



BARRIERS FACING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSITION PRACTICES IN GREEK KINDERGARTENS

Gourgiotou Efthymia
Assistant Professor
University of Crete
School of Education
Department of Preschool Education
Gallou Campus
74100 Rethymnon
Greece
egourgiotou@edc.uoc.gr

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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 α , 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 ($\chi^2(136) = 3881.44$, $p\text{-value} < 0,001$).

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 α 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 ($\chi^2(91)=4201.73$, $p\text{-value} < 0,001$).

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, 2003 α , σ . 64. Abric, 2003 β , 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 nd 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 1st periphery of representation of parents, and are interpreted by the differences within the groups.

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



**2nd
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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