Self- efficacy with teachers

The concept of self- efficacy belongs to the social learning theories which Albert Bandura developed. This concept deals with the values, goals, actions professional functioning and loyalty of the person which can perform a certain task (Bandura, 1986; Pinquart, Juang & Silbereisen, 2003). The feeling of self- efficacy is based on a system of beliefs holding an interaction with the environment and helping the individual to cope and realize his skills effectively (Bandura, 1997; Knoll, Rieckmann & Schwarzer, 2005). The power of the individual's belief in his capacity influences his tendency to cope with specific situations (Bandura, 1986; Burkett, 1999).

Self- efficacy is sometimes defined as the belief of people in their capacity to manage events which have an influence on their life and on their environment, so that their needs will be satisfied, and also as the capacity of people to achieve the required motivation, cognitive skills and actions, in order to succeed in execution of the tasks which were chosen for them. Bandura claims (1997) that there are several ways to encourage and increase self- efficacy: this by successful experience in execution of challenging tasks, study of models of behavior, verbal persuasion and a high level of mental and physical alertness.

He also claims that the student is empowered by identification of his forces and capacities, the increase of awareness of these traits, development of self- confidence and belief in himself, reduction of the negative opinions of the school staff towards him, and giving individual and group opportunities for expression of his skills. The role of the educational institution is to discover the strong points of the student, to realize himself until he will excel.

The feeling of self- efficacy has an influence on behavior and on emotion. People who doubt their capacity, tend to invest less effort, and give up on a task if they find difficulty in it, and in situations with which they are incapable of coping they will feel anxiety and negative arousal of feelings. Efficacy deals with the belief of a person in his capacity, and not in his skills as they are tested in tests.

The factor of motivation plays a key role in studies of the student and without it learning will not take place and there will be no educational achievements. If the student is endowed with the positive trait of self- control he will turn to challenging

tasks and will focus on the development of his initiative and motivation. As a result of the increase of efficacy, empowerment will be executed with him when he passes from a state of helplessness to a situation in which he has much control of himself and on events in his life, and consequently his level of achievements will rise.

Following the cognitive revolution which took place in the field of psychology in the 50s and 60s of the previous century, the focus of the psychological world passed from the basic and unconscious needs of the person and from treating him by means of punishment and reinforcements which would teach him a lesson to cognitive processes. One of the most important discoveries on this matter was the discovery that motivation processes are composed also from expectations of the individual of the results of his behavior. Self- efficacy, which was defined as the most important concept, is belief in capacity. Bandura invented (1986) the term 'feeling of self-efficacy', and claimed that this is a component of the connection between knowledge and action, and of assessment of the capacity to execute a task which would cause the required result. Bandura (1990) also presents the belief in the capacity of mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and actions, which are required for control of the demands of the task, and this stresses the theoretical aspect.

These are cognitive, social, verbal and physical experiences which build the self-efficacy of the person when he undergoes them. In order to realize our resources effectively, and in order to execute complex tasks, we need good abilities and high self- efficacy, although there is no connection between the level of abilities of the person and his assessment of his capacity to take advantage of them in various tasks. Self- efficacy is a process of evaluation, which creates an estimate which determines how the person thinks, feels, and operates himself, and which contributes much to motivation and ambitiousness.

Schein- Feder (1995), described the feeling of self- efficacy as a belief which a person has that he can achieve things in which he is interested, these beliefs fill a central role, as they shape and determine the various behaviors of the person and they are the central contributor to his development (Albion, 1999).

Bandura (1986,1997) claimed that self- efficacy developed during the social learning of the individual and consequently benefits his experiences. Bandura thought that learning is based mainly on cognition, and therefore self- efficacy is perceived in a

defined and conscious way by its holders. Bandura (1986, 1997) identified four sources of information contributing to development of a feeling of self- efficacy:

1. Performance accomplishment- the amount of success of the person in his tasks contributes to the feeling of self- efficacy, whereas previous failure reduces the feeling of self- efficacy. The real influence of the personal experience of self- efficacy depends on the conditions of the task which was executed and on its result. If a certain task was executed under challenging conditions, and gained reinforcements, conceptions of increased self- efficacy are formed following this success. The personal experiences which the person experiences when he executes a certain task, consolidate the self- efficacy of the individual, and usually the successes and failures of the actions of a person influence this perception.

2. Vicarious experience- a person learns with the help of observation of others. Observation of the capacities and actions of others can help him in shaping his expectations of himself. If a person finds difficulty in forming a forecast or prediction of the capacity to implement his abilities in a certain task, then he can borrow this information from the performance of another person executing a similar task.

3. Verbal persuasion- experience of verbal persuasion is an influential factor mainly if the persuading people are perceived as having significant and relevant capacity and experience by the person constituting the target for the act of persuasion. If the persuading people are significant others like parents or teachers, then as a matter of fact this persuasion is more significant. The persuasion can receive influence on the amount of generality of the perception of self- efficacy. The persuading person will instruct the instructed person by special reference to the person's successes or failures in similar situations, and thereby will reinforce or weaken his specific self- efficacy. If the persuading person directs his reference to different situations, then the general self- efficacy will be reinforced or weakened.

4. Physiological state- an unpleasant physical feeling at the time of performance of a certain action, can create with the person a feeling of low self- efficacy. On the other hand pleasant physical feelings increase the feeling of self- efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Physical and emotional reactions under calm

and pleasant conditions or under conditions of anxiety or fatigue, indicate to the individual his capacity or incapacity to succeed in the performance of his task. The physical arousal has mainly an influence on the feeling of specific efficacy as it is expressed in specific situations.

Teachers' efficacy was defined (Gunkey & Passaro, 1994) as "the belief or persuasion of teachers that they can influence the quality of students' learning, even of those who are considered as problematic cases or lacking motivation." The importance of teachers' efficacy emerges from its cyclical character. Higher levels of belief in efficacy lead to greater efforts of teachers, which in turn lead to better performance, which again supplies information for formation of higher beliefs of efficacy (Malinen, Savolainen, Xu, 2013).

Beliefs of efficacy, especially of experienced teachers, apparently stay quite stable when the teachers are exposed to new training. Yet, even experienced teachers with firm efficacy beliefs maybe need to reevaluate their beliefs when they cope with new challenges, like teaching in a new sort of framework. In addition, we have to remember that teachers' efficacy is specific to context. Teachers can feel capable of teaching certain subjects to certain students in certain frameworks when they perceive themselves as less capable in different circumstances.

In the 70s the RAND organization, which is a non- profit research and analysis organization, divided teachers' efficacy into dimensions of general and personal teachers' efficacy. General teachers' efficacy deals with teachers' beliefs as to the way in which teachers generally can influence students' learning whereas personal teachers' efficacy is a more individual and specific belief as to the efficiency of their teaching itself. The second strand of teachers' efficacy research, which is often called the Bandura strand, defines teachers' efficacy as a type of self-efficacy.

New research findings supported the idea that one needs to perceive self- efficacy of teachers as a multidimensional structure. Apparently this is valid in a number of countries and cultures. The number of self- efficacy dimensions of teachers which were found in studies usually ranges from three to six, which mainly depend on the measuring instrument and on the focus of research. The dimensions were connected often with class management, instruction, motivation and student

engagement, and in a newer form, cooperation with colleagues and parents (Chan, 2008a, 2008b).

There is a study which was carried out in the People's Republic of China (Cheung, 2008) which investigated the structure of different dimensions of teachers' capacity along Bandura's strand of self- efficacy. Two dimensions of self- efficacy were found from data which were collected among Chinese teachers (from the town of Shanghai). The first dimension deals with efficacy in teaching and engagement of students, and the second with efficacy in keeping discipline.

In a study which investigated teachers and teaching students in Hong Kong (Chan, 2008a), six dimensions were found which are: self- efficacy in teaching very able students, class management, guidance and counseling, increase of student engagement, teaching designed to absorb variety, and teaching designed to enrich learning. Afterwards the author (Chan, 20087b) adds a further dimension, self-efficacy in work with colleagues and parents, to his list. There are significant differences between the results which were found in the education system in the People's Republic of China and in Hong Kong, as there are significant differences between the two systems.

Inclusive education (integration of abnormal students in normal classes) is also a concept which can carry different meanings in different contexts. Regardless of a growing international consensus towards inclusion (integration) as a universal goal, there is no accepted definition in the world of inclusive education. But there is a certain universal consensus of several basic characteristics of inclusive education for children with disabilities. These traits include normal classes in neighborhood schools together with other children of the same age, access to support services and accessories, and access to personally matched programs. Usually people agree on inclusive values like equality and participation but do not agree on their implications for educational practice.

The universal transition towards inclusive (integrated) education also has implications on research on self- efficacy of teachers. Apparently there is growing interest in connection with what was required from teachers in combined classes and there are many instruments measuring self- efficacy which were recently developed containing items dealing with abnormality of students. Indeed, the

number of studies whose focus is self- efficacy of teachers of inclusive education is limited, but often these studies implemented scales of general teachers' efficacy. In order to fill this deficiency, a new measuring instrument was developed (Sharma et al., 2011), which is the scale of self- efficacy of teachers for inclusive practice (TEIP). It is possible to divide this scale into three subscales: efficacy in the use of inclusive instruction, efficacy in cooperation, and efficacy in management of behavior (Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel & Malinen, 2011).

A further study suggests that there is a positive connection between self- efficacy of teachers and attitudes towards inclusive education. It was discovered (Meijer & Foster, 1988) that Dutch teachers with higher self- efficacy scores were more liable to feel that it is suitable to place a problematic student in a normal class. A study which investigated Israeli junior school teachers (Weisel & Dror, 2006), drew the conclusion that teachers with a high level of self- efficacy had more positive attitudes towards inclusive education. There is also an American study (Sondak et al., 1998) which noted that integrated education was more acceptable to teachers with higher self- efficacy. It was also discovered that beliefs on teachers' efficacy had a direct influence on the perceived success of teachers in teaching special education for students in normal classes. A further study which was carried out in Israel (Almog & Shechtman, 2007), who observed integrated Israeli classes, concluded that teachers with a higher self- efficacy coped better with a number of types of problematic behavior of students. Researchers who tested Finnish and South African teachers (Savolainen et al., 2011), and used the TEIP scale (see above), found that self- efficacy, especially self- efficacy with cooperation, had a positive connection with the attitudes towards inclusive education. It was also found that teachers with seniority in teaching students with special needs hold more positive opinions than teachers with less experience (de Boer et al., 2011).

With certain studies, there are findings suggesting that self- efficacy will be able to predict satisfaction of teachers from their job and that it is also linked to professional commitment of teachers. Therefore, supply of support for teachers in order to increase their self- efficacy in teaching integrated classes will be able not only to improve their attitudes but also to create dedicated educators who enjoy their work. But there is also a disadvantage: placement of teachers in situations

which are too demanding without further support sometimes is counterproductive. Negative experiences reduce the level of self-efficacy and also create negative attitudes. Even with much support and intensive training, it is unrealistic to expect that beliefs on teachers' efficacy will change overnight. The beliefs of experienced teachers (Tschannen- Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) stayed fairly stable when the teachers participate in the new training.

In the field of education, a definition of self- efficacy with teachers is based on the social- cognitive theory of Bandura focusing mainly on the teacher. According to this theory the definition of self- efficacy is the belief of the teacher in his capacity to organize and implement methods of action, for the sake of achievement of the goals in specific educational tasks (Tschannen- Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Thus the basic assumption existing in the educational research literature is, that one of the central factors influencing the effectiveness of the teacher and his behavior in class are his pedagogic beliefs (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996).

Gibson & Dembo (1984) dealt with the term self- efficiency in the context of educational work, and classified the feeling of self- efficacy of teachers into two dimensions: "general self- efficacy of teaching", which is the teacher's belief that teaching generates changes. The second dimension is "personal self- efficacy of the teacher" which is the belief of the teacher that he by himself is capable of generating the change in the student (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

These factors described above influence the self- efficacy in the various fields of life: in the family field in childhood and adolescence, in the educational field, in the social field outside the school walls in spare time, in the field of parenthood, and in the rest of the life systems.

Bandura (1997) presents five processes which he bases on cumulative experience which help to form the generality in the conception of self- efficacy:

1. Similar skills required in a variety of activities.
2. Simultaneous development of skills in various fields.
3. Self- direction and control.
4. Coping skills which it is possible to generalize and enable the person to control stressful situations.

5. Shaping widespread behaviors of success in a cognitive way in different activities.

Teachers with a high level of self- efficacy perceive their work as a challenge and succeed in coping more effectively with difficulties. On the other hand teachers with low self- efficacy experience more emotions of anxiety, concern and self-doubt damaging their capacity to cope effectively with challenges (Schwarzer et al., 2005). This assumption receives corroboration in the study of Ben- Yehuda and Last (2007) who found that women teachers who succeeded in integrating abnormal students in their classes, ascribed the success of the abnormal students to their efficacy as teachers (Ben- Yehuda and Last, 2007).

Ross (1995) found that teachers with a high feeling of self- efficacy post more challenging targets for themselves and for their students, take responsibility for the students' achievements and persist also when they encounter difficulties. On the other hand teachers with low feelings of self- efficacy post more modest targets for themselves and for their students (Ross, 1995). A high level of self-efficacy helps the teacher to organize the knowledge and abilities at his disposal, in order to implement the methods of action required in filling the accepted tasks of teaching and in order to achieve future goals. The main task standing before the teacher is to advance the achievements of students, also those which can be considered as problematic or lacking motivation (Chen, 2011; Malinen, Savolainen & Xu, 2012).

Many studies which examined the self- efficacy of the teachers found that the feeling of self- efficacy of teachers is connected to their empowerment and this includes these terms: self- value, belief in the capacities of influence and autonomy, belief in the capacity of students to invest in order to achieve the goals which were posted before them. These characteristics enable the teacher to be emotionally available and to devote himself to the teaching and educational experience required, when they integrate in class children who have special emotional and social needs (Lev & Koslowsky, 2009).

Bandura (1997) found that a strong feeling of difficulty can undermine the conception of self- efficacy of the teacher. Therefore, the more the characteristics of the students are perceived by the teacher as constituting a difficulty for him, the

stronger will be the negative influence they have on the feeling of self-efficacy of the teacher Bandura (1997). Riehl & Sipple (1996) checked this model with teachers occupied in special education. They assumed that the unique characteristics and demands of abnormal students place exceptional challenges before the teachers working with abnormal students and thus higher erosion is created of the feeling of self- efficacy of the teachers (Riehl & Sipple, 1996). This conception is also supported by the findings of the study of Lipschitz and Naor (2001) who found that also among female students for teaching and in particular among female students for special education the higher is the level of handicap of the student so the feeling of efficacy of the students in their capacity to integrate an abnormal student will be less (Lipschitz & Naor, 2001).

Bandura (2000) spoke about two variables which can influence the willingness of the teacher to integrate a student with special needs in his class. The first variable, collective self- efficacy, was defined as the group feeling of teachers that they can cope with social and educational tasks successfully, and the second variable, the level of functioning of the educational organization, is expressed in giving a possibility to display openness and innovativeness in educational practice (Bandura, 2000).

In the study of Metz (1993) it was found that prolonged exposure of teachers to failures at work with problematic students not only lowered the feeling of efficacy of the teacher in relation to treatment of these students, but even damaged the feeling of capacity of the teachers themselves to learn and cope with new situations and challenges (Metz, 1993).

Self- efficacy is found to be connected also to class management in a more positive form. Teachers feeling a strong feeling of efficiency will refer fewer students with educational difficulties and behavior problems to special education, than teachers with a lower level of self- efficacy (Romi & Leyser, 2006). A teacher with a high level of efficacy and a higher level of self- efficiency will be more optimistic and democratic in class management, and will use more means of praises and reinforcements. This teacher will be more open and attentive to new ideas and to experiences in new methods and this in order to answer the needs of the students.

In the study of Ashton & Webb (1986) a statistically significant connection was found between a high perception of the self- efficacy of the teachers and high achievements of the students in mathematics. These teachers placed higher academic standards, demonstrated confidence, and dealt individually with the unique needs of their students (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

A number of studies which were carried out among teachers and students for teaching in Israel found a connection between the level of efficacy of the teachers and their positions towards the integration of abnormal students (Hutzler, Zach and Gafni, 2004; Weisel & Dror, 2006).

Hutzler, Zach and Gafni (2004) relied on a model of students for teaching from colleges in the center of the country and on questionnaires of explicit positions in order to examine the connection between the feeling of efficacy of the students and their positions towards the integration of abnormal students. Their findings showed that the level of efficacy of the students predicted positively the positions of the students towards integration of abnormal students (Hutzler, Zach & Gafni, 2004). Also Weisel & Dror (2006) examined the positions of teachers towards the integration of abnormal students in normal classes and their feeling of efficacy. In order to examine this connection they relied on a model of Jewish women teachers in the north of the country and a battery of questionnaires which included also an explicit questionnaire of positions dealing with integration of abnormal students and a questionnaire dealing with the feeling of efficacy of the female teachers. The findings of the study showed that the feeling of efficacy of the teachers predicted positively their positions towards the integration of abnormal students even after neutralization of the influence of other relevant variables like the school atmosphere seniority and success to explain a significant part of the variance in the positions of the teachers (Weisel & Dror, 2006).

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