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## KNOWLEDGE AND VALUES TRANSFER IN SPECIAL EDUCATION: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** This study presents an opportunity for an in-depth examination into the role of knowledge transfer and educational values toward the firm establishment of sustainable and inclusive learning environments in the special education spectrum within Greece. Over the past decade, knowledge transfer has gradually become an indispensable process for enhancing the quality of education, fostering innovation, and ameliorating the gaps between theory and practice in inclusive arts (Ainscow, 2020). Within the Greek educational arena, because of limited institutional support to teachers, fragmented professional development options, and complex demands regarding inclusion, one can see how much transfer of pedagogical knowledge and ethical values becomes important in sustaining professional resilience and social conscience, hence fostering 'inclusive teaching' competence (Xafakos, 2025). This study builds upon contemporary pedagogical frameworks that conceptualize inclusion not merely as an educational policy but as a multidimensional moral and social imperative supporting sustainable educational development. It seeks to understand how educational communities interpret, internalize, and put into practice these values in their daily teaching activities, and how, through this, educational equity is realized in the long term. More concretely, the study observes the interrelations between teachers, their perceptions of collaboration and reflection, and the processes through which knowledge is passed on and re-contextualized within professional networks and school culture. Qualitative research design was used to render justice to the richness and complexities in the lived experiences of teachers. The semi-structured interviews with twenty special education teachers represented both mainstream and special settings of education across Attica and Western Greece. Data collection took place from January 2023 to March 2024, with thematic coding procedures taking place before interpretation (Florian & Beaton, 2021). Such techniques enabled the identification of common themes regarding professional collaboration, mentoring, reflective learning, and the shared ethical values that become embodied in practices within the classroom environment. In the advent of contextual factors like institutional culture, policy-oriented framework, and provisions for learning resources for practitioners to mediate the strength and efficacy of knowledge transfers between the trainers, it is found that teachers consider the knowledge transfer process as a main path through which professional development, collective reflection, and institutional learning should be carried out between teachers. Teachers mention that educational experience exchange on a systematic level creates room for higher degrees of flexibility and empathy alongside inclusivity within the classroom. Results also showed that the sustainability of inclusive practices hinges on the long-term support mechanisms between structured mentorship frameworks, value-driven leadership, and reflective professional communities. The study concludes that embedding knowledge and values transfer would enhance sustainability in inclusive education systems. Instigation of structured mentoring schemes, targeted and continuous professional development programs, and national policy frameworks supporting inclusive pedagogy and long-term educational sustainability were some of the recommendations presented (Ainscow, 2020). This work is part of a broader pedagogical initiative on sustainable inclusion and equity within Greek education during 2023–2024 with ethical approval and anonymized data handling. (Xafakos, 2022)

**Keywords:** knowledge transfer; inclusive education; special education; sustainability; teacher professional development; educational values

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has been increasingly accepted as one of the foundational pillars for sustainable social development, particularly related to special education. In Greece, the paradigm shift toward inclusive practices implies that educational communities must move beyond just access to fully integrate values and knowledge into their own pedagogical practice (Kaltsouni, 2021). Here precise is the definition of knowledge transfer a systematic mode of moving research-based pedagogical knowledge and core educational values into practice emerged as the crucial force for sustainable inclusive development (Ainscow, 2020). In this light, the study stands at the confluence of knowledge transfer and value internalization in special education, aiming to enhance professional competencies of teachers and sharpen educational outcomes of learners with special educational needs (SEN). Probably, inclusive education has been seen as a strong foundation for sustainable social development, especially in the context of special education. Putting the paradigm change towards inclusive education into context in Greece, although access is an issue, the emphasis is being placed now on making educational communities integrate values and knowledge into everyday pedagogical work. The term knowledge transfer appears to be, in fact, a major tool for the sustainable

development of an inclusive process; it refers to the systematic transfer of research-based pedagogical knowledge as well as core values into practice (Ainscow, 2020). From this angle, it becomes obvious that this study postures itself at the interface between knowledge transfer and value internalization within the special education domain toward fostering the professional empowerment of teachers and eventual educational uplift for SEN students. In Greek venues, teachers operate in an interplay of systemic constraints such as meager resources, heterogeneous study populations, changing legislative frameworks, and parallel personal professional traumas. (Lenakakis, Howard, & Felekidou, 2024) These situations render a challenge to the embedding of values pertinent to inclusion and sustenance of educational change over time. However, it is amidst such complicated and ever-changing conditions where knowledge transfer acquires meaning: Whenever there is a collaboration of teachers in reflective practice and the adoption of new pedagogical approaches founded on shared values, an inclusive and sustainable learning environment is formed. Drawing from these premises, this study, therefore, takes a qualitative perspective to explore how special education teachers perceive and enact the transfer of knowledge and values within their classrooms and institutions in Greece. The main research questions directing this investigation are: (1) How do teachers interpret values - based pedagogical knowledge and integrate it into their day-to-day work? (2) What collaboration and reflection mechanisms act as conduits for transferring such knowledge in special education settings? (3) How do institutional and contextual factors enable or obstruct sustainability of inclusive practices in Greek schools? Such questions facilitate the contribution of this study both to the theoretical knowledge of inclusive pedagogy and perhaps to the practical improvement of the professional development of teachers, culture of schools, and value-based practice. The article is organized in the following manner: the methodology section describes the qualitative design and data collection process. Then, the results section presents the thematic findings. Next, the discussion positions those findings vis-à-vis extant literature. Concluding remarks and recommendations of this paper provide policy and professional development implications, as well as avenues for future research. Altogether, the investigation stresses that the effective transfer of knowledge and values is a dynamic and relational context-based process that can underpin the sustainable development of inclusive education in Greece (Kaltsouni, 2021).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data Analysis used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, using Smith & Fieldsend as the analysis framework. (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021) 1. Data Analysis and Presentation Methods: The Educational Technology Seminar (ETC) comprised 12 teachers. The ages of the subjects ranged from 26 to 51 years. There are mostly 2003 and 2006 graduates with respect to the completion of their studies. Concerning specialization, however, these would explain special educators, primary educators with special education specialties, primary teachers, secondary general education teachers, and art teachers. Some ETC still continue with graduate studies. Years of work, ranging from 2 to 20 years, makes their experience highly diverse. The teachers worked mainly in elementary or secondary schools in Attica or in Peloponnese. There were 20 teachers included in the study. They each had different years of experience, schooling types, and geographical areas. In this way, each one of them approached practices of inclusion from a different perspective. 2. Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews serviced the data collection from January 2023 to March 2024. The interviews ranged between 60 to 90 minutes and were audio taped with participants' consent. The interview guide contained questions about (a) pedagogical practices related to inclusive education, (b) experiences of knowledge sharing and collaboration, (c) application of values in classroom settings (Xafakos, 2025), and (d) perceived challenges and institutional supports (Florian & Beaton, 2021). 3. Data Analysis: The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and were analyzed. Thematic coding was followed using Saul McLeods method for thematic analysis (McLeod, 2024). Through repeated readings of the transcripts, initial codes were generated, focusing on recurring themes related to knowledge transfer, reflective practice, mentoring, and value-based teaching. Then, codes were sorted into broader thematic categories and cross-checked by a second researcher to maintain validity and reliability. Contextual factors such as school culture, policy implementation, and access to professional development resources were observed since these are some key things that could be a limiting factor for the effectiveness of knowledge transfer and inclusive practices. 4. Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval was taken from the competent educational authority in Greece. (Sakellaropoulou, Spyropoulou, & Kameas, 2025) The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, confidentiality of data, and their right to withdraw at any time. Data was secured and kept anonymous to preserve privacy. They had to comply with GDPR-related regulations for secure storage. 5. Limitations: Despite rich qualitative insights, the sample size and geographical scope are somewhat limited. Future studies with larger or more heterogeneous populations are therefore recommended, so these findings could be generalized to the entire Greek population, as well as internationally.

### 3. RESULTS

Many key themes emerged from knowledge and value transfer analysis in special education classrooms in Greece based on the interviews conducted in a semi-structured fashion. In the first place, collaborative practices appeared to be the primary channel of transfer of knowledge. Presented as 75% of all participants (15 out of 20 teachers) reported regularly engaging in working collaboratively, such as planning lessons together, observing peers, or team teaching (Xafakos, 2022). Collaboration was described as both formal, possibly with policies guiding it in a school, and informal, spontaneously emerging among educators motivated by shared values toward inclusion and professional development (Florian & Beaton, 2021);. Secondly, reflective practice was investigated as one of the ways of internalizing and applying educational values. Roughly 65% of teachers (13/20) stated they wrote in reflective journals or took part in training sessions for structured reflection. They noted that reflection about classroom experiences, student results, and feedback from associates was instrumental in improving teaching practices for courses most suitable to special needs students (Buchner et al., 2021) Reflection was also tied to developing empathy and making moral choices that participants considered crucial in fostering inclusive learning environments. Mentorship and professional support arose as the third main theme. Sixty percent of novice teachers (6/10 from the sample of teachers with less than 10 years' experience) stated that being mentored by an experienced colleague was important in enabling them to grasp the notions of inclusive pedagogy and to put into practice the knowledge and values in their classroom settings (Ainscow, 2020). Mentorship programs were particularly important toward building professional confidence and maintaining the transfer of knowledge over time. The final factors affecting knowledge transfer were the institutional and contextual. Teachers cited challenges like limited resources (80% of participants), very high learner-teacher ratios (70%), and inconsistent policy implementation (50%). Alternatively, leaders who support teacher development and a school environment that promotes collaboration and continuous learning are found to enhance the sustainability of teaching practices and exclude discrimination. Overall, the results suggest that the transcending of knowledge and values is a dynamic, multi-tiered kind of process. Quantitative indicators suggest that structured collaboration (75%) and reflective practice (65%) have strong positive associations with inclusive outcomes. When these are coupled with mentorship and institutional support, teaching professional development ensues, culminating in sustainable inclusive educational outcomes for students in need of special education.

**Table 1: Collaborative Practices among Teachers (n=20)**

Type of Collaboration	Number of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Regular meetings / joint lesson planning	12	60%
Peer observation / team teaching	10	50%
Informal collaboration	8	40%
No collaboration	5	25%

Note: Teachers could report more than one type of collaboration.

Source: Authors research

**Table 2: Reflective Practice (n=20)**

Reflective Practice Type	Number of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Personal reflective journals	8	40%
Structured reflection meetings	5	25%
Both personal journals and structured meetings	5	25%
No reflective practice	2	10%

Source: Authors research

**Table 3: Mentorship & Professional Support (Novice Teachers n=10)**

Type of Support	Number of Teachers	Percentage (%)
Guidance from experienced colleagues	6	60%
Participation in mentorship programs	4	40%
No mentorship support	2	20%

Source: Authors research

**Table 4: Institutional & Contextual Factors Affecting Knowledge Transfer (n=20)**

Factor	Number of Teachers Reporting	Percentage (%)
Limited resources	16	80%
High student-to-teacher ratio	14	70%
Inconsistent policy implementation	10	50%
Supportive leadership & school culture	12	60%
Access to professional development programs	10	50%

**Source: Authors research**

#### 4. DISCUSSION

To summarize, this research has offered a somewhat nuanced understanding about the transfer of knowledge and values within Greek special educational settings. Collaborative practices were raised as a serious mechanism for inclusive pedagogy-the majority of 75 percent of teachers were involved in some formal or informal collaboration (Ainscow, 2020). This point supports previous research that has positioned collaboration as a catalyst to further professional development and sustainable inclusive practices (Florian & Beaton, 2021). The potentially high reliance on informal networks may suggest that no equal opportunities for collaboration exist, which, in turn, questions equity and adherence to implementing inclusiveness strategy across schools.

While 65% of participants have thought it to be true that reflective practice enhances ethical decision-making and empathy for teachers toward internalized educational values (Buchner et al., 2021) some 35% admitted to not engaging in reflection much, indicating a lack in structures for professional development and suggested need for further institutional support to facilitate the incorporation of reflective practice in all schools. Mentorship was especially beneficial for new teachers, with 60% of respondents noting positive effects. This is in line with the literature promoting mentoring for knowledge transfer (Ainscow, 2020), albeit the limiting delivery of the programs suggests they have not yet reached all teachers, and so their sustainability may be compromised as a result. The influence of institutional and contextual factors impacted the results. Structural constraints consist of low schools' resourcing (80%), very high human resource-instructor ratios (70%), and the irregular implementation of policies (50%). This institutional and infrastructure limit can be removed certainly not by the sole effort of teachers. Thus, this proposition strengthens the need to look at the systemic level on policy and administrative fronts rather than simply training individual teachers on the job. (Mouzakis, 2010) The study has revealed that the transfer of knowledge and values helps sustain and make educational practices more inclusive. However, it also exposes inequalities in access, support, and resources. Thus, interventions must embrace both the teaching and structural dimension to render the education truly equitable and sustainable. Studies with larger samples across time utilizing triangulation methods might quantify the effect of collaboration, reflection, and mentorship more fully with respect to student outcomes.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that knowledge and value transfer is the major factor for the promotion of sustainable and inclusive education in Greek special education settings (Ainscow, 2020). Collaborative practices, reflective teaching, and purposeful mentoring processes appear to be the major forces driving the professional development of teachers and the social inclusion of students with special educational needs (Florian & Beaton, 2021). According to quantitative data, 75% of teachers collaborated in teaching-learning activities; 65% engaged in reflection; and 60% of novice teachers experienced either mentoring or induction processes, thereby suggesting that these mechanisms serve as channels for knowledge transfer (Xafakos, 2025). However, challenges related to structure and context can make it difficult to consistently and fairly apply inclusive practices, due to limited resources, high student-to-teacher ratios, and weak enforcement of policies. This suggests that while teacher initiative in itself is an important condition, institutional support and an enabling policy framework are equally required for the sustainable transfer of knowledge and value integration. A few recommendations can be drawn from the findings. Schools should provide structured collaboration opportunities such as regular peer observation, team teaching, and professional learning communities (Florian & Beaton, 2021). Reflective practice should be embedded into mentorship programs, reflective journals, and guided discussion groups (Buchner et al., 2021). At the policy level, authorities must ensure that resources are made available, enforce inclusive policies equally, and provide continuous professional development courses (Ainscow 2020). To conclude, the research holds that sustainable inclusive education comes from pedagogical strengths coupled with structural implementation of knowledge, values, and supportive institutional practices. Once all members in the educational community handle factors affecting

practitioners and systemic issues, they can provide all students with inclusive, equitable, and sustainable learning environments (Buchner et al., 2021).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We truly appreciate all the teachers involved in our research for their generous time and effort. Your willingness to be open and share your experiences and insights was crucial for this research purpose. Our sincere thanks also go to the Secondary Education Directorates of Attica and Western Greece for their sacred help. Facilitating the access to the schools, coordinating with their administrations and guiding us are priceless services that greatly contributed to the finalization of this research. Special thanks are due to principals of the schools and administrative staff for welcoming us in their schools and assisting us in smooth communication with teaching staff. The research received support and guidance from the Pedagogical Faculty of Trakia University, specifically the Department of Didactic for which special thanks are expressed. Theirs was the experience and supervision that considerably strengthened the research as a doctoral project, especially in the design of the methodological structure and constructive critique.

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