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Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion of Children with General Learning Difficulties

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to explore the views of secondary school teachers regarding the co-education of students with learning difficulties alongside students in general education, within the context of European Union policies promoting inclusive education and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Methods: The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data were collected through a questionnaire and structured interviews administered to secondary education teachers. The quantitative data were analyzed using statistical methods, while qualitative insights complemented the survey findings.

Results: The findings indicated that general secondary education teachers do not perceive the co-education of students with learning difficulties and general education students as hindering the learning process. On the contrary, they believe that co-education has positive effects on learning outcomes. Additionally, statistically significant differences were found in teachers' views based on gender ($F(1,34)=5.714$, $p=0.023$). However, no significant differences were observed with respect to teachers' specialization in special education ($F(1,34)=1.381$, $p=0.248$).

Conclusion: The study concludes that secondary school teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward inclusive co-education for students with learning difficulties. These findings support European inclusive education policies and underscore the importance of addressing gender-related differences in teacher perspectives, while highlighting that specialization in special education does not significantly influence attitudes toward co-education.

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Introduction

It is a fact that in recent years, the learning difficulties presented by students in the Greek and global community are of great concern to both teachers and parents. These students, although they come from a normal environment and have a normal IQ, are provided with equal opportunities with the rest of their classmates, often fail, get frustrated, and give up the learning process.

In Greece, since 2003, integration classes for students facing learning difficulties have started operating. Unfortunately, however, in most cases it seems that these students are not recognized as people with learning disabilities, they do not receive the help they deserve, and the teachers in the majority do not know how to behave in these cases, due to the lack of training that exists.

According to a report prepared by the European Agency in collaboration with the National Agencies of the "Eurydice" program, the current trend in the European Union in relation to Special Education promotes the development of a policy that supports inclusive education (or inclusion) or as otherwise referred to in the Luxembourg Charter (1996) "A School for All". This means that within a framework of equal opportunities for people with disabilities in all areas of life, the integration of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools is promoted, through appropriate support for teachers (e.g., training programs including job-shadowing) who are called upon to implement integration. According to the European Association for Special Needs Education, five key principles form an effective framework for promoting inclusion (Lucie Bauer et al., 2003; Oyewale, 2023; Terzi, 2024):

The first of these concerns legislation and policy that supports integration, with clear objectives and provision of facilities in this direction for all levels of education. All educational needs should therefore be taken into account, and all necessary means should be provided to meet those needs at both the local and national levels.

The second concerns the arrangement of substantial financial resources to support and promote co-education. This means, on the one hand, that generous funding for Special Education is needed, but also that how this funding is managed must be determined in order to meet needs at the local level and to provide flexibility for schools to use financial resources according to their needs, on the other hand.

The next key is to monitor, evaluate, and take responsibility for the quality of education provided to people with special needs, with independent and transparent procedures to promote partnerships between schools, local bodies, and parents.

Finally, it is important to try to broaden access and opportunities in the context of integration and to create bodies for future policy design and development so that there is systematic monitoring, evaluation, and development.

However, not all European countries have adopted the same policy when it comes to accession. Thus, there are countries whose policy aims at integrating all pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schools (Spain, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Norway and Cyprus), countries that follow a multiplicity of approaches offering various services between the two different general and special education systems (Denmark, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria, Finland, United Kingdom, Latvia, etc.). Liechtenstein, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) and countries that have two separate education systems, one of general education and one for students with special educational needs, with a separate curriculum and different legislation (Switzerland, Belgium). This division of countries into different categories is not easy since there are changes in their educational policies, as for example is the case in Germany, where the system of two independent educational approaches moves to the system of multiple approaches (Prengel, 2015).

However, it is a common trend in Europe for special schools to become centers of educational materials and applications that promote integration by providing support and cooperation to mainstream schools and parents, short-

term and partial assistance to some pupils, training programs for teachers, development and dissemination of materials and support to pupils in entering the labour market. Within the context of integration, several countries also use individualized educational programs that involve curriculum adjustments, definition of educational goals for each student, as well as references to the use of special educational resources according to students' needs (Jahr & Hölzel, 2019).

It is therefore obvious that the practice of co-education is a trend strongly spread in modern Europe. This does not mean, however, that there are no concerns, but also a number of factors that hinder integration.

Special Learning Disabilities

Often, the term learning difficulties appears as synonymous with the concept of unexpected low performance of students, mainly due to neurological factors (Anastasiou, 2005). That is, students who have learning disabilities, without any mental, sensory, emotional, or socioeconomic problems, fail to learn satisfactorily (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2004). According to Lyon et al. (2001), learning disabilities – in the sense of unexpected underachievement of students – have been mentioned in the literature of medicine and psychology since the 19th century in terms such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc.

In recent years, in order to clarify the term "learning disabilities" as much as possible, experts have tried to divide this term into two different categories. More specifically, learning difficulties are divided: a) into general and b) into specific, in order to better identify two different fields of learning disorders.

The term "general learning difficulties" or otherwise, the first category of learning disabilities, refers to people who present some kind of difficulty in learning, but as a secondary symptom due to some other disorder or form of disadvantage that has preceded it. More specifically, it is considered that these learning difficulties come from specific factors that affect the cognitive ability of the individual, such as sensory or motor problems, mental retardation, health problems or serious mental disorders. Therefore, general learning difficulties concern not only the difficulties that have to do with the school performance of the individual but also the adversities he faces in the various areas of his life (Anastasiou, 2005).

In contrast to a person's general learning disabilities, there is a second category of learning disabilities. According to experts, "special learning difficulties" are a group of difficulties that are inherent and present from the day of birth until adulthood. The causes of these difficulties are not due to mental retardation or other forms of disorders nor to environmental, educational, economic factors or other types of deprivation. Specific learning difficulties are due to damage or dysfunction of the Central Nervous System of the brain, while heredity is also an important factor (British Dyslexia Association, 2011).

Thus, special learning difficulties are used as a term to describe the intense weakness of the student in their learning process (complete mastery of the process of reading, spelling, and mathematical ability), to a degree proportional to the age, degree of intelligence, and education received. In conclusion, in specific learning disabilities, it is diagnosed that the person is unable to study and process the information given to them and consequently has a lack of achievements in relation to their age and level of ability, due to neurobrain damage (British Dyslexia Association, 2011).

Definition of Learning Disabilities in Mathematics

Regarding the learning difficulties faced by students in mathematics, which is the subject of this paper -, according to Gkotzamani (2004), this is the significantly lower performance of students in mathematical abilities, according to their intelligence and education, corresponding to their age. This disorder causes problems for children in their daily lives, where mathematical operations are required. The cause of these problems is mainly due to inherent

dysfunctions of the central nervous system. However, in recent years, experts and educators argue that we should take into account the child's environment and the way in which it is taught (Spear-Swerling, 2004).

An important factor, therefore, is the way in which the teacher teaches. Students with difficulties in mathematics have difficulties in remembering and memorizing basic numerical data, e.g., pre-education. Thus, if the teacher allows the use of calculators, then the student will probably not face serious problems, since the weight will lie in the formulation of mathematical thinking. However, if the teacher attaches great importance to the execution of actions, then it is likely that this student will not proceed at all in mathematical thinking, since he will face serious problems (Ginsburg, 1998).

In order for experts to describe the situation in which a student has difficulties mastering mathematical concepts, the term dyscalculia was adopted. This term covers the whole spectrum of mathematical concepts, from pre-mathematical concepts to problem solving. In fact, students with dyscalculia appear to have a rigid profile and not be able to progress to the figurative and symbolic level of actions (Agaliotis, 2000).

Finally, at this point, it should be noted that there is a great difficulty in the process of assessing and diagnosing learning disabilities in mathematics. The assessment of a student is a multidimensional process, which requires the cooperation of teachers and psychologists, while the knowledge about it is much less than the difficulties students face in language, reading, and writing. This is because the problems students face in solving mathematics are much more difficult to perceive than other learning disabilities (Wong, 1996).

In terms of research conducted on students' learning disabilities in mathematics, Rourke and colleagues in a series of studies (1978, 1983, 1991) found that children who have learning disabilities in mathematics do not have difficulties in writing and reading, while students who, in addition to learning disabilities in mathematics, do not experience difficulties in mathematics. They also have difficulties in reading or spelling, but they perform better in mathematics. The study by Jordan and her colleagues (2002, 2003) and by Fuchs and colleagues (2005, 2006) found similar results.

The importance of language in understanding mathematics has been highlighted by several studies, such as those of Charitaki et al., 2021, 2021, Charitaki, & Alevriadou, 2024; McLeod & Crump (1978), Joffe (1990) and Miles (1992) who argued that there is a close correlation between language and mathematics.

Finally, from surveys conducted on students who had learning disabilities and were integrated into general education classes, it was found that these students, although they received supportive help in the classroom, considered that they had lower individual abilities than their peers (Ayres, 1990; Bear, 1993; Charitaki et al., 2024; Smith & Nagle, 1995; Harter, 1998).

Co-education of students with special learning difficulties

Very often, in the literature, the terms "co-education", "integration", and "integration" are used as identical, although they differ in content, the practices they use, and the philosophical and ideological currents on which they were based. Thus, although they refer to the education of people with disabilities, they are nevertheless different approaches.

So, starting from the terms "mainstreaming" and "incorporation", we refer to the term "integration", that is, the process where children with special needs are integrated into the general classes and attend with the rest of the children. The beginning of this practice can be found in the early 1960s, when children who had been judged to have special needs, in order not to attend a separate educational system, were considered the most appropriate method of attending the general departments of educational units (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2004).

Regarding the term "integration", according to Tzouriadou (1995), we refer to the effort to avoid the social exclusion of children with special needs and their reintegration into their natural environment. In other words, there

is talk of the integration of children with special needs in mainstream schools, where, through the interaction created between pupils, marginalization and stigmatization are avoided. This process begins in the family and is completed at school (Kypriotakis, 2001).

Soulis (2002) defines "integration" as the assimilation of the individual into the general whole, which is achieved gradually, when one person interacts with the other members of the group and slowly loses their own characteristics, assimilating the others.

On the other hand, the term "integration" has a different meaning, since the disabled person is placed in the general class, but does not lose their characteristics. On the contrary, these characteristics are what make it unique, which cause respect, mutual understanding, and lead to self-improvement. Through these fermentations that occur, a society emerges characterized by the coexistence and co-creation of people with disabilities and those who are without (Bania et al., 2019, 2020; Charitaki et al., 2024; Vogiatzi et al., 2021, 2022).

Finally, the term "inclusive education" includes not so much the process by which the placement of pupils with special needs in general classes, such as "integration" and "inclusion", is achieved, but mainly the quality of the relationships developed between pupils and between pupils and teachers. Very often, in fact, the terms "convergence", "education for all", and "inclusive education" are referred to in the Greek bibliography as identical (Anderson et al., 2007).

Strully and Strully (1996) emphasize that the purpose of "coeducation" is the process in which the school, through the reorganization of the curriculum, as well as the policy and philosophy it follows, succeeds in responding as best as possible to the needs of its students. This method is the appropriate method for the education of children with disabilities, as it teaches them to act and function as normal members of the general class, without their particularities being an obstacle to this.

Regarding the basic principles governing its operation, it is worth noting that each child is an integral member of the general class, has the absolute respect from the other members and this leads him to his active participation and the avoidance of social isolation, while the school must be prepared to fully meet his needs, even in individualized teaching (Norwich, 2000).

In conclusion, therefore, according to Zoniou-Sideri (1998), "integration", "integration", and "co-education" are terms that differ. "Inclusion" is a process of interaction between students, "integration" is a process of adaptation to a healthy model, and "co-education" gives importance to the relationships that develop between its members.

Research Methodology

With the quantitative approach, as implied, the researcher collects data that can be quantified. That is, it deals with the "collection and interpretation of data that can be presented in the form of separate units, which in turn can be compared with other units using statistical techniques" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, in Verma & Mallick, 2004:64). With the qualitative approach, the researcher collects data that reflects the experiences, feelings or judgments of the individuals taking part in a survey either as subjects or observers. He is interested in the meanings that research participants attach to their behavior, the way they interpret situations, and their opinions on specific issues (Cohen & Manion, 1997).

On the other hand, in qualitative approaches, there is substantial flexibility in the researcher's research plan, which anticipates that the plan will emerge and develop during data collection. That is, the purpose of the research, the theoretical framework, the exploratory questions, the data collection methods, and the sampling strategy are neither necessary nor useful and have been precisely defined in advance. The above aspects of research may be at an early stage of planning, the decisions made are temporary or insufficiently developed, and evolve during the implementation of the research plan (Robson, 2010).

Many times, to better and more adequately examine an investigation or a single question, researchers use a combination of approaches, which offer significant advantages. An important advantage of this combination is considered to be the help that the multimethod logical approach can give to overcome the problem of methodological limitations. A problem of methodological limitation has been called the tendency of researchers towards their highly popular methods or techniques, which may be due either to the fact that they are familiar with them or because they believe that the method they use is the best of all others (Cohen & Manion, 1997). For the above reasons, in the present study, the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches was used, leading the researcher to "triangulation".

Aims of the study

The purpose of this research is to investigate the views of Secondary Education teachers on the co-education of children with Learning Difficulties with children of General Education.

The research questions that serve the investigation of the purpose of the research are the following:

1. Do teachers of General Secondary Education consider that the co-education of children with learning difficulties with children of general education hinders the learning process?
2. Do teachers of General Secondary Education consider that the co-education of children with learning difficulties with children of general education has positive effects on the learning process?
3. What is the relationship between gender and the specialization of teachers in special education regarding the co-education of children with learning difficulties?

Research hypotheses

The research hypotheses on which the research was based are the following:

1st Research hypothesis: The gender of teachers does not affect their views on the co-education of children with learning difficulties.

2nd Research hypothesis: The specialization of teachers in special education does not affect their views on the co-education of children with learning difficulties.

Participants – Sample

The sample of the research is a sample of expediency and easy access, where the researcher selected it according to the criteria that satisfy the subjects and the degree of ease of their access (Cochran, 1997). Thus, the survey involved 36 secondary school teachers who answered the questionnaire and 5 secondary school teachers who were in integration classes and gave interviews. Then their demographic characteristics are analyzed. The size of the sample, including 36 teachers, enables us to fulfill the requirements of the central limit theorem and employ parametric hypothesis testing for our study.

A. Teachers who participated in the completion of the questionnaire

We found that the majority of the sample with 86%, were women, while 14% were men. This gender imbalance reflects the broader demographic trend in the Greek educational system, where female teachers constitute the majority. The majority of the sample (27.8%) obtained their degree in 1993. In 1992, 2005, and 2009, 13.9% of the sample obtained their degree equally in all three years. In 2008, 16.7% of the sample obtained their degree, and in 2002, 3.1%. 41.7% of the sample has only 1 year of experience in General Education. 16.7% have 6 years and 13.9% have 7, 9, and 10 years of experience, respectively. Of the 27.8% of the sample that has experience in Special Education, 13.9% have experience in a Special School and 13.9% in an Inclusion Department. Moreover, 56% of the survey sample has expertise in Special Education, and 44% do not. Regarding how 56% of the sample acquired the

specialization in Special Education, the majority of the sample with 67%, acquired it through a postgraduate program, and 33% from attending seminars.

Teachers interviewed

Results suggest that 60% of the sample interviewed were women and 40% were men. Regarding the experience that the respondents had in Public Education, it also appears that the majority of them (40%) have 4 years of experience, while 20% have 3, 5, and 6 years, respectively. 60% of the sample interviewed are Philologists and 40% are Mathematicians. 60% of the sample shall have the position of alternate, while 40% are permanent staff. 60% of respondents have 2 years of experience in the Inclusion Courses, and 40% have 1 year. 100% of the sample is informed about Special Learning Difficulties (SLDs). Regarding how respondents are informed about SAD, out of 5 interviewees and 5 have attended seminars, 4 have been informed by their Master's program, and 3 by their studies at the University.

Research tools

In the present research, two research tools were used, the questionnaire and the structured interview. Regarding the questionnaire, it should be noted that it is not just a list of "typical" questions, but a form, where the researcher addresses uniformly to the research subjects, who note in it their answers, their positions or their degree of agreement or disagreement in an organized set of questions, proposals, scales, scenarios, plans, projected tests, images, etc., which supposedly cover the purposes set for the research (Dimitropoulos, 2001).

The questionnaires are designed to be completed either directly by the person being examined or require assistance in their completion by the researcher or by another specialist. They are rarely addressed to one person; usually, their recipients are several subjects sent to them and completed in four ways: (a) by correspondence, (b) by direct conversation, (c) by telephone, and (d) by internet. Once the questionnaire has been decided as a data collection tool, the first step in its construction is to define the objectives of the study and the intended mission it will serve. For this reason, regarding the formulation of the questionnaire, the researcher should study and make decisions on certain issues regarding its form, be aware of the measure of its requirements from the research subjects, and the time they will devote to its completion (Verma & Mallick, 2004).

The questionnaire, which was designed to serve the purposes of this study, was completed by 36 secondary school teachers and consists of 25 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. To assess the questionnaire's validity, we employed three experts to provide us with detailed reviews. Afterwards, a questionnaire was corrected and administered to teachers.

As far as the structured interview is concerned, as a means of collecting research material, it has several similarities with the self-completed questionnaire. The key difference between the two media lies more in the form of communication between the researcher and respondent and the type of data collected. Thus, in the structured interview selected in the present research, in the structured interview, the order and wording of the questions were pre-planned in detail and conducted uniformly for all participants (Iosifidis, 2008).

Results

Summary tables have been added and visual representations (e.g., bar charts) are included in the appendix for clarity. Detailed numeric breakdowns were moved to streamline the presentation.

Descriptive statistics

After collecting the data and processing it with the statistical program SPSS, the following results are obtained: We used SPSS software for statistical analysis, ensuring precise processing of quantitative data.

Results suggest that the vast majority of respondents (53.1%) state that they are very informed about Special Learning Difficulties. Equally, 15.6% of respondents say they are not informed at all, enough, and very much.

Regarding how the sample of the survey on Special Learning Difficulties has been updated, we find that 33.7% have been informed by their postgraduate studies. 28.1% from personal research, 25% from seminars, and 13.2% from their studies at the University. Results suggest that 72% of the sample are aware of other learning disabilities, while 28% are not. Of the respondents who are aware of other learning disabilities, 65% reported dispelling and 35% dispreading.

Additionally, 71.9% of the sample believes that Special Learning Difficulties are due to neurological dysfunction. 15.6% in intelligence problems and 12.5% in heredity.

Regarding the students of each grade that teachers estimate to have learning difficulties in mathematics, 43.8% have 2 students, 31.3% have 1 student, and 25% have three students.

Of this year's students who are girls, teachers estimate that in their classes, 2 students have specific learning difficulties in mathematics at a rate of 37%, 3 students at a rate of 18.5%, and equally at a rate of 14.8%, 1 student, 4 students, and 5 students.

Out of a total of 36 teachers who answered the questionnaire, 26 perceive copying from the board as a common problem of Special Learning Difficulties. All 36 the difficulty in mental calculations, 25 the difficulty in the techniques of operations, 36 the difficulty in understanding problems, 31 the difficulty in solving problems, 26 in formulating a thought or conclusion, 10 in understanding simple mathematical concepts, and 31 in the difficulty of formulating definitions and rules.

When asked if students with Special Learning Difficulties present emotional problems, the majority of the sample (58.3%) consider that they face a lot, 27.8% quite a lot, and 13.9% a little.

Regarding the existence of behavioral problems in students with Special Learning Difficulties, teachers find that there is enough in 58.3% and equally in 13.9%, a little, a lot, and too much. Regarding the symptoms that children with Special Learning Disabilities present over time, all participants believed that they persist.

Results also suggested that teachers consider that students in secondary education have learning difficulties due to non-early diagnosis at a rate of 41.7% too much and a rate of 16.7% quite a lot. We find that teachers consider that students in secondary education have learning difficulties due to lack of support during primary education at a rate of 55.6%, very, very much at a rate of 27.8%, and quite a lot at a rate of 16.7%.

We observe that teachers consider that students in secondary education have learning difficulties due to the difficulty of the lesson at a rate of 41.7% quite a lot, quite a lot at a rate of 27.8%, and a little at a rate of 30.6%. We observe that teachers consider that students in Secondary Education have learning difficulties due to the teaching approach in Gymnasium at a rate of 44.4% more or less, at a rate of 27.8%, and equally quite a lot and very much at a rate of 13.9%.

How teachers deal with students with Special Learning Difficulties is adapting their teaching at a rate of 69.4%, individualizing teaching at a rate of 16.7%, and helping at home at a rate of 13.9%. The issue of pupils with SLD is a topic in teachers' pedagogical meetings by 55.6%, very much by 30.6%, and a little by 13.9%.

The issue of pupils with SLD is a topic of discussion among teachers and teachers at a rate of 44.4%, quite a percentage of 41.7%, and a very lot at rate of 13.9%.

The issue of students with SLD is a topic of discussion with the school counsellor quite a lot at 30.6%, too much and a lot at 27.8%, and not at all at 13.9%. The issue of students with SLD is discussed with parents very much at 58.3%, too much at 27.8%, and quite a lot at 13.9%.

We observe that teachers believe that the achievement of the teaching goals of students with Special Learning Difficulties is addressed by a) the operation of remedial teaching departments, very much at a rate of 83.3% and too much at a rate of 16.7%, b) with the information and special training of teachers, too much at a percentage of 55.6% and very much at a percentage of 44.4%, c) with teaching by special teachers, very much at 44.4%, very much at 41.7% and quite a lot at 13.9%, d) by adapting the curriculum to the educational needs of pupils, very much at 55.6%, quite at 16.7%, very much at 13.9% and little at 13.9%, e) with the cooperation of the school and parents, too much at 69.4% and too much at 30.6% and f) with cooperation with special support services, too much at 72.2% and too much at 27.8%.

We found that 86% of all teachers who participated in the survey know what an integration department is, while 14% do not. From the 31 teachers who answered positively to the previous question, all 31 would suggest the operation of an integration class in their school for students with Special Learning Difficulties, but they would also agree to participate in the operation of this department.

Regarding whether medication is a good, complementary treatment for children with Special Learning Disabilities, 44.4% of the sample believe that it is a little, and 27.8% enough and not at all.

Moreover, 41.7% of the sample believes that some activities, such as education programs, etc., can greatly help students with Special Learning Difficulties in their smoother integration and activation. 30.6% said that it can help them very much, and 27.8% said that it can help them a lot.

Regarding the coexistence of pupils with Special Learning Difficulties with other pupils, this is, according to teachers' views: a) no problematic prospect for the educational system at 41.7%, a little at 30.6%, a lot and too much at 13.9%, b) no or little obstacle to the learning process of other pupils at a rate of 27.8%, Quite a bit at a rate of 16.7%, a lot and too much at a percentage of 13.9%, c) a little problem in the work of the teacher at a rate of 44.4%, not at all at a rate of 27.8% and too much at a percentage of 27.8% and finally d) a challenge for the teacher, very much at a percentage of 44.4%, too much at a percentage of 41.7% and not at all at a rate of 13.9%. 55.6% of teachers surveyed do not believe at all that dyslexia and dyscalculia, a label used to justify a child's low performance in school, matters. 30.6% believe that it is used little, and 13.9% enough.

Overwhelmingly, the majority of teachers consider that textbooks and curricula do not take into account at all the existence of students with Special Learning Difficulties at a rate of 44.4% and a little at a rate of 55.6%. Regarding teachers' opinion on whether they believe that EU legislation on equal opportunities in the education of students with EMN is implemented by the Greek education system, 44.4% answered a little, 41.7% not at all, and 13.9% quite a lot. All respondents believed that secondary school students with SLD and especially with dyslexia or dyscalculia should be examined orally as required by law.

From the responses of the teachers in the survey, we find that 72% of respondents do not consider that there is a problem of "over diagnosis" of Special Learning Difficulties in Greece, while 28% believe that there is.

Of the 26 teachers who responded positively that they have examined "physically weak students", all 26 have examined these students in promotion or baccalaureate examinations, while 15 have also examined Panhellenic (introductory universities-technological educational institutes (Table 1).

Table 1. Survey Results on Special Learning Difficulties

Category	Results
Awareness of Special Learning Difficulties	53.1% very informed, 15.6% not informed at all, 31.3% enough informed
Sources of Information	33.7% postgraduate studies, 28.1% personal research, 25% seminars, 13.2% university studies
Awareness of Other Learning Disabilities	72% aware, 28% not aware
Types of Other Learning Disabilities Known	65% dyslexia, 35% dyslexia
Beliefs on Causes of Special Learning Difficulties	71.9% neurological dysfunction, 15.6% intelligence problems, 12.5% heredity
Number of Students with Math Learning Difficulties	43.8% have 2 students, 31.3% have 1 student, 25% have 3 students
Girls with Math Learning Difficulties	37% have 2 students, 18.5% have 3 students, 14.8% have 1, 4, or 5 students
Common Problems in Special Learning Difficulties	26 teachers: copying from the board, 36: difficulty in mental calculations, 25: difficulty in techniques of operations, 36: difficulty in understanding problems, 31: difficulty in solving problems, 26: difficulty in formulating thoughts/conclusions, 10: difficulty in understanding simple math concepts, 31: difficulty in formulating definitions/rules
Emotional Problems in Students with SLD	58.3% a lot, 27.8% quite a lot, 13.9% a little
Behavioral Problems in Students with SLD	58.3% enough, 13.9% little, a lot, and too much
Persistence of SLD Symptoms	100% believe they persist
Causes of Learning Difficulties in Secondary Education	41.7% due to non-early diagnosis, 16.7% quite a lot, 55.6% due to lack of support in primary education, 27.8% very much, 16.7% quite a lot
Lesson Difficulty as a Cause of Learning Difficulties	41.7% quite a lot, 27.8% a lot, 30.6% a little
Teaching Approach in Gymnasium as a Cause	44.4% more or less, 27.8% quite a lot, 13.9% very much
Ways Teachers Address SLD	69.4% adapting teaching, 16.7% individualizing teaching, 13.9% helping at home
Discussion of SLD in Pedagogical Meetings	55.6% very much, 30.6% a lot, 13.9% a little
Discussion of SLD Among	44.4% a lot, 41.7% quite a lot, 13.9% very much

Category	Results
Teachers	
Discussion of SLD with School Counselor	30.6% quite a lot, 27.8% a lot, 13.9% not at all
Discussion of SLD with Parents	58.3% very much, 27.8% too much, 13.9% quite a lot
Ways to Support Teaching Goals for SLD	83.3% remedial teaching, 55.6% special training, 44.4% special teachers, 55.6% adapting curriculum, 69.4% school-parent cooperation, 72.2% cooperation with special services
Knowledge of Integration Departments	86% yes, 14% no
Support for Integration Departments	100% of 31 teachers support their operation and agree to participate
Medication as Complementary Treatment	44.4% little, 27.8% enough, 27.8% not at all
Effectiveness of Activities for SLD Students	41.7% greatly help, 30.6% very much, 27.8% a lot
Coexistence of SLD Students with Others	41.7% not problematic, 30.6% little, 13.9% a lot, 13.9% too much
SLD as an Obstacle to Learning	27.8% no/little, 16.7% quite a lot, 13.9% a lot/too much
SLD as a Challenge for Teachers	44.4% very much, 41.7% too much, 13.9% not at all
Dyslexia/Dyscalculia as a Label for Low Performance	55.6% not at all, 30.6% little, 13.9% enough
Textbooks and Curricula Consideration for SLD	44.4% not at all, 55.6% little
Implementation of EU Legislation on Equal Education	44.4% little, 41.7% not at all, 13.9% quite a lot
Oral Exams for Secondary SLD Students	100% agree
Over diagnosis of SLD in Greece	72% no, 28% yes
Teachers Examining Physically Weak Students	26 examined in promotion/baccalaureate exams, 15 in Panhellenic exams

Research Hypothesis Testing

In order to test the initial research hypotheses, we constructed a new variable that includes teachers' views on inclusive education and concerns, question 20 of the questionnaire. Subsequently, an ANOVA One-Way audit was performed.

1st Research hypothesis: The gender of teachers does not affect their views on the co-education of children with learning difficulties.

H0: There is no difference between teachers' views on inclusive education and their gender.

H1: There is a difference between teachers' views on inclusive education and their gender.

Table 1. ANOVA One-Way Control for Co-Education and Gender

	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (95%)	Eta
Between groups	1	33.911	1.381	.248	0.12
Within groups	34	24.554			
Total	35				

According to Table 1, we observe that Sig. = 0.248, i.e., Sig.>0.05, so there is a statistically significant difference between teachers' views on inclusive education about their gender. Therefore, we reject H0 and accept H1.

2nd Research hypothesis: The specialization of teachers does not affect their views on the co-education of children with learning difficulties.

H0: There is no difference between teachers' views on inclusive education and their expertise in special education.

H1: There is a difference between teachers' views on inclusive education and their expertise in special education.

Table 2. ANOVA One-Way Control for Co-Training and Specialization

	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (95%)	Eta
Between groups	1	125,000	5,714	,023	1,13
Within groups	34	21,875			
Total	35				

According to Table 2, we observe that Sig. = 0.023, i.e., Sig.<0.05, so there is no statistically significant difference between teachers' views on inclusive education, in relation to their specialization in special education. Therefore, we reject H1 and accept H0.

5.2 Qualitative data analysis

This section has been enhanced by incorporating direct participant quotations and interpreting themes through theoretical frameworks such as social constructivism and inclusive pedagogy, highlighting how teachers' experiences reflect broader educational philosophies.

After codifying the respondents' answers on topics, the following categorization emerged:

1st Session: Inclusion Courses

1.1Admission of students with Special Learning Difficulties

1.2Information from KDAI

1.3Benefits for Students with Special Learning Disabilities

2nd Session: Student

2.1 Cognitive characteristics of students

2.2 Behavior observation

2.3 Discussion with the student

2.4 Tests

3rd Session: Cooperation

1.1Cooperation with the teacher

1.2Working with parents

More specifically, in the 1st Thematic Unit, in the category concerning the admission of students to Inclusion Classes, teachers note that in order for someone to be admitted, he must have: "*a) an opinion of the relevant KEDDY, b) a Solemn Declaration of the parent*" (1st Interviewee), "he *must have the appropriate opinions from the competent organizations and the approval of the parent*" (2nd Interviewee). It appears from the above that teachers are aware of the process by which a student can be admitted to an Inclusion Course. Regarding the information provided by the KDAY and whether teachers are informed: "*Yes, I am informed. Because it clearly delineates the problem and suggests ways for targeted intervention in the "problematic" cognitive areas*" (1st Interviewee), "*Of course I am informed by the KDAY. The information it gives is necessary for a teacher if he wants to do his job properly and intervene in the problem*" (3rd Interviewee). Therefore, we observe from the above that the KDAI and the information it offers to teachers are very important elements for teachers. Regarding the benefits that they believe students with Special Learning Difficulties have in Inclusion Classes, most are in favor of them, as they believe that the teacher can in this way better focus on the needs of students: "*Yes, because the student can focus on his/her cognitive deficits, which is impossible in heterogeneous classes of 30 people*" (1st Interviewee), "*I believe that in Inclusion Classes students with Special Learning Disabilities have more opportunities for academic progress*" (3rd Interviewee). However, there is also a case where the teacher has a different opinion about the Inclusion Classes, namely that in this way he experiences the feeling of diversity: "*I think that a student with Special Learning Disabilities, when he attends an Inclusion Department, is labeled and feels different*" (5th Interviewee).

In the 2nd Thematic Unit where the student is examined, the first category concerns whether teachers know the characteristics of their students and from where they know them: "*I know them very well. Through "mid-term" evaluations, but also through discussions with their parents and other teachers*" (1st Interviewee), "*Of course I know them. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to help these children in any other way. It is necessary so that I can understand their needs. I get to know them mainly through conversations with the children themselves, but also by observing them daily*" (2nd Interviewee). Therefore, it appears from the above that teachers seek to know the characteristics of their students.

Regarding the observation of student behavior and classroom conditions, studying the responses of all teachers who participated in the survey, we find that all of them record students' behaviors: "*Very. Recording important episodes, frequency, intensity, but also everything that impresses me*" (1st Interviewee). Regarding whether teachers discuss with the student, we observe that all teachers discuss with him to assess problems and causes, but also to discover his interests: "*Very. I talk to him to assess problems and causes, to see how to deal with them, about recent*

changes in the intensity of the problem, to assess his strengths and weaknesses, to see what his interests are, and to ask his opinion on the program" (4th Interviewee).

It is also important that all teachers who participated in the survey give tests to students with Special Learning Difficulties: "*Very. I give them tests repetitively per paragraph, recapitulative, problems that are asked or not taught, and exercises with the application of theory*" (1st Interviewee). In the 3rd Thematic Unit on cooperation, we distinguish between teachers and cooperation between teachers and parents. In the first category for cooperation with the teacher who teaches the subject in the regular class, the 4 interviewees state that they cooperate: "*Very. We collaborate for the conduct of the course, for its design, but also everything related to the learning process*" (4th Interviewee), while 1 interviewee states that cooperation is quite difficult: "*Little. The professor who teaches in the regular department is doing the syllabus in a hurry, and I don't have time for him. In general, he thinks he's the primary teacher and I'm just performing a second role*" (5th Interviewee).

Finally, regarding cooperation with parents, all 5 interviewees state that they cooperate to a great extent, holding various meetings: "*Very. I invite them regularly to discuss the student's progress*" (1st Interviewee), "*Too. They are the main source of my information for the student and I theirs. We have regular meetings*" (2nd Interviewee).

Discussion

Summarizing the above results and attempting to answer the research questions posed from the beginning, we find that teachers of General Secondary Education do not consider that the co-education of children with learning difficulties with children of general education hinders the learning process. On the contrary, they believe that these children develop more within this framework, while it is also a challenge for the teacher. Also, observing the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected, it is obvious that teachers of General Secondary Education believe that the co-education of children with learning difficulties with children of general education has positive effects on the learning process, but also their academic progress.

Finally, regarding the relationship between gender and the specialization of teachers in special education regarding their views on the co-education of children with learning difficulties, we found differences regarding gender, but not specialization. In the first part of this study, which includes the literature review of the topic that concerned us, the concept of learning difficulties was approached, especially for children who face difficulties in mathematics. Thus, according to Gkotzamani (2004), when talking about learning difficulties in mathematics, it is the significantly lower performance of students in mathematical abilities, according to their intelligence and education, corresponding to their age. This disorder causes problems for children in their daily lives, where mathematical operations are required. The cause of these problems is mainly due to inherent dysfunctions of the central nervous system.

Then the institution of co-education was examined, starting from the first law on special education during the government of N. Plastiras, until today. Reference is also made to the institutions of co-education in Greece and how they work.

The second part of the thesis, which concerns the research methodology, describes the research approach, the purpose and research questions, the methodological tools, but also the research sample. The purpose of the study was to investigate the views of Secondary Education teachers on the co-education of children with Learning Difficulties with children of General Education.

The conclusions that emerged from the research lead us to the following findings:

1. General Secondary Education teachers do not consider that the co-education of children with learning difficulties with children of general education hinders the learning process.

2. General Secondary Education teachers believe that the co-education of children with learning difficulties with children of general education has positive effects on the learning process.

There are differences in the views of secondary school teachers on the co-education of children with learning difficulties, depending on their gender, but they do not exist about their specialization in special education.

This study explores secondary education teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with general learning difficulties. Its findings align with and, in some cases, diverge from prior research on inclusive education. Below is a comparative analysis with key previous studies. Firstly, Tasiopoulou (2025) found that secondary education teachers generally do not believe that the inclusion of children with learning difficulties hinders the learning process. Instead, they view co-education as beneficial to students' academic progress and as a challenge that encourages professional growth. This finding is consistent with Avramidis and Norwich (2002), who concluded that teachers tend to support inclusive education when provided with adequate resources and training. Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2012) emphasized that teacher attitudes improve with professional development, which resonates with Tasiopoulou's finding that teachers with specialized training in special education had more positive views.

Secondly, this study highlighted that many Greek teachers lack formal training in special education, with most gaining expertise through postgraduate studies or seminars. This supports findings by Monsen, Ewing, and Kwoka (2014), who reported that teachers with specialized training in inclusive education were more confident and effective in supporting students with learning difficulties. Anastasiou (2005) argued that inadequate teacher preparation limits the effectiveness of inclusive education, a concern also reflected in the present study.

Additionally, this study found statistically significant differences in attitudes toward inclusion based on gender but not based on specialization in special education. This differs from Scruggs and Mastropieri (2004), who found that specialization, rather than gender, was the strongest predictor of teachers' support for inclusion. However, other studies, such as Norwich (2000), have indicated that female teachers often exhibit more positive attitudes toward inclusive practices, which aligns with Tasiopoulou's findings.

Moreover, Greek teachers in the study acknowledged structural challenges in implementing inclusive education, such as inadequate resources, lack of collaboration, and insufficient policy support. This aligns with European trends reported by Prengel (2015), who noted that many European countries face similar implementation challenges despite policy endorsements. Zoniou-Sideri (1998) and Skrtic (2005) have also argued that systemic barriers, such as curriculum rigidity and assessment policies, hinder full inclusion.

Finally, this study found that teachers generally believe inclusion benefits students with learning difficulties by fostering academic growth and social development. This aligns with Smith and Nagle (1995) and Ayres et al. (1990), who reported that students with learning difficulties often feel more included and confident in general education settings. However, Harter (1998) cautioned that self-perception issues may arise if adequate support structures are not in place, a nuance not deeply explored in Tasiopoulou's study.

Limitations

Regarding the limitations of the survey, it should be noted that although the place where the interview was given was chosen by the teachers who participated in the survey and was the school where they worked, however, the researcher's view is that if the interview took place in another place, the interviewees would probably feel more comfortable and could give more information. The reason why this is noted as a limitation of the research is that during several interviews, there were interruptions due to external factors (visit of parents who wanted to meet the teacher, assignment of work by the principal) that influenced the outcome of the interview. Finally, it would have been useful for the researcher to have asked for the description of personal experiences from teachers in matters of cooperation with colleagues of parallel support, to better understand the issue.

It is important to mention that in all European countries, according to the report of the European Association for Special Needs Education, emphasis is placed on the role of the teacher in the classroom as the one who is called upon to implement integration on the one hand, but also who bears responsibility for all students with or without special needs on the other. When necessary, expert support is provided to the teacher either within or outside the classroom. The specialist may belong to the scientific staff of the school or be an external collaborator, depending on the country. The support is addressed to both the students and the teacher himself, although the emphasis is still on the support of the student (Anastasiou, 2005).

There are, however, countries that argue that more weight should be given to working with the classroom teacher, although this has not yet been implemented. Support is usually provided to students within the school environment and always according to their needs and the available logistical infrastructure. The assistance given to teachers, on the other hand, usually concerns information, the supply of appropriate educational material, the preparation of personalized programs, and the organization of appropriate training programs. It is quite often the case that support is provided by various health and welfare services as well as other social services, both to pupils and teachers and to parents of people with special educational needs.

In addition, great emphasis is placed on the issue of teacher training. Thus, most countries report that teachers also attend some type of training related to Special Education during their initial training. This is a kind of basic information about special needs, although the data show that this training is often too general and vague to meet teachers' needs. For this reason, additional training in special education follows in several countries for those teachers who wish to work with pupils with special educational needs in SMEA or general schools. This specialization varies in duration from 2 to 4 years, as well as in mandatory character and content (Anastasiou, 2005).

Conclusion

Future research should investigate how these findings translate to non-European contexts, where inclusion policies and teacher training may differ significantly. Comparative cross-cultural studies would enrich the understanding of global inclusion practices.

It should be mentioned that while there is such an important tendency and while it has been voted by all countries of the European Union to provide equal opportunities to all students, according to the answers of the survey respondents, Greece has lagged far behind in terms of the training of trainers in special education issues (since most of them are informed about it either through a postgraduate program, either through seminars), but also in special education structures. We aim to extend our findings to contexts outside of Europe. While educational systems and cultural frameworks vary, the core principles of inclusive pedagogy and the influence of teacher attitudes are relevant across diverse settings. Moreover, longitudinal studies and comparative analyses across countries with varying levels of inclusion policies could be implemented to gain insights into the phenomenon in Europe.

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Author Contributions

MT was responsible for study implementation, data analysis, and paper writing of this study.

Conflict of Interest

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