



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

**National and Kapodistrian  
University of Athens**

School of Education

Department of Early Childhood Education

## **MA Program “Special Education”**

Name: **Adamantia Eleni Fotopoulou**

Supervisor: **Evdoxia Nteropoulou - Nterou**

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### **Abstract**

The present study examines the views of general and special education teachers on co-teaching in early childhood education. In addition, co-teaching practices applied by teachers are being explored in the light of inclusive education. The parity in teachers’ roles and common decisions on all matters which are related to co-teaching and on all forms that are being developed, are key factors that contribute to the inclusion of all students, especially students of the inclusive classroom in the general classroom.

Although it has been considered as a possible inclusive practice, often co-teaching in its application turns out to be defined differently losing in this way, the prospect of the inclusive character that initially is considered to have. Therefore, the aim of the research is to investigate in depth co-teaching in the light of inclusive education, issues arising during development, but also the attitude of education policy towards co-teaching and how it affects the educational practice. Inclusive education, co-teaching approaches, differentiated instruction, the definition of special and general education teachers’ role in inclusion and in co-teaching, the educational policy on co-teaching and previous research on co-teaching, were the starting point for this study.

This qualitative research was developed in a kindergarten with an inclusive classroom. The general teacher and the special teacher of the inclusive classroom participated in this research. The data collected, came from the use and combination of a variety of research tools with the purpose of connect the meanings that teachers give to their

practice and the way they act in real situations. Therefore, the semi-structured first-cycle interview, short interviews, observation, diary and semi-structured second-cycle interview were used in this research. Corresponding interview guides were created for the needs of each interview cycle and short interviews. In addition, an observation protocol was developed for the purposes of observation, which was formulated after the trial records of co-teaching in the diary.

The method chosen to interpret the findings is thematic content analysis.

One of the main findings of the research is the vague meaning of inclusive education on the basis of which co-teaching is approached as a mechanism for supporting specific students. As far as educational policy is concerned, teachers' knowledge is proving general and fragmentary.

The main factor that seems to influence the practice of co-teaching is the confused perception of the terms "differentiation", "inclusion" and "co-teaching". This perception leads to an uneven distribution of roles and responsibilities between the special and general education teacher, where most of the time the general education teacher assumes the primary responsibility for the content, the overall preparation of instruction and the evaluation of the educational work and the students' progress and the special education teacher assists the students of the inclusive classroom or other students who are perceived by teachers as needing extra support.

The lack of systematic planning and organization of co-teaching seemed to be one of the main obstacles to the quality development of co-teaching during its implementation. In addition, fixed-term teacher employment contracts, inadequate staffing of the school unit, ambiguity in the institutional texts, and inadequate teachers' education regarding co-teaching are some of the issues that appear to affect the effectiveness of co-teaching.

In conclusion, there is a hierarchical relationship between teachers that does not allow for the substantial development of co-teaching and for the enhancement of all students' inclusion and in particular of disabled students' inclusion. The application of co-teaching in this context does not meet the basic requirements as defined by the theoretical framework and the literature, according to which co-teaching contribute to students' inclusion in the general classroom. Changes in legislation, in the education system and in the way teachers are educated are necessary.

**Key words:** inclusive education, co-teaching, co-teaching approaches, early childhood education, general teacher, special teacher