

ABSTRACT

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Teachers' sense of self and collective efficacy in working with students with selected special educational needs

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Keywords: teachers' sense of self-efficacy, teachers' sense of collective efficacy, inclusive education, students with special educational needs, teacher of a gifted student, teacher of a dyslexic student.

The subject of the author's study is **teachers' sense of efficacy in working with students with special educational needs**. As this group of students is heterogeneous, a study was conducted of teachers' sense of efficacy related to two selected groups – **dyslexic students** and **gifted students**. The reasons for their selection are justified in the theoretical part of the paper.

In the research, teachers' sense of efficacy was considered in four contexts. Two of these were the focus of the research, they are: 1) analyses made through the lens of the teacher's individual classroom activities with students with special educational needs, constituting the teachers' sense of self-efficacy in working with dyslexic and gifted students; 2) analyses made through the prism of the collectivity of actions of teachers in the school as an organisation towards students with special educational needs, constituting a sense of collective efficacy of teachers in working with dyslexic and gifted students. In addition, two other dimensions of the sense of efficacy were controlled, i.e.: 3) a sense of teacher's self-efficacy in terms of being able to fulfil the tasks ascribed to the professional role of a teacher; 4) *interteacher component* – stable overall component, generalised sense of efficacy.

The research served cognitive and practical/implementation objectives. Among the first group are: identifying teachers' sense of efficacy in the four aspects mentioned above, as well as establishing relationships between them. In addition, relationships were also established between selected components of teachers' sense of efficacy and variables such as teachers' level of cooperative competence, seniority, professional rank, additional

qualifications and certified competences, and professional success. It appears that teachers have high levels of self-efficacy in all aspects studied except for working with dyslexic students. Their cooperative competence is at an average level. They declare that they are successful in teaching and educating dyslexic and gifted students, only their academic success rate is low. For the most part, they do not have additional qualifications and competences to work with the selected groups of pupils with special educational needs; while improving, they usually complete short forms of training. A statistically significant relationship was found between all six components of sense of efficacy examined, as well as between teachers' sense of self and collective efficacy in working with dyslexic and gifted students and their professional success in working with these groups of students.

The empirical data from the research provided the backbone for the following practical and implementation objectives:

- recommendations for educational practice on the need and opportunities to increase teachers' sense of efficacy, both self and collective efficacy, the implementation of mentoring systems, monitoring, and evaluation of teachers' professional efficacy, especially in the field of inclusive education,
- recommendations for schools and institutions linked to the system of in-service teacher training on how to improve, supplement, and update teachers' professional qualifications and how to acquire new competences,
- recommendations for higher education on the need and opportunities to increase teacher candidates' sense of efficacy, including by preparing future teachers to effectively fulfil their professional role as teachers, including in areas of working with students with special educational needs,
- implementation into practice of the “Model of collective teacher efficacy” (Goddard et al., 2004) by indicating the possibility of translating the theory into concrete actions, tools, procedures.

The research employed a hypothetico-deductive research model, using deductive reasoning and quantitative research strategies. This was a cross-sectional correlational study in which the testing method and the diagnostic survey method were made the main methods. Four self-report based tools were used: the author's Index of Specific Sense of Efficacy in Teachers - SPOSUN together with a questionnaire; Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale - GSES in the Polish version by Ralf Schwarzer, Michael Jerusalem and Zygfrzyd Juczynski; Social

Competence Profile - PROKOS by Anna Matczak and Katarzyna Martowska; Norwegian Teachers Self-Efficacy Scale (NTSES) in the Polish version by Łukasz Baka.

The study group comprised 300 teachers working in 18 schools in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship, selected through random sampling and multi-stage, stratified-group random sampling. The pilot study was conducted in 2021 and the proper study in 2022.

Research on teachers' sense of efficacy continues to be relevant and needed because of its key role in shaping the quality of the teaching process, and because of dynamic changes in education, including new challenges, such as working with students with special educational needs. In Poland, the sense of teachers' efficacy in inclusive education, in working with students with special educational needs, including dyslexic students and gifted students, is a completely absent issue. In global trends for the past 20 years, the most recently studied dimension of teachers' sense of efficacy is collective sense of efficacy (explored in Poland for only five years). There is still no consensus on the measurement of this construct, there is no tool available in Poland to measure teachers' sense of collective efficacy and, moreover, this issue is addressed by a negligible number of researchers. It does not emerge as an object of research, and the few researchers describing the construct from a theoretical level rely exclusively on foreign literature.

In light of the identified research gaps and the lack of standardised tools in Poland dedicated to the study of specific, narrowly defined situational constructs such as 'teacher self-efficacy in working with dyslexic and gifted students' and 'teacher's sense of collective efficacy in working with dyslexic and gifted students', a proprietary tool called the Index of Specific Sense of Efficacy in Teachers – SPOSUN – was constructed and subjected to expert validation and scale reliability checks. It can contribute to increasing the stock of tools used in educational practice by teachers themselves to understand their self-efficacy in specific areas of action, improve team communication, monitor the efficacy of collaboration and shared responsibility for pupils' developmental achievements, develop peer support, seek action leaders, and identify areas for professional development.

The results of the theoretical analyses and the research carried out are described in the dissertation consisting of seven chapters placed in three parts: I. Theoretical framework, II. Methodology of author's own research, III. Teachers' sense of self and collective efficacy. Presentation and interpretation of own research results. The entire paper concludes with a summary and discussion of the results, pointing out educational implications.