

THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF SELF-EFFICACY AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article concerns teachers' sense of personal self-efficacy and the attitude to inclusive education. The purpose of the study is the assessment of teachers' general and professional self-efficacy, identification of the attitude to inclusive education, and the examination of the relationship between the above variables. The process of the introduction and implementation of inclusive education in Georgia has been in place for about 20 years and, as evidenced by reports and studies, it is still a major challenge for the educational sector. Teachers play a crucial role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. The study of the problem of self-efficacy is timely and relevant as long as the qualification of teachers, enabling them to accurately evaluate the outcomes of their actions in the context of professional activities and form a realistic picture of their opportunities has currently acquired especial importance.

The study was conducted throughout Georgia and covered 102 teachers in general education: 45 in elementary school and 57 in basic education. The data were processed using basic and multidimensional methods. SPSS-23 software package was employed for the statistical analysis. The data analysis showed that compared to the previous years, teachers now have a better understanding of the importance of inclusion. It also showed that the teachers' professional efficacy (teaching related tasks, engagement of students in the educational process and class management) is associated with the sense of general self-efficacy. Our hypothesis about the impact of teachers' self-efficacy level on the relationship between the factors of their attitude to the readiness for inclusive education has been partially confirmed.

Key words: *inclusive education, self-efficacy, professional self-efficacy, readiness for inclusive education*

Introduction

Inclusive education refers to the integration of students with special educational needs into the general educational space alongside their peers (პაჭკორია თ. ლალიძე ა. 2011). In 1994, UNESCO published the Salamanca Statement, which states that every child, including those with special educational needs, has the right to receive quality education. This document laid the foundation for the future implementation of inclusive education worldwide, aiming to ensure that students with special educational needs also have access to quality education (ჭინჭარაული თ. ჯავახიშვილი ნ. 2013).

The implementation and development of inclusive education in Georgia effectively began in 2006 and its proper advancement remains one of the current issues (ჭინჭარაული თ. ჯავახიშვილი ნ.2013). Norway has actively supported the development of inclusive

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education in our country, both financially and methodologically. In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia implemented the project "Implementation of Inclusive Education in 10 Schools in Tbilisi", which effectively laid the foundation for the integration of individuals and children with disabilities into society. The results demonstrated the necessity of defining the goals regarding the education of students with special educational needs, which would reflect the legislative changes in the field of education (Inclusive Education Support Program, 2009).

In our country, alongside the development of inclusive education, the number of students with special educational needs is also increasing in schools every year. According to the 2019 data, the number of students with special educational needs in schools was approximately 8,685 (მახარაძე თ. აბაშიძე თ. ქიტიაშვილი ა. მარკოვსკა-მანისტა ა. ლაუბერ-პოლი ს. 2019).

It is certainly important that the involvement of the students with special educational needs in the school system is increasing, but it is even more significant to consider the quality of the students' engagement in the educational process and the opportunity of an individual student to receive quality education.

The research has shown that schools often fail to provide quality education to students with special educational needs (მახარაძე თ. აბაშიძე თ. ქიტიაშვილი ა. მარკოვსკა-მანისტა ა. ლაუბერ-პოლი ს. 2019). Students do not receive the knowledge that is important for their future employment, independent living, or overall well-being (მახარაძე თ. ქიტიაშვილი ა. 2019).

The process of inclusive education in general educational institutions is reflected annually in the parliamentary reports of the Public Defender of Georgia. According to these reports, the quality of education for students with special educational needs remains one of the main issues in our country (მახარაძე თ. აბაშიძე თ. ქიტიაშვილი ა. მარკოვსკა-მანისტა ა. ლაუბერ-პოლი ს. 2019). Several factors significantly influence the involvement of students with special educational needs in the learning process, including not only the professional competence of the school staff, but also their attitudes (მახარაძე თ. აბაშიძე თ. ქიტიაშვილი ა. მარკოვსკა-მანისტა ა. ლაუბერ-პოლი ს. 2019).

In Georgia, the teaching profession is regulated by law, and the corresponding competencies are defined by the professional standards for teachers, which emphasize the role of inclusive education and the ability of teachers to serve as providers of knowledge for students with special educational needs (ჭინჭარაული თ. ჯავახიშვილი ნ. 2013). In order for inclusive education to be implemented correctly and effectively in the country, a study was conducted in 2013 to examine the opinions and attitudes of specialists involved in inclusive education on various issues. A significant role in achieving this goal is played by the educational institutions and the teachers working in those institutions. Teachers play one of the most important roles in inclusive education (ჭინჭარაული თ. ჯავახიშვილი ნ. 2013). This is also indicated by the teachers' professional standard (Article 4), which states that the teacher adheres to the basic principles of inclusive education, shares its

values, and contributes to the creation of a supportive environment for students with special educational needs, its adaptation, etc. (Teacher professional standard, 2014).

In pedagogical practice, the teacher self-assessment questionnaires are predominantly used as self-reflection means that help them evaluate their own work. This enables teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and introduce subsequent changes to their work. Self-assessment is viewed as a factor contributing to the teacher's personal and professional development (as stated in the government's resolution on approving the scheme for teachers' professional development and career advancement, Chapter 3, 2019). In order for teachers to effectively fulfill their duties, to be motivated and productive, it is crucial how much they trust themselves when facing specific situations and what their perception of personal self-efficacy is. According to Bandura, self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to cope with various situations in life; it is the belief in one's own competence (Bandura, A., 1986). The feeling that we can successfully engage in a specific activity and achieve success is often a key determinant – essentially, the expectation that we can meet challenges – of whether we take steps towards our goals.

The research on self-efficacy is relevant and timely, as today more than ever, society needs highly effective educators who can accurately assess the outcomes of their actions (including professional ones) and their own abilities.

In our country, the research concerning inclusive education mainly focuses on the activities of special education teachers, their role in the development and implementation of inclusive education. In fact, there are fewer studies that specifically address the attitudes of general education subject teachers towards inclusive education, their personal readiness, and self-efficacy as one of the determining factors, alongside other factors, that may influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

The purpose of the present study is to determine whether there is a correlation between the teacher's self-efficacy and their attitude to inclusive education.

The purpose of the study: *Defining teachers' self-efficacy level and its effect on the attitude (readiness).*

Participants: *102 active teachers from Tbilisi and different regions of Georgia (57 teachers in basic education and 45 – in elementary education). The sample included the teachers who had/did not have experience of work with the students with special educational needs.*

Research question:

1. *Does the teacher's readiness for inclusive education depend on his/her general self-efficacy?*
2. *Does the teacher's readiness for inclusive education depend on his/her professional self-efficacy?*

Study objectives:

- ✓ Review of the current status of inclusive education in Georgia and abroad;
- ✓ Teachers' self-efficacy study;

- ✓ Assessment of teachers' attitude to (readiness for) inclusive education;
- ✓ The effect of teachers' self-efficacy level on their attitude (readiness) to inclusive education;
- ✓ The effect of teachers' self-efficacy level on their attitude (readiness) to inclusive education at the elementary and basic stages of education;
- ✓ Research into teachers' perception of self-efficacy including the following three sub-components: self-evaluation of the effectiveness of class management, self-evaluation of efficacy in teaching and self-evaluation of students' engagement in the educational process (TALIS 2015);
- ✓ Assessment of teachers' perception of professional self-efficacy at the elementary and basic stages of education;
- ✓ Assessment of teachers' self-efficacy and attitude to inclusive education among the teachers who have/have not worked with students with special educational needs.

Methods:

1. Theoretical;
2. Quantitative methods of empirical research, self-administered questionnaire;
3. Basic and multi-dimensional methods of mathematical statistics (SPSS-23).

Instruments:

1. Teachers' readiness for inclusive education (Першина Н.А., Сычев О.А.);
2. The general self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer, R., Jerusalem, M.);
3. Assessment of teachers' self-efficacy according to Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (2015).

1. Inclusive education

1.1 General Overview

According to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child, regardless of gender, age, nationality, or religious belief, has the right to receive education in a general educational environment alongside their peers without discrimination (თ. პაჭკორია, თ. ჭინჭარაული 2011).

Children often experience various difficulties related to learning, and the causes of these difficulties can vary for each individual. These challenges may arise from different conditions, such as physical, emotional, or social circumstances, environmental factors, and so on (თ. პაჭკორია თ. ჭინჭარაული 2011). Language barriers can also contribute to learning difficulties, and it is important to note that children who may be exceptionally gifted compared to their peers can also face challenges in the learning process.

Inclusive education implies that every child has the right to be fully engaged in the general educational environment alongside their peers, including, of course, students with special educational needs, who must have equal opportunities to receive quality education along with their peers (თ. პაჭკორია, თ. ჭინჭარაული, ა. ლალიძე, მ. ბაგრატიონი, 2011).

1.2. Teachers' Attitudes to Inclusive Education

Students with disabilities have varying strengths and weaknesses and, accordingly, require diverse academic and behavioral support. Thus, a student's disability and the associated educational needs often influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

According to Monahan, Marino, and Miller (1996), 62% of teachers did not believe that students with special educational needs would negatively impact their classmates in the classroom. In other studies (Horne & Timmons, 2009), 50% of teachers felt this way. Timmons also found that the majority of teachers believed they would be unable to meet the needs of all students in an inclusive classroom. Furthermore, according to Lohrmann and Bambara (2006), teachers were not confident that they would be able to balance the needs of students with disabilities and their classmates. The research conducted at various times has shown that teachers' attitudes are crucial to the success of inclusive education (Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008). According to Forlin (2001), teachers perceive the implementation of inclusive education as a challenge. Ryan (2009) noted that the category of people with special educational needs can significantly influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

1.3. A brief overview of internationally conducted studies

- ✓ In 2011, a study was conducted in Romania involving 112 teachers. The purpose of the research was to determine whether there are significant differences in the perceptions of their competencies between teachers of different ages regarding inclusive education practices. The results revealed that there are significant differences related to considering the individual characteristics of students and class management. It also showed that the primary school teachers are more experienced, confident, and capable of adapting educational activities to meet the needs of each student. The findings indicated that there still are misconceptions about children with special educational needs. Additionally, significant differences were revealed among teachers of different ages concerning fundamental concepts of inclusivity (Unianua M, 2011);
- ✓ In 2018, a study was conducted in Turkey aimed at determining the relationship between Turkish teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and their sense of self-efficacy. A total of 1,163 preschool, subject and special education teachers from four different geographical regions of Turkey participated in the study. The results indicated that there is a significant relationship between teachers' perceived self-efficacy and their attitudes towards inclusive education (Özokcu, O. 2018);
- ✓ In 2017, a study was conducted in Japan involving 359 teachers. This study examined Japanese teachers' attitudes toward inclusivity and their self-efficacy. The results indicated that, although teachers generally had a positive attitude toward individuals with disabilities, they expressed concerns about the implementation of inclusive education in their classrooms. The overall level of self-efficacy was lower in Japan compared to other countries, particularly regarding problem-solving related to student behavior (Yada A., 2017);

- ✓ A study conducted in Finland in 2015-16 involved 1,764 teachers. The research showed that significant and substantial differences existed between subject teachers and special education teachers. Subject teachers were found to be more critical compared to special education teachers. It was also demonstrated that teachers had a negative attitude towards inclusion. However, the majority believed that educating students with special educational needs would be better facilitated in integrated classrooms. A minimal number believed that special classes for students with special educational needs were beneficial. The study demonstrated that inclusion does not create additional work for educators. Overall, it was closely related to a positive attitude towards inclusion. The study also highlighted the issues of gender balance. Female teachers had a more positive attitude towards inclusion than male teachers, and younger teachers exhibited more positive behavior compared to older ones (Salovita 2018);
- ✓ A study conducted in Egypt in 2011 aimed to explore teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive classrooms. The research showed that teachers' sense of self-efficacy directly impacts students' academic achievement. The results indicated that more experienced teachers had a more positive attitude compared to those with less experience. At the same time, a teacher's experience did not affect their sense of self-efficacy when teaching students with special educational needs;
- ✓ No differences in attitudes were found between the preschool and elementary school teachers regarding their attitudes. However, the elementary school teachers exhibited a higher level of self-efficacy (Mohamed M. 2011).

1.4. Inclusive Education in Georgia

According to the Constitution of Georgia, everyone has the right to receive education (Constitution of Georgia, Article 27, Paragraph 1). This inherently means that every individual is equal in terms of access to education. Our country also adheres to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) issued by the United Nations General Assembly, which ensures the protection of each child's rights, including the right of children with disabilities to be actively involved in public life (რ. ჭანტურია, ს. გორგოძე, თ. ჩხაიძე, თ. მოსიაშვილი, ს. ჯანაშია, 2016). Inclusive education in Georgia is regulated by three main laws: the "General Education Law of Georgia", the "Vocational Education Law of Georgia," and the "Higher Education Law of Georgia" (თ. ჭინჭარაული ნ. ჯავახიშვილი 2013). The General Education Law of Georgia defines inclusive education as an educational process that is equally accessible, whereby each student is ensured education tailored to their individual educational needs and capabilities (General Education Law of Georgia). The role of the teacher is, in fact, crucial in the implementation of inclusive education, both in terms of developing individualized learning plans, assessing students' academic abilities, and delivering knowledge, as well as in making positive changes to the environment where students with special educational needs develop. Over the years, various training sessions have been conducted for specialists involved in inclusive education, while, in parallel, various studies have been carried out regarding teachers' readiness (Inclusive Education in Pilot Schools, Monitoring Report 2019).

According to the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) report, the school environment is positively oriented towards each student. The majority of surveyed teachers are able to discuss existing challenges, with 48.1% of teachers considering diversity not as a problem but as a resource for carrying out different activities. 15.9% of respondents do not know what the attitude towards inclusive education is (თ. ჭინჭარაული, ნ. ჯავახიშვილი, 2013). In schools, teachers employ various strategies to combat the existing stereotypes regarding students with special educational needs. Some teachers try to avoid using the term “ability” in relation to children’s knowledge and/or competence (თ. ჭინჭარაული, ნ. ჯავახიშვილი, 2013 წ).

The perception of self-efficacy studied in the framework of TALIS research includes three components: self-evaluation of classroom management effectiveness, self-evaluation of teaching effectiveness, and self-evaluation of student engagement in the learning process. According to the findings of this research, teachers feel most confident in fulfilling tasks related to class management, somewhat less so in the tasks related to teaching, and least of all in terms of engaging students in the learning process (TALIS 2015).

2. Self-efficacy

According to Bandura, self-efficacy is a person’s belief in their ability to manage various events that affect their lives and that they have the capability to perform specific actions (მ. მელიქიშვილი, 2012).

2.1. Teachers’ Perception of Self-Efficacy

The perception of self-efficacy is important for individuals in all professions, including teachers, because various studies confirm that the perception of self-efficacy often determines the successful execution of their work, which significantly impacts students’ achievements (მ. მელიქიშვილი, 2012).

The research findings often show that the level of a teacher’s perception of self-efficacy is significantly related to a student motivation and academic achievement, which in turn affects the teacher’s motivation and the quality of their work (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004; Caprara et al., 2006). Teachers tend to have a low perception of their self-efficacy, particularly when it comes to managing a student behavior, and when they have low expectations regarding students’ academic success (Caprara et al., 2003; Caprara et al., 2006; Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Collie, Shapka & Perry, 2012).

The satisfaction that a teacher derives from their profession is often influenced by factors such as salary, resources (e.g., Dinham & Scott, 1998, 2000; Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999), and the attitudes surrounding people (Hargreaves, 1994).

The self-efficacy of teachers is increasingly playing a significant role in school research, where its relevance is highlighted as one of the key factors leading to effective teaching outcomes (Klassen et al., 2009; Klassen & Tze, 2014). The teachers with high

self-efficacy tend to experience greater job satisfaction, lower levels of job-related stress, and encounter fewer difficulties regarding students' behavioral characteristics (Caprara et al., 2003). Based on research findings, it can be stated that a thorough understanding of the essence of self-efficacy has a significant impact on teachers' professional well-being as well as effective management and improvement of school activities (Barni, D).

Hypotheses of the study

Based on theoretical materials and empirical research, we identified the perception of self-efficacy as the most important factor of the teacher's attitude (readiness) to inclusive education. The hypotheses of the study were formulated as follows:

1. The factors of readiness for inclusive education depend on the general level of the teacher's self-efficacy;
2. Perception of professional self-efficacy depends on the teacher's general self-efficacy level;
3. The factors of attitude towards the readiness for inclusive education will be represented differently among the teachers in elementary and basic education.

Results

1. The primary objective of the study was to assess teachers' self-efficacy. Table 1 shows that most responds are characterized with the sense of high or above average self-efficacy (uneven distribution: $\chi^2=60.980$; $p=0.000$). The difference between self-efficacy levels is statistically significant. This means that the interviewed teachers trust their own ability to cope with challenges and know how they would solve a problem in unexpected circumstances.

Table 1. Self-efficacy level

Frequency %			
Self-efficacy level	Low level	0	0,0%
	Below average	5	4,9%
	Average	7	6,9%
	Above average	49	48,0%
	High level	41	40,2%

2. Examining self-efficacy by elementary and basic stages of education. The sense of self-efficacy turned out to be higher among the teachers in the elementary school (44,4%) compared to the teachers at the basic stage of education (36,8%). The results were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), due to which we can only limit ourselves to the description of the observed tendencies. There are more teachers in elementary school who have a feeling that they can easily achieve the set objective and cope with difficult problems and who rely on themselves in any kind of situation.

Table 2. Self-efficacy level by stages of education

	Stages of education	
	Primary	Basic
Below average	6,7%	3,5%
Average	6,7%	7,0%
Above average	42,2%	52,6%
High	44,4%	36,8%

3. The questionnaire developed by Pershina and Sychev was used to examine teachers' attitude (readiness) to inclusive education. The questionnaire provides for three levels (low, average, high) and includes five scales: F1 – Understanding the importance of inclusion; F2 – Caution and skepticism; F3 – Barriers; F4 – Uncertainty, incompetence; F5 – Meaningfulness (personal meaning). Our results showed uneven distribution of responses on Likert scale. The dominant responses were the following: "Inclusive education is an extremely important approach" (F1) and "In a civilized society every child should be given the opportunity to study in a general education institution" (F5). Therefore, most teachers participating in the study agree with the opinion that all children have the right to study in a general education institution and receive the education they need. This process is also important for typically developing students in terms of the demonstration of tolerance and empathy.

Table 3. General levels of the factors of attitude to inclusive education

Frequency %			
Understanding the importance of inclusion	High level	100	98.0%
	Average level	2	2.0%
	Low level	0	0.0%
Caution, skepticism	High level	0	0.0%
	Average level	5	4.9%
	Low level	97	95.1%
Barriers	High level	37	36.3%
	Average level	54	52.9%
	Low level	11	10.8%
Uncertainty, incompetence	High level	19	18.6%
	Average level	52	51.0%
	Low level	31	30.4%
Meaningfulness (personal meaning)	High level	100	98.0%
	Average level	2	2.0%
	Low level	0	0.0%

The results showed that the factors of attitude (readiness) to inclusive education strongly correlate with each other ($p < 0.05$), which means that the selected factors reveal the essence of readiness for inclusive education. This implies that each of them has to be considered in teacher training programs.

4. At the next stage of the study, the attitude (readiness) to inclusive education was assessed by additional factors – elementary and basic education. The difference obtained was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). However, the test for readiness for inclusive education showed difference by the above two stages on the barrier scale. A higher level of barriers was revealed for elementary education (40,0%) compared to basic education (33,3, %). Teachers in elementary education stated that it would be difficult for typically developing students to accept the students with special educational needs, that working with a class would be more difficult and parents would face some kind of problems.

Table 4. Attitude to inclusive education by stages of education

		Stage of education	
		Primary stage	Basic stage
Understanding the importance of inclusive education	Low level	0,0%	0,0%
	Average level	2,2%	1,8%
	High level	97,8%	98,2%
Caution, skepticism	High level	0,0%	0,0%
	Average level	8,9%	1,8%
	Low level	91,1%	98,2%
Barriers	High level	40,0%	33,3%
	Average level	46,7%	57,9%
	Low level	13,3%	8,8%
Uncertainty, incompetence	High level	17,8%	19,3%
	Average level	48,9%	52,6%
	Low level	33,3%	28,1%
Meaningfulness (personal meaning)	Low level	0,0%	0,0%
	Average level	4,4%	0,0%
	High level	95,6%	100,0%

5. Assessment of teachers' self-efficacy level which comprises three sub-components: self-efficacy in class management, efficacy in teaching and efficacy in the engagement of students in the educational process. It turned out that the distribution was uneven by scales, but the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. Teachers' professional self-efficacy levels

Efficacy in the engagement of students in the educational process	Very low level	0	0.0%
	Lower than average	0	0.0%
	Average level	35	34.3%
	High level	67	65.7%
Efficacy in teaching	Very low level	0	0.0%
	Lower than average	1	1.0%
	Average level	32	31.4%
	High level	69	67.6%
Efficacy in class management	Very low level	0	0.0%
	Lower than average	0	0.0%
	Average level	35	34.3%
	High level	67	65.7%

6. Assessment of teachers' professional efficacy by elementary and basic education. The difference was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). At the basic stage the level of self-efficacy in teaching was 71,9%, while at the stage of elementary education it made 62,2%. Since the difference is not statistically significant, we could only look at a general tendency. Teachers in basic education use more alternative teaching and evaluation strategies.

Table 6. Teachers' professional self-efficacy level by stages

		Stages of education	
		Elementary stage	Basic stage
Efficacy level in the engagement of students in the educational process	Very low	0.0%	0.0%
	Lower than average	0.0%	0.0%
	Average	35.6%	33.3%
	High	64.4%	66.7%
Efficacy level in teaching	Very low	0.0%	0.0%
	Lower than average	2.2%	0.0%
	Average	35.6%	28.1%
	High	62.2%	71.9%
Efficacy level in class management	Very low	0.0%	0.0%
	Lower than average	0.0%	0.0%
	Average	31.1 %	36.8%
	High	68.9%	63.2%

Hypothesis testing

The results show that some factors of attitude (readiness) to inclusive education are differently associated with the sense of self-efficacy; in particular, understanding the importance of inclusive education positively correlates with the sense of self-efficacy, whereas uncertainty/incompetence shows a negative correlation.

In addition, correlation turned out positive among all the three components of general and professional self-efficacy (efficacy in the engagement of students in the educational process, efficacy in teaching and efficacy in class management).

Table 7. Correlation between the study variables

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Understanding the importance of inclusive education	-.136	-.329**	-.211*	.140	.229*	.141	.295**	.178
2. Caution, Skepticism	.173	.001	.033	.161	.021	.158	.003	.073
3. Barriers		.045	.256**	.356**	-.054	-.188	-.066	-.006
		.654	.010	.000	.589	.058	.507	.955
4. Uncertainty, incompetence			.262**	.083	-.056	.024	-.058	-.113
			.008	.408	.576	.810	.564	.257
5. Meaningfulness (personal meaning)				-.026	-.289**	-.166	-.265**	-.155
				.799	.003	.095	.007	.121
6. Self-efficacy					.219*	.096	.257**	.179
					.027	.338	.009	.072
7. Efficacy in the engagement of students in the educational process						.353**	.398**	.364**
						.000	.000	.000
8. Efficacy in teaching							.554**	.474**
							.000	.000
9. Efficacy in class management								.642**
								.000

- ✓ Therefore, our first hypothesis according to which readiness for inclusive education depends on the teachers' general self-efficacy level, was confirmed. A strong correlation was observed between self-efficacy and readiness for inclusive education;
- ✓ The second hypothesis according to which the teachers' professional self-efficacy depends on the teachers' general self-efficacy was also confirmed. Therefore, the

- higher the teachers' general self-efficacy, the stronger is the sense of self-efficacy in class management, engagement of students in the educational process and teaching;
- ✓ We also hypothesized that the attitude (readiness) to inclusive education would be different at different stages of education, namely elementary and basic education. No statistically significant difference was observed between the variables; however, at the level of tendencies (revealed in the percentage) some factors of readiness for inclusive education (specifically barriers) showed certain stage related differences.

Conclusion

1. Similarly to other studies, the present study demonstrated that self-efficacy, as a person's belief in one's own abilities (Bandura A.) and the factors of the attitude to inclusive education are strongly associated. Self-efficacy is a truly significant predictor of how a person perceives this or that issue or challenge, what expectations she/he will have, what attitude they will form toward a specific event and whether they will be motivated to carry out a specific action (Bandura, 1997; Schwarzer, 1992);

2. The study showed that the sense of self efficacy positively correlates with the teacher's perception of one's professional efficacy;

3. Among the factors of the attitude to inclusive education, the teachers give a priority to the understanding of the importance of inclusive education and meaningfulness (personal meaning). Inclusion is not perceived by teachers as an additional work load, but is rather related to a positive perception of inclusion;

4. When examining the attitude to inclusive education with the consideration of the elementary and basic stages, it turned out that the teachers in the elementary school perceive more barriers in relation to school studies of children with special educational needs, their relationship with classmates and their parents than at the stage of basic education;

5. In the formation of readiness for inclusive education, teachers perceive emotional difficulties, the health of special needs children, lack of knowledge about their development and an insufficient ability to formulate the cognitive component as the main barriers. The higher uncertainty and incompetence, the stronger are the barriers in teaching activity. For this reason, it is important that psychologists and special educators professionally support teachers in their activity.

Study limitations and future research

- ✓ Most respondents in the study had experience of working with children with special educational needs, which made it impossible to examine the effect of experience, as an important variable, on the attitude of the teachers to inclusive education and their perception of self-efficacy;
- ✓ Since a number of teachers participating in the study was from different regions of Georgia rather than Tbilisi and their distribution was uneven, it prevented us from comparing the attitudes of the teachers in the regions with the attitudes of teachers working in Tbilisi;

- ✓ At the same time, all the teachers participating in the study had similar opinions regarding the importance of the understanding of inclusive education, which points to social desirability bias;
- ✓ The tendencies revealed in the study create a precondition for future research for an in-depth examination of the issue, since inclusive education and its proper implementation is an important challenge for our society.

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