Ο ρόλος των ΚΕΔΑΣΥ-ΣΔΕΥ στη Διάγνωση, Συμβουλευτική και Υποστήριξη των Μαθητών. Απόψεις και Εκτιμήσεις Εκπαιδευτικών Πρωτοβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης.

The Role of KEDASY-SDEY in the Diagnosis, Counseling, and Support of Students. Opinions and Assessments of Primary Education Teachers.

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Abstract: This study examines the perceptions and experiences of primary education teachers regarding the role and effectiveness of the Centers for Diagnosis, Counseling, and Support (KEDASY) and the School Networks for Educational Support (SDEY) in providing assistance to students with special educational needs. Through qualitative research and in-depth interviews with teachers working in collaboration with these structures, the study analyzes the practical application of the services, the challenges faced, and their impact on the school community. The results show that teachers recognize the importance of the specialized support provided by KEDASY-SDEY, but they point out significant problems such as understaffing, inadequate funding, the complexity of referral procedures, and bureaucratic obstacles, which often delay students' access to necessary interventions. At the same time, the need for strengthening communication and collaboration between teachers, parents, and support organizations is highlighted, as well as the continuous professional development of teachers in the field of special education.

Keywords: KEDASY-SDEY, effectiveness, teachers' perceptions

Περίληψη: Η παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζει τις αντιλήψεις και τις εμπειρίες των εκπαιδευτικών πρωτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης σχετικά με τον ρόλο και την αποτελεσματικότητα των Κέντρων Διάγνωσης, Αξιολόγησης και Υποστήριξης (ΚΕΔΑΣΥ) και των Σχολικών Δικτύων Εκπαιδευτικής Υποστήριξης (ΣΔΕΥ) στην παροχή βοήθειας σε μαθητές με ειδικές εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες. Μέσα από ποιοτική έρευνα και εις βάθος συνεντεύξεις με εκπαιδευτικούς που συνεργάζονται με τις συγκεκριμένες δομές, η μελέτη αναλύει την πρακτική εφαρμογή των υπηρεσιών, τις προκλήσεις που αντιμετωπίζονται και την επίδρασή τους στη σχολική κοινότητα. Τα αποτελέσματα δείχνουν ότι οι εκπαιδευτικοί αναγνωρίζουν τη σημασία της εξειδικευμένης υποστήριξης που παρέχουν τα ΚΕΔΑΣΥ-ΣΔΕΥ, επισημαίνουν ωστόσο σημαντικά προβλήματα όπως η υποστελέχωση, η ανεπαρκής χρηματοδότηση, η πολυπλοκότητα των διαδικασιών παραπομπής και τα γραφειοκρατικά εμπόδια, τα οποία συχνά καθυστερούν την πρόσβαση των

μαθητών στις απαραίτητες παρεμβάσεις. Παράλληλα, αναδεικνύεται η ανάγκη ενίσχυσης της επικοινωνίας και της συνεργασίας μεταξύ εκπαιδευτικών, γονέων και υποστηρικτικών φορέων, καθώς και η συνεχής επαγγελματική επιμόρφωση των εκπαιδευτικών στον τομέα της ειδικής αγωγής.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: ΚΕΔΑΣΥ-ΣΔΕΥ, αποτελεσματικότητα, αντιλήψεις εκπαιδευτικών

Introduction

Learning difficulties and behavioral problems are major challenges in the modern educational process, affecting both the academic progress and socio-emotional development of students. Learning difficulties include problems in reading, writing, mathematics, and concentration, without being linked to low intelligence or insufficient effort. At the same time, behavioral problems, such as attention deficit, hyperactivity, and emotional difficulties, often coexist with learning difficulties, complicating school adjustment and the educational process (Snowling, M., & Hulme, 2021; Semel, Wiig, &Secord,2006).
Early diagnosis and intervention are crucial for supporting these students. In Greece, important roles in this process are played by the Centers for Diagnosis, Evaluation, and Support (KEDASY), which replaced the former KEDDYS. KEDASY provides diagnostic, counseling, and support services for students with special educational needs, offering individualized interventions in collaboration with teachers, parents, and specialists (Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, 2022). These services include the evaluation of learning and psychosocial difficulties, proposals for adapted teaching, and psychosocial support for students.
The evaluation of learning difficulties is conducted using standardized diagnostic tools, observation in the school environment, and collaboration with teachers and families. The interventions proposed aim at differentiated teaching, the use of alternative educational methods, and enhancing students' self-esteem and social skills. According to recent research, the combined use of psychopedagogical strategies and technological tools contributes to the more effective support of students with learning difficulties (Snowling & Hulme, 2021).
In summary, managing learning difficulties and behavioral problems requires a holistic approach, combining diagnosis, educational intervention, and psychosocial support. In this context, KEDASY plays an important role in promoting inclusive education and creating a school environment that fosters educational equality and students' emotional resilience.

1.Methodology

The purpose of this research was to investigate the perceptions of primary education teachers in the Drama region regarding the effectiveness of KEDASY and SDEY in diagnosing and intervening for students with special educational needs.
The study examines how teachers perceive the roles and responsibilities of these bodies and the overall support they provide in meeting the educational needs of students. The present study

employs a qualitative methodology aiming for a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding the operation and effectiveness of student support bodies (KEDASY and SDEY).

Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection tool, allowing flexibility in questions and adaptation based on participants' responses. The sample of the study consisted of ten primary education teachers from the Drama region, who were selected through purposive sampling.

The method of data analysis employed was thematic analysis, a systematic and flexible method for interpreting qualitative data. The goal was to reveal and organize recurring patterns of meaning, allowing for a deeper understanding of the multiple dimensions of the data and the highlighting of significant themes.

2. Data Analysis of the Research

2.1 Perception of Role and Importance

The role of the KEDASY-SDEV centers in primary education in the Drama region is crucial, as these centers are responsible for diagnosing, counseling, and supporting students with special educational needs. Teachers' perceptions of these entities shed light on their functioning and how they contribute to the educational process.

2.1.1 Support from Specialists

One of the most frequently mentioned topics in the interviews is the necessary support provided by KEDASY-SDEV centers due to the specialized knowledge and training of their staff. Teachers often face difficulties in understanding the special needs of their students. As one participant noted:

«*Many times, we struggle to understand why a child is having difficulties in class and how to address them…*» (EM8)[1]

Despite recognizing the students' difficulties, teachers feel they don't always have the right knowledge to manage them. For this reason, the support of specialists is crucial, as another teacher mentions:

«*…with their help, we receive guidance on how to address the children's problems*.» (EM1)

The daily challenges that teachers face are varied and involve both learning and extracurricular difficulties of the children, as one participant mentions:

«*I have a child with an alcoholic parent, how do I handle this in class? I need to consult a specialist…*» (EM10)

[1] Educator Man

Teachers acknowledge the need for specialized support and are empowered by the assistance provided by specialists.

2.1.2 Diagnosis as a «Lifeline» and Proposals

KEDASY is considered by teachers to be essential in addressing learning and behavioral difficulties. As one teacher notes:

«It's not our job to diagnose, but to understand if there is a problem and how to address it. In the past, we did it on our own, and it was not effective…» (EW3)[2]

It is recognized that past practices, where teachers tried to handle the issues on their own, were insufficient. The special diagnosis and recommendations provided by KEDASY significantly contribute to improving educational interventions. As another teacher mentions:

«*The diagnoses from KEDASY provide clear guidance for both general and special education teachers, helping us adjust our teaching methods.»* (EM4)

Teachers appreciate the guidance provided, which helps them address difficulties and adapt their teaching according to the needs of the classroom.

2.1.3 Mediation in the Teacher-Parent Relationship

Teachers often struggle with communication with parents, who many times see the teacher as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. One teacher states:

«*In the past, parents saw me as their 'psychoanalyst,' but now we have the support of specialists.»* (EW3)

KEDASY-SDEV centers have the ability to convince parents to acknowledge the issues and seek help for their child, something that teachers couldn't always achieve on their own. As another teacher mentions:

«*Parents listen better to specialists because they see them as more objective in evaluating their child.»* (EM1)

This mediation facilitates the process of assessing the child and seeking appropriate help from specialists.

2.1.4 Teacher Training - Enhancing Teacher Competence

The training sessions offered by KEDASY enhance teachers' knowledge and skills, allowing them to better recognize and support students with special needs. As one teacher mentions:

[2] Educator Woman

«*The training sessions offered are very useful for identifying learning problems, whether requested by us or offered by KEDASY.»* (EW1)

However, teachers point out that while online training is useful, it does not replace the experiential learning provided through in-person meetings, as another teacher notes:

«*Online meetings are not the same as in-person ones. In in-person meetings, we have the opportunity for experiential learning.»* (EM5)

Overall, teachers value the educational meetings and the flexibility they are given to train not only teachers but also parents, strengthening the function of the family and the school community.

2.2. Experience of Collaboration with KEDASY-SDEV

The collaboration between teachers and KEDASY-SDEV is influenced by various factors, both structural and related to the individuals staffing these entities. The main axes that emerge are bureaucracy, understaffing, lack of staff permanence, ambiguity in the recommendations provided to teachers, and the role of the individuals making up these services.

2.2.1 Bureaucracy and Time-Consuming Procedures

Teachers describe the process of collaboration as particularly bureaucratic, which hinders the provision of support to students and delays the implementation of interventions:

«*…those many questions we had to fill out... 100? ... I see the issue as a bit bureaucratic*.» (EW9)

The sense of an endless process enhances teachers' frustration, as they often feel that the result does not justify the time and effort required:

«*There were years when I didn't want to send it because I had to fill out all the paperwork, and I felt like I wouldn't gain anything*.» (EW3)

Simplifying the procedures could accelerate access to KEDASY-SDEV services and enhance cooperation between the involved entities.

2.2.2 Understaffing and Lack of Staff Permanence

Insufficient funding results in understaffing at KEDASY-SDEV and a lack of staff permanence. This leads to significant delays in evaluations and support for students:

«*Often, we ask for something, and they tell us 'in two months.*'» (EW9)

At the same time, staff turnover complicates the building of trust between teachers and specialists:

«*Relationships are built, and it’s more about relationships... both with the child and to gain the teachers’ trust.*» (EW9)

The lack of staff stability negatively affects the continuity of interventions, as teachers must constantly collaborate with new faces, creating fragmentation in the processes.

2.2.3 Ambiguity and Generalities in KEDASY Proposals

One of the most significant issues raised by teachers is the ambiguity of the guidelines that accompany the evaluations. Teachers seek practical directions tailored to everyday teaching practices but often receive documents full of technical terms and theoretical expressions:

«*I received a diagnosis... it had many technical details that were difficult for me to understand... I expected practical ways to help the child.*» (EM8)

This generality leads to a sense of isolation for teachers, who are left to manage learning difficulties without clear directions:

«*Nothing specific comes through; they leave us to walk alone and seek help*.» (EW3)

Teachers request clearer, more understandable, and applicable suggestions so they can adapt their teaching to the needs of their students.

2.2.4 The Role of Individuals in the Collaboration

The collaboration between teachers and KEDASY-SDEV is not stable, as it largely depends on the individuals staffing these entities. There are cases where the staff significantly contributes to supporting students and teachers, but also cases where the collaboration is deemed insufficient:

«*I see psychologists and social workers who dive into the problems, they care, they are concerned... and others who treat the situation with indifference*.» (EM4)

«*The first year it worked well, they did parent counseling, interventions in the classroom... the second year, they mostly drank coffee*.» (EM1)

The fact that the experience of collaboration differs significantly between individuals highlights the need for better staffing, training, and evaluation of the staff within these entities.

2.3. Effectiveness of Interventions

The effectiveness of the interventions provided by KEDASY (Center for Diagnosis and Support) and SDEY (Special Education Support Unit) is fundamental for supporting students with special educational needs. According to teachers, the impact of these interventions is evident through the significant improvements in the students' learning progress, as well as the overall enhancement of the educational process in the classroom.

2.3.1 Improvement of the Student

Teachers report that diagnosis from KEDASY leads to a significant change in the approach to students. The diagnosis not only allows for the provision of necessary special assistance but also modifies the expectations from the child, which become more realistic for everyone involved—teachers, parents, and students. As one teacher points out:

«*The change is enormous at the cognitive level when the student receives the appropriate help*.» (EW2)

Students with special learning difficulties require an individualized approach and support. When this help is provided, the results are impressive, as noted by one teacher in the following statement:

«*...the child is significantly helped and shows progress. Although the parents tried to assist, they did not know the appropriate way. Despite the many hours of study they dedicated, the progress was limited. On the other hand, the intervention of a specialist was effective.»* (EW7)

Diagnosis, besides offering assistance to the students, promotes understanding of their difficulties by both parents and teachers, helping with acceptance and adjustment of expectations. As one teacher emphasizes:

«*A child without a diagnosis can easily be labeled as lazy or indifferent. However, with the diagnosis, we understand their difficulties and adjust our expectations and behavior towards them.»* (EM4)

Recognizing the difficulties of a child and adopting the appropriate approach has a positive impact on their daily learning experience, enhancing their psycho-emotional state and reducing the injustices caused by ignorance.

2.4 Effectiveness of Parallel Support

The institution of parallel support is viewed very positively by teachers, as it not only supports children with special needs but also the entire class. Cooperation with the special education teacher strengthens the participation and collaboration of students while avoiding the stigma often associated with inclusion classes. As one teacher states: «*Parallel support works very positively because it not only helps the child with difficulties but the entire class. The child is not stigmatized as the support is provided within the class, contributing to better cooperation among all students*.» (EW6)

According to teachers, parallel support is more effective than inclusion classes, as it promotes the integration of the child into the regular class and enhances the sense of interaction and collaboration among the students. This not only strengthens inclusion but also improves the relationship between the child and other class members.

2.5 Dysfunctions and Causes

The effectiveness of diagnostic and support bodies, such as KEDASY and SDEY, is significantly influenced by the structures and processes of the educational system. Teachers face many challenges related to the systemic framework and the structural weaknesses of the Greek educational system.

2.5.1 The Educational System

Teachers report that the Greek educational system has serious weaknesses, which hinder the implementation of programs and the achievement of their goals. The lack of flexibility and the teacher-centered structure of the system make it difficult to apply differentiated teaching approaches. As one teacher mentions:

«*The system does not know what it is aiming for, it is overloaded with material and requirements. Differentiated teaching seems like a myth when the school is intensified and guided by the need to complete the curriculum.»* (EM4)

A structural upgrade of the educational system is necessary if we want to achieve a truly inclusive school. Until this happens, efforts to implement inclusive practices remain limited and ineffective.

2.5.2 School Buildings

The inadequacy of school buildings, which are still designed for traditional teacher-centered practices, makes it difficult to operate an educational environment that promotes inclusion. As one teacher points out:

«*The school buildings in Drama are completely unsuitable to support modern educational practices. The lack of multipurpose spaces and special facilities severely limits the ability to apply an inclusive approach.»* (EM4)

2.5.3 The Role of Parents

The role of parents in the process is crucial, as their decision to accept or reject the diagnosis and the proposed support affects the child’s course. The need for parental consent creates obstacles in the implementation of KEDASY's proposals and often leads to ineffectiveness. As one teacher notes:

«*The paradox is that the final decision on whether the child will be referred or not depends on the consent of the parents. When parents do not agree, the process stops*.» (EM4)

The non-acceptance of proposals by parents often results in the lack of necessary support for the child, limiting their potential.

2.6 Teachers' Suggestions

Teachers suggest a series of changes and improvements to the educational process based on the dysfunctions and gaps they identify. Their proposals cover a broad range of issues, from overall educational policy to the specific conditions of school infrastructure and enhancing cooperation with parents and agencies.

2.6.1 Redesign of Educational Policy

Teachers believe that a redesign of educational policy is necessary, aiming to create an educational system that focuses not only on content and the cognitive aspect of the process but also on the socio-emotional development of students with special educational needs. As teacher EM4 mentions:

«*If we look at high school, private tutoring doesn't decrease, it actually increases. What does this mean? It means something very simple: we are very interested in the material, very interested in the cognitive, and the only thing we can respect in differentiated teaching now is that we understand that we should help these children a bit in the socio-emotional when needed. Teaching must be effective for these children*.»

2.6.2 Necessary School Infrastructure and Facilities

Another area requiring immediate intervention is school infrastructure. According to teachers, the existing school facilities do not support the inclusive approach needed to assist students with special needs. Teacher EW6 mentions:

«*I don’t have a good classroom, there are no multipurpose spaces, no music or art rooms, the classrooms are cramped with desks and a blackboard opposite, there’s not even a corner to create something. In this sense, the responsibility for change, let’s say, is transferred to the school, the curricula, the material, and everything that exists today...»*

2.6.3 Role of Parents and Agencies

The necessary collaboration between parents and teachers is considered crucial by teachers for supporting students with special needs. However, teachers report that the current process, which allows parents to decide whether to start the program proposed by KEDASY, causes difficulties and delays. Specifically, teacher EA1 says:

«*I agree that parents should first receive the diagnosis, but they should not decide where the child goes.»*

This situation creates problems in the process, as teacher EA4 mentions:

«*When nothing is imposed, and the role depends on everyone's goodwill...*»

2.6.4 Strengthening Funding and Hiring Special Educational Staff

Teachers emphasize the need for increased funding for education and the addition of more special educators in schools. Teacher EM5 states:

«*Yes, there could be a daily presence of these people in two or three schools, in a group of schools, so you can have the person you need at any time, not just once a week. Also, what we said is to better staff KEDASY so the work can be done better*.»

The lack of staff is a critical issue, and strengthening educational structures will allow for more comprehensive and immediate services for students.

2.6.5 Teacher and Parent Training

Training for both teachers and parents is considered essential for strengthening their skills in recognizing and supporting students with special needs. As teacher EW2 states: «*They should address understaffing, hire more people, help us, and inform parents*.» Additionally, training helps create a more collaborative relationship between parents and teachers, reducing the chances of conflict and creating a common goal.

2.6.6 Reducing Bureaucracy

Teachers highlight that excessive bureaucracy and the time-consuming process related to sending documents and managing evaluations create delays and difficulties in applying educational support. Teacher EW9 notes:

«*...I see the issue as a bit bureaucratic...»*

Reducing bureaucracy and simplifying procedures would facilitate access to services and accelerate the implementation of support programs.

2.6.7 Proposals and Guidelines for Implementing Support

The lack of clear and practical guidelines for implementing evaluation proposals is a common problem mentioned by teachers. Proposals from agencies are often general and do not provide specific directions for helping students. Teacher EW3 mentions: «*...but I didn't have specific instructions on what to apply, how to apply it, I have to judge it on my own...*»

Similarly, teacher EM8 states:

«*Of course, I would like them to propose more specific measures, not just that parallel support is suggested, but to give one, two, three, five ways, five examples of how I can help, because they tell me the diagnosis but don't give me clear ways to help, they leave me to figure it out on my own. I would like more specific suggestions for help*.»

The need for clear and practical directions is fundamental for effectively supporting students with special needs.

Discussion

The study highlights the interaction between educational policy and practice in KEDASY (Centers for Educational and Psychological Support) and SDEY (Special Educational Support Services), emphasizing their importance in supporting students with special educational needs (SEN). Challenges such as understaffing and bureaucracy affect the effectiveness of services, aligning with global concerns about special education, such as insufficient funding (Ainscow et al., 2006). Effective communication and collaboration between teachers, parents, and support staff are fundamental to successful educational outcomes (Norwich & Kelly, 2004).

The analysis emphasizes the need for policy reforms that will strengthen support services, such as increasing funding and improving administrative processes. Enhancing the professional development of teachers can promote an inclusive educational environment (Vlachou, 2014; Lindsay, 2007). Overall, the findings reinforce the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses material and bureaucratic barriers, promoting educational equality and social inclusion.

The research reveals that teachers value the role of KEDASY and SDEY, recognizing their importance in supporting students with SEN. However, challenges such as understaffing and bureaucracy are identified, which cause delays in service delivery and limit the effectiveness of interventions. Teachers emphasize the importance of strengthening cooperation with parents and continuous professional development to be prepared to meet the needs of their students.

The study concludes that, despite positive impressions of the services provided by KEDASY and SDEY, the effectiveness of interventions can be significantly improved by increasing funding, reducing bureaucracy, and improving communication between support agencies, teachers, and parents. Teachers point out that professional development and ongoing support for students are key to enhancing the overall educational experience.

Furthermore, teachers recognize the value of KEDASY and SDEY services in addressing learning difficulties, but delayed support and the lack of continuous monitoring limit the duration of the effectiveness of these interventions. The lack of cooperation from parents is also a barrier to fully implementing the recommendations from KEDASY and SDEY, which highlights the need for better communication and collaboration.

Finally, the challenges identified, such as bureaucratic processes, understaffing, and lack of continuous support, underline the need for systemic changes and improvements in the organization of special education services to ensure effective support for students with SEN.

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