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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INVESTIGATION OF THE FUNCTIONING AND EFFECTIVENESS TO DATE OF THE FACILITY OF PARALLEL SUPPORT IN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

In recent years, the institution of Parallel Support has been implemented in the general/standard school. More specifically, it is about the support of PWDs (Persons with Disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs) who have –opinion from KE.D.A.S.Y. (Center for Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counseling and Support)– within the classrooms of the general school. The survey was conducted in the school year 2021-22 in the school organizations of the educational district of Lasithi and forty teachers who served in these schools participated in it (40). The semi-structured interview was used as a tool to collect the research data and information, while the analysis and decoding of the research data was carried out with the qualitative method of content analysis. Based on the results of the research, the inability of the operation of the institution to contribute to the essential and real pedagogical-educational, psycho-emotional and psycho-social inclusion of the students of this special group in the general context is revealed.

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Introduction:-

A very large percentage of students with disabilities and/or special educational needs study in the general framework and structures, based on institutionalized decisions emanating from educational laws 2817/2000 and 3699/2008. Based on the aforementioned, didactic, learning and pedagogical support and support is carried out by specialist pedagogues and/or teachers who have some educational experience in Special Education and Education, in the logic and philosophy of the opinions issued by the KE.D.A.S.Y. (Established Organization of the State) regarding the manner and form of co-education and adaptation of these individuals within the classes of the general school. These individuals/students/three, it must be mentioned that in addition to our support and undivided help, they deserve our faith and respect in order to conquer their minimum legislated rights. As an applied and humanitarian science, Special Education and Education, after all, always creates and shapes theories and practices that have to do with the public sphere and life (Anderson & Beauchamp, 2012). The essential inclusion and not false inclusion of these students in the general context and school, therefore, is considered and judged as one of the most basic and major issues that falls into the category of human rights and individual freedoms that they have conquered over time (Lindsay, 2007).

In any case, it is recognized and observed that Parallel Support, as a tool and teaching aid for the students of this group, contributes the most to the holistic rehabilitation and treatment of their cognitive and psychosocial deficits and weaknesses in general school classes (Odom, 2000). Therefore, it is understood that these students have the inalienable constitutionally established and legislated right, to receive –through individual assistance– the same

education together with their classmates who do not have special educational needs in the same school context, structures and physical environment (Wiley & Siperstein, 2015). It is possible that the partial removal and/or elimination of stereotypes, stigmatization, marginalization, labeling and prejudices experienced by these people can be achieved and effective through co-existence and teaching (co-education) with people without special educational needs (Waajida et al., 2013). In other words, it is pointed out that the obligations of the state –through the educational system– towards these individuals/students in relation to the provision of educational and pedagogic-teaching services and facilities, also include individual support (co-education) by special educators in standard units (Avramidis, 2010). At this point, however, it should be noted that the terms "integration" and "integration" that are most often used in the educational system and are synonymous with the term "co-education" actually refer to, euphemistically, school acceptance of the group's students of it (Sklad et al., 2012).

On the contrary, the "co-education" of these individuals/students concerns the change of each general school unit that has within it individuals with special educational needs, in areas such as philosophy, perceptions, attitudes and views towards individuals these, the programs, the content of the lessons and most importantly, the behavior of all teachers in particular during their daily school life (Espelage et al., 2016). In addition to the others, it is deemed necessary and necessary to over-emphasize that based on the values, beliefs, ideologies and attitudes that prevail within each society of all countries, these individuals are treated, helped and facilitated in the –logic of otherness–, equally proportionally, from the respective legally institutionalized educational system (Merrell & Gimpel, 2014). In this sense, co-education constitutes a tool and means for the formation of –more– schools that aim to facilitate and support the learning needs of the individuals of this particular group and not, the implementation of co-education as a theoretical end in itself (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Umadevi & Sukumaran, 2012).

The application of the institution of inclusive education to people with special educational needs in the general context

With regard to the principles and values espoused by the respective educational system in matters and issues of providing equal educational and pedagogical facilities and opportunities to all students, it is found that they actually constitute a fenak of pretentiously formal but vague and practically inapplicable proclamations and reports, which, in essence, act as a brake in the daily school life of the individuals of this group in standard school units (Maras et al., 2015). Another obstacle for these students is that the content of the syllabi does not leave room for flexibility and the application of alternative pedagogical-teaching strategies and techniques regarding the education and practice of people with disabilities in general structures (Imellou, 2010). In this light, it appears that the syllabi function more as a simple self-evident goal of the respective educational system of all countries and, less and/or not at all as a flexible and adaptable philosophy, framework and logic, which contributes to the cognitive, psycho-emotional, psycho-social and behavioral facilitation, development, promotion and essential inclusion of these individuals in the activities of the school life of the general school. Under these circumstances and if they therefore wish to implement the design of the institution of co-education at least the basic principles of its declaration, they must proceed quickly towards the fundamental revision, modification/change, differentiation and updating of both the main axes and of the content of the syllabi and curricula of university departments and General and Special Education (Panteliadou, 2011).

In the logic of the above reports and reflections regarding the institution of co-education, listed below are some of the basic principles and axioms of the said institution that define and delimit its content, so that it responds as best as possible to the pedagogical and teaching needs and deficits/difficulties of these individuals in the general context: a) inclusive education as a philosophy is used as a method and not as an end, to achieve the optimal and maximum academic and psycho-emotional development and stabilization of the behavior and abilities of the individuals of this particular group, b) inclusive education as a principle and philosophy, in addition, tends to the basic and entrenched change of the systemically prevailing social ideology, culture and mentality, regarding the definition and interpretation of terms and concepts such as deviance, marginalization, failure, diversity etc., c) in addition to others, is also considered the goal of implementing the principles of co-education based on the statutory declaration and the charter of rights regarding these individuals is considered feasible and achievable, which implies their fair, equal and equal involvement and participation in all stages of the educational teaching process and practice (Cramer & Castro-Olivo, 2016). In this way, they can be effective and active adult citizens in the future, not only for the local community but also for society as a whole, d) also, it is considered and recognized that continuous and lasting evolution, development, upgrading and specialization of the teachers who undertake the difficult role of holistic support of these individuals within the general school classrooms (Lynch & Simpson, 2010). The change in the way of thinking, among others, attitude, behavior and use of pedagogical and teaching tactics and techniques of the

General Education teachers towards these students and the total reorganization in form and methods of the classes where students with special educational needs study, contribute to in this way as much as possible, so that the principles and practices of the philosophy of inclusive education can be cultivated, successful and effective in implementation (Georgiadi et al., 2007).

The heterogeneity and diverse characteristics that most students with special educational needs are born with, act as a driving force and a driving force for the effective and comprehensive implementation of successful co-educational programs for people with disabilities and/or special educational needs with people who they do not carry, in the classroom environment of the general framework and structures (Doikou-Aulidou, 2016). According to the currently prevailing reality surrounding the substantial implementation of the principles and practices of co-education in the Greek unified school, however, the visible and active cancellation, self-cancellation and/or even distorted and partial implementation in practice of equal rights, opportunities and differentiated access to cognitive goods, which must be provided to these students during the educational process and school life (Wehmeier et al., 2010). Despite this, it must be emphasized and pointed out that the maintenance, reproduction and maintenance of each educational system –which in fact constitutes the main stone and the basic foundation and component of social cohesion– is in essence self-defined and defined by the thematic, the meanings and the practices that are chosen to be integrated into the contents of the curricula, by the experts who have the heavy and supreme national responsibility for their design, formulation and elaboration (Statiri&Andreou, 2017).

The contribution and the work of the teachers of the Parallel Support regarding the implementation of co-education in the unified school

The teachers who support these individuals through Parallel Support and, knowing that the goals and content of the curricular programs are designed and structured (Agorastou, 2020) exactly the same for all students regardless of knowledge, abilities and of inherent neurophysiological difficulties and deficits, they must change the conditions of their teaching and learning. More specifically, this means that they must facilitate the processes and conditions of teaching, providing these students with material and tasks that will be adapted to their learning profile, their cognitive abilities and their interests (Vlachou et al., 2016).

In the logic of the above reports, it is deemed necessary for the teachers of Parallel Support to take care and decide on the pedagogical-teaching and social actions of these students with prudence, logic and unparalleled ethics, following more the voice of their conscience. As special educators, in other words, they must, due to their role, position and obligations, possess and have a higher level of specialized scientific skills and knowledge in relation to the subject of their university studies and supporting work – their profession (Vlachou, 2006). In essence and based on the data on the scientific qualifications that teachers who support –individual– students with disabilities in the general context should possess and have, it is concluded that it is not enough for them to feel that they are strong and prepared to face any problem that arises during their educational duties (Abu-Hamour&Muhaidat, 2013; Raimundo et al., 2013).

Consequently, they must be well scientifically constituted and qualified, so as to provide practical and palliative solutions to the learning and behavioral deficits and difficulties of these individuals during the educational process and in general their daily school life. In this way, their contribution to the design, development and consolidation of co-educational philosophy and culture in the structures of the general framework is recognized and considered of utmost importance and importance. In addition to the others, they also function as a safety valve for the students of this group, since they ensure and at the same time ensure their seamless integral and multi-level substantial participation in the teaching and learning processes, as well as in the other events and actions of daily school life (Buchanan et al., 2009).

The special pedagogue and/or not of the Parallel Support, in addition, is responsible for the evaluation of the pedagogical-learning promotion and improvement of the student and/or his/her students (in the Greek system they often support up to two students in the same class), the design of the framework and method of teaching and work, the application of the special individually differentiated scientific measures, the analysis of the learning profile, interests and generally the cognitive level of the supported student and the faithful observance of the decided differentiations of assessment-based teaching (Hen&Goroshit, 2012). In other words, it defines and determines the learning objectives of the teaching and learning of the supported students, always in collaboration, –even if theoretically pseudo-labeled– with the teacher of General Education and Education (Doll et al., 2011). He is also called upon to contribute, through the correct use of appropriate counseling methods and techniques, in the direction

of creating and shaping correct and rational human and collegial relationships and climate within the school, of course, as more experienced and professionally qualified and specialized in solving the specific issues and situations. Consequently, it must be mentioned that special educators more and above all in relation to General Education teachers, must have full and substantial scientific formation and training in the handling and effective resolution of issues and problems that touch ethics and concern individuals of this particular group and, less, to be knowledgeable about scientific-pedagogical, didactic, psychological and behavioral considerations and practices (Dias & Cadime, 2017).

Purpose and objectives of the research

General purpose of the research

With this specific empirical research, an as detailed investigation and study as possible is attempted of the opinions and concerns of the teachers of the Parallel Support of the educational district of Lasithi, regarding the up to now offer and/or non-operation and application of the institution to students with disabilities in the structures of the general school.

Research hypotheses/questions

The research questions I posed to the interviewed teachers were the following:

1. What is their contribution to the operation and implementation of the institution when supporting these students in the school classes of the general framework?
2. What methods and practices do they follow in order to strengthen the students of this group in the psycho-emotional and psycho-social field?
3. To what extent are they scientifically qualified and sufficient to successfully cope with their role?

Research Methodology:-

Sample survey

Forty (40) teachers (Primary Education) participated in the research who in the 2021-22 school year served in the institution of Parallel Support in the structures of the general schools of the Educational Region of Lasithi - Crete.

Research data collection tool

The means and tool used to conduct the research are semi-structured interviews. In this way, the interviewees are given the opportunity to express their views and opinions freely, while on the other hand, it essentially unties the interviewer's hands, since he can have relative flexibility in the questions he asks the interviewees and concerns the form, their manner and order (Bryman, 2017).

Research data analysis method

The material collected from the interviews of the teachers who participated in this empirical research was analyzed, processed and decoded through the tool of content analysis, which falls under the qualitative methods. The technique of content analysis, in particular, was used since it is considered the most suitable for the systematic and objective form of description and rendering of the meaning of the perceptions of the teachers of the Parallel Support of the Lassithi Educational District who took part in the research (Isari & Pourkos, 2015).

Presentation of research results

With reference to the results of the research, it is found that the institution of Parallel Support was not implemented in the proper and appropriate way and form in the Greek education system. This implies that the psycho-emotional, psycho-social and behavioral treatment of students with disabilities and/or special educational needs is not supported in the general context, nor for what reason, because the institution was simply a copying and stitching of some methods, techniques and practices from others foreign educational systems. In essence, it failed to facilitate the adaptation of these individuals to the general school, because it was introduced in a completely wrong way, since the experts in planning and proposing the implementation of the institution in this form did not take into account factors and heterogeneous variables such as culture, cultural capital, the values, attitudes, beliefs and ideology of the people/citizens who make up the Greek state and by extension the Greek education system in this case.

Teachers' perceptions of their contribution to the operation and implementation of the Parallel Support institution in the general context

The teachers strongly emphasized the importance of their work in supporting the Parallel Support students during daily school life, as it contributes decisively to the improvement and promotion, especially of their social skills. The

role of their position, in other words, allows them to be involved in an essentially hands-on way in the school interactions of students both during instruction and other school activities and events, thus facilitating them in acquiring acceptable behavior under the status of various situations that initiate school becoming. In addition to others, they consider and believe that they contribute not only to the academic development and improvement of the students of this special group, but also to the stabilization and handling of their emotional world.

“Although the institution of Parallel Support is not implemented correctly, it seems that it offers more to the psycho-emotional and psycho-social strengthening of the supported students”.

“We alone are fighting for the reduction that these students show in the educational process... nevertheless we are achieving many things”.

“We help students interact with classmates and other teacher’s, manage stressful situations and generally communicate in many different ways with others”.

“In essence, we act as a connecting link that helps these students not only improve their academic performance so that they feel at a disadvantage with the rest of their classmates, but also to acquire social skills of another order”.

Teachers' perceptions of the methods and practices they use to support these students

The main concern of the teachers who support those diagnosed by the K.E.D.A.S.Y. (Center for Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counseling and Support of volumes with special educational needs) students are, to apply the individualized program where it exists and to take care of their adaptation as best as possible to the processes of the educational practice. In this spirit, it could be argued that they act as intermediaries and facilitators to alleviate the problems that these individuals instill in the classrooms during teaching and learning. Therefore, the approach techniques and practices used to support these individuals in the general school classrooms are initiated/emanate from the logic of developing and improving their emotional load and their social needs and priorities, so that they can be more successfully integrated into the events of the school communities.

It should be noted that the students of this group are supported through Parallel Support in the classes of the general framework, not because of low academic performance, but on the contrary, because of psycho-emotional deficits, alienating behaviors and outbursts as well as social declines they present in their daily school life and life in general. Consequently, it can be seen that the teachers of Parallel Support have the sole responsibility of promoting, using and exploiting psycho-emotional and behavioral teaching methods and practices towards these students, with the ultimate goal of their all-round and diverse support.

“Theoretically we promote the inclusion methods and practices of supported students... although sometimes we have obstacles from within”.

“I personally had perfect cooperation with the general education teacher, which helped me in the essential implementation of co-educational practices and in the psycho-emotional empowerment of my student”.

“I have the ability under the regime of my educational responsibilities and my university expertise, to teach students social skills and to psycho-educate them emotionally and behaviorally and also to revive and stimulate their constantly depressed psychology”.

“With continuous targeted interventions, I try to change the behavior of the student I am responsible for the better, in other words to differentiate it, so that it is destigmatized by the rest of its classmates and they do not burden him with their own misdeeds and lies”.

Teachers' perceptions of their scientific training and competence in relation to their assigned role

The pedagogic-teaching work of the teachers of the Parallel Support of the students attending the unified school is considered particularly important and front-loading, since it contributes not only to their cognitive improvement and promotion but also to their psycho-emotional upliftment, which entails social integration and their acceptance. More specifically, they must create and shape appropriately smooth pedagogically and didactically balanced school conditions and a learning environment and climate for the students of this group, which will facilitate and support their social advancement and academic/cognitive success. Given the above, they must have a high level of scientific

specialized knowledge and skills to be able to design, develop, teach and implement co-educational actions and practices.

In this way, they strengthen and strengthen the efforts of these students to acquire social skills and effectively handle their psycho-emotional burden and burden. In addition, they must promote collaborative methods of learning and practices, contribute to their non-marginalization and act as activators of their learning and critical thinking motivations. In short, they play the role of a beacon for their supported students, since they immediately eliminate the shadows that appear to them during the educational process and practice at all stages and phases as well as in their school life in general.

“Because of the experience we gained during our university studies and practice, we have a clear mind and composure to handle these students under the most difficult situations and teaching conditions”.

“We definitely make it easier for diagnosed students who are impatient, who are quite impulsive and who have difficulty communicating during the educational process, to follow the rules through our own constant reinforcement, support and advice”.

“At any time and moment we strengthen the image of our supported students so that they do not fall behind in their lessons and develop psycho-emotionally...after all, this is also our role in relation to these students”.

“These children lack empathy. So we help them to understand and apply basic social rules and conventions both during teaching and in the rest of their school life”.

Conclusions – Suggestions:-

It has now been proven that teachers who support diagnosed students with special educational needs in general school through the institution of Parallel Support, contribute to their academic development and psycho-emotional progress. Therefore, they facilitate the students of this group in understanding the steps to follow in order to resolve their interpersonal conflicts and in looking for alternative methods of solving and dealing with stressful situations and pathogenic issues. Part of the responsibilities and professional obligations of the Parallel Support teachers, therefore, is their contribution to the acquisition of social skills by their supported students. In particular, they consider that their position in the teaching and learning of these students is multidimensional and crucially important, since they shoulder the heavy burden of their psycho-emotional maturation and smooth integration not only into the environment of the general school but also into the activities of the social scientist. It has been established, however, that most teachers of Parallel Support – because they belong to General Education – that they cannot fully dedicate themselves to their work either because they do not have the corresponding knowledge and skills or because there are limits and barriers regarding the undertaking of scientific and pedagogical initiatives by them compared to the teacher who is responsible for all the students in the class.

In the light of the aforementioned, it is proposed to fundamentally update and in many cases revise the content of the syllabi regarding the students of this group. This implies that teachers will have the freedom and flexibility to vary their educational planning, as a result of which they will focus more on the implementation of programs that will focus on strengthening the psycho-emotional and social skills of their supported students. At an unsuspected time, also, and during the conduct of their interviews, they argued that there must be at some point through legislative regulations corrective changes from the guidelines of the educational policy, which will lead to the creation of appropriate material for these students, while from the others consider that there should be a studied configuration of some spaces for their ad hoc unloading. Finally, they note that the state has always been indifferent to the issue of their essential and continuous training, since most of them state that they have graduated from university departments of General Education and have been trained to teach and support students without special educational needs and/or disability.

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