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**THE IDENTIFICATION OF TEACHERS' ATTITUDES
TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND FACTORS
AFFECTING THEIR FORMATION**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION RESUME

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Resume

Inclusion is an educational reform that promotes rights-based policies, ensures well-being and provides intensive "accommodation, adaptation and support" (EADSE, 2017) to all children/learners. It is one of the challenges of contemporary education, for the realization of which teachers' attitudes towards the concept and comprehensive practices have a special role. (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002. Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape, 2013; Saloviita & Schaffus, 2016; Ainscow, 2020; Saloviita 2020; Parey, 2021). Based on the importance of teachers' attitudes, this doctoral thesis aims to identify the attitudes of pre-university teachers towards inclusive education in Kosovo, as well exploring the factors that influence the formation of these attitudes, including: gender, age, place of residence, professional preparation, educational level, training for inclusive education, educational experience, experience working with children with special needs, and teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive practices. In order to provide more detailed information, the experiences of teachers' have been explored, with special emphasis on their challenges and needs in the realization of inclusion in learning environments.

From the theoretical point of view, the study relies on the theory of social attitudes of Rosenberg and Hovland (1960), on the social-cognitive theory of Bandura (1977), as well as on the social-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1934).

The methods used in this research are quantitative and qualitative. Part of the quantitative research were 1085 respondents from the seven main regions of Kosovo, who were selected with the simple random technique. For the collection of quantitative data, two standardized instruments were used, such as: "The Teacher Attitude towards Inclusive Education Scale" (TAIS) (Saloviita, 2015) to evidence the intellectual readiness of teachers', and "The Efficiency of Teachers for Inclusive Practices" (TEIP) (Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2012) to reflect teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive practices. Data were analyzed with descriptive, correlative and multiple regression statistics. The qualitative part of the research relies on the phenomenological design. The sample is represented by 10 teachers, namely two teachers from the preschool educational level, two from the pre-primary level, two from the primary level, two from the lower secondary level and two from the higher level.

The results show positive attitudes of Kosovar teachers towards inclusive education. They understand this practice as a right protected by law and as a moral and human obligation, and as an opportunity for active involvement in the community. The results of the research have not shown significant differences between the teachers' attitudes depending on their gender, but an important difference was identified in the subscale "child's rights", where female teachers reached the highest average.

The findings did not show differences between teachers' attitudes depending on their residence in urban or rural areas, but they testified to differences between teachers from different regions, where the region of Peja showed the highest average. Teachers in the middle age of 42-57 years old, those with work experience from 11 to 15 years, those with more than four years of work experience with students with special needs, those with more than three trainings, those from the middle level and above had more positive attitudes. The research did not find differences between teachers, depending on their educational qualification. A positive linear correlation was demonstrated between teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education with their age and professional experience, while no correlation was shown between the respective attitudes and educational qualification. A negative correlation was identified between teachers' attitudes with their experience of working with students with special needs, and no relationship was found with teacher training for inclusive education. Participants in this research indicated high self-efficacy for inclusive practices, particularly for inclusive instruction. Positive correlation was identified between teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy for inclusive practices. According to the multiple regression test of eight factors that can predict the value of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, it turns out that only age, region, educational level, experience working with children with special needs and self-efficacy significantly predict teachers' attitudes theirs. Whereas, the best predictor of teachers' attitudes was their self-efficacy for inclusive practices.

Teachers feel and believe that they are not prepared to work with students with severe special needs. They face several difficulties: low social awareness, lack of professional skills, lack of information, lack of training, lack of human and physical support, type and degree of injury, lack of time, work overload, feeling of stress and anxiety. Teachers state the need for support from Municipal Directorate of Education and the relevant school institution, especially for professional support staff, for training, for materials, tools, infrastructure, but also for support from the family

and the community as a whole. In view of the efficiency and quality of inclusive education, in addition to teachers' attitudes and their needs, it is important to identify some of the main components that can improve inclusive practices, such as: early identification and assessment of the children's abilities and needs; positive beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion; ensuring equality and quality of teaching and learning; understanding the benefits of inclusive environments; holistic and flexible curriculum; professional preparation and professional development of teachers'; development of positive inclusive culture, policies and practices; support at the central, municipal and institutional level; physical, human and financial support; school, family and community cooperation and communication; child-centred approach and personalized assessment; monitoring, evaluation and self-reflection.

The identification of factors that have an impact on the attitudes of teachers' towards inclusive education, as well the exploration of their challenges and needs in this field, result in the development of a model that addresses and supports the needs of teachers', and that directly affects policies and practices best comprehensive in pre-university education in Kosovo.