

Parents Associations in Greece and their Potential Contribution in Schools Implementing DASI: Challenges and Possible Solutions

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Outline

- My positioning
- Parents as school stakeholders
- Two examples of actions related to partnership policy and provision of sufficient learning resources to students and teachers
- Indicative challenges and possible solutions
- Suggestions for future research

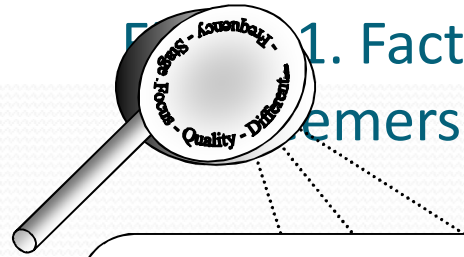


My positioning

- Phd student, Faculty of Philosophy, Pedagogy and Psychology, Section of Psychology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
- Research assistant involved in the “Promoting quality and equity: a dynamic approach to school improvement” (PROMQE) ERASMUS+ project
- Member of the board of a Greek Parents’ Association at the school that my child attends

1. Factors of the dynamic model operating at the school level (Lemmers & Kyriakides, 2012). Reprinted with permission.

SCHOOL LEVEL FACTORS



School Policy on teaching and actions taken for improving teaching:

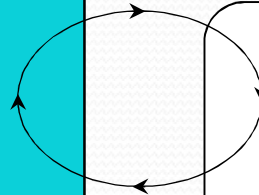
- Quantity of teaching
- Provision of learning opportunities
- Quality of teaching

Evaluation of school policy on teaching and actions taken for improving teaching

Policy on the learning environment of the school and actions taken for improving the school learning environment:

- Student behaviour outside the classroom
- Collaboration and interaction between teachers
- **Partnership policy**
- **Provision of sufficient learning resources to students and teachers**

Evaluation of the learning environment of the school



Partnership policy: the relations the school builds with the community, parents and other stakeholders (Kyriakides, Creemers, Antoniou, & Demetriou, 2010).



Why partnership policy?

- Partnership policy as a factor **linked to school effectiveness is of paramount significance** (Fan & Chen, 2001; Kyriakides et al., 2010).
- “When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout life” (Henderson & Berla, 1994, p.1).

Parents as school stakeholders

- Family and school collaboration presupposes parents' involvement (parental involvement)
- Epstein's (1995) framework: 6 categories of parental involvement:
 - Parenting
 - Communicating
 - Volunteering
 - Learning at home
 - Decision-making
 - Community collaboration




Why parental involvement?

- Parental involvement: a prominent indicator of school effectiveness
(Poulou & Matsagouras, 2007)
- positively related to children's academic performance (e.g. Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkins, 2010; Wilder, 2014), including that of minority children too (Jeynes, 2003)



Greek Parents' Associations (PAs)

- Parents' Associations = actors of parental involvement
- Greek Parents' Associations are the **institutional body established by law** (Law 1566, 1985, article 53) which represents all parents whose children attend a school and is regarded to be a school's "important social partner" (Papageorgakis, 2013, p. 17).

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- **Greek PAs role tends to be limited** to providing financial assistance for minor repairs and merely buying equipment (Maridaki-Kassotaki, 2011)
 - **more active participation** of the Parents' Association in educational issues is needed as their engagement may prove to be beneficial (Maridaki-Kassotaki, 2011)

Potential contribution of a PA to improving school policy for creating a learning environment at school

- **a school celebration for first grade students (2 hours)**

the rationale behind this initiative was to offer an opportunity for students and parents coming to school for the first time to get to know each other

(links with the aspect of partnership policy in DASI).

- **Purchase of robotics software and provision of extra desktops (action in progress)**

the rationale behind this initiative was to support the school to introduce Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) education in classrooms.

(links with the aspect of providing sufficient learning resources to students and teachers in DASI).

School celebration for first grade students

- organised for approximately 50 students
- permission granted by Headteacher
- Poster/invitation handed out to students individually by class teacher
- 2 volunteer coordinators organized the schedule of the celebration
- 2 more volunteers were recruited to assist running the activities on the day
- Drinks and food brought by parents

Γιορτή για την πρώτη δημοτικού



Αγαπητοί Γονείς/Κηδεμόνες,

Στα πλαίσια του καλωσορίσματος των μαθητών της Α' δημοτικού στο σχολείο μας, ο Σύλλογος Γονέων και Κηδεμόνων διοργανώνει μια γιορτή για τα μικρά παιδιά που φέτος κάνουν το ξεκίνημά τους στο μεγάλο σχολείο.

Σας προσκαλούμε λοιπόν να έρθετε το **Σάββατο, 5 Νοεμβρίου** και ώρα **5.00 μμ. έως 7.00 μμ.** να περάσουμε μαζί ένα όμορφο παιχνίδι και δημιουργικής απασχόλησης.

Όσοι/ες μπαμπάδες και μαμάδες επιθυμούν και έχουν διάθεση να μαγειρέψουν, μπορούν να φέρουν κάποιο κέρασμα για τα παιδιά (όπως για παράδειγμα κέικ, τυροπιτάκια, μίνι σαντουιτσάκια κλπ). Θα προσφερθεί εκ μέρους μας χυμός και νερό.

Ευγενικά σημειώνουμε ότι τα παιδιά θα πρέπει να συνοδεύονται από κάποιον ενήλικα ο οποίος θα παραμείνει μαζί τους κατά τη διάρκεια της γιορτής.

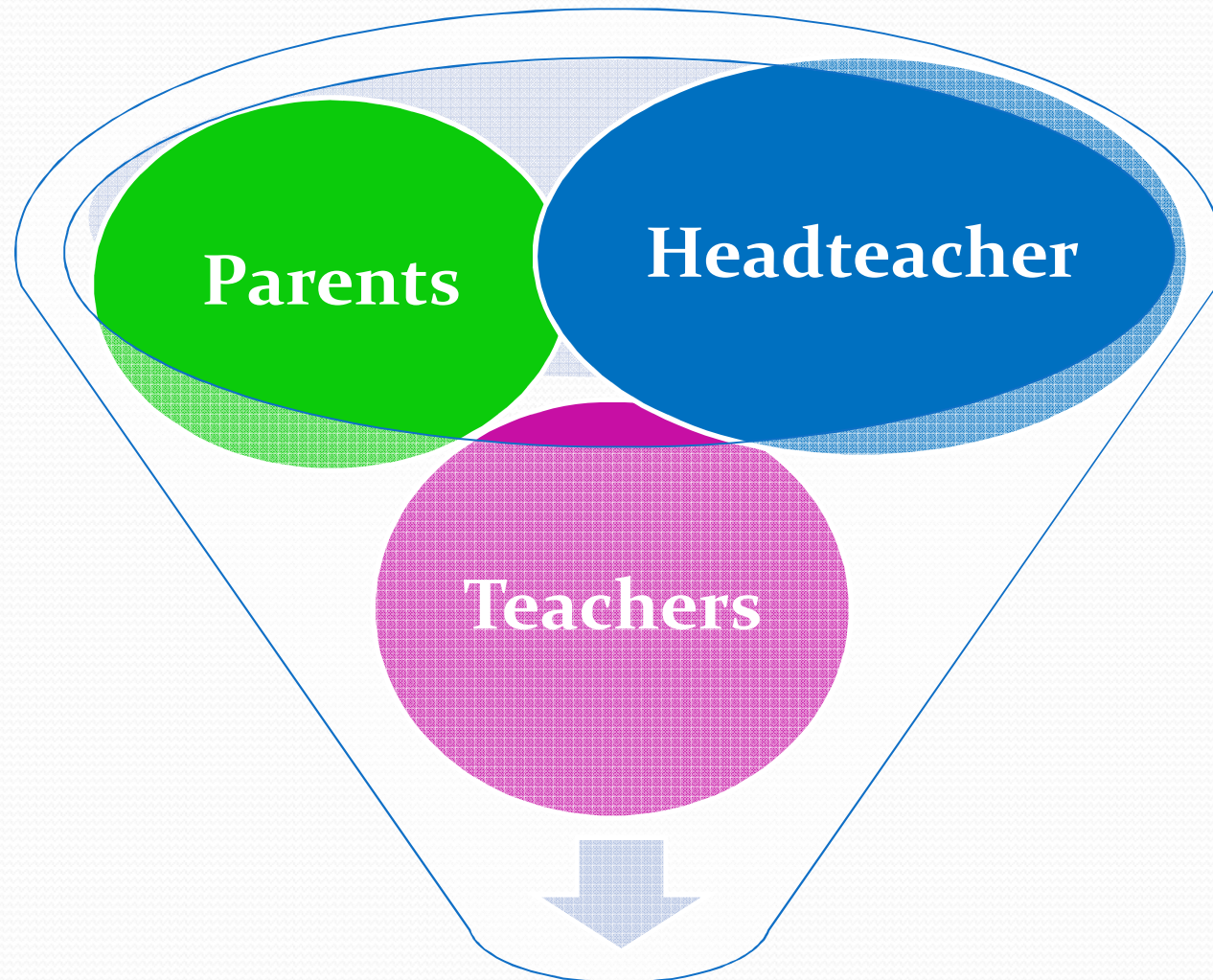
Σας περιμένουμε όλους!

Με χαρετασιούς,
Το ΔΣ του Συλλόγου Γονέων και Κηδεμόνων.



Purchase of robotics software and provision of extra desktops

- Discussion with involved teacher and headteacher
- Fundraising
- Purchase of software (2 kits)
- Communication of action plan to parents
- Sponsorship of extra desktops by school parent



Parents-school collaboration

Challenges to parents-school collaboration and solutions

- School-family collaboration **deeply valued** in the world-wide literature. One challenge is **not knowing how to form and maintain a successful collaboration** (Poulou & Matsagouras, 2007).
- Headteacher and teachers' role = **crucial** in building positive relations with parents (Saiti & Saitis, 2012).



- **Teachers' role:**

research conducted in Greece and Cyprus with pre-service and in-service teachers: **teachers** believe that parents and teachers have separate roles and **view their collaboration in a rather narrow and school-centered way** (Angelides, Theophanous & Leigh, 2006; Poulou & Matsagouras, 2005; Symeou, 2003; as cited in Poulou & Matsagouras, 2007, p. 84).

- Solution: shifting these attitudes via training, courses, workshops.

- **Headteacher's role:**

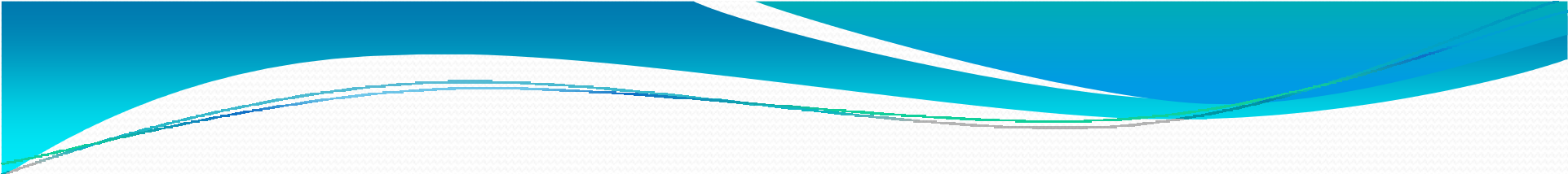
the school leader may facilitate the development of collaborative relations, if they **apply the appropriate supportive mechanisms** (Sanders, 2008a).

Headteacher's role

Headteacher
adopts
supportive
mechanisms

positive
relations
with parents

PAs
potential
exercised in
fullest

- 
- the headteacher , as an institutional leader, plays a significant role in forming an effective partnership
 - the capacity for a Parents' Association to exercise in its fullest its potential depends on the headteacher's leadership style and attitudes towards parents' role
 - Solution: as PAs may serve as agents of change, their potential should not be undermined. Supportive mechanisms fostered by the appropriate leadership style should be in place.

Parents' role

Parent factors (among others) that affect the school-family collaboration:

- Parents' low socioeconomic status
 - Parents' educational background
 - **Parents' attitudes about their role and the school's role**
 - their previous experience
- (for a more detailed account see Naoum, 2014; Papageorgakis, 2013).

What are the PA board members' perceptions about their role and aspirations?



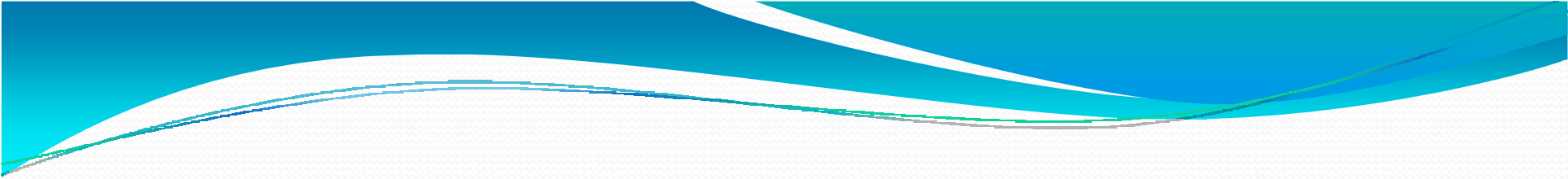
What are the PA board members' perceptions about their role and aspirations?

- PAs board members **educational background**
- PAs board members **personal ideologies**

Last but not least:

- **PAs president's leadership style**

suggested solution: open channels of communication

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- **DASI** highlights the role parents have as school stakeholders
 - Schools adopting DASI encourage the creation of a **supportive environment** whereby Parents Associations contribution to schools may be maximized



Suggestion for research

Research about teachers and parents perspectives' regarding the Parents' Associations role and its contribution to school development in Greece, remains limited (Papageorgakis, 2013).


Qualitative study (in progress): explores the views parents have as to how a PA may become actively involved in school issues, identifying at the same time the perceived challenges and proposed solutions.



Thank you for your attention!

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