

PRE SERVICE TEACHER ATTITUDES AND SELF EFFICACY TOWARD INCLUSION IN KOSOVA

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Abstract

Inclusive education is a relatively new philosophy and practice in Kosova. There is increasing recognition that successful implementation of inclusive education practices depends largely by teacher' positive attitudes and high self-efficacy toward these practices.

The purpose of this study is to examine attitude toward inclusive education and self-efficacy for inclusive practice among pre-service teachers in Kosova. Moreover, it will examine the relationships between pre-service attitude and self-efficacy and other demographic variables such as gender, age, study years, previous professional trainings in inclusive education, experience in working with children with disabilities and significant relationship with a person with disabilities.

This study will include 180 BA and MA pre service teachers (primary and preschool) from two universities in Kosova.

The findings of this study are discussed within the framework of the importance of pre service teachers' personal variables in successful implementation of inclusion in education.

Keywords: *Pre service teacher, inclusive education, attitudes, self-efficacy.*

1. Introduction

Although inclusive education as a relatively new philosophy in Kosova, during the two last decades there has been a lot of efforts to build and reform the educational system based on inclusion principles. However the literature confirms that teachers' personal variables such as positive attitudes and high self-efficacy toward inclusive practices play a crucial role in implementing successful inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Forlin, 2010^a; Sharma, Folin & Loreman, 2006). While internationally there are a considerable number of studies that examined these two variables among pre service teachers in the context of inclusion, in Kosova there is no single study in this field. This study is the first attempt to fill the gap in the existing literature. Moreover the importance of this study relies on the fact that pre service education years have a fundamental importance in acquiring appropriate attitude and skills to implement inclusive education more successfully (Sharma et al., 2006).

1.1. Teachers' attitudes, concerns and sentiments towards inclusive education

The term attitude as defined by Eagly and Chaiken (1993, p.1) means "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor". There are two types of teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. Positive attitudes are those that make teachers use appropriate teaching strategies for inclusion of children with special needs in their classrooms and negative attitudes that contribute to teacher's failure to implement such strategies and create rather exclusive than inclusive learning environment (Campbell, Gilmore, Cuskelly, 2003; Forlin, 2010a).

Many studies have confirmed that there is a relationship between teacher's attitudes, concerns and sentiments toward children's with special needs. Agbenyega (2007) in his study confirms that except attitudes also concerns are important factor in implementing inclusion. Changpinit, Greaves, and Frydenberg (2007) explored the attitudes and concerns of 702 in-service teachers of Thailand and found that teacher's positive attitudes towards children with disabilities and their concerns correlated negatively. In contrary, a comparative study that included 319 South African and 822 Finnish primary and secondary teachers found that teachers concerns were much higher although teachers from both countries expressed positive attitude and sentiment toward children with disabilities (Savolainen et al., 2012). Therefore, according to these findings we can conclude that there is a complex relationship between teachers' attitudes, sentiments and concerns towards the inclusion of children with disabilities.

1.2. Teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive practices

According to Bandura (1977), teacher self-efficacy has been defined as the “extent to which a teacher believes that she or he can influence students’ behavior and their academic achievement, especially of pupils with difficulties or those with particularly low learning motivation” (Friedman & Kass, 2002, p. 675). In addition, several empirical studies have confirmed that teachers with higher self-efficacy were more confident in using their own skills, abilities and knowledge during inclusive practices and showed more success in including children with disabilities in their classrooms (Friend & Bursuck, 2009; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin 2012). The role of teacher’s self-efficacy in implementing inclusive practices to date has been examined mainly in two directions: how it relates with attitudes, concerns and sentiments toward inclusive education and how the degree of self-efficacy among in service and pre service teachers varies according to different countries around the world. Regarding the first direction, a growing body of literature confirms that there is a positive relationship between teacher’s self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusive education. According to Meijer and Foster (1988) Dutch teachers with higher self-efficacy had more positive attitudes toward students with difficulties than those with lower self-efficacy. Furthermore, sense of efficacy was the only crucial factors that affected teacher’s attitude toward inclusive education among Israeli teachers (Weisel & Dror, 2006). Furthermore, the study of Malinen et al. (2012) found that Chinese teachers’ self-efficacy in collaboration was the single factor that predicted teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive education.

Internationally, many comparative studies have been conducted to assess differences in self-efficacy to use inclusive practices among teachers (pre service and in service) in different countries. For example, a study on 319 South African and 822 Finnish primary and secondary in-service teachers revealed a higher level of self-efficacy of teachers of both countries for IE (Savolainen, et al., 2012). Another international with 380 pre-service teachers in four teacher preparation institutions in Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, and Indonesia revealed that pre-service teachers in Hong Kong reported significantly lower levels of teaching self-efficacy with respect to inclusion while the Australians reported significantly higher responses than their counterparts in all other countries.

1.3. The relationships between demographic variables, attitudes and self efficacy for inclusive practices

Previous studies have confirmed that different demographic and background might predict the level of attitude and self-efficacy of pre service teachers to use inclusive practices. For example, age, gender, length of training, interaction with people with disabilities, confidence and knowledge about policies predicted teacher’s self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusive practices (Ahsan, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012a; Ahsan, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2014a; Forlin et al., 2009; Forlin et al., 2011; Loreman, Earle, Sharma, & Forlin, 2007; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2007). In line with these studies the current study will reveal how contextual and demographic factors influence pre service teacher’s attitude and self-efficacy in Kosova.

2. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine attitude toward inclusive education and self-efficacy for inclusive practice among pre-service teachers in Kosova. Moreover, it will examine the relationships between pre-service attitude and self-efficacy and other demographic variables such as gender, age, study years, previous professional trainings in inclusive education, experience in working with children with disabilities and significant relationship with a person with disabilities.

1. What is the level of attitudes, sentiment, concerns toward inclusive practices among pre service teachers in Kosova?
2. What is the level of self efficacy in general, and self efficacy in using inclusive instruction, use collaboration and managing classroom behavior among pre service teachers in Kosova
3. How pre service teachers background and demographic variables relate to their attitudes, concern and sentiments toward inclusive practices

2.1. Research Instruments

A demographic questionnaire was used to obtain information regarding age, gender, years of study previous professional trainings in inclusive education, experience in working with children with disabilities and significant relationship with a person with disabilities.

The second research instrument *Sentiments, Attitudes and Concerns about Inclusive Education* scale (SACIE) (Loreman, Earle, Sharma & Forlin, 2011) was used to assess pre service teacher attitudes toward inclusive practices Items on the *concerns* and *sentiments* subscales were reverse coded so that a higher mean score indicated more positive dispositions towards inclusion.

The *Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP)* Scale (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, submitted) measured teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy in three subscales: using inclusive instructions, managing behavior and in working collaboratively. The TEIP consisted of 18 items. The higher mean indicated higher self-efficacy.

The whole section of the instruments was originally written in English. The study author's with a licensed interpreter in English worked together on translation and back translation of all instruments.

2.2. Participants

This study included 180 MA and BA pre service teachers (preschool and primary) studying in at University of Prishtina and Gjakova in Kosova. The sample mean age is 23.17, $SD = 2.94$. Among the participants 74% were females and 26% male. Regarding study years 17.5 % of participants came from the first year, 18.2% from second year, 22.4% from third year, 26.5 % from fourth year and 15.4% from MA study in Inclusive education. 78.7 % have none training on inclusive education, 13.8% reported some while 7.5 % reported having above 20 hours of training. Having practicum individual experience with children with special needs 55.4% reported none, 33.7 % some and 10.9 % a lot. Lastly, having significant experience with a person with disabilities 36.5 % of participants said yeas and 63.5 % said no. Regarding group age 50.5% were included in 19-24 age, 39.5 included participants from 25 to 29 age and 10% were 30-37 age.

2.3. Data analysis

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) with eta squared was conducted to evaluate the significant relationships and potential influence of selected demographic variable and subscales of TEIP and SACIE-R. Statistical power was evaluated according to guidelines outlined by Ferguson (2009) where moderate effect is .25 and strong effect is .64.

3. Results

3.1. In the table 1 we have presented the mean score for overall of the pre service teacher's self-efficacy on the TEIP scale in total and for each of three subscales

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, mean standard deviation for SACIER.

Scales	Mean	SD	Cronbach alpha
Efficacy to use II	4.59	.41	.85
Efficacy in collaboration	4.59	.43	.86
Efficacy in MB	4.60	.42	.87
TEIP Total	4.59	.41	.94
Attitude	2.50	.26	.69
Sentiments	2.94	.36	.72
Concerns	2.52	.44	.70
SACIER-R total	2.52	.28	.74

Note: *II – inclusive Instructions; MB – Managing Behavior

3.2. Univariate analysis of variance of demographic variables against attitude, sentiments, concerns and SACIER R total mean scores

The ANOVA results in Table 2 shows that the relationships between the three age groups and attitude, sentiments, concerns and total SACIER-R were all statistically significant ($p = .000$). Tukey HDS post test revealed that the group age 19 to 24 means score was higher than two other groups in SACIE-R Total, whereas the second group age 25-29 scored higher for attitude, sentiments, and concerns.

Also study years showed significant relationships with SACIER-R in total, attitudes, sentiments and concerns ($p = .000$). Tukey HDS post test revealed that the MA students differed from four other groups with highest mean score.

Training level have significant relationships with attitude, sentiments and concern at ($p = .000$, $p = .05$) level of significance and small to moderate effect for attitude as eta square showed (.12). Tukey HDS post test revealed that the third year students have higher mean score than four other groups.

Experience with SEN children during practicum was another variable that showed to have significant relationships with attitude, sentiments and concern at ($p = .000$) level of significance but not with SACIE-R total. Tukey HDS post test revealed that students who scored "very Often" had the higher mean score across the subscale and SACIER –R Total.

Table 2. Univariate analysis of variance of demographic variables against SACIER R total mean score and three subscales.

Independent Variables	Attitude		Sentiments		Concernc		SACIE-R total	
	F	eta ²	F	Eta ²	F	Eta ²	F	Eta ²
Age	18.40***	.20	48.69***	.26	103.98***	.37	22.71***	.12
Study years	16.37***	.013	53.40***	.43	103.60***	.60	17.91***	.20
Training Level	19.02***	.012	4.34**	.03	14.22***	.09	2.50	.00
Experience with SEN	23.98***	.014	26.18***	.16	44.57***	.24	10.41	.07

Note: p*** = .000, p** = .01, p* = .05;

3.3. Univariate analysis of variance of demographic variables against TEIP total, self-efficacy to use inclusive instruction, use collaboration and managing behavior

The relationships between age and UII, UC, MB and Total TEIP were statistically significant at ($p = .000$) level of significance. Tukey HDS post test revealed that the group age 19 to 24 means score was higher than two other groups in TEIP Total, whereas the second group age 25-29 scored higher for attitude, sentiments, and concerns.

Study years had significant relationships with UII, UC, MB and Total TEIP ($p = .000$) level of significance. Tukey HDS post test revealed that the MA students differed from four other groups with highest mean score.

Training level have significant relationships only with attitude, sentiments and concern at ($p = .000$, $p = .004$) level of significant and small to moderate effect only for attitude as eta squares showed. Tukey HDS post test revealed that the students who had more than 20 hours of training different with higher mean score comparing with students of two other groups.

Experience with SEN children showed to have significant relationships with attitude, sentiments, concern and TEIP Total ($p = .000$) level of significance. Tukey HDS post test revealed that students who scored “very often” had the higher mean score across the subscale and TEIP Total.

Table 3. Univariate analysis of variance of demographic variables against TEIPS Total mean score and three factors.

Independent Variables	Use Inclusive Instruction (UII)		Use Collaboration (UC)		Managing Behavior (MB)		TEIP Total	
	F	Eta ²	F	Eta ²	F	Eta ²	F	Eta ²
Age	9.83***	.35	11.44***	.40	12.24***	.41	12.60***	.41
Study years	40.18**	.37	48.82***	.41	55.19***	.45	55.96***	.44
Training Level	18.55	.12	14.68	.10	16.89	.10	18.35***	.11
Experience with SEN during practicum	23.50**	.14	30.57***	.18	32.09***	.19	31.66***	.19

Note: p*** = .000, p** = .01, p* = .05

4. Discussion

Pre service teachers in Kosova are moderately positive to implement inclusive practices and are less concerned regarding use of inclusive practice comparing with their colleagues from other countries. This can be attributed to the satisfying level of implementing inclusive in the overall education system.

Pre-service teachers in Kosova have relatively high overall self-efficacy the same as they colleagues from Finland and South Africa (Savolainen, et al., 2012). They also showed to have higher self-efficacy in Managing Behavior comparing with Use Inclusive Instruction and Use Collaboration

Younger group age showed to have higher means on positive attitude and higher self-efficacy toward inclusive education that older age group. These might be because the younger generations were educated while our education system embraced the idea of inclusion so they had more opportunities to be educated on inclusion and work more with children with disabilities during their practicum.

Students of MA showed to have higher positive attitudes and self-efficacy and finally students who were more engaged with children with special needs during their practicum had more positive attitudes and higher self-efficacy toward these children. These results must raise the attention of mentoring in universities to encourage students to interact more with children with special needs during the practicum since it gives them a great opportunity to build more positive attitudes which further might help them to implement inclusive practices more successfully.

Finally, age and study years were the most influential factors of attitudes and self-efficacy to use inclusive practice among pre-service teachers in Kosova. It means that new generation of teachers hopefully will be able to contribute more in the successful implementation of inclusive education by creating a warm and welcomed learning environment for each child with different abilities.

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