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The Reception of newly appointed Teachers: The Contribution of the Principal and the Teachers' Association

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Abstract: According to many studies teachers' reception has been associated with the smooth operation of the school, the professional development of the teaching staff and the provision of optimal teaching work. Despite its significance and its attention from scholars, though, its implementation at schools has been facing challenges and hardships. The present study focuses on the role played by principals and teachers' associations upon the reception and acclimatization of all newly appointed teachers in their schools. The findings indicate that the favorable disposition and actions of both principals and the teachers' association in terms of receiving/acclimatizing any newly appointed teachers should be further enhanced.

Keywords: *School climate, teacher induction, teacher reception, teacher effectiveness, teacher socialization.*

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Introduction

The kind of reception given to teachers, along with the way they are integrated into a new school unit, provides a good indication of collegial solidarity, a means of fostering a positive school climate and is a significant contributory factor to the school's efficient operation (Bush & Middlewood, 2013). In particular, relevant studies indicate that teachers' reception in the school environment play a vital role in promoting a sense of "belonging" (Malinen & Savolainenb, 2016), enhancing the quality of teaching and learning provided (Goddard et al., 2007; Shah, 2012), facilitating a disposition for professional growth (Anthony et al., 2011; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010b) as well as reducing the likelihood of leaving the school to which they have been appointed, or even abandoning the profession altogether (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). For the above reasons, it is suggested that a special effort is to be made to integrate teachers into their appointed school unit during their first year of teaching there. This effort, according to the practices and understandings of those involved, should "start gradually as early as the commencement of teachers' initial training" (Henderson & Noble, 2015, p. 2).

As regards the meaning of the term "reception/induction", both in pertinent studies/research (e.g. Eliophotou Menon, 2012; Kang & Berliner, 2012) as well as in education policy texts (European Commission, 2015; Ingersoll, 2012; Pain & Schwillie, 2010), it refers primarily to mandatory programs of support intended for newly recruited teachers. However, within the framework of the current study, the term "acclimatization" has been preferred over "induction" and refers to any teacher appointed at a new school at the beginning of the school year, regardless of their years of experience in the profession. The reason is that any newly appointed teacher is very likely to face personal and professional problems as well as socialization challenges while adapting to a new school environment. Overall, those difficulties have been found to obstruct both their cooperation within the school community and their work performance in the classroom (Richards et al., 2019; Rogari et al., 2015). Through this approach, the framework of reception/acclimatization of teachers in schools has been broadened so as to equally include both those who are less as well as more experienced, given that it is necessary to implement a constant and onward capitalisation of their existing "wisdom and expertise" so as to further "promote ambitious levels of classroom instruction that will help all students be successful" (Moir & Gless, 2001, p. 110).

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Owing to its great significance, both for the school's operation and for the teaching staff, reception/acclimatization has been officially established by various countries such as Japan, China, France, Switzerland and USA (Ingvarson et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2005; Zuljan & Požarnik, 2014).

However, despite these research findings of the literature and the recognition of its importance, the reception/acclimatization of teachers in schools is not well organized while many schools are not systematically prepared in this area (Feiman-Nemser, 2010, p. 22). Therefore, the research on this topic "remains relevant to the current research agenda" (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019, p. 117) and exploring parameters that affect the inclusion of teachers in their new school should continue to concern scholars (Strong, 2005).

As far as the Greek school reality is concerned, there is no officially established procedure for the reception/acclimatization of teachers in the school units. Any actions taken in this direction are of a supplementary nature to the introductory training given to newly hired teachers, which tends to concentrate on "updating knowledge on their teaching subject, incorporating technology in teaching, multicultural education", etc. (Katsimpras & Gelameris, 2018, p. 13). In addition, they tend to lack a "predetermined plan" (Christodoulakis, 2009, p. 160) and to have been left at the discretion and initiatives of the principal and the teachers' association (Douloudi, 2018). As a result, newly qualified teachers appointed to their first school tend not to experience the cooperation of their principal or fellow teachers (Anagnostopoulos, 2018; Mlekani, 2005; Thanasopoulou, 2019). Rather, they tend to feel as if they do not belong in the school and are therefore missing opportunities for interacting with the school community and actively participating in school life. This is a particularly important observation for the country's education system and the quality of teaching provided, given that the phenomenon of teachers changing schools, even for teachers with many years of experience, is a very common one in Greek schools (Rogari et al., 2015; Saiti & Saitis, 2020).

The goal of the current study is to examine the viewpoints of the educational community as regards the role played by the principal and the teachers' association (the school's basic fundamental administrative bodies according to the Educational Act of 1985) in this process of receiving/acclimatizing newly appointed teachers in their schools. In order to better approach its objectives, the following research questions have been established:

(a) to what extent do the school principal and teachers' association provide new teachers during the first days of the school year with all the necessary information for the performance of their duties and offer genuine support for their effective performance in the new school environment, thus cultivating a sense of "belonging" in the school?

(b) how significant is this acclimatization process considered by teachers and which practices should primarily govern it?

(c) does the acclimatization of newly appointed teachers have an impact on their job satisfaction?

(d) which recommendations could further facilitate the acclimatization of newly qualified teachers who assume teaching duties for the first time at schools?

The significance of the study is substantiated by the fact that it investigates an issue related to (a) an increasing trend for a high turnover of teaching staff at school units internationally (Helms-Lorenz et al., 2016; Sutchter et al., 2016) and the challenges faced by newly recruited teachers who are called to teach time in a new school (Dicke et al., 2015), and (b) the lack of strategic planning in staffing the country's school units (Alexopoulos, 2019). Additionally, it helps to enrich relevant literature by examining not only the role of principals but also that of the teachers' association in receiving/acclimatizing each newly appointed teacher.

Theoretical framework: Reception/Acclimatization of teachers and the role of principals and the teachers' association

Pertinent literature includes many approaches to interpreting the meaning and content of the term reception/acclimatization of teachers in schools (e.g. Everard et al., 2004; Ingersoll 2001; Villani, 2002; Wong, 2004, 2002). Upon perusal, it could be supported that this term refers to the short-term support of newly qualified, newly recruited teachers through established programs of professional counselling and guidance, usually for a few weeks or months (Schermerhorn, 2012). The carrier of those induction programs "is mainly the school unit" (Kearney, 2019, p. 13), namely, the location where the teacher carries out their daily work. However, there is also provision for social bodies, scientific unions or other academic institutions (Zembytska, 2016) and collaboration networks therein (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004, p. 18) to participate in reception/acclimatization programs for schools' teaching staff. The goal of any such program, usually of an obligatory nature, is mainly the socialization of the newly appointed teacher. In this way, teachers do not feel left to their own devices but instead experience a sense of familiarity with the school's staff. Their creative nature is given room to develop and any gap between their expectations and the reality at the school in which they will be teaching for the first time is bridged (Kardos et al., 2001; Moore-Johnson, 2004).

The reception/acclimatization practice for teachers in schools is generally viewed in a positive light. In particular, through acclimatization, newly appointed teachers "absorb the basic operational elements and the school's culture" (European Commission, 2010, p. 15). Also, they feel justified in their choice and therefore commit to their new school environment with the intention of remaining (Howe, 2015; Kelley, 2004; Mansfield & Gu, 2019; Totterdell et al., 2004). Furthermore, they develop a more positive attitude towards their cooperation with the other school community agents

(Breux & Wong, 2003; Nasser Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2010; Panteli, 2009). Indeed, teachers' acclimatization to their new school further enhances their commitment to continuous professional development, reduces professional stress and contributes to a better handling of daily challenges at school and the classroom (Howe, 2015; Kutsyuruba, 2012; Totterdell et al., 2004; Wong, 2005). It also constitutes a means of adapting attitudes, behaviour and teaching practices to their new students, given that each student community differs from one school and classroom to another. This matter is of great significance since teachers tend to adopt and consolidate teaching standards proportionate to their "personal emotional experiences as students in relation to their own teachers in the past" (Uitto & Estola, 2009, p. 518).

Among the practices utilized for the materialization of reception/acclimatization programs as well as their content, pertinent literature (Dyal & Sewell, 2002; Wong, 2004) includes the distribution of printed or electronic material (informative, educational, supportive for teaching in class, etc.), meetings with education officials, the organisation of seminars, visits to other schools, discussions with parents, tours of the neighbourhood and the school premises and attendance at teaching sessions offered by senior teachers in the school unit followed by productive analysis, feedback and commenting. Special arrangements are also recommended, such as being exempted from extra-curricular obligations during the first semester, ensuring that their work schedule is moderated so as to allow for participation in acclimatization programs, and establishing groups for newly appointed teachers in the school where they can exchange experiences and viewpoints. Special importance is attributed to the counseling relationship between newly appointed teachers and mentors. Indeed, mentoring is more often than not considered as a crucial element (Wong, 2004), regardless of the concerns occasionally expressed over its conceptual clarity (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007), or even as a "synonym for teachers' reception in schools" (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, p. 29). However, regardless of the final choice, the fundamental principles expected to govern the reception/acclimatization of teachers in their school is empathy, a cooperative spirit and a disposition to share knowledge and experience, as illustrated by the modern social reality and by contemporary education.

In cases where official mentorship programs for reception/acclimatization are lacking, as is the case in Greek schools, the burden of responsibility for integrating newly appointed teachers falls upon the principal and the teachers' association (Eliophotou Menon, 2012; Ioradinides & Vryoni, 2013; Snoek, et al., 2011; Weasmer & Woods, 2000). They are the school's fundamental administrative bodies which, along with the aid of supportive counselling institutions, constitute the central pillar of pedagogical and teaching functions, inspiring confidence and security in newly appointed teachers (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010a, 2010b; Eliophotou Menon, 2012; Kang & Berliner, 2012; Wood & Stanulis, 2010). This is because the principal and deputy headteacher, together with senior teachers, have accumulated extensive experience in teaching local children, but also in cooperating with parents, local authorities, social groups and related organizations. However, while this experience is essential, it does not constitute a sufficient condition for the smooth reception and acclimatization of a newly appointed teacher. Equally important elements that could further facilitate the principal and the teachers' association in welcoming and integrating a new colleague into their school are: the maturity of existing relations between those in positions of authority and the teaching staff, good cooperative/collegial relationships, solidarity, mutual respect, empathy as well as knowledge in organizational behaviour and human resources management. The aforementioned elements help shape an amicable and collegial climate at school, within which the principal and existing teachers can provide support to newly appointed teachers. This support could, for example, refer to coping with psychological and emotional difficulties (e.g. stress) that might arise as a result of changes in the work environment, or providing professional guidance in terms of managing their new class at school, or simply getting familiar with the school equipment as well as providing assistance for their extracurricular work, such as organizing school celebration events (Douloudi, 2018; Papageorgakis, 2013).

Methodology

Data gathering tool

The research data has been collected through an anonymous printed questionnaire that was distributed to a sample of convenience. The questionnaire was deemed to be an appropriate research tool for the present study, given that it has been utilized for data collection in similar studies in the past (e.g. Eliophotou Menon, 2012; Kang & Berliner, 2012; Nasser Abu Alhija & Fresko, 2016). It was designed by the research team upon perusal of former studies (Anagnostopoulos, 2018; Anthony et al., 2019; Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010a; Eliophotou Menon, 2012) and the exchange of ideas with principals and teachers in the prefecture of Attica and Heraklion in Crete. The questions were consolidated into their final form subsequent to (a) conducting a pilot questionnaire among 57 teachers in 4 schools in the prefecture of Attica and 2 in the prefecture of Heraklion, Crete whose reliability coefficient was similar to that of the main study (≥ 0.70) and (b) taking into consideration all the additional remarks made by the participants in the course of the pilot phase.

The questionnaire's internal consistency was evaluated through the *Cronbach α* coefficient and was found to be over 0.70 for all questions. Indicatively, the reliability coefficient for the first question was 0.89, for the fourth it was 0.913 and for the fifth it was 0.781.

The final questionnaire included 57 questions in total, divided into three sections: Section A collected data on the sample's general demographics, such as gender, age and length of service in education (*see Table 1*). Additionally, this section included questions about the frequency with which teachers had changed schools during their teaching service in public education, whether they faced any difficulties upon assuming their duties at those schools and who had provided them with help, if any (e.g. school principal, deputy headteacher, colleagues).

Section B assessed the participants' level of agreement with aspects related to actions and behaviours on the part of the principal or the school's association of teachers (e.g. whether, upon arriving at the school, the principal advised them of the school's objectives, or whether the teachers' association made them feel a sense of belonging in the school community) through a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = Totally disagree to 5 = Totally agree). In this section, participants were also requested to indicate (a) their level of agreement/disagreement to statements that could further facilitate newly appointed teachers' acclimatization in schools, (b) the impact that providing support to newly appointed teachers could have on teachers' professional advancement and on students' learning/education, and (c) their job satisfaction (e.g. how satisfied they were from taking initiatives at work, or what prospects there were for their professional development/promotion).

Finally, Section C requested participants to provide any suggestions that could help newly appointed teachers to acclimatize more smoothly to their new school unit.

Population, sample and the time period of the study

The above questionnaire was distributed by mail (both conventional and electronic) to primary school teachers serving in five regions of Greece, that is, 23.1% of all the country's regions, namely Central and Northern Athens, Eastern Attica, Corinth and Heraklion in Crete. Over the period from October to December 2019, 257 questionnaires were properly completed and suitable for further statistical processing (response rate 85.6%).

Table 1 . Social – demographic characteristics of the sample

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
A. Sex		
Male	61	23.7
Female	191	74.3
B. Age		
≤ 30 years old	42	4.3
31-40 years old	125	48.6
41-50 years old	76	29.6
≥ 51 years old	14	5.4
C. Family status		
Married	167	64.9
Single	75	29.3
Other	15	5.8
D. Studies in education management/administration		
	43	17.6
E. Field of specialization		
Primary school teacher, general or special needs education	210	81.8
Teacher of Physical Education	17	6.6
Teacher of English Language	15	5.8
Teacher of French, German Language	9	3.5
Other field (e.g. Art, Music)	6	2.3
F. Type of service in public education		
Permanent, fixed-term position	153	59.8
Permanent, under assignment or secondment	26	10.1
Substitute / On an hourly-paid basis	78	30.1
G. Number of different school placements while in serving in education		
0-2 times	29	11.3
3-6 times	108	42
More than 6 times	120	46.7
H. Total length of service in education		
Up to 5 years	34	13.4
6 – 10 years	38	15
11-20 years	108	42.7
≥ 20 years	77	28.9

Table 1. Continued

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
I. Length of service in current school		
Up to 5	163	64.4
6 - 10	53	20.9
11-20	32	12.6
≥20 years	9	2.1
J. Required assistance upon undertaking duties in a new school		
	164	63.8
K. Requested assistance from (multiple answers possible)		
The school principal	64	39.5
The deputy headteacher	43	26.5
Colleague of the same subject	81	50
Colleague of different subject	42	25.9
Teacher in another school	31	19.1
The coordinator of teaching	2	1.2
Someone else	17	10.5

Data Analyses Techniques Used in the Research

The analysis of the research findings was conducted with the aid of the statistical package SPSS (v. 20) and included the examination of the questionnaire's reliability through the *Cronbach α* reliability test and correlation tables with chi-square χ^2 tests in order to ascertain statistically significant differences among groups (predetermined level of significance $\alpha = 0.05, 5\%$).

Results

After conducting a descriptive analysis of the research findings, it was initially found that less than half of the participants stated they either "Agree" or "Totally Agree" that the principal supported newly appointed teachers by means of their actions and behaviour. An exception was noted only for information provided for matters related to being on attendance duty and special cases of students (see Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of teachers who "Agree" or "Totally Agree" that the principal

	%
took pains to discover their personal needs/hardships	43.2
showed interest in hearing about their professional goals	17.5
advised them on the school's goals	44.5
escorted them around the school premises	43.1
discussed the challenges of being on attendance duty	60.9
informed them about particular cases of individual students (e.g. health, behaviour problems)	59.9

The percentage of those who "Disagree" or "Totally disagree" with the statements in Table 2 are 39.7%, 54.1%, 34.8%, 32.8%, 24.2% and 22.9% respectively. The remaining participants took a neutral stance. Further analysis of the research findings showed that school principals tended to inform their permanent staff about special cases of individual students (e.g. health or behavioural issues) to a greater extent than their substitute or hourly-paid colleagues $\{\chi^2 (12,257)=26.823, p=0.008\}$.

The results of this study also indicated that the principal engaged in supportive actions to a lower extent during the first semester than in the first few days of the school year, and manifested less supportive behaviour towards newly appointed teachers (see Table 3).

Table 3. Views of how the sample of teachers felt about their principal's actions/ behaviours during their first semester

	Disagree or Totally Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree or Totally Agree %
they were encouraged to cooperate	19.5	27.3	53.1
they were treated on equal terms with their senior colleagues	32.3	27.2	40.5
they were assigned with duties proportionate to their capacities	31.1	21.4	47.5
they were supported in their teaching duties	32.5	29.8	37.7
they requested to provide their active participation in collective administration bodies	29.4	25.9	44.7
they were provided with emotional support	38.9	26.5	34.6
they were assisted with their problems (personal, work-related)	32.4	25.7	41.8
they were given guidance in their professional development	32.2	31	36.9
they were publicly praised and received constructive feedback	29.6	31.9	38.6

This finding, in conjunction with the age of the teachers who participated in this study, suggests that during the first semester the principal mostly encouraged younger teachers (up to 30 years old) to work cooperatively at school $\{x^2(12,257)=21.612, p=0.042\}$. Moreover, according to the research findings, out of all the teachers assigned to their schools, principals tended to manifest preferential treatment towards those with more years of teaching experience, as they were more likely to be treated on equal terms with their senior colleagues $\{x^2(12,257)=24.668, p=0.016\}$.

As regards actions and behaviours on the part of the teachers' association, the participants indicated they "Agree" or "Totally agree" with the statement that upon their placement at school this association surrounded the newly appointed teachers with cordiality (68%), supported them psychologically (40.1%) and fostered a sense of belonging (52.2%) while also keeping a formal stance (50.8%). The percentages of those who stated that they "Disagree" or "Totally Disagree" to the aforementioned are 12.7%, 22.2%, 16.6% and 20% respectively whereas the remainder provided a neutral answer.

Further analysis of this finding indicates that the teachers' association at schools mostly surrounded newly appointed teachers with cordiality $\{x^2(4,257)=10.278, p=0.036\}$.

The teachers who participated in this study also stated that during the first semester the teachers' association did not really manifest supportive behaviour to a great extent nor engaged in related actions towards newly appointed teachers (see Table 4).

Table 4. Actions and behaviours of the teacher's association

	Disagree & Totally Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree & Totally Agree %
demonstrated tolerance for newcomers' mistakes/omissions	14.9	38.4	46.7
supported them in difficulties faced in the classroom (e.g. using laboratories)	53.6	24.4	22.1
encouraged their active participation in meetings	13.2	30.7	56
facilitated the handling of personal problems (e.g. health, family)	18.8	38.7	42.6
took decisions that facilitated their work (e.g. the appointment of classes)	38.8	29.3	31.9
treated them on equal terms with any other senior member of the association	44.1	31.3	24.6

They also expressed their level of agreement/disagreement to a series of statements related to the reception and acclimatization of newly appointed teachers at their schools (see Table 5).

Table 5. Degree of agreement of the teachers sampled with statements regarding the reception/acclimatization of teachers at their schools

	Not at all - Little %	Average %	Much - Very Much %
they are usually underprivileged when the teaching timetable is drawn up	35.3	30.2	34.5
they prefer to perform their first on attendance duties together with an experienced school teacher	3.5	13.2	83.3
they should be supported when undertaking extracurricular activities (e.g. school celebrations, events)	4.3	16	79.7
they should be supported when selecting classes assigned to them	36.3	41.8	22
every school should have a strategic plan in place for the support and encouragement of newly appointed teachers	7.4	15.2	77.5

Further analysis of this study's findings suggests that female teachers agree more strongly with the statement that newly appointed teachers, upon the delegation of extracurricular activities, should be further supported since they are not aware of the school's climate $\{\chi^2(4,257)=9.944, p=0.041\}$.

Another finding was the statistically significant relation between teachers aged over 50 and the statement that newly appointed teachers are usually disadvantaged when it comes to the weekly timetable $\{\chi^2(12,257)=28.181, p=0.005\}$.

As regards the significance of newly appointed teachers' acclimatization in schools, participants stated it had "Much" or "Very much" importance for their future professional course and the school students' learning-education (70% and 63.6% respectively). In association with the gender factor, the research findings suggest that female teachers believe more in the contribution of positive reception and support provided to newly appointed teachers towards their professional development $\{\chi^2(12,257)=28.181, p=0.005\}$.

Finally, the research findings indicated that:

(a) the majority of participants are either much or very much pleased with aspects of their work at school (see Table 6)

Table 6. Level of work satisfaction among the sample's members regarding:

	Much to Very Much %	Average %	Little to None at all %
their capacity as permanent teachers in public education with a fixed post	42.2	20.4	19.5
cooperation/communication with colleagues	61.9	27.8	10.2
prospects of professional development / promotion	26.7	36.5	35.3
undertaking initiatives at work	53.9	30.7	15.3
the levels of hardship and pressure associated with their duties	32.9	45	22.1

(b) the study's questions examining the level of job satisfaction among the sample are associated to those examining the degree to which the principal and teachers' association provide support to newly appointed teachers at their school unit (see Table 7).

Table 7. Chi square analysis for association between the support offered to the sample's participants by the principal and teachers' association, and teachers' job satisfaction

	Satisfaction from permanence/stability of their post in public education	Satisfaction from the level of challenges, pressure posed by the school duties
The principal takes pains in discovering the newly appointed teachers' personal needs/challenges	$\chi^2(16,257) = 20.035, p = 0.031$	$\chi^2(16,257) = 34.855, p = 0.004$
The principal displays interest in their professional goals	-	$\chi^2(16,257) = 38.823, p = 0.001$
The principal treats newly appointed teachers on the same terms as senior colleagues in the first semester	$\chi^2(16, 257) = 32.114, p = 0.010$	-
The principal provides the newly appointed teachers with emotional support during the first semester	$\chi^2(16, 257) = 28.166, p = 0.030$	$\chi^2(16, 257) = 38.861, p = 0.001$
The principal facilitates the professional development of newly appointed teachers during the first semester	$\chi^2(16, 257) = 33.233, p = 0.007$	-
The principal publicly praises their creative, innovative work during the first semester	$\chi^2(16, 257) = 30.015, p = 0.018$	$\chi^2(16, 257) = 28.856, p = 0.025$
The principal provides constructive, resourceful feedback during the first semester	$\chi^2(16, 257) = 37.654, p = 0.002$	-
The teachers' association treats newly appointed teachers with familiarity/cordiality	-	$\chi^2(16, 257) = 33.799, p = 0.006$

Discussion

In pertinent literature, the reception/acclimatization of teachers in their school units has been associated with the smooth operation of the school, the professional growth of the teaching staff and the provision of optimal teaching work (Saitis & Saiti, 2018; Wong, 2004). Despite its significance, however, its implementation at schools has been facing challenges and hardships (van Velzen et al., 2010). The present study focuses on the role played by principals and teachers' associations upon the reception and acclimatization of newly appointed teachers in their schools.

As regards principals, the research findings were similar to those of former relevant studies (Eliophotou Menon, 2012; Iordanides & Vryoni, 2013; Stefanou, 2013), indicating that during the initial days of the school year the topics discussed with newly appointed teachers who are called to work in their school for the first time mainly revolve around students' learning/behavioural issues and the challenges of being on attendance duty. This is probably because teaching/learning is at the core of the school operation (Duncan & Stock, 2010) and interest in its unobstructed function in and out of the classroom is inevitably increased. As for the finding that principals and newly appointed teachers have discussions about the hygiene and safety of school premises to a great extent, it could be further attributed to each school's care in safeguarding the students' and staff's safety in accordance with pertinent legislation. However, it could also be attributed to the importance many principals place on being proactive as concerns school crisis management by averting situations that could disturb the school's harmonious climate and the learning process which is taking place therein (Karasavidou & Alexopoulos, 2019; Saitis & Saiti 2018).

The research findings also suggest that, upon reception/acclimatization, principals are interested in the personal problems of the newly appointed teachers to a large extent. This could be attributed to their concern with matters likely to affect and restrict teachers' performance in the classroom as well as their participation in the school's events. This finding is in agreement with relevant studies which identify personal/family problems as significantly stressful factors for the community of teachers, the impact of which is further augmented by the lack of interest on the part of the school administration (Doney, 2013; Sass et al., 2011). Contrary to the previous finding, the interest that principals manifest towards the professional goals and ambitions of newly appointed teachers seemed to be quite limited. Possible explanations in this regard could be the fact that (a) principals do not believe that such goals or ambitions on the part of teachers are directly related to the school's current pedagogical, teaching and administrative operation, and (b) newly appointed teachers are more likely than not to be transferred soon after their initial posting, owing to the opportunities offered by the existing regulative framework in the Greek education system (Darra et al. 2010; Rogari et al., 2015). In this respect, it is worth noting that 46.7% of participants have changed schools more than 6 times during their teaching service, as manifested by the present study.

Additionally, this study has also indicated, as in previous ones (Christodoulakis, 2009; McCormack & Thomas 2003; Ramsey, 2000; Vrionis, 2016), that during the first semester, more than half of the principals failed to treat newly appointed teachers on the same terms as their senior colleagues, nor did they guide them in their teaching work in the classroom, or encourage them to actively participate in collective procedures. Even fewer principals exercised

constructive feedback, publicly praised them or supported them in their professional growth (e.g. by suggesting that they participate in seminars, lectures, or postgraduate courses). This is contrary to the attention drawn by international research to the significance of equal treatment of newly appointed teachers and to the benefits of their active participation in decision making at school (Saitis & Saiti, 2018; Wood & Weasmer, 2002) as well as the value of in-school training (Fresko & Nasser-Abu Alhija, 2015; Pasternak et al, 2012).

The above findings could be attributed to the heavy workload of principals and the overly bureaucratic and centralised Greek education system (Saiti & Saitis, 2020) where the principal is called upon to handle a great number of operational functions, execute orders passed down by upper hierarchy and provide updates on expected outcomes. Another potential explanation for those findings could be, according to the present as well as other pertinent studies (Saiti & Saitis, 2012), the large number of principals that lack management training or have not become acquainted with issues related to the school unit's organizational life, such as communication and group dynamics.

The findings also indicate, similar to previous studies (Kidd, et al., 2010), that principals do not display the same sensitivity and interest towards all newly appointed teachers. In our study, more care was taken of permanent and older teachers probably because principals felt more collegial closeness towards them compared to non-permanent younger teachers who had less experience. Towards the latter, as other studies similar to this have indicated (e.g. Andrews et al., 2007, Daloudi, 2018), principals seem to convey to them basic principles of collaboration to a lesser extent. This is possibly because, from their position of responsibility they experience the need for cooperation and collectivity in decision making through the permanent and more experienced members of teachers' association (Raptis & Psaras, 2018).

The present study also aimed at investigating the attitudes and behaviours of teachers/members of the teachers' association towards newly appointed teachers. The results therein suggest that, similar to the principals' stance, only half of the newly appointed teachers participating in this study experienced a sense of amiability on the part of the teachers' association and a consequent sense of "belonging" upon their arrival at school. Furthermore, only four out of ten teachers stated that they received some kind of psychological support.

The sampled teachers indicated an equally low rate (four out of ten newly appointed teachers) in their answers concerning the level to which their colleagues provided professional support, understanding and tolerance regarding any mistakes or omissions they made and facilitated them at a personal level (in dealing with family issues) during the first semester upon their appointment. A noteworthy finding is that newly appointed teachers in their majority stated that they were not treated on equal terms by their colleagues. Also, they were not facilitated in organizational issues such as the distribution and allocation of classes during their first year at school and were not supported in difficulties faced outside the classroom environment - a finding in concurrence with international literature (Scherff, 2008) according to which there has been a tendency to allocate "challenging classes and a plethora of extracurricular activities" to newly appointed teachers (Howe, 2006, p. 289). An exception appears to be the fact that newly appointed female teachers tended to be the recipients of more positive behaviours compared to their male counterparts in terms of tolerance for mistakes and omissions as well as receiving support at both a personal or professional level.

A plausible explanation for the above research findings, which in their majority are in agreement with former studies (Bakas, 2011; Christodoulakis, 2009; Douloudi, 2018; Stefanou, 2013; Thanasopoulou, 2009), could be any of the following: (a) a lack of cooperation as observed in the country's school units (Papadatou & Alexopoulos, 2019), (b) the perception of some teachers who, due to their profession's increased autonomy, believe that any arising challenges ought to be handled independently in the classroom, or (c) the ever-expanding and heavy workload of teachers, who are often required to perform a plethora of teaching and extracurricular duties on a daily basis (Cahapay, 2020, p.69, Stefanou, 2013, p. 15). As regards the greater support that, according to the research findings, newly appointed female teachers seem to enjoy upon their arrival at school, it could possibly be explained by the fact that female teachers are usually much more burdened with family obligations. Given those obligations, women are officially supported by the Greek state through pertinent legislation as well as unofficially by means of the positive attitude manifested by the greatest part of society (Brugiavini et al, 2011; Papadopoulos, 1998).

In accordance with the goal and objectives of the present study, the viewpoints of teachers were investigated regarding issues related to the reception/acclimatization process for newly appointed teachers. The findings indicated that a relatively high percentage of teachers, particularly those of an older age, consider the implementation of a series of measures and mechanisms aimed at supporting newly appointed teachers in their work (e.g. facilitating their extracurricular work, timetable, on attendance duties) to be of great significance. This finding might be attributed to the fact that most of them (also highlighted by Rogari et al., 2015), have also served as newly appointed teachers in other schools in the past and the majority (six out of ten) have also faced significant challenges upon their placement on numerous occasions. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the opportunity for a newly appointed teacher to participate in the selection process of class allocation was not recognized as a practice in the reception/acclimatization process. This could be due to a reluctance to review the legislatively vague allocation method which unofficially gives priority to teachers with more years of experience (Bakas, 2011), offering them the opportunity to choose classes based on personal needs or preferences (e.g. facilitations in the timetable, familiarisation with teaching in particular classes -

student age groups). However, this practice contravenes the fundamental principle that the school education system as well as students need to have the most suitable teacher, in terms of knowledge and experience, allocated to the appropriate grade and individual class accordingly.

Finally, it is worth noting that the present study, in concurrence with previous research (Banks et al., 2015; McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Strong, 2009; Woods & Weasmer, 2002), has suggested that the acclimatization of newly appointed teachers and special aspects therein, such as the principal's interest in the teachers' needs and goals as well as their equal treatment, are associated to their job satisfaction. This association was found mainly in terms of their new position's stability (their eagerness to stay, not opting for transfer to another school) and their low level of work stress, as experienced daily in their school environment.

Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that the favourable disposition and actions of both principals and the teachers' association in terms of receiving/acclimatizing any newly appointed teacher who is called to teach at their school for the first time, despite their significance, are problematic. Specifically, the research results showed the newly appointed teachers do not feel a sense of "belonging" during the first period of the school year. They are not treated on the same terms as their senior colleagues and they are not encouraged to actively participate in collective procedures. Therefore, their receiving/acclimatization should be further enhanced. In this direction, mandating the reception and acclimatization of teachers at schools could be a further contribution. However, such a statutory measure does not suffice on its own account.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, it is advisable that the school undertakes initiatives, such as: a) establish a group of teachers whose role would be to keep newly appointed teachers updated, b) seek support (administrative, pedagogical, teaching) from supportive organisations such as centres for educational planning, union bodies, pedagogical departments at universities, etc., and c) strengthen the role of teacher groups and mentoring at schools through actions that could include, but not be restricted to, joint teaching or horizontal extracurricular cooperation among classes (organizing celebrations, athletic events, etc.). Such initiatives are expected to deter the formation of "cliques" that separate senior and newly placed teachers in school (Johnson & The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers 2004, p. 159). Consequently, they could further enhance the cooperative, amicable and cordial collegial climate in the school unit, thus further contribute to the resolution of issues at the classroom level, foster innovation, creativity and self-evaluation (Heggen, et al., 2018; Pasiás & Kalospiros, 2015) and eventually upgrade the quality of teaching in the classroom. Temporary alleviation of duties and care in ensuring that "demanding" classes are not allocated to them could also help towards facilitating newly appointed teachers' acclimatization since the latter are not fully aware of the school's climate and require time in order to get familiar with different actors and the special requirements and dynamics therein involved. Finally, every school unit's actors ought to attend professional training in organizational behaviour whereas the development of a cooperation and communication network both among newly appointed teachers of each school and between the school management, school community and neighbourhood would also of great significance.

Limitations

The present study is subject to limitations primarily due to its sample which does not cover the entire Greek territory. For this reason, future research could aim to include teachers from additional regions in Greece in their sample but also examine potential differences between urban, semi-urban and rural areas, education levels and types of schools (e.g. music schools, special education schools, etc.). In addition, since teachers do not constitute a homogenous group (Bartell, 2005) but on the contrary they manifest significant differences in terms of age, years of service, gender, experiences, ideological background, type of education as well as the size and type of school where they teach, those elements could be further taken into consideration upon designing relevant research in the future. Finally, keeping in mind the crucial role of the school climate in school management and the limited interest of Greek primary school principals in the reception and acclimatization of newly appointed teachers in their school, as indicated by the present study, future investigation is recommended as regards (a) correlations between the school climate and the reception/acclimatization of newly appointed teachers, (b) factors which could render both principals and the teachers' associations more favourably inclined towards this process, and (c) potential correlations between the principals' leadership style and the actual practices of reception/acclimatization, as exercised with respect to newly appointed teachers.

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