Exploring the Greek Kindergarten Teachers’ Views and Practices during the Implementation of Educational Programs

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ABSTRACT
In this paper kindergarten teachers describe the types of services and practices they often use to design and implement an educational program. The authors’ paper aims to identify and present the kindergarten teachers’ views and practices, concerning the types of educational programs they usually conduct, the kindergarten teachers’ training status and needs on designing and implementing such programs according to the mandated Curriculum Studies of Preschool Education for Greece, as well as the teaching methods and equipment settings they usually use in an educational program. They also indicate the problems and difficulties most kindergarten teachers meet while carrying out an educational program, as well as the reasons most kindergarten teachers prefer to carry out an “informal school program.” An “informal school program” takes place at a local level and kindergarten teachers do not take this approach to a higher level, in order not to have any particular problems with the school context, the mandated Curriculum Studies and timetable of Preschool Education for Greece currently and the teaching methods, aids and materials.

Keywords: Educational Programs, Greece, Kindergarten Teachers’ Views and Practices, Preschool Education for Greece, Teaching Methods and Equipment Settings

INTRODUCTION
Educational programs play an important role in the educational system of many European countries, including Greece. The design and implementation of educational programs have created new opportunities and prospects, as the project method was applied not only in the U.S but also in many European countries (Prawat, 1995; Helm & Katz, 2002; Van Ausdal, 1988, as cited in Katz & Chard, 2004). Specifically, the key concepts concerning the implementation of
educational programs, the *Interdisciplinary and Cross-curricular Programs*, have to do with the following subjects (Fogarty, 1991):

- Combination of topics-subjects;
- Emphasis on projects;
- Access to extra teaching equipment and devices beyond the schoolbooks;
- Interrelated concepts creation;
- Establishment of thematic units as a part of the structural principles;
- Flexibility of the school timetable;
- Flexibility in the schooling group work.

Besides, the development of social knowledge and skills is very important for children (French, 1985), and if the children do not develop social skills during the first five or six years, they run the risk of not doing so sufficiently in their adulthood (Katz & McClellan, 1997; Parker & Asher, 1987). Specifically, the importance of developing children’s communication skills requires children to be in small groups and participate in discussions with or without the presence of adults (Nelson, 1985; Wells, 1983, 1986).

Besides, it should be clear that it is difficult to improve social skills through traditional teaching methods, so teachers ought to implement a wide range of methods, practices and strategies in their teaching (Katz & McClellan, 1997).

So, in this paper we hold as important and we are trying to explore the Greek kindergarten teachers’ views about their training needs, concerning the implementation of educational programs, the school/classroom settings and conditions under which these educational programs take place in our country (types of programs, school premises, school partnerships, available teaching hours), the emphasis on the project method, including the learning sources and teaching aids and materials.

### MAIN ISSUES CONCERNING THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

There are different types of educational programs being implemented all over Europe, including Greece (Carida, 2006).

**Type I:** European educational programs.

In recent years, various programs have been conducted. Initially, the *Interdisciplinary and Cross-curricular Programs* have been carried out by the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE, 1999, 2001). Later on, some other programs were also implemented in Europe and in our country, such as: (a) The *European Educational Programs* in cooperation with the Greek State Scholarships Foundation (GLOBE, COMENIUS, etc., available on [http://www.pedia.gr/corner/eok-programs](http://www.pedia.gr/corner/eok-programs), [http://www.iky.gr](http://www.iky.gr)); (b) The *European Educational Programs* of the Greek Ministry of Education (e-twinning programs, Unesco programs, educational programs of the Council of Europe, etc., available on [http://www.minedu.gov.gr](http://www.minedu.gov.gr)); and (c) The *Educational Programs* of international or Non Governmental Organizations (i.e., Unicef, etc).

**Type II:** The *Educational Programs* of the Greek Ministry of Culture (available on [http://www.yppo.gr](http://www.yppo.gr)).

**Type III:** The *Environmental Education Centers Educational Programs*, which are implemented in cooperation with the National Thematic Networks ([http://www.ekke.gr/estia/gr_pages](http://www.ekke.gr/estia/gr_pages)).

**Type IV:** The “Innovative Educational Programs,” supervised by the local authorities and officials of the Ministry of Education-Department of Counseling...
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