

ISSN: 1300-915X

# IOJPE

INTERNATIONAL ONLINE JOURNAL OF  
PRIMARY EDUCATION



International Online Journal Of Primary Education

# **International Online Journal of Primary Education**

**ISSN: 1300-915X**

**DECEMBER 2018**

**Volume 7 - Issue 2**

**Prof. Dr. Şule Aycan  
Editor**

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Published in TURKEY

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## **Message from the Editor**

I am very pleased to publish second issue in 2018. As an editor of International Online Journal of Primary Education (IOJPE), this issue is the success of the reviewers, editorial board and the researchers. In this respect, I would like to thank to all reviewers, researchers and the editorial board. The articles should be original, unpublished, and not in consideration for publication elsewhere at the time of submission to International Online Journal of Primary Education (IOJPE), For any suggestions and comments on IOJPE, please do not hesitate to send mail.

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## BARRIERS FACING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSITION PRACTICES IN GREEK KINDERGARTENS

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**Received Date:** 16-10-2018

**Accepted Date:** 10-12-2018

**Published Date:** 31-12-2018

### ABSTRACT

Last years the process of transition from kindergarten to primary school has attracted considerable attention as a research topic in Greece. The purpose of this research, which had a sample of 1225 teachers and 1052 parents, was the investigation of their views about the barriers they face in implementing transition practices. The views' research was achieved through the use of a questionnaire. The result analysis indicated that there are many crucial barriers which complicate the transition process. Indicatively, we refer lack of continuity between the two institutions, lack of communication and cooperation between kindergarten and primary teachers, between teachers and parents, insufficient in-service training for teachers, the quality of the relationship with the teacher, the distance between the two institutions etc.

**Key words:** teachers' and parents', social representations, transition practices, kindergarten, Greece

### INTRODUCTION

Taking into account that the transition from kindergarten to primary school marks an important period in children's lives, the way the transition process is implemented has a significant impact on children's educational progress and their ability to enjoy learning (Myers, 1997). For some children the entrance to primary school is not always a positive experience (Brostrom, 2000). This happens because the difficulty to manage successfully the changes occurring in their lives becomes often cause of stress, anxiety and phobias (Myers, 1997). The literature review has identified significant barriers which make difficult the process of transition, according to the perceptions of teachers and parents.

It is obvious that there is a lack of continuity between the two institutions, which affects negatively the successful transition of children. Particularly, four reasons of this discontinuity have been described, which are involved in causing anxiety in children. There are changes in the school environment in terms of the dimensions of the buildings, the large size of objects, the colors of the classrooms (Πανταζής, 1991), the difficulty of children to follow a typical schedule and to work instead of choosing playing activities (Stephen & Cope, 2003), differences in the management of the classroom, discontinuities in the content of the curriculum and different perceptions between kindergarten and primary teachers (Curtis, 1986; Shore, 1998; Yeboah, 2002).

The lack of communication and cooperation between teachers and parents create various barriers which can be classified in personal and emotional level eg parents' alienation from the school environment due to negative personal experiences, emotions, different culture e.t.c. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Studer, 1997), negative attitudes of teachers towards parents due to the way they behave and support their children (Barclay & Boone, 1996. Burgess, Herphes





& Moxan, 1991 in Moore & Lasky, 2001) or the way they intervene in the school process (Blamires et al, 1997; Carey et al, 1998; Myers, 1997; Downer, Driscoll & Pianta, 2006). The inadequate communication between parents and teachers may also be due to management and social barriers (Thiessen & Anderson, 1999 in Moore & Lasky, 2001) e.g. bureaucracy, issues related to the administration of the school, the staff, the implementation of the curriculum etc. (Benson, 1999; Moore & Lasky, 2001).

Additionally, the study of the literature reveals many other areas where parents face problems/experiencing difficulties in their cooperation with the teaching staff, such as insufficient information about the progress of their children, occasional communication for learning and adaptation issues, difficulty in exchanging ideas, absence of instructions for supporting children, limited contacts with families and children at home (Pianta, Cox, Taylor & Early, 1999. La Paro, Pianta & Cox, 2000. Einarsdóttir, 2003; Nor, Palaniappan, Ishak, Razak & Arshad, 2006).

This inadequate communication and cooperation is most evident in the case of children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Myers, 1997). More specifically it is supported that structural variables in society, namely the nation, the gender and the social class affect the process of transition. The fact is that cultural and social diversity, within the framework of the educational policy, makes children and parents unprepared for the educational and regulatory role of the school, instead of enriching the educational process (Stephen & Cope, 2003; Γκόβαρης, 2008;).

A similar picture emerges in the case of children with special educational needs. The cooperation between teachers and parents remains insufficient, although parents constitute an important source of accurate information about their child (Jewett & Tertell, 1998). This cooperation gets worse because there are also operational problems (Yeboah, 2002), lack of initiative from the teaching staff to support these children, unskilled staff (Guranlick, 2001; Yeboah, 2002), lack of resources and coordination between ministries and agencies, inadequate training, etc. There is additional data which argue that the economic situation of the family is directly related to its involvement in the transition process. Especially, families with low economic resources find it difficult to participate and this affects the cognitive abilities of children, their behavior (Arnold, Barlett, Gowan & Meral, 2006; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, Gennaro & Wildenger, 2007; Giddens, 2009), their ability to follow the routine of the school and overall their educational progress (Brooker, 2002; Stephen & Cope, 2003).

Although all research findings converge on the conclusion that the good relationship between parents and teachers is very important in facilitating the transition, several studies are grounded on the view that teachers have a limited knowledge of transition issues because of their academic studies and the lack of initial and in-service training (Βρυσιώτη, 2002). The collaboration between parents and teachers could become essential by conducting training programs for teachers and parents on issues of transition from kindergarten to primary school (Myers, 1997).

Based on the data that emerged from an analysis of the literature a successful transition program requires the cooperation of the teachers of the two institutions (Κιτσαράς, 1997; Brostrom, 2000). Although research results reveal that kindergarten and primary teachers have many opportunities to develop cooperative relationships (Timperley, McNaughton, Howie & Robinson, 2003), many parents and teachers describe the lack of cooperation and



communication between teachers, as one of the crucial barriers in the transition process (Πανταζής, 1991; Βρυσιώτη, 2002; Allin, 2005).

Regarding the issue, relationships with their peers, research findings highlight adjustment difficulties during the transition process, due to limited social skills and problems in interpersonal relationships among children (McGinnis & Goldstein, 2003; McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, Gennaro, & Wildenger, 2007; Βρυσιώτη, 2007). The relationship with the teacher is also an important factor in proper adjustment and smooth transition. Specifically, children who have a good relationship with their teacher like to go to school, as opposed to children who feel uncomfortable with their teacher and lose their interest for school (Βρυσιώτη, 2008).

Finally, there are additional data supporting that the lack of parental involvement (Γιαννακόπουλος, 1991), the distance between the two institutions (Myers, 1997; Βρυσιώτη, 2008), the different academic studies of primary and preschool teachers (Myers, 1997), the limited knowledge of the curricula (Μπαγάκης, Διδάχου, Βαλμάς, Λουμάκη, & Πομόνη, 2006) and the need to develop motives for professional development are crucial factors that complicate the transition process.

In Greece, teachers and parents identify aspects and symptoms of the problem through difficulties that observe daily, by making assumptions about the causes of the problem, based solely on their experience. In order to prevent incorrect actions and making the changes that accompany the transition painless planned to conduct this investigation with the aim of the empirical approach of preschool and primary school reality.

## THE PURPOSE OF STUDY

Based on the foregoing the purpose of this study was to explore teachers' and parents' social representations (SR) about the barriers they face in implementing transition practices.

The specific objectives of the research are:

1. To identify possible changes in SRs of teachers in relation to:  
a) their age, b) years of service, c) the level of their studies, d) the nature of training they have received, e) the occupation with the subject of transition during their studies or training.
2. To identify possible changes in SRs of parents in relation to:  
a) their age, b) the socio-economic status, c) the level of their studies,
3. To investigate possible convergences or divergences in SRs among teachers and parents.
4. To investigate possible changes in teachers' and parents' SRs of public and private kindergartens, as well as general and special education.

## METHOD

Accepted that the knowledge is a social product and transition constitutes a personal, social, political and cultural phenomenon, the theory of Social Representations was implemented to consider how teachers and parents- as social agents- gain knowledge about barriers the face in implementing transition practices in Greek Kindergartens. Social Representations are defined as shared images and concepts by which people organize the world around them in order to make sense of it, be it events, phenomena of objects. These SPs can be seen as products of interactions and exchanges between members of culturally shared groups such as teachers and parents, in their day to day reality (Γουργιώτου, & Γκλιόου-Χριστοδούλου, 2016).



For the purpose of the study two questionnaires were used – one for parents and one for teachers. One section in both questionnaires referred to barriers to implementing transition practices. Both sections were consisted by 14 items on a 5-point Likert scale response format ranging from completely agree (1) to completely disagree (5).

### Sample

A large, national sample of teachers and parents participated in our research. The study sample consisted of 1052 parents and 1225 teachers (Table 1). 73.0% of parents were mothers, 21.3% were fathers and 5.7% were some other guardians. 53.6% of teachers were working in a primary school and 46.4% in a kindergarten. The ages of the participants were classified into 5 groups (Table 2). 24.5% of parents have age from 23 to 33, 63.9% from 34 to 44, 10.5% from 45 to 55, and 1.1% are older than 55 years. 24.9% of teachers have age from 23 to 33, 46.1% from 34 to 44, 27.9% from 45 to 55, and 1.1% are older than 55 years. The majority of both parents and teachers lived in a city.

**Table 1** Sample description

|          |                | Frequency (%) |
|----------|----------------|---------------|
| Parents  | Other          | 60 (5.7)      |
|          | Father         | 224 (21.3)    |
|          | Mother         | 768 (73.0)    |
| Teachers | Kindergarten   | 568 (46.4)    |
|          | Primary school | 657 (53.6)    |

**Table 2** Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Sample

|               |          | Parents    | Teachers   |
|---------------|----------|------------|------------|
| Age           | 23-33    | 258 (24.5) | 305 (24.9) |
|               | 34-44    | 672 (63.9) | 565(46.1)  |
|               | 45-55    | 110 (10.5) | 342(27.9)  |
|               | 55+      | 12 (1.1)   | 13(1.1)    |
| Residence     | Village  | 144 (13.7) | 198 (16.2) |
|               | Town     | 194 (18.4) | 264 (21.6) |
|               | City     | 483 (45.9) | 443 (36.2) |
|               | Big city | 231 (22.0) | 320 (26.1) |
| Frequency (%) |          |            |            |

### Data analysis

For the purposes of the study we implemented two principle-components factor analyses, using varimax rotation – one for parents and one for teachers. We then used the two independent samples t test or the analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to test if the factors are affected by several demographic characteristics. For the analysis the PASW Statistics 20 was used while the level of significance was set up to 5%. For the interpretation of the data used the theory of Structural Approach of the Central Core (Abric, 2003b).

## RESULTS

### Barriers to implementing transition practices according to teachers

Statistically significant difference between kindergarten teachers and primary teachers emerged for barriers “Lack of information or limited information during registration of children at school”, “Lack of communication with teachers of previous grades” , “Lack of time to implement transition practices”, “Transition program is not implemented in school”,



“The Head / Director does not support transition practices” ( $p < 0.001$ ), “personal choice not to follow transition practices” and “Lack of training”.

The frequency and the relative frequency of the 14 items are reported in Table 3. The most important barrier according to teachers is the lack of skilled staff to support children with problems. 70.4% of teachers agree or completely agree with this barrier. 62.5% of teachers agree or completely agree that it is risky to visit the home of a child. Half of the teachers (50.2%) answered that a transition program is not implemented in their school. 41.0% of teachers agree or completely agree that they have not been properly trained for the adoption of such practices.

Similar are the results for kindergarten teachers and primary teachers. Statistically significant difference between kindergarten teachers and primary teachers emerged for barriers “Lack of information or limited information during registration of children at school” ( $p = 0.004$ ), “Lack of communication with teachers of previous grades” ( $p = 0.049$ ), “Lack of time to implement these practices” ( $p = 0.002$ ), “Transition program is not implemented in our school” ( $p < 0.001$ ), “The Head / Director does not support such practices” ( $p < 0.001$ ), “I chose not to follow transition practices” ( $p < 0.001$ ) and “I have not been properly trained for the adoption of such practices” ( $p < 0.001$ ). In all cases, primary teachers agree or completely agree to a greater degree than kindergarten teachers.

### Barriers to implementing transition practices according to parents

Statistically significant difference between parents arose on barriers “The nature of my work and the lack of time did not give the opportunity to follow the practices suggested by the teacher”, “Transition program is not implemented in my child’s school”, and “The Head / Director does not support transition practices”.

The frequency and the relative frequency of the 14 items are reported in Table 4. The most important barrier according to parents is the lack of skilled staff to support children with problems. 55.9% of parents agree or completely agree with this barrier. 47.4% agree or completely agree the education system does not encourage meetings with parents before the school year beginning. 47.2% agree or completely agree that the non-availability of financial resources and materials from the school is a barrier.

**Table 3** Opinion of teachers on barriers to implementing transition practices

|  | Completely Agree | Agree      | Neutral    | Disagree   | Completely Disagree |
|--|------------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------|
| Lack of information or limited information during registration of children at school           | 430 (35.1)       | 224 (18.3) | 288 (23.5) | 148 (12.1) | 135 (11.0)          |
| The additional work required is not supported by our salary                                    | 372 (30.4)       | 152 (12.4) | 257 (21.0) | 136 (11.1) | 308 (25.1)          |
| Our education system does not encourage meetings with parents before the school year beginning | 521 (42.5)       | 165 (13.5) | 188 (15.3) | 118 (9.6)  | 233 (19.0)          |
| Financial resources and materials from the school are not available                            | 434 (35.4)       | 227 (18.5) | 246 (20.1) | 114 (9.3)  | 204 (16.7)          |
| Lack of skilled staff to support children with problems  | 718 (58.6)       | 145 (11.8) | 141 (11.5) | 65 (5.3)   | 156 (12.7)          |
| Parents’ disinterest   | 172 (14.0)       | 200 (16.3) | 468 (38.2) | 212 (17.3) | 173 (14.1)          |
| Lack of communication with teachers of previous grades   | 387 (31.6)       | 259 (21.1) | 273 (22.3) | 141 (11.5) | 165 (13.5)          |
| Lack of time to implement these practices  | 266 (21.7)       | 275 (22.4) | 373 (30.4) | 146 (11.9) | 165 (13.5)          |
| It is risky to visit the home of a child   | 549 (44.8)       | 217 (17.7) | 227 (18.5) | 83 (6.8)   | 149 (12.2)          |
| Parents do not bring children to visit the kindergarten during the registration                | 243 (19.8)       | 203 (16.6) | 387 (31.6) | 184 (15.0) | 208 (17.0)          |
| All parents are not able to read the mail sent by school to home.                              | 203 (16.6)       | 140 (11.4) | 341 (27.8) | 229 (18.7) | 312 (25.5)          |
| Transition program is not implemented in our school  | 427 (34.9)       | 187 (15.3) | 242 (19.8) | 103 (8.4)  | 266 (21.7)          |
| The Head / Director does not support such practices  | 217 (17.7)       | 123 (10.0) | 257 (21.0) | 131 (10.7) | 497 (40.6)          |



|   |            |            |            |            |            |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| I chose not to follow transition practices                                      | 174 (14.2) | 93 (7.6)   | 250 (20.4) | 156 (12.7) | 552 (45.1) |
| I have not been properly trained for the adoption of such practices             | 319 (26.0) | 184 (15.0) | 312 (25.5) | 142 (11.6) | 268 (21.9) |
| The discontinuity between the curricula of kindergarten and primary school      | 436 (35.6) | 173 (14.1) | 339 (27.7) | 103 (8.4)  | 174 (14.2) |
| The distance between the two institutions makes their communication impossible. | 286 (23.3) | 121 (9.9)  | 267 (21.8) | 137 (11.2) | 414 (33.8) |
| Frequency (%)   |            |            |            |            |            |

**Table 4** Opinion of parents on barriers to implementing transition practices

|   | Completely Agree | Agree      | Neutral    | Disagree   | Completely Disagree |
|---|------------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------|
| I have not asked for information concerning the history of my child during registration                                     | 369 (35.1)       | 104 (9.9)  | 115 (10.9) | 97 (9.2)   | 367 (34.9)          |
| Our education system does not encourage meetings with parents before the school year beginning                              | 499 (47.4)       | 121 (11.5) | 125 (11.9) | 95 (9.0)   | 212 (20.2)          |
| Financial resources and materials from the school are not available   | 342 (32.5)       | 155 (14.7) | 250 (23.8) | 120 (11.4) | 185 (17.6)          |
| Lack of skilled staff to support children with problems   | 446 (42.4)       | 142 (13.5) | 177 (16.8) | 108 (10.3) | 179 (17.0)          |
| Teachers' disinterest to promote a smooth transition of my child  | 129 (12.3)       | 88 (8.4)   | 237 (22.5) | 170 (16.2) | 428 (40.7)          |
| Lack of communication between teachers of previous grades   | 291 (27.7)       | 135 (12.8) | 227 (21.6) | 156 (14.8) | 243 (23.1)          |
| The nature of my work and the lack of time did not give me the opportunity to follow the practices suggested by the teacher | 109 (10.4)       | 60 (5.7)   | 188 (17.9) | 154 (14.6) | 541 (51.4)          |
| All parents are not able to read the mail sent by school to home  | 125 (11.9)       | 83 (7.9)   | 172 (16.3) | 127 (12.1) | 545 (51.8)          |
| Transition program is not implemented in my child's school  | 260 (24.7)       | 128 (12.2) | 275 (26.1) | 123 (11.7) | 266 (25.3)          |
| The Head / Director does not support such practices   | 132 (12.5)       | 82 (7.8)   | 308 (29.3) | 130 (12.4) | 400 (38.0)          |
| The teacher of my child chose not to follow transition practices  | 147 (14.0)       | 79 (7.5)   | 263 (25.0) | 116 (11.0) | 447 (42.5)          |
| The teacher my child had not the appropriate training for the adoption of such practices                                    | 150 (14.3)       | 78 (7.4)   | 282 (26.8) | 128 (12.2) | 414 (39.4)          |
| The discontinuity between the curricula of kindergarten and primary school complicates teachers                             | 263 (25.0)       | 203 (19.3) | 239 (22.7) | 112 (12.6) | 235 (22.3)          |
| The distance between the two institutions makes their communication impossible  | 123 (11.7)       | 68 (6.5)   | 206 (19.6) | 107 (10.2) | 548 (52.1)          |
| Frequency (%)   |                  |            |            |            |                     |

On the other hand, 66.0% of parents disagree or completely disagree that the nature of their work and the lack of time did not give them the opportunity to follow the practices suggested by teachers. 63.9% of parents disagree or completely disagree that all parents are not able to read the mail sent by school to home. 62.3% disagree or completely disagree that the distance between the two institutions makes their communication impossible.

The results are almost the same for fathers, mothers and other guardians. Statistically significant difference arose on barriers “The nature of my work and the lack of time did not give me the opportunity to follow the practices suggested by the teacher” ( $p=0.049$ ), “Transition program is not implemented in my child’s school” ( $p=0.047$ ), and “The Head / Director does not support such practices” ( $p=0.017$ ).

#### Factor analysis concerning teachers

The internal reliability was examined through Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ , which was found high (0.768). This means that the measurement is validated, the questionnaire is usable and the results are reliable. Then, the factorability of the 14 items was examined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin





measure of sampling adequacy was 0.80 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2(136) = 3881.44$ , p-value<0,001).

A principle-components factor analysis of the 14 items, using varimax rotation was conducted, leading to 4 statistically significant factors, explaining nearly the 48.50% of the variance. The first factor explained 13.99% of the variance, the second factor 13.82% of the variance, the third factor 11.95% of the variance, and the fourth factor 8.57% of the variance.

All items had loadings over 0.4 apart from "Parents' disinterest" and "The distance between the two institutions makes their communication impossible". The factor loading matrix is presented in Table 5. We can give to the first factor the label "School environment and policies and preschool education structure", to the second factor the label "Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers", to the third one the label "Preschool education system structure and transition policies", and to the fourth one the label "Family characteristics".

### **Factor analysis concerning parents**

The coefficient of reliability Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was found high (0.836). This means that the measurement is validated, the questionnaire is usable and the results are reliable. The factorability of the 14 items was examined through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.84) and Bartlett's test of sphericity, which was significant ( $\chi^2(91)=4201.73$ , p-value<0,001).

A principle-components factor analysis of the 14 items, using varimax rotation was conducted, leading to 3 statistically significant factors, explaining nearly the 52.50% of the variance. The first factor explained 22.20% of the variance, the second factor 18.56% of the variance, and the third factor 11.73%.

All items had loadings over 0.4. The factor loading matrix is presented in Table 6. We can give to the first factor the label "Lack of school transition practices", to the second factor the label "Incomplete preschool system structure", and to the third one the label "Family and school characteristics".

### **Hypothesis testing**

The type of school (public or private) affects statistically significant the factor "Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers" ( $p=0.001$ ) (Table 7). Teachers working at private schools have positive attitude against this factor while teachers working on public schools have negative attitude. The same factor is also affected by the level of school ( $p=0.001$ ). Kindergarten teachers have positive attitude against this factor while teachers have negative attitude. The retraining affects factors "Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers" ( $p<0.001$ ) and "Family characteristics" ( $p=0.002$ ). Teachers who have received retraining have positive attitude against both the factors while teachers who have not received retraining have negative attitude against both the factors. Participation into a transition program affects factor "Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers" ( $p<0.001$ ). Teachers who have participated in a transition program have positive attitude against both the factors while teachers who have not participated have negative attitude against both the factors.



**Table 5** Factor loadings and communalities based on a principle components analysis concerning teachers

|  | School environment and policies and preschool education structure | Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers | Preschool education system structure and transition policies | Family characteristics |
|--|---|--|--|------------------------|
| Lack of information or limited information during registration of children at school           | 0.434   |  |  |                        |
| The additional work required is not supported by our salary                                    | 0.732   |  |  |                        |
| Our education system does not encourage meetings with parents before the school year beginning | 0.641   |  |  |                        |
| Financial resources and materials from the school are not available                            | 0.644   |  |  |                        |
| Lack of skilled staff to support children with problems  |   |  | 0.631  |                        |
| Parents' disinterest   |   |  |  |                        |
| Lack of communication with teachers of previous grades   | 0.464   |  |  |                        |
| Lack of time to implement these practices  | 0.551   |  |  |                        |
| It is risky to visit the home of a child   |   |  | 0.601  |                        |
| Parents do not bring children to visit the kindergarten during the registration                |   |  |  | 0.728                  |
| All parents are not able to read the mail sent by school to home.                              |   |  |  | 0.660                  |
| Transition program is not implemented in our school  |   | 0.716  |  |                        |
| The Head / Director does not support such practices  |   | 0.746  |  |                        |
| I chose not to follow transition practices   |   | 0.747  |  |                        |
| I have not been properly trained for the adoption of such practices                            |   | 0.536  |  |                        |
| The discontinuity between the curricula of kindergarten and primary school                     |   |  | 0.669  |                        |
| The distance between the two institutions makes their communication impossible.                |   |  |  |                        |

Factor loadings < .4 are suppressed



**Table 6** Factor loadings and communalities based on a principle components analysis concerning teachers

|   | Lack of school transition practices | Incomplete preschool system structure | Family and school characteristics |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I have not asked for information concerning the history of my child during registration                                     |                                     |                                       | 0.551                             |
| Our education system does not encourage meetings with parents before the school year beginning                              |                                     |                                       | 0.765                             |
| Financial resources and materials from the school are not available   |                                     |                                       | 0.741                             |
| Lack of skilled staff to support children with problems   |                                     |                                       | 0.614                             |
| Teachers' disinterest to promote a smooth transition of my child  | 0.636                               |                                       |                                   |
| Lack of communication between teachers of previous grades   |                                     |                                       | 0.557                             |
| The nature of my work and the lack of time did not give me the opportunity to follow the practices suggested by the teacher |                                     |                                       | 0.736                             |
| All parents are not able to read the mail sent by school to home  |                                     |                                       | 0.781                             |
| Transition program is not implemented in my child's school  | 0.600                               |                                       |                                   |
| The Head / Director does not support such practices   | 0.810                               |                                       |                                   |
| The teacher of my child chose not to follow transition practices  | 0.845                               |                                       |                                   |
| The teacher my child had not the appropriate training for the adoption of such practices                                    | 0.825                               |                                       |                                   |
| The discontinuity between the curricula of kindergarten and primary school complicates teachers                             |                                     |                                       | 0.492                             |
| The distance between the two institutions makes their communication impossible  |                                     |                                       | 0.565                             |

Factor loadings < .4 are suppressed

**Table 7** Hypothesis testing concerning teachers

|  |                                       | N    | Mean   | SE of Mean | p-value |
|--|---------------------------------------|------|--------|------------|---------|
| Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers | Kind of school                        |      |        |            |         |
|  | Public                                | 1169 | -0.020 | 0.029      |         |
|  | Private                               | 56   | 0.418  | 0.140      | 0.001   |
| Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers | Level of school                       |      |        |            |         |
|  | Kindergarten                          | 568  | 0.141  | 0.044      |         |
|  | Primary school                        | 657  | -0.122 | 0.037      | <0.001  |
| Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers | Retraining                            |      |        |            |         |
|  | Yes                                   | 178  | 0.278  | 0.076      |         |
|  | No                                    | 1047 | -0.047 | 0.031      | <0.001  |
| Family characteristics   | Yes                                   | 178  | 0.201  | 0.070      |         |
|  | No                                    | 1047 | -0.034 | 0.031      | 0.002   |
| Transition policies, training and professional development of teachers | Participation into transition program |      |        |            |         |
|  | Yes                                   | 139  | 0.599  | 0.097      |         |
|  | No                                    | 1086 | -0.077 | 0.029      | <0.001  |

The occupation of parents affects the factor “Lack of school transition practices” (p=0.005). Further post hoc tests showed that laborers differ from civil servants (p=0.009), private employees (p=0.023) and freelancers (p=0.001). The place of permanent residence affects factors “Incomplete preschool system structure” (p=0.001) and “Family and school characteristics” (p=0.039). As far as factor “Incomplete preschool system structure” is





concerned, further post hoc tests showed that those living in a village differs from those living in a town ( $p < 0.001$ ), in a city ( $p < 0.001$ ) and in a big city ( $p = 0.001$ ). As far as factor “Family and school characteristics” is concerned, further post hoc tests showed that those living in a city differs from those living in a village ( $p = 0.034$ ) and in a big city ( $p = 0.023$ ). The kind of school that their children goes affects factor “Incomplete preschool system structure” ( $p = 0.001$ ). Parents with children in a private school have positive attitude against this factor while parents with children in a public school have negative attitude. The level of school that their children goes affects factor “Lack of school transition practices” ( $p < 0.001$ ). Parents with children in kindergarten have positive attitude against this factor while parents with children in primary school have negative attitude.

**Table 8** Hypothesis testing concerning parents

|                                       |                    | N      | Mean   | SE of Mean | p-value |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|------------|---------|
| Lack of school transition practices   | Occupation         |        |        |            |         |
|                                       | Civil servant      | 375    | 0.004  | 0.054      | 0.005   |
|                                       | Private employee   | 372    | -0.044 | 0.050      |         |
|                                       | Laborer            | 50     | -0.387 | 0.153      |         |
| Freelancer                            | 255                | 0.135  | 0.059  |            |         |
| Incomplete preschool system structure | Place of residence |        |        |            |         |
|                                       | Village            | 144    | 0.326  | 0.094      | 0.001*  |
|                                       | Town               | 194    | -0.124 | 0.063      |         |
|                                       | City               | 483    | -0.034 | 0.046      |         |
| Big city                              | 231                | -0.029 | 0.063  |            |         |
| Family and school characteristics     | Place of residence |        |        |            |         |
|                                       | Village            | 144    | 0.128  | 0.078      | 0.039*  |
|                                       | Town               | 194    | -0.045 | 0.066      |         |
|                                       | City               | 483    | -0.072 | 0.049      |         |
| Big city                              | 231                | 0.109  | 0.061  |            |         |
| Incomplete preschool system structure | Kind of school     |        |        |            |         |
|                                       | Public             | 945    | -0.034 | 0.033      | 0.001   |
| Private                               | 107                | 0.301  | 0.088  |            |         |
| Lack of school transition practices   | Level of school    |        |        |            |         |
|                                       | Kindergarten       | 420    | 0.151  | 0.046      | <0.001  |
| Primary school                        | 632                | -0.101 | 0.041  |            |         |

\* Welch test used

## DISCUSSION

Our analysis attempted to present the content of social representation when facing barriers in transition practices (information, attitudes and the field of representation). It included the responses of two social groups (teachers and parents) against the questionnaire.

A different attempt is being implemented in this section: the structural approach theory of the central core (Abric, 2003a) was used for the analysis and interpretation of the organisation, structure and importance of social representations and meanings. According to this theory a social representation is organised around a central core which leaving out some items that organize the other elements of representation and give importance (Abric, 1994a). The tool for the emergence of content and internal structure of representation (see table 9) using two criteria: the frequency (quantitative criterion) in which it appears every element and the degree of significance (quality criterion) attached by the subjects of research. As to the criterion of the frequency with which items appear in the representation, many researchers have adopted a limit of sample subjects  $\frac{3}{4}$  (75%) (Moliner et al., 2002; Flament, et Rouquette,



2003), others 70% and others 50 (Gourgiotou & Gliadou-Xristodoulou, 2016). The intersection of information gathered on the basis of these two criteria enables us to interpret the centrality of information and of its regional character. In our own research and for your convenience, we will use that as a criterion the percentage frequency of 50% of the respondents in the sample.

More specifically, three bands emerged based on these two criteria (see table 9). Above and to the left we find the key elements which appear more frequently and in which the analysis gave them a high degree of significance (>50%, p<0.05). These elements create the central core of the representation (La théorie du Noyau Central, NC: Abric, 2003b) which is the primary organizer of the representation providing meaning and value to the other elements. The central zone consists of the most stable elements and it has organized from collective experiences and memories of the social group.

Up and right and down and to the left we find the elements which either occur in high frequency but with a weak degree of significance (>50%, p>0.05) either in low frequency and strong degree of significance (<50%, p<0.05) and constitute the peripheral elements of the representation. The peripheral system consists of less stable elements and can include inter – individual or inter-groups differences and new information such as personal experiences and lead to adaptation and transformation of the surrounding environment (see table 9). The fourth cell bottom rights consists of rare elements with less importance and which, therefore, are secondary and represent the second periphery (Abric, 2003α, σ. 64. Abric, 2003β, p. 378).

**Table 9:** Data sharing in accordance with frequency and degree of significance.

|           |             | Significance    |                           |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
|           |             | Strong (p<0.05) | Weak (p>0.05)             |
| Frequency | High (>50%) | Central core    | 1st Periphery             |
|           | Low (<50%)  | 1st Periphery   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Periphery |

According to table 10 the central core of barriers that hinder the Greek teachers and parents in the implementation of practical transition occurs to some extent coherently. The lacks of qualified personnel to support children with problems and the weakness of our educational system to encourage meetings with parents before the start of the school year are the central core’s components that seem to perplex both interested social groups. There are additional barriers for teachers however: non-available financial resources and materials on behalf of the school, the lack of information in the registration of children at school, lack of communication with teachers of previous levels and the fact that, according to them, a transition program is not implemented within their school. These figures are shown in the 1<sup>st</sup> periphery of representation of parents, and are interpreted by the differences within the groups.

A common obstacle for both teachers and parents in the 1<sup>st</sup> periphery of representation seems to be the discontinuity between kindergarten and primary curriculum, as confirmed by past research (Carr, 2006; Peters, 2000; Peters, 2003; Jones, 2006; Parker-Peer & William, 2006; Wood & Bennet, 2001). Parents can grasp this concept only if they have experienced both study programs (already had another child study and in kindergarten and in elementary, or had a child which attended the 1st municipal during the time of the research). For teachers,



however, the idea of discontinuity between the two Curricula (Kindergarten- Elementary) is an important finding. It demonstrates the uncertainty, confusion and doubt within the educational community, as for the vertical and horizontal continuity as set out in the introductory part of the Unified Interdisciplinary Curriculum Framework (Y.II.E.II.Θ.-II.I, 2003). Therefore there appears to be an inconsistency between the proposed educational policies and educational practices, which leads to the conclusion that the three subsystems (school, family, community), as well as teachers of two tiers do not communicate adequately with each other.

On the other hand, we find that the two barriers that seem to trouble the sample's parents are: 1. The lack of specialized school staff to support children with problems (55.9%) and 2. The fact that our education system does not encourage meetings with parents before the start of the school year (58.9%) (See table 9). The lack of qualified personnel to support children with problems is also confirmed by the research of Rous, Schroeder, Stricklin, Hain & Cox (2008), Reid, Maag, & Wright, (1994). The risks of home visits is acknowledged as a very important barrier to implementing transition practices by other pieces of research that have been carried out abroad, such as surveys of Pianta, Cox, & Taylor Early, (1999), the Riedinger, (1997) and Rous, Schroeder, Stricklin, Hains & Cox (2008).

According to the survey of Einarsdóttir (2003) the most common barriers in using transition practices is the lack of financial resources and time. The very same research highlights that teachers do not consider cooperation and transition facilitation as part of their normal duties; instead they regard it as extra work for which they are not being paid (Rous, et al., 2009; LaParo, Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2003). The lack of time was recorded as an obstacle to the implementation of good practices of transition to both research results of Pianta et al (1999), and of Danish teachers in research of Broström (2002).

**Table 10:** Representational structure of the barriers teacher and parents facing in implementing transition practices

| Barriers                                    | Teachers   | Parents   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Central core of SRs</b>                  | The lack of qualified personnel to support children with problems. (70, 4%)<br>It's risky home visits. (62, 5%)<br>Our education system does not encourage meetings with parents before the start of the school year (56%).<br>Non-available financial resources and materials on behalf of school unit (53, 9%).<br>The lack of information during the registration of children at school. (53, 4%)<br>Lack of communication with teachers of previous levels (52, 7%).<br>Not implemented transition program at our school (50, 2%). | The lack of qualified personnel to support children with problems (55, 9%).<br>Our education system does not encourage meetings with parents before the start of the school year (58, 9%).  |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> periphery of elements</b> | Additional work required which is not supported by our salary (42, 8%).<br>Indifference on the part of parents (30, 3%).<br>Lack of time for applying these practices (44, 1%).<br>Parents do not bring children to visit kindergarten during inscription (36, 4%).  | Non-available financial resources and materials on behalf of school unit (47, 2%)<br>The failure to request from the parents information related with the history of their child during registration.(45%)<br>The discontinuity between kindergarten and elementary school curricula (44, 3%).<br>Lack of communication among teachers of two |



**2<sup>nd</sup>  
periphery of  
elements**

I have not received training appropriate for the adoption of such practices (41%).

The discontinuity between kindergarten and elementary school curricula (49, 7%).

The distance between two educational institutions makes it impractical to communicate between them (33, 25).

I chose to not follow transition practices (21, 8%).

Chief/Director/Manager does not support such practices (27, 7).

All parents are not capable to read the mail you send home school (28%).

educational levels (40, 5%)

Not implemented transition program at our school (36, 9%)

Indifference of teachers to promote a smooth transition of my child (20, 7%).

The nature of my work and the lack of time is not enabled me to follow the practices of transition that I suggested the teacher of my child (16, 1%).

All parents are not capable to read the mail you send home school (19, 8%).

Chief/Director/Manager does not support such practices (20, 3%).

The teacher of my child chose not to pursue transition practices (21, 5%).

The teacher of my child has not had the proper training for the adoption of such practices (21, 7%).

The distance between the two educational institutions makes it impractical to communicate between them (18, 2%).

## CONCLUSION – RECOMMENDATION

The results of our research, we believe that they provide some answers and confirm our initial hypotheses, about the role of groups involved in school reality and form social representations on the issue of school transition. The analysis of the social representations of the transition school is by definition comparative after going for comparison between groups, comparison between cultures, and the comparison of ideological and social concepts Moscovici (1986, p.76). In addition to exploring the social representations of school transition was aimed at searching for cultural and culturally appropriate meanings in national level around the issue of school readiness, transition and necessity that has internationally recognized by many researchers. (Britto, et al., 2006).

The two main barriers to the implementation of transition practices both for teachers and for parents are the lack of qualified personnel to support children with problems and the fact that our education system don't encourage meetings with parents before the start of the school year. Educational policy, the institutional educational framework, the non-available financial resources are a brake on educators and parents in Greece to promote the smooth transition of children to elementary school. The school transition is, therefore a socially, culturally and politically structured concept, which is based on representations for the role of those involved in it, as well as their personal characteristics, the structure of the educational system and the education policies.

State, society, family and school community are invited in conjunction with Pedagogy to redefine roles and practices that will: 1) Facilitate communication between school and family in particular among teachers of two educational institutions. 2) Enhance the education and training of all involved (with emphasis on in-service training), depending on their role and according to modern research studies and creating corresponding educational/training materials and assessment tools. 3) Ensure the continuity and coherence of actions of all



stakeholders, the cooperation with other ministries, with social services, with education, with parents' associations, etc.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL POWER RESOURCES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL RELATIONS IN SCHOOLS

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**Received Date:** 11-12-2018

**Accepted Date:** 28-12-2018

**Published Date:** 31-12-2018

### ABSTRACT

In this study, the relationship between psychological capital and the power resources used by the administrator in the educational organizations is researched. In the organizations and, especially, in the educational organizations expertise, reward power, compelling power, legal power, and charismatic power are the power types that managers use and are of great importance. This affects the psychological situations of the teachers in the school organization which reflects their performance and their daily lives. In this context, studies regarding the psychological capital concept have gained pace and importance. In the study, the concepts of optimism, hope, psychological durability and self-efficacy that are the dimensions of the psychological capital are emphasized. The psychological capital concept is becoming increasingly important and it can be said that there is a mutual interaction with the organizational power concept. When the writings are scanned and examined regarding this topic, it can be said that the power and the power types used by the school administrators in the school organizations can be influential on the psychological capital dimensions of the teachers such as optimism, hope, psychological durability, and self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** psychological capital, organizational power, school manager

### INTRODUCTION

School is described as a complex structure and a socially open system. All the activities conducted at the school are gathered under the same roof and the base of these activities are formed by education. The duties of the school organization are actually the duties of education and these duties can be categorized as social, political, and economic. It is essentially connected to the fact that in order the school to fulfill these mentioned duties, education should be seen as an investment which can later be turned into a form from which the state resources can be benefited (Bursalıoğlu, 2015).

School is an organization which consists of school administrators, teachers, students, and custodians. School administrators have a certain power resource within the school. (Aşan and Aydın, 2006; Şimsek, 2003; Başaran, 2008) The power resource concept that the school administrator holds expresses what the current power base is based on. The answer to “Where can I supply the power?” question is intended for finding the resources of power (Bayrak, 2001).

Through investigating the structures of the organizations, organizational power resources are formed according to the changing conditions. The power resources that have an effective potent on from the order of the organization to its structures affect the employees and accession to the resources of the organization and it helps determine the places of those employed in the organization (Çelik, 2015; Aşan and Aydın, 2006; Hoy and Miskel, 2010; Şimsek, 2003). An administrator who knows the base of the power resource and uses it effectively can forecast what kind of an effect the power which is used by the organization on its employees.

When the writings regarding the power resources held by the administrators are examined, it is seen that many classifications are done due to the diversity of the power resources. The power resources or





kinds are firstly generated by French and Raven (1959) by following the interaction between the person, organization, group, and teams. These power resources are classified within five groups such as legal power, compelling power, rewarding power, charismatic (resemblance), and information-expertise (Can, 2009; Çelik, 2014; Helvacı, 2011 Karaman, 1999; Hoy and Miskel, 2010; Yılmaz and Altınkurt, 2012; Kızanlıklılı and Erkoç and Kılıçlar, 2016). Raven (1965) also accepted the power based on information as the sixth power dimension. (Raven vd., 1998:308, Akt: Çavuş and Harbalıoğlu, 2016: 118). On the other hand, Max Weber added an additional dimension to the organizational power resources with the traditional authority term. In the organizations, the administrators can use different power resources in order to impress their subordinates. The administrator is capable of influencing and orienting others by using the power resources (Koçel, 2014:652). For this reason, it is important to know the power resources in order to detect the power sorts used in the organizations.

According to McShane and Von Glinow (2005), the power resources are closely related to each other. There is not only one type of power resource in the organization administrators. It is necessary that the administrators use these power resources in time and effectively to arouse desire in the employees and by orienting them to increase the fertility of the organization.

Table 1: Power Types and Sources

| Power Types       | Power Resource                                 | Examples  |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Legal Power       | Authority and authorization of the office      | Authority of the principal of the teacher   |
| Rewarding Power   | Availing power of the employees                | Teacher's giving small presents to the students for their achievements                                |
| Expertise Power   | Administrators' knowledge, skills, and talents | Principal's being an example to the teachers with his/her theoretical and practical knowledge         |
| Compelling Power  | Capacity of punishing the employees            | Administrator's request for warning penalty to the teachers that are constantly late for the courses. |
| Charismatic Power | Love and admiration to the administrators      | Teachers' admiration and respect towards the principal  |

\*Northouse, 2012

Legal power, which is one of the organizational power resources, is a power type that is held by the administrator thanks to its office. Legal power which is also expressed as authority or authorization is the official power held by the administrator thanks to its office (Hoy and Miskel, 2010). Rewarding power which is another type of power is based on rewarding. In this case, in order, the power to be effective is related to power resource. If the administrator uses the reward power successfully and applies it to its employees equally then s/he has the most significant power to impress the employees (Eraslan, 2007). The other resource power which is compelling power is described to be the power to scare, damage, and threaten the subordinates. Compelling power is of capital importance in making the subordinates do their jobs correctly and toeing the line (Başaran, 2004). Compelling power is the power to describe the material and nonmaterial compelling which is used by the administrators to



orient them to a certain way of behavior (Eraslan, 2007). According to Çelik (2014), the other power resource, expertise, is a power related to knowledge, talent, and experience.

Attaining power by the consultant in the business comes from his/her relations with networks and knowledge. This type of power is related to the leader's knowledge and experience and is also about the extent to which the employees trust the leader's knowledge. The expertise of the administrator on some topics contributes to the orientation, persuasion, and influence of the individuals in the organization. It is seen that people tend to be influenced by the individuals that they respect and want to resemble. Shortly, expertise power is the use of prestige as an influence tool (Aydın, 2013). Charismatic power is directly related to the personality of the administrator (Koçel, 2007) and is welded from the fact that because of the employees' commitment, loyalty, and respect these virtues make them do their duties and their willingness to make their administrators happy. This power type resembles expertise power, however, requires less surveillance than expertise power (Can, 2009). Charismatic power is a power that arouses from the fact that the subordinates rely on an administrator's character that can impress them (Çelik, 2014).

According to the result of a research conducted by Titrek and Zafer (2009), it is detected that in the school organization the school administrators use the legal and compelling power the most and the rewarding power the least. According to the results of the researches conducted for detecting the relation between the school administrators' emotional competence and administrative power, the more emotional competence the school administrators have the more they use their expertise, rewarding, and charismatic powers. Along with this, if the school administrators' emotional competence level is low they use the legal and compelling powers more. In another research conducted for the school administrators' power resources, it is concluded that the school administrators use the legal power resource the most against the teachers and the rewarding power resource the least (Yorulmaz, 2014: 102)

The psychological capital concept, which is another topic of the research, is a concept which not only deals with who the individual want to be but also the individual's will to be the best and wants s/he wants to be in the future (Karatürk, 2015). Psychological capital is evaluated as individuals' positive development situation. Luthans (2007a:3) describes psychological capital as "individuals' positive development situation and that psychological capital finds an answer to the question "Who am I?" in the individuals.

Psychological capital is a concept consists of dimensions. It is a structure consists of hope, endurance, optimism, and self-sufficiency (Luthans vd, 2008:820). Aforementioned hope, endurance, optimism, and self-sufficiency dimensions can be explained as follows: Hope is the belief that individuals have along the way to commence and continue in order to attain a certain goal. Hope is the fact that people's effort, decisiveness and will to determine the alternative roads to use in the targets (Jensen, Luthans, 2006:261). Self-efficacy is described as people's beliefs for their own capabilities to reach out to a certain performance level in the situations that can affect their lives (Bandura, 1997).

Self-efficacy dimension expresses the belief that the individual creates in him/herself on how to do his/her job in a most productive way (Arslantaş and Dursun, 2008:115). So, the thought that is formed in the individual "I have the ability to realize duties related to my job" is actually the self-efficacy in the individual (Arslantaş and Dursun, 2008:118; Arslantaş, 2007:233)

Optimism is evaluated as the heart of the psychological capital and it has been for years used both positive psychological concept and human life by the people (Luthans, 2002:64 ).



Optimism is expressed that people associate their own inner, permanent, and general incidents' realizations with positive situations while associating their outer, temporary, and private incidents' realizations with negative situations (Şengüllendi and Şehitoğlu, 2017:115).

Psychological durability which is another dimension is the positive coherence that people the individual has against a certain danger and harsh conditions (Masten, 2001:288). According to Özkalp (2009), durability is a concept that expresses people's behavior against all the hardships and their durability power, flexibility, harmony, reaction to change and existing psychological suppressions.

Psychological capital which forms a greater structure than the total of dimensions has something to do with the question of "Who did you start to be?" not with what it knows, or who it knows (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, and Peterson, 2010:42). Along with it, positive psychological resources which are covered by the psychological capital concept are basically forming the individuals' mental structure (Avey, Luthans, Smith, and Palmer, 2010:20).

When the effects of the psychological capital concept on the administrators are examined, it is concluded that the administrators can develop various methods to increase their employees' trust, hope, optimism, and durability, therefore, psychological capital is manageable and its effectiveness could be evaluated objectively (Luthans and Youssef, 2004:152-153).

This information is obtained when the effect of the power resources and psychological capital concepts on the education organization is examined.

By their duty, in order the principal, who is in the first degree liability of the effectiveness and productivity of the school organization, to fulfill his/her responsibilities s/he must have the ability to impress those who watch her/him and that the school organization be oriented in accordance with the organization's targets. An effective principal should detect a management method through common vision and values and then should include the teachers at the school in the decision-making process so that he would manage the school administration process (Can, 2009).

An effective school principal should be aware of the power types rooted in official authority or individual features then determine the most appropriate power type which should be effective in the school management and should demonstrate its application capability (Aslanargun, 2010). Also, the principal should use his/her power, by paying attention to the fact that group work would be effective in the works at the school, not to arouse individuality but to arouse team spirit (Yorulmaz, 2014). This situation extremely affects the psychological situations of those workmen in the organization which reflects their performances and daily lives. In this sense, the works done about the psychological capital concept are gaining pace and importance.

When the self-efficacy concept, which is one of the components of the psychological capital, is evaluated from the aspect of the teacher, the knowledge and skills that are necessary for teaching are emphasized. It is confirmed by the researchers conducted that in order for the teachers to prepare effective educational peripheries and realize practices it must have a close relationship with the self-efficacy dimension (Tuluk, 2015:2).

Although there are many pieces of research on the hope dimension's description, purpose, and contribution to individuals, there is a limited number of researches on its effect on the teacher. When this research is examined; so that the teachers would be productive, the students would be more active during the learning and the schools demonstrate a better performance the teacher's and student's hope and happiness should be neglected (Kalman, 2017:35).



Every single dimension's effect of the psychological capital on the teachers reveals that it is in showing oneself and disclose that the dimensions are an inseparable whole. The mentioned situation can be explained as follows: the teacher's effect from him/herself to the students and the student's interactions with each other (Kaya, Balay, Demirci, 2014).

If the teachers work in a school environment where there is insufficient structural and psychological empowerment, it may not contribute to their own psychological capital's development (Kaya, Altinkurt, 2018:65). In this regard, it can be said that the school organization where the teachers work significantly contributes to their psychological capital development. What makes the school organization work productively and orderly is the head of the school and his/her power resources (Yorulmaz, 2014).

It can be said that the school administrators have an impact on the psychological capital development of the teachers. The school administrator can show this effect of his/her by the power resources that he uses during his/her administration. The school administrator has a legal power due to his/her office, however, how to use this power is framed according to the structure and members of the school organization that s/he works. It has resulted from the conducted researches that in the schools that are state institutions the compelling and expertise powers are more effectively used and the rewarding power is less used (Nartgün, Nartgün, Arıcı, 2016:23).

According to the results of the researches regarding the aforementioned topic, it is possible to talk about a relationship between the organizational power resources and the teachers' psychological capital. When the researches about this topic are examined, it can be said that the power and power types that form the teachers' psychological capitals used by the school administrators might well be effective on optimism, hope, psychological durability, self-efficacy dimensions.

## METHOD

The purpose of this research is to detect the impact degree of the power resources used by the school administrators on the teachers' psychological capital and to put result and suggestions according to data obtained. The literature research method is used in this work. Articles and scientific researches regarding the research topic are found by literature researching. Literature research is done by examining the existing knowledge and resources.

The literature research model is described as reviewing the works conducted in various types such as books, magazines, and articles in the scientific discipline of a scientific area (Büyüköztürk, 2014).

## FINDINGS

In this section, there are findings and comments that come out as a result of the literature research regarding the research topic.

The fundamentals of the power used by the administrators are directly connected with the features of the organization, of the job, and of the employees. By their duties, By duty, in order the principal, who is in the first degree liability of the effectiveness and productivity of the school organization, to fulfill his/her responsibilities s/he must have the ability to impress those who watch her/him and that the school organization be oriented in accordance with the organization's targets (Can, 2009.). There are some points that the principals should pay attention to while using their administrative powers. For instance, every school shows a difference according to the quality of the service it provides and the features of the employees. Educational activities at the school is not a job that can be run by individual



efforts and decisions. Most of these services require creativity and make the group work mandatory. On the other hand, the school employees are composed of people that are experts in their own disciplines.

In this regard, the fundamentals of the power that is used by the school administrator should be taken care of. In the slack-structured and value-oriented schools, it is very important that the base of the power used by the administrator be detected with regards to resolving the structure of the institution (Altinkurt and Yılmaz, 2013:4). An important point in developing the schools is that the shared power in the organization to be known as the gained power (Taymaz, 2003:66). When the effects of the psychological capital concept's effect on the teachers are examined, Gibson and Dembo (1984) state that a teacher who has a high level of self-efficacy of psychological dimensions is more willing in the classroom, plans his/her time more effectively and works longer. Guskey and Pasaro (1994) described that teacher's self-efficacy concept as "feeling of trust and belief in effective education." It is confirmed by the conducted researches that teacher's ability to create effective educational environments and realize practices has a close relation to the self-efficacy dimension (Tuluk, 2015:2).

When the researches of the psychological capital concept's hope dimension on the teachers are examined it is concluded that in order the teachers to be productive, the students to be more active during the learning process and the schools to show a better performance the student's hope and happiness should not be neglected (Kalman, 2017:35). Every single dimension's effect of the psychological capital on the teachers reveals that it is in showing oneself and disclose that the dimensions are an inseparable whole. The mentioned situation can be explained as follows: the teacher's effect from him/herself to the students and the student's interactions with each other.

## RESULT AND SUGGESTIONS

Among the elements that form the school organization, the school administrators and teachers hold a significant place. Teachers are the key points in the educational organizations and they can affect the educational institutions positively or negatively. There is a common objective of the people who conduct teaching as a profession. This objective is to examine the learning capabilities of the students by paying attention to the students' individual differences (Shen vd, 2014). It can be said that the teachers' professional development and existing psychological capital dimensions are quite effective on the students' career development and learning levels (Rehman vd, 2017). The psychological capital concept is something first came out to continue the performance that is shown by the employee in the economic and social area and to reveal the positive effect of this behavior (Arthur, Jonathan, William, 1997). The focus point of the psychological capital concept is on the people's power and how they can evolve in the workplace. This concept is examined in the four dimensions such as optimism, psychological durability, hope, and self-efficacy (Cheung, 2011). According to Altinkurt (2012), when people move by their individual feelings and express themselves accordingly it affects the organizational structure in which they are. In this regard, it can be said that the teacher's psychological capital's positive improvement would have a positive effect on the school organization. Revealing the powerful sides of the teachers working in the educational institutions by reviewing their features and in the result of developing these features more and providing a convenient environment and facilities for this purpose it can be said that the success in the educational institutions would increase and together with that it can contribute to preparing for life which is one of the duties of the school organization. The teacher's discovery of their own features, awareness of their positive or negative features can have a positive effect on their own psychological capital (Nartgün, Nartgün, Arıcı, 2016:23). It can be said that the school administrators who form the head of the school organization have an effect on the psychological capital development of the teachers. The school teacher can show this ability of his/her by the power resources during his/her administration. The school administrator





has a legal power due to his/her office, however, how to use this power is framed according to the structure and members of the school organization that s/he works. It has resulted from the conducted researches that in the schools that are state institutions the compelling and expertise powers are more effectively used and the rewarding power is less used (Nartgün, Nartgün, Arıcı, 2016:23).

For this reason, the administrators at the schools must know which power resources they are going to use against the teachers and other employees and may need to know the necessary tactics to hold this power. In order the school administrators to find the necessary tactics in the school organizations and detect how to use them, firstly, the school administrator must know his/her power resources and what kind of effects these power resources may have the teachers and other employees (Yorulmaz, 2014).

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## **RURAL AND REMOTE REPAIR: EXAMINING WORKFORCE SHORTAGES AND SOLUTIONS WITHIN RURAL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS**

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**Received Date:** 30-08-2018

**Accepted Date:** 15-11-2018

**Published Date:** 31-12-2018

### **ABSTRACT**

Rural schools are present in nearly every nation across the globe, and they face some unique challenges in their mission to educator students living in remote areas. Within this article, a definition of the geographic and population characteristics that define rural schools is offered, as is an examination of contemporary issues impacting the facilitation of effective primary and secondary education around the world. Concerns such as educator shortages, retaining quality teachers and concerns over technological capacity are discussed, as are avenues to resolve these issues in a proactive and cost-effective manner. There is some great teaching and learning taking place in rural schools around the world, but ensuring that all students have access to a quality teacher and opportunities for academic achievement continues to be a challenge in remote and rural regions of the world.

**Keywords:** Rural schools, global education, educator shortages

### **INTRODUCTION**

In nearly every corner and nation of the world, rural schools exist. In these remote environments, students learn and teachers teach in areas and regions that are inherently different than their partner institutions in the urban and suburban regions. While the process of teaching and learning still takes place – and much of the content taught mirrors that of other schools, the methods used and the challenges associated with providing quality education in these rural locations are unique.

In total, the number of students enrolled in rural schools is substantial. Today, nearly 1.3 billion students attend school around the world (UNESCO, 2016) and, as roughly 46% of the world's population lives in rural areas (United Nations, 2015), it can be estimated that there are nearly 600 million school-aged children living in rural regions. These rural students live in nearly every nation in the world (with the exception of non-rural city-states such as Singapore), and the process of educating these students in remote and rural regions is a continuing challenge for governments and ministries around the world. The obstacles to providing quality rural s has become even more vast in recent years due to teacher/educator shortages around the world, as rural schools are often the first types of educational institutions impacted by a diminishing labor pool.

### **Defining Rural Schools**

We tend to think of rural schools in a pastoral light with a focus on those institutions serving farming or agricultural-based communities, but this is often not the case (Greenough and Nelson, 2015). In many situations, rural schools exist in areas of remote geographic locations such as high alpine mountains where farming may be replaced with an expanding tourist or energy industry. In my own part of the world, numerous rural regions are centers of the ski and winter sports recreation industries, both of which are very dissimilar in their focus and structure to more traditional farming-based communities. With this in mind, there is a need to understand the distinctive nature of rural schools and rural locations in order to identify and begin to solve some of the ongoing concerns that impact the quality and accessibility of education for children in rural areas (Schafft, 2016). A viewpoint that encompasses a diverse environment



of rural schools is an important initial step, and one that assists in the supporting a working definition of rural schools.

Many different organizations take great pains to define the term “rural school.” In the United States, the National Center of Education Statistics examines the distance a school is from an urbanized center (NCES, 2006). In Sweden and part of Finland, the geographic distance needed to travel for students to attend school is a component of defining rural schools (Lind & Stjernstrom, 2015) and in contemporary Mongolia, nearly everyone living outside three main cities are considered rural residents (UNDP, 2003). This creates a need to clearly define the term “rural” and “rural education” in a simplistic and transparent fashion. Under this umbrella, the following definitions of these terms, for the purposes of this article will be:

- “rural school” – any school that is located more than 40 driving-miles (65 kilometers) from an urban or suburban location. This may include locations that are in proximity to urban/suburban locations but are inaccessible due to the driving distances.

The use of this general definition may be problematic in some instances (e.g. locations where river travel is used to transport students), and it should be seen as a flexible definition that can be modified as needed when examining or focusing on schools outside of urban and suburban locations.

There are other key characteristics of rural schools that also need to be taken into account. A defining feature relates to the size of the school and/or the total number of students enrolled in rural school. While physical school size and total student population may vary, a general rule for these purposes associates rural schools to a total number of students enrolled in a k-12 (ages 5-17) school as less than 6000 (Colorado Department of Education, 2016). Further delineations have been used to define “small rural school”, those with less than 1000 students between 5-17 – but for the purposes of this paper, the 6000-student maximum enrollment is a general qualifying trait.

The unique nature of every rural school makes it difficult to expound on generalities associated with education in remote and rural areas. To be certain, every school has considerable strengths, and areas of needed development, but in almost all instances these components are distinct between each school – even those in close proximity. While it is impossible to develop and expand upon concepts that apply to every school and every educational institution, there are some larger, more general, concerns experienced by a majority of rural schools around the world. The need to address and resolve these issues is one area of commonality that can generally be applied to all rural education environments.

### **Finding Educators for Rural Schools**

One significant issue found in remote and rural schools around the world is being able to find quality teachers and educators to support student learning (Mukeredzi, 2016). This issue has become pervasive in rural schools and has presented unique challenges for administrators, education ministers and parents in nearly all regions of the globe. This problem has been exacerbated in recent years as the total number of individuals interested in pursuing careers in education has been in decline throughout the last decade (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). This decline in the total number of educators entering the profession has significantly impacted rural schools – as they are frequently the first locations to experience teacher and educator shortages. Even in more developed nations, schools are often forced to forgo key academic personnel because they are unable to find anyone interested in applying for a specific teaching position. In one school in the central United States, for example, school leadership was unable to locate and employ a secondary math teacher for a period of four years – a limitation not caused by



financial shortfalls (as may be the case in some locations), but rather due to the limited (i.e. zero) applicants interested in applying for the position (Garcia, 2017).

The reasons for the reduction in individuals interested in careers in education vary and frequently include critiques about the low pay of teachers, the long hours and the external perception of the profession (Dupriez, Delvaux, & Lothaire, 2016). Within rural schools, these factors are exacerbated as the pay in rural schools is frequently less than jobs in cities or other neighboring towns (Fowles, 2016). In some regions of the United States, teachers are paid far below the cost-of-living for their particular region, requiring many educators to receive government support for food and housing. Combined with the concern that the hours required to be an effective educator in rural schools may exceed the time requirements found in urban/suburban regions (as many teachers have to prepare for five, six or even seven different classes every day as they provide instruction for multiple grade levels and, frequently, across multiple academic disciplines), the attractiveness of a career in a rural school may be very limited.

One of the major drivers for the diminishing interest young people have in entering a career in education is the perception by many believe that the job is difficult, not rewarding (financially or otherwise) and generally unappreciated. These perceptions are observed daily by the students themselves as they are exposed to the oft-harried nature of many of today's educators. As they observe their teachers being asked to work harder with fewer resources and little external support, many students dismiss any interest to pursuing careers as a teacher or educator. To many, the stress and limited rewards associated with a career in education are too daunting to explore the idea of becoming a teacher (Solochek, 2013). It is this trend that continues to impact the ongoing educator shortages throughout the world and there is little evidence that this trend is slowing.

### **Retaining Rural Teachers**

With this identified concern about attracting new teachers to careers in education, it becomes even more important for schools to concentrate efforts on retaining the current educators within their schools and ensuring that they remain in the classroom and working with students for as many years as possible. Still, patterns show high numbers of educators electing to leave the classroom, if not the entire education sector, to pursue other opportunities outside of the school structure (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky, 2016). As each veteran educator departs, it becomes more difficult to recruit new teachers to take their place – oftentimes leading to the combining of classes into very large groups or extended periods of time where a qualified teacher is not present or available to students in rural schools.

For experienced educators, a leading reason why they elect to leave a school or the profession completely relates to the leadership within an individual school. For those teachers who work under a difficult principal, headmaster or dean – they are much more likely to leave their position and find other employment than those who believe they have a supportive or collaborative leader to work (Player et al, 2017). If significant efforts and resources were dedicated to ensuring that school leaders are effective managers and supervisors of teachers, it is believed that a significant number of educators who leave a school would be retained.

The costs associated with replacing teachers who have moved to other opportunities is also a significant concern. In the United States, it can cost thousands of dollars to recruit and hire a teacher to replace an educator that may have left the school (Watlington et al, 2010). When compounded year after year, as teacher mobility rates are projected to rise due to the ongoing teacher shortages, these costs will surely have a significant impact on school resources and funding – two elements that are frequently in short supply in rural schools.



Another factor impacting teacher retention centers around population demographics – especially throughout North America and Europe. As the “baby boomer” generation (those born between 1946-1964) approach the end of their working years and begin retirement, it is expected that additional vacancies in classrooms will expand. Nearly one-third of educators in some regions are expected to retire within the next ten years, putting additional strains on the limited teacher pipelines into rural schools around the world (Aaronson & Meckel, 2009). Several initiatives have started to try to convince these veteran-teachers in rural schools to delay retirement and continue teaching, but the impact of these efforts have not been fully determined.

### **Ongoing and Pervasive Rural School Problems**

It would be negligent to not highlight the concerns between the disparity of funding between rural schools and their urban/suburban counterparts. In general, rural schools are funded at a lower level than other schools within the same country – despite the additional operating costs inherent within rural schools (Zhang, Sheu, & Wu, 2016). A prime example of this concern centers on transportation costs for students, staff and faculty within a rural school location. The costs associated with any travel, whether it be to a professional development opportunity, or sporting competition or a meeting of administrators, in rural regions often surpass the costs found within a city location due not only to the distance travelled, but the need for specialized (often larger) vehicles that can navigate difficult roads. This is but one example of the increased costs inherent within rural school operations, but it represents a larger foundational issue that centers on the need to fund rural schools at a higher level than urban/suburban schools. Unfortunately, this practice is often reversed as rural schools are frequently provided funding levels that fall below the levels of their urban/suburban counterparts.

The availability and accessibility to educational technology also impacts many rural schools throughout the world. While viable, and speedy, internet connections may be available in portions of eastern Saudi Arabia, for example, this access is extremely limited in the southwestern or more remote regions of the Kingdom. Much of this disparity of access is due to the development of telecommunications networks and rural schools continue to struggle with access to high-speed internet connections and consistent availability of other technological platforms that can help support effective education (Clifford, 2016). These access problems are even more evident in regions of the world impacted by political or economic restrictions (e.g. contemporary Iran under international sanctions on technology) where access to simplistic web-based content such as streaming video is not viable due to very slow internet access speeds.

Finally, a historic practice related to educator quality continues to impact rural schools and students throughout the world. Too often, those individuals seeking employment as a teacher or educator, who are unable to secure a job in their desired location, are placed within teaching environments that they are neither prepared nor personally invested (Kelly & Fogarty, 2015). In some cases, teachers are placed in a remote or rural school that they do not want to be located. Even worse, teachers who are deemed “unhireable” by urban/suburban districts are provided employment opportunities in rural or remote locations. Often times, these teachers possess limited teaching experience or marginal pedagogical skills – that make them ineffective educators and ultimately have a negative impact on their students’ academic achievement (Lindenberg, Henderson & Durán, 2016).

This process of moving the least-proficient teachers to rural and remote locations is problematic at best, and unethical at a larger level. Students who are located in rural regions are often exposed to teachers who are not of the highest quality and are frequently interested in moving to another, more desirable, location



as soon as possible. The frequency at which outstanding educators are moved to rural locations (either by their choice or as a condition of employment) is rare as the highest-quality educators tend to be housed and employed in the most prestigious and/or desirable schools in any particular region – despite the need for high-quality educators in all locations, including rural schools.

### **Fixing the problem**

To be certain, these issues are significant and there are no easy solutions to the complex issues related to educator shortages and the impact on rural schools. Still, there are emerging strategies that are being attempted in an effort to ensure that students enrolled in rural schools have access to strong teachers – the primary factor related to individual academic achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Some of these strategies as outlined are viable at the individual school level, but many of them require the assistance or support of educational administrators at the state or national level. Through these combined efforts, significant shifts in the quality and access of rural educators can be developed.

One emerging technique being used to support teacher recruitment and retention for rural schools is a method of identifying those individuals with experience living in remote locations and recruiting them for potential careers in the rural schools starting at a very young age. For many new teachers coming from an urban/suburban background, the idea of moving to a remote or rural school is daunting and not especially appealing. As a result, many of these teachers are unwilling to accept a position at these rural schools or they seek employment elsewhere at the first possible opportunity (Mtyuda & Okeke, 2016). As a remedy, several proactive schools and school districts have decided to identify current students in their schools, primarily at the lower secondary level, and begin to support them and encourage them to become educators in the hope that they will return to their school as a rural teacher. This process is commonly termed as a “grown your own” strategy, as schools are seeking to build up their teaching force with individuals who know what it is like to live and attend school in a rural location (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2015).

With the “grow your own” approach, some schools have encountered complications related to having a graduate of their school return to teach in that same environment. Having a younger teacher who used to be a student, now return as a colleague to more established teachers, has been identified as a potential problem. Another concern centers on a limited knowledge base a rural teacher may have if he/she grew up in a rural environment and now lives and works in that same type of location. This limited perspective could have a detrimental impact on the education provided to the students in the rural school.

A key component that is also impacting teacher numbers and retention, especially in rural schools, centers around teacher compensation. Historically, many nations have typically paid educators below the median salary for worker with a similar background and education level (Rickman, Wang & Winters, 2017). With increased professional opportunities for university graduates, fewer workers are willing to accept positions with limited salaries and benefits. Coupled with the increasing expenses of a university education and the various costs associated with living in rural areas – the role of appropriate compensation in recruiting and retaining teachers cannot be understated.

An apparent simple solution would seem to be to increase pay levels for teachers, but like many sweeping solutions, it is also problematic. Aside from the limited funds most governments have to pay teachers and other governmental workers, the dramatic increase in teachers’ salaries may have other unintended consequences such as increasing economic disparity in rural regions and/or a shift of labor from other sectors into primary or secondary education. The university sector could be impacted as many of the skills





used and refined by college professors and instructors can be transferred to the primary or secondary classroom. If there is a significant increase in the salary levels of primary/secondary teachers, it could be expected that a new shortage of labor at the university level could emerge.

A final strategy that has been pushed forward, and in some cases enacted upon, is to eliminate rural schools and shift resources to offering educational opportunities to these former rural students in urban/suburban locations. As seen in China in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, many schools in the rural regions were shuttered and the students moved to boarding schools in urban centers where teachers are in greater supply and educator retention a lesser concern (Zhao & Barakat, 2015). And while this may resolve the problems associated with rural schools (e.g. rural problems being eliminated by eliminating the rural schools), the impact on student welfare and family structure seems to be a significant detriment to the students themselves. Other efforts at consolidating schools may seem viable on paper, and may even represent a cost-savings over the long-term, but the impact on students who now may have to endure a multiple-hour bus ride to get to school would seem to offset these benefits.

## **Conclusion**

There are little doubt that rural and remote schools continue to be challenged by a limited labor pool interested in becoming teachers. The barriers are significant and the economic realities of living in a relatively high-cost area while earning a low-wage seems daunting to many teachers and educators in the rural regions of the world. Despite these challenges, however, these smaller, rural schools continue to provide quality educational opportunities to millions of students every day.

These schools operate and support student learning on a very limited basis in some locations. Students in some rural schools often have older textbooks, limited access to technology and less-effective teachers than their peers in suburban and urban schools. The opportunities provided to these students are simply not equivalent to those educational offerings provided to other students in more affluent or more central locations. This duality of educational opportunities seems, and is, both unfair and in many cases unethical.

The solutions to the rural-urban/suburban divide are equally complex – and do not necessarily equate to increased funding to the rural schools in any given nation or location. Above all, creative and new approaches need to be made to transform rural schools into places where both teachers and students want to attend and where academic expectations match, or even exceed, those provided to all students within a nation – regardless of the location of their school. It is hoped that the search for viable solutions continue as we look for ways to support optimal student learning in all types of schools. It is not only the primary mission for all educational institutions, but is also the conduit where all students have the opportunity to meet and exceed their own expectations – even in a rural school.

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