

Training and Motivation of Special Education Teachers in Greece

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the characteristics of teachers of the special education population, their training, the available training programs, the necessary qualifications the possibility of their cooperation with bodies and individuals (like school counselor) and their motivations as regards this field of employment.

The results show that: Women are the majority among young teachers having less experience in special education. On the contrary, men between 31-50 years old are comparatively more than women. The majority of teachers up to the age of 30 years old serve special schools and the majority of teachers between 31-40 years old serve integration classes. INSET colleges (Didaskalia) train the majority of teachers on special education. Special studies and sensitization motivate teachers to choose the field of special education to a high degree. Financial bonuses also play an important role in their choice. According to teachers, school units and school system in general does not correspond to a great extent with the particular needs of special education. Teachers cooperate satisfactorily to a great extent with their colleagues and with the parents of their students. The element that mainly differentiates teachers that participated in the research in relation to the total of their answers is their age.

Keywords: Special education, Teacher training, Working motivations, Cooperation, Parents, Colleagues, Educational infrastructure

1. Necessity of the survey

The role of special education in post modern society: Only organizations and systems which have an ability to forecast and adopt innovations with flexibility and effectiveness, are able to survive in an international environment which is driven by market forces and technological developments (Usher and Edwards 1994). This results in a review of the traditional social structures and systems. The role of education in light of such radical and immense changes is crucial. The model of education that progresses along with the current system and practically incorporates many of the theoretical parameters of post modernity is the model of special education.

The aims of special education: The system of special education is an education field where innovative methods are applied and contemporary technologies are adopted in a spontaneous and non-bureaucratic manner. Taking into consideration that, over the last decade, production process and the international economic environment have been completely transformed by the revolutionary introduction of digital technologies, then the role of special education should be reconsidered. Special education combines the individual programs of education and training, the use of contemporary technologies and aims to relate education to production processes and the work force. Special education can respond to contemporary challenges.

Additionally: a) students with special needs have expanded the over recent decades (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs 1994) b) integration programs are implemented in mainstream schools c)

parents' associations demand access to the education system and equal opportunities in the education and labor market. d) special needs associations demand independent living in society.

Provision of special education: Special education is provided:

(1) Within mainstream schools:

a. With the support of the classroom teacher of the classroom or with parallel support if the child has mild difficulties.

b. With the support of the integration class teacher if the child has mild-severe difficulties.

(2) In special schools if the child has serious difficulties.

Qualifications of special education teachers include:

- PhD in the field of special education needs
- Post-graduate degree in the field of special education or school psychology
- First degree from Pedagogy Departments of Primary Education or Special Education or Departments of Educational and Social Policy. In parallel, a certificate of attendance at annual seminars degree on special education from Department of Pedagogy (Law 3699/2008 ar.20)

However, according to the Law, in the case of vacancies an individual's sensitization to individuals with special needs could be qualification enough in order that someone be employed in special units.

2. Historical Review

Under Law A.N. 453 the first school in Athens was established "the physical, mental and moral care of abnormal and retarded children...". The formal and essential qualifications of head teachers, teaching staff and other staff members of the institution were regulated by law and the institution of In-Service Education and Training (INSET) of the teaching staff of special school units was established. The acquisition of a degree through special INSET in Greece or abroad was considered a necessary condition for the appointment of a teacher in special school units. Special (financial) incentives were also established in order to attract teachers to the institution (Stasinou 1991). "Teachers of primary or secondary education who had a minimum of two years of special additional studies and had published relevant work were appointed to the post of head teacher" (Law A.N. 1049/1938 art.2.2).

In 1969 the state established the Office of Special Education at the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (Decision 101491/1/8/1969). The directors of the Office demanded that the executives of the Ministry undertake the following institutional measures:

a) the organization of seminars in Therapeutic Pedagogy in Maraslio INSET College of Primary Education (Didaskalio) for the preparation of special teachers. The Seminar of Therapeutic Pedagogy began running in January 1970 in Maraslio INSET College of Primary Education (Didaskalio) and it was attended by 46 teachers. The following year it was developed to a one-year INSET course, which was attended by 50 teachers with five years of work experience in mainstream schools. The one-year special INSET course became a two-year programme from the academic year 1975-1976. The curriculum was so enriched by the introduction of additional subjects that even students from previous courses at the INSET College were called to attend.

b) the institution of special schools within Academies of Pedagogical Science (Greek Official Governmental Gazette 793 2/10/1972)

c) the construction of a curriculum for special schools

d) the introduction of a lesson on "Teaching the mentally retarded" into the curriculum of Academies of Pedagogical Science. The curriculum of the Academies of Pedagogical Science added the subject "Teaching the mentally retarded" for an hour per week (1972). The subject "Teaching retarded infants" was also taught for one hour a week in the faculty of nursery teachers (1971).

e) the institution of a committee for the study and composition of reports on issues related to special education in Greece.

In the summer of 1975 the first committee for the "study and design of special education" was created within the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. It included teachers, psychologists, psychiatrists and members of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Initially, the committee's main undertaking was to establish the main targets of the program. At the committee's suggestion the following institutional changes were implemented in the field of special education:

a) a one year special INSET course for teachers, from the academic year 1975-76, extending to two years with a parallel enrichment of the curriculum. Also, the introduction of new specialized subjects such as child psychopathology (Law 227 21/11/1975).

b) the Office of Special Education was upgraded to the Department of Special Education and then to the Directorate of Special Education

c) the institution of a special inspector was introduced for first time.

Special education took its contemporary form under Laws 1143/81, 1566/85, 2817/2000 and 3699/2008 which define the necessary qualifications for teachers who serve in school units of special education and also the appointment procedure, as well as their INSET, their briefing on issues of special education as well as working bonuses for school units of special education.

3. Research Methodology

Empirical research carried out during the academic year 2008-2009 with the aim of evaluating the profile of special education teachers. The survey was carried out by questionnaire which was distributed in spring 2008 to teachers who work in the field of special education and serve either in special schools or in integration classes that function inside certain schools.

The questionnaire was formulated within the framework of the subject Methodology of Educational Research and carried out by teachers from the INSET college (Didaskalio) "Alexandros Delmouzos" in Rhodes, who are also students in the Department of Special Education and they collected 60% of the total of 277 questionnaires. The remaining 40% were distributed by colleagues.

The results concentrate on the following areas a) age and years of work experience in education and special education (distribution of teachers in special education according to gender and age, distribution of teachers according to gender and place of work, distribution of teachers according to place and age) b) studies and reason for occupation in special education (which training institution of special education had the teachers involved in the research attended, the reasons for the teachers' involvement in special education), c) the presentation of the working environment and teacher cooperation (degree of correspondence of the school system and school units to the needs of special education, evaluation of the cooperation with colleagues and parents of students, the individuals with whom the teachers of research declare that they cooperate).

4. Demographics of the sample

Population of areas where teachers work: 62 teachers (22.38%) work in areas with more than 500.000 inhabitants, 56 teachers (20.22%) work in areas with 50.001-100.000 inhabitants. 54 teachers (19.49%) in areas with 100,001-500,000 inhabitants, 41 teachers (14.80%) work in areas with 10,001-30,000 inhabitants, 23 teachers (8.30%) in areas with 5,001-10,000 inhabitants, 19 teachers (6.86%) in areas with 30,001-50,000. 9 teachers (3.35%) did not answer this question.

Gender: 109 of the 277 teachers were male (39.35%) and 167 female (60.29%), while 9 teachers did not answer the relevant question.

Age and years of experience in education and special education: Regarding age and experience, almost half of the teachers (132 teachers, 47.65%) were between 41-50 years of age, almost 30% (83 teachers) were 31-40 years of age and almost 15% were 30 years old and under. 41 teachers (almost 15%) were up to 30 years old (table 1).

Experience in the field of education did not present any great variation in the number of teachers over the different categories of years of experience. On the contrary, experience in the field of special education showed some variation. About half (50.54%) of the teachers had worked in the field of special education for more than 5 years, and more than 30% had a working experience of 6-10 years. 23 teachers (almost 8%) had worked for about 11-15 years in special education.

Distribution of teachers in special education according to gender and age: The participation of male and female teachers over the different age groups is not homogeneous. In the category of teachers up to 30 years of age it appears that there are four times more women than men at work. Also teachers between 31-40 and 41-50 years include more females (table 2).

Distribution of teachers according to gender and place of work: The teachers of special education are mainly distributed in special schools and inclusive classes. These two types are represented almost equally in the research. 125 teachers (45.13%) serve schools of special education and 117 (42.24%) inclusive classes. 34

teachers, approximately one eighth of the total, did not answer this question. The distribution of male and female in these two places of work is similar to the distribution of the two genders in the sample (table 3).

Distribution of teachers according to working place and age: While there is not a great difference in the number of teachers working in these two places within any given age group, research shows that considerably more teachers aged up to 30 serve in schools of special education, whereas, relatively more teachers between 31-40 years serve in inclusive classes. In the two older age groups there is not significant difference. 48% of teachers between 41-50 work in schools of special education and 49.54% of teachers of the same age group in inclusive classes. 6.40% of teachers up to 50 years old work in schools of special education and 5.98% in inclusive classes.

5. Research findings

5.1 Studies and reason for occupation in special education

Studies in the field of special education: The questionnaires investigated the field of teacher training in the subject of special education. The relevant question allowed the possibility of a multiple answer. More than half of the teachers had attended INSET Colleges (Didaskalia) of special education according to the research. 50 teachers (18.05%) had followed postgraduate studies and 37 (13.36%) were graduates from university departments. Finally, 43 teachers (15.52%) declared that they work in this field without having relevant training (table 4).

Reasons for teacher employment with special education (possibility of multiple answers): The reasons why teachers became active in the field of special education also had a multiple answer possibility (table 5). The reason for this choice, in at least 60% of the cases, was studies in the particular subject. A stronger reason was personal sensitivity (71.48%), while 14.80% of teachers had personal experiences which had led them to their choice. 3.25% were individuals with special needs. Finally, approximately one third (27.80%) of teachers mentioned the reason as being financial bonus.

5.2 The presentation of working environment and teacher cooperation

Degree of correspondence of school system and school units to the needs of special education according the teachers: The function of the Greek school system and the infrastructure of school units as well as their response to the needs of special education were evaluated differently by the teachers in the sample. The majority of teachers believed that the school system and school units responded averagely to teacher expectations. This was more obvious regarding the school system, a perception which was adopted by almost two thirds of the people questioned. This number was lower regarding the school units, it comprises 43%. The more extreme positive and negative responses were expressed in the evaluation of school units where numbers were higher for the categories *satisfactory* and *not at all* (table 6).

Evaluation of cooperation with colleagues and their students' parents: In table 7 the cooperation of teachers with their colleagues was estimated at a positive, to high degree (over 85%). The category on cooperation *very good* is more frequent than that of *good*. Regarding assessment of cooperation with parents, *good* cooperation is about 50%, *very good* is over one third of cases, while cooperation is referred as *average* in more than in one out of five cases. Answers which characterize cooperation as *bad* are very few in both cases.

With whom do teachers in this research declare that they cooperate? (multiple answers possible): Teachers of special education cooperate in order to accomplish their duties with other people and bodies. In table 8 the groups with whom they cooperate are presented, on a declining scale. Multiple answers were also possible.

6. The distribution of teachers of special education that participated in research

Above we referred to the individual characteristics of teachers and their opinion on the particularities and the conditions of their work. The answers to these questions are frequently inter-related. The degree of correlation between answers can lead to a proposition of distribution which is based on the finding of common characteristics.

Methods in multi-variable statistical analysis permit the possibility of correlating all the given variables. Specifically the methods of Analysis of Givens can help the formulation of criteria of differentiation or distribution of the people in a sample and the distributional grouping of individuals on the basis of, in both cases, the commonality of characteristics, namely the commonality of answers. For the criteria of differentiation or distribution we used the method of Multi-Analysis of Correspondence (Correspondence Analysis) and for the grouping of teachers the method of Hierarchical Distribution (Cluster Analysis) of the software SPAD.

6.1 *The results of Multiple Analysis of Correspondence*

1st criteria of teacher differentiation (1st factorial axis)

The element which differentiates the teachers participating in the research to a serious degree is age and work experience. There are men who have been trained in INSET Colleges (Didaskalia), who are at least 40 years old, with a work experience of over 16 years in education and over 5 years in Special Education who claim that the choice of the particular working field was motivated by financial incentive. As regards cooperation they cooperate with Centers of Diagnosis Assessment and Support and school counselors and they have very good cooperation with the students' parents. These male teachers differ from their female counterparts who are aged up to 40 years old with little experience in Special Education and in Education, who have been trained in their field, either in university departments or during their post-graduate studies, who deem that their cooperation with parents of their students and their colleagues is average.

2nd criteria of teachers' differentiation (2nd factorial axis)

Participating teachers differ as regards their working environment, cooperation and their evaluation of the infrastructure. The female teachers who work in schools of special education declare that they had been led to their choice by personal sensitivity, they cooperate with social services, child-psychologists, volunteers, and to a very good extent with parents of their students and their colleagues, they get a great deal of satisfaction from their work. In addition they believe that school system and their working environment respond satisfactorily to the needs of special education. They have been trained in university departments of special education and have been working in this field for more than 10 years and education in general for more than 20 years. The male teachers are between 31-40 years old, they have been working in integration classes for 5-10 years, they have trained in INSET Colleges (Didaskalia), they are satisfied to a small extent by their work, they judge their cooperation with the parents of students and their colleagues as average and they believe that the material and the building infrastructure of their school unit and the school system generally do not correspond to the needs of their work at all.

3rd criteria of teachers' differentiation (3rd factorial axis)

The third factor in the hierarchy that differentiate teachers in the sample is the lack of training in Special Education, particularly in men over 50 years old with many years of experience, amongst whom there are also people with special needs with training in INSET Colleges (Didaskalia) or within the framework of post-doctoral studies which concerns women with a working experience of 16-20 years in education. These teachers work in inclusive classes and cooperate with Centres of Diagnosis Assessment and Support, with counsellors of special education, with parents and child-psychologists. The degree of evaluation of the school system, in the unit they work, and their cooperation with parents and colleagues is average and so is their satisfaction from work.

The differentiation between teachers in the combination of particular answers is not unambiguous, on the contrary differentiations are apparent, in a hierarchical order of importance, from the different co-combinations of the characteristics.

6.2 *The results of Hierarchical Distribution*

The Hierarchical Distribution led to the creation of seven groups which are presented according to Diagram 1, which was extracted by the software used in this case. Together with each group the corresponding number of teachers is recorded along with the corresponding percentage (Diagram 1).

The value of variables (namely of answers) that formulate the groups are presented to as follows:

Group 1: 27 teachers (9.75% of the sample)

This group includes teachers who are up to 30 years old and have little working experience in education and special education, for which they have been trained through post-graduate studies. They work in schools of special education in heavily populated. They cooperate, as they claim, with child-psychologists, social services and volunteers. They are satisfied to an average extent by their work and they consider that the school system and material infrastructure of the school corresponds to a certain degree with the needs of special education.

Group 2: 44 teachers (15.88% of the sample)

Teachers of the second group have little working experience in special education, but they have served more years (11-15) in education and they are 31-40 years old.

Group 3: 29 teachers (10.47% of the sample)

The third group consists of female teachers who have been trained in a university, in a department of special education. They have not served for more than 5 years in special education, while in education in general they have not served for more than 10 years, mainly in lesser inhabited areas. They are not older than 40 years and they declare that they are very satisfied with their work.

Group 4: 35 teachers (12.64% of the sample)

The common element of teachers in this group is that they are not trained in special education. Among them there are teachers who work in this field motivated by the fact that they are themselves individuals with special needs.

Group 5: 28 teachers (10.11% of the sample)

The teachers who belong to this group declare that they get a high degree of satisfaction from their work, they judge their cooperation with the parents of their students and colleagues as average and they believe that the material and building infrastructure as well as school system do not correspond at all to their needs. Their involvement in special education is related to their studies in this field. They have served in education for 11-15 years and special education for 5-10 years.

Group 6: 46 teachers (16.61% of the sample)

This group, as well as the next, includes teachers 41-50 years old. In the sixth group teachers serve in schools of special education. They have been working for more than 15 years in this particular field and they have been trained in INSET Colleges (Didaskalia), and they have been working in education in general for more than 20 years. They declare that they cooperate with child-psychologists, with social services, with volunteers and the parents of students. They gain a great deal of satisfaction from their work, they cooperate very well with their colleagues and they claim that the material and building infrastructure and school system correspond satisfactorily to the needs of special education.

Group 7: 68 teachers (24.55% of the sample)

Finally, teachers of the seventh group are the same age as teachers of the sixth group, age 41-50 years old. They teach in inclusive classes, they have served in the field of special education for 11-15 years and they have been working in education for more than 15 years. They declare that they cooperate well with their colleagues and the parents of students, but they are not particularly satisfied by their work and they believe that the building infrastructure of the unit where they work is average to the needs of special education.

In the Hierarchical Distribution the basic criteria of differentiation of teachers of the sample are presented. The last two groups, in spite of their different characteristics, have their older age in common, and consequently working experience, in relation to teachers of the first five groups.

7. Conclusions

- Women are the majority among young teachers with less experience in special education. On the contrary, men between 31-50 years old are comparatively more than women.
- One third (30%) of teachers are young people, more than 50% are teachers having working experience of up to 5 years and 30% with less than 10 years
- More than half of the percentage (57.76%) of teachers have attended INSET in a college (Didaskalio) of the country. At the beginning of special education in Greece, through the decades 1980 and 1990 this was the minimum, necessary, formal qualification for the appointment of a teacher in special education units (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs 1994). 18% have attended post-graduate studies. In special education dealing with each student demands individual and specialized approach.
- 13% are graduates from departments of special education.
- 15% work without relevant training. From the 1980s until 2000, the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs legalized the appointment and provision of services in special units by people sensitized and motivated by love and interest (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs 1994) in geographical areas where there were not otherwise teachers with education, training and specialization in special education. Thus 71.4% of teachers consider sensitization as a motivation for vocational choice. This fact makes the degree of personal responsibility towards children and institution of special education high.
- 27.8% are motivated by financial incentive.
- A high percentage (65.7%) of teachers consider the school system average.

- Average is also their satisfaction with the infrastructure of special school units (42.96% of teachers)
- 85% of teachers turn to cooperation with colleagues. This finding agrees with the results of research carried out on teachers in the special education population over the period 1991-1994. (Syriopoulou 1997).
- The role of parents in special education is important. Parents are obliged to identify possible difficulties their children at a pre-school age and to choose the appropriate intervention and special staff. In the USA, under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, parents have the right to be informed and to express their objections when they disagree on the special education provision to their children (Tjouriadou 1995: 36). Most programs of intervention in special education should be implemented during the hours that the child is at home. Parents provide teachers with useful information about their child. Statistical data (Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs 1994) reveal that more and more parents trust the institution of special education and accept their child's participation. Law 3699/2008 recognizes the importance of the role of parents in special education in Greece and gives them the right to participate in it. 83.75% of teachers cooperate with parents.
- Special education demands extrovert management of school units in relation to the system of general education (Syriopoulou 2003). For this reason, there is cooperation of special units with assessment bodies (Centres of Diagnosis Assessment and Support) and social services.
- 59.57% cooperate with school counsellors.
- 45.85% cooperate with child-psychologists.
- 8.3% cooperate with volunteers. The enlightenment of general opinion and informing social services are necessary prerequisites for the smooth integration of people with special needs into social and vocational life. In Great Britain volunteer groups over the last decade have participated and facilitated the work of special education bodies by providing people with special needs social and vocational support (Beveridge 1993).

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Table 1. Age and years of work experience in education and special education

Age		Working experience in education			Working experience in special education			
	n	%		n	%		n	%
Up to 30 years	41	14.80	Up to 10 years	79	28.52	Up to 5 years	140	50.54
31-40 years	83	29.96	11-15 years	54	19.49	6-10 years	85	30.69
41-50 years	132	47.65	16-20 years	64	23.10	11-15 years	23	8.30
>50 years	16	5.78	>20 years	74	26.71	>15 year	20	7.22
No answer	5	1.81	No answer	6	2.17	No answer	9	3.25
TOTAL	277	100.00	TOTAL	277	100.00	TOTAL	277	100.00

Table 2. Distribution of teachers in special education according to gender and age

	Up to 30 years		31-40 years		41-50 years		>50 years	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Men	6	5.50	37	33.94	59	54.13	5	4.59
Women	35	20.96	46	27.54	73	43.71	11	6.59
TOTAL	41	14.80	83	29.96	132	47.65	16	5.78

Table 3. Distribution of teachers according to gender and place of work

	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
School of S. Education	50	40.00	75	60.00
Inclusive class	45	38.46	72	61.54
Not answer	14	40.00	20	57.14
TOTAL	109	39.35	167	60.29

Table 4. Which Institution of training in Special Education have teachers have attended
(multiple answers possible)

	n	%
INSET College (Didaskalia)	160	57.76
Postgraduate studies	50	18.05
University Department of Special Education	37	13.36
No training	43	15.52

Table 5. Reasons for teachers occupation with special education

(possibility of multiple answers)

	n	%
Studies on the subject	172	62.09
Sensitization	198	71.48
Personal experience	41	14.80
I am a person with special needs	9	3.25
Financial bonus	77	27.80

Table 6. Degree of correspondence of school system and of school units to the needs of special education according the teachers

	School System		School Unit	
	n	%	n	%
Satisfactory	41	14.80	58	20.94
Average	182	65.70	119	42.96
Not at all	50	18.05	95	34.30
No answer	4	1.44	5	1.81
TOTAL	277	100.00	277	100.00

Table 7. Evaluation of cooperation with colleagues and the parents of students

	With colleagues		With parents	
	n	%	n	%
Very good	120	43.32	74	26.71
Good	118	42.60	137	49.46
Average	34	12.27	61	22.02
Bad	3	1.08	3	1.08
No answer	2	0.72	2	0.72
TOTAL	277	100.00	277	100.00

Table 8. With whom do teachers in this research declare that they cooperate?
(multiple answers possible)

	n	%
With colleagues	249	89.89
With parents	232	83.75
With Centers of Diagnosis Assessment and Support.	171	61.73
With counselors of special education	165	59.57
With child-psychologists	127	45.85
With social services	62	22.38
With volunteers	23	8.30

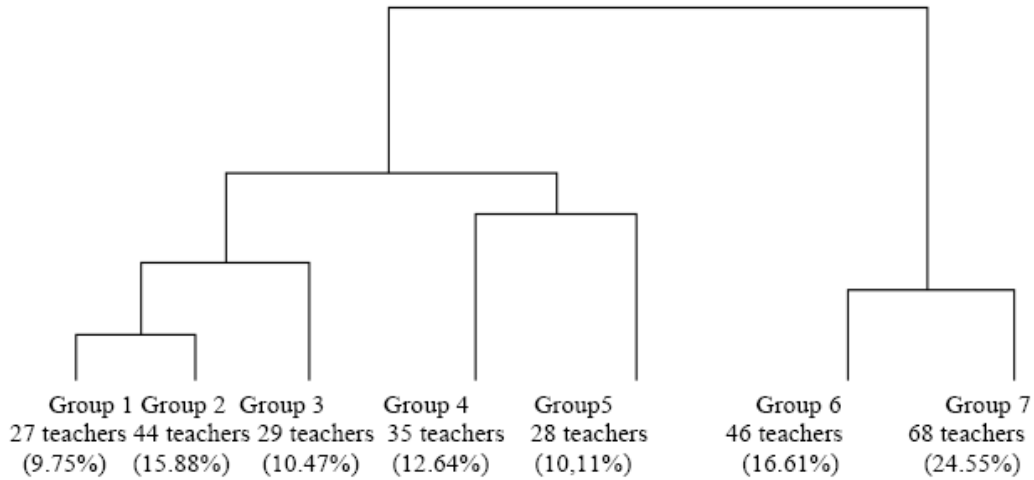


Diagram 1. Hierarchical Distribution of teachers