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Investigating teachers' views through art about school violence

Abstract

The alarming increase in incidents of school violence in primary, junior high and high schools also in Greece is now confirmed by many studies. Interpreting and addressing the problem is a very complex process, as many and varied factors (family, school, child, social factors, etc.) are involved in the occurrence of school violence and the exact responsibility of each of them is unclear. However, public opinion tends to attribute responsibility mainly to family-related factors. In the context of this reflection, the purpose of this paper was to investigate teacher's views regarding the contribution of schools to incidents of school violence and to explore the possible changes in the initial views after taking part in the workshop, where art was used to elaborate on the theme. The research was carried out in an experiential workshop with the participation of 20 primary and secondary teachers. The implemented method was "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience". By exploiting great artworks, this method aims at promoting critical reflection on views, perceptions, attitudes, and their transformation, when participants in this process consider them to be stereotypical or dysfunctional in relation to the researched problem. Implementation of the method in the workshop showed that

teachers discussed critiqued, re-examined and partially revised stereotypical views on the factors responsible for the occurrence of school violence.

Keywords: school violence (bulling), critical self-reflection, transformative learning, aesthetic experience

Διερεύνηση των απόψεων εκπαιδευτικών, μέσα από την τέχνη, για την ενδοσχολική βία

Περίληψη

Η ανησυχητική αύξηση των περιστατικών ενδοσχολικής βίας σε Δημοτικά, Γυμνάσια και Λύκεια και στη χώρα μας επιβεβαιώνεται σήμερα από πολλές έρευνες. Η ερμηνεία και η αντιμετώπιση του προβλήματος είναι πολύ σύνθετες διαδικασίες, επειδή στη δημιουργία της ενδοσχολικής βίας εμπλέκονται πολλοί και ποικίλοι παράγοντες (οικογένεια, σχολείο, παιδί, κοινωνικοί παράγοντες κά), όπου η ακριβής ευθύνη του καθενός από αυτούς είναι αδιευκρίνιστη. Ωστόσο, η κοινή γνώμη τείνει να αποδίδει την ευθύνη κυρίως σε παράγοντες που αφορούν την οικογένεια. Στο πλαίσιο αυτού του προβληματισμού, ο σκοπός της παρούσας εργασίας ήταν να διερευνήσει τις απόψεις εκπαιδευτικών σχετικά με τη συμβολή του σχολείου στη δημιουργία της ενδοσχολικής βίας, καθώς και να διερευνήσει πιθανές αλλαγές στις αρχικές τους απόψεις, μετά από τη συμμετοχή τους σε εργαστήριο, όπου επεξεργάστηκαν το θέμα με την αξιοποίηση έργων τέχνης. Η διερεύνηση πραγματοποιήθηκε σε βιωματικό εργαστήριο στο οποίο συμμετείχαν 20 εκπαιδευτικοί. Η μέθοδος που χρησιμοποιήθηκε είναι η «Μετασχηματίζουσα μάθηση μέσω της αισθητικής εμπειρίας». Η μέθοδος αυτή έχει στόχο, αξιοποιώντας σημαντικά έργα τέχνης, να προάγει τον κριτικό στοχασμό σε απόψεις, αντιλήψεις, στάσεις, καθώς και το μετασχηματισμό τους, όταν οι συμμετέχοντες σε αυτή τη διαδικασία κρίνουν ότι αυτές είναι στερεότυπες ή δυσλειτουργικές σε σχέση με το ερευνώμενο πρόβλημα. Η υλοποίηση της μεθόδου στο εργαστήριο έδειξε ότι οι εκπαιδευτικοί συζήτησαν, στοχάστηκαν κριτικά, επανεξέτασαν και εν μέρει αναθεώρησαν στερεότυπες απόψεις για τους παράγοντες, που ευθύνονται στην εμφάνιση της ενδοσχολικής βίας.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: ενδοσχολική βία, κριτικός αυτοστοχασμός, μετασχηματίζουσα μάθηση, αισθητική εμπειρία

1. Introduction

The alarming increase in incidents of school violence in primary, junior high and high schools also in Greece is now confirmed by many studies[1]. In the most

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1 National Centre of Social Research. (2006). *Growing up in Athens. Children and teenagers' life Quality.*

recent survey of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in schools of both stages, the most frequent form of school violence reported is verbal bullying (56.5%) involving being called names or insulted, followed by physical bullying (30.5%) involving pushing and punching, and lastly, social bullying, involving being isolated, excluded and mocked by the rest of the classroom (27.8%). In smaller percentages, the pupils reported that they were afraid of other pupils (15.4%) and, also, that some of their pupils used force to obtain personal belongings (11.3%)[2].

The interpretation and treatment of the phenomenon, now defined as a problem, are very complex processes because many and varied factors (family, school, child, social factors etc.) are involved in the occurrence of school violence and the exact responsibility of each of them is unclear. Important researchers, such as Dan Olweus[3] argue that violence as manifested by a small number of children would not have happened without the devastating, tacit consent and silent complicity of adults.

In Greece, most research to date has focused on the family and social environment of pupils[4] while less has been done to investigate factors related to the school or social environment. As for the public opinion, which is most of the time stereotypically expressed, the viewpoints mainly identify the problem within the family. Research has shown that teachers hold the same opinion. For example, Principals of schools in West Greece claim that only 12% of factors regarding school violence are related to school while 88% of factors are related to the pupils, to their families and their society[5].

In this context, we found it interesting to investigate the views of teachers, who daily face this phenomenon at school and are called upon to deal with it without any sufficient training. As Artinopoulou quote the teaching staff is unprepared to handle these issues because they have not received the proper training. In our country, in general, we are unprepared for this issue at an institutional level, although individual efforts are being made. In any case, parents who find out that their child has been bullied have to make their own efforts to get the school involved. Of course, it is necessary to support their child, but the phenomenon must be aggressively tackled because it has serious implications on the child's psyche[6].

Αθήνα: ΕΚΚΕ.

2 Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. (2016). *Research for the Bulling at Schools in Greece (Primary and Secondary Education)*. In https://www.minedu.gov.gr/news/18569-08-03-16-ti-deixnoun-ta-stoixeia-erevnas-gia-ton-sxoliko-ekfovismo (accessed on 6/02/2020).

3 Olweus, D. (2013). *Bullying at School – what we know and what we Can Do.* New York: J. Wiley & Sons Inc.

4 Artinopoulou, V. (2016). *Bullig in School. Researchs and Politics in Europe*. Athens: Metaixmio.

5 Vergidis, D., Panagiotopoulos, G. & Moïsidou, E. (2014). *Violence in Schools*. Patra: Peloponnesus, p.p. 155-169.

6 Artinopoulou, V. (2009). Violence in Family and Violence in School**.** *Encephalos*, 44(2). Athens: Society of *Encephalos*.

In the text of this reflection, the objective of this work is to investigate teachers' views on school violence regarding factors associated with school environment. The method was implemented is the "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience", which correlates the content of art works with the content of subjects studied by pupils or adults, with the aim of developing their critical thinking and transforming potential stereotypes[7]. The method was applied in a workshop in which 20 primary and secondary teachers participated in the context of a one-day training meeting. The goal of the workshop was for teachers to critically explore a 'difficult subject', such as the contribution of school to the occurrence of school violence.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Method "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience"

The exploitation of the arts in education has long been supported by many educators: Dewey[8], Freire[9], Gardner[10], Perkins[11], Greene[12], Efland[13], etc., with the main idea that art promotes not only the aesthetic cultivation, but also the creativity, imagination and critical thinking of trainees. Specifically, the "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience", method was implemented, correlates the content of art works with the content of subjects studied by pupils or adults, with the aim of developing their critical skills and transforming potential stereotypes[14]. "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience" is a method developed by Alexis Kokkos and according to him aesthetic experience is the systematic observation of works of art which can lead adults to a process of critical thinking which will help them become more emancipated when faced with ideologies that be set their thoughts and seek to embed in their conscience the established order of things, which usually works against their vital interests[15]. The method takes

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7   Kokkos, A. (2009c). Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience: Theoretical framework and method of implementation. In http://www.adulteduc.gr/images/mm_aisthitiki_empeiria (accessed on 9/02/2020).

8   Dewey, J. (1934/1980). *Art as Experience*. USA: The Penguin Group.

9   Freire, P. (1985). The action of study. In Freire, P. (Ed.), *The politics for education: Culture, power and liberation.* South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Carvey.

10   Gardner, H. (1990). *Art Education and Human Development.* Los Angeles: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts.

11   Perkins, D. (1994). *The Intelligent eye: learning to think by looking at art.* Los Angeles California: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts.

12   Greene, M. (2000). *Releasing the Imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

13   Efland, D. A. (2002). *Art and Cognition. Integrating the Visual Arts in the Curriculum*. New York: Teachers College Press & Reston. National Art Education Association. ISBN: 0-8077-4218-X.

14   Kokkos, A. (2010). Transformative learning through aesthetic experience: Towards a comprehensive method. *Journal of Transformative Education,* vol. 8, p.p. 155-177.

15   Kokkos, A. (2011). Transformative learning through aesthetic experience: The formulation of a method. In A. kokkos & Associates (Eds.), *Education through the arts* (pp. 71-120). Athens: Metaixmio.

place through the elaboration of artworks that are correlated with the studied subject. The method promotes the selection of works of art based on the criteria of the Frankfurt School[16], selection authentic artworks rather than products of the cultural industry[17], which could provoke critical reflection.

The stages of the method are:

- "**1st stage: Investigating the need for critical thinking:** At this stage, trainers explore the need to critically examine certain cognitive assumptions of trainees on the subject. In the beginning, trainers may discover that trainees consider their mental habits to be correct, while, in reality, they are dysfunctional either for themselves or for the community. This will be the trigger for initiating an investigation into the educational needs of trainees. Through discussion, trainers, acting as team coordinators, attempt to shake learners' certainty about the functionality of a particular mental habit, a process which works as a disorienting dilemma, in the sense of Mezirow's theory. Then the trainers ask trainees if they would like to critically consider the issue during their upcoming meetings. Once everyone has given their consent, the process of critical thinking may begin.

- **2nd stage: Trainees express their views:** The aim of this stage is expression and recording of the trainees' views on the topic under consideration, through their answers to open-ended questions the trainer asks. This allows to collect the material to be studied, design a strategy to transform mental habits and, on the other hand, to compare at the end of the process the shift in trainees' views achieved.

- **3rd stage: Defining the viewpoints to be examined:** At this stage, the topic subsets and the critical questions to be investigated by trainees are identified, usually using the collaborative method, as well as other techniques, such as role play, critical discussion, etc. They are prioritized on the basis of the interest each of them presents for the group members.

- **4th stage: Selection of works of art**: Once the critical question has been chosen, trainer and trainees choose together various original works of art from all forms of art which can be processed to produce critical thinking. Based on this information, trainers coordinate a process aiming at approaching the issue being explored from many different angles. This will reveal to trainees as many dimensions as possible and will encourage them to reconsider their initial views. Therefore, at this stage it is very important to pay particular attention to the correlation between the work of art and the dysfunctional view, as well as the critical question determined in the previous stage.

16 Horkheimer, M. (1938/1984). Art and mass culture. In Adorno, T., Marcuse, H., Horkheimer, M., Lowerthal, E. (Eds.), *Art and mass culture*. Athens: Ypsilon.
17 Adorno, T. (1986). *Aesthetic theory*. NY: Kegan and Paul.

- **5th stage: Critical thinking through aesthetic experience**: At this stage, through systematic observation of works of art, applying the Perkins model[18], the group critically approaches the viewpoint they have decided to consider first. In more detail, Perkins developed a model of approaching works of visual arts where, through methodical and organized observation, trainees can move from a superficial contact with the work of art towards deeper understanding and decoding of its messages. According to the author of the method, achieving this goal contributes to the development of critical and creative thinking, activates intuition and imagination, promotes understanding and acceptance of oneself and others and, possibly, shows learners the way towards self-awareness and empathy.

- **6st stage: Re-evaluation of premises**: At this stage, which is the last one, trainees write a small text on what they experienced during the observation of works of art; the text is on the same topic as that considered in stage 2, and presents their final viewpoints. Next, the final viewpoints are compared to those expressed in the 2nd stage and the transformations of their initial thoughts and premises are highlighted. This is followed by a plenary debate and all ideas and suggestions emerged are synthesized"[19].

2.1. Clarification of terms, purpose and question of research

This method claims that the use of art could can promote critical reflection on opinions, views, attitudes, and their transformation, when participants consider that these are dysfunctional in relation to the subject being studied[20]. According to Mezirow "***Transformative learning*** may be defined as learning as transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflecting, open and emotionally able to change"[21]. In this context, the objective of the research was the investigation of transformation of the teachers' views on the school violence, through the art-based method. But because the transformation of views, perceptions and assumptions is a difficult and demanding process that requires a lot of time, which we did not have in our research, we used the term critical self-reflection. "***Critical self-reflection*** is reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing,

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18   Perkins, D. (1994). *The Intelligent eye: learning to think by looking at art.* The Getty Education Institute for the Arts. Los Angeles California.
19   Kokkos, A. (2011). Transformative learning through aesthetic experience: The formulation of a method. In A. kokkos & Associates (Eds.), *Education through the arts* (pp. 71-120). Athens: Metaixmio, p.p. 97-100.
20 Mezirow, J., Taylor, E., &Associates. (2009). *Transformative learning in practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
21 Mezirow, J., Taylor, E., & Associates. (2009). *Transformative learning in practice.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p. 22.

believing, feeling and acting"[22]. In some occasion, critical reflection triggers transformative learning but demanding more time and suitable preparation of the team. That's why ***the purpose*** *of the research was to investigate teacher's views regarding the contribution of schools to incidents of school violence and to explore the possible changes[23] in the initial views after taking part in the workshop, where art was used to elaborate on the theme with provoking critical reflection.*

For the definition of ***school violence*** used Olweus' term. Olweus[24] points out that a pupil is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more pupils, and considers as a negative action a type of violence (physical or psychological) in which a person or a group of people intentionally inflicts or attempts to inflict injury or discomfort to another person who cannot defend themselves at that particular moment.

The ***questions of the research*** were:
- Witch are teachers' views (initial) regarding the contribution of schools to incidents of school violence?
- Do their views agree with the rather stereotypical public opinion that responsibility lies almost exclusively with the family?
- There are any changes in their views after the application of method "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience"?

3. Research Methodology

For the present work we designed a flexible research plan. It is a qualitative study in which the stages of an already established theory[25] were applied aiming at acquiring knowledge on a topic such as that of school violence. The main goal was to investigate possible changes in teachers' views on the phenomenon of school violence by implementing a method that uses art as an educational tool. The method was implemented in a workshop, within a focus group of 20 primary and secondary teachers-participants in the context of a one-day training meeting, "Focus groups are essentially interview groups, which are not based on the type of question-answer interview, but on the interaction developed within the group"[26]. The group was homogeneous regarding the participants'

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22 Mezirow, J. & Associates. (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood. A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p.13.
23 The content of "change" in this work analyzing in methodology's paragraph.
24 Olweus, D. (2013²). *Bullying at School – what we know and what we Can Do.* New York: J. Wiley & Sons Inc.
25 Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research. A resource for users of social research methods in applied settings* (3rd ed.). England: Wiley.
26 Kruerger & Casey (2000). In Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*. (ed.). E. Giannakopoulou). Athens: Metaixmio, p. 293.

profession, but mainly regarding the participants' experience, since they had all experienced incidents of school violence. The goal was "through the interaction of the team to get more personal views from the participants than those collected in an interview, where the researcher would have a dominant role"[27]. The people involved (ten teachers were from primary education and ten from secondary, overall, fifteen women and five men) participated voluntarily and after explicitly expressing a desire to discuss the specific topic. They had a 15-25-year educational experience. The six stages of the method, above presented in detail[28], were adapted based on the studied topic and specific group. The techniques used in this flexible research plan based on specific theory were to produce evidence-based ***documents*** resulting from the recording of the observations of a work of art, but also the writing of the initial and final views of the teachers on the topic of school violence. The elaboration of the content of the documents was carried out based on the technique of content analysis following the axial coding of the teachers' views[29]. Axials concerned the teachers' views on the subject matter and more specifically on the factors that cause this behaviour and are related to the school environment. The initial and final views were compared in order to ascertain the change-differentiation in the initial views. The concept of change was based on open coding[30] after thorough analysis of the written evidence and on whether, in their final views, the teachers enriched the factors of occurrence of the phenomenon of school violence also with factors concerning school and more specifically their role in incidents and problem management in general. The homogeneity of the group resulted in a safe transition from personal expression on the subject (2nd stage) to "group thinking"[31], with the writing of group texts at the end of the implementation of the method (6th stage).

4. The Research findings

The presentation of research findings is following the six stages of method "Transformative learning through aesthetic experience":

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27 Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*. (ed.). E. Giannakopoulou). Athens: Metaixmio, p. 293.

28 Kokkos, A. (2011). Transformative learning through aesthetic experience: The formulation of a method. In A. kokkos & Associates (Eds.), *Education through the arts* (p.p. 71-120). Athens: Metaixmio, p.p.97-100.

29 Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*. (ed.). E. Giannakopoulou). Athens: Metaixmio, p. 485.

30 Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*. (ed.). E. Giannakopoulou). Athens: Metaixmio, p.p. 484-486.

31 Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research. A resource for users of social research methods in applied settings* (3rd ed.). England: Wiley, p. 340.

4.1. Identifying the teachers' need to critically think and explore the phenomenon of school violence.

At this stage identifying the need to critically think and explore the phenomenon of school violence: Based on the workshop's rationale, the concept of school violence (using brainstorming technique) was first explored and the need for critical thinking and exploring of the issue was highlighted.

The key question was how do teachers perceive the phenomenon of school violence. In their views, what factors are responsible for it? Do their views agree or not with the rather stereotypical public opinion that responsibility lies almost exclusively with the family? However, the need to explore the subject was anticipated, since the teachers had voluntarily and willingly signed up to participate in the workshop, expressing the view that they wanted to participate in it, because they had encountered incidents of school violence at their school and wanted to discuss them. During the three-hour workshop, once the members got to know each other, they discussed the about the school violence. After discussing the content of the definitions given by teachers, because the definitions were many and some varied, it was decided by the team to use the definition of school violence by Dean Olweus, as cited above.

4.2. Expressing the teachers' views

In the second stage, the members of the group expressed their views, responding in writing (individually) to a question about the factors - causes of school violence and the ways in which teachers deal with such incidents. Specifically, teachers were asked to answer in writing the following question: *"Think of the most serious incident of violence or intimidation that occurred in your school and answer: What factors, in your opinion, influenced the phenomenon?*

Indicative views expressed in the individual texts are:
- *The diversity and variety of pupils in terms of origin, ethnicity, colour, religion etc.*
- *The external characteristics of the pupils, their physical development, their disability, their attire.*
- *Pupils' family environment: single parent families, adopted children, divorce.*
- *Low self-esteem of the perpetrator and victim.*
- *The different perceptions of each child and their code of values.*
- *Family violence.*
- *The general social violence. Violence of the mass media.*
- *The use of substances.*

- *Pupils' anxiety.*
- Aggressiveness manifested at adolescence.
- *The value judgement of the school and the separation of good pupils from bad ones, as well as the isolation and exclusion of the latter.*
- *Lack of adequate training of teachers.*

As it was previously mentioned, the goal was to investigate the teachers' views regarding the factors that link school violence to school. We also aimed at detecting any possible stereotypes of teachers' perceptions which create additional difficulties in preventing and coping with the problem at school. In our opinion, it was found that teachers' responses were more related to family and pupil factors and much less to school. It was thus confirmed the original assumption that teachers are also oriented towards the rather stereotypical and unilateral public opinion that responsibility lies with the family.

4.3. Defining the viewpoints to be examined and critical question

In the third stage, the written responses were elaborated in order to identify the individual issues and critical questions that the team members considered important to explore in order to critically approach the phenomenon of school violence. In this context, the individual issues could relate to all three factors, namely 'family', 'school', 'pupils'. However, the initial goal of the workshop for which the teachers were invited was to explore the school-related factors and upon our proposal it was agreed to focus on one individual issue:

o *The contribution of school to incidents of school violence*

The critical question arising from the issue being discussed was:

o *Are there any school factors that contribute to the occurrence of school violence? If yes, which are they?*

4.4. Selection of works of art

At this stage the team members chose the artwork through which they would explore the issue of their choice. The choice was made between projects the trainer presented to the group and effort was made to be authentic and holistic, able to produce multiple interpretations and stimulate critical thinking.

So, we presented the members of the group with four paintings and asked them to choose a work of art through which we would explore the aforementioned critical question. These artworks were: a. "She doesn't want School", by N. Litras (image 1), b. "The School Master", by J. Steen (image 2), c. "The Children Classroom", by Henri-Jules-Jean Geoffroy (image 3), and d. "The Country School", by W. Homer.

image 1	image 2	image 3

image 4

Of the four proposed artworks, the chosen work to be elaborated by the group was "**The country School, 1871"** by Winslow Homer (1836-1910).

4.5. Critical Thinking through aesthetic experience

In the fifth stage, the art work was processed using Perkins's four-phase method[32]. At each stage, specific questions are asked about the in-depth observation of a work of art and aim to challenge the critical and creative thinking of the learners. The four phases are:

o Simple observation of the artwork.
o Open and adventurous observation of the artwork.
o Detailed and in-depth observation of the artwork.
o Holistic observation of the artwork and reflection throughout the process with the aim of utilizing all the information that the team has mentioned in previous

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32 Perkins, D. (1994). *The Intelligent eye: learning to think by looking at art.* The Getty Education Institute for the Arts. Los Angeles California.

stages, with the aim of developing reflective skills.

The questions the group was asked to answer are reflected in the following panel.

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o **Phases of observation of a painting: (D. Perkins, 1994)**

Phase 1: Simple observation of the artwork
(Giving time to look)
✓ *What do you see?*
✓ *What are you wondering?*
✓ *What is interesting in your opinion?*
✓ *Why?*
Phase 2: Open and adventurous observation of the artwork
(Broadening to look for meaning/ interpretation, surprises… to look for a mood, to look for emotions etc.
Phase 3: A detailed and in-depth observation of the artwork
Looking clearly and deeply at the cross for example:
what's reflecting, find symbols, details...
Phase 4: Holistic observation of the artwork and reflection throughout the process with the aim of utilizing all the information that the team has mentioned in previous stages, developing reflective skills *{Re-seeing the whole work, re-experiencing what it has to offer, which is your conclusion about the painting...}.*

While processing the table, the components of the table were first described. Then (2nd and 3rd phase) the team members deepened further and identified elements such as:

-The contrast between outdoor space (nature) and indoor classroom space. They said that "*outside there is light and green colour, which is the colour of hope, in contrast to the interior of the room; inside the room the windows have railings, which refer to a prison school, light is scarce and colours are earthy but not too bright, as it should be in a place that invites children to learn*".
-Additionally, they said that "*the walls of the classroom were naked, the chalkboard was disproportionately large and empty of written references that would refer to knowledge, the figure of the teacher was over-sized, and her clothes were conservative. Reference was also made to the empty space of the classroom*

which refers to limited learning as is the case in this classroom*".

Then, they identified the group of girls "*which appear to be cooperating, as well as the red colour of their clothes and indicated that both elements are encouraging. However, at the same time they reported that the little boy was crying without anyone paying attention to him and that some boys were alone facing the wall; They wondered whether these pupils are the 'bad' ones*".

-The above elements were interpreted by the members of the group as elements of a teacher-centered education model that does not favor communication, equitable participation, warm relationships between the pupils and the teacher, which are prerequisites for learning. They also pointed to the bare feet of some children, who seem to be poor, more than others, as evidence of a school that promotes inequality.

In the 4th phase of reviewing the process of the art work and reflection, they noted that while analyzing the painting they identified elements of the educational process that restrict individual-pupil freedom, impede learning and development of healthy and warm relationships between teachers and pupils, and are potential causes of pupils' aggressive behaviour and incidents of school violence.

4.6. Critical Reflection. Re-evaluation of initial views

In the sixth and final stage the team members reflected on the preceding process, re-examined their views and positioned themselves on the importance of the method and the exploitation of art in the learning process. The team members after reflecting on the preceding process and having experienced the workshop process, drafted a text responding to the initial critical question with a small differentiation:

'In your opinion, are there any school factors that contribute to the occurrence of school violence? If yes, which are they?'

We mention, inter alia, some of the responses the teachers processed as part of team work[33]:

- *'School is a microcosm of society. Pupils come to school with different experiences and their parents have different educational levels and background. This encounter often creates aggression and insecurity. School does not make much effort to address the latter. School does not educate on cooperation, does not really communicate with pupils, but instead cultivates the pursuit of good grades and competition' (1st group).*
- *'Of all the factors I distinguish the separation of good pupils from bad ones and*

33 In the 6th stage, the teachers divided into four groups of five members discussed, reflected on their initial views and wrote the final texts.

the isolation of the 'bad' pupils in some desks in the classroom. Many teachers are only interested in their lesson and whether there is quiet in the classroom. The way they assign tasks, form teams, give praise favours only those pupils already favoured in their families' (2nd group).

- *'Factors contributing to violence: The assessment system of the pupils, but also the educational process in general, rewards excellence and marginalizes weak students. The 'unconscious' process of self-fulfilling prophecy for some students depending on their social background. Tolerance, indifference to racist behaviour or comments. The lack of a common educational policy at the level of teacher associations regarding incidents of marginalization, weaknesses and specificities' (3rd group).*

- *'Factors that contribute to the emergence of school violence are the lack of a democratic atmosphere, dialogue and tolerance at school. The dominance of the teacher-centered model that leads to teachers distancing themselves from pupils and lack of interest in building communication with pupils. The cultivation of a competitive climate for high performance requirements. Ostrich-like behaviour in dealing with similar problems of school violence and teachers disclaiming their responsibility. The incomplete observation and supervision of relations between children' (4th group).*

While studying their responses, we found that their views were now more concise and critical than the original ones and concerned more school-related factors that are linked to school violence. They recognized that the school partially contribute to school violence, and also teachers themselves with their perceptions and attitudes are involved in it and can play an important role in preventing and addressing the problem. Teachers identified factors that had not been mentioned in initial views, namely:

o When pupils with different experiences, knowledge, etc., come to school, they should be integrated into a uniform way of education, and this results in stress, anxiety and in some cases causes aggressive behaviour.

o School does not promote systematic cooperation and communication between pupils, and it does not systematically cultivate a democratic climate. The teacher-centred model remains dominant in school, which provides few opportunities for group and collaborative learning.

o Via its evaluation system, school promotes grade-chasing and competition, which in some cases result in aggressive behaviour.

o The distinction between the good and the weak pupils, as a subconscious function - results in the validation of the self-fulfilling theory[34] through which some students are marginalized.

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34 Rosenthal, R. & Jacobson, L. (1968). *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

o Teachers sometimes tolerate verbal violence between classmates, racial comments, and thus there is insufficient surveillance of incidents of school violence.

In addition, it is important to mention that teachers also developed suggestions on how to prevent and address the phenomenon at school, such as:

- *'To approach the personality and uniqueness of students at school in a democratic climate with a tolerance towards difference should be our priority. To Inform and keep an open dialogue with students and the wider society on such issues. To cultivate a friendly climate, intimacy and trust to keep the communication channel open and for students to find shelter and solutions at school when they are in need' (1st group).*
- *'The school will be able to deal with this when teachers have time to listen to their children, when such events are not silenced, but discussed through a variety of discussions, films, tasks, analysis of artworks, and meetings with all people involved' (3rd group).*
- *'The school can address the problem with teachers that listen to their class and understand in a timely manner what is happening, who are in no hurry to finish the lesson and syllabus, communicate their pupils' assets / potential talents, give equal opportunities to everyone, encourage and do not offend them about their incomplete knowledge, low performance, etc.' (4th group).*

5. Conclusions

The "Transformative learning through Aesthetic experience" is a demanding method whose full application to transform stereotypical views or dysfunctional assumptions requires many applications over time[35]. However, even in this limited time frame, teachers were given the opportunity to express more freely their views on such a complex topic as that of school violence, and to realize that they themselves are sometimes part of the problem, as well as of its solution. The findings facilitate the development of critical reflection on the theme. Through their experience of the workshop process, the teachers in our team discussed, critiqued, re-examined their views on this issue, and to a certain extent seemed to revise some of their views by recognizing the role of the school in the occurrence of school violence.

Teachers mentioned inter alia the lack of educating pupils on democratic school principles and values, such as the development of meaningful cooperation, communication and dialogue. In contrast, the prevalence of a competitive climate in the classroom and the distinction of good and bad pupils contribute to incidents

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35 Kokkos, A. (2009c). Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience: Theoretical framework and method of implementation. In http://www.adulteduc.gr/images/mm_aisthitiki_empeiria (accessed on 9/02/2020).

of school violence. Theories such as that of Self-fulfilling prophecy[36] find their place in the modern school as well.

This is also evidenced by the final individual texts we asked them to write at the end of the workshop on how they experienced the application of this method. The impressions of the team members were very positive, and they expressed a strong desire to apply it in the classroom. Some of themes sages they wrote were:

- *'The correlation between the painting and the factors of school violence was a very good and fruitful moment. At some points I recognized myself in the teacher-centered model while thinking that I had not completely rejected it. The method is very interesting overall, and I would be happy to apply it in the classroom.'*
- *'Very interactive and enlightening method. I'm looking forward to using it in the classroom.'*
- *'I enjoyed the whole process. I find the method very powerful and bright! An epitome of experiential learning based on art that raises emotions, memories and experiences with intensity and beauty. Through the painting, I saw myself in the classroom from a distance and that made me think a lot. Many thanks and good luck in the classroom!'*
- *'In the end, art is a very powerful tool for highlighting even the most subtle manifestations of a phenomenon. It is very important the fact that art has helped us understand how much responsibility lies with the school on pupils' issues and not just the family and society.'*

In conclusion, the painting chosen by the teachers was also very suitable for provoking not only critical comments and thoughts, but also emotions, since its content was very close to the teacher-centered school they themselves experienced as students. As Dewey says '*The work of art is a challenge to the performance of a like act of evocation and organization, through the imagination, on the part of the one who experiences it. It is not just a stimulus to and means of an overt course of action*[37]'.

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36 Rosenthal, R. & Jacobson, L. (1968). *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
37 Dewey, J. (1934/1980). *Art as Experience*. USA: The Penguin Group, p. 285.

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Davoulou Maria

School-family relations: policies and practices in the Greek context of early childhood education

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the current Greek legislation and curriculum context as well as the reality of school-family relations in early childhood education through bibliographic research. Legislative documents and research papers demonstrate that there is a gap between theory and practice, and also between both teachers' and parents' stated attitudes and actual behavior. School-family relations in Greek Kindergarten seem to be formal, superficial, and far from the trusting and engaging relations that would benefit children's learning and development. The emerging conclusions lead to suggestions for future research, policies, and practices. The importance of the present paper lies in the description of the current situation of school-family relations in the Greek context of early childhood education and the proposal of theory-driven and evidence-based suggestions that could lead to its improvement.

Keywords: School-family relations, parental involvement, early childhood education

Σχέσεις σχολείου-οικογένειας: πολιτικές και πρακτικές στο ελληνικό πλαίσιο της προσχολικής εκπαίδευσης

Περίληψη

Σκοπός της παρούσας εργασίας είναι να εξετάσει το ισχύον ελληνικό πλαίσιο της νομοθεσίας και του προγράμματος σπουδών, καθώς και την πραγματικότητα, όσον αφορά τις σχέσεις σχολείου-οικογένειας στην προσχολική εκπαίδευση, μέσω βιβλιογραφικής έρευνας. Τα θεσμικά κείμενα και οι ερευνητικές εργασίες, καταδεικνύουν ότι υπάρχει χάσμα μεταξύ θεωρίας και πράξης, καθώς και μεταξύ των δεδηλωμένων στάσεων και των εκδηλωνόμενων συμπεριφορών, τόσο των γονέων όσο και των εκπαιδευτικών. Οι σχέσεις σχολείου-οικογένειας στο ελληνικό Νηπιαγωγείο φαίνεται να είναι τυπικές και επιφανειακές και να απέχουν πολύ από τις σχέσεις εμπιστοσύνης και συμμετοχής που θα ωφελούσαν τη μάθηση και την ανάπτυξη των παιδιών. Τα συμπεράσματα που προκύπτουν οδηγούν σε προτάσεις για μελλοντικές έρευνες, πολιτικές και πρακτικές. Η σημασία της παρούσας εργασίας έγκειται στην περιγραφή της τρέχουσας κατάστασης των σχέσεων σχολείου-οικογένειας στο ελληνικό πλαίσιο της προσχολικής εκπαίδευσης και στην παρουσίαση θεωρητικώς και εμπειρικώς θεμελιωμένων προτάσεων που θα μπορούσαν να οδηγήσουν στη βελτίωσή τους.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: Σχέσεις σχολείου-οικογένειας, γονική εμπλοκή, προσχολική εκπαίδευση

1. Introduction

Children learn in contexts, and the spaces, places and people they come into contact with have a deep influence on their learning and development[1]. In early childhood education it could be argued that there is no clear line between parents' and teachers' inputs, since both contexts (family and school) play a crucial role in children's learning whose impact is greater if parents and schools work together as partners[2]. But, although the need for parental involvement is a topic in education on which there is great and decades-long agreement, schools still need help in developing comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships[3]. This also seems to be the case for Greek early childhood education

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1 Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education.* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge, p. 1.
2 Sakellariou, M., & Rentzou, K. (2007). Types of Parental Involvement in Greek Preschool Settings: A Case Study. *International Journal of Learning, 14*, p. 33.
3 Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., Van Voorhis, F. L., Martin, C. S., Thomas, B. G., Greenfield, M. D., Hutchins, D. J., & Williams, K. J. (2019) *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action.* (4th Edition). California: Corwin Press, p.1.

(Kindergarten/Nipiagogeio) where, according to Birbili and Roufidou, parents and teachers have not yet built the kind of relationship that would allow them to work together for children's benefit[4].

The present paper focuses on the school-family relationships which form the most immediate and important mesosystem for preschool children[5]. Using the bibliographic research methodology, we broadly describe the theoretical framework of parental involvement and school-family partnerships and we attempt an examination of how theory relates to policy and practice in the Greek context of early childhood education. Our conclusions and suggestions for future research and policies are presented in the paper's final chapter.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Definition of terms

A wide range of terms have been used to describe the ways in which parents and teachers cooperate and communicate and the ways parents are getting involved in their children's education[6]. 'Parental participation', 'school-family relations', 'educational partnership', and 'school-family partnerships' are some of the terms suggested to replace the term 'parental involvement', expressing the divergence between the various theoretical models regarding the way they perceive this 'collaboration'[7]. All families are involved in their children's learning and well-being in some way but involvement doesn't necessarily mean that families are engaged with their children's early childhood education programs and are collaborating with them in meaningful ways that maximize their children's educational experiences[8].

Parental engagement entails a greater commitment and a greater ownership of action than parental involvement with schools[9]. It is only when the relationship between parents and school shifts from involvement to engagement that it can be described as a 'partnership'[10]. According to Epstein, the development of

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4 Birbili, M., & Roufidou, I. (2019). Parent involvement in Greek early childhood education and care: The need for new policies and practices. In S. Phillipson, & S. Garvis (Eds), *Teachers' and Families' Perspectives in Early Childhood Education and Care. Early Childhood Education in the 21st Century Vol. II.* Abingdon: Routledge, p. 96.

5 Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education.* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge, p. 10.

6 Sakellariou, M., & Rentzou, K. (2007). Types of Parental Involvement in Greek Preschool Settings: A Case Study. *International Journal of Learning, 14*, p. 33.

7 Πεντέρη, Ε., & Πετρογιάννης, Κ. (2013). Σύνδεση σχολείου-οικογένειας και το ζήτημα της μεταξύ τους συνεργασίας: Κριτική παρουσίαση βασικών θεωρητικών μοντέλων. *Έρευνα στην Εκπαίδευση, 1*(1), σ.σ. 2, 6.

8 Halgunseth, L. (2009). Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature. *Young Children, 64*(5), 56-58.

9 Goodall, J., & Montgomery, C. (2014). Parental Involvement to Parental Engagement: A continuum. *Educational Review, 66*(4), p. 400.

10 Συμεού, Λ. (2003). Σχέσεις σχολείου-οικογένειας: έννοιες, μορφές και εκπαιδευτικές συνεπαγωγές.

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a partnership is a process, not a single event. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students. In partnerships the conditions and relationships invite power sharing and mutual respect and allow energies to be directed toward activities that foster student learning and development[11]. The two models which were used to form the theoretical frame of the present paper are presented in the following chapters.

2.2. The bioecological model

In his book "*The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design",* Urie Bronfenbrenner offered a theoretical perspective based on a new -at that time- conception of the developing person, of the environment, and especially of the evolving interaction between the two[12]. Bronfenbrenner used the word 'ecological' for his model to capture the embedded and holistic nature of human development and recognized that good early educational practice required a deep understanding of the developing child in context[13]. The ecological environment is conceived as a set of four nested structures, each inside the next like a set of Russian dolls[14], which Bronfenbrenner named the 'microsystem', the 'mesosystem', the 'exosystem' and the 'macrosystem'[15]. The child's closest and most familiar microsystem is the family, but there are other microsystems such as preschool and school. The mesosystem refers to communication and interactions between the various elements of the individual's microsystems as, for instance, the relationship between family members and preschool teachers in kindergarten[16]. According to Bronfenbrenner, such interconnections can be as decisive for development as events taking place within a given microsystem[17]. The exosystem refers to more distant influences, factors external to the children and adults but impacting on them nonetheless (educational policy, local government, media, parent workplace). The macrosystem represents the influence of even more distant factors, such as societal norms and values. Finally, the chronosystem

Παιδαγωγική Επιθεώρηση, 36, σ. 108.
11 Epstein, J. L. (2010). School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(3), 81-96.
12 Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development. Experiments by Nature and Design.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 3.
13 Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education.* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge, p. 6.
14 Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development. Experiments by Nature and Design.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 3.
15 Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education.* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge, p. 7.
16 Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education.* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge, p. 8.
17 Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development. Experiments by Nature and Design.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 3.

refs to the influence of time -both individually perceived and historical- on development (picture 1)[18].

Due to over-attention given by researchers and practitioners to the specific systems of development, at the expense of the position and influence of the individual developing in a complexity of interacting systems, Bronfenbrenner reconsidered the title of his model and changed it to 'bioecological'[19]. In the revised model, 'proximal processes' are displayed as the engines of development[20]. The construct of process (P) encompasses particular forms of interaction between the individual and its environment, which are located in the microsystems of development (proximal) and operate over time. The power of proximal processes to influence development depends on the characteristics of the person (P), of the immediate and remote environmental contexts (C) and the time periods (T) in which they take place. The integrated nature of the various elements led to the characterization of the model as the PPCT model[21].

Picture 1. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model

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18 Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education.* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge, p. 8.

19 Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education.* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge, p. 9.

20 Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The Bioecological Model of Human Development. In R. M. Lerner & W. Damon (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol 1, Theoretical Models of Human Development,* (6th edition), p.p. 793-828. Chichester: Open University Press, p. 825.
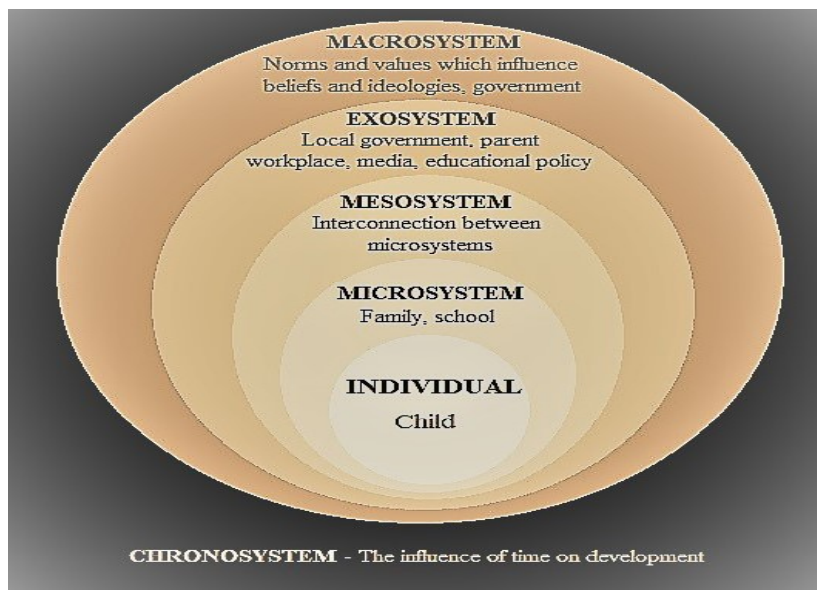
21 Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A Guide for Practitioners and Students in Early Years Education.* (1st Edition). New York: Routledge, p. 10.

2.3. The overlapping spheres of influence model for school-family partnerships

Joyce Epstein's systemic model of school, family, and community partnerships describes these three contexts as overlapping spheres of influence. In her view, such partnerships can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work. However, the main reason to create partnerships is to help children succeed in school and in later life[22].

The *external* structure of overlapping spheres of influence acknowledges that there are some practices which schools, families, and communities conduct separately and some which they conduct jointly in order to influence children's learning and development. The *internal* structure shows where and how complex and essential interpersonal relations and patterns of influence occur between individuals inside the overlapping area of home, school, and community, both at an *institutional* and at an *individual* level[23]. Without disregarding the role of the community, the present paper sets its focus on the internal model of two overlapping spheres of influence, school and family (picture 2). The largest overlap of these two spheres takes place, for most children, during preschool and primary school when schools and families operate 'cooperatively' with frequent collaborative efforts and close communication in well-defined contexts[24].

Epstein suggests a framework of six types of involvement which can help educators develop more comprehensive programs of school and family partnerships. *Parenting* refers to helping all families establish home environments to support children as students. *Communicating* is about designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress. *Volunteering* has to do with recruiting and organizing parental help and support. *Learning at home* involves information and ideas provided to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning. *Decision making* stands for including parents in school decisions, and developing parent leaders and representatives. Finally, *collaborating with community* means identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Each type of involvement includes many different practices of partnership and is likely to lead to different results for students, for parents, for teaching practice, and for school

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22 Epstein, J. L. (2010). School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(3), p. 82.
23 Epstein, J. L. (2010). School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(3), p. 82.
24 Πεντέρη, Ε., & Πετρογιάννης, Κ. (2013). Σύνδεση σχολείου-οικογένειας και το ζήτημα της μεταξύ τους συνεργασίας: Κριτική παρουσίαση βασικών θεωρητικών μοντέλων. *Έρευνα στην Εκπαίδευση, 1*(1), σ. 16.

climate. Thus schools can choose the types of involvement that are best suited with their goals[25].

Picture 2: Overlapping spheres of influence - Internal Structure[26]

Family **School**

F   S
C
P   T

Inter-institutional interactions (in overlapping area)
F = Family S = School C = Child P = Parent T = Teacher
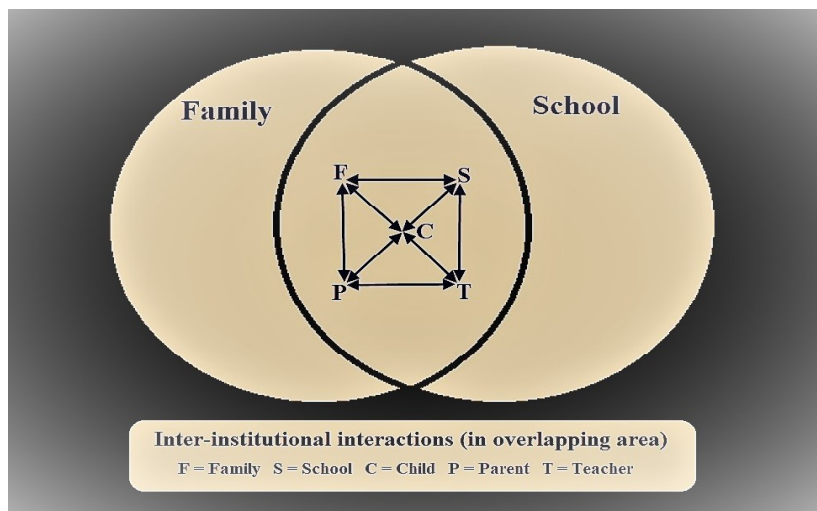
3. School-family relationship in the Greek context of early childhood education

3.1. The policy and curriculum level

The notion of partnerships in education has been embraced and embedded in policy documents and curricula from around the world[27]. According to the Greek legislation framework of early childhood education[28], parents have the right to be informed about the educational program and the general operation of the school, as well as about issues concerning their children's behavior and progress. For this purpose, individual and group meetings are scheduled at the beginning of the school-year but can also be planned during the year whenever a need (especially a problem) occurs. As mentioned in the "*School Guide for Parents and Guardians of Students in Public Nipiagogeio and Dimotiko Scholeio"* (primary education [29]), parents decide whether kindergarten students with special educational needs

25 Epstein, J. L. (2010). School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(3), p.p. 84-86.
26 Adapted from: Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2002). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action.* (2nd Edition). California: Corwin Press, p.p. 178-179.
27 Palaiologou, I., & Male, T. (2018). Formation of partnerships: an ecological paradigm. In Z. Brown and S. Ward (Eds), *Contemporary Issues in Childhood: A bio-ecological approach*. Abingdon: Routledge, p.p. 83-97.
28 Νόμος 1566/1985; Προεδρικό Διάταγμα 79/2017
29 Eurydice (2020). *Greece Overview.* In: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/

receive support from a special education teacher, attend special education settings and/or stay in Nipiagogeio for an additional year before entering Dimotiko Scholeio[30]. The need for parents/guardians to collaborate with the school's teaching staff and administration on issues of student behavior at school is highlighted in order to develop the best possible pedagogical treatment. Parents also decide about students' participation in school activities and have the right -but not the obligation- to establish Parents' and Guardians' Associations and to participate, through their representatives, in the School Community Councils[31] and School Councils[32], which facilitate effective school-family communication and schools' operational matters (buildings, safety and health measures, etc.)[33]. According to recent legislation[34] the establishment of Parents' and Guardians' Associations is a prerequisite for the participation of parents' representatives in School Councils. Furthermore, relations within the school community are part of schools' educational planning and evaluation[35] and School Councils' view must be taken under consideration[36] but there is no description of the vision, goals or practices related to this aspect of planning and evaluation.

The need for parents' expectations to be taken under consideration by teachers in the process of educational planning is mentioned in the last legislated Greek early childhood education curriculum (2003)[37]. In the Educator's Guide[38], published in 2006, as well as in the Full-day Nipiagogeio Guide[39] and Parent's Guide[40], both published in 2008, there are separate chapters about school-family collaboration. In these chapters families' role as one of children's educational contexts is recognized. Strong emphasis is placed on the need for the establishment

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greece_en (accessed on 20/4/2020).

30 ΥΠ.Π.Ε.Θ. (2019). *Σχολικός Οδηγός για τους γονείς και κηδεμόνες των μαθητών και μαθητριών των Δημόσιων Νηπιαγωγείων και Δημοτικών Σχολείων.* In: https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2018/25_02_19sch_odigos.pdf (accessed on 20/4/2020).

31 Primary education's School Community Councils must consist of the school principal, at least one Parent's and Guardians' Association representative and at least one Teacher Association representative.

32 Each public school has a School Council, which consists of the Teachers' Association, the members of the board of directors of the Parents' and Guardians' Association and the representative of the local self-government in the School Board.

33 ΥΠ.Π.Ε.Θ. (2019). *Σχολικός Οδηγός για τους γονείς και κηδεμόνες των μαθητών και μαθητριών των Δημόσιων Νηπιαγωγείων και Δημοτικών Σχολείων.* In: https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2018/25_02_19sch_odigos.pdf (accessed on 20/4/2020).

34 Υπουργική Απόφαση 1940/2-2-2018.

35 Υπουργική Απόφαση 1816/ΓΔ4/11-1-2019 (which has not been implemented yet).

36 Νόμος 4547/2018, p. 8411.

37 Η Περί Διαθεματικού Ενιαίου Πλαισίου Προγραμμάτων Σπουδών (Δ.Ε.Π.Π.Σ.) και Αναλυτικού Προγράμματος Σπουδών (Α.Π.Σ.) Απόφαση, (2003, Μάρτιος 13). *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας,* Α. 21072β/Γ2/03, αρ. φ. 304, τ. Β΄, σ.σ. 4306-4335.

38 Δαφέρμου, Χ., Κουλούρη, Π., & Μπασαγιάννη, Ε. (2006). *Οδηγός Νηπιαγωγού: Εκπαιδευτικοί σχεδιασμοί, Δημιουργικά περιβάλλοντα μάθησης.* Αθήνα: Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο.

39 Αλευριάδου, Α., Βρυνιώτη, Κ. Π., Κυρίδης, Α. Γ., Σιβοπούλου-Θεοδοσιάδου, Ε., & Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2008). *Οδηγός Ολοήμερου Νηπιαγωγείου.* Αθήνα: Υπουργείο Εθνικής Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων.

40 Βρυνιώτη, Κ. Π., Κυρίδης, Α. Γ., Σιβοπούλου-Θεοδοσιάδου, Ε., & Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2008). *Οδηγός Γονέα.* Αθήνα: Υπουργείο Εθνικής Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων.

of effective communication and relationships built on mutual respect, acceptance, understanding, and trust between the two contexts. Practical instructions for communicating and managing meetings with parents are presented in the Educator's Guide, where there are also suggestions about involving parents as volunteers and supporting them in learning-at-home activities. Specific reference is made to the need for collaboration with parents from different ethnical background and parents of children with special educational needs[41]. In the Full-day Nipiagogeio Guide and the Parent's Guide the problems and challenges of school-family collaboration are recognized (parents' and teachers' lack of time, ease and training) and five types of family involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making) out of Epstein's typology are adopted. Also, it is mentioned that "the type of family involvement that seems to most influence students' school performance is the physical presence of parents at school"[42]. On the contrary, in the New Curriculum for early childhood education[43], which was designed and piloted -but not legislated- by the Institute of Educational Policy in 2014 and is a reference document for teachers, it is mentioned that "of all the activities implemented in the context of school-family collaboration, those that have the greatest positive impact on children's performance are the ones that give parents specific ideas and instructions on how they can expand learning at home"[44]. Furthermore, it is argued that parents' physical presence in school should not be mistaken as the only meaningful involvement and that there are many ways in which a family can be involved in a child's learning, emphasizing on communication, parenting and learning at home, while there is no mention about volunteering and parental involvement in decision making. But, since there are no references in the document, we cannot make assumptions or draw conclusions about the research evidence and the reasons supporting this differentiation from previous documents.

3.2. The school level

Although parental involvement is not a new concept in Greek early childhood education[45], parent-teacher relationships have a long way to go towards becoming

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41 Δαφέρμου, Χ., Κουλούρη, Π., & Μπασαγιάννη, Ε. (2006). *Οδηγός Νηπιαγωγού: Εκπαιδευτικοί σχεδιασμοί, Δημιουργικά περιβάλλοντα μάθησης.* Αθήνα: Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο, σ. 49.

42 Βρυνιώτη, Κ. Π., Κυρίδης, Α. Γ., Σιβοπούλου-Θεοδοσιάδου, Ε., & Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2008). *Οδηγός Γονέα.* Αθήνα: Υπουργείο Εθνικής Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων, σ. 91.

43 Υ.ΠΑΙ.Θ.-Ι.Ε.Π. (2014). *Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών Νηπιαγωγείου.* Αθήνα: Υπουργείο Παιδείας & Θρησκευμάτων, Ινστιτούτο Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής.

44 Υ.ΠΑΙ.Θ.-Ι.Ε.Π. (2014). *Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών Νηπιαγωγείου.* Αθήνα: Υπουργείο Παιδείας & Θρησκευμάτων, Ινστιτούτο Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής, p. 59.

45 Birbili, M., & Roufidou, I. (2019). Parent involvement in Greek early childhood education and care: The need for new policies and practices. In S. Phillipson, & S. Garvis (Eds), *Teachers' and Families' Perspectives in Early Childhood Education and Care. Early Childhood Education in the 21st Century Vol. II.* Abingdon: Routledge, p. 96.

partnerships[46]. There has been a long tradition of non-collaboration with parents which may be the cause of the difficulty that some teachers with more in-service years have in changing their practices[47]. Also, a significant part of novice teachers do not seem to have acquired in their undergraduate studies the knowledge and experience that would make them feel safe to communicate with their students' parents and to involve them as partners[48].

The evidence from a research conducted to a sample of 430 kindergarten teachers in 2003 indicates that the idea of school-family collaboration was theoretically accepted but not fully implemented by teachers, who exchanged information with parents about their children but did not seem to accept and promote their involvement in decision making, in setting educational goals, and in planning and implementing the educational program. Communication was mostly oral and meetings for most teachers were rare (every two to three months). Only one third of the teachers mentioned that they plan educational meetings for parents, while in almost half of the schools a Parents' and Guardians' Association had not been established[49].

A 2004 research, in a sample of 271 parents of preschool children, revealed that the school-family relationships were rather lukewarm and that parental involvement was mostly about children's out-of-school behavior and learning at home, while involvement in school activities was relatively less frequent[50].

A case study conducted in 2007, led to the conclusion that, though both parents and teachers expressed positive attitudes towards parental involvement, there was no provision for this to happen. Teachers encouraged learning at home and parents' help in financial and operational matters but not as much in educational activities, claiming that parents do not have the necessary knowledge and skills and that 'too much' involvement could complicate parents'-teachers' relationships. Parents seemed to be willing to participate and were positive in any call for help, but they did not seem to attribute the needed importance to the concept of parental involvement, acknowledging the

46 Rentzou, K., & Ekine, A. (2017). Parental Engagement Strategies in Greek and Nigerian Preschool Settings: Cross-Country Comparison. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 25*(1), p. 30.

47 Birbili, M., & Roufidou, I. (2019). Parent involvement in Greek early childhood education and care: The need for new policies and practices. In S. Phillipson, & S. Garvis (Eds), *Teachers' and Families' Perspectives in Early Childhood Education and Care. Early Childhood Education in the 21st Century Vol. II.* Abingdon: Routledge, p. 99.

48 Αποστόλου, Ζ., Βελλοπούλου, Α., Καμπεζά, Μ., Μισιρλή, Α., Παπαπάνου, Ι., & Τζαβάρα, Α. (2013). Στάσεις και αντιλήψεις μελλοντικών νηπιαγωγών για τη συνεργασία ανάμεσα στο σχολείο και την οικογένεια και για τις επικοινωνιακές τους ικανότητες. Στο Π. Κυπριανός (Επιμ.), *Πρακτικά του 15ου Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου AIFREF - Οικογένεια, Σχολείο, Τοπικές Κοινωνίες: Πολιτικές και Πρακτικές για το Παιδί*, 22-26 Μαΐου 2013 (σ.σ. 20-31). Πάτρα: Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρών.

49 Ντολιοπούλου, Ε., & Κοντογιάννη, Α. (2003). Η αλληλεπίδραση νηπιαγωγών-γονέων στον ελληνικό χώρο. *Ερευνώντας τον κόσμο του παιδιού, 5*, 88-108.

50 Μανωλίτσης, Γ. (2004). Η εμπλοκή των γονέων στην προσχολική αγωγή. *Το βήμα των κοινωνικών επιστημών, 1*(38), 121-145.

difficulties and commitments associated with it[51].

According to the evidence of a research conducted in 2012 to a sample of 233 teachers and 913 mothers of kindergarten students, the relationship between them appeared to be rather formal and superficial. Mothers seemed to have more positive attitudes towards teachers and school-family collaboration, while teachers seemed to be willing to collaborate on condition that they were the ones setting the content and the framework of the interactions. Furthermore, though teachers expressed positive attitudes about connecting with parents, they reacted negatively to the prospect of a more upgraded role of parents in kindergarten, as they did not trust parents' knowledge and skills regarding children's education[52].

Another research was conducted in 2015 to a sample of 300 kindergarten teachers. Contrary to previous evidence, this research showed that almost 2/3 of the sample teachers thought that parents were interested in educating their children and had the necessary abilities to help their children with learning at home, which teachers considered more important than parents' participation in school activities. Parents seemed to be accepted as supporters, helpers, and sponsors, but not as partners, and their involvement in decision making was not considered to be helpful for teachers' work. Thus, teachers did not appear to encourage the formation of School Councils and parents' participation in decision making and educational planning. Communication did not seem to be sufficient and the investigation of parents' needs and beliefs was not systematic and satisfying. An interesting finding was teachers' reported lack of training in matters of school-family collaboration, which might be the cause for their resistance to and fear of parents' substantial involvement[53].

In a 2019 research, 20 parents from two kindergartens appeared to have a positive view of school-family collaboration and parental involvement and recognized an equal share of responsibility in them and in the teachers for the quality and the quantity of their involvement. They characterized the framework of communication as formal and limited mostly to meetings about problems in students' learning and behavior, which were scheduled under school's terms. Only a few of the parents were involved in schools' operation and in the Parents' and Guardians' Associations due to lack of time and distrust in the Associations' role and effectiveness. Parents stated that they would like to be involved with the educational program and activities but personal barriers (lack of time, education,

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51 Sakellariou, M., & Rentzou, K. (2007). Types of Parental Involvement in Greek Preschool Settings: A Case Study. *International Journal of Learning, 14*, 33-40.

52 Πεντέρη, Ε. (2012). *Ψυχοπαιδαγωγικές διαστάσεις της σχέσης οικογένειας και νηπιαγωγείου: Διερεύνηση της γονικής εμπλοκής και των παραγόντων που την επηρεάζουν* (Διδακτορική διατριβή, Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης). In: http://hdl.handle.net/10442/hedi/31668 (accessed on 20/4/2020).

53 Νάστου, Λ. (2015). *Η συμμετοχή των γονέων στην εκπαιδευτική διαδικασία: στάσεις, αντιλήψεις και πρακτικές των νηπιαγωγών* (Διδακτορική διατριβή, Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης). In: http://hdl.handle.net/10442/hedi/43226 (accessed on 20/4/2020).

and training, negative childhood experiences) as well as school barriers (teachers' lack of openness and of initiative for collaboration) were mentioned[54].

Another research, which was also conducted in 2019 among 210 teachers and 210 parents of kindergarten students, revealed that parents and teachers had positive attitudes towards their collaboration. Though teachers stated that they were willing to involve parents with the educational process, they did not seem to involve them in practice and preferred more traditional and formal types of collaboration, invoking that parents do not have the necessary training and skills, but actually being afraid of parents' judgments of their teaching methodology and behavior. On the other hand, parents stated that they had clear understanding of schools' operation and referred to common goals and action, development of mutual trust as well as active participation of Parents' and Teachers' Associations in schools' administration. Furthermore, they mentioned that they had the time and the will for frequent communication and suggested alternative ways of communicating (text messages, e-mails and phone calls). Both groups agreed that their communication should not be just informational but an exchange of feedback and that their participation in training and joint educational programs would be quite beneficial[55].

4. Conclusions and suggestions

From their early years, every child belongs in two microsystems, family and school, which form a mesosystem of constant interactions[56]. With frequent and high-quality communications and interactions, designed to bring the two spheres of influence closer together, more students are more likely to receive common messages from various people about the importance of school and of learning[57]. When teachers and parents build connections and work together, children are more successful -both academically and socially[58]. However, parental engagement activities are not yet part of the Greek early childhood education program[59]. Although a collaborative relationship with the parents, which is largely determined

54 Μαστακούρη, Κ. (2019). *Αντιλήψεις γονέων για την εμπλοκή τους στην προσχολική εκπαίδευση των παιδιών τους* (Μεταπτυχιακή διπλωματική εργασία, Ελληνικό Ανοικτό Πανεπιστήμιο - ΕΑΠ). In: https://apothesis.eap.gr/handle/repo/43817 (accessed on 20/4/2020).

55 Κουρέτα, Μ. (2019). *Η συμβολή της γονεϊκής εμπλοκής στην προσχολική αγωγή. Σύγκριση απόψεων γονέων και εκπαιδευτικών* (Μεταπτυχιακή διπλωματική εργασία, Ελληνικό Ανοικτό Πανεπιστήμιο - ΕΑΠ). In: https://apothesis.eap.gr/handle/repo/44712 (accessed on 20/4/2020).

56 Ντολιοπούλου, Ε., & Κοντογιάννη, Α. (2003). Η αλληλεπίδραση νηπιαγωγών-γονέων στον ελληνικό χώρο. *Ερευνώντας τον κόσμο του παιδιού, 5*, σ. 88.

57 Epstein, J. L. (2010). School/Family/Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(3), p. 82.

58 Kersey, K. C., & Masterson, M. L. (2009). Teachers Connecting with Families - In the Best Interest of Children. *Young Children, 64*(5), p. 38.

59 Rentzou, K., & Ekine, A. (2017). Parental Engagement Strategies in Greek and Nigerian Preschool Settings: Cross-Country Comparison. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 25*(1), p. 30.

by the kindergarten teachers, is promoted by policy documents (legislation, curriculum, guides), there is no clear definition of parental involvement. Reference is made to parental participation in *decision-making*, but a clear framework for roles and responsibilities is not provided[60]. Furthermore, the presented practices and activities about school-family collaboration regard mostly the establishment of effective *communication* and *learning at home* rather than *parenting* and *volunteering* in school activities, while proposals in the documents rely on theory and research evidence from other countries.

Evidence from research on school-family relations conducted over the last twenty years in the Greek context of early childhood education, as presented in the previous chapter, demonstrates that theory is not applied in practice. The stated, by both parents and teachers, positive attitudes towards parental participation and engagement do not convert to appropriate behavior and activities. Although the Greek curriculum recognizes the need for kindergarten teachers to take into consideration the expectations of parents in the design of educational programs, this does not seem to happen in a systematic way as an essential part of educational planning. School activities and meetings with parents aiming to inform and educate them about their role in their children's education are scarce. Communication between the two microsystems is mostly oral and seems to be rather formal, lukewarm, and superficial. Lack of trust is evident in parents' and -mostly- teachers' attitudes. Teachers seem to avoid power-sharing and engaging parents in school planning and activities due to either reduced self-efficiency or distrust towards parents' knowledge, skills, and intensions. Though parents' participation in decision-making is legally guaranteed through their representatives, at least about communication and operational matters, in many kindergartens Parents' and Guardians' Associations have not been established and parents are not formally represented in School and School Community Councils. However, there is a notable change evident in recent years' research findings, that is, the acknowledgment of their need, by both teachers and parents, for education and training on matters of school-family collaboration. This could mean that they have developed the will to change their relations but do not know how to do it. Government policy must respond to teachers' and parents' reported need for education and training in order to improve their interaction and communication and prepare them for effective collaboration and engagement. But how?

Policy initiatives that work well in one country cannot necessarily be transferred across national borders[61]. In other words, "what works" in the United

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60 Πεντέρη, Ε. (2012). *Ψυχοπαιδαγωγικές διαστάσεις της σχέσης οικογένειας και νηπιαγωγείου: Διερεύνηση της γονικής εμπλοκής και των παραγόντων που την επηρεάζουν* (Διδακτορική διατριβή, Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης), σ.σ. 84-85. In: http://hdl.handle.net/10442/hedi/31668 (accessed on 20/4/2020).

61 Pashiardis, P., & Johansson, O. (Eds.) (2016). *Successful School Leadership. International Perspectives.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p.12.

States of America, where Epstein and her colleagues developed their model, might not be suitable for Greece. Every country, every school and every family are different. Therefore our first suggestion refers to research. As far as we know, in the Greek context of early childhood education, research about school-family relations seems to describe what happens rather than discover what works. Action research (concerning schools' strategies and plans towards the improvement of school-family relations), as well as longitudinal research, must be conducted in various kindergarten sites and evidence must be collected, shared, and used for defining government's policies and for guiding schools' actions. This could lead to the development of a rich repository of diverse, creative, and effective practices at the disposal of every school and every teacher to adopt and adapt[62].

Meanwhile, educational programs aiming to enhance kindergarten teachers' and leaders' self-efficiency and professional development are needed in order to prepare and to encourage them for opening up to parents'/families' participation in decision-making and engagement in the learning process. As suggested by Halgunseth, an ongoing and comprehensive system for promoting family engagement must be created by ensuring that school leaders and teachers are dedicated and trained, and receive the supports they need to fully engage families[63]. When teachers help them, parents of all backgrounds can be involved productively[64]. Knowledge of various theoretical models and practical applications towards effective school-family relations, as well as of the benefits that such relations bare for everyone involved, is likely to strengthen teachers' confidence and urge them to share power and responsibility, and pursue families' active engagement.

Since the concepts of two-way communication and mutual trust are at the core of family engagement[65] there is an immediate need for teachers to be trained during their pre-service and in-service education to improve their communication skills when working with parents, especially with those of different educational, ethnical and socioeconomic backgrounds, in diverse contexts. Teachers need to learn to listen to parents and take into consideration their needs, emotions and expectations[66]. They also have to involve parents in every decision about their child's learning and development. When that is achieved, parents will feel

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62 Epstein, J. L. (2016). *Issues and Insights.* In: http://nnps.jhucsos.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Type-2-Spring-40_v2.pdf, p.2.

63 Halgunseth, L. (2009). Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature. *Young Children, 64*(5), p. 57.

64 Epstein, J. L., & Dauber, S. L. (1991). School Programs and Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement in Inner-City Elementary and Middle Schools. *The Elementary School Journal, 91*(3), p. 290.

65 Halgunseth, L. (2009). Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and Early Childhood Education Programs: An Integrated Review of the Literature. *Young Children, 64*(5), p. 57.

66 Symeou, L. (2003). Family-school communication: Critically revisiting parent-teacher briefings. In S. Castelli, M. Mendel, & B. Ravn (Eds.) *School, family, and community partnerships in a world of differences and changes* (pp. 119-134). Gdansk: University of Gdansk, p. 24.

respected and appreciated and a relationship of mutual commitment and trust will start evolving. Furthermore, just as different students need various methods of instruction to master skills and concepts, different families need various ways of communication to become engaged at school or at home. Teachers, taking into consideration parents' needs and/or lack of time, should learn how to use different ways and means of communication (phone calls, text messages, e-mails, blogs, private groups in social networks, automatic translation technologies), and make the effort to contact as many families as possible[67]. They should also learn how to establish positive relationships by shifting from a focus on children's problems to affirming children's strengths, given the fact that authentic and caring relationships with families are created when teachers become a source of positive information[68]. Additionally, teachers need to be trained in how to design and implement parental involvement plans, which have to be detailed (goals, roles, processes, evaluation) and systematic.

Parents should also be involved in educational programs that address their parental role as well as the role they could play in their children's education, since their lack of skills, education, and training is mentioned as an obstacle to their engagement by both parents and teachers. The educational programs could be organized at the school level and carried out by qualified teachers or other specialists (psychologists, doctors), but they could also be carried out in the context of Parents' Schools, which should operate in every city. Empowered with knowledge and skills, parents are more likely to make positive and meaningful interactions with their children and their children's teachers and they may understand better and respect kindergarten teachers' work.

In addition to the education and training of those involved, we propose some institutional changes which could positively influence school-family relations. Parental participation should be developed in practice as a principle, as a means, as a condition, and as a goal, and, though there is no detailed or single recipe for doing it[69], there are policies that could enable it. A clear definition, a vision and specific goals for parental engagement and school-family collaboration should be part of the kindergarten curriculum. The choice of transferring kindergarten teachers' working hours in the afternoon could be institutionalized in order to facilitate meetings with working parents whenever it is necessary. Also, a framework for volunteer parents' presence at school during

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67 Sheldon, S. B. (2016). *Meeting the Challenge*. In: http://nnps.jhucsos.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Type-2-Spring-40_v2.pdf, p. 4.
68 Kersey, K. C., & Masterson, M. L. (2009). Teachers Connecting with Families - In the Best Interest of Children. *Young Children, 64*(5), p. 34 & 38.
69 Gordon, J., Peeters, J., & Vandekerckhove, A. (2016). *Integrated Early Childhood Education and Care - Results of a European Survey and Literature Review*, p. 24. In: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316476625_Integrated_Early_Childhood_Education_and_Care_Results_of_a_European_Survey_and_Literature_Review (accessed on 20/4/2020).

working hours might contribute to their engagement in school activities. Last -but not least- the establishment of Parents' and Guardians' Associations, which is a prerequisite for parents' participation in decision-making, should be obligatory. Students are enrolled in kindergarten for only two years and often parents are not willing to pay the amount of money which is required for the establishment of the Association, thus we propose that the School Board should cover the cost. When parents participate in decision-making their sense of commitment and ownership of action are enhanced and, consequently, their engagement becomes stronger[70].

As a closing remark we quote an excerpt from the book "*Invisible Cities*", which depicts our view of school-family partnerships in the early childhood education context:

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone.
"But which is the stone that supports the bridge?" Kublai Khan asks.
"The bridge is not supported by one stone or another," Marco answers, "but by the line of the arch that they form."
Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds:
"Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me."
Polo answers: "Without stones there is no arch."[71].

Teachers and parents together, by building strong and caring school-family relations, can form 'bridges', that is, the safe and welcoming paths for children's effective and lifelong learning and development. It is time for everyone involved in Greek early childhood education to find the tools and learn how to build.

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70 Hoy, W., & Miskel, C. (2013). *Educational Administration: theory, research and practice.* (9th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc, p.p. 359-387.
71 Calvino, I. (1974). *Invisible cities,* (trans.) W. Weaver, p. 82. In: https://designopendata.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/calvino_italo_invisible_cities.pdf (accessed on 20/4/2020).

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ICT knowledge and skills: A study of pre-service secondary teachers in Greece

Abstract

The pre-service teacher education, through the official specifications of the current academic curricula, is geared towards preparing university students for teaching at the so-called digital school and to be familiar with the appropriate ICT tools and digital programs. In such a school, Information and Communication Technologies will be prominent and will be the "intelligent" assistant of the teachers in their innovative teaching practices. This paper, taking into account the above context, illustrates the pre-service teachers' perspectives of the Schools of Philology, History & Archaeology and Philosophy & Education of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). Particularly, a qualitative thematic analysis research was conducted, regarding the ICT programs that university students exploit in different and differentiated learning environments, their ICT/digital literacy skills, as well as the institutions from which the students acquired these knowledge.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, digital literacy practices, ICT skills

1. Introduction

The international educational discussion in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) puts at the heart of the modern student, who is daily overwhelmed by the new sophisticated digital media and comes into contact with hybrid electronic texts and hypertexts[1]. This technologically advanced generation of today students or otherwise, according to the literature, the generation of "i-kids"[2] is on the threshold of the post-digital age, where it is not complacent in the acquisition of basic computer knowledge and ICT skills, but evolves and socializes in the light of modern digital applications. From the computer, which will gradually begin to be a conventional form of learning, the modern student ends up, today, in dealing with last-generation and up-to-dated devices such as iPhones, iPad, iMacs. These devices which include a plethora of every day, and not only, applications, opening up new horizons of communication and information. This generation of "digital natives", as a well-known term by Marc Prensky[3], acquires and enhances knowledge and skills about ICT through its self-education and interaction with the modern environment and with its peers both[4].

From the beginning of the new millennium to the present day, the concept of digital "native" is under the microscope of researchers, forming a global discussion area. The original claim, which lacks empirical documentation and is of a generalist nature, defines the students' generation, born from the 1980s onwards, as digitally literate[5]. However, this limiting factor of age, which separates digitally literate students (digital natives) from non-literate students (digital immigrants), was negatively commented and rejected by modern researchers, who redefine the subject and set new scientific foundations, fuelled by empirical research. Factors, such as the way and aim of use of technological means, the prior experience in the ICT use, the institutions that boost students to obtain the appropriate ICT knowledge, as well as a sense of self-confidence seem to contribute, in part, to the classification of people into digital immigrants, giving stimulus for further research[6].

The ability of the today students; the digital "natives" to be aware of including the new digital media in their daily life, which will be a useful and cognitive tool, requires, at least, a minimum conquered level of digital literacy[7].

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1   Ware, P. D. & Warschauer, M. (2005), Hybrid literacy texts and practices in technology-intensive environments. *International Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 43, no. 7, p.p. 432-444.
2   Tapscott, D. (2009), *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. New York: McGraw-Hill Professional.
3   Prensky, M. (2001), Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, vol. 9, no. 5, p.p. 1-6.
4   Davies, H., Halfond, S. & Gibbins, N. (2012), Digital natives? Investigating young people's critical skills in evaluating web based information. *In: Proceedings of the 3rd Annual ACM Web Science Conference*. ACM 2012, p.p. 78-81.
5   Prensky, M. (2001), Digital natives, digital immigrants. On the Horizon, vol. 9, no. 5, p.p. 1-6.
6   Ng, W. (2012), Can we teach digital natives digital literacy? *Computers and Education*, vol. 59, p.p. 1065-1078.
7   Spante, M., Hashemi, S. S., Lundin, M. & Algers, A. (2018), Digital competence and digital literacy in higher

Digital literacy approach as a dynamic "strategy" gives the opportunity to students to use and create with new technology and, also, to understand how the digital tools affect the individual and society. This much-discussed concept is defined, redefined and adapted, ultimately, on the basis of historical and social context. Digital literacy, according to the most recent publication of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development[8], is a fundamental learning objective for society and education and includes, in addition to the ability to effectively engage with ICT, digital information management skills, control of reliability of electronic sources and their relevance to the results of each search.

This interchangeable concept is interpreted in a post-level familiarity of modern citizens with ICT, taking into consideration the context, whether defined as formal or informal learning[9]. The European Union also considers it vital to acquire digital literacy knowledge and skills for its citizens. In particular, the Digital Agenda is an important initiative of the leaders of the European Union, with the central aim of strengthening the e-skills of modern Europeans, with the motto: *"every European Digital"*[10]. The above demanding reference framework leads to redeployments occurring, or should, at the very least, occur in the field of education. The fact that today's citizen lives in the age of technology, handles its applications, communicates with social media and learns with -and for- the ICT programs and other digital and internet devices and applications, raises questions; questions about tomorrow and whether modern Greek teachers, and in particular philologists are able to teach in the interactive digital era. Considering this fundamental change and the normalization of ICT diffusion on students every day out-of-school digital literacy practices, it concerns whether today's school is in danger of being described as anachronistic, while preparing its students for a society, which is constantly and dramatically changing[11].

How technology is addressed in teacher education programs? This question is vital for how pre-service teachers apply new technology means in elementary and secondary school after their graduation[12]. In teacher education curricula, sometimes interactive technology receives little attention, neither how

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education research: Systematic review of concept use. *Cogent Education*, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 2-3.

8 Istance, D. & Kools, M. (2013), OECD Work on technology and education: innovative learning environments as an integrating framework. *European Journal of Education*, vol. 48, no. 1, p. 43; OECD (2012), *Connected minds: technology and today's learners*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

9 Ito, M., Horst, H., Bittanti, M., Boyd, D., Herr-Stephenson, B., Lange, P. G. et al. (2008), *Living and learning with new media: Summary of findings from the digital youth project*. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning, p.p. 615-627.

10 Leahy, D. & Lawler, S. (2012), *NCBI and digital literacy: A case study*. In: K. Miesenberger et al. (eds.), ICCHP 2012, Part I. Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, p. 244.

11 Gutiurrez, A. & Tyner, K. (2012), Media education, media literacy and digital competence. *Comunicar*, vol. 38, no. 19, p.p. 31-39.

12 Admiraal, W., van Vugt, F., Kranenburg, F., Koster, B., Smit, B., Weijers, S. & Lockhorst, D. (2017), Preparing pre-service teachers to integrate technology into K-12 instruction: Evaluation of a technology-infused approach. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, vol. 26, no. 1, p.105-106.

it can be exploited in education nor as an innovative tool of pedagogy in teacher education itself. On the other hand, it seems that in many developed countries, teacher education includes specialized courses and programs aimed at preparing university students for teaching with the contribution of ICT. Particularly, courses related to ICT are found to be ineffective in providing pre-service teachers with the appropriate preparation to functionally and pedagogically integrate technology into their instruction[13]. These efforts, albeit at the unprecedented stage, were systematic during the 1990s and peaked from 2000 to the present day. It is worth mentioning that, worldwide, many university departments invest in modernizing the role of modern teacher, with systematic efforts to train and familiarize them with digital and online applications in the context of so-called formal learning[14].

However, despite the fact that many countries in Europe and America are one step ahead of Greece in educating teachers in ICT, it seems that the problems that arise in them are similar too. Especially, the integration of new technological means into the educational process may be in line with teachers, but problems such as the technical equipment of halls and school workshops, as well as the inability to integrate ICT functionally into the curriculum is shown at the forefront[15]. Many factors also prevent the use of ICT in the educational process, such as candidates' attitude towards the benefits of new technologies, support structures during their studies and during their practicum as well as the degree of self-efficacy in the use of digital media[16]. We have to pay attention on pre-service teacher education and to focus on how to use technology towards a pedagogical approach in teaching[17].

So many key issues arise. One of them is the so-called professional identity of candidate teachers as it is formed in the university context[18]. Pre-service teachers attend a university institution with a minimum or even satisfactory, cognitive background related to a broad set of ICT knowledge and skills and through their education they are primarily familiarized with the academic digital literacy practices[19]. These practices concern either basic computer skills or specialized knowledge, for

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13   Karatas, I. (2014), Changing pre-service mathematics teachers' beliefs about using computers for teaching and learning mathematics: The effect of three different models. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 37, p.p. 390-392.
14   Larose, F., Grenon, V., Morin M. & Hasni, A. (2009), The impact of pre-service field training sessions on the probability of future teachers using ICT in school. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 32, no. 3.
15   Madden, A., Ford, N., Miller, D. & Levy, P. (2005), Using the internet in teaching: The views of practitioners. A survey of the views of secondary school teachers in Sheffield, UK. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, vol. 36, no. 2.
16   Lai, C., Wang, Q. & Lei, J. (2012), What factors predict undergraduate students' use of technology for learning? A case from Hong Kong. *Computers and Education*, vol. 59, no. 2, p.p. 573-577.
17   Sweeney, T. & Drummond, A. (2013), How prepared are our pre-service teachers to integrate technology? A pilot study. *Australian Educational Computing*, vol. 27.
18   Sutherland, L., Howard, S. & Markauskaite, L. (2010), Professional identity creation: Examining the development of beginning pre-service teachers' understanding of their work as teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 26, no. 3.
19   Burnett, C. (2011), Pre-service teachers' digital literacy practices: Exploring contingency in identity and digital literacy in and out of educational contexts. *Language and Education*, vol. 25, no. 5.

familiarity with educational software and programs, geared to the teaching of literary courses. Through their university studies, their professional identity is enhanced and their cognitive background on the computer knowledge they possess is broadened.

Researches about the level of students' digital literacy expertise outline that pre-service teachers rate their ICT cognitive background at least as adequate, with regard to the main programs of a computer. Also, usually consider themselves experts on dealing with many internet applications, such as web browsing, e-mail applications, searching for sources on every day and academic topics, dealing with websites and social networking, communication, entertainment, etc.)[20]. As far as their familiarity with digital tools and applications is concerned, both formal/institutionalized bodies, such as school and university, private learning sectors (schools of informatics and adult education institutes) and informal learning bodies, such as the environment of candidate teachers[21]. A factor with importance is that of self-education, that comes to enhance the university students' cognitive skills in the field of new and renewal technologies

The academic digital literacy practices of pre-service teachers seem to be intertwined with traditional/conventional forms of literacy, such as reading and writing, but by assisting the computer screen and device. Students, with a high frequency, are engaged with academic literacy and especially with computer-based writing skills, i.e. tasks through the word processor and presentation program, search of bibliography and sources, the preparation of tasks and educational activities, as well as the search for internet information, through specific searching engines and special software packages. On the contrary, in their out-of-school/university digital literacy practices, entertainment and social networking apps monopolize their interest through Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Linkedin, Skype, Instagram etc.[22] and to a lesser extent applications associated with their academic activities and assignments.

2. Purpose, questions and methodology of study

The purpose of this research is to present, analyze and identify the characteristics that make up the so-called digital identity of pre-service teachers. In other words,

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20   Thinyane, H. (2010), Are digital natives a world-wide phenomenon? An investigation into South African first year students' use and experience with technology. *Computers and Education*, vol. 55, no. 1; Bikos, K. & Tzifopoulos, M. (2012), Candidate philologists academic and non-academic digital literacy practices. In: K. Malafandes, et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of 7th Hellenic Conference "Hellenic Pedagogical and Educational Research"*. Athens: Diadrasi.

21   Meyers, E. M., Erickson, I. & Small, R. V. (2013), Digital literacy and informal learning environments: An introduction. *Learning, Media and Technology*, vol. 38, no. 4, p.p. 355-367.

22   Perkel, D. (2008), Copy and paste literacy? Literacy practices in the production of a MySpace profile. In: K. Drotner, H. S. Jensen & K. C. Schroeder (eds.), *Informal learning and digital media: constructions, contexts and consequences*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing; Davies, J. (2012), Facebook on Facebook as a new literacy practice. *Computer and Education*, vol. 59, no. 1; Greenhow, C. & Gleason, B. (2012), Twitteracy: Tweeting as a new literacy practice. *The Educational Forum*, vol. 76, no. 4.

through the presentation of ICT programs and applications they utilize in different learning environments, their different level of digital literacy and the bodies from which they acquired this knowledge will be outlined the profile of the modern candidate Greek philologist, who will be challenged to teach, in the future, with the contribution of ICT.

The research questions are as follows:

- What digital literacy practices candidate philologists are engaged in academic learning environments?
- What digital literacy practices candidate philologists are engaged in "out-of-academia" learning environments?
- In which category of users are they included, based on self-assessment of the ICT knowledge they possess; to "beginners", "moderate/satisfactory" or "very good/excellent/expert" users?
- Which are those learning bodies that support students in order to obtain this digitally literate or non-digital literate profile?

The representative random sample of this research consisted of fifteen students of the Schools of Philology, History & Archaeology and Philosophy & Education of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. A semi-structured interview guide was designed, purely for the needs of this research, with questions regarding: (a) the ICT programs and applications used at the university, (b) the ICT programs and applications used at home, (c) the ICT level, which ranks them in a specific category of users, and, (d) the formal and/or informal bodies from which they acquired this knowledge. The study followed a qualitative methodology. The stage of the transcription of the interviews was followed by the grouping of data with the contribution of qualitative thematic analysis, through the creation of an inductive system of codes[23].

3. Thematic Analysis

3.1. Digital literacy practices in the School

3.1.1. ICT for academic tasks

The sample of the pre-service secondary teachers usually take advantage of the computer's educational applications in their academic context. This, of course, reveals the dimension between the digital literacy practices of candidate teachers in university and in "out-academic" learning environments. More specifically, the context of formal learning favors their involvement with the internet in search of literature, such as scientific literature, journals and a variety of educational articles. Almost unanimous is the choice of using a computer as a practical

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23   Willig, C. (2008), *Introducing qualitative research in Psychology*. England: Open University Press.

academic literacy, on the grounds that access to all electronic sources is free from libraries, laboratories and computer islets.

"For academic purposes mainly I use the computer". "Yes, I use library search engines, books, papers and journals. I almost never use it for games or music or download something". "In the library of my field I enter the database (...) and I've happened to be looking for academic articles, or in which library I'm going to find a book". "(...) I'm looking for my tasks and there are certain websites, which you can only access from the University and free of charge".

3.1.2. Communication and Information

A few of the students use the university digital means to check their e-mail, to find online information on every day issues and to be updated by online newspapers and news pages.

"Yes, primarily, when I don't make it home, I walk in and check my mail. And if I need to send an email, which is urgent, I'm writing it there on the spot". "To read some news, if there's any extraordinary news". "Check emails. (...) If there is an emergency and I need to send an email to a friend of mine and I do not have access from elsewhere, only then I will use the university computer".

3.2. "Out-of-School" digital literacy practices

3.2.1. Communication and Information

Pre-service teachers report that computer, tablet, or any other last-generation digital device they use in their home space, is a means of information for them. Online applications and search engines are an easy-to-use information tool for candidate philologists. In other words, they are looking for information on every day issues, updated by electronic news bulletins, weather forecasting websites and from websites of varying interest.

"I am informed about the news through the internet. News, primarily, pages. Then I look for more general information, as is the weather". "I am informed by the internet every day. The information I get and learn, everything, is from the internet. I don't buy newspapers or a form. It's all from the Internet. I'm looking for information, and everything I hear, I'm learning is electronically".

3.2.2. Entertainment

Music is a basic practice of digital literacy for the participants in the research. Candidate teachers outside School use the computer's capabilities to be entertained

through music, to download music, to store music tracks they wish, and have fun with the various applications provided by the computer and mobile phones of the latest digital generation.

"I use i-tunes and whatever software, about music and music tracks". "I very often listen to music through the pc and the internet, I "download" songs. It's a means of entertainment for me".

3.2.3. Social networking

Social networking pages, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others, monopolize the interest of students through which they communicate with friends, make acquaintances, discuss in the various "chat rooms" dialogue and open, as they say, a "window" to the modern world.

"(...) And Facebook, and this is on a daily basis and opens a window to the world. I find friends, I talk to them. It's funny". "Communicating with others on Facebook and Instagram is a good choice. I use it on a daily basis (...)".

3.2.4. ICT for academic tasks

However, the use of computer, out of School, is also an academic practice of enhancing the digital literacy of pre-service teachers. Participants mark that they take advantage of the Internet's multiple capabilities for academic online research. They search electronic sources for their university courses, input data into specific bibliographic search forms, and read e-books and texts on the subject of their studies and the assignments and educational activities they perform at the university. They even use written production programs, such as Word Processor, PowerPoint, Prezi, for writing a text and presenting a task.

"I use Word Processor for both documents and texts written and for tasks, etc. And then as far as the internet is concerned I use search engines". "(...) the use of "Word" for School tasks, PowerPoint of course, e-class, blackboard, almost on a daily basis, is relatively common". "I do my university classes and my homework almost every day". "I use quite often (...) and OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog) to find what I need from bibliography and search sources (...) and the dictionary of modern Greek on the internet, as well as the bank of ancient texts TLG (Thesaurus Linguae Graecae) for example".

3.3. Self-assessment of digital literacy skills

The question concerning the self-assessment of knowledge and skills, which they

possess in basic and specialized computer programs, ranks the research sample into two main categories of users: a) moderate/satisfactory users, and b) the excellent/expert users of the computer programs.

3.3.1. Moderate/satisfactory users

Most pre-service secondary teachers consider themselves to be moderate users of computer programs. In particular, they claim to handle programs satisfactorily, such as the text editor, the presentation program and the internet applications (e.g. e-mail). A lesser degree of familiarity indicate in the spreadsheet program and databases. Finally, they do not possess knowledge about statistical data processing programs and educational software packages.

"Moderate user, I'd say. What do I handle best? The internet is the first to handle well and secondly the text editor. Less, databases, even not at all, I've never been able to figure them out. And for spreadsheets, I hardly know". "I can definitely handle Word and PowerPoint very well and I've used them many times". "Access and Excel do not know them much, because I never had to use them". "Internet apps in daily use, so I'd say I'm a good user".

3.3.2. Excellent/expert users

There are several students who self-assessed as excellent/expert users of the computer programs and apps. The research sample states that it handles the main computer programs with a proficiency and, of course, deals with several sophisticated/specialized internet applications, such as the creation of web pages and environments, which are not known to the average user. They state, however, that they have heard about educational software packages, have "come across" them in a course or have been informed of them through their own search, but they have not been systematically used for academic reasons to become familiar enough.

"I'm on a very good user because I know all the programs of "Microsoft Office". I can use the pc for many things, as well as to make websites. I'm very, very familiar with all of this". "I guess I'm at the level of the very good operator, because I learned programs from school that we handled, and I used them at home myself, so I think I'm at that level (...). The educational software I know to some extent, especially in the ancient history course I was taught". "I think I'm a very good computer user, like Word, PowerPoint, Prezi, e-mail, and internet. I know these. I handle them very well".

3.4. ICT and learning institutes

3.4.1. Private bodies

The students of this research claim that they have acquired knowledge of computer programs and applications through private learning bodies, such as private Schools of Informatics. The contribution of official learning bodies, such as Primary and Secondary Education, seems not to be so important, despite the fact that they have provided pre-service teachers some initial stimulus of contact with the computer.

"ICT schools too and that is the truth and most of my knowledge stems from there, essentially private education". "At primary school I learned very basic things about computers, which continued in high school and university, and I can say that they didn't help at all". "The University, unfortunately, did not offer me much. Only some knowledge I had already acquired".

3.4.2. Self-education

Remarkable is the fact that most references focus on the candidates' involvement with the computer, without the help of an official learning body. They report, characteristically, that they experimented both through "trial and error" learned to exploit the potential of many programs. In other words, the acquisition of computer knowledge was based primarily on their willpower through so-called self-education.

"Primarily, it is not from an educational institution, such as Secondary and Tertiary Education (...). As with most people, the most knowledge is acquired based on auto power. How much you're going to sit alone and look for it, (...), empirically or less". "I was looking for it. I was opening a program, opening another one, and at some point I figured it out. I like to experiment".

4. Discussion

The introduction, diffusion and exploitation of ICT in educational reality is, internationally, one of the greatest challenges of the education policymakers, thus investing significantly, and often excessively[24]. These efforts are moving towards internal education reform, with the students of the modern/digital generation as the main recipients, who socialize with a dominant language code that of the computer

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24   European Commission (2013), *Survey of schools: ICT in education*. Digital Agenda for Europe. Final Study Report, February 2013, p. 14.

and its digital applications. The effective integration of ICT into the educational field can therefore significantly enhance the profile of a modern teacher and, by extension, a modern student. International Organizations, such as the OECD, argue in favor of the view that a digitally literate citizen of 2020 will be a necessary "lever" for labor market development, because it will optimize its cognitive structures and invent strategies for acquiring and disseminating new knowledge[25].

The effective integration of ICT into teaching practice seems to be a challenge for the Modern Greek teacher. At the same time, this situation requires teachers to have acquired, at least, a basic grid of ICT knowledge and skills in order to be able to cope with their teaching. At this point, this research, taking into account the reflection of modern literature, outlines the profile and demarcates the digital identity of the modern pre-service philologist. According to the qualitative analysis of the research, "digitally literate" can be described a pre-service teacher, who is familiar, at least, with the main programs of the computer and internet applications, and has as a daily means of information, work, entertainment and social networking computer. However, candidate philologists seem unable to bridge their academics with their out-academic digital literacy practices.

Therefore, all of the above strengthens the premise that modern teachers are making efforts to shape their digital identity, but they are lagging behind in the knowledge and skills they possess in relation to the students of the new millennium (*otherwise: New Millennium Learners*)[26]. The digital experiences of pre-service secondary teachers rank them in the category of digitally literate, and exclude them from the category of "native speakers" of the digital age; Modern teachers, despite being quite familiar with ICT, maybe will never be able to keep up with their students. This finding is justified, in part, by the fact that their familiarity came at a later stage, while they were socialized, in particular, with practices of traditional/conventional literacy or found themselves at the cross-check of these rapid changes[27].

The above discussion and reflection, therefore, shows the question of taking 'responsibility' official bodies of compulsory and post-compulsory education, starting with primary and ending in tertiary education, but also the bodies of education and lifelong learning must, through their programs, be mitigated or to eliminate the now obvious digital inequalities between the new generation students and modern teachers. The educational politics cannot satisfy the demands for modernization of education only through the acceptance of the principles of the European Union with regard to ICT, if it does not consciously proceed with the adoption of feasible practical and effective strategies for

25 OECD (2012), *Connected minds: technology and today's learners*. Paris, OECD Publishing.
26 OECD (2012), *Connected minds: technology and today's learners*. Paris, OECD Publishing.
27 Gamliel, T. & Hazan, H. (2013), 'Digital natives': Honor and respect in computerized encounters between Israeli Jewish and Arab children and adult learners. *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 40, no. 5.

integrating and exploiting ICT in the educational landscape. Focus is on the development of a number of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and cross-cultural understanding through ICT. This should be a challenge for education policy makers who wish to design curricula that aim at educating the 21st century citizens and enhance their digital literacy skills[28].

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28   Chu, S., Reynolds, R., Tavares, N., Notari, M. & Lee, C. (2017), *21st century skills development through inquiry-based learning*. Singapore: Springer.

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