

COVID 19 and classrooms: The Greek case

Briefing

A new situation has appeared in the foreground. Globally, societies are being adapted to these new facts, because of 'Covid-19', with social, cultural, economic and educational implications. So teachers were locked up in their homes, working differently, teaching from a distance, taking advantage of the e-learning platforms, as "tech-experts" (Taylor, 2018), sometimes without technical problems and sometimes having to deal with several of them. School's out, but class 'on' (Zhou et al, 2020).

With the pandemic ruling the world, teachers are compelled to restructure their pedagogical and teaching approaches and follow novel procedures in short time-frames. In many cases, the preparatory activities and readiness of the teachers have been questioned too. As the Greek Education Minister pointed out: "(...) the response of teachers and students to distance education exudes a particular dynamism. The encouraging early signs strengthen our belief that the education system needs to show greater confidence in our teachers, to expand the limits of their autonomy, but also to invest in processes and infrastructures that will actively support their teaching work".

In addition, the Minister of Education gives the impetus for the technological equipment that is vital to be present, for the educational staff and their training in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and for the cultivation of (a) synchronous survival skills. Naturally, we can conclude that we live and refer to a period of continuous changes to the core of the system.

As far as the social and educational contexts are concerned, with consideration to the general parts of the Curriculum of both primary and secondary education in Greece (see curricula in: <http://ebooks.edu.gr/new/ps.php>) we clearly see the following reference: "The various social, political, economic and cultural conditions of our time have as their main characteristic the fluidity, which is exacerbated by the rapid scientific and technological development. In this context, the school's once undisputed role, as a key social institution, in the field of knowledge provision and skills development, seems to be subject to some weakening, because the conditions for the formation of cognitive data are multimodal and diverse.

The Greek Case: The educational system in response to the pandemic

In the light of the foregoing, have we wondered about the competence of our teachers who teach in today's schools, whether they can meet this "challenge"? Data from postdoctoral research to philologists in Thessaloniki, feed us with elements on their professional identity and digital competencies (Tzifopoulos, 2020a). Through this up-to-date research, we find the inability of teachers to teach by utilizing digital tools in their classrooms, functionally and pedagogically. Although a 42.0% percentage of philologists claim to be familiar with technology (mechanistic optics), however when they have to link this knowledge to their subject, pedagogical practices, and teaching activities (functional perspective), there is a problem. And the problem is exacerbated by teachers who have many years of service in education (over 11 years) or who do not have sufficient knowledge in digital media or who do not have a master's or a doctorate. This, of course, is the inability to connect the three cycles (subject matter knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy, technology knowledge), based on the "Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge" model (TPACK) (Tzifopoulos, 2019b), may be linked to many different factors.

It is considered that

- the lack of initial education,
- lack of satisfactory training,
- attitude towards learning, teaching and technology

are factors that affect growth and the ability of teachers to cope with distance learning.

Sources

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