

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL OF KOSOVO

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## Abstract

In the education system of Kosovo for about 15 years in a row, inclusion was and is a matter of discussion, better said the inclusion of children with special needs in regular schools and classes.

This research, entitled " Inclusive Education in Contemporary School of Kosovo", aims to assess the challenges and difficulties that inclusive education has, namely teachers in the real implementation of inclusiveness. So, through this research we aim to know what are the challenges and difficulties of the inclusive school in the development of children with special needs and to conclude how to alleviate those challenges so that the development of children with special needs bigger life.

The field of study of this research is exploratory, explanatory and analytical, because it first aims to explore-research data on the work of educational institutions in the realization of inclusiveness, then it aims to explain these data by correctly clarifying the difficulties and challenges of inclusive education and in the end, it aims to analyze the data, coming to a conclusion about what the solutions are so that the challenges of comprehensive education are as few as possible and this type of education is implemented properly in the schools of Kosovo From this study we come to the conclusion that the main difficulties of inclusiveness in Kosovo are the large number of students in inclusive classes and the lack of assistants.

The research is quantitative in nature, where the population of this study is 100 teachers of students with special needs of the inclusive school/class, participants from schools in Kosovo.A questionnaire was designed as a measuring instrument.

**Keywords:** *contemporary education, inclusive education, inclusive school, difficulties.*

## 1. Introduction

Every child has individuality. The difficulty to discover and recognize these individualities is significantly greater in children with special needs than in typical children. And this individuality is recognized if the child is in a suitable environment and feels acceptable, unprejudiced and ready to give everything of himself to develop at the highest possible level. These can be achieved in two educational institutions; in comprehensive school and resource center.

Inclusive schools promote and provide education and training for all students regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional and linguistic conditions. But how much the comprehensive school is ready to develop these children in the aforementioned aspects and how great the difficulties are, then this remains to be discussed. Therefore, considering the impact of the educational institution on the development of the child as important, we think that this issue is of study importance, because it highlights the difficulties of comprehensive schools and therefore we can give suggestions for further improvements.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify teachers' attitudes about inclusive education
2. To identify the challenges of the inclusive school in the implementation of inclusiveness in the inclusive school/class.
3. To identify the difficulties and needs of the teachers in the comprehensive school.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the teachers' attitudes about inclusive education?
2. To what extent is comprehensive education implemented in the contemporary education schools of Kosovo?
3. What are the main difficulties of the teachers in the inclusive school?

## 2.LITERATURE REVIEW

### II.1. Comprehensive school

Inclusion is the process of including all persons regardless of any difference in certain social activities. In the educational sense, inclusiveness is the process of including typical and atypical students in the educational process, providing them with the same education based on their needs.

Inclusive schools promote and provide education and training for all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional and linguistic conditions. Inclusion is a process that cannot be achieved in a short time. This is aimed at the continuous change of the educational system, of the school but also of the teacher himself to make it more flexible, more suitable to respond to the needs and diversity of students. (MEST 2014). Inclusive education can be defined as an educational process, philosophy and practice (Florian, 2005). Sebba (1996) defined inclusive education as the process through which a school attempts to respond to all students as individuals by revising its curricular organization and delivery. Similarly, Vislie (2003) defined inclusive education as a process by which a school strives to respond to all students as individuals. UNESCO (1997) defined inclusive education more as a philosophy raised as a matter of basic human rights and the belief that all people are equal and should be respected and valued. Braunsteiner and Lapidus (2015) saw inclusive education as a fundamental right of all children and adults to participate fully, and to contribute to all aspects of life and culture, without limitations or threats of marginalization. So, an inclusive school is a school in which all students are included without any distinction, be it gender, race, religion, ethnicity, need or ability, meeting all the needs of all students and basing the curriculum on of their ability.

### II.2. Background on inclusive education in Kosovo

In many different countries of the world, including in our country, in Kosovo, for several years now, inclusiveness has started to become part of the educational policy, both theoretically and practically. While inclusiveness has its own difficulties, we can freely call it a challenge, so Kosovo is also facing this challenge, which is making efforts to realize inclusiveness in the best possible way. Inclusion as an educational philosophy is relatively new in Kosovo, both as a concept and as a practice. According to Zabeli and Behluli (2014), inclusive education is a challenge for all countries that aim to realize the principle of creating equal opportunities for all children regardless of religion, culture, race, gender and any other diversity, which

it is a fundamental right of every human being. In many countries around the world, inclusiveness has become part of the education system, regardless of the difficulties they face. Kosovo has been dealing with this concept for 20 years, but in practice, inclusiveness has entered the education system for 10 years. The changes that have taken place in Kosovo in recent years

had a strong impact in the field of education as well. This concept and practice came to Kosovo after 1999 along with other educational reforms.

Since 2009, Kosovo has started working with preschool institutions and schools with the aim of providing a more comprehensive environment for children and students, not only in terms of physical inclusion, but also in providing quality education and training. Working with these institutions, which have been pilots in this field, has enabled us to have positive models of comprehensive educational institutions that will serve as a model of success for preschool institutions and other schools in Kosovo. Examples of positive models are the Preschool Institution "Our Joy" in Pristina and the primary and lower secondary school "Thimi Mitko" in Gjilan (MEST, 2014). In the Republic of Kosovo, in addition to very positive developments in education, the statistics about the non-inclusion of children with special needs in education can still be considered disturbing.

### II.3. Positive and negative effects of inclusive education

Several reviews of inclusive education were undertaken in the 1980s (eg Madden & Slavin, 1983) and 1990 (e.g. Baker, Wang, & Walberg, 1994; Hegarty, 1993; and Sebba & Sachdev, 1997). These reviews were presented on the basis of various researches on methodology including reviews, reviews and meta-analyses, but failed to provide evidence of clear about the effectiveness of comprehensive education. By and large, the literature presents positive results and negative for both aspects, academic and socio-emotional, but these results are not specific. A review of the literature by Lindsay (2003) showed that the comparison of students with special needs and students without any special needs does not present any clear indication of the effectiveness of inclusiveness. However, this result is not for u surprised when considering the challenges of implementing inclusive education. Ruijs and Peetsma (2009), in a review of the literature on the effects of inclusiveness, focused on the effects positive, negative and neutral in terms of academic achievements and socio-emotional aspects of children with special needs. Regarding the academic achievements of children with special needs special education, a review of the literature by Ruijs and Peetsma (2009) found that these authors (Jepma, 2003; Karsten, Peetsama, Roeleveld & Wergner, 2001; Markussen, 2004; Marston, 1996; Cole et al. 2004; Myklebust, 2007; Salend & Duhaney, 1999) had done different research which show that inclusiveness, specifically inclusive schools have a positive impact to children with special needs in terms of academics. While these authors (Rogers & Thiery, 2003) through their research they found that inclusiveness has a negative impact on children with needs special. Regarding the socio-emotional development of children with special needs, the authors (Wiener & Tadif, 2004) based on their research gave effective results in the aspect that inclusiveness positively affects these children in the socio-emotional aspect. The authors (Bakker & Bosman, 2003) based on their research gave some negative results, while the authors (Jepma, 2003; Mand, 2007; Peetsma et al., 2001) were neutral in their results. According to Ruijs and Peetsma (2009), it is not possible to draw conclusions about the effect of inclusive education on development of children with special needs. In general, the effect of comprehensive education on academic achievement of children with special needs appears to be positive. Very few studies reported negative effects of inclusive education on the academic and socio-emotional achievement of children with special needs. According to Reich – Limbach (2015), if we stop at socio-emotional aspect, then some studies regarding the socio-emotional effects of education comprehensively presented that children with special needs tend to be excluded from society than typical children, namely children without any special needs. Furthermore, studies in regarding the effects of inclusive education on the academic achievements of children without special needs found mostly positive or neutral results. What does it mean, that inclusiveness for children

typically it only increases the academic and socio-emotional level, specifically it has positive effects on typical children. Studies of children with more severe special needs showed that children without special needs in inclusive classes had less prejudice about children with special needs. These students were found to be more willing to play with students with significant needs and to have a more positive attitude towards this group of children. Some discoveries from European countries concluded that through inclusive education, children with special needs showed

better academic performance. Still, existing research has not confirmed that education inclusive has a dominant and mostly positive effect for all children with special needs, with positive effects on both academic results and socio-emotional dimensions, or no negative effects on classmates without special needs. But definitely in order to be successful, inclusive education requires changes in school systems

and society. (Reich – Limbach, 2015). Perhaps similarities and differences between studies on the effects of inclusive education are more contextual than methodological in nature and depend on educational policies, educational system, inclusive education practices, preparation of teachers, partnership with the community, leadership and functional cooperation between all of these aspects and interested parties (European Agency for Development in Education for Special Needs, 2013). To successfully implement inclusive education, however, they are required comprehensive educational approaches that actually address the needs of students and that ensure implementation through policies that are manageable and practicable. Actually, for him

fully adopted an effective approach to inclusive education requires preparation and the appropriate participation of all actors. This applies especially to the training of staff in all levels, from the system to the classroom (Forlin, 2013). Interaction effects between level of difficulty children and their placement in classrooms were reported by a number of studies using models almost experimental. For example, Mills, Cole, Jenkins and Dale (1998) during the research of found that including atypical students in groups with typical students represents more success in the tasks given than the opposite. (Cole, Mills, Dale, & Jenkins, 1991). Studies on children with more severe intellectual needs indicate that children without special needs in inclusive classes had less prejudice about children with special intellectual needs. These students were discovered that they were more willing to play with students with significant needs and keep one more positive attitude towards this group of young people. Some findings from German-speaking countries concluded that through inclusive education, children with learning difficulties showed better academic performance. However, existing research has not confirmed that education inclusive has a dominant and mostly positive effect on all children with special needs, with positive effects in both aspects: academic and socio-emotional development. Similarities and differences between studies on the effects of inclusive education are more contextual rather than methodological in nature and are dependent on educational policies, the educational system, inclusive education practices, teacher preparation, community partnerships, leadership and functional cooperation between all these aspects and actors interested. (Duci.V& Ndrilo. M & Dragoti. E & Agolli. I & Ismaili. E, 2013).

#### II.4. The difficulties of inclusive education

Except that it is obvious that the difficulties in the comprehensive school are great, so if we want to achieve inclusiveness in the best way possible. In one study done in Albania, we get some more specific data about the difficulties of the comprehensive school and challenges experienced by teachers and students with special needs. Regardless of the schools they have no right to refuse any child to attend classes, in fact, they tend to use arguments like maybe the school is overcrowded so they don't accept children with special needs.

In addition, when children with special needs are in school, they cannot be a part of everything activities due to the lack of support and continuous support they have. School infrastructure continues to be a major barrier to access and participation children with special needs. (Duci, Ndrino, Dragoti, Agolli & Ismaili, 2016). Especially children visually impaired do not have didactic materials suitable for them, the same thing happens even with hearing impaired children. Overcrowded classes, with more than 30 students in class, are difficult to manage, not to mention here children who need extra attention and no teaching assistants. These are just some of the challenges they face teachers in an effort to create an inclusive learning environment. Teachers indeed who do not know how to work with these children, as well as with children belonging to vulnerable groups, due to the lack of qualifications in this field. A teacher in the city of Gjirokastra emphasizes that; "Children are accepted and we have assistant teachers, but we have a problem with resource classes.

We have blind children and we don't have didactic materials for them. In these circumstances, teachers have used several methods to create a more inclusive learning environment and performed a differentiated work with different children. Below are some of them: A principal in a school in Shkodër emphasizes, "We don't keep absences for these children; we dictate to them separately; The sitting with classmates who can help them; reduce the amount of homework for them; often we have evaluated positively, such as we say it aloud or draw a flower or a bird on his hand them, whatever they like in order to speed them up.". Another approach to developing values human for all children, is the commitment of all children to care and support children in need. (Duci, Ndrino, Dragoti, Agolli & Ismaili, 2016). Obviously, any change in education also manifests itself with challenges and difficulties, namely education at school comprehensive faces difficulties and challenges which are not few in number. Based on one the research done by Stevens & Wurf (2018) the main challenge or the main problem of the education of truly comprehensive lies in the preparation of teachers who do not have the appropriate level of knowledge about the diverse range of students with special needs So, the main challenge is not adequate professional preparation of teachers for the students in question. Also, from this one research we realized that parents emphasized that comprehensive schools respectively inclusive teachers lacked experience and engagement with the students in question. And the whole development of their children is facilitated by support assistants and not by teachers. From an international review of the literature De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2010) also u found that the amount of individualized instruction and teacher attention for these students it is quite disturbing. Considering the above literature we understand that one among the difficulties of comprehensive education, among others, lie with the teacher. But let's see in this case with a critical eye, then all the blame should not be placed specifically on the teacher, but also to some other actors from which comprehensive education is based, which are: MEST, schools, directory, etc. MEST should organize training for inclusive teachers, but yes assistants or support teachers should also be hired to help the teacher comprehensive. From this we notice that challenges are present, but they are not challenges that cannot be overcome are resolved. For this reason, we are conducting this research in order to specify them challenges and difficulties of inclusive education and together give our suggestions which they send us towards the success of inclusive education.

### **3. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS AND TABLE FIGURES**

#### **III.1. Introduction about the results**

In this chapter, the findings of the research conducted with (N=100) teachers will be presented. The analyzes and results are organized respecting the objectives of the study, in order to achieve them. Also, the results in this chapter will be presented in order according to the objectives of the study.

The statistical methods used for this study consist of descriptive and inferential analyses, depending on the aim, questions and assumptions of the study. Based on these analyses, the data are presented in this chapter at the level of their verbalism, while the interpretations for the same arguments are made in the chapter of interpretations and discussions.

### III.2. Actual data of participants

In the inclusive school, we see that 76% of the teachers have declared that they have knowledge about inclusiveness, of which 29% have fully agreed, while 47% have only agreed. While 18% have expressed neutrality on this question and 6% have declared that they have no knowledge about inclusiveness. From these data we declare that;

The teachers of the inclusive school have declared that they have not very satisfactory general knowledge about inclusion and children with special needs and that, based on their statements, they need continuous training in order to obtain the minimum knowledge for the implementation of inclusion in comprehensive school-class and individual teaching. The percentage of neutrality and disagreement with this statement can be explained by the fact that these teachers do not have significant knowledge about inclusiveness, therefore they do not accept it and do not apply it properly. I think this question represents a strong basis and a starting point in how inclusiveness develops in a regular school, since the teacher must first have knowledge of what he applies, and then implement it.

Despite the fact that the number of teachers who have more than one student with special needs in the class is small, it is still unimaginable that in a class of approximately 20-30 students there is more than one student with special needs. In the next and last question regarding this aspect, with this question we aimed to understand whether the students have assistants and how often they are involved in the lesson, almost half of the teachers stated that they do not have assistants in the classroom, which is very depressing and not proper. Then about 34% of the teachers stated that they have an assistant who is involved every day in the classroom, while the rest of the teachers stated that the assistant is involved 1-3 times a week or less than 1 time a week. In the comprehensive school, the class mainly consists of 30-40 students, where 50% of the students

with special needs do not have individual assistants, and consequently 50% of the teachers do not carry out individual lessons with these students. Despite the large number of students, despite the lack of assistants, the data are positive data, they are hopeful data that convince us that the teachers of the inclusive school work with students with special needs with the opportunities they have, making the most of them. achieve the development of the atypical student. So, while there is a large number of students and while almost half of the students with special needs do not have assistants, then all responsibility for what the student in question benefits from in the comprehensive school falls on the back of the teacher, which is not right. Because the teacher cannot bear two such great responsibilities at the same time; individual responsibility for typical students and total individual responsibility for the student with special needs.

### III.2. The difficulties of the comprehensive school

Around 60% of teachers agree with the opinion that there are many difficulties in realizing inclusiveness. From these data, the difficulties that are expressed in larger percentages are undoubtedly the large number of students and the lack of assistants. The other difficulties then derive from the first two difficulties. The same difficulty

is presented by the teachers of the resource center where they emphasize that the main difficulty in the resource center lies in the large number of students. While logically a class with 1-5 students, respectively 5-10 students, in which class 2 or more teachers teach is a class let's say perfect for real teaching. Also, from the comments that the teachers have written, we see that the therefore the academic and socio-emotional development is greater in these cases. As for

The difficulties of including students with special needs are very great	9%	58%	23%	7%	3%
I encountered difficulties in preparing teaching materials for the student with special needs	60%	32%	7%	0%	1%
The large number of students in the class makes it impossible to always give the required help to the student with special needs	51.5%	34.3%	8.1%	4.0%	2%
I am unable to provide regular instruction for typical students and individualized instruction for a student with special needs at the same time	11%	48%	28%	21%	2%
I have my cooperation with the parents of students with special needs	51%	39%	8%	1%	1%
I often do not manage to complete the assigned lesson unit in one hour because of the time I spend working one-on-one with the student with special needs	14%	47%	22%	16%	1%
There is often a lot of noise because I can't manage the behavior of the student in question	6%	28%	25%	30%	11%

students, whose needs are greater, then working with them is very difficult, almost impossible.

Table 1. Difficulties of teachers in comprehensive school

1- I completely agree 2- I agree 3- Neutral 4- I do not agree 5- I do not agree at all

	1	2	3	4	5
When I teach in the classroom, the assistant explains individually to the students with their needs	15%	23%	17%	5%	40%

I prepare for each day individual materials for the student in question	16%	38%	28%	4%	14%
I prepare for each material subject for the student with special needs	13.1%	33.3%	30.3%	8.1%	15.2%
I have a real collaboration with the support teacher	43.4%	16.2%	12.1%	3%	16.2%
The student in question is there all the time when the students are also engaged	33%	39%	21%	5%	2%
I constantly realize individual goals for the students in question	38%	39%	18%	3%	2%
I think that the inclusive school meets the academic needs of students with special needs.	15%	28%	36%	19%	2%

Table 2. Inclusion of students with special needs

## Conclusions

The study manages to prove that: Regarding the assessment of the challenges of the inclusive school in the academic and socio-emotional development of students with special needs, from the findings we have come to the conclusion that the challenges of the inclusive school are related to the need of teachers to have of different trainings, with the creation of conditions in the classroom having a not too large number of students as well as enabling each student with special needs to have an assistant. As for the difficulties and needs of the teachers in the comprehensive school, from our findings, we find that the main difficulties of the teachers are: the large number of students in the class as well as the lack of an assistant.

Seeing how complex the process of inclusiveness is, namely the process of working with students with special needs, then the conclusions we have reached are not certain statements that do not need further discussion, but statements that are close to the truth. of our study and have approached the answers for which we have carried out this study. From our findings, we were able to come to this conclusion, always not presenting complete certainty, for the reason that the data we extracted are general data that are not individual for each student.

Students with special needs, whose behaviors can be managed during the learning process by the teacher and the assistant, benefit more from the academic and socio-emotional aspect in the comprehensive school than in the resource center. As for students with special needs who, the difficulty to work with them is greater because of their behavior, the display of emotions or even their special need, these students benefit more in the resource center than in the comprehensive school.

As a conclusion of this study, we recommend that:

- Classes that have students with special needs should have a smaller number of students, approximately 20-25.
- In classes where there are students with special needs, there should be an assistant.
- Teachers who have students with special needs in the class where they teach, should be offered different trainings for inclusiveness for free.

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