Application for doctoral position

1. Curriculum: Educational Science 80338

2. Project title in English: Towards an empirically validated multilevel teacher support strategy for coping with behaviour difficulties in schoolchildren

3. Project title in Estonian: Empiiriliselt valideeritud mitmetasandilise õpetaja toetusmudeli loomine käitumisraskustega õpilastega toimetulekuks

4. CERCS speciality: S271 Special didactics; S272 Teacher education

5. Doctoral candidate:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Current activity</th>
<th>E-mail:</th>
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When candidates are outside of LTOM or SVHI the assessment of his/her qualifications must be done (up to 400 characters with spaces).

6. Supervisor:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Position:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>Kiive</td>
<td>IE Special Education</td>
<td>Professor of Special Education</td>
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</table>

7. Research group where the doctoral thesis is being done:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Position:</th>
<th>PhD student</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>Kiive</td>
<td>IE Special Education</td>
<td>Professor of Special Education</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tõnu</td>
<td>Jürjen</td>
<td>IE Special Education</td>
<td>Assistant in Special Education</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marika</td>
<td>Padrik</td>
<td>IE Special Education</td>
<td>Lecturer in Logopedics and Theory of Learning Difficulties</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Merit</td>
<td>Hallap</td>
<td>IE Special Education</td>
<td>Lecturer in Logopedics and Theory of Learning Difficulties</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaja</td>
<td>Plado</td>
<td>IE Special Education</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Pille</td>
<td>Häidkind</td>
<td>IE Special Education</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>No</td>
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8. Description of necessary available resources (equipment, finances):

Work will be carried out in Institute of Education, Department of Special Education, Näituse 2, Tartu. No special equipment/high technology apparatus will be needed. For funding several resources will be compiled including ESF funded UT teacher-training competence centre project „Supporting the development of students with special educational needs“ (2016-2018), and research grants in the future.

9. Doctoral thesis’ innovativeness and importance for development of this scientific direction:

The World Health Organization (2004) states that approximately every fifth child has developmental, emotional or behavioural problems. Every eighth child has a psychiatric disorder. In 2016, there are about 120 000 children in the basic compulsory educational system in Estonia. About 2000 of these children are learning in special classes designated for children with special needs concerning management of their behaviour. The rate of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) in mainstream classrooms is unknown. With the implementation of the principles of inclusive education the rate is likely growing and teachers will face difficulties in satisfying needs of SEBD children (Armstrong, 2013; Goodman & Burton, 2010).

Disruptive behaviour in the classroom is dependent on behaviour management strategies teachers use in the classroom (Simon et al., 2013) and there is an array of effective strategies (e.g. use of behaviour-specific praise, teaching rules and behavioural routines) supported by evidence (Simonsen et al., 2008). Guidelines in Estonian educational system for working with SEBD children are general and there is little information about the strategies used by teachers, how effective they are in the use of those strategies and what are the support systems teachers need to be effective. Both, personnel in schools and parents perceive SEBD as on of the biggest problems (Rose & Gallop, 2002; Reinke et al., 2011). Teachers feel the need for extensive and specific skills in the management of problem behaviour in the classroom (Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2006). Children, who are in classes where behavioural disruption takes place will get less instruction (Weinstein, 2007) and may themselves show behavioural problems and be more vulnerable to psychiatric disorders (Ialongo et al., 2001).

Teachers’ knowledge about effective intervention strategies is poor (Stormont et al., 2011). Their readiness to work with SEBD is bigger in schools where they are supported by the management and get more training. Length of teachers work experience is connected to smaller readiness to include SEBD children. (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Usually one or more models are used to help teachers manage better with SEBD children: training to change classroom behaviour of teachers, feedback for teachers based on observations, consulting teachers (one-to-one mentoring by experienced teachers or supporting staff). It has been shown that one-time training may not affect teacher classroom behaviour (Fixen et al., 2005). Effectiveness of training and implementation of skills depends on the methods used in training and feedback teachers receive (Dufrene et al., 2014). Consulting teachers to support implementation of new strategies has been
with varying effect depending on the focus and characteristics of the consultation (Sanetti et al., 2015). For example, raising teacher motivation for implementation of new strategies should be included in consultation models (Reinke et al., 2008).

There is lacking information about the strategies used with SEBD children in Estonia and their effectiveness in our educational context. As well, worldwide there is an ongoing search for best models for supporting teachers in coping with SEBD children and ways how to link teachers to support models best suited for them.

The aim of the thesis is:
1) to find teacher characteristics (work experience, knowledge, skills and attitudes) predicting effective coping with SEBD in our educational system;
2) to find feasible models (training, consultation, feedback and combined models) supporting teachers in implementation of effective practices in managing behavioural difficulties;
3) to find evidence helping to link teachers with different characteristics to support models best suited for them.

10. Doctoral thesis project (up to 4000 characters with spaces):

The research is conducted as a part of UT teacher-training competence centre project „Supporting the development of students with special educational needs“ (Hariduslike erivajadustega õpilaste arengu toetamine) funded by European Social Fund.

Work will be conducted in the following stages:


b) A self-assessment instrument for teachers capturing teacher characteristics, used strategies and perceived classroom disruption level will be developed and a pilot study conducted. 100 teachers working with grades 3 and 5 from 28 schools participating in the project „Supporting the development of students with special educational needs“ will be included. The effects of characteristics on used strategies and perceived disruption level will be analysed and results published. (2016-2017)

c) Development of an observer measure to grasp strategies used by teachers and classroom disruption level. The developed tool will be designed to be possibility to give feedback to teachers as well. A pilot study will be conducted with 50 teachers working with grades 3-6 in the project schools. During the pilot study two observers will be used to assess inter-rater reliability. The teacher self-assessment instrument will be administered to teachers and effects of teacher characteristics and perceived classroom disruption level on used strategies and classroom disruption level (measured by observers) analysed and results published. (2017-2018)

d) Compiling a literature review and developing models suited for our educational context, piloting the models on small samples (10 teachers for each model) and refining the models based on the data and teacher feedback. (2017-2018)
e) Three prospective models for teacher support will be chosen and implemented. 50 teachers are included in each group and a control group will be added (200 teachers in sum). Groups will be balanced according to critical teacher characteristics. Previously constructed measurement tools will be used to assess teacher characteristics, used strategies in classroom and their effect. Results will be published. (2018-2019)

f) Completing the thesis. (2020)

11. Summary in Estonian
Title: Empiiriselt valideeritud mitmetasandilise õpetaja toetusmudeli loomine käitumiraskustega õpilastega toimetulekuks
Supervisor(s): Evelyn Kiive
Annotation (ca. 1/2 page):

Kaasava hariduse põhimõtete rakendamisega Eestis on õpetajate üheks väljakutseks sotsiaalsete, emotsionaalsete ja käitumisraskustega lastega toimetulek. Kuna õpetajate käitumine klassis mõjutab oluliselt õpilaste toimetulekut, vajavad õpetajad üha enam teadmisi tõhusastest õpilaste käitumist toetavatest strateegiatest ning tuge nende strateegiate kasutuselevõtmiseks.

Doktoritöö eesmärgiks on: 1) leida õpetaja omadused, mis ennustavad tõhusat toimetulekut käitumisraskustega õpilastega; 2) leida mudelid, mis toetaksid õpetajaid tõhusate käitumist toetavate strateegiate kasutusele võtmisel ja 3) leida, kuidas siduda erinevate omadustega õpetajaid toetamisprotsessi, mis neid kõige paremini aitaks käitumist toetavate strateegiate kasutusele võtmisel.

Doktoritöö käigus arendatakse välja hindamisvahendid õpetajate karakteristikute, kasutatavate strateegiate ja klassis esineva häiriva käitumise määra mõõtmiseks. Samuti luuakse õpetajate toetamise mudelid ja hinnatakse nende tõhusust.

12. Summary in English
Title: Towards an empirically validated multilevel teacher support strategy for coping with behaviour and emotional difficulties in schoolchildren
Supervisor(s): Evelyn Kiive
Annotation (ca. 1/2 page):

With the implementation of the principles of inclusive education in Estonia teachers are facing an increasing need for support in using effective strategies in the classroom to satisfy the needs of children having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teacher behaviour in the classroom is a key factor predicting student outcomes and dependent on support models used to help teachers implementing those strategies.

The aim of the thesis is: 1) to find teacher characteristics (work experience, knowledge, skills and attitudes) predicting effective coping with SEBD in our educational system; 2) to find feasible models (training, consultation, feedback and combined models) supporting teachers in implementation of effective practices in managing behavioural
difficulties; 3) to find evidence helping to link teachers with different characteristics to support models best suited for them.

Tools for measurement of teacher characteristics, strategies used in the classroom and amount of disruptive behaviour will be developed. Models for teacher support are created and tested.