

## **REVIEW**

from prof. Dora Levterova - Gadjalova, DsC, PU "Paisii Hilendarski"  
of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "PhD"

by: field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences;

professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy

PhD program Special pedagogy

**Author: Ekaterini Anagnostu**

**Topic: Attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the general education school**

**Scientific supervisor: Prof. Tsvetanka Tsenova, DSc, SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".**

### **1. General presentation of the procedure and the PhD student**

By Order No. RD-38-348/ 02.07.2024 of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury in the procedure for the defense of a dissertation work on the topic "Attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs in the general education school", developed by Ekaterini Periklis Anagnostu, a full-time PhD student in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Special Pedagogy) with training in English, with scientific supervisors Prof. Dr. Tsvetanka Lukanova Tsenova, for awarding the educational and scientific degree "PhD".

The paper materials presented by the PhD student Ekaterini Periklis Anagnostu meet all the requirements of the RSARB and the Rules for it.

### **2. Relevance of the topic**

The topic of the dissertation work is characterized by exceptional topicality in a scientific and scientific-applied sense given the dynamic nature of the development of inclusive education and its effectiveness according to existing stereotypes, attitudes and folk-psychological influences. The success of the educational inclusion of students with special educational needs in general education schools depends to a significant extent on the attitudes and values of

general education teachers. In this context, the selection and development of the issues of the dissertation is not only a temporary issue, but also an actual and perspective issue.

### **3. Knowing the problem**

PhD student Ekaterini Periklis Anagnostu is deeply familiar with the issues being developed. Skillfully refers to scientific facts and interprets scientific results and analyzes with personal conviction and bias for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools. He skillfully outlines the future directions of the analyzed issues, foreseeing a transition, improvement and improvement of educational policies and practices in the educational system, a higher degree of cooperation and dialogue between teachers, parents and other interested parties participating in the educational system, creating a shared a vision of inclusive education that is critical to creating an inclusive culture in schools and society as a whole.

### **4. Research methodology**

The methodology of empirical research includes a clearly expressed goal and research tasks. Six hypotheses have been put forward, which logically and reasonably follow from the analysis of the theoretical studies of the scientific literature. The research philosophy includes primary quantitative research in order to more adequately cover the research objectives and more clearly answer the research questions.

Participants in the study were 120 teachers from general primary and secondary education in Greece. The research sample was collected through random sampling. From working teachers in Greek general education. The questionnaire was sent by the researcher to a total of 400 general education teachers in Greece. The response of the 120 general education teachers comprising the study sample suggests a response rate of 30%. The demographic characteristics are presented clearly and correctly. Of the sample, 56.67% were male and the remaining 43.33% were female; 40.83% of the studied sample are people over the age of 51, 34.17% of the studied sample are people between the ages of 36 and 50, and the remaining 25% of the studied sample are people aged up to 35 years; 75% of the studied sample are persons with more than ten years of experience as teachers, and the remaining 25% of the examined sample are persons with between 5 and 10 years of experience as teachers. 65.83% of the studied sample are individuals with a basic education degree, and the remaining 34.17% of the studied sample are individuals

with a master's degree. 50% of the studied sample are persons working in primary education, and the remaining 50% of the studied sample are persons working in secondary education as teachers. 95.83% of the study sample were persons working as permanent teachers and the remaining 4.17% of the study sample were persons working as deputy principals.

The research instrument included a five-part structured questionnaire: Part A included demographic information about the participants in the study sample, with six closed-ended questions. Part B includes the “My Thinking About Inclusion Scale” MTAI (Stoiber et al., 1998) of 28 statements, some of which are negative in nature and should be reversed during statistical analysis. Participants rate the 28 statements. Part C asks participants to rate barriers to inclusion on the scale. In part D, participants rated inclusion methods on the scale of Stoiber et al. (1998). In Part E, participants rated seven different special education needs on two models: according to how well they felt they had the ability to address each one, and according to how well their schools were prepared to deal with them effectively. Evaluation is done on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale for the empirical study was submitted via Google Forms. The research was conducted in the period from 24/3/2023 to 1/4/2023.

## **5. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions**

The dissertation is developed in five chapters. The first three chapters present a theoretical analysis of scientific literature on the problems of special education and types of special needs, inclusive education and attitudes towards students with special educational needs. The fourth chapter presents the methodology of the empirical research. The fifth chapter presents the results of the conducted empirical research. The results were subjected to statistical analysis on the MTAI scale. Results are presented by factor analysis of the three factors on the MTAI scale: The first variable is one of the main perspectives, the second is expected outcomes, and the third is classroom practices. Descriptive statistical analysis of primary outcomes as well as paired samples t-test and correlation analysis were interpreted. An elegant statistical analysis of the data is followed by an in-depth discussion with reference to study results from other scientific developments. A general conclusion and recommendations for practice are made.

## **6. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the PhD student**

The personal contribution of PhD student Ekaterini Anagnostu is unquestionable.

Scientific contributions can be divided into two areas:

*Contributions of a theoretical nature*

1. The level of knowledge of general education teachers in Greece about the many types of special educational needs was investigated.
2. An extensive theoretical framework is provided which includes a theoretical analysis of the most popular special educational needs of children, inclusion, attitudes towards inclusion of (a) general education teachers, (b) special education teachers, (c) parents of children with special educational needs and d) parents of children with typical development.
3. General education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are presented, combined with their abilities to deal with different types of special educational needs, their attitudes about the importance of different inclusion strategies, their perceptions of the existing barriers they face and the effectiveness of their schools to meet the special educational needs of students.

*Contributions of a practical nature*

1. For the first time in Greece, the MTAI scale is used in combination with the list of beneficial practices and barriers to inclusion presented in the study by Stoiber et al. (1998).
2. For the first time in Greece, teachers assess children's different types of special educational needs, on the one hand, taking into account their own ability to cope with each of them and, on the other hand, taking into account the school's ability to help them to deal with them.
3. The correlation made of general education teachers' attitudes and knowledge towards inclusion shows a statistically significant correlation with their demographics.
4. The lack of knowledge of general education teachers to deal with the most popular categories of special educational needs of children and the lack of schools to cover the needs of these students is emphasized.
5. The multidimensionality of the existing obstacles that general education teachers must face in order to deal with the effective inclusion of children with special educational needs is brought out.

The publications of Ekaterini Anagnostu are three, they were published in conference proceedings and are full-text on the issues of the dissertation work.

## **7. Abstract**

The content and quality of the abstract reflects the content and results achieved in the dissertation work.

## **8. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results**

I recommend to the PhD student Ekaterini Anagnostu to publish her dissertation in order to benefit both general education teachers, parents and society, as well as for the development of inclusive education for students with special educational needs.

## **CONCLUSION**

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations for the Implementation of ZRASRB.

The dissertation work shows that the PhD student Ekaterini Anagnostu has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in the scientific specialty Special-pedagogy by demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "PhD" to Ekaterini Anagnostu in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2 Pedagogy, PhD program Special pedagogy.

18 Septembert 2024

Reviewer

(Prof. Dora Levterova - Gadjalova, DsC)