

# The Inclusion of Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood: Challenges and Dilemmas of Kindergarten Teachers

Aviva Dan

Ohalo Academic Educational College, Katsrin, Israel

Email: avivanaab@gmail.com

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## Abstract

The philosophy of inclusion is anchored in the law of Israel, from 2002, stating that all children with special needs have the right to be educated in mainstream kindergartens. Some of the children are children that in the past would have been educated in special education facilities. Some of them have not undergone the process of evaluation and diagnosis. As a result of this policy, kindergarten teachers in the mainstream face a complex reality of trying to teach a group of children with very diverse needs that they may not have had any professional training. This research examines the challenges and dilemmas that face the kindergarten teachers in their daily practices in trying to manage the kindergarten. The literature examines this subject in schools and what is the meaning of such policies from the aspect of school teachers and principles, but not from the aspect of kindergarten teachers.

## Keywords

Inclusion, Main Stream Kindertartens, Kindergarten Teachers

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## 1. Introduction

Philosophies regarding the ideas of integration of children with special needs in the educational mainstream have changed dramatically over the last twenty or so years. Integration is based on the philosophical ideas of equality and equal rights for diversified populations. Integration is thought though to be failing because not all placement decisions are able to provide the specific needs of children with significant disabilities. The idea of integration has been recently replaced by the concept of inclusion. In contrast to integration, inclusion demands the adaption of mainstream educational environments to accommodate every child's needs

(Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000).

The philosophy of inclusion stems from the philosophy of human rights and that every child has the right to be valued equally, and treated with respect and provided with equal opportunities within the main stream system (UN, 1989, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*; UN, 1994, *The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*). The change in the term signifies a difference in the philosophy behind the concept. The idea of inclusion, as described by the NAEYC (The National Association for the Education for Young Children) is defined by “a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning” (DEC/NAEYC, 2009; p. 2).

In early childhood frameworks the policy of inclusion has been translated into different programs (Leatherman & Niemeyer, 2005). Children with special needs attending kindergarten with children who do not have special needs, children with special needs who attend a kindergarten for children with special needs for most of the week, but for two days will attend a mainstream kindergarten with children who do not have special needs. Each program has its disadvantages and advantages.

One of the greatest advantages of kindergartens for children with special needs is the provision of all the necessary services that are required on site, as opposed to mainstream kindergartens where it is necessary to seek the treatments outside of the kindergarten and often during working hours of the parents, meaning a loss of work days or hours for the parents and the removal of the child from the familiar environment and disturbing their daily schedule. The greatest advantage for children in attending a mainstream kindergarten with children who do not have special needs, is the development of their social skills (Odom & Diamond, 1998). In addition, the children without the disabilities become more aware of diverse populations and develop a greater capacity for empathy (Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, 1994).

According to the literature, factors that affect the success of inclusion practices are the quality of the social interactions and engagement that are facilitated by the staff through natural daily interactions, rather than imported programs (Brown et al., 1999; Malmskog & McDonnell, 1999; Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro, & Peck, 1995). Collaborative team work between all the professional staff involved in providing services to the children (Brown, Horn, Heiser, & Odom, 1996; Bruder, 2000) collaboration and empowerment of the families as part of the decision-making team (Grace, Llewellyn, Wedgwood, Fenech, & McConell, 2008), professional and qualified staff support systems (Hammond & Ingalls 2003) and positive attitudes of the pedagogical staff, concerning the idea of inclusion (Niemeyer & Proctor, 2002).

This article will look at the literature concerning teachers attitudes to integration and inclusion and more specifically the kindergarten teacher's role in successful inclusion. In addition, the article will examine the influence of self-efficacy of the kindergarten teacher as an important factor in promising successful inclu-

sion of children with special needs in the kindergarten. The following parts will describe the research methods, the research population and the methodology that was undertaken to examine the research questions. The last part will discuss the results and finally the conclusions that arise from the results and the practical implications necessary to be undertaken to promise successful inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream kindergartens.

The objectives of this research were to examine the challenges and dilemmas facing mainstream kindergarten teachers when faced with the policy of inclusion of children with special needs in their kindergartens. There has been a great deal of research examining this policy from the school teachers perception, but very little, if any research has examined this policy from the perceptions and practice of kindergarten teachers.

## 2. Teachers' Attitudes towards Integration

According to [Triandis \(1971\)](#), attitudes are composed of three elements, cognitive, affective and behavioral elements. Attitudes affect our perceptions, feelings, thoughts and behaviors. All these elements are interactive and influence the teachers' perception of what it means to work with a child with special needs. This indicates that the interactions of a teacher with a child with special needs are affected by their previous experience, the child's characteristics and professional knowledge. Although the philosophy of inclusion is based on the human rights agenda, many educators have expressed concerns and reservations concerning the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream frameworks ([Florian, 2008](#)). In an extensive piece of research undertaken in Australia that investigated attitudes of teachers ([Center, Ward, Parmenter, & Nash, 1985](#)), head teachers and psychologists, the research indicated that the attitudes to inclusion were strongly influenced by the nature of the disability, and the educational or behavioral dilemmas that were presented as a result of the disability. In an additional study, the group that showed the highest motivation for inclusion, were pre-school teachers ([Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000](#)).

[Bowman \(1986\)](#) in her research that investigated 14 nations, showed that there were wide differences between teacher's attitudes to the idea of inclusion. Severe mental handicaps and multiple handicaps were thought to be less suitable for successful inclusion, whereas children with sensory impairments were candidates for a more successful inclusion in the mainstream education. In addition, Bowman indicated in her research that countries were, there was a law concerning inclusion, more favorable to the idea.

In a study by [Ward, Centre & Bochner \(1994\)](#) the attitudes of the mainstream teachers were affected by feelings of a lack of confidence in their teaching skills and the quality of support that was available to them during the process. In a meta-analysis done on attitude studies of teachers in America by [Scruggs, Mastropieri Cook, and Escobar \(1986\)](#) it was reported that two thirds of the teachers agreed with the concept of inclusion. There was found to be a difference between agreeing to the concept and the willingness of teachers to implement the

policy in their classrooms. In addition, only one third indicated that they had the sufficient time, skills training and resources necessary to implement the policy.

## 2.1. Teachers Attitudes to Inclusion

According to the research of [Vaughn et al. \(1994\)](#) the majority of teachers, who did not implement inclusion practices in their classrooms viewed the idea of inclusion in a negative manner. The teachers identified a number of factors that according to them were problematic, class size, inadequate resources, lack of teacher preparation and the extent that the pupils would benefit from inclusion practices. In comparison, research that investigated attitudes of teachers who had actually experienced inclusion showed that the teachers favored the idea of children with special needs being educated in main stream frameworks ([Villa et al., 1996](#)). The conclusions indicated that the teacher's positive attitudes were a result of teachers feeling that they had gained professional skills to implement the programs.

In addition, research that was conducted in Australia investigated the daily experiences of mothers and early childhood professionals in an inclusive early childhood program indicated that there are serious limitations in the national policy concerning inclusion in early childhood centers. The few number of successful inclusions were due to the quality of the staff and not as a national policy or guidance for practice ([Grace, Llewellyn, Wedgwood, Fenech, & McConell, 2008](#)). The study showed that the greatest difficulties of the professional staff centered on the strain on resources, children who are undiagnosed, which means a lack of funds and the communication with the families. The child care centers that exhibited successful inclusion programs were centers that managed to raise their own funds and who were flexible in their practice methods. The three centers that were successful deliberately planned for activities that would allow the children with special needs to be accommodated in the maximum way that was possible. In conclusion the researchers indicated that the lack of funds, inadequate staff training, motivation and attitudes of the professional staff are serious obstacles in trying to implement successful inclusion programs.

In research conducted by [Smith & Smith \(2000\)](#) which investigated what were the perceptions of kindergarten teachers regarding successful inclusion, the themes that arose indicated a list of factors that are central in promising successful inclusion programs:

- 1) Training: which included undergraduate teacher preparation, graduate classes, and school district in-service training sessions.
- 2) Class Load: which included class size, number of students with special needs, severity and range of needs of students, as well as extenuating circumstances.
- 3) Support: which included assistance provided by the regular education paraprofessional assigned to the classroom, by the special education staff, and by the building administration.

4) Time: which included the time needed for planning lessons, making adjustments to lessons, making or procuring materials for students with special needs, as well as time needed for collaboration with relevant personnel

## **2.2. Kindergarten Teachers Role in Successful Inclusion**

Inclusion means providing an educational climate that allows each child to develop in all areas and feel supported, accepted and feelings of well-being (Bredkamp & Copple, 1997). Very often the mainstream kindergarten teacher does not have specific training for children with special needs and therefore needs to develop new professional skills ongoing. The kindergarten teacher needs to be responsive and sensitive to the variety of needs at the same time as well as organize a pedagogical program that is developmentally appropriate. Working with children with special needs also demands collaboration with paramedical staff and of course with the child's parents. Very often it is the kindergarten teacher who is the one to identify the child's difficulties and as a result have to support and understand the processes the parents go through, disbelief, anger, depression and eventually, acceptance (Lerner et al., 2003). The kindergarten teacher needs to empower, counsel and support the parents in very often difficult decisions. Placing a child into an inclusive setting is not sufficient to promise that the inclusion will be successful (Vakil, Welton, O'Conner, & Kline, 2009).

There is little research that focuses on the effects of program quality for children with special needs as in comparison to evaluating tools that have been developed to evaluate educational frameworks for children in the mainstream. Inclusive Classroom Profile has been developed and validated (Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011). This evaluation tool consists of eleven items featuring essential inclusive classroom practices, for example, adaption of space and materials, adult interactions and guidance, adaption of group activities and other factors. In addition, the instrument includes several qualitative measures, for example descriptions of kindergarten teachers' behaviors. This tool shows a high level of reliability and could be used to measure the quality of inclusion practices.

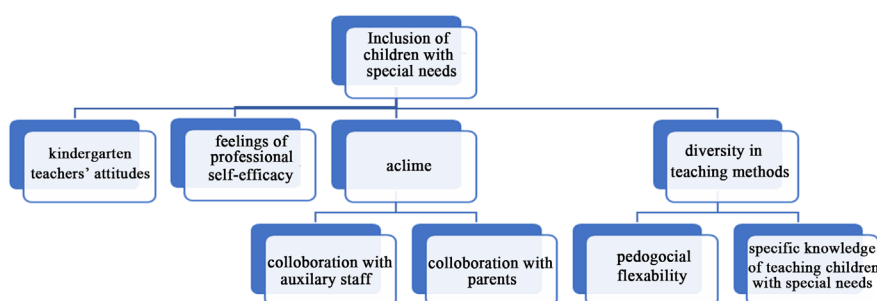
## **2.3. Self-Efficacy of Kindergarten Teachers as a Factor in Promising Successful Inclusion**

According to the theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) cognitive processes are central in self-regulating behavior. He suggested that "cognitive processes mediate change, but that cognitive events are induced and altered most readily by experiences of mastery arising from effective performance" (Bandura, 1977: p. 191). Therefore it is imperative for an individual to have the necessary knowledge and skills in addition to feeling self-confidence and a feeling of competency in order to succeed in their efforts to be successful in the inclusion of children with special needs.

Self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs that they can bring about desirable

changes in pupils' behavior and achievement (Guo, Justice, Sawyer, & Tompkins, 2011). It has been shown in previous research that teachers' feelings of self-efficacy in inclusion situations affect teachers' attitudes, management classroom skills and the students' academic achievements (Ahsan, Sharma, & Deppler, 2012; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In a study conducted by Main and Hammond (2008) it was found that preservice teachers that reported high levels of self-efficacy were more successful in managing inclusive programs.

Factors affecting successful inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream kindergartens:



This research aimed to investigate the dilemmas and challenges facing kindergarten teachers in inclusive kindergartens and how the kindergarten teachers' attitude to inclusion effects the success of inclusion and whether the kindergarten teachers' way of coping with inclusion effects their feeling of professional self-efficacy.

#### Research Questions

- 1) What are the challenges and dilemmas facing kindergarten teachers in the inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream kindergarten?
- 2) How does the kindergarten teachers' attitudes effect the success of the inclusion?
- 3) How does dealing with inclusion affect the kindergarten teachers' feeling of professional self-efficacy?

### 3. Method

#### Participants

The participants in this research were five kindergarten teachers in the north of Israel between the ages of 40 - 46. All five kindergarten teachers were female, had trained as mainstream kindergarten teachers. Four of the kindergartens were secular and one religious. The number of children in the kindergartens ranged from 20 - 28. The population of the kindergartens included children with special needs. All kindergartens were in rural settlements. The children with special needs visited the kindergartens on a regular basis. One of the children was enrolled in a part time program at the mainstream kindergarten as well as being a student at the special education kindergarten. The interviews took place

in the kindergartens.

This was a qualitative research, qualitative research allows the researcher to gain an insight into thoughts, feelings and personal experiences of the interviewees. The researcher used in depth interviews to enable her to understand the internal world of the kindergarten teachers and get a better understanding about their concerns and dilemmas in teaching children with special needs within a mainstream kindergarten. The data were transcribed and analyzed by content analysis.

#### 4. Results

This research aimed to examine the dilemmas and challenges facing kindergarten teachers, the kindergarten teachers attitudes towards inclusion and the effect of inclusion on feelings of professional self-efficacy.

During the interviews the kindergarten teachers expressed their experiences and views considering the success of the inclusive practices and identified the challenges and dilemmas that they faced concerning the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream kindergartens.

The emerging themes that arose from the data revealed the following themes:

- 1) Challenges and dilemmas.
- 2) Attitudes.
- 3) Collaboration with other professionals.
- 4) Collaboration with the children's parents.
- 5) Professional self-efficacy.
- 6) The availability of suitable resources.

Challenges and Dilemmas:

M. a child with special needs on the autistic spectrum, 4 years old attends the local kindergarten for the second year, and in the first year had a special assistant whom worked exclusively with him.

The kindergarten teacher S. in the first year found that she was not building up her connection with M.

S. "I decided to take my place by force. In time I learnt to tell D. to move aside and that I would be working with M".

S. "It was very frightening for me in the beginning, I asked myself questions. Am I capable of doing this. Where do I put my boundaries"?

E. A kindergarten teacher that finished her studies four years ago:

"She demands all my attention, I feel there is her, and the rest of the children. It feels like she demands the same attention as the rest of the kindergarten. All day long I have to make sure that she is given positive feedback, I have to keep my eye on her all day long".

V. "He needs time of one on one, but if I do that what about the other children"?

V. "I cannot give him what he needs, it means that I am less available for the other children. If I give him what he needs then the other children suffer".

Y. "The kindergarten is a place where he feels comfortable and safe, but I am



not sure if it advances him educationally. He likes to be in front of the computer, he is relaxed and quite there, which is good for us and for him. But it feels terrible, a waste”.

Y. “It would be different if he was in a program where he would be in my kindergarten half-time”.

E. “I am there to do the mediating, then the idea works, but it doesn’t don’t really work, they (the children) are playing near to each other but not with each other. He is feeling good that he is near them and the other children receive the praise from me”.

C. “He is supposed to go to first grade in September, but he is nowhere near ready. If his mother would have agreed to put him in a special education kindergarten, at least part time, he would be in a better situation. Another year in my kindergarten will not advance him in any way. I am doing everything I can to persuade them that next year they will enroll him into a part time program in a special education kindergarten”.

V. “We are at the beginning of the year, even though we give all our support and try to include him in all activities, it is always detrimental to the other children”.

Y. “In my previous experience in my last kindergarten, I had a child who was supposed to be in special education and the parents did not agree. The other parents complained to the local council, to the supervisor. They gave us an extra member of staff that was supposed to be exclusively for this child, but it was a terrible year. I felt that I was not doing my job properly and the other children missed out. When I came to this kindergarten and learnt that there was this boy who had special needs I was determined that this time it would be different”.

V. “I sometimes let him use the computer instead of being in circle because there is no one available to sit with him, or when I need to work with another group of children. It pains me to do this, but only like this can I give the other children the attention that they deserve”.

E. “If I am not near him or I do not look at him all the time or mediate the interactions with the other children, it all falls apart”.

C. “It hurts me very much to see B. he would be better off in a part time program. Especially concerning the other children, they find it difficult to be with him. If he was in a part time program and came to us twice a week from a special education kindergarten it would be different. We would be able to receive him, the children would have more patience and tolerance for him”.

#### Attitudes

Y. “The fact that M. is in our kindergarten, I think that it is a present and I am for inclusion. I am also for the fact that the other children experience being with a child that is different. But I don’t know how I would accept another child with physical defects. I would find that much more difficult”.

E. “I have a humanistic approach, that everyone is equal and everyone gets a chance. I come from that position totally”.

E. “We emphasize in our kindergarten the values of consideration for others”.



“I believe in integration, and want to bring my kindergarten the idea of integration, how to teach children to accept others who are different, how to bring my staff to include the child with special needs into the kindergarten, but it needs to be in small portions of time. It is not impossible in the full time program but it demands certain conditions. I am totally for integration but it needs to be limited in time and with certain conditions. It can not be at the expense of the other children”.

V. “It would have been better if he were to come to the kindergarten twice a week, socially. Today he is on the borderline of being rejected. The rest of the children have a limit to how much they can tolerate him, his violent behavior, the swearing and the destroying of their buildings and work”.

C. “The idea of inclusion is not successful, we make sure that B. is looked after physically but without the proper resources we are missing the objectives. The children do not accept him as equal to them”.

#### Collaboration with Other Professionals

S. “I asked for help from the special education kindergarten, how to mediate with M”.

“I asked the psychologist to observe him and he told M parents that the special assistant was not suitable because she did not let M. act freely enough”.

E. “I spoke with the psychologist and we have started to observe her in a consistent way and we are due to apply to the inclusion committee to ask for extra resources for her”.

E. “The psychologist will work with the parents and give them advise about how to behave with her”.

E. “The father was less willing he said to me “she is just like me. I was just like her as a child”.

V. “I asked him to come to the meeting with the psychologist, but he didn’t arrive to the meeting”.

E. “I am very happy with the working relationship that I have with the kindergarten teacher from the special education kindergarten. We work together and everything is well organized. The communication with the parents is combined and each one knows her place”.

Y. “This year I work more intensively with the psychologist, we are completely attuned and work very closely together and I learnt a lot from her”.

V. “I make sure that I navigate the psychologist’s hours in a way that will allow me to answer all the needs in the kindergarten. It is very easy to get into a pattern where all the resources go towards the child with the special needs”.

#### Collaboration with the Parents

S. “His mother is very scary, very aggressive and I was lacking in confidence as a new kindergarten teacher with little experience. There was no trust at the beginning”.

C. “I never thought of what the parents were going through, I do not have that ability. I am able to understand the parents of other children that arrive cranky in the morning, or are having problems, but I never took the time to think what

M.'s parents are going through”.

E. “We learnt during the year to trust each other”.

“After the Chanuka party his mother came up to me and told me how disappointed she was. I remember that was a significant point for me, I had done everything that I could or knew how to do”.

E. “In day care they were very strict with her. I told her mother I did not believe in this way of working. I do not want her to be frightened of me”.

E. “I talked about her mother about filling in forms to ask for extra help and fortunately she was willing to collaborate with me”.

Y. “I am very nervous about dealing with the parents, and each time I am surprised. I feel that with each year that passes they have learnt to trust me more”.

Y. “We had a meeting with the parents and with the psychologist and the kindergarten teacher that is working with him one on one. The kindergarten teacher asked me if we could not transfer him to special education in the middle of the year. The mother was not willing to move him at all, she wants him to stay in the mainstream kindergarten because of the social relationships. To move him out of this kindergarten would mean that after the kindergarten, he would not have any friends”.

V. “From the first time that we spoke, I suggested that they went together for counselling, but the father is not willing to cooperate. In all our conversations and meetings, I tried everything to try to meet with the father but did not succeed”.

S. “I tell the mother everything. She told me that her son is happy to come to the kindergarten. She feels good about our communication, which is different to what she experienced last year. So she feels good about the kindergarten and sleeps easily at night”.

Professional Self-Efficacy

Y. “It is not easy to manage a kindergarten when there is a child with special needs, not even for more experienced kindergarten teachers, even more so for a kindergarten teacher in her first year”.

S. “I did not know how to do this”.

S. “In my first year I arrived on the kibbutz, no one prepared me for this, I had no experience or knowledge no one explained to me what is a child with special needs, you have to do this or other things. Today I am more experienced, today M. is in his second year in the kindergarten, I have more knowledge, so does he, he knows what is expected of him”.

“I see myself, how much I am invested and how much I give of myself. I do everything I can to make sure that M. feels good, that his parents feel good, that the other children feel good”.

S. “In the second year I am taking much more responsibility for him, because he is now totally mine. Not under someone else”.

E. “I do not want her to be frightened of me, my way of doing things is different. I told the mother that I believe that we need to teach her and give her more time, in the end she will learn”.

V. "The best thing I did was to send N. to the special kindergarten half time. He received all the treatment he needed in the kindergarten and is stronger and will be able to fit in with the first grade at the local school in September".

S. "I have learnt that what I broadcast to the parents will be what they accept. If you show anxiety or lack of reassurance, then they will find it more difficult to trust you and follow your lead".

Y. "I go to sleep easily at night and feel that I am fulfilling my professional duties".

#### Resources

V. "You know we are limited in the number of children that we can ask for special resources. Each year it is becoming more and more difficult to receive the necessary resources. Last year I was able to receive help for children with emotional difficulties, this year impossible".

Y. "I know that with inclusion the kindergarten teacher is supposed to receive professional help, counselling, advice, paramedical professional help, like speech therapist, occupational therapist etc. When you don't get that help, because the parents waived their rights, that leaves me, the kindergarten teacher with the knowledge that I have and my instincts to try to work through this by trial and error. That means that the success of inclusion and the possibility of feeling that you are successful is dependent on the resources and the support you get".

C. "Inclusion that does not come with resources, or with the necessary professional advise, if it means extra staff or part time programs or professional consultation does not enable us to fulfill the targets of inclusion in a professional way".

#### Auxiliary Staff

E. "All the members of my staff know how to be with the child. In the beginning they did not want me to send him to the special education kindergarten".

Y. "There is a lot of empathy from the staff, the mother is very happy".

V. "We work as a team, we work together have the same messages. I told the staff that it is very important that we work together".

C. "The staff is very involved, we talk about how to be with B. in staff meetings. In the beginning it was V. (kindergarten teacher) tell us what to do, how to behave . Give us some kind of tips how to behave".

S. "I told them there is no right way or wrong way it is a matter of trial and error to see what works with him. There are good days and not so good days. We discuss our interactions with him a lot because there is a great deal of difficulty".

S. "Our message is to let him feel good, to feel secure and loved, because it is very easy to get angry and frustrated".

Y. "I make sure that the work is equally divided so that not only one member of the staff has to deal with the difficulties, and that way it is easier for all of us".

V. "It is different between the staff, there are those that hug and kiss and there are those that are more didactic, and those that find it more difficult. It makes it easier that he is very warm, hugs and gives us a lot of love".

## 5. Discussion

The philosophy of inclusion comes from a democratic humanistic view of equal rights and opportunities for diverse populations. The law of special education and inclusion in Israel is based on this agenda. The promotion of human dignity and the aspiration for equal opportunity. Each and every child is entitled to learn, according to his or her own abilities. In order to provide equal opportunities, a range of special support systems and specifically adapted instructional modes have been developed for children with a variety of difficulties and disabilities (2002). This research investigated the practical side of the implementation of the law from the experiences of kindergarten teachers who are required to implement this law in their kindergartens. None of the kindergarten teachers who participated in this research had professional training in special education.

The research questions that this research addressed were:

- 1) What are the challenges and dilemmas facing kindergarten teachers in the inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream kindergarten?
- 2) How do the kindergarten teachers' attitudes effect the success of the inclusion?
- 3) How does dealing with inclusion affect the kindergarten teachers' feeling of professional self-efficacy?

What are the challenges and dilemmas facing kindergarten teachers in the inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream kindergarten?

To ensure that the inclusion programs are successful it is necessary to provide certain conditions. According to the literature professional training, class load, support and time, and other resources were shown to be influential in effecting the quality of the inclusion programs (Smith & Smith, 2000). In this present research it was shown that all these factors were thought to be inadequate to allow the kindergarten teachers to feel that they were able to successfully activate the inclusion program, "I don't know how to do this".

Training: "In my first year I arrived on the kibbutz, no one prepared me for this. I had no experience or knowledge, no one explained to me what is a child with special needs".

Class load: According to kindergarten teacher E. "She demands all of my attention. I feel there are her and the rest of the children. It feels like she demands the same attention as the rest of the kindergarten".

Support: "I know that with integration the kindergarten teacher is supposed to receive professional help, counselling, advice, paramedical professional help, like speech therapist, occupational therapist etc. When you don't get that help, because the parents waived their rights, that leaves me, the kindergarten teacher with the knowledge that I have and my instincts to try to work through this by trail and error. That means that the success of integration and the possibility of feeling that you are successful in integrating is dependent on the resources and the support you get".

Time and resources: "You know we are limited in the number of children that

we can ask for special resources. Each year it is becoming more and more difficult to receive the necessary resources. Last year I was able to receive help for children with emotional difficulties, this year impossible”.

How do the kindergarten teachers' attitudes effect the success of the inclusion?

The literature indicates that the positive attitudes of teaching staff concerning the idea of inclusion effects the rates of success especially after the teachers had experienced inclusion (Villa et al., 1996). In addition a study conducted in the United States of America concerning the policy of inclusion, it was shown that the majority of teachers who had not experienced inclusion were negative to the idea (Vaughn et al, 1994). In the present research nearly all the kindergarten teachers were positive about the idea, but experienced difficulties in the implementation as was reported in the literature (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000).

“The fact that M. is in our kindergarten, I think that it is a present and I am for inclusion. I am also for the fact that the other children experience being with a child that is different”. But I don't know how I would accept another child with physical defects. I would find that much more difficult”.

And in addition, kindergarten teacher V. I have a humanistic approach, that everyone is equal and everyone gets a chance. I come from that position totally”.

“We emphasize in our kindergarten the values of consideration for others”. In comparison one kindergarten teacher stated “The idea of inclusion is not successful, we make sure that B. is looked after physically but without the proper resources we are missing the objectives. The children do not accept him as equal to them”.

How does dealing with inclusion affect the kindergarten teachers' feeling of professional self-efficacy?

Self-efficacy is a teachers' belief that they can bring about desirable changes in pupils' behavior and achievements (Guo, Justice, Sawyer, & Tompkins, 2011). The kindergarten teachers in this present study, expressed frustration.

“It is not easy to manage a kindergarten when there is a child with special needs, not even for more experienced kindergarten teachers, even more so for a kindergarten teacher in her first year”.

But also, feelings of competency and satisfaction: “I see myself, how much I am invested and how much I give of myself. I do everything I can to make sure that M. feels good, that his parents feel good, that the other children feel good”.

“I go to sleep easily at night and feel that I am fulfilling my professional duties”.

It can be seen that the inclusion of children with special needs within mainstream kindergartens brings with it a complex myriad of dilemmas and challenges for the kindergarten teacher. There seems to be a gap between the philosophical, ideological side and the implementation in the field. It is not sufficient to decide to implement a policy of inclusion within the mainstream education system, it is essential to provide the necessary resources, training and constant emotional and professional support for the kindergarten teachers to enhance

their feelings of self-efficacy when facing the challenges of inclusion within the mainstream kindergartens.

## 6. Conclusion

This research was limited in the size of the research population, and the fact that all the kindergarten teachers came from the north of the country. It is recommended in future research to increase the size of the research population and to examine if there is a significant difference in feelings of professional self-efficacy between kindergarten teachers who have more years of professional experience than to those who are new to the profession. The main contribution of this study is helping to understand the challenges and dilemmas that a mainstream kindergarten teacher faces when having to implement the policy of inclusion in her kindergarten. Therefore the researcher recommends that all teacher training programs address this issue and provide professional training in this area to enable future kindergarten teachers to feel professionally capable in being able to implement a program based on knowledge and not just depending on their instincts or trial and error and by so to ensure that children with special needs are truly included in the communities that they live and are educated in.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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