Support Programs for Developing Competences of Teachers as an Essential Factor for Successful Inclusive Education

Programas de apoio ao desenvolvimento de competências de professores como fator essencial para uma educação inclusiva de sucesso

Programas de apoyo para el desarrollo de competencias de los docentes como factor esencial para el éxito de la educación inclusiva

Andrea Hathazi

Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (Romania)

ahathazi@yahoo.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8082-4517

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education represents not only a right of children with special education needs to access educational and social opportunities and experiences, but also a requirement regarding services of successful educational systems that support the principles of equity and diversity. We consider that the main factor for a successful inclusion is represented by the professional and personal competences of teachers, which need to have our continuous and thorough consideration in terms of training, development, and support within the educational contexts. In this view, teachers need to have access to training programs that continuously will facilitate the make use of teachers' knowledge, practices, and expertise in improving intervention and overcome various barriers. These training programs may refer to specialized initial and in-service training, supervision, mentoring, networking, school consultation, working in multidisciplinary teams and personal development programs.

Keywords: inclusive education, teacher training, competencies, support programs, mentoring, reflective practitioner

RESUMO

A educação inclusiva representa não apenas um direito das crianças com necessidades educacionais especiais de acesso a oportunidades e experiências educacionais e sociais, mas também uma exigência em relação aos serviços de sistemas educacionais de sucesso que apóiem os princípios de equidade e diversidade. Consideramos que o principal factor para o sucesso da inclusão é representado pelas competências profissionais e pessoais dos professores, as quais necessitam de uma consideração contínua e aprofundada em termos de

formação, desenvolvimento e apoio nos contextos educativos. Nessa visão, os professores precisam ter acesso a programas de treinamento que facilitem continuamente o uso dos conhecimentos, práticas e experiência dos professores para melhorar a intervenção e superar várias barreiras. Esses programas de treinamento podem referir-se a treinamento especializado inicial e em serviço, supervisão, mentoria, networking, consultoria escolar, trabalho em equipes multidisciplinares e programas de desenvolvimento pessoal.

Palavras-chave: *educação inclusiva, formação de professores, competências, programas de apoio, mentoria, profissional reflexivo*

RESUMEN

La educación inclusiva representa no solo un derecho de los niños con necesidades educativas especiales a acceder a oportunidades y experiencias educativas y sociales, sino también un requisito en cuanto a servicios de sistemas educativos exitosos que apoyen los principios de equidad y diversidad. Consideramos que el factor principal para una inclusión exitosa está representado por las competencias profesionales y personales de los docentes, las cuales deben tener nuestra consideración continua y profunda en cuanto a formación, desarrollo y apoyo dentro de los contextos educativos. Desde este punto de vista, los docentes deben tener acceso a programas de formación que faciliten continuamente el uso de los conocimientos, las prácticas y la experiencia de los docentes para mejorar la intervención y superar diversas barreras. Estos programas de capacitación pueden referirse a capacitación inicial y en servicio especializada, supervisión, tutoría, trabajo en red, consulta escolar, trabajo en equipos multidisciplinarios y programas de desarrollo personal.

Palabras clave: *educación inclusiva, formación docente, competencias, programas de apoyo, tutoría, practicante reflexivo*

Introduction

Inclusive education means the finding of the most efficient support systems for people with disabilities, based on their specific and complex needs, so these systems can contribute to their general development, including communication and language, social and emotional skills, and adaptive behaviors (Hathazi, Rosan, 2019). Inclusive education is strongly connected with terms such as diversity, acceptance, rights, access, equality, opportunity, participation. Inclusive education is defined as being the process that enables participation of children and reduces the possibility of exclusion from curriculum, culture, and local school community (Booth, Ainscow, 2011). Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse (2007) state that inclusion means that all children should study together, in a context in which each individual is valued and is actively involved in what is taught and learned (apud Florian, Spratt, 2013). Inclusive education implies that to a based on the notion that schools should, without question, provide for the needs of all the children in their

communities, whatever the level of their ability or disability" (Foreman, 2011, p. 548 cited by Woodcock, Hemmings, Kay, 2012). Salend (2011) presents inclusive education as being characterised by a philosophy of acceptance and belonging to a community, a philosophy of cooperation and partnerhsip between student, family, teacher and community, respect of diversity and valuing of each person, assuring high quality education and education for all children of the community (Salend, 2011 apud Hornby, 2015). Great importance is attributed to the efficiency of teamwork and the cooperation and communication between the members of the team, valuing each persons' contribution and expertise. The factors that assure a successful implementation of inclusive education strategies refer to: the open attitude of school towards diversity, qualified staff, differentiated curriculum, facilitation of participation, adaptive behavior approach, approach of social and emotional abilities, concrete opportunities, holistic approach, partnerships, evidence-based decisions, exploring social aspects such as wellbeing as part of results of learning, development and implementation of support programs, implementation of Shalock model regarding quality of life (Hathazi, Rosan, 2019). Other facilitating factors for a successful inclusion refer to the open attitude of school and teachers towards inclusion, qualified teachers, support for continuous professional development of teachers, development of documents such as individualised intervention plans and adapted and differentiated instruction and curriculum, partnership with parents and other specialists in a professional network (Hathazi, 2013).

Active participation of children with special education needs is regulated and supported in the majority of countries through legislation, policies and methodologies, but the way in which this process will become a success for the child and his or her family has to be continuously evaluated and supported through different services and systems. The support systems refer to qualified and itinerant teachers, additional resources, involvement of parents, adaptation of environment, curricular adaptation, differentiated assessment and instruction, continuous professional development, socio-educational systems of support (psychological, health, educational, social assistance (Vrăşmaş, Vrăşmaş, 2012).

Shani (2014) identified four main components influencing the success of implementation of inclusive education which refer to: a) policy and legislation; b) quality of support received by pupils with special education needs; c) quality of training for teachers and specialists, and d) type of impairment and educational capabilities (apud

Shani, Hebel, 2016). In the Kinsey Report (Barber, Mourshed, 2007 cited by Malm, 2009) it is stated that the quality of an educational system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers, that the only way to improve results is to improve instruction and that the achievement of results is possible only when mechanisms are implemented to assure high quality instruction for each child. Roldão (2009) and Rodrigues and Nogueira (2011) cited by Gaitas and Alves Martins (2016) maintain that the principal reason for failures in school success is related to the lack of teacher skills when creating learning opportunities for all students.

1. Implications of inclusive education and teacher training programs

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) adopts a broad definition of professional development among teachers: "Professional development is defined as activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher" (OECD, 2017). The Association for Teacher Education in Europe (ATEE 2006, 7) sees teaching as a "profession that entails reflective thinking, continuing professional development, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, research and personal judgements" (Malm, 2009) These competences need to be approached in teacher training programs where they are not only presented, described and discussed, but they are going to be assumed by the teachers as values in action and become a routine and a way of functioning and performing in education and intervention. It is an ongoing process, to get self-awareness of style of teaching, communicating and behaving, as an intervention and interaction style, that becomes personal and it is used in professional contexts and settings. The OECD's comparative review on teachers noted (OECD, 2005): effective professional development is on-going, includes training, practice and feedback, and provides adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities. There is growing interest in developing schools as learning organizations, and in ways for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically.

Evaluations of teacher training programs state that there is a need to re-think and re-structure teacher training programs, taking into consideration the complex and various needs of students, aspects of inclusion and also specific support according to the needs of individuals, available evidence-based studies, various educational paradigms, legislation and implemented programs, promoted approaches, expectations of families and competences of professionals. (OECD, 2017). In a study realized by Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) the results revealed the importance of professional development in the formation of positive attitudes towards inclusion, more specifically teachers with university-based professional development appeared both to hold more positive attitudes and to be more confident in meeting the IEP requirements of students with SEN. Professional development has to be considered with a constructive and systematic approach to support teachers in developing a positive attitude towards students with disabilitIes (Tristani, Bassett-Gunter, 2020). There is a need to take into consideration the training of teachers so it becomes more contextualised and flexible, providing possibilities for diversity in rhythms and pathways of learning progression (Vaillant, 2011 cited by Ozel et al., 2018).

In the TALIS report (OECD, 2009) referring to the types of professional development, the following types of programs were mentioned: courses/workshops related to specific knowledge and techniques, education conferences or seminars, qualification programs; observation visits to other schools; participation in a network of teachers formed specifically for the professional development, individual or collaborative research, mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching, reading professional literature. The teachers will have to first know the implications of the disability/difficulty/disorder, then conduct a complex and thorough assessment with significant information that can be used to plan the educational or rehabilitation processes, to write the documents such as Individualized Education Plans or adapted curriculum, implement and evaluate continuously the efficiency of the program, making the necessary adaptations in an ongoing manner, referring to the uses of methods and resources (human, material , financial), reflection on the process and the results, work in multidisciplinary teams. It has been evidentiated that pre-service teachers had an open attitude and views towards inclusion prior the training and most of them continued to have them after inclusive teaching experiences (Forlin, Chambers, 2011), though a follow up study suggested that the preservice teachers had increased self-efficacy for teaching

diverse populations, formed through a variety of means, not necessarily just after direct involvement with individuals with disabilities (apud Ozel et al., 2018). Preparing to teach for a diverse context includes one-on-one mentoring opportunities, offering experiences within inclusive classrooms or non-practice approaches (Lancaster, Bain, 2010 apud Ozel et al., 2018). It is evidentiated that all strategies – including course-based, workshop, practicum and a blended approach – can positively affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education practices (Tristani, Bassett-Gunter, 2020). The authors recommend that teacher training and professional development should be realised in the most feasible and practical manner (i.e. time, resources, economically justified, etc.). Mentioning the studies of Lambe and Bones (2006) and Nes (2005), Woodcock, Hemmings, Kay (2012) underlies that the pre-service teaching stage of a teaching career represents the adequate time to intervene and promote more positive views and beliefs about inclusion and inclusive practices. Taking this statement to consideration, we need to focus on the most efficient ways to organise teacher training programs even for more experienced teachers in terms of functionality, efficiency, opportunity and finality. Teacher development should be based on a collaborative environment where teachers can improve their practices, from a contextualized process of reflection and experimentation, with a focus on the importance of supervision and peer work (de Nazare Coimbra, Pereira, de Oliveira, Martins, Baptista, 2020).Mentioning the work of several authors such as Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Sharma, Forlin and Loreman, 2008, the authors state that there is extended research that acknowledges the relation between teacher training and the positive impact on teacher affect, cognition and skill development.

Teacher training programs need to take into consideration not only the information and working competences that need to be presented and discussed, but also raising awareness of the implications of diversity and the key elements that need to be focused on by the teachers while planning and carrying out educational activities. Sometimes, teachers cannot identify the causes of difficulties, or even the difficulties themselves, attributing other interpretations to behaviors, barriers, causes, results.

The needs of teachers who are at the beginning of their career may include:

- receiving of just in time learning rather than just in case learning so that information is usable immediately in the situation of difficulty with immediate practicality and results,

- accessing information and the possibility to get prompt answers asking the right questions or identifying the right questions to be asked
- to develop a sense of belonging to the professional community and building a professional relationship with other teachers.
- to be valued and acknowledged as a colleague, who can be at the beginning of their career, but still can bring a new and different perspective. (The Alberta Teachers Association, 2003)

Teachers need to be aware that a successful intervention process needs to be structured and monitored, with the skills to make the necessary adaptations whenever the specific contexts require. The development of educational programs and individualized intervention plans need to be based on a comprehensive evaluation process, so that the results of the evaluation are put into further objectives in education or intervention. This transfer requires developed competences, both in assessment and in planning, so that there is no gap between the two essential stages. The development of a responsive environment, with opportunities for interaction and participation is also a factor that contributes to the success of child participation, achievement and inclusion. It is also identifying the adequate resources that will be used and the experience of teachers in using these resources is also a major component of inclusion.

2. Support programs for teacher training and development of professional competences

The necessary abilities and competencies should always be developed and upgraded through continuous training and lifelong learning. The abilities gained through mentoring are meant to help the teachers to offer a personal high-quality support to all the students, as part of the curriculum (Donaldson, 2010). Hiroyuki (2008) conceptualized the concept of school consultation, citing Caplan (1970) stating that "Consultation is a process of interactions between two professional persons, the consultant, who is a specialist and the consultee, who invokes his help in regard to a current work problem with which the latter is having some difficulty, and which he has decided is within the former's area of specialized competence". Hiroyuki (2008) refers to the concept of school consultation and in this case the consultees are teachers, assistant principals, principals, and teachers of children with disabilities. Consultation is linked to supervision, mentoring and coaching.

Pedagogical supervision can be defined as the theory and practice of teaching and learning regulation in an educational context, with the aim to improve educational action and the skills of the teachers who are involved in training programs (de Nazare Coimbra, Pereira, de Oliveira, Martins, Baptista, 2020). Citing Glickman et al., 2017, the authors extend the process of supervision to the organizational development, referring to the concept of the reflective school, bringing also in discussion the studies of Alarcão, 2003 and Nolan and Hoover, 2011, who underlies the evaluative, but also formative role of the school as an organisation.

Supervision in teacher education refers to assisting teachers either to prepare them to enter profession or practicing teachers for improving their skills and the efficiency of teaching (McCarthy, Quinn, 2010). The authors state that supervision consists in three processes: (1) observation, (2) analysis, and (3) discussion or sharing information collected and organized by the supervisor with the teacher.

Mentoring is essential for the professional development in all the stages of a teacher's career and all teachers should see themselves as mentors, but mentors are mainly in the same institution, and they are teachers or specialist who has more expertise and years of practice. A mentor must have the knowledge and personal qualities and abilities necessary to address the needs of the young teachers and must also be able to create a friendly environment meant to positively stimulate the participants. The characteristics of mentoring refer to a relationship of one to one or one to a group, in which the mentor has more expertise and knowledge, involves a situation of crisis or difficulty that needs to be taken into consideration and decisions should be made or problems should be solved, hopefully in a short time, or there is a transition period that needs more information, way of thinking, way of working (Tufar, 2017).

The main purpose of mentoring is understood as any sustained relationship between a more knowledgeable person (or others) and a novice, in which the primary objective is the professional development and/or overall growth of the novice toward a desired level of competency (West, 2016). Liu (2014) citing Rajuan, et al. (2007) refers to three main facets of person-oriented, practice-oriented and technique-oriented skills and states that usually mentors implement practice-oriented and technique-oriented approaches, including teaching skills, interpersonal interactions and career competitive ability, and not so frequently the person-oriented supports for pre-service teachers. This way, change becomes difficult, and usually teachers experience a resistance, even if they

become aware of the difficulties and what is need to be changed or acquired as knowledge or practice. In this view West (2016) citing Kise (2009) states that the way in which teachers educate, communicate, interact and behave, it is around what they do best, their personalities and their own learning styles, their core educational beliefs. The author describes a mentoring model called differentiated coaching, in which the mentor, after an initial evaluation, adjusts the process of mentoring to the concrete needs of the teacher, so that the mentoring strategies are different within each context, relationship and purpose. In this way the teacher will realise that the new competencies can be immediately put in use and that they will make a difference. West (2016) describes the differentiated coaching model as a four-step process, in which the coach first draws a hypothesis about the teacher's natural style and identifies the teacher's beliefs, then they identify together the difficulty which needs to be solved and the coaching plan is developed to address the problem. Hawkey (1997) citing Dunne and Bennet (1997) presents a learning framework and dimensions of teaching that will support the process and progress within the model of mentoring. These include several competences that refer to teaching, management, monitoring, ethos, planning and preparation and written evaluations. Some of the aspects that are included consists of direct instruction with describing, explaining, demonstrating, using guided practice, structured conversations, management of resources and rules, evaluations and monitoring, deciding on aims, objectives, curriculum , but also the sense of purpose and the ambiance. Hawkey (1997) citing Saunders, Pettinger and Tomlison (1995) identifies four typologies of mentors. These are the hands-off facilitator mentor, the progressively collaborative mentor, the professional friend mentor and the classic mentor. Each of the types emphasizes different aspects and ways of mentoring that is the hands-off facilitator type will be based on discussions, rather that teaching, the progressively collaborative will work along trainees and offer advice within the process, the professional friendly would praise and evaluate the work of the mentee within the classroom and the classical types would council, advise, recommend and evaluate (Hawkey, 1997).

Teachers should develop also their reflection skills, which is a critical component of teaching practice, because being reflective practitioners requires systematic and structured training which integrates their peers' advice, their supervisors' recommendations and their own experiences into their own practice (Kim, Baylen, Leh, Lin, 2015). Schön (1983) defines the term of reflective practitioner meaning that, The

practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation". (Schön 1983: 68).

Zeichner and Liston (2011) state that teaching means both thinking and feeling, and those who can reflectively think and feel, will have more professional rewards. In a synthesized definition of reflection, Reynolds (2011:5) sustains that "reflection involves thinking about past or ongoing experience of events, situations or actions so as to make sense of them, potentially with a view to informing future choices, decisions or actions". Argyropoulos and Nikolaraizi (2009) citing Reynolds (1992) argues that in order for teachers to reflect successfully on their teaching activities, they have to use self-reflective methods such as continuous evaluation of their students' results, reviews of their classroom lives and writing journals of thoughts and feelings.

Sellars (2017) presents a personal model of reflection in which the first step is to acknowledge the condition and the situations that triggers reflection, meaning the need to identify the experience that will be reflected upon. The WHAT? Question, will be followed by the SO WHAT? Question, determining the need to identify the causes and the implications that need to be analysed and discussed, finalising with the question NOW WHAT as a following plan of action.

In many times, teachers do not have the know-to develop and to put into practice their own reflective skills, so that this will make it difficult for the mentor/coach/supervisor to train accordingly, because as it it mentioned by Edwards and Thomas (2010) apud Hébert (2015), reflective practice cannot be just a set of skills to be taught, as it becomes rigid and with a lot of contraints, supporting the very technicist perspective that the reflective practice was meant to avoid.

Teacher self-efficacy is defined as a teacher's "judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of students' engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001, p. 783 cited by Woodcock, Hemmings, Kay, 2012). Through reflection, there is a link between learning and action and experience (Reynolds, 2011). Reynolds (2011) proposes a series of stages that will lead to reflective teaching practice. These are (a) engaging with

reflection, (b) thinking reflectively, (c) using reflection, (d) sustaining reflection, and (e) practicing reflection, and will be used according specific need, time and context.

In the following, starting with the problem- solving approached called also the IDEAL (Identify, Define, Explore, Act, Look) approach, which is developed by Bransford and Stein in 1993. (Kim, Baylen, Leh, Lin, 2015), we will conceptualise the model to the professional development of teachers regarding inclusive education.

The IDEAL approach consists of the following steps:

1) Identify problems and opportunities;

2) Define goals;

3) Explore possible strategies;

4) Anticipate outcomes and act;

5) Look back and learn (Kim, Baylen, Leh, Lin, 2015).

Using the presented approach, the teacher/specialist should prepare for the inclusion of a child with disability so that decisions will be based on evidence and reflections upon the implications, development and assessment. Identifying problems or difficulties and opportunities will start with the preparation for the situation of a child with disability who is going to enter a specific education context (mainstream, regular classes). Knowing the disability, implications of disability, any possible results of previous assessments or school documents, will support the teacher in creating a responsive and supportive environment, ask for any information from other members of the multidisciplinary team that will enable early inclusion. In this view, the factors that will contribute to a successful inclusion refers also to the readiness of the child with SEN (special education needs) for the inclusion, the initial assessment, the involvement of parents in the whole process, the type of information that their future peers have, the openness of the school management towards the inclusion, the training of the teachers and their expertise and availability, the presence of the multidisciplinary team, the (Maier, 2016): Cooperation between teachers from the special education system and teachers from regular schools is important as it enables access, participation and curricular development (Şerban, 2016).

In the second phase, that is to define goals, after an initial evaluation, the aim of the inclusion should be understood and all objectives and strategies would follow and work within that aim, which is to form independence in learning, functioning, communication, behavior for the child with disability. The aspects that will be approached here will refer

to the secure physical environment, the specific evaluation and the profile of development, curricular adaptation with possible assistive technologies, specific strategies in following the curriculum, learning environment (Best, Heller, Bigge, 2010).

One possible common error is that usually teachers equal a successful inclusion only to knowledge progress and access of school curriculum, neglecting the needs for social emotional development, communication and interaction, language and communication in terms of functional abilities. Black-Hawkins (2010) also suggests that the inclusion of a child has little meaning if there is no consideration also to the achievement that he or she needs to experience.

The third phase refers to possible strategies. This does not mean that the teachers should use the try and error approach, but should decide based on the needs of the child, the objectives and the environment. This process will be reflective- based, meaning that there will be an ongoing monitoring and reflection of the process and results. This process should be reflection orientated and the teachers should become a reflective practitioner. Reflective teachers are those who are aware of the reasons behind the decisions they make and the consequences of those decisions (Smith, Geng, Black, 2017). The authors state that all approaches to reflection encourage teachers to think about what they do, question their own practices or current theories and innovations, and make changes where necessary. Being a reflective teacher determines better interpersonal relationship, higher job satisfaction, increased confidence, deeper engagement, increased competence and best practices (Dobbins, 1996 citet by Smith P., Geng G., Black P. (2017). The authors say that it is also very important for the teachers to understand what they are doing so that their efforts will result in student learning. In The Learning Guide for Teacher Mentors developed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2010) it is suggested that according to O'Mahony and Matthews (2005) who cite Schon's research that 'reflection is a process needing hindsight, insight and foresight for development. Two types of reflections are mentioned, that is the reflection-on-action and the reflection-in-action (O'Mahony, Matthews 2005, Stanley, 1998). Reflection-on-action, when reflection is made after a lesson. Stanley (1998) distinguishes between the two forms, considering that observation and reflection on action will determine development for reflection in action in the moment of decision, with improved awareness and decision making skills.

The mentor and beginning teacher can review what was planned to happen, compared with what actually happened and discuss implications. Reflection-in-action, which is when we consciously think about our teaching while we are teaching and modifications are made as we go along to make the teaching more effective. In the middle of a lesson the teacher may change an activity to better suit the needs of the students (O'Mahony, Matthews 2005 apud Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010).

The fourth phase is about anticipating outcomes and act, a phase that support also the idea and approach of the reflexive practitioners, but always based on evidence, results and a thorough analysis of the child's needs, strengths and weaknesses. It is very important to have developed competences of planning and anticipating the results of the educational activities and therapeutic interventions, anticipation in time,

The fifth phase consists in looking back and learning from the effects of the strategies that were used, the modifications that were made, the direct relationship between what has been done and the specific result. Education and intervention are dynamic processes, development of children can be supported and results can be obtained if there is a comprehensive understanding of development and mainly the specificity of development. If there is participation, then there are also results, no matter how insignificant we may consider them. Every step is a gained step forward.

In the same approach, developing and using a reflective log by specialists in education and therapy, supported and evaluated by an expert or a specialist, with continuous feed-back and encouragement for reflection and projection of each step and its results in the learning or development of competences of teachers. Reflection require reflective practitioners to participate in a continuous cycle and self-assessment (Shalabi, Sameem, & Almuqati, 2018). Zeichner and Liston (1987: 24 apud Farrell, 2011) distinguished between routine action and reflective action, for teachers' routine action is strongly guided by tradition, but the reflective action considers any form of active, persistent and careful consideration upon beliefs and knowledge. Teachers need to ask themselves about the implications and consequences of their intervention, to question the decisions referring to selection of methods , techniques and resources, type and instruments for evaluation, use of results of evaluation and efficiency of education and intervention. Many of the times, this exercise of reflection is difficult as teachers do not have the experience and practice to use the reflection-orientated approach. One of the

forms to develop reflection based competences is to develop observation skills, as Watson-Gegeo (1988: 588) cited by Farrell (2011) points out: Thus, through observation, teachers will focus on classroom organization, teaching and learning strategies, and types of interaction and communication (Watson-Gegeo, 1988 apud Farrell, 2011).

The use of a reflective journal combined with a supportive environment is an excellent modality for teachers to tackle aspects and to explore issues and concerns that are of personal and/or professional interest (Smith, Geng, Black, 2017). The only risk and disadvantage is that it is acknowledged that it is difficult to use extensive reflective exercises for a long period of time, as teachers may see it as a required extra (Lee 2007and Liou 2001 cited by Ene, Riddlebarger, 2015). Ene and Riddlebarger (2015) state that other challenging factors may be the limited theoretical background and practical experience, and also that the reduced opportunities for carrying out practical activities to reflect on. Critical systematic reflection is a necessary condition for quality teaching and reflection can promote construction of professional development, based on continuous learning and on the development of a school community (Martins, Coimbra, Pinto, and Serradas (2015).

Conclusions

The necessity of support programs for teachers has been subject to numerous studies, programs and projects and their importance have been validated in research and practice. The factors that need to be approached within the training programs and professional development consist in choosing the adequate types of evaluation, carrying out the processes of planning and implementation, monitoring according to the particularities of educational contexts and developmental and learning characteristics of the students. Teachers who were mentored can become mentors themselves and share their examples of best practices. The use of sustained and continuous mentoring combined with reflection-based approaches leads to professional and personal development and adequate and efficient decisions that can be made for the benefit of all partners included in the educational and intervention process are enabled through the developed skills of teachers.

Resources

Argyropoulos, V., Nikolaraizi, M.. (2009). Developing inclusive practices through collaborative action research in *European Journal of Special Needs Education*. 24:2 139-153.

Avramidis, E., Bayliss, P. & Burden, R. (2000) A Survey into Mainstream Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in the Ordinary School in one Local Education Authority, *Educational Psychology*, 20:2, 191-211

Best, S. J., Heller, K. W., & Bigge, J. L. (2010). *Teaching individuals with physical or multiple disabilities*. Pearson.

Black-Hawkins, K., Florian, L., Rouse, M. (2007), *Achievement and Inclusion in Schools*, London: Routledge

Black-Hawkins, K. (2010) The Framework for Participation: a research tool for exploring the relationship between achievement and inclusion in schools. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 33: 1, 21-40.

Booth, T. & Ainscow, M. (2011) *Index for Inclusion. Developing learning and participation in schools*, Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education

De Nazare Coimbra, M., Pereira, A. V., de Oliveira Martins, A. M., & Baptista, C. M. (2020); Pedagogical Supervision and change dznamics of collaboration and teacher development., *Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings*, 292-301.

Donaldson, G. (2010). *Teaching Scotland' Future – Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive*. Available: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/337626/0110852.pdf (accessed on 20/08/2020).

Ene, E., Riddlebarger, C., (2015). Intensive Reflection in Teacher Training: What is it Good For?. *Journal of Academic Writing*. ol. 5, No1, Spring , pages 157-168

Farrell, T. S. (2011) ''Keeping Score': Reflective Practice Through Classroom Observations'. *RELC Journal* 42(3), 265-272

Florian, L., Spratt, J. (2013). Enacting inclusion: A framework for interrogating inclusive practice. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 28(2), 119-135.

Forlin, C., Chambers, D. (2011): Teacher preparation for inclusive education: increasing knowledge but raising concerns, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 39:1, 17-32

Gaitas, S., Alves Martins, M. (2016): Teacher perceived difficulty in implementing differentiated instructional strategies in primary school in *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21 (5), 544-556

Hathazi, A.(2013), Factori facilitatori ai incluziunii școlare la copiii cu sindrom Down, in Roșan, A. (coord.)(2013*). Cartea Albă a Psihopedagogiei Speciale, Departamentul de Psihopedagogie Special*ă, online volume, http://psihoped.psiedu.ubbcluj.ro/caPPS/

Hathazi, A., Roșan, A. (2019), *Facilitating Factors and Barriers in Implementing Inclusive Education in Romania* in Santoshi Halder, Vassilis Argyropoulos (Eds.) Inclusion, Equity and Access for Individuals with Disabilities, Palgrave Macmillan Publisher, pp.603-618.

Hawkey, K. (1997), Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships in Mentoring: A Literature Review and Agenda for Research, in *Journal of Teacher Education* 1997, 48: 325

Hébert, C. (2015) Knowing and/or experiencing: a critical examination of the reflective models of John Dewey and Donald Schön, *Reflective Practice*, 16:3, 361-371,

Hiroyuki, S. (2008). Support for teachers of education for children with multiple disabilities through school consultation. in *NISE Bulletin*, 27.

Hornby, G. (2015). Inclusive special education: development of a new theory for the education of children with special educational needs and disabilities. *British Journal of Special Education,* 42(3), 234-256.

Kim, J. H., Baylen, D. M., Leh, A., & Lin, L. (2015). Blended learning in teacher education: Uncovering its transformative potential for teacher preparation programs. In *Handbook of Research on Enhancing Teacher Education with Advanced Instructional Technologies* (pp. 166-185). IGI Global.

Liu, S-H. (2014). Excellent Mentor Teachers' Skills in Mentoring for Pre-Service Teachers. *International Journal of Education*. 6. 29. 10.5296/ije.v6i3.5855.

Maier, A. (2016) – Aspecte ale educației integrate/incluzive, in Roșan, A., Timiș, V., Hagău, G. (Eds.), *Educație și formare în contextul provocărilor lumii contemporane*, Argonaut&Limes, Cluj-Napoca

Malm, B., (2009), Towards a new professionalism: enhancing personal and professional development in teacher education in *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 35:1, 77-91
Martins, A. O., Coimbra, M. N., Pinto, I. P., and Serradas, R. (2015). How Teachers Experience Practical Reflectivity in Schools: A Case Study. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 3 (7), 918-922. Retrieved on 03 September 2020 from http://pubs.sciepub.com/education/

McCarthy, J. & Quinn, L.F.. (2010). Supervision in Teacher Education. *International Encyclopedia of Education*. 615-621.

O'Mahony, G.R, Matthews, R.J. (2005), *A Climate of Mentoring Building Teams for School Improvemen*t, Hawker Brownlow Education, Heatherton Victoria

Ozel, E., Ganesan, M. Z., Daud, A. K. M., Darusalam, G. B., & Ali, N. A. B. N. (2018). Critical issue teacher training into inclusive education. *Advanced Science Letters*, 24(7), 5139-5142.

Reynolds, M. (2011). Reflective practice: origins and interpretations. *Action learning: research and practice*, *8*(1), 5-13.

Schön, D.(1983), *The reflective practitioner*, New York, Basic Books

Sellars, M. (2017), *Reflective practice for teachers*, (2nd Edition), London, Sage Publication Ltd.

Shalabi, M. M., Sameem, M. A. M., & Almuqati, A. N. (2018). Reflective teaching as a practical approach. In *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, Vol.43, 2018, pp.40-48

Shani, M., Hebel, O. (2016). 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. *International Journal of Special Education*, *31*(3), n3.

Smith P., Geng G., Black P. (2017), Teachers as Reflective Practitioners in Geng G., Smith P., Black P (Eds.), *The Challenge of Teaching*, Springer, Singapore, pp.25-32

Stanley, C. (1998) 'A Framework for Teacher Reflectivity'. *TESOL Quarterly* 32(3), 584-591

Şerban, I.L. (2016), *Rolul comunicării totale în dezvoltarea vocabularului elevilor cu dizabilităţi de auz,* Cluj-Napoca, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană

Tufar, I. (2017), Implicatii psihopedagogice ale activitatilor de mentorat, in Rosan A.,

Hagau, I. (2017*), Management si bune practici educationale in contextul provocarilor lumii contemporane*, Argonaut, Limes: Cluj-Napoca, pp.154-612

Tristani, L., & Bassett-Gunter, R. (2020). Making the grade: teacher training for inclusive education: A systematic review. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, *20*(3), 246-264.

Vrăsmaş, E., Vrăsmaş, T. (2012), *Educaţia incluzivă în grădiniţă: dimensiuni, provocări şi soluţii*, UNICEF România, Buzău: Alpha MDN, 2012

West, A. (2016) "A Framework for Conceptualizing Models of Mentoring in Educational Settings," *International Journal of Leadership and Change*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Art.11.

Woodcock, S., Hemmings, B. & Kay, R. (2012) 'Does study of an inclusive education subject influence preservice teachers' concerns and self-efficacy about inclusion?' *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37 (6), pp. 1–11.

Zeichner, K. M., & Liston, D. P. (2011). *Reflective teaching: An introduction* (2nd Edition), New York: Routledged.

*** Alberta Teachers' Association. Mentoring Beginning Teachers, Program Handbook. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Teachers' Association, 2003.

***OECD 2009, Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS, https://www.oecd.org/education/school/43023606.pdf

***OECD (2017), "Do new teachers feel prepared for teaching?", *Teaching in Focus*, No. 17, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/980bf07d-en.

***Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Treasury Place, A Learning Guide for Teacher Mentors, Teacher and Education Support Development Unit School Improvement Division Office for Government School Education, East Melbourne Victoria 3002, February 2010