



## CO-EDUCATIONAL FACTORS OF TYPICALLY AND NON-TYPICALLY DEVELOPED CHILDREN WITHIN THE GREEK GENERAL KINDERGARTEN AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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### **Abstract:**

Co- education involves a whole of strategies, practices, perspectives and options all of which allow the admission of typically and non- typically developed children in the General School. The issue, however, remains whether school can be restructured as a place where the equal participation of all children in the educational process and the acceptance of their diversities, are ascertained or not. In the context of the present research which was conducted during the 2014- 2015 school year, views of Greek Kindergarten Teachers (N: 217) and Elementary School teachers (N: 303) in the District of Epirus were assessed, regarding the factors which affect admission in the general school, of children with special educational needs. From the extracted data, the need for the general school to be aptly organized and the educators to work together in the context of a dynamic collaboration, not only with each other, but also with the special and parallel support educators, appeared on the purpose of determining the strategies, the practices, the suitable preconditions and the content of the educational process.

**Keywords:** admission factors, special educational needs, coeducation, elementary school teachers, kindergarten teachers

### **1. Introduction**

Preschool and primary school education is an important period in children's life and a crucial first domain of socialization and education (Kypriotaki, 2004- Sakellariou, 2008) holding an important role on the preparation to the students' life, since it provides them with all the supplies for being able to flexibly correspond to a wide range of skills, while

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determining the kind of relationship with their peers (Shonkoff & Philips, 2000 – Sakellariou, 2005). For children with special educational needs, primary training is even more significant not only for their integration, incorporation and substantial coeducation within general classes, but also for their acquirement of cognitive and social skills (Soulis, 2010- Kamerman & Gatenio, 2003).

The educational political decrees which led to the increased number of children with special educational needs in the general School have been influenced by global developments and agreements such as the Salamanca Declaration on special education (UNESCO, 1994) and the United Nations Convention on the rights of the impaired (UN, 2006- Louse Callan, 2013).

The modifications within the special education policies as well as the relevant ordinances have changed the way in which the children with special educational needs are being instructed (Griffin & Shevlin, 2001). In Greece, the effort of achieving a comprehensive educational scheme resulted in the attendance of general school by pupils of special educational needs or disabilities, subsequently the decrease of the number of special schools' students. All of the school educators should participate in developing its special conditions (formation of specialized integration policies) and be fully familiarized with the classroom processes on locating, evaluating and predicting, regarding children with special educational needs (Gross, 2002). Incorporation of all pupils within an ordinary school, where they shall go through with the same curriculum, at the same time, in the same classrooms, under a catholic acceptance and in which the pupil, in a way, shall not feel different than the rest of the children, is considered to be the co- inclusion to the general class (Bailey, 1998- Callan, 2013). Coeducation is based on every child's right to be a part of the communal school life and to be provided with the appropriate scholar and educational experiences. This involves a whole range of strategies, practices, perspectives and options (Onaga & Martoccio, 2008), all of which allow the integration of typically and non- typically developed children inside the general class, thus forming "One School For All" (Soulis, 2010).

Within the Greek educational system, impaired pupils and children with special educational needs are defined as all those who exhibit or have exhibited significant learning difficulties for all or a certain period of their scholar life, due to sensory, mental, cognitive, developmental problems, psychiatric and neuropsychological disorders which, according to the interdisciplinary evaluation, affect the process of scholar adaptation and learning. Moreover, pupils exhibiting complex cognitive, emotional and social handicaps, child delinquency due to abuse, parental negligence and abandonment or due to domestic violence, as well as pupils who show one or more overdeveloped, regarding the anticipated rates of their age, skills or talents, all call for special education (Law on Special Education and Schooling 3699/2008). The goal of the Greek educational system is the participatory or inclusive education which is characterized by polymorphism which in fact, diversifies the educational act. Cooperation alongside team work, are key aspects of coeducation (Lindsay, 2007).

The present study aims at educating without barring pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, at changing the educational policies in Greece as well as at the modification of the curricula in order for them to be embodied in the general school.

More specifically, the goals of our research are:

- For Greek educationalists to evaluate the inclusion factors of children with special educational needs into the general class such as; adopting a versatile teaching style, altering of the class' structure and function, modifying the curricula, effective handling of severe behavioral issues, the presence of a second teacher in the classroom (parallel support educator).
- How they think that the aforementioned factors will impact on the rest of the pupils.
- How important is, in terms of embodying children with special educational needs, the following components to be included; being familiarized with environmental elements, developing the ability of imitating other people, developing linguistic usage and comprehension, being taught of the appropriate role of toys and object utilization, improving social skills through interaction, all of these within an aptly modified curriculum whose purpose is co-inclusion.

The exploratory hypotheses of this study comprised the whole of our general investigative direction;

- First hypothesis: A key factor to a successful integration into the general class is the educational approach (the process of decision making, implementation and evaluation of a course) as far as the Elementary School teachers are concerned and social integration of children towards their peers, for the Childcare Workers (Kindergarten Teachers).
- Second hypothesis: Effective dealing with behavioral problems is a decisive factor towards a successful integration within a coeducational class.
- Third hypothesis: Educators come to agree that a modified curriculum aiming at co- inclusion should contain ways of developing linguistic abilities, social skills and role- playing games (RPG). These elements are of higher significance to Childcare Workers than to Elementary School teachers.
- Fourth hypothesis: Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers do believe that educating children with special educational needs and impairment inside a general class can actually disrupt the education of pupils with typical development.

## **2. Educational act in the context of Co-inclusive education**

Educationalists ought to implement a variety of educational strategies in order to support the effective integration of children with special educational needs into the general class, such as scaffoldings, modeling, emergency management (Callan, 2013-Ellem, 2004). Diversification is the key to a successful embodiment of the curricula inside the daily school routine (King, 2006). The purpose of diversification is to promote

the children's success in learning (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011). The time taken to plan the teaching module, the pedagogues' professional training, the material resources, the school workforce, the size of the class, all of the above are of vital importance towards a successful integration.

Team work, collaboration between two or more educators with a group of pupils within a wholesome domain that is, promotes the integration of children with special educational needs in general schools (Callan, 2013). The children condone individual differences when educated together in the same classroom. During the group teaching, pupils with special educational needs or impairment are able to benefit from their peers who, in this case, act as role models to them. All pupils can acquire an equal access to the curriculum through a suitable group of educators (Sakellariou, Strati, Anagnostopoulou, 2015). The educators will, in turn, gain from group teaching, even if such thing entails more preparation. Their daily stress will be reduced if they have access to appropriate curricula, resources and additional footings (Lindsay, 2007).

Developing versatile curricula which rest upon the diversification of cognitive conditions is a necessity for the contemporary school (NCSE, 2010- Callan, 2013). Diversified teaching requires the existence of a versatile curriculum which is submitted under a perpetual modification so as to be fitted to every single pupil's personal needs (Griffin & Shevlin, 2011). The differentiation of cognitive experiences assists on accomplishing the integration of all kids into the general school, subsequently their incorporation in it (Ampartzaki & Kypriotaki, 2010).

A determinant factor towards the implementation of diversified cognition is the mode of creating and operating the curricula;

- At what extend do they support the educator providing ways, techniques and strategies in order the children with special features to be embodied into the general class.
- In which way do they take under account the parameters relative to socialization and emotional growth of the children (Ampartzaki & Kypriotaki, 2010- Gena, 2004)
- How much do they promote the participation of the children themselves throughout the cognitive process.

A modern curriculum should include knowledge, skills, predisposition (curiosity, creativity) and emotions (self- confidence, security) (Katz & Chard, 2004- Ampartzaki & Kypriotaki, 2010).

### **3. Views of Greek Educationalists on behavioral problems**

One of the basic concerns among the Greek educationalists regarding the coeducational classes is coping with behavioral problems, which imposes considerable amount of work stress (Mpilanaki & Tragoulia, 2011- Kyriakou & Sutcliffe, 1977, 1978, 1979- Kantas, 2001). Pupils who exhibit behavioral problems during their Kindergarten and Elementary School attendance and who have not participated in any specialized

psycho-pedagogical intervention courses, present increased possibility of developing personal as well as interpersonal problems during their adult life (Kourkoutas, 2007-Strati, 2017).

The success of the intervention depends on a number of factors relative to the sort of problem, the duration of the intervention curriculum, the quality of the relation between family, school and any other involved in the educational process (Clough & Nutbrown, 2005). The necessity for the educators to undergo a professional training on matters regarding behavioral problems inside the classroom is the desideratum on numerous studies (Bruder, 1997- Panteliadou & Patsiodimou, 2000- Malikiosi/ Loizou, 2003).

## **4. Methodology**

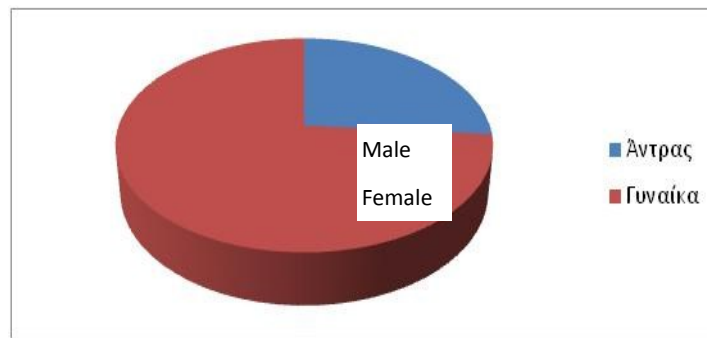
### **4.1 Exploratory specimen**

For the needs of our research, a random sample of 520 educationalists was used. This was derived from 217 Kindergarten Teachers and 303 Elementary School Teachers from the District of Epirus during the 2014- 2015 school year. The Greek educationalists that participated on the research and answered the inventories were picked through random sampling. Initially, we made an entry of the number of the educationalists (Kindergarten or Elementary School Teachers) serving each kindergarten or elementary school for each of the four Prefectures in the District of Epirus. Our purpose was to pick over a large amount of the educationalists' target population of the district (20% at the minimum).

For the output of the random numbers that formed the indexes of the population units included within the specimen, a random number generator (RNG) out of the Superior Performance Software System (SPSS) package (Zairis, 2010) was used. Thus, the educationalists as well as their respective school units of service (kindergartens and elementary schools), in total but also in separate prefectures, were chosen. The inventories were handed out at the aforementioned school units. The sampling was randomly stratified. (Zafeiropoulos, 2013- Karageorgos, 2001). The term "strata" refers to the two groups of educationalists (Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers). The research was conducted from October 2014 until March 2015.

### **4.2. Demographics of the educationalists' population within the research**

Out of the total of the educationalists (N=520) the majority (73, 7%) consists of females whereas the remaining 26, 3% consists of males, as shown on the following table (table 1).



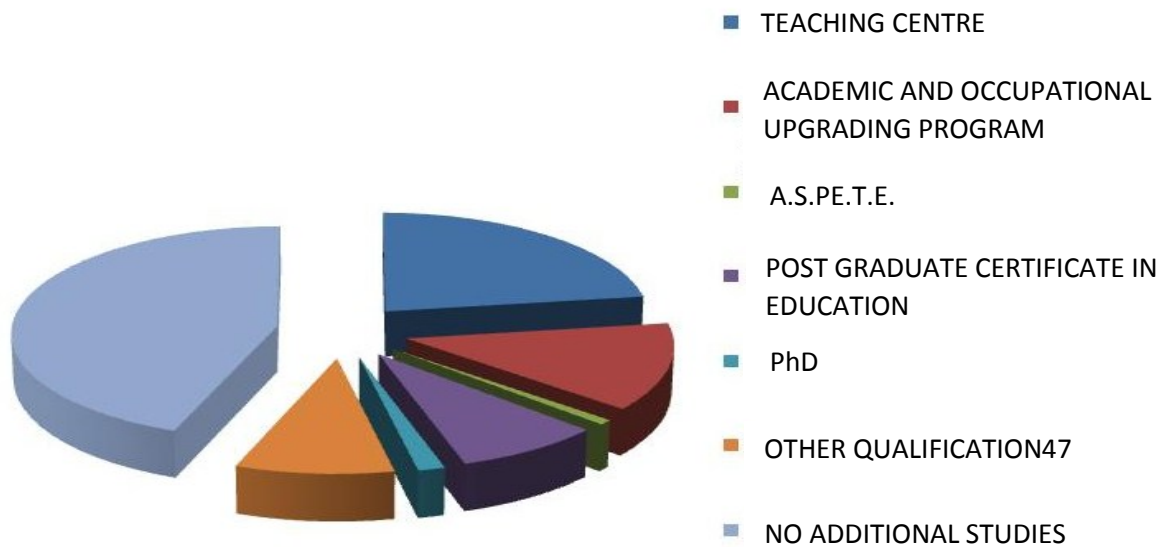
**Table 1:** Distribution of educationalists regarding **gender**

Regarding the years of teaching experience a 43, 8% lies between 11 and 20 years, a 22, 9% has a working experience of 21 to 30 years, an 18, 3% from 6 to 10 years, a 10, 8% up to 5 years, while there is a lower percentage, 4, 2% of the educationalists who have a working experience of more than 30 years (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Distribution of educationalists regarding **years of working experience**

Years of working experience	Up to 5 years	10,8%
	6 to 10	18,3%
	11 to 20	43,8%
	21 to 30	22,9%
	Over 30 years	4,2%

Chart 1 presents the education level of the educationalists on our specimen. The majority (44, 2%) of them has no other degree than their basic studies. A 22, 7% have attended further training courses in a Teaching Centre while a 13, 3 % have attended an academic and occupational upgrading programme. A 9,0 % possess a second qualification from a University or Technological Educational Institution (TEI), an 8, 5% possess a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education), 1, 5% own a PhD while a small amount (0,8%) have attended the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (A.S.PE.T.E.).

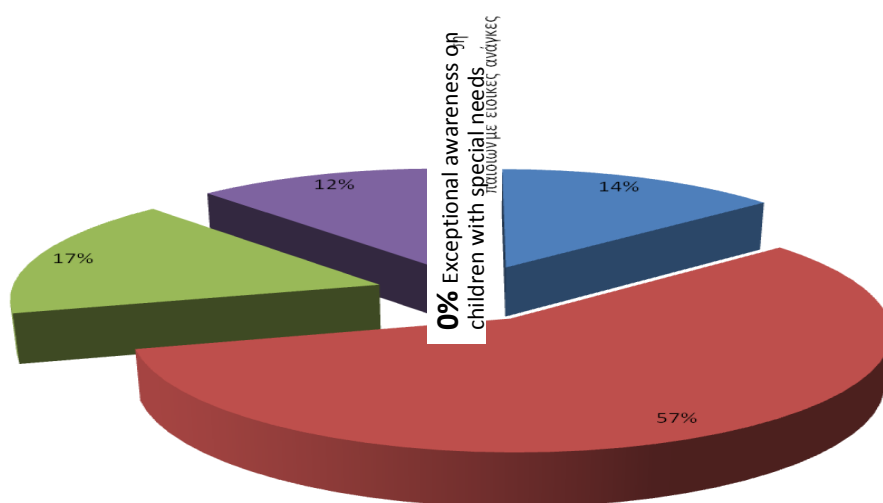


**Chart 1:** Distribution of educationalists regarding **level of studies**

Of the N: 520 Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers who took part in our research, the largest amount 57, 0% (N: 297) have only little awareness about children with special educational needs and impairment. By 17, 0% (N: 91) have adequate awareness, by 14, 0% (N: 71) no awareness whatsoever, a 12, 0 % (N: 61) have a good awareness while a 0 % (N: 0), none of the participants that is, would consider their awareness to be of exceptional level (Chart 2).

**Please, evaluate your level of awareness on children with special educational needs on a scale 1-5**

- 2: Little awareness on children with special needs
- 3: Adequate awareness on children with special needs
- 4: Good awareness on children with special needs
- 5: Exceptional awareness on children with special needs



**Chart 2:** Distribution of educationalists regarding awareness on special education

### 4.3. Exploratory asset

The survey review through questionnaires was deemed as the most appropriate method of collecting data with regards to tracking the views of a representative specimen among primary education employees, Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers, on the issues concerning the incorporation and integration of children with special educational needs, inside the general class. After a profound study of the relevant bibliography an inventory was formed, containing “open” type questions as well as “closed” type ones.

### 4.4. Restrictions on the research

Prior to the commencement of the research, it was determined that the educationalists who were to fill in the questionnaires would all be inhabitants of the District of Epirus and they would all be working in public Kindergartens and Elementary Schools. We deem that a further investigation to a Pan-Hellenic extend would be legitimate, in order our findings to be generalized in a larger certitude.

### 4.5. Data Analysis

The responses that were derived from the questionnaires were collected, codified, and processed with the aid of the SPSS statistical package and analyzed respectively to each case. For the analysis of the exploratory data, the methodological route in which the conductor complies, analyzes, interprets and evaluates tables, charts and responses, was followed.

Regarding the codification of open type questions, the method of sampling categorization was implemented. The responses to open type questions were gathered and listed, and they were classified according to their content, while the overriding concern was to evade any loss of information and, simultaneously the responses of similar content to be incorporated within the same category.

- **Independent sample t- test:** It is considered to be suitable when it comes to comparative checking of average values which are derived from two independent specimens (Voelkl & Gerber, 1999). In our questionnaire, this test was utilized on the evaluation of coeducational factors regarding the implementation difficulty (a scale between 1 and 5- 1 for the easiest, 5 for the hardest of the factors). So, we calculated the average of the responses. Since the amount of the specimen is quite high, it is consequent that the statistical functions of the average values follow a *t* (student) distribution. On the results' charts, the following are given;

N = size of specimen

Mean = the estimated average

Mean Difference = the assessment of the average values' difference

Std. Deviation, Std. Error Mean = measures of the distributional dispersion around average

Df = degrees of freedom of the distribution, dependent on the size of the specimen



95% Confidence Interval of the Difference = a confidence interval of 95% for the average or for the difference between average values

F, Sig = the measure and probability which remains from the estimated value and above, under the assumption that the dispersions on both groups, from which the difference between their averages are derived, are equal.

- **Pearson chi square test**, for checking the existence of any relation between two qualitative variables,  $\chi^2$  test of independence was applied where, in order for the p- significance level to be calculated and respective to the (absolute) frequency of responses, the pearson asymptotic test was implemented. We discard our initial hypothesis on the  $\alpha$  significance level (usually 0, 05 = 5%). The statistical package calculates the  $\chi^2$  value as well as the **p** probability of the assumption. Obviously, we shall keep discarding the initial hypothesis as for minimal **p- values** (a high  $\chi^2$  value) smaller than 0, 05, so a  $p > 0, 05$  or  $p < 0,05$  is given. The distributional degrees of freedom are also given, which are expressed by the “**df**” symbol. In conclusion, if  $p > 0, 05$  we shall admit, on significance level, that the responses show no statistical difference in both categories, while if  $p < 0, 05$  there is a difference indeed.

## 5. Presentation of the Results

**Question 1:** *If a child with special educational needs and impairment attends the curriculum of a general class, the following factors should be taken on account. Please evaluate them regarding their easiness or difficulty degree in order for them to be implemented, according to your own experience. Please, evaluate on a scale 1-5, 1 representing the easiest of factors and 5 representing the most challenging.*

**Table 3:** Mean values and standard deviations on the evaluation of factors regarding their **implementation**

Group Statistics					
	Job title	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Adopting a versatile teaching style	Kindergarten Teacher	217	3,01	1,369	,093
	Elementary School Teacher	303	3,03	1,139	,065
Change of the class' structure and function	Kindergarten Teacher	217	3,11	1,336	,091
	Elementary School Teacher	303	2,91	1,376	,079
Modulating the curriculum so as to include social skills, team work and creative activities	Kindergarten Teacher	217	3,19	1,101	,075
	Elementary School Teacher	303	3,44	1,180	,068
Effective handling of severe behavioral problems	Kindergarten Teacher	217	3,54	1,388	,094

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	Elementary School Teacher	303	3,62	1,331	,076
Working with a parallel support educator	Kindergarten Teacher	217	2,16	1,476	,100
	Elementary School Teacher	303	1,99	1,419	,082

By studying the Table 3 we find that the easiest factor regarding its implementation inside a coeducational general class, as far as the Kindergarten Teachers are concerned, is their cooperation with a parallel support teacher (mean 2,16) followed by the adoption of a versatile teaching style (mean 3,01). Then comes the change in the structure and function of the class (mean 3,11), the modulation of the curriculum in a way that it includes social skills, team work and creative activities (mean 3,19) while the most challenging factor, in terms of treatment, is handling severe behavioral problems (mean 3,54). As for the Elementary School Teachers, the easiest factor to be implemented within a coeducation class is, as it was on the Kindergarten teachers' case, working alongside a parallel support teacher (mean 1,99), second comes the change in the structure and function of the class (mean 2,91), third comes the change of teaching style (mean 3,03). The most challenging factors to implement, are, for the Elementary School Teachers, the modulation of the curriculum (mean 3,44) and handling severe behavioral problems (mean 3,62). The aforementioned results are confirmed by the measurement with the use of a **t- Independent Samples Test** in which we discover a statistical significant difference between Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers concerning the "modulation of the curriculum" factor ( $p= 0,015$ ), being harder for the Elementary School Teachers to implement such a modification ( $t= -2,436$ ,  $df= 518$ ,  $Sig= 0,015$ ).

**Question 2:** *In what way do you think these factors would affect the rest of the children in the class?*

Adoption of a versatile teaching style
Change on the structure and function of the class
Modulating the curriculum so that it includes social skills, team work and creative activities
Effective handling of severe behavioral problems
Working with a parallel support teacher

*"I believe, provided that these factors work effectively, they shall certainly have a positive impact on the cognitive course and socialization of the general class pupils. At the beginning, of course, a certain period will be required for their adaptation to the newly formed conditions of function and organization of the cognitive process". (Male Elementary School teacher having 21 to 30 years of service, a post-graduate degree and limited awareness of children with special educational needs.)*

*“The aforementioned factors shall be of significant aid towards the coexistence of all pupils since the rest of the children will be able to accept the dissimilarities of each of their classmates”.* (Kindergarten Teacher having up to 5 years of service, a post graduate degree and a sufficient awareness of children with special educational needs.)

*“Children will learn to coexist and will develop their feelings of empathy”.* (Male Elementary School teacher, having 11 to 20 years of service, a post graduate degree, general education worker, with a sufficient awareness of children with impairment.)

*“The factors will work, to a certain point, towards the acceptance of impaired children, it is my belief, however, that accepting dissimilarities is mainly a matter of family and culture”.* (Female Elementary School teacher, having 21 to 30 years of service, attended a Teaching Centre, working in a rural area and with limited awareness of children with special educational needs.)

**Question 3:** *How important, in terms of incorporation of children with special educational needs, is that the following elements within a modified curriculum aiming on co-inclusion, are encompassed? (Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, Not Important)?*

### A. Being taught of environmental elements

**Table 4:** Of total, Quantitative results concerning the category: **Environmental Elements**

Crosstab					
			Job Title		Total
			Kindergarten Teacher	Elementary School Teacher	
Being taught of social environmental elements	Very important	Count	135	155	290
		% within Job title	62,2%	51,2%	55,8%
	Important	Count	76	139	215
		% within Job title	35,0%	45,9%	41,3%
	Somewhat important	Count	6	9	15
		% within Job title	2,8%	3,0%	2,9%
Total	Count	217	303	520	
	% within Job title	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	

Being taught of social environmental elements is considered to be a very important issue, therefore it must be included in a curriculum which is oriented towards all children, by 62, 2% of Kindergarten Teachers and 51, 2% of Elementary School Teachers, important by 35, 0% of Kindergarten Teachers and 45, 9% of Elementary School Teachers, somewhat important by 2, 8% of Kindergarten Teachers and 3, 0% of Elementary School Teachers, respectively (Table 4). From the Pearson Chi Square test we see that there is a statistically significant difference ( $p=0,041$ ) between the Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers' responses. This difference is focused on the percentage reflecting the Kindergarten Teachers' aspect on it being very important

which is quite increased in comparison to the Elementary School Teachers' one. The above mentioned results are confirmed by the measurement of the chi square method, where  $\chi^2= 6, 392^a$ ,  $df=2$  and  $p=0,041$ .

## B. Developing the ability of imitating others

**Table 5: Of total, quantitative results on the category: Imitation Ability and Curriculum**

Crosstab					
			Job title		Total
			Kindergarten Teacher	Elementary School Teacher	
Developing the ability of imitating others	Very Important	Count	72	59	131
		% within Job title	33,2%	19,5%	25,2%
	Important	Count	118	137	255
		% within Job title	54,4%	45,2%	49,0%
	Somewhat Important	Count	24	92	116
		% within Job title	11,1%	30,4%	22,3%
	Not Important	Count	3	15	18
		% within Job title	1,4%	5,0%	3,5%
Total		Count	217	303	520
		% within Job title	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

The ability of imitating others and whether this should be contained within a modified curriculum which aims at co- inclusion, seems to provoke different opinions among the educationalists, as shown on Table 5. More specifically, this is considered as very important for Kindergarten Teachers, by 33, 2%, while the respective percentage is lower among the Elementary School Teachers, 19, 5%, important for a 54, 4% of the Kindergarten Teachers and 45, 2% of the Elementary School Teachers, *whereas a remarkable difference occurs on the "somewhat important" aspect which is 11, 1% concerning the Kindergarten Teachers, while reaching up to 30, 4% of the Elementary School Teachers.* There are even educationalists who consider the issue to be of no importance whatsoever (Kindergarten Teachers: 1, 4% - Elementary School Teachers: 5, 0%), thus disregarding the significance of imitation during childhood, even more so when it comes to children with Special Educational Needs. The aforementioned results are confirmed by the measurement of the chi square method, where  $\chi^2=37, 367^a$ ,  $df= 3$  και  $p=0,000$ . From the Pearson Chi Square test, a statistically significant difference occurs ( $p= 0, 00$ ) between the Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers' responses.

## C. Development of linguistic use and comprehension

The development of the use and comprehension of language by children with special educational needs so as for their smoother integration in the school context to be facilitated, is an element of major significance within a curriculum which aims at co-inclusion. In particular, it is considered as very important for 74, 7 % of Kindergarten Teachers and 64, 0% for Elementary School Teachers. It was considered as Important for

25, 3% of Kindergarten Teachers and 36, 0% of Elementary School Teachers. The above mentioned results are confirmed by the measurement of the chi square method, where  $\chi^2=6,615^a$ ,  $df=1$  and  $p=0,010$ . From the Pearson Chi Square test, a statistically significant difference occurs between the Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers' responses.

#### **D. Being taught of the appropriate role regarding toys and objects utilization**

Being taught of the appropriate role regarding toys and objects utilization, is a part of the curriculum on which both, Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers agree, in terms of materiality level. In total, for all educationalists (63, 7%) this is considered as very important, for a 34, 0% important, and only a mere 2, 3% would evaluate it as somewhat important. From the Pearson Chi Square test, it is pointed out that no statistically significant difference occurs between the Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers' responses, while the results are confirmed by the measurement of the chi square method, where  $\chi^2=0,940^a$ ,  $df=2$  and  $p=0,625$ .

#### **E. Improvement of social skills via interaction**

Improvement of social skills through interaction should be a primary goal of every curriculum, considering how significant those skills are for individuals with special educational needs. High is the percentage of Kindergarten Teachers (a bounteous 83, 4%) who consider this very important, followed by the Elementary School Teachers of a 75, 9% percentage. This is shown from the Pearson Chi Square test in which a statistically significant difference ( $p=0,026$ ) occurs between the responses of Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers. As important, it is considered by 15, 2% of the Kindergarten Teachers and 23, 8% of the Elementary School Teachers, Somewhat Important for 1, 4% of the Kindergarten Teachers and 0, 3% for the Elementary School Teachers. The results are confirmed by the chi square measurement method, where  $\chi^2=7,304^a$ ,  $df=2$  and  $p=0,026$ .

### **6. Conclusive discourse**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century Educationalists, acquire skills which are highly significant towards the integration and incorporation of all children in school and society as well. They map out the cognitive experiences enhancing collaboration and participatory education. The purpose of this New School is that education is accessible to all pupils hereinafter. Children with mental retardation, hearing problems, vision problems, disorders within the autism spectrum, multiple impairments, can now attend school and be empowered with a specialized curriculum, under the backing of the Parallel Support Teacher (Strati, 2018).

By analyzing the data concerning the factors which lead to a successful integration in the general class, we establish that, Kindergarten Teachers consider backing by a Parallel Support Teacher, to be the factor of utmost importance, then

comes the capability of the teacher on dealing with behavioral problems and lastly, the social integration of children towards their peers. Elementary School Teachers also deem the Parallel Support Teacher as a major significance factor, followed by the modulation of the curriculum and the teacher's capability on handling behavioral problems.

Our first hypothesis, regarding the fact that for the Elementary School Teachers, teaching style is an important factor towards a successful integration in the general class, is not substantiated, since this factor is listed at the bottom of the evaluation charts. Our second hypothesis is, however, verified; all educationalists regard dealing with severe behavioral problems, as an important factor. They also consider the number of pupils, the appropriate buildings' infrastructures, the cooperation with families and colleagues, the suitable training, the type of impairment and the children's cognitive difficulties, as significant factors, as well.

All educationalists agree that a modified curriculum which aims at co-inclusion must contain social environment elements, the children's ability of imitating others, the development of linguistic skills and language comprehension, role-play games and use of objects. The improvement of social skills through interaction should be a primary goal for every curriculum. These elements are proven to be of higher significance among the Kindergarten Teachers, rather than among the Elementary School ones, and this is precisely where our third hypothesis comes to prove. The timely relationship between the kids and their parents, teachers and peers, goes hand in hand with the development of socio-emotional abilities and academic skills, which is depicted inside the children's social facility within kindergarten and elementary school (Sakellariou, 2008) and this is something that can be enhanced through a suitable curriculum.

The majority of educationalists, in contrast to our fourth hypothesis, expressed their view that coeducational factors shall facilitate the cognitive course and socialization of the general class' pupils, too. The attendance of general classes by children with special educational needs will by no means disrupt the teaching of pupils with typical development. These pupils will indeed accept diversity and develop the feeling of empathy. Of course, quite a lot of the educationalists gave a negative response without presenting any arguments to support their point of view.

## **7. Recommendations**

In order a status of an exclusion- free education to be promoted, we ought to be fully aware of what is actually being taught inside the School (conformation of curricula) in what mode teaching takes place, how human and material resources can be utilized, as well as the fact that their management must be determined via collective planning and decision- making (Clark et al, 1995).

Behavioral problems must be included within the additional training courses. Educationalists regard those as crucial impediments to their teaching approach so, they

frequently form a strong belief that children themselves are the ones who bear the problem, not the school environment (Thomas & Loxley, 2001).

In Greece, contemporary pedagogy requires, additionally, that the coeducation employees possess a potent scholarship, common awareness as well as collective beliefs which are able to interrelate school with the university, acquirement of study methods concerning evaluation and teaching of impaired individuals (Strati, 2017). On the purpose of educationalists to be feeling capable of providing into a coeducational class, they should be lying within a continuum of cognitive domain, which begins during their studies' (graduate and post- graduate) years, and spans across their whole professional life (Sakellariou, Strati & Anagnostopoulou, 2015).

What educationalists really need is to ameliorate their teaching skills and obtain specialized knowledge in order to efficiently work with children who exhibit special educational needs or impairment, within the general class (Symeonidou & Ftiaka, 2012- Jordan, Schwartz & McGhie / Richmond, 2009). Those curricula which aim at backing educationalists on reviewing their role towards coeducation of children with or without special educational needs, must rest not only on the provision of theoretical training to the teachers, but also on the potentiality of offering empirical knowledge through practice (Patsidou, 2011). Every single child is entitled to a free access in education. Promoting the voice of the child with special educational needs is acknowledged as a key element towards the development of a solidary educational system (Elorian, 1998- Mittler, 2000).

### **About the authors**

**Maria Sakellariou** is a Professor, President of The Department of Early Childhood Education (T.P.N.) of the University of Ioannina and Managing Director of the Post-graduate Studies Programme. She studied at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) where she completed her Post- Graduate studies as well as her Doctoral Thesis, with particular emphasis on Pedagogy and Preschool Pedagogy. Her studies also include international seminars in Pedagogy and Preschool Pedagogy at Zurich University, Switzerland. She has taught as a visiting professor on the Educational Sciences Department at the University of Cyprus and on the post- graduate course under the title "Gender and New technologies within Education" which is being implemented by the Department of Pre-school Education and Educational Design (TEΠΑΕΣ- DPEED) of the University of the Aegean. Her research interests and her bibliography focus mainly on Pedagogy and Preschool/ Primary School Education, in particular on the cognitive domains of Teaching Methodology and Curricula Design, Socio- Ethical Cognition as well as School- Family- Community Collaboration. She is the author, co- publisher and editor of 13 books- scientific manuals some of which are: Cooperation between Family and the Kindergarten: Theory- Research- Teaching Proposals (2008), Teaching Methods Enhancement of Cognition for Children from Kindergarten to High School (2009), Ethics and Education: Dilemmas and Perspectives (2011), Introduction to the Didactics of Pedagogical Labor in the Kindergarten:

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