

**Educating towards Inclusive Education:
Assessing a Teacher-Training Program for Working with Pupils with
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Enrolled in General
Education Schools**

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Abstract

Implementing inclusive education is one of the major challenges facing the educational system. One of the main difficulties in implementing inclusive education is that general education teachers receive insufficient training to work in complex teaching contexts and to respond to the unique needs of all the pupils in their classroom.

The objective of this research was to assess the components of an innovative integrative training program, developed in a teacher education college in Israel, that integrates special education studies with elementary/secondary general school studies (curriculum

and field experience), thus contributing to graduates' sense of self-efficacy in integrating and including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities and helping them develop teaching methods that promote inclusive education.

On the practical level, the findings can help training program designers adapt and/or improve existing training programs. On the conceptual level, this study can contribute to research in the field of inclusive education from the perspective of teacher education.

Keywords: *inclusive education; pupils with special educational needs and disabilities; special education; teacher education.*

Introduction

Inclusive Education – Policy and Implementation

Implementing inclusive education (IE), one of the major challenges facing educational systems worldwide, involves providing equal education for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), as set forth by the United National Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1994, 2008). Research on inclusion policies and implementation describes a controversial topic that raises ethical and educational dilemmas (Acedo, Ferrer, and Pamies, 2009; Nubrown and Clough, 2013). The Inclusive International Organization (2009) has determined that pupils with SEND are still excluded from education in many places in the world. Yet, comprehensive research is lacking, and there is a need to examine barriers to implementing inclusion and a need to define indicators to serve as criteria for success in order to oversee equal education policies.

Acedo, et al. (2009) claim that implementing inclusion policies requires understanding that IE is an ongoing process requiring daily maintenance and involves identifying and removing barriers and constructing a stable foundation of inclusive organization and pedagogy. In examining the research in the field, Shani (2014) identified four main components influencing inclusion implementation: a) policy, legislation and coordination between them and the actual needs in the field; b) quality of

support received by pupils with SEND; c) quality of training for working with pupils with SEND, and d) type of impairment and educational capabilities.

In Israel, the Special Education Law was amended in 2002 to include a section referring to the inclusion of pupils with SEND in general educational settings (Ministry of Education, 2002). As a result, the number of pupils with SEND studying in general educational settings has gradually increased each year. In 2013, around 65% of all pupils defined as having SEND attended general schools (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2013). In view of this rise general school personnel are required to implement inclusion policies and provide a response to the large variance in the classrooms.

Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes toward Inclusion

General teachers are considered the key to the success of IE. They are expected to provide suitable education, to find the required solutions and to respond appropriately and effectively to every problem related to their pupils' diverse needs (Memisevic and Hodzic, 2011). Therefore, their positive attitudes toward inclusion of pupils with SEND are critical (De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert, 2011; Elliott, 2008). Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy and a belief in their ability to motivate their pupils, even those with SEND have been found to have a direct impact on their pupils' achievements and their emotional wellbeing. A high sense of self-efficacy among teachers also influences dialogue and cooperation between school staff and parents in developing individual programs (IP's) (Bandura and Barbaranelli, 1996; Mc Naughton and Vostal, 2010).

Yet, most research examining teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards IE showed that teachers experience frustration, fear, anger and lack of confidence regarding their ability to meet the needs of all their pupils (Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden, 2002; Barning, Knapp, and Neuharth-Pritchett, 2011; Chhabra, R. Srivastava, and I. Srivastava, 2010; De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert, 2011).

Furthermore, the research reveals a considerable gap between the declared desire of general teachers to provide IE and their actual behavior (Huang and Dimond, 2009; Shani, 2015). De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011) found that general teachers have a neutral or negative opinion regarding inclusion of pupils with SEND in their classroom. They reported a lack of required knowledge and a sense of insecurity regarding their ability to cope with IE. In addition, the general teachers commonly claimed they had not

received sufficient training for IE. There was a direct correlation between appropriate training and positive attitudes toward inclusion (Seçer, 2010; Ntombela, 2011).

Thus, fostering and developing teachers' professional perceptions along with providing them the knowledge and skills to promote IE must be part of all teacher education programs.

Training Models for Inclusive Education

In models describing teacher training programs for IE, the nature of the training and the development of a sense of self-efficacy are significant components in constructing teachers' abilities to cope with pupils with SEND. Allday, Neilsen-Gatti and Hudson (2013) defined four basic skills that are essential for the inclusive teacher and that should be instilled during the training period: a) familiarity with the attributes of pupils with SEND and understanding their areas of responsibility as teachers in implementing laws dictating IE in the school; b) expertise in teaching methods adapted to a broad range of pupils; c) excellent classroom management skills for creating the optimal classroom climate and a sense of security among the pupils; d) ability to work as part of a team and cooperate with other teachers and professionals in developing intervention programs. It was found that teacher-training programs do not provide students sufficient professional development with respect to these four skills.

Lengyel and Vernon- Doston (2010) noted that incorporating analysis of events from the field experience during training improves future teachers' ability to cope in a multi-contextual environment while focusing on the unique needs of each pupil. They also found that teachers with knowledge about special education including awareness of rules and regulations, development of IP's, and excellent ability to construct tailored teaching programs, exhibited greater competence in working with pupils with SEND, their parents and inter-professional teams (Simon, 2006; Sindelar, et al., 2006).

Nonetheless, in a comprehensive study that examined how teacher-education institutions cope with training towards IP, Angelides, et al. (2006) found that the concept of special education rather than the concept of IE dominated the course syllabi. For the most part, learning about and training for inclusion are isolated from actual practice, while maintaining the traditional separation between tracks preparing students for "general" teaching and those preparing them for "special" teaching (Shani, 2010).

The literature describes a number of programs offering inter-track training to cope with the rift between special education and general education. One of these programs is the NAHAR multi-track training program, an experimental teacher-training program at Levinsky College of Education in Israel (Margolin, 2010). This program recognized that training teachers to work in a changing reality requiring them to meet pupils' unique needs in the general school setting must be based on practice and on collaborative work of experts from general and special education. In this program, special education students and elementary education students worked together with lecturers and instructors from both fields in a professional learning community that provides integration and connectivity between the fields as well as practice accompanied by reflection. This experience encourages the development of insights and thus helps change each teacher's ability to cope with the challenge of including children with SEND (Shani, 2010).

Research Context and Objective

The objective of the research was to assess an innovative integrative training program based on simultaneous training for special education and for general primary/secondary school education. The aim of the program was to provide students with the responses necessary to cope with the existing school reality in the context of including learners with SEND. The students in this integrative program gain experience in special education settings and in general settings and take a variety of courses in both fields.

The components of the integrative training program that contribute to its graduates' sense of self-efficacy in integrating and including pupils with SEND, and to help students develop the optimal teaching methods for IE were assessed.

Research Questions

The research attempted to answer two questions:

1. What are the main components of the training program that contribute to its graduates' sense of self-efficacy in integrating and including pupils with SEND?
2. What significant components of the training program help its graduates develop teaching methods that promote integration and inclusion of pupils with SEND in the class and at school?

Research Participants

The research sample comprised 25 graduates of the integrative program in 2012-2013 who have been working for a year or two as teachers in general schools. Participants work as homeroom teachers and/or subject matter teachers in general schools and naturally must cope with classes of pupils with a broad range of SEND.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were collected in two sequential stages. The first stage involved structured in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews took into consideration all components of the training program (practical experience, reflection on the experience, curricular courses and workshops). The researchers then analyzed the interviews and identified central categories and themes. A third judge reviewed each of the analyzed interviews to ensure analysis reliability.

In the second stage, the interviewees were asked to reflect on the findings and the analysis. Their reflections were taken into consideration, so that participants' agreement or lack of agreement with the thematic analyses were included in the summary of findings and enriched the discussion and conclusions.

Including the interviewees' input made it possible to increase authenticity and congruence with the context of the categories and themes, as recommended in assessment studies in which participants' perceptions are the initial source of knowledge (Patton, 2002).

The data were analyzed using content analysis intended to identify the primary and secondary categories emerging from the data. Because the data analysis was data-driven, the categories emerged from the data rather than being defined in advance. This type of analysis enables the researchers to keep an open mind in the analysis without determining in advance any known conceptual framework based on theoretical knowledge, thus facilitating discovery and examination of themes deriving directly from the data (Gibbs, 2007).

Analysis of Findings

Three main themes were identified. The first theme refers to the training and includes references to components of theory and practice. The second theme refers to the

teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy emerging from their understanding of their job. The third theme refers to components of the school context that are liable to influence the inclusion of pupils with SEND.

Training: Theory and Practice

This theme amalgamated all the statements in which the interviewees referred to components of the theoretical courses they took during their training and their practical experience in schools. The interviewees felt that the special education courses contributed to their theoretical knowledge and were helpful in their work in the field. They specifically noted courses on the attributes of different population groups, such as pupils with complex disabilities, learning disabilities and behavioral problems. Moreover, many of the interviewees noted the contribution of courses on adaptive teaching, classroom management and coping with the families. In addition to the courses, all the interviewees mentioned the contribution of the workshops that emphasized development of an accessible learning environment for pupils with SEND

With respect to specific content courses in special education, the interviewees pointed to the major contribution of all the basic courses that discussed various disabilities and courses about laws and policies. Some of the interviewees indicated that the course on classroom management and on the families of pupils with SEND's course became more significant when they themselves began teaching and managing a classroom.

The special education courses in which the interviewees learned models and approaches to customized education seem to have given them the tools to develop inclusive teaching because this knowledge is reflected in their work today. One of the interviewees who teaches in a general school where most of the teachers have a great deal of seniority stated that despite her youth, the other teachers consult her. *"I think my background, my degree, what I learned about special education at the college gave me better tools than those of a teacher who knows nothing about special education, who never included 1 pupil with SEND."* Another interviewee noted: *"I am pleased that I learned so much about special education because the teachers at the general school imitate me. They come into my classroom and see that when I teach, in whole-class activities, in groups, at every opportunity, I always use customized teaching strategies and all my experience in special education."*

The interviewees noted that the workshops about customized mathematics teaching, teaching reading and writing and pupils' social skills enabled them to focus on

the individual pupil and to implement what they learned in managing their classroom today. In the context of the workshop on social skills one of the interviewees stated: "*The workshop on social skills helped me understand difficulties in Theory of Mind among special education pupils. In my first year as an inclusive teacher it also helped me record social objectives in each pupil's IP.*"

Many of the interviewees found it significant that during their training period they had to develop IPs and monitor the construction of programs adapted not only to pupils' academic abilities but also to their emotional-behavioral profiles. One of the interviewees mentioned that her experience in the workshop helped her personally cope with barriers and experiences that according to her were "*traumatic,*" as she indicated in her interview:

"For years I was traumatized by math. During my studies I was forced to take a workshop on customized mathematics and to construct a customized teaching program in this field. In my first year as an inclusive teacher I succeeded in coping with the work objectives of the pupils I was teaching. I worked with a group of first graders on math and I used everything I learned in the workshop."

All the interviewees noted they benefited from the courses they took in the special education program—the various content courses and the workshops, which also incorporated applications and individual perspectives on pupils with SEND. None of the interviewees mentioned courses they took as part of their general studies or elective courses in their majors as being helpful or effective in their work today in the inclusion of pupils with SEND.

Integration between special education knowledge and subject area knowledge

The interviewees mentioned the connection between their special education studies and their area of subject matter specialization in their practical experience. Some of them practiced teaching in their subject area in special education settings, while others practiced only in general education settings. Interviewees who did not practice teaching their subject matter in a special education setting described their frustration regarding the

lack of sufficient congruence between the subjects they taught and the areas in which they specialized. The interviewees noted that the areas in which they specialized (elementary or secondary education) did not refer to customized teaching and inclusion of pupils with SEND and that the lecturers did not pay attention to these matters. Moreover, some claimed that in planning their teaching they were taught to relate to the entire class, with less emphasis placed on the extent to which the teaching was suitable to diversity. Their responses showed that today they attempt to include customized teaching in a variety of subjects taught in class.

Interviewees who did their practice teaching in their subject matter areas in special education settings stressed the importance of delving into the topic and claimed that implementing customized teaching in their areas of specialization enabled them to cope with the challenge of teaching pupils with difficulties in the general classroom. One interviewee stated: "In special education you teach many subjects. But the fact that I studied one in depth helps me develop adaptations for my class that are appropriate for a broad pupil population. Indeed, my toolbox can be applied to any subject area and it does not matter whether I teach in special education or general education.

Practical experience

All the interviewees agreed that their practical experience at schools during their training program serves as an anchor in their teaching today, and they all noted that this experience was the most significant stage of their training. Some of the interviewees did their practice teaching at general schools that integrated special education classes. In this setting they taught their areas of specialization both in general classes and in special education classes. Other interviewees did their practice teaching in two different schools—in a special education school where they taught various subjects and in a general school where they taught their area of specialization.

One interviewee who taught in a general school that included special education classes noted: "*I feel I went out into the field with a great deal of knowledge about teaching math in a regular class and less knowledge about teaching other subjects in special education.*" In contrast, another interviewee who did her practice teaching in a similar school context stated:

“ I did not gain experience with many populations, as other students did. Yet, the fact that I've been working for several years at a school whose vision emphasizes and practices integration from the first to the eighth grades causes me to delve into this and this is good for me. I've put all my fears aside. I was spared having to get used to this each time anew, and I was able to concentrate on the work. ”

Some of the interviewees who did their practice teaching at special education schools but today teach at general schools stressed the importance of their special education experience during their training as a factor that helps them include pupils with SEND in their classes. One interviewee stated: *“Because I practice taught in special education during the year and I had to stand up in front of the class by myself, I felt a bit more prepared when I went out into the field. I pay attention more, I try not to lose the pupils even though this is a bit difficult in a class of 37 pupils, but I feel I know what I'm doing.”*

One of the interviewees who works today as a homeroom teacher in a general class referred to the nature, duration and structure of the practical experience:

“ There's no doubt that the practical experience is the real world. It is most important. If there's something that the training program does right it's that already in the first year the students are in the schools. Already from the outset you can tell whether you feel attached to this or not. I remember that in my first year I was quite apprehensive about going to a special education school, but when I got there I discovered a different world. “

Another interviewee who did her practice teaching in diverse settings during her three years of training summed up her insights as follows:

“ You have to taste everything, both special education and general classes. There are special education classes in general schools without any inclusion whatsoever. In contrast, there are special education classes in special education schools that are more inclusive. I'm glad I experienced everything. It's given me a basis for comparison. ”

Some of the interviewees referred to the role of the mentor teacher and talked about modeling that aroused inspiration. One interviewee expanded on this: *“Seeing the mentor teacher can provide practical examples of the theory I hear about in my courses.”*

Another interviewee added: *"You even learn from teachers that make mistakes. You learn what is not worthwhile, what you don't want to take away with you."*

Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Self-Efficacy

This theme refers to the interviewees' feelings and perceptions regarding their ability to cope with IE. Three sub-themes emerged from the interviews: a) professional identity; b) teacher's ability to respond to a broad range of learners; c) teacher's ability to work as part of a team.

Professional identity. Many of the interviewees were concerned with their professional identity. A dominant point in the interviewees' discussions of formulating their educational credo was the perception that pupils with SEND should be the focus. The interviewees' perception of their role was identical regardless of their place of work—special education or general education.

One of the interviewees who works today in a general school setting stated: *"even today in a general classroom it is more important to me to deal with those who need me more than with those that will take up challenges on their own."* In this regard, another interviewee added: *"It's easier for me to deal with those who need mediation and help . . . I am more attracted to that."*

Another interviewee described how the integration of two pupils with special needs in his classroom enables him to realize his educational perspective as a teacher:

"I very much enjoy when they participate in my class I gave them a medal for participation and they were so pleased they took the medal to the school principal to have their picture taken with her. It was that important to them."

He went on to discuss the importance of including pupils like these and of observing the individual because *"despite the hard work this is what makes you a good teacher."*

Ability to respond to a broad range of learners

The interviewees mentioned their ability to provide educational and social responses to the pupils with SEND in their classes. An interviewee who teaches in a general classroom stated: *"The experience I gained in special education classes during my training helps me*

cope with pupils with SEND. One pupil in my class is scheduled for a placement committee, and I am supporting the family." Another interviewee teaches in a school in which many special education classes are integrated, and she copes well with the inclusion of these pupils in her class. *"I have the tools. I know how to handle the pupils who are integrated in my class. I know how to include them much more than a teacher without any background in special education."*

Another interviewee mentioned a sense of mutual proactivity between his knowledge of his area of specialization and his knowledge of special education, which contributed to his sense of self-efficacy in coping with the needs of the diverse pupils in the class. *"Special education places more emphasis on individual learning, observing each child's needs. I take what I learned about special education and implement it in general education."*

Another interviewee explained the importance of discourse during the training period in promoting the sense of self-efficacy she later developed in meeting the needs of diverse learners:

" We spoke about this a lot in the course in which we discussed the practice teaching. I do not see the integration of children with special needs as a burden. There is a paradox here because these children have lower abilities and you respond to them at the expense of time spent with the others. But this is important. I see how this has a positive influence on the entire class."

The interviewees described situations in which they were the ones who coped with the marginal children at the school. One interviewee who taught at a general school described how she made things easier for a boy who spent most of the day outside the classroom. Another interviewee described how in her first year of teaching she coped with a girl who refused to remain in the classroom when the teacher was not present and how she reinforced the girl's participation in the general class.

The interviews indicated that the students' subject area knowledge, their practical experience and their studies in the field of special education gave them the tools to cope with the inclusion of pupils with SEND in their classrooms. This experience and knowledge, while preliminary in nature, gave them a good jumping off point for teaching

these pupils in general classrooms, and the experience provided them a relatively strong sense of self-efficacy regarding their ability to implement IE.

Teamwork. Not many of the interviewees referred to the significance of teamwork in developing their self-efficacy. Though the training did not include a course on this topic, as part of their training in special education settings all were exposed to various examples of teamwork. The concept of teamwork took on a different meaning in their work as teachers compared to their perceptions during their training, and two of them referred to this.

One said the following about the school staff: *"In the teachers room you feel isolated and don't always feel part of the school staff."* In contrast, another interviewee described a positive experience with the staff of a school with several special education classes: *"It's a large staff, an amazing staff; the special education staff gives you a feeling of being part of a unit."*

Another point in the context of the staff emerged from the responses of two interviewees who also referred to the role of the aide in the classroom. One stated that she had not been trained to work with the aide as a partner. During her practice teaching she saw aides supporting children in their integration. Hence, when an aide came to her classroom with a pupil and *"just sat there"* she did not know *"what else I could ask of her . . . because that's what I saw."*

This point also seems to be related to classroom management in the context of pupils with SEND. During their training the students observed different teamwork models, but this issue was not necessarily discussed in depth. According to one interviewee, *"I saw teachers who knew how to 'utilize' the aide better, but we did not discuss how to do this"*.

Only two of the interviewees referred to teamwork as a significant component contributing to their sense of self-efficacy.

Inclusive Education in the School Context

The theme of IE was prominent in the interviews. Even though there was no direct reference to inclusion in the training program, for many of the interviewees the various aspects of developing IE emerge in the context of the school where they work.

Three interwoven sub-themes refer to IE in the school context: the school's educational perspective, updating and preparation in the work of the school staff, and teachers' work with the parents.

The school's educational perspective

Almost all the interviewees referred to the relationship between the school's educational perspective as an inclusive school and their current ability to cope with pupils with SEND in their classroom.

An interviewee who works in a school with a large number of special education classes stated: *"my school is very much in favor of integration and inclusion. Children from my class (a general class) play with the integrated children at recess and do not see anything special about this. They are part of the school."* Nevertheless, she complained that she does not always receive specific information on pupils with SEND. *"I cannot complain that they are not giving me information because perhaps that fell through the cracks. It just happened naturally and we did not receive instructions from the principal to pass on information". She sums up by saying that in her opinion "because this is a natural process at the school sometimes the formal process of passing on information falls by the wayside."*

Another interviewee who works at the same school, also in a general classroom, clarified the importance of social inclusion as part of the school's perspective:.. *"The school stresses social integration, which in my view is no less important than integration in the subject area"*. He describes a school that *"lives and breathes"* inclusion, thus helping him develop an IE perspective as part of his job.

The interviewees also indicated that the school administrative staff is very significant in implementing IE. Administrative staffs that advocate policies backed up by a worldview that sees IE as an inseparable part of the school ecology have an impact on the entire school. The staff shares relevant knowledge, formulates an inclusive school model based on a worldview regarding inclusion and exclusion, and perceives a reality characterized by differences as inspiring growth rather than as disturbing and obstructing.

An interviewee that has worked in a number of school settings described the educational setting where she works today: *"the large special education staff is amazing. The assistant principal, who comes from the field of special education, promotes a very*

inclusive atmosphere and the school principal is also remarkable and gives a free hand to our initiatives". Another interviewee specifically stressed the role of the school principal as leading the school's perspective: my principal does not concede to anyone. Even when things are difficult she helps. She takes the children to her office on an individual basis and really helps them."

One of the interviewees brought up another point. She believes that the school perspective should be assimilated so that the entire staff knows what is expected from pupils who are having difficulties. During her first year of teaching at a general school, the teacher had to cope with behavioral problems and lowered motivation for learning: "The children were given the freedom to wander around outside and to watch the fish in the aquarium in the corridor and the parrot and so on. But I still feel they were not battling for the children to learn and realize their potential". She gave the impression that without a school perspective that promotes inclusion the school seems to be giving up on the child and he feels different precisely because he is allowed to "*wander around*" whenever he feels like it.

Updating and preparation at the school

The interviews revealed that not every school sufficiently prepares for inclusion of pupils with SEND. Thus the staff is not provided essential information regarding how the pupil functions. One interviewee complained: "*I wish they had given me some background on the special education pupils, because when I don't have sufficient information and I only know that a child has ASD but nothing else about him . . . that's too bad. He can suddenly interrupt and I don't know where it's coming from*". She went on to say: "*In the school where I work, despite the inclusion perspective there is no fixed procedure for the teachers to meet and pass on information about the pupil. There's always a sense of pressure. We never have enough time*".

Another interviewee also referred to the information she was given: "*I did incidentally discuss the pupil with SEND with her teacher, but there is no set procedure for exchanging information*". She claimed that this made things difficult for her because often when the girl from the special education classroom did not come to the lesson in the general classroom or did not want to participate, she did not know whether to attribute the girl's behavior to something that may have been dependent on other factors. She admitted

that the atmosphere at the school was very positive regarding the integration of pupils with special needs, but she felt that "*there needs to be something permanent . . . at least one hour every two weeks in the schedule for reporting, so we can update each other*". She recalled that during her training when she helped a pupil integrate into a general class she got a great deal of help from the special education teacher and that helped her support the pupil. An interviewee from another school stated that even though the assistant principal came from the field of special education, she received updates about the integrated pupil in her class only when "*something happened*". This took place "*in the corridor*" and only "*when something required updating and not on a regular basis*".

Most of the interviewees felt that general schools do not have set procedures for preparing important and relevant information for including pupils with SEND. Such procedures are crucial for teachers to be able to function optimally as inclusive teachers.

Working with parents

The interviewees mentioned contact with the parents and the family as a significant factor in their ability to integrate pupils with SEND in their classrooms. Most of them are aware of the importance of the connection with parents, though some of them felt they did not have sufficient tools to cope with this issue. One interviewee told about a first grade pupil that wandered around all the time and "*did not want to cooperate*". She stated that she was the one who contacted the parents. "*With the help of this contact I let her do things like copy from the board, work in workbooks . . . of course not on the level of the class. The girl knew I was in contact with her mother and because of this emotional connection she agreed to work*".

Another interviewee who now teaches in a general classroom complained that he does not have the close connection with parents that he saw in special education classes. "*I really miss the contact with the parents. It's impossible without that. You can give the child everything, but if the parents do not collaborate it will not work. I contact the parents but I don't always get their support*". He also felt he had not been given sufficient tools in his training period to work with parents.

All the interviewees referred to the fact that students should take the course "*Parents and Families of Pupils with SEND*" during their training period.

Discussion and Conclusion

General teachers are key figures in the success of IE policies. They are expected to provide appropriate education and meet the varying educational and emotional needs of their pupils (Memisevic and Hodzic, 2011). In practice, however, the research shows that general teachers do not feel prepared for the task of IE (Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden, 2002; Barned, Knapp, and Neuharth-Pritchett, 2011; Chhabra, R. Srivastava, and I. Srivastava, 2010; De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert, 2011) and that there is a considerable gap between the declared desire for inclusion and what actually occurs (Shani, 2015). One of the most influential factors affecting the lack of a sense of efficacy is insufficient preparation during the teacher training stage (Ntombela, 2011; Shani, 2014).

Models describing teacher training for IE refer to the nature of the training and the development of a sense of self-efficacy as significant components in constructing the teacher's ability to cope with pupils with SEND. The data analysis revealed three main themes, each divided into sub-themes:

1. ***Training: Theory and Practice:*** Curriculum that contributes to customized teaching includes integration between special education knowledge and knowledge in area of subject matter specialization aligned with to practical experience.
2. ***Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Self-Efficacy:*** Professional identity; ability to respond to diverse learners; teamwork.
3. ***IE in the School Context:*** School's educational perspective; planning and preparation processes in the school; skills to collaborate with parents; class size and schools' resources.

Together these three themes produce a tapestry that can be used to evaluate the integrative training program at Levinsky College of Education and thus to characterize the optimal program to train teachers for IE.

A number of points related to the integrative training program emerged from the findings:

1. The subject matter area studies in the elementary and secondary programs and the studies in the special education program are not sufficiently interwoven to allow for coherent learning. The interviewees describe learning and practicing in two parallel tracks. In one track they learned a subject matter area without reference to customized teaching methods or teaching pupils with SEND. In the other track, the focus of the

studies and practice was on pupils with SEND and on customized teaching methods. .

This situation contradicts the basic perception of an integrative program and generates dissonance among those studying in the program. All the interviewees stressed that they formulated their worldview and ability to develop IE as part of their theoretical and practical training during their studies in the special education program.

2. Most of the subject area studies focused on imparting knowledge and teaching the entire class, with little reference to marginal pupils and those with SEND.
3. For all the participants, the practical experience was the most significant component in developing their sense of self-efficacy in coping with IE in their future careers. They stressed that practice teaching at a school in which IE is an integral part of the school ecology is extremely important.
4. A holistic perspective toward pupils with SEND should include teachers' ability to cope with students' academic performance as well as with their behavioral and emotional needs..
5. Collaboration with parents and teamwork are two areas that require more attention. The training program should emphasize these areas in developing teachers' ability to include pupils with SEND. The interviewees in this research did not take a course on "Parents and Families of Pupils with SEND" that was added to the curriculum after they graduated. The training also does not include a course on teamwork with specific focus on sharing and team communication. The interviewees' responses indicated that topics in the program such as learning with colleagues, working in small groups and colleagues' feedback should be constructed in greater depth and based on theoretical knowledge.

Similar to the findings of Allday, Neilsen-Gatti and Hudson (2013), the findings of this research indicate that IE develops out of dialogue among three primary components. The first is that the teacher should develop personal commitment and responsibility to pupils with SEND as part of the teacher's professional identity and job perception.

The second is for the teacher to become familiar with the unique attributes of pupils with SEND and with customized teaching methods both for individual pupils and for groups of learners. The third is that the teacher must develop the ability to recognize and analyze the factors in the school context that support or hinder the inclusion of pupils with SEND.

The research findings also point to the importance of experience with IE during the training period and the importance of developing the ability to conceptualize and connect between theory and practice. Knowledge "about" and knowledge "how" to teach pupils

with SEND are undoubtedly important. Yet, it is no less essential for teachers to see the inclusion of pupils with SEND as an integral part of their worldview and their job. Practicing IE during their training is also essential. Not only does practical experience in teaching pupils with SEND convey the ability to cope with customized teaching. It also provides a platform for identifying perspectives and basic assumptions related to the teacher trainee's worldview regarding inclusion of pupils with SEND.

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