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Investigation of teachers' soft skills performance toward supervisor/organization expectations/standards in Greek primary school teachers
Stergiani Zygopoulou

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Abstract

Objective: Teachers' soft skills is a particularly important skills for their daily practice and their teaching competence.

Purpose: To investigate the levels of elementary teachers' soft skills performance.

Methods: A quantitative and cross-sectional study with the use of a self-report questionnaire. A modified version of Kantrowitz's Soft Skills Performance Questionnaire, using four out of the 7 clusters of soft skills performance: communication/persuasion skills, leadership/organization skills, interpersonal skills, and political/cultural skills.

Results: The sample of the study consisted of N = 220 elementary teachers from public schools in different regions of Greece. In all of four dimensions of soft skills, the participants deemed their communication, interpersonal, leadership and political skills performance to "meet the standards" of the supervisor and the organization. Interpersonal skills performance was the highest scored with the political/cultural skills performance been the lowest scored.

Conclusion: As the research on Greek elementary teachers' soft skills is limited, it is necessary to investigate them further in the future.

Key words: Greece, performance, primary school, social skills, teachers.
Λέξεις κλειδιά: Ελλάδα, επιδόσεις, δημοτικό σχολείο, κοινωνικές δεξιότητες, δάσκαλοι

1. Introduction

The social and economic well-being of a country is to a great extent determined by the labor force and the educational attainment of the labor force.[1] A number of studies have found for example that a country's economic development and educational quality at different academic levels are significantly related.[2]

For teaching in this context to be successful, teachers need to be competent in a number of social, emotional and behavioral skills, termed "soft skills". Soft skills have been defined as *"the skills, abilities, and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge"*[3] (p. 253). Logaras,[4] are describes soft skills as *"intrapersonal and interpersonal talents, abilities, behaviors, and attitudes that contribute to personal growth, happiness, social involvement, success, and overall advancement"* (p. 28). Generally, soft skills comprise personal knowledge and capabilities of the teacher that are difficult to formalize and difficult to train for, since the development of those skills depends largely on personal experience.

Despite the fact that in business literature, and even in the medical and computer fields, soft skills of employees are considered as particularly important skills in their daily practice[5], in the field of education and especially in relation to soft skills of teachers, research is limited.

The aim of this study is to investigate the levels of elementary teachers' soft skills, and specific their communication, interpersonal, leadership and political skills, as the participants reported them.

2. Literature review

2.1 Clarification of terms

Soft skills in the workplace have been studied for decades under a variety of different names. For example, UNESCO[6] has used the term "non-cognitive skills" to refer to soft

[1] Ağçam, R., Doğan, A. (2021), A study on the soft skills of pre-service teachers, In: International Journal of Progressive Education, vol.17, issue 4, pp. 35-48.

[2] Hanushek, E. A., Woessmann, L. (2020), Education, knowledge capital, and economic growth, In S. Bradley, C. Green (eds.), The economics of education, Academic Press, pp. 171-182; Khan, F., Omar-Fauzee, M. S., Daud, Y. (2015), Significance of teachers and education in promoting national economic development: A case study of Pakistan, In: Asian Social Science, vol. 11, issue 12, pp 290-296; Mishra, S. (2016), Role of education in growth and development of the society, In: Splint International Journal of Professionals, vol.3, issue 7, pp. 84-91.

[3] Moss, P., Tilly, C. (1996), "Soft" skills and race: An investigation of Black men's employment problems, In: Work and Occupations, vol.23, issue 3, pp. 252–276.

[4] Logaras, I. (2017), Skills development and the labour market, Perceptions and beliefs of secondary school students, Case study 42, Postgraduate thesis, Corinth, Peloponnese: Department of Social and Educational Policy.

[5] Fernandez-Sanz, L., Gutiérrez de Mesa, J.A., Hilera, J., Lacuesta, R., Palacios, G., Cuadrado, J. (2010), *New challenge for teachers:* dealing with soft skills in multinational environments, World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications, 1, 2680-2684.

[6] UNESCO. (2016), Education 2030: Incheon declaration and framework for action for the implementation of sustainable development goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all [online]. In: https://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf (accessed 3/1/2023)

skills. Soft skills have been known by various other names: transferable skills, transversal skills, generic skills, key skills, employability skills,[7] functional skills,[8] 21st century skills, life skills, career skills, and social–emotional skill.[9] Soft skills have also been mentioned in the literature as interpersonal, people, human, or behavioral skills.[10] All of the above terms may confuse the study of soft skills and seem to indicate that consensus should be reached about how to properly term and define soft skills. Modern soft skills in the workplace may include critical features like innovative thinking, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, multicultural skills, and media literacy.[11] Other approaches have considered optimism, friendliness, social gracefulness, and culturally-sensitive language fluency, as soft skills.[12] The World Health Organization has provided a reference list of ten core soft skills. These are self-awareness, critical thinking, creative thinking, empathy, problem-solving, decision-making, communication effectiveness, interpersonal relationships, techniques for coping with stress, and coping techniques based on emotions.[13]

A report by the Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization of the United Nations proposed the existence of four categories of soft skills, cognitive, self-management, good citizenship, and practical skills. Cognitive soft skills or "learning to know" skills included decision-making, problem-solving critical thinking. Self-management skills, or "learning to be" skills, involve self-awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence and coping skills. Good citizenship soft skills, or "learning to live together" skills, include living and working well with others, applying good interpersonal and social communication, showing empathy, negotiating, as well as being cooperative and being assertive. Finally, practical or "learning to do" skills, involve physical and manual actions that require particular motor skills or control of tools and machines and the like.[14]

2.2 Theoretical approach

Soft skills are important for employees and specifically teachers to be able to perform effectively at work. However, soft skills are hard to learn through training, and it is even harder to train teachers to be able to readapt their skills across different contexts when the need arises[15]. Because of the nature of soft skills, which are largely determined by

[7] Tran, T. T. (2013), Limitation on the development of skills in higher education in Vietnam, In: Higher Education, vol. 65, issue, pp. 631-644.

[8] Brolin, D. E., Loyd, R. J. (2004), Career development and transition services: A functional life skills approach (4th ed.), Pearson Merrill Prentice-Hall.

[9] Chalkiadaki, A. (2018), A systematic literature review of 21st century skills and competencies in primary education, In: International Journal of Instruction, vol.11, issue 3, pp. 1-16.

[10] Gnecco, G., Landi, S., Riccaboni, M. (2023), The emergence of social soft skill needs in the post COVID-19 era, In: Quality & Quantity, pp. 1-34.

[11] AlHouli, A. I., Al-Khayatt, A. K. A. (2020), Assessing the soft skills needs of teacher education students, In: International Journal of Education and Practice, vol.8, issue 3, pp. 416-431.

[12] Pachauri, D., Yadav, A. (2014), Importance of soft skills in teacher education programme, In: International Journal of Educational Research and Technology, vol.5, issue 1, pp. 22−25.

[13] WHO. (1997), Life skills education for children and adolescents in schools: Introduction and guidelines to facilitate the development and implementation of life skills programmes [online], World Health Organization, Programme on Mental Health.

[14] UNESCO. (2000). The Dakar framework for action, education for all: Meetings our collective commitments [online], World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000.

[15] Gnecco, G., Landi, S., Riccaboni, M. (2023), The emergence of social soft skill needs in the post COVID-19 era, In: Quality & Quantity, pp. 1-34.

individual behavior, a teacher with good soft skills cannot easily demonstrate it through his or her formal academic qualifications, or in resume. Indeed, to assess the personal soft skills of a preservice, current or potential teacher, a psychologist or other specialist is needed.[16] At any rate, soft skills are considered to be critical for effective teaching as they involve core skills in communication, teamwork, time-management, leadership and problem-solving.[17]

A number of studies have assessed the relative importance of different soft skills in teacher training, and the factors that may affect soft skills development in pre-service and in-service teachers. For example, Rakhi, Licy, and Hafiz,[18] have found that good soft skills, including psychosocial and interpersonal capabilities, promote effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking, healthy interpersonal relationships, empathy, and a constructive outlook towards everyday challenges. In a similar vein, Wentz[19] has concluded that employees utilize soft skills in order to facilitate problem-solving, creative thinking, empathy, leadership, and communication.

2.3 Objectives

The overall aim of the research was to investigate teachers' soft skills performance compared to the standards and expectations of the supervisor and the organization.

2.3.1 Rationale of the present study

The literature review conducted for the purposes of this study, outlined above, revealed that there are many studies which have focused on teacher's soft skills, operationalized primarily either as soft skills or as social and communications skills. However, only little research was found to have been performed regarding the relationships among the different soft skills of the teachers, as well the effects of demographic and occupational variables on the teachers' soft skills. Furthermore, only a very small number of studies were located which examined the relationship between soft skills and personality characteristics, including extraversion, specifically in teachers,

Additionally, an important obstacle in performing a literature review on teachers' soft skills and their antecedents, is the fact that soft skills have, over the years, been named, defined and operationalized in greatly variable terms – as mentioned earlier, teachers and other employees' soft skills have been alternatively named as 21st century skills, behavioral skills, career skills, employability skills, functional skills, generic skills, human skills, interpersonal skills, key skills, life skills, people skills, social-emotional skills, transferable skills, transversal skills. This fact diminishes the ability of all relevant research to be meta-analyzed and considered together, and one of the reasons for that is that different definitions of soft skills also necessitate that different measurement instruments are used, and other conceptual and methodological differences are to be expected. Thus, these diverse research schedules vary considerably

[16] Pop, D.-P. (2014), Online tool for soft skills evaluation and employee management, In: Journal of Information Systems & Operations Management, vol. 8, issue 2.

[17] Çetin, A., Sadik, F. (2020), Examining factors facilitating career-changing teachers' adaptation to change and the challenges they encounter, The Qualitative Report, vol. 25, issue 5, pp. 1302-1322.

[18] Rakhi, N., Licy, A. D., Hafiz, M. N. P. (2011), Theoretical perspectives in sociology, University of Calicut.

[19] Wentz, F. H. (2012), Soft skills training: A workbook to develop skills for employment, Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.

and general conclusions from these studies as a whole can easily not be drawn.

Given the above limitations, a gap was located in the relevant research literature, which pertains to teachers' soft skills levels, and specifically the relationship between different soft skills; the effects of demographic variables on teachers' soft skills; and the potential effect of extraversion on the communicational and other soft skills of the teachers. The present study therefore aimed to address this research gap by assessing the soft skills of primary school teachers; specifically, the main research questions posed were whether different teacher soft skills are related between them.

2.5.2 The main objective

The main objective of the study was to assess whether there are differences among the teachers' self-reported soft skills levels (communication/ persuasion skills, interpersonal skills, leadership/organizational skills, political/cultural skills);

2.2.1. Hypothesis

The null hypothesis states that (H0): *There are no significant differences between the four clusters of teachers' soft skills performance toward supervisor/organization expectations/standards.*

The alternative hypothesis states the following (H1): *We suppose that there are statistically significant differences between the four clusters of teachers' soft skills performance toward supervisor/organization expectations/standards.*

3. Methods

3.1 Sample

Elementary school teachers from different regions of Greece were approached through the academic and professional contacts of the researcher, through the use of telephone, email and social media platforms (Facebook). Interested potential participants received an electronic link to the questionnaire to be completed through the online survey platform of Google Forms. Participants completed and returned the questionnaires during the period of January 2023 to March 2023.

The sample of study consisted of N = 220 elementary teachers from public schools from different regions of Greece. Given recourse constraints for the realization of this research project, as a sampling method was an opportunity method (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).[20]

Most participants were female (76%), and participants' age ranges varied between 22-30 years (22%), 31-40 years (30%), 41-50 years (30%), and 51-60 years (18%). Approximately one in two teachers had received a postgraduate degree (49%), with another 48% having graduated from university; 3% of the sample held doctorate degrees. Many teachers of the sample were elementary teachers (46%), with 10% teaching foreign languages and another 10% teaching informatics. Seven percent were physical education teachers (7%), while 19% of the sample reported that they had other

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[20] Creswell, J. W., Creswell, J. D. (2022), Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (6th ed.). Sage.

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specialties. Participants' years of service as teachers varied; specifically, 18% had up to 5 years' experience, 29% had 6-10 years of experience, 31% had 11-20 years of experience, 16% had 21-30 years of experience, and the remaining 6% had more than 30 years of service (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic and occupational characteristics of the sample of teachers (N = 220*)*

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	54	24.5
	Female	166	75.5
Age	22-30	48	21.8
	31-40	66	30.0
	41-50	66	30.0
	51-60	40	18.2
Studies/Training	University degree	106	48.2
	Postgraduate	108	49.1
	Doctorate	6	2.7
Specialty	Elementary teacher	100	45.5
	Foreign language	22	10.0
	Physical education	16	7.3
	Music	10	4.5
	Informatics	22	10.0
	Artistic	8	3.6
	Other	42	19.1
Years of service	0-5	40	18.2
	6-10	64	29.1
	11-20	68	30.9
	21-30	36	16.4
	30+	12	5.5

3.2 Instrument

The design of the study was quantitative and cross-sectional, with within-subjects measures.[21] Specifically, it utilized the quantitative research approach, collecting data through the use of a self-report questionnaire, which is a psychometrically valid and reliable instrument. Furthermore, the study was cross-sectional, since data were collected at a single, specific time point with no repeated measures across time. The main variables of the study, regarding self-reported soft skills performance compared to supervisor/organization standards, were within-subjects in that all participants completed all scales.

A modified version of Kantrowitz's Soft Skills Performance Questionnaire (SSPQ),[22] was used for the assessment of teachers' soft skills. The initial soft skills performance questionnaire is comprised of 106 items, where participants rate themselves on their skills performance in a series of 7 skill clusters according to the performance standards of the organization, as well as compared to their co-workers. For the purposes of the present study, four out of the 7 clusters of soft skills performance were selected for incorporation. These, selected in alignment with the aims of the research, were

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[21] Creswell, J. W., Creswell, J. D. (2022), Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach (6th ed.), Sage.
[22] Kantrowitz, T. M. (2005), Development and construct validation of a measure of soft skills performance, (Doctoral dissertation), In: http://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/6861 (accessed 3/1/2023)

communication skills (13 questions), interpersonal skills (22 questions), leadership/organization skills (20 questions), and political/cultural skills (13 questions).

3.3 Statistics

The statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics was used for the statistical analysis of the results. Data were inputted and coded in the software and descriptive and inferential analyses were performed. In the descriptive analysis, frequencies and percentages were calculated for the demographic/work characteristics of the sample, and median values, as well as means and standard deviations, were reported for the 68 items of the questionnaire, as well as for the resulting four dimensions of the study. Cronbach reliability indexes were calculated for each of the four subscales of the study, as well as for the total scale of skills performance as per performance standards. Since the four subscales had acceptable reliability, four dimensions were computed, corresponding to the four clusters of communication skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills and political skills. Furthermore, Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests of normality were performed for the total 68 items of the scale, as well as for each of the computed dimensions; all of which showed that the data did not follow normality (all $p < 0.05$). Given this result, non-parametric statistical tests were selected for the testing of the hypothesis of the study. For the main hypothesis, a series of six paired-samples Wilcoxon signed rank tests were performed, between all possible pairs of skill performance clusters.

4. Results

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for all the individual items of the study questionnaire pertaining to teachers' performance in soft skills and whether it meets supervisor/organization expectations and standards. Given that Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality tests indicated that the data for all items significantly deviated from normality (all $p < 0.05$), the median values are reported below.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics for the items of employee performance according to standards*

Does performance meet expectations/standards?	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
1. I accept feedback from my supervisor and coworkers	3.27	3.00	.926
2. When things go wrong, it's hard for me to admit my mistakes	2.21	2.00	1.268
3. I cooperate with others to get the job done	3.59	4.00	1.005
4. I adjust my message depending on the audience in order to convey my point	3.53	4.00	.883
5. If someone has a problem with something I have done, I handle their objections appropriately	3.28	3.00	.778
6. I demonstrate empathy when dealing with others	3.77	4.00	.903
7. When responding to others, I modify my reactions to fit the organizational culture	3.37	3.00	.915
8. When starting a project or task, I start by defining the objectives	3.58	3.00	.859
9. If something needs to be addressed, I confront an issue head on to defuse the situation	3.20	3.00	.894
10. I delegate work to others as appropriate	2.86	3.00	1.151

	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
11. I deliver effective presentations	3.24	3.00	1.020
12. I effectively develop rapport when meeting someone new	3.49	3.00	.934
13. I distinguish big from small errors to deal with them appropriately	3.51	4.00	.873
14. I show creativity and try new ideas	3.61	4.00	.834
15. I act courteous and respectful toward others	3.97	4.00	.860
16. I tend to not ask questions or get help from others	2.76	3.00	1.162
17. I actively build a "network" to have a group of people who serve as professional contacts	3.21	3.00	1.030
18. When responding to others, I compliment them on valid points	3.59	4.00	.858
19. I greet my employees and coworkers	4.10	4.00	.875
20. I handle delicate/confidential situations carefully	3.93	4.00	.893
21. I actively manage my impression so that am portrayed positively by others	3.34	3.00	.949
22. When called upon to make a decision, I act decisively	3.45	3.00	.902
23. I act patiently in a variety of situations	3.65	4.00	.922
24. When making decisions, I consider all possible consequences	3.60	4.00	.846
Does performance meet expectations/standards?	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
25. I seek to build and maintain professional relationships	3.61	4.00	.877
26. I command the respect of others	3.63	4.00	1.028
27. I hold others responsible for their actions	3.11	3.00	1.125
28. I set goals as a way of improving my performance	3.59	4.00	.825
29. I plan and organize my time and activities	3.66	4.00	.814
30. When things change, I have a difficult time adapting to different environments and people	2.60	3.00	1.269
31. When completing my work, I am often unsure of the end goal of a project or task	2.61	3.00	1.210
32. I get buy-in/commitment from other people for projects	3.32	3.00	.875
33. I tend to not be influential when dealing with others	2.85	3.00	1.161
34. I actively observe what's going on around me	3.60	4.00	.995
35. I find it difficult to learn the unwritten rules of the workplace	2.10	2.00	1.430
36. I organize work to plan out what needs to be done	3.23	3.00	1.112
37. I turn a negative situation into a positive/learning situation	3.32	3.00	1.002
38. I exercise judgment in a variety of job situations	3.39	3.00	.887
39. I tend to focus on the details of my work rather than the big picture	3.03	3.00	1.085
40. I update my skills by learning what's new in the field	3.56	3.50	.881
41. When collaborating with others I voice my own opinions	3.52	4.00	.894
42. I forget to attend to the details of my work	2.32	3.00	1.289
43. I promote a team environment	3.64	4.00	.894
44. I seek information to help me do my work more effectively	3.82	4.00	.846
45. I have a hard time compromising when necessary	2.22	2.00	1.320
46. I show enthusiasm for my job	3.67	4.00	.867
47. I take rejection when I am out of options for solving a problem	3.20	3.00	.884
48. I develop strategies and plans for carrying out work	3.53	3.50	.862
49. I use humor to make a point	3.54	4.00	.903
50. Other people know that I am accessible and approachable	3.75	4.00	.898

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51. I lack interest in the work that I and my coworkers do	2.07	2.00	1.336
52. If there is conflict between myself and others, I am effective in resolving it	3.30	3.00	.951
53. I find it difficult to get dissimilar people to work together	2.49	3.00	1.222
Does performance meet expectations/standards?	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
54. I work as a team player	3.59	3.50	.958
55. I listen to concerns that other people have	3.82	4.00	.835
56. I am open to hearing other points of view	3.85	4.00	.853
57. I hold myself accountable for my actions by taking responsibility for things I do	3.77	4.00	.872
58. I persist and work hard to get the job done	3.74	4.00	.749
59. I know my resources and who to reach out to for help and advice	3.51	3.00	.852
60. I reconcile differing opinions	3.52	3.50	.963
61. I show a vision for where the company and the work should go and how we can get there	3.38	3.00	.876
62. I respond to upset customers or coworkers by addressing their concerns	3.53	3.00	.852
63. I negotiate contracts and projects	3.20	3.00	.944
64. I show sensitivity to organizational and national cultures	3.51	3.00	.904
65. I understand the political environment I am working in	3.25	3.00	1.040
66. I am ineffective at persuading others	2.74	3.00	1.176
67. I provide solutions when a problem needs to be resolved	3.45	3.00	.861
68. I use a democratic process for making decisions	3.75	4.00	.838

Overall, in almost half of the total questionnaire items (31 out of 68), participants indicated that their performance exceeded the expectations and standards set by the supervisor and the organization. Of these, 27 items had a median value of Md = 4 ("exceeds standard"). Furthermore, the median scores of participants indicated that their performance also marginally exceeded standards in: developing strategies and plans for carrying out work; reconciling differing opinions; updating their skills by learning what's new in the field; and working as team players (Md = 3.5, "exceeds standard").

In the next 33 items, participant median scores indicated that their performance met the standards set by the company and the supervisor (Md = 3, "meets standard"). Finally, median scores showed that participants felt that they met organizational standards to some extent (Md = 2, "partly meets standard") concerning: finding it difficult to learn the unwritten rules of the workplace; having a hard time compromising when necessary; lacking interest in the work that they and their coworkers do; and admitting their mistakes when things go wrong.

A series of Cronbach reliability analyses were performed, for the total skills scale, as well as for each of the four subscales of the study. Results showed that the total skills performance scale had high reliability ($\alpha = 0.94$, 68 items). Three out of four subscales also had high reliability, specifically, communication skills ($\alpha = 0.76$, 13 items), interpersonal skills ($\alpha = 0.86$, 22 items), and leadership/organizational skills ($\alpha = 0.84$, 20 items). The fourth subscale of political/cultural skills, had a lower reliability index ($\alpha = 0.65$, 13 items), however, this result approached the cut-off point of $\alpha = 0.70$ and was deemed to be adequate for the purposes of the present analysis (Table 3).

Table 3. *Reliability coefficients for the scales of the study*

	Cronbach Reliability	N of Items
Total Scale	.941	68
Communication Skills	.763	13
Interpersonal Skills	.856	22
Leadership/Organization Skills	.842	20
Political/Cultural Skills	.646	13

Based on the acceptable reliability indexes for the subscales of the study, the four dimensions were calculated as per their creators' instructions. The following Table 4 presents the median scores, along with means and standard deviations. Given that the data for the four dimensions of the study did not meet criteria for normality (all $p < 0.05$, as per Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Lilliefors significance correction), the median scores are reported here.

Overall, the median scores for all four dimensions indicated that participants deemed their communication, interpersonal, leadership and political skills performance to "meet the standards" of the supervisor and the organization. Specifically, interpersonal skills were highest (median Md = 3.36), followed closely by communication skills (Md = 3.31) and leadership/organizational skills (Md = 3.30). political/cultural skills performance was last, with Md = 3.19.

In order to test the research hypothesis, which examines whether there are statistically significant differences between the four dimensions of soft skills performance related to supervisor/organization standards ("*H_1. There are statistically significant differences between the four clusters of teachers' soft skills performance toward supervisor/organization expectations/standards*"), a series of six Wilcoxon signed ranks tests were performed between the median scores of skills – interpersonal, communication, leadership and political.

Results showed that all examined relationships were statistically significant (all $p < 0.05$). Specifically, and taking into account the median scores for each dimension, interpersonal skills were significantly higher than communication skills ($Z = -5.52$, $p < 0.01$), leadership skills ($Z = -4.29$, $p < 0.01$) and political skills ($Z = -9.18$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, communication skills were significantly higher than leadership skills ($Z = -2.23$, $p = 0.026$) and political skills ($Z = -6.06$, $p < 0.01$), while leadership skills were assessed to be higher than political skills ($Z = -7.01$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4 presents these statistically significant results. Therefore, hypothesis H_1 was accepted, and there were statistically significant differences between all four clusters of teachers' soft skills performance toward supervisor/organization expectations/standards.

Table 4
Pairwise comparisons for the dimensions of the study

Pairwise comparisons	Z	p
Interpersonal Skills - Communication Skills	-5.522	.000
Leadership/Organization Skills - Communication Skills	-2.229	.026
Political/Cultural Skills - Communication Skills	-6.062	.000
Leadership/Organization Skills - Interpersonal Skills	-4.289	.000
Political/Cultural Skills - Interpersonal Skills	-9.177	.000
Political/Cultural Skills - Leadership/Organization Skills	-7.005	.000

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the levels of elementary teachers' communication, interpersonal, leadership and political soft skills performance. According to the results of the survey, it appears that in all of four dimensions of soft skills, the participants deemed their communication, interpersonal, leadership and political skills performance to "meet the standards" of the supervisor and the organization. Specifically, interpersonal skills were highest, followed closely by communication skills and leadership/organizational skills, with the political/cultural skills performance been the lowest reported.

As discussed in the literature review, teachers' social and emotional competence can be a decisive factor in shaping a positive learning environment and providing students themselves with social and emotional learning.[23] At the same time, the successful teaching of social and emotional skills in class is important in facilitating positive student outcomes.[24] Conversely, when teachers provide insufficient social and emotional teaching in the classroom, students may invest less in the following the lesson and their academic performance may be adversely impacted.[25]

Jennings and Frank[26] and other writers have recommended that in order to facilitate the positive social and emotional learning of students, teachers need to develop their social and emotional capabilities for themselves, and their social-emotional teaching competence for their students. Similarly, Schonert-Reichl[27] has proposed that teachers should be competent in teaching social and emotional skills to their students. In the same vein, Brackett et al.'s[28] study concluded that the teacher's ability to create a positive psychological climate, and her or his ability to maintain good interpersonal relationships in the class, were soft skills that contributed to the students' learning as well as their acquisition of social and emotional skills learning.

Given the above, future research should focus on the design and implementation of training programs for teachers, in particular, targeted towards primary school teachers, in social, emotional and other difficult to learn soft skills, because soft skills play a significant role in the social/emotional development and the academic learning of the students.

Additionally, as the research on Greek teachers' soft skills is limited, it is necessary to investigate them further in the future, both concerning the levels of communication, interpersonal, leadership and political soft skills performance and the relationship between them.

6. Limitations

The limitations of the study are those characteristics of design or methodology that may

[23] Jones, S. M., Bouffard, S. M., Weissbourd, R. (2013), Educators' social and emotional skills vital to learning, In: Phi Delta Kappan, vol. 94, issue 8, pp. 62-65.

[24] Jennings, P. A., Greenberg, M. T. (2009), The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes, In: Review of Educational Research, vol. 79, pp. 491-525.

[25] Marzano, R. J., Marzano, J. S., Pickering, D. J. (2003), Classroom management that works, ASCD.

[26] Jennings, P. A., Frank, J. L. (2015), Inservice preparation for educators. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg & T. P. Gullotta (eds.), Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice (pp. 422–437). The Guilford Press.

[27] Schonert-Reichl, K. (2017), Social and emotional learning and teachers, In: Future of Children, vol. 27, pp. 137-155.

[28] Brackett, M. A., Reyes, M. R., Rivers, S. E., Elbertson, N. A., Salovey, P. (2012), Assessing teachers' beliefs about social and emotional learning, In: Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, vol. 30, issue 3, pp. 219–236.

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adversely impact the interpretation of the findings from research. Study limitations may be the constraints placed on the ability of the researcher to generalize from the results, to further describe applications to practice, and reduce the potential practical utility of findings. The present study had some limitations. First, the sampling technique that was used was one of opportunity, and therefore this places a limit on the generalizability of the findings to the wider population of primary school teachers. Secondly, the study employed the use of psychometric questionnaires with closed-ended items, and did not include a qualitative component with teacher interviews, which could have provided cross-method validity and enriched the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Furthermore, and related to the above, in survey research, participants' responses to close-ended items do not necessarily capture or convey participants' feelings and views accurately, which is more likely to happen if they personally answer items in open-ended format.

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Βιογραφικά στοιχεία συγγραφέα

Ονομάζομαι Ζυγοπούλου Στεργιανή και είμαι απόφοιτος του τμήματος Αγγλικής Γλώσσας και Φιλολογίας του ΕΚΠΑ και έχω ειδικευθεί στις ειδικές μαθησιακές δυσκολίες Εργάζομαι στη δημόσια εκπαίδευση τα τελευταία 8 χρόνια. Επιπλέον, έχω ασχοληθεί με την προσχολική αγωγή και είμαι κάτοχος Bachelor από το Mediterranean College σε συνεργασία με το University of Derby για το οποίο έχω λάβει την αναγνώριση από το αρμόδιο τμήμα του Υπουργείου Παιδείας (ΑΤΕΕΝ) για την άσκηση των επαγγελματικών δικαιωμάτων στην Ελλάδα.

Thanopoulou Athanasia

Critical Pedagogy, Education policy and the Detailed Preschool Education Curricula of Greece

Abstract

In this paper we will examine the role of critical pedagogy in the formation of the educational system and what is its relationship with the syllabi. The content of education, provided to the new generation, receives the influence of its time. The various economic-social-political conditions affect the formation and organization of the educational system. Therefore, the education that the person will receive must cultivate respect, critical thinking, give possibilities to the person to act and participate in social events. An educational system must connect theory with practice with the aim of developing social action and production of knowledge.

Keywords: Critical pedagogy, curricula, education, kindergarten

Περίληψη

Στην παρούσα εργασία θα εξετάσουμε το ρόλο της κριτικής παιδαγωγικής στη διαμόρφωση του εκπαιδευτικού συστήματος και ποια είναι η σχέση της με τα αναλυτικά προγράμματα. Το περιεχόμενο της εκπαίδευσης, που παρέχεται στη νέα

γενιά, δέχεται την επίδραση της εποχής του. Οι διάφορες οικονομικές-κοινωνικές-πολιτικές συνθήκες επιδρούν στη διαμόρφωση και οργάνωση του εκπαιδευτικού συστήματος. Επομένως, η εκπαίδευσης που θα λάβει το άτομο οφείλει να καλλιεργεί το σεβασμό, την κριτική σκέψη, να δίνει δυνατότητες στο άτομο να ενεργεί και να συμμετέχει στα κοινωνικά δρώμενα. Ένα εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα οφείλει να συνδέσει τη θεωρία με την πράξη με στόχο την ανάπτυξη κοινωνικής δράσης και παραγωγή της γνώσης.

1. Introduction

Freire emphasizes the importance of pedagogy as an "act", which upgrades the role of the teacher with the aim of cultivating the students' critical consciousness with a view to their emancipation and the change of social reality. To explain the concept of critical pedagogy we refer to the second chapter with the emergence of critical theory and the Frankfurt school, but also how the organization of societies is connected to the sciences according to Habermas. Then, the reference to two theorists of the critical theory of Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux with the aim of understanding how theory and practice are connected in educational practice for the cultivation of emancipated individuals. Then a reference is made to the relationship between school and society as two concepts that complement each other and have a two-way relationship between them. Then, we examine the relationship between critical pedagogy and educational policy. The principles of critical pedagogy can influence the educational system, which is determined by the formation of curricula, which are interpreted as social and political ideologies that influence and shape tomorrow's citizens.

The course of education is based on the detailed programs, which concern the objectives, the teaching material, the duration of the school knowledge that a student must acquire. Thus, in the third chapter we refer to the role of critical pedagogy in the formation of syllabi and how they influence and shape citizens, but also to the concept of the hidden syllabi which has an unofficial/unconscious role in education. The fourth chapter deals with the effect - if any - of critical pedagogy on the kindergarten curriculum and specifically on the cognitive content that concerns "The child in Kindergarten and his relationship with others" and how critical pedagogy can be applied in the specific cognitive content.

2. Theory

2.1 Clarification of Terms

2.1.1 Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a pedagogical theory and practice which contributes to the cultivation of the individual's critical thinking and consciousness by questioning the existing social order and leading to a social, political and educational

transformation[29].

2.1.2 Curriculum

The syllabus is the way of organizing school knowledge in accordance with the prevailing social conditions that determine the functioning of education, obeying specific ideological and political criteria for which method the teacher will apply and what kind of knowledge he will offer. In other words, what the student will be taught at school, what knowledge he will acquire is connected to what kind of society we want to "build"[30].

2.1.3 Education

Education, with its narrow meaning and as it is used today in the science of pedagogy, means the systematic and organized process of education and learning, which on the one hand is planned by the state or by any other entity, public or private[31].

2.1.4 Kindergarten

Kindergarten is the first level of education, for children aged four to six. Kindergarten attendance is compulsory. Initially, the obligation was limited to infants. However, with article 33 of Law 4521/2018, the schooling of infants who turn 4 years old on December 31 of the year of registration (toddler children) became mandatory[32].

2.2 Critical theory and critical pedagogy

2.2.1 The emergence of critical theory – The Frankfurt school
Critical theory theorists: Paulo Freire & H. Giroux

Critical theory appeared at the University of Frankfurt in 1923. It is a theory, based on the theories of Marx, which tries to interpret social events as they emerged in "social becoming". Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse et al. were the pioneers of this theory, while later Juergen Harbermas was the man who wanted to show the conditions for the emergence and application of knowledge in the scientific field[33]. Society is perceived as a whole which influences and shapes the field of science. In contrast to older theories, such as positivism, which try to understand and describe

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[30] Γρόλλιος, Γ. (2003), «Θεμελίωση, στοχοθεσία και διαθεματικότητα στο νέο
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[32] https://www.lawspot.gr/nomikes-plirofories/nomothesia/n-4521-2018/arthro-33-nomos-4521-2018

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Αθήνα: Ελληνικά Γράμματα.

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the events around them without being interested in their resolution, critical theory is interested according to the social sciences in examining social events as products of human activity. These products can undergo any change since they are directed/produced by human activity. In addition to events, experiences acquired by the human mind through mental representations and influenced by the language and structure of society shape and can change the functioning of society[34]. Critical theory considers the social character important in human activity influenced by the Marxist understanding of the concepts of alienation and emancipation considering that the established social structures are the ones that shape the economic-political-cultural relations of human work leading man to alienation from other people, from work, from himself. In this way his life is emancipated without him being able to control and determine his action as a "social being".

According to Harbermas, language, power and work are tools that shape the organization of societies but also through the interests that emerge and influence the sciences[35]. Knowledge refers to a practical form, technical, related to the natural sciences, and emancipatory, related to the social sciences[36]. Harbermas emphasizes that people communicate with each other through language, trying to convince each other through arguments and the imposition of power, which results from social hierarchy[37]. In these contexts of communication the rules that govern it are most often imposed by power and remain unchanged. Man can negotiate this imposition and change it from relations of power to relations of mutual respect, interaction within the framework of free communication.

Critical theory, questioning the traditional social structures of power, exerted a great influence in the field of social sciences and critical pedagogy, which are affected by the science-society relationship in the social-political-economic becoming.

Freire was born in Brazil in 1921 and died in 1997. His social situation did not allow him to receive any education due to the consequences of the economic crisis of 1929. He then studied law and philosophy, became director of the Ministry of Education, engaged in programs for the combating illiteracy such as "The Bare feet can also learn to read" etc. The 1964 coup drives him into exile for 16 years, which he dedicates to writing his important work, such as "Ten letters to those who dare to teach", "The education of the oppressed" etc.[38]. He was one of the main theorists of critical pedagogy. As Giroux[39] emphasizes, we cannot understand critical pedagogy without the contribution of Paulo Freire.

Freire believes that education alone cannot create the basis for change in social structures. Education can through the education that will offer the new generation to assimilate values within the current social system. It is a process in which student

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[34] Craib, I. (2000). *Σύγχρονη κοινωνική θεωρία. Από τον Πάρσονς στο Χάμπερμας.* Αθήνα: Ελληνικά Γράμματα.

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and teacher are freed and both are led together to approach knowledge. The teacher is no longer the only one who owns the knowledge and has to pass it on to the student, but it is a collective learning process/collaboration. They acquire knowledge through interaction, dialogue, communication, free and effortless intervention in knowledge. The student's silence and the teacher's monologue (teacher-centered approach to teaching) are limited, while the concept of freedom acquires a dynamic dimension towards the education process[40]. For Freire[41] "The work of teaching …. it requires above all the ability to fight for freedom, without which teaching has no purpose".

Freire emphasizes the liberating power of education, which is why he dedicates himself to the education of children and adults. He emphasizes the importance of theory and practice through a pedagogical action. His participation in programs concerning the education of individuals (students-students-adults) as well as the important written work he has left testify to elements of critical theory, the relationship between education and social reality[42].

A younger theorist of critical pedagogy is Giroux, who attempts to study, in the 1980s in the USA, the conditions of pedagogy so that education acquires a democratic and free power, empowers students and contributes to social transformation[43]. For Giroux, pedagogy must acquire a liberating activity so that teachers and students acquire critical thinking for social change[44]. He referred to the critique of technocratic, hermeneutic and reproductive logic in education, dealing with the concepts of ideology, culture, hegemony and resistance in shaping critical pedagogy. He addressed the hidden curriculum that can lead the school to a perspective of reproduction and transformation. He highlighted the contradictory role of teachers as intellectuals in the school, as well as the problems of the syllabus. At the beginning of the 1980s in the USA Giroux refers to the concept of critical pedagogy and later McLaren. This concept concerns pedagogical thinking and educational practice. In particular, it is an important help in the field of education, allowing teachers to acquire a critical thinking about the social phenomena that happen around them, to discover and understand the reasons for them[45].

Critical pedagogy is a pedagogical theory and practice which contributes to the cultivation of critical thinking and consciousness of the individual by questioning the existing social order and leading to a social, political and educational transformation[46]. That is, it is a pedagogy of practice, according to Freire[47] that

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[40] Γρόλλιος, Γ. (2003), «Θεμελίωση, στοχοθεσία και διαθεματικότητα στο νέο Πλαίσιο Προγράμματος Σπουδών για την υποχρεωτική εκπαίδευση», *Εκπαιδευτική Κοινότητα,* (67), σσ.30-37.

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enhances the role of teachers, who interpret social reality as a field of struggle between social classes. Thus individuals realize the value of social dimensions by participating and shaping social reality.

The collective political claim for a society with democratic perspectives presupposes critical consciousness and political targeting. The change of the social situation through the empowerment and emancipation of individuals led to a social transformation and a society with the principles of democracy and equality[48].

Critical pedagogy is a process that leads to critical practice and emancipatory knowledge. With emancipatory knowledge, the individual cultivates critical thinking and identifies unequal social relations "...creates the foundations of social justice..."[49]. A relationship between oppressed and oppressors is established where "...in the first stage the oppressed uncover the world of oppression and with their action undertake to change it"[50].

Critical pedagogy is an educational process that helps students to develop critical thinking, to understand social phenomena, to be ready to change social structures. Thus, through school, students are trained to become active members for social change and acquire "...critical citizenship"[51]. The school is the place of social action, critical thinking and knowledge production. In this way, the conflict between oppressed and oppressors is founded on the power of education, which leads to the liberation of the oppressed, highlighting the political and social dimension of education. Critical teachers empower students and contribute to the improvement of social conditions not only within the classroom but also extend to the wider society.

2.2.2 The educational policy - Relationship between school and society

The role that the school will play in shaping tomorrow's citizens will influence gradual changes in social structures and contribute to social transformation. Educational reality cannot be calculated and organized without taking into account the social context. The school's relationship with society is two-way. According to Giroux[52] schools can hardly achieve radical social change, stressing that "...schools will not change society, but we can create within them pockets of resistance that provide pedagogical models for new forms of learning and social relations..."[53]. But they can create role models through teaching with faith in values. In this way individuals have faith in the struggle for a just society.

The school is influenced by society and society is influenced by pedagogical actions.

[48] Freire, P. (2006). *Δέκα επιστολές προς εκείνους που τολμούν να διδάσκουν.* (επιμ.) Τ. Λιάμπας. Θεσσαλονίκη: Επίκεντρο.

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[51] Mc Laren, P. (2010). 'Επαναστατική Παιδαγωγική σε Μετα-Επαναστατικές Εποχές: Επανεξετάζοντας την Πολιτική Οικονομία της Κριτικής Εκπαίδευσης'. Στο Γούναρη, Π. & Γρόλλιος, Γ. (επιμ.) *Κριτική Παιδαγωγική: μια συλλογή κειμένων (σσ.* 513-562). Αθήνα: Gutenberg (p. 560).

[52] Giroux, H. (2011). 'Επανεξετάζοντας την υπόσχεση της Κριτικής Παιδαγωγικής: Ένας πρόλογος'. Στο Νικολακάκη, Μ. (επιμ.). *Η Κριτική Παιδαγωγική στον Νέο Μεσαίωνα* (σσ. 21-26). Αθήνα: Ι. Σιδέρης.

[53] Giroux, H. (2011). 'Επανεξετάζοντας την υπόσχεση της Κριτικής Παιδαγωγικής: Ένας πρόλογος'. Στο Νικολακάκη, Μ. (επιμ.). *Η Κριτική Παιδαγωγική στον Νέο Μεσαίωνα* (σσ. 21-26). Αθήνα: Ι. Σιδέρης (p.120)

Freire emphasizes that "Education is not the highest stage of the struggle for social transformation. But without this society cannot be transformed"[54]. Educational reform promotes a social vision, it is a social reform, it makes proposals for a just society and gradual social change.

The concept of educational policy concerns the functioning of society and the relationships of people. Teachers as political subjects and as educators have a responsibility in the matter of democracy and social justice. Freire "...turned himself into a political educator, rather than a political educator, because he refused to consider education as a purely pedagogical act, without emphasizing its political and moral-aesthetic character"[55]. McLaren[56] emphasizes that school education cannot ignore the political, cultural, social and historical context and asymmetric power relations.

The educational policy is formed and completed within a historical and cultural context in which the spirit of the time, the circumstances, the philosophy of the social situation are "mirrored". Education is a carrier of historical and cultural goods which it transfers to the teaching of children and influences their attitude and their action towards society. The education of the children is determined through the organization of the analytical programs, which are formed based on the political and social ideology that agrees with the state educational policy[57].

2.3 Critical pedagogy and analytical programs

2.3.1 The impact of critical theory on curricula

Critical pedagogues believe that the curriculum represents a particular way of life and thinking. It is part of the social-cultural-political dimension of the educational process, which dimensions form the basis for understanding modern education. The curriculum includes goals that consist of ideological content and these goals should be achieved within the educational process so that the students, the new generation, can join society. The content of the material constitutes essential knowledge that every young person must be taught. Social sciences emphasize that school knowledge is an educational good that reflects the spirit of the time and determines social-political-cultural practices. Thus, school knowledge orients the student to specific social attitudes, values, positions, behavior patterns with the aim of the new generation becoming capable of taking on social functions[58].

The syllabus is the way of organizing school knowledge according to the dominant

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[54] Freire, P. (2006). *Δέκα επιστολές προς εκείνους που τολμούν να διδάσκουν.* (επιμ.) Τ. Λιάμπας. Θεσσαλονίκη: Επίκεντρο (p.141) .

[55] Araújo – Freire, A.M. (2011). 'Επίλογος. Paulo Freire: Μία ιστορία ζωής - Σχετίζοντας τη ζωή του Paulo Freire με την κατανόηση του για την εκπαίδευση, τον πολιτισμό και τη δημοκρατία'. Στο Νικολακάκη, Μ. (επιμ.) *Η Κριτική Παιδαγωγική στον Νέο Μεσαίωνα* (σσ.523-534). Αθήνα: Ι. Σιδέρης (p. 532).

[56] Mc Laren, P. (2010). 'Κριτική Παιδαγωγική: Μία Επισκόπηση'. Στο Γούναρη, Π. & Γρόλλιος, Γ. (επιμ.), *Κριτική Παιδαγωγική: μια συλλογή κειμένων* (σσ.279-330). Αθήνα: Gutenberg.

[57] Γρόλλιος, Γ. (2003), «Θεμελίωση, στοχοθεσία και διαθεματικότητα στο νέο Πλαίσιο Προγράμματος Σπουδών για την υποχρεωτική εκπαίδευση», *Εκπαιδευτική Κοινότητα,* (67), σσ.30-37.

[58] Μαυρογιώργος, Γ. (1992). Εκπαιδευτικοί και Διδασκαλία. Για μια Αντί (-παλη) πρόταση, *Σύγχρονη Εκπαίδευση,* σσ. 69-98.

social conditions that determine the functioning of education, obeying specific ideological and political criteria for which method the teacher will apply and what kind of knowledge he will offer. That is, what the student will be taught at school, what knowledge he will acquire is connected to what kind of society we want to "build". The ideology of school knowledge means what kind of worker and citizen tries to shape the school and with which political direction it will achieve it. In other words, the creation of syllabi is "...a project of partial readjustment of the functions of education that does not directly contradict the state educational policy..."[59].

The content of the teaching, the time-hours that will be taught, the method and the way of evaluation (an analytical program concerns: content, objectives, methodology, evaluation) will determine the type of employee-citizen that the school will make with the education provided, in order to serve the functions of society. Thus we find the dominant ideology of the school and the fact that the school itself reproduces social discrimination related to gender, race, social class, thus excluding some students from the right to knowledge-to education. It confirms and realizes the wishes and expectations of specific social groups through procedures of rules, grades, organization and operation of school and classes, but also the attitudes-expectations of teachers, without realizing it, are differentiated favorably in some specific groups of students[60]. According to Pierre Bourdieu, this different favorable attitude of teachers towards some specific groups of students gives us an interpretation of the inequality towards school success related to the process of "ethus" and educational capital. Ethos refers to a system of implicit and internalized values that determines the child's behavior towards the school institution and the educational capital - the educational heritage that differs "...from one social class to another, is responsible for the primary inequality of children in the school test..."[61]. This inequality continues through specific courses, which cultivate language, mathematics, literature. In this way, the student "loses contact" with the physical and social environment and the only thing he is interested in is the assimilation of the course material. This standardized knowledge does not allow cooperation, group work, communicative teaching based on the experiences-experiences-interests of the students[62]. The educational system is based on a competition and a system of points, preventing the development of cooperation and teamwork. Thus the young student participates in a learning process that is not his choice, but under compulsion he must accept and discipline himself in this program and in this way of life. The development of critical thinking is oriented only in the direction of school knowledge, "expressing a mechanistic understanding of the world"[63]. This creates a behavior disciplined and subordinated to an institution of power, which is indifferent to the inclinations, interests, needs of the students. The phenomenon of "boredom",

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[59] Γρόλλιος, Γ. (2003), «Θεμελίωση, στοχοθεσία και διαθεματικότητα στο νέο Πλαίσιο Προγράμματος Σπουδών για την υποχρεωτική εκπαίδευση», *Εκπαιδευτική Κοινότητα,* (67), σσ.30-37 (pp.35-37).

[60] Φραγκουδάκη, Α. (1985). *Κοινωνιολογία της εκπαίδευσης. Θεωρίες για την κοινωνική Ανισότητα στο σχολείο.* Αθήνα: Παπαζήσης.

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[62] Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2000). *Βιωματική - Επικοινωνιακή διδασκαλία. Η εισαγωγή της Μεθόδου Project στο σχολείο.* Αθήνα: Gutenberg.

[63] Γρόλλιος, Γ. (2005), *Ο Paulo Freire και το αναλυτικό πρόγραμμα.* Βάνιας: Θεσσαλονίκη (p. 232).

"yawning", and joy when the lesson is missed is not accidental. Many children get tired and don't want to go to school. This should cause the educational community to rethink and redefine its role in educating students. Therefore, the school must be transformed into a place of learning, joy and life, with teachers and students really participating in the learning process[64].

2.3.2 The hidden syllabus

The term hidden curriculum appears in 1968 by Phillip Jackson, who talks about informal or non-conscious versions of learning. That is, it concerns the way of organization and operation of the school and the classroom, the teaching, the regulations of the management, the school standards of school language, the suppression of emotions, the competition that develops between students in the context of school performance[65].

The hidden curriculum has hidden messages, which are conveyed to the student from the school environment and "…have nothing to do with the formal content of the lessons"[66]. The hidden analytic is not planned but appears in the everyday life of the school and refers to the unintended results of the educational process[67]. Many times it can reinforce or prevent behaviors in relation to the formal analytical.

All these operating conditions of the school can work positively towards the mechanisms of the hidden curriculum and satisfy the goals that are not planned or are not in accordance with the official curriculum[68]. It is certain that this is sometimes perceived by teachers, but the issue is how the teacher can manage it[69]. At this point the teacher has an active role and can intervene by realizing and reacting effectively through his collaboration with the students.

2.4 The detailed kindergarten curriculum

2.4.1 Cognitive content: "Human Environment: The child in Kindergarten and his relationship with others"

The detailed curriculum of the kindergarten and specifically the cognitive content concerning the "Human Environment: The child in Kindergarten and his relationship with others" shows that knowledge is shaped and influenced by social life. This cognitive content reflects the attitudes and values of the specific social-political-cultural conditions of the era in which the child lives and develops[70]. The analysis

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[64] Γρόλλιος, Γ. (2003), «Θεμελίωση, στοχοθεσία και διαθεματικότητα στο νέο Πλαίσιο Προγράμματος Σπουδών για την υποχρεωτική εκπαίδευση», *Εκπαιδευτική Κοινότητα,* (67), σσ.30-37.
[65] Westphallen, k. (2000). *Αναμόρφωση των αναλυτικών προγραμμάτων. Εισαγωγή στη μεταρρύθμιση των Curriculum.* Αθήνα: Αδελφών Κυριακίδη.
[66] Giddens, A. (2002). *Κοινωνιολογία.* Αθήνα: Gutenberg (p. 547).
[67] Φλουρής, Γ. (2000). *Αναλυτικά Προγράμματα για μια Νέα Εποχή στην Εκπαίδευση.* Αθήνα: Γρηγόρη.
[68] Γκότοβος, Α., Μαυρογιώργος, Γ. και Παπακωνσταντίνου, Π., (2000). *Κριτική Παιδαγωγική και Εκπαιδευτική Πράξη.* Αθήνα: Gutenberg.
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[70] Κουτσουβάνου, Ε. (1999). *Οι κοινωνικές επιστήμες στην προσχολική ηλικία.* Αθήνα: Οδυσσέας.

itself does not give reasons for a genuine communicative relationship, for the development of teamwork, for the expression of the child's personal concerns and needs[71].

In the name of a holistic approach to knowledge, students approach the various subjects in an interdisciplinary manner. Intersubjectivity means gathering and combining facts and information, which leaves students with no meaningful knowledge, but confusion in thinking. This cognitive content does not create "...conditions that lead to the emancipation of the individual and the group"[72]. Thus the creativity and initiative of the students is limited. The teacher becomes the mediator and manager of knowledge, while the student becomes a passive receiver of information, without having the right to evaluate school performance.

At a time when the development of science enables the individual to acquire a true picture of reality, the organization of the syllabus aims to limit the developmental possibilities of thought and to control the consciousness of young people[73]. The ideas of dialogue, cooperation, interaction, participatory democracy and freedom are presented as simple ideas. In fact students are being prepared for tomorrow's "active citizen", who will not only accept the present social situation, but also support it as the most correct and just[74]. Thus the individual follows a one-sided way of thinking and expressing himself for society.

Another element that is absent in the specific cognitive content concerns the connection of theory and practice. The absence of practice prevents the student from forming a correct perception and criticism of social reality. The development of initiative, self-activity and interaction with others, the awareness of one's uniqueness and diversity in relation to others cannot be cultivated without the practical process and the participation of children in the production of school knowledge[75].

2.4.2 Applying critical pedagogy to the curriculum

The application of critical pedagogy in the cognitive content "The child in the Kindergarten and his relationship with others" can include work plans/progects, which concern investigations of topics chosen by the children. These issues can arise through the children's interests and the investigation process is followed in order to establish the children's real interests, the planning of the activities and the materials they will use, the implementation of the activities and the process of evaluating the children themselves. children and the teacher. Throughout this process, the teacher's role is coordinating, emphasis is placed on student-centered education in which "the voices of the children" participate. These are open actions both in the process, in the content, in the materials, in the time of implementation[76].

[71] Goehlich, M. (2003). *Παιδοκεντρική διάσταση στη μάθηση*. Αθήνα: Τυπωθήτω – Δαρδανός Γιώργος.

[72] Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2004). *Επιστημολογικές αρχές της προσχολικής αγωγής*. Αθήνα: Τυπωθήτω – Δαρδανός Γιώργος (p. 145).

[73] Κουτσουβάνου, Ε. (1999). *Οι κοινωνικές επιστήμες στην προσχολική ηλικία*. Αθήνα: Οδυσσέας.

[74] Ζαμπέτα, Ε. (1998). *Αγωγή και εκπαίδευση της πρώιμης παιδικής ηλικίας στην Ευρώπη*. Αθήνα: Θεμέλιο.

[75] Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2004). *Επιστημολογικές αρχές της προσχολικής αγωγής*. Αθήνα: Τυπωθήτω – Δαρδανός Γιώργος.

[76] Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2000). *Βιωματική - Επικοινωνιακή διδασκαλία. Η εισαγωγή της Μεθόδου Project στο σχολείο*. Αθήνα: Gutenberg.

In the course of the research, they discuss and make decisions that lead to the work plan, developing encouragement, initiative, cooperation, dialogue, creativity and the participation of all children in small work groups. These activities are developed in the context of experiential-communicative discussions and combine daily experiences with the school program and with the wider community[77].

The school is open to parents, to the local community, creating conditions for the smooth integration of the child into social life with active participation. In this way the student acquires critical thinking and creativity contributing to a fair and equal society. It has the ability to perceive social reality, to participate actively as a member of society, to submit proposals for a just society contributing to the gradual change of social structures[78]. Thus the student comes into contact with his physical and social environment. It acquires citizenship through social action, the cultivation of critical thinking and the production of knowledge.

2.5 Purpose of the bibliographic research

The purpose of this bibliographic research concerns the role of critical pedagogy in the formation of the educational system, as well as its relationship with the syllabi. The principles of critical pedagogy can influence the educational system, which is determined by the formation of curricula, which are interpreted as social and political ideologies that influence and shape tomorrow's citizens.

3. Conclusions – Suggestions

According to the above, we find that the design of the analytical programs is directly connected to the social context. The various political-economic-social-cultural conditions determine the education system and shape it in such a way as to prepare the worker-citizen, who will be the continuator of these political practices. The state itself, through the choices of educational practices, cultivates and prepares citizens as it wishes with the aim of maintaining the existing social situation using curriculum design and giving directions through education[79].

The main pedagogical purpose of the school according to critical pedagogy is the formation of citizens with critical thinking, able to reflect and cooperate with the goal of social transformation. Educational policy and the role of syllabi do not allow for the creation of emancipated citizens with a critical conscience who can identify unequal social relations and create the foundations for social justice. Thus, encouragement, initiative, communication and collectivity are limited, with the result that the school creates disciplined citizens without active participation in social life[80].

The absence of bridging theory and practice of education does not enable the student

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[77] Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2004). *Επιστημολογικές αρχές της προσχολικής αγωγής.* Αθήνα: Τυπωθήτω – Δαρδανός Γιώργος.

[78] Goehlich, M. (2003). *Παιδοκεντρική διάσταση στη μάθηση.* Αθήνα: Τυπωθήτω – Δαρδανός Γιώργος.

[79] Blackledge, D. & Hunt, B. (2004). *Κοινωνιολογία της εκπαίδευσης. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.*

[80] Χρυσαφίδης, Κ. (2000). *Βιωματική - Επικοινωνιακή διδασκαλία. Η εισαγωγή της Μεθόδου Project στο σχολείο.* Αθήνα: Gutenberg.

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to acquire his own voice and to be able to explore his daily life through reflection and critical discourse in order to achieve the improvement of society, social transformation for a society fair and equal for all its members[81].

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