

**РАЗДЕЛ II. ПСИХОЛОГО-ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВАНИЯ КОМПЛЕКСНОГО  
ПОЗНАНИЯ СОВРЕМЕННОГО ЧЕЛОВЕКА И ОБЩЕСТВА**  
**SECTION II. PSYCHOLOGICAL-PEDAGOGICAL BASES OF COMPLEX COGNITION  
OF THE MODERN PERSON AND SOCIETY**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GREEK AND RUSSIAN TEACHERS' DAILY LIFE  
IN THE CLASSROOM**

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**Abstract**

The article presents the results of a comparative research between Greek and Russian teachers. Differences and similarities in teachers' professional activities, problems and difficulties encountered by teachers in their daily work are displayed. We investigated the data obtained during the survey of random Greek and Russian teachers. The results are processed using the content analysis method. To identify the specifics of problem situations in the activities of Russian teachers, a special survey was designed featuring seven questions related to the emotional state of teachers. To interpret the results, we used methods of comparative analysis. Teachers of the school often face situations of uncertainty both directly in their pedagogical activities and in the process of their professional development. The task of choice for them becomes a relevant problem, and the forecasting of the consequences of their decisions is an integral part of professional activity. The high psycho-emotional strain of a teacher, since there is no room for error, the need to draw attention to a wide variety of activities, the constant pressure on the speech apparatus and other risks associated with tension - have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of a teacher. The obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the afore mentioned is that there seems to be a consistent pattern that most preschool teachers in our selection restrict themselves to daily working routine that is rigorously adherent to the formal guidelines imposed on them by the authority under which they operate – in this case, the Ministry of Education. This may occasionally happen even subconsciously – it is regarded as an unquestionable process, dictated by the need to meet the predetermined goals and year schedule. To date, teachers' autonomy and initiative are concepts still under question.

**Keywords:** school educational, teachers, Greek educational, Russian educational.

**Introduction**

The Greek educational system has always been relatively open and accessible to all social layers. In this way it has maintained its popularity under the principle of equal opportunities, producing graduates who did not encounter major problems as regards their entry to a university nor during their studies, in relation to their social or their demographic origin, gender and race, except of course in cases of very poor economic situation.

However, the principle of equal opportunities is insufficient if not accompanied by the equality of results. The famous equality of educational opportunity, according to which, the educational doors were open to all students regardless of race, gender, economic status and / or social origin, so as to become distinguished in their field and lead their sectors, school and society, was an important step for societies. The

social and economic conditions and conflicts continued and continue to marginalize students-undergraduates and rank them socially in specific professions. And in this respect equality of opportunity served as a veil obscuring inequalities and blurring social barriers [24].

A modern Russian teacher may be said to act in an innovative environment. The atmosphere of this environment is created by a relaxed attitude on the part of schoolchildren and parents, conflicts of the teaching staff and high demands from the administration. Under such conditions, the teacher can not fully realize her/his targets and implement pedagogical task.

We decided to cite some indicative answers from interviews (texts) we took from Greek pre-school/nursery teachers and from questionnaires which were filled in by Russian pre-school/nursery teachers, in order to analyse them, so as to present similarities and differences within teachers' views. Moreover, we sought to discern elements reflecting the two educational systems, as well as teachers' concerns, due to the way society and the State estimates their profession.

The purpose of this work is not to blame any parties for a particular situation. Rather, it is to emphasize the need for change and the importance of a teacher's own inspiration and agility, based on her/his own needs and views as well as those of her/his pupils. It is of great importance to note that the results cannot be generalised –due to the small sample-, and underline certain findings that we believe are worth mentioning.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study is based on content analysis with Greek and Russian school/pre-school teachers -consisting of their response to one major question [19]. Besides the Russian survey of teachers included seven additional questions about the prospects, feelings and emotional state of teachers in their daily work. Data were gathered from May to July 2017.

We thought it would be interesting to view any/the differences between the two countries by measuring teachers' aspects *mutatis mutandis* and by checking the endurance of this research questions in two different cultures.

During the Russian survey, respondents aged 23 to 47 were interviewed; all of them had a higher education. Their work experience was from 1 to 20 years.

Considering that these two professional groups have allegedly been engaged to pedagogical job increases the possible comparison processes between them despite the methodological differences.

As regards Greek teachers: we, specifically, asked 10 pre-school-nursery teachers to describe their daily schedule and what they do in the classroom. It was an open question aiming at inviting teachers to freely retrieve their experiences.

In this paper, as mentioned above, we used the methodological tool of content analysis. This method is defined as “the scientific study of content of communication. It is the study of the content with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages” [10, p. 119]. It is a method that treats any form of “text” as an object for research or as a set of messages.

No fear, or hesitation, appeared through research and no event that needs to be highlighted was spotted.

The answers were in the Greek and Russian language and, in fact, there were some difficulties in transferring and analysing the exact meaning of the words spoken. Some terms could not be accurately translated. We tried to analyse the data as accurately as possible; through presenting the respondents' points of view and expression.

### **Literature review**

The relatively low self-image of pre-school/nursery teachers can be attributed to many reasons; particularly for Greece among them could be the teachers' low social origins. The social origin, although not directly given, is an important issue and affected all aspects of life of teachers [25].

Through a wider perspective, teachers' low self-image has been closely attached to the low social estimation and respect of the profession [7]. Teachers are “helpless agents” who try to handle many

social roles within one classroom and must deal with factors such as parents and administrative or financial issues and they face low prospects and professional expectations [5, 27].

Apart from social stereotypes the state itself with the institutional framework it has established, further depreciates social acceptance of teachers. For the wider social environment the benchmark seems to be only the prestigious professions (doctors, lawyers, civil engineers, etc.). The scientific training of their members, the – above mentioned – social background, of course, and their financial returns, reflect the impact the prestigious professions have in a society in which materialistic standards prevail.

The preschool teaching profession is allegedly not appreciated by society and the State [18] because scientifically it is considered not to offer important knowledge and because the prestigious professions do not include educators – except maybe the ones who teach in the higher education field. The teaching profession is still described by the phrase just being a teacher and is compared to similar low status professions or a social worker and the vicious circle goes on; Everything is interrelated.

Despite their negative self-image, the pre-school/nursery teachers derive satisfaction from communication with children; we easily reach to that conclusion from the answers that we got. Their self-image is equalized through compensation from the relationship with children. Contact with children may compensate for how they see themselves. In other words they are trying to improve their self-image through the satisfaction they receive from dealing with children. They often mentioned a sort of personal reward they receive from the relationship developed with their students. They spoke of the love they feel for their children, the care they feel that they have to show, for the knowledge they provide and for what they feel when they realize that a child has learned something. Teachers shared similar points of view on the fact that they evaluate themselves based on what the pupils have gained after each day in school, how they respond in the classroom and then they build up from that point on [20]. Teachers do judge themselves and their abilities and that causes them to be frustrated and experience more stress than normal [20].

What we actually tried to do resembles what Cummings mentions in Pollard & Bourne: “I chose to look at the start of the day because [...] I wanted to look, in more depth, at the way I used the time, at what I felt the children might be gaining, at how they handle and manage the occasion and at how I could make the time more effective” [23, p. 147]. Teachers, by describing their daily school program, would feel free (or not) to express themselves and they would be given the opportunity to talk, which is really important to any human being and especially when referring to this profession.

Though “people have a striking propensity to misconstrue data and to discount information that contradicts antecedent beliefs” and they usually think that when being interviewed they “have” to present specific points of view, being heard is still something needed and something that can always be exploitable.

Now we continue to some indicative answers, trying to analyse further what is connected to our research focus. Greek respondents are indicated by the letter – G, Russian – R.

## Results

*Greek teachers.* G1 wrote a detailed description of her day in Nursery School, G2 was really typical as regards her description of one day and so was G10; they even wrote what they do hour by hour. All three of them described their day as it should be – dictated by the Curriculum- or as they try to do it. As Sutton & Wheatley write: “using conservative and familiar teaching strategies reduces the unpredictability of classroom life. This decreases the likelihood that unexpected events or failures will cause teachers to experience negative emotions while teaching” [28, p. 351].

But “Teachers are more than mere bundles of knowledge, skill, and technique. [...] As teachers sometimes say to their students, they are not wheeled out of a cupboard at 8.30 am in the morning and wheeled back in at 4.00 pm. Teachers are people too [15] and that may be why G3 wrote a very human approach. She said that “...the self-evident -for many others- processes are objects of learning for children”, trying to explain that regarding children and especially infants the situation seems different than with all the other human beings.

One of the main characteristics of children's personality and behaviour is the fact that during these early years they structure their environment as an expression of their inner tendencies and emotional situation. "Children of one, two, or even three throw the whole of themselves into everything they do. They embrace life, and devour it, it is why they learn so fast and are such good company. [...] Children come to school curious" [23]. Children at this age should be treated as "persons to be".

G4 presented a more optimistic point of view: "when we say goodbye to children we wish them a beautiful evening because tomorrow will be a better day" (and so they should be prepared to welcome it) as regards daily program but she wrote on the paper all those procedures which reveal the structure of the Greek nursery school: "welcome... prayer... days... season... weather... songs... fairytales...". The religious part is very important for Greek schools and directly connected to tradition. Tradition is directly connected to habits and stereotypes and this vicious circle goes on [14].

G5 began her description with the same words "welcome... dates... weather..." and G6 also described the program with almost the same words as G4 beginning with the word "fairytales" (and she continued saying that from fairytales children paint pictures). Both G5 and G6 mentioned that they discuss with children what they would like to do the next day or even the whole week and this is a common element among other three pre-school/nursery teachers (G2, G8, G10).

G7 started by writing "Every day I begin working from 8am... I welcome children with love" and after referring to words such as "fairytales... art work... games" concluded that "at the end of the day I give them to their parents with safety".

G8 wrote a truthfully detailed text. She described what the others wrote as well but in a very positive and joyful way. She mentioned talks with infants on what they would like to discuss, she highlighted working in groups, eating, learning how to be clear and healthy, but the whole text was a piece of happiness. She wanted us to comprehend the fact that she really likes what she does [8]. "The time of departure has come and no one wants to leave school! This is for me the greatest reward for me after all! I wish all people could experience within their job what we, nursery teachers, live!! See you again, only with smiles!!!" She actually draw a happy face at the end of her text; "[...] positive mood may lead teachers to set more challenging learning goals for students and set more ambitious goals regarding their own teaching" [28].

G9 also wrote how happy she is with her job. 'I am so lucky to be working on this profession' and she continued saying that "It is very beautiful and great when you make a child trust you, smile, feel comfortable and express her/himself...".

*Russian teachers.* The following results were obtained during the Russian study. Teachers of the school often face situations of uncertainty both directly in their pedagogical activities and in the process of their professional development. The task of choice for them becomes an actual problem, and the forecasting of the consequences of their decisions is an integral part of professional activity [4]. The high psycho-emotional strain of the teacher, since there is no room for error, the need to draw attention to a wide variety of activities, the constant load on the speech apparatus and other risks associated with tension - have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of the teacher.

In a modern school, teachers spend a lot of time in the workplace. In an effort to avoid professional failures most teachers consciously increase their working hours: they take work at home, deprive themselves of a proper rest and the opportunity to recover from work. The usual working day of such a teacher begins early in the morning, after completing the main classes, s/he conducts additional classes for the laggards and specialized courses for preparation for examinations. Then s/he communicates with parents and accompanies the children. After that, the teacher's responsibility is to complete the documentation (electronic journal and other resources) and to check the work of the students. The school day comes to an end in the evening in preparation for the next working day.

Such teachers spend more than 12 hours in the workplace. The teacher's high level of workload is associated not only with the length of the working day, but with a wide range of various activities and functions that the teacher must perform.

In such a case, there is a tendency to an excruciating dependence on work, a syndrome of emotional burnout and chronic fatigue, dissatisfaction with pay and the volume of requirements. All this often causes the alienation of the teacher from professional activity, stagnation, regression.

Despite the noted negative factors, teachers experience a wide range of positive emotions from interacting with children. However, the current situation shows that other ways of occurrence of positive emotions in teachers, for example, participation in various competitions, relationships with colleagues are often absent.

Due to the heavy workload, many teachers need psychological and pedagogical support, which in most schools is implemented.

In situations of choice, teachers prefer to talk honestly about their own or common position while maintaining neutrality towards the student, depending on the situation. Teachers rarely have problems with religious, national and political issues, they note difficulties only in situations where students violate moral and ethical standards and discipline.

The administration's actions have a sufficiently strong influence on the pedagogical process in the school. On the one hand, teachers note the great role of the administration in regulating the educational process, and on the other hand complain about various problems arising in this area through due to the fault of the leadership. This, in all likelihood, significantly reduces the effectiveness of the support of the teaching staff by the administration and violates its unity.

We must never forget every single teacher with whom we have talked to and whom we have heard and we should always be reflective on their thoughts so as to help them strengthen the way they professionally develop. "If we gave up on the various groups of teachers with whom we have worked when things got difficult, then the significant changes we have witnessed and benefits to students would not have been realized" [21, p. 326]. Undeniably, the current institutional framework of the Greek education does not contribute in any way to alleviate the crisis. Therefore, the state by only "caring" at some point may not act as a "panacea" to problems that modern teacher is asked to overcome. The reconstruction of the educational sector is imperative and teachers should be asked to take initiative as they are the ones directly involved [20].

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the above mentioned is that there seems to be a consistent pattern: most preschool teachers in our sample restrict themselves to daily working routine that is rigorously adherent to the formal guidelines imposed on them by the authority under which they operate - in this case, the Ministry of Education. This may occasionally happen even subconsciously - it is regarded as an unquestionable process, dictated by the need to meet the predetermined goals and schedule of the year. To date, teachers' autonomy and initiative are concepts still under question, in Greece at least.

There are, of course, some exceptions to this pattern, rare yet evident wherever present, and we highlight these in our sample.

In most educational systems, educational processes are being undertaken primarily or exclusively by qualified personnel, the educators. Members of this professional group present, apart from ethnocentric differences, major differences as regards the content and level of their knowledge and their specialization and a series of "negative" social characteristics. These include low social origins due to upward mobility chances of a descent, the large number of women in it etc.

Reforming Russian education has been going on for several decades, and its result is a decline in the quality of the teacher's work in the school, and their pedagogical training in the university. The effect of "double negative selection" is formed, when not the best graduates of schools enter the pedagogical universities, and later become teachers [1, 22]. In our opinion, this is due to the fact that in pedagogical universities there is no necessary criteria-evaluation apparatus for selecting future teachers. Another serious problem is the underestimation of the teacher's importance in society, which directly affects the quality and results of the teaching and upbringing process.

These elements are balanced by other “positive” ones, such as the permanent employment in the public sector (fact which is admittedly not truthful nowadays [26], the ensuring of social advancement and the ability to start a family.

For most Greeks graduates, problems occur after obtaining their degree and decide to embark on their professional path. This path is determined by their insertion into certain career hierarchy, their working conditions, their salary and profit and of course the promotion possibilities. The equality of results remains a thorny issue for the Greek society. Our education system has never stopped producing graduates with inflationary degrees, who, in a great amount, were obliged to resort to their survival time honoured standards.

Teaching remains stressful and tiring [17]. When the professional status of an employee does not meet her/his initial expectations, stress comes out and if it is not promptly treated can be destructive and disastrous for the person [16]. As regards teachers, some of their main stressful “sources” are the working conditions at school (high workload, role overload, ambiguity and conflict job position roles, etc.), the in-the-classroom problems (difficulty in managing pupils, pupils’ indifference, etc.) and the inter-personal relationships with their colleagues and pupils’ parents [3,6].

Nowadays the salaries are lower, the economic crisis is part of our everyday life and the social estimation-appreciation for educators remains the same. It is always the same. To be more specific economic austerity is not only economic, but is also a crisis of values. And that has changed the way that we see the teaching profession and, most importantly, it has altered the way teachers see themselves [12]. Nowadays, the teacher feels distant from the teaching values s/he was about to transmit. For young people entering the labour market, it is all about receiving more money from a profession and not to learn how to love something you do and be good and well-trained at it. So, some of them feel that the teaching profession is antiquated. With that said, we can understand that young children in the forthcoming days who experience unemployment, as a consequence of crisis, are not able to interact with a profession, that in our days is not the stable profession that it used to be [9].

Apart from the above written, also, the fact that all of the texts were written and all of the questions were answered by female teachers, helps us conclude –once more- to the perspective of non-appreciation of people who choose to become teachers [11, 13]. It would not be wise to generalize, but the teaching profession is still closely attached and limited to low social origins, the high presence of women and the limited action [29] and the fact that everyone has already formed an opinion about the “scientific pedagogical discourse” and believes that s/he could do it effortlessly.

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## СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ ГРЕЧЕСКИХ И РОССИЙСКИХ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ

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**Аннотация.** В статье изложены результаты сравнительного исследования между греческими и российскими учителями. Показаны различия и сходства в профессиональной деятельности учителей, описаны проблемы и трудности, с которыми сталкиваются учителя в своей повседневной работе. Исследовались данные полученные в ходе опроса выборки из греческих и российских учителей. Обработка результатов выполнена методом контент-анализа. Для выявления специфики проблемных ситуаций в деятельности российских учителей использовался также специально разработанный опросник, включающий в себя семь вопросов, связанных с эмоциональным состоянием учителей. Для интерпретации результатов использовались методы сравнительного анализа. Учителя школы часто сталкиваются с ситуациями неопределенности как непосредственно в своей педагогической деятельности, так и в процессе их профессионального развития. Задача выбора для них становится актуальной проблемой, а прогнозирование последствий своих решений является неотъемлемой частью профессиональной деятельности. Наблюдается высокое психоэмоциональное напряжение учителей, в большей степени связанное с боязнью допустить ошибку, необходимости распределять внимание между широким кругом действий, постоянной нагрузкой на речевой аппарат. Исследование показало, что существует схожая модель профессиональной среды греческих и российских учителей. Большинство учителей в нашей выборке ограничиваются ежедневной рабочей процедурой, которая строго соответствует официальным правилам и принципам. Поведение и действия учителей в обеих странах в большей степени определяется критериями, разработанными министерством образования. На сегодняшний день автономия и инициативность учителей – это понятия, которые по-прежнему находятся под вопросом.

**Ключевые слова:** школьное образование, учителя, образование в Греции, образование в России.

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