Communicative Relations in the Educational Environment: Exploration of Parents' Views on Educational Leadership

Abstract

Thisstudydelvesintotheissueofparent – teacher communicationand the relations formed in the educational environment with emphasis on the parents' views about the relation between parents and educational leadership.The ~~thorough~~ literature review provides both theoretical and research dimensions which form the frame of our research process in the specific field. In this respect, our study utilizes the semi-structured interview as a methodological tool. The case study focuses on Crete, a Greek island in the south of the country[1]. The interview results document and analyze the views of 18 parents, 5 of which are members of the Parents and Guardians Association. Their views are classified in terms of: 1) the reasons, ways and frequency of their communication with the school principal, 2) the quality of communication and possible factors of negative impact on their communication and 3) the school principal's communicative profile along with their features that promote or hinder their communication with parents.

Our research data showed that: 1) the communication with the school principal is rare, non-systematic, unscheduled while the main reasons for communication are problem management and solving, 2) there is positive communication in the frame of a conventional, neutral or weak relation with the principal. The main factors of negative impact on communication are: a) parents' previous negative experiences, their disappointment due to insufficient information provision from the Principal, c) their comparisons and subjective perceptions about principal effectiveness, d) their goal for more frequent and systematic communication with the classroom teacher. Finally, 3) it was found that the majority of parents have positive views about the principal's communicative profile meaning that the principal's skills and personality features outweigh any other factors regarding the promotion of communication between the two sides.

Comment [SC1]: Consider rephrasing so as to avoid writing with an anthropomorphism.

Comment [SC2]: Avoid using descriptive words.

Comment [SC3]: This does not make sense. You conducted the literature review. How could the review provide dimensions? Do you mean that you have reviewed literature dealing with both theory and research?

Comment [SC4]: To what "respect" are you referring?

Comment [SC5]: Move this to the content part of the article.

Comment [SC6]: Again, avoid writing with an anthropomorphism.

Comment [SC7]: Critically reconsider this statement.

[1]The surface of the island is 8.336 km^2, its population is 634.930 people. There are 755 Primary education schools with a total population of 53.376 students.

Key words: educational leadership, school principal, school–family communication, school administration, Primary education, qualitative research.

1. Introduction

The contemporary school, as a form of social system, consists of the principal, teachers, students, parents and a number of other factors that affect its operation (Tzotzou & Anastasopoulos, 2013).

~~The principal, as the main school leader (Kirkigianni, 2011) is responsible for developing positive relations and cultivating a positive school climate among all stakeholders. To achieve the above, communication is perceived as one of the basic processes that take place in the school unit (Hughes& Kroehler, 2007). Hence, the principal's social / communicative skills are considered of primary importance and are part of the skills an effective principal is expected to have (Argyropoulou & Symeonidis, 2017; Anthis & Kaklamanis, 2006).~~

School and its interdepended elements are at the epicenter of Sociology of Education,while. V~~v~~arious theoretical approaches about it have been developed. One of them is the theory of symbolic interaction, characterized as the micro-hermeneutics approach (Darsinos, 2011; Kyriazi, 2011) because it focuses on the micro-domains of social life, while it is also an important tool to study the complexity of relations (Hughes & Kroehler, 2007).

This is an anthropocentric approach which contains the concept of social action or act and it studies society as a grid of perceptions and relations which undergoes ongoing reciprocal reformation in terms of communication and impacts (Sanders, 2008; Tsaousis, 2006). This means that, at the same time, it allows human exploration from a sociological perspective (Hughes & Kroehler, 2007:89).

The theorists Mead, Blummer and Fine contend that the three major standpoints on which it is based are (as cited in Hughes & Koehler, 2007:88):

a) Our correspondence to things of the environment is based on their meaning and our perception of them
b) Meanings are acquired as the outcome of social interaction

Comment [SC8]: Did you focus on parents or the whole family? Compare this with your abstract wherein you have not mentioned "family" at all.

Comment [SC9]: Are these stakeholders "factors"? Perhaps rather rephrase: "The principal, teachers, students, parents, and a variety of other stakeholders make up the modern school as a social system, and their interactions have an impact on how it operates."

Comment [SC10]: Avoid one sentence paragraphs. One-sentence-paragraphs almost always hamper the flow of argument.

Comment [SC11]: Of importance to?

Comment [SC12]: Referring to?

Comment [SC13]: Incorrect use of "while". You did not present any contradiction in the second part of the sentence. "While" is used to compose structures of contrast. When using "while" to indicate a contrasting argument or idea, you should make sure that there is indeed a contrasting argument or idea offered in your line of argument. You may find the following webpage helpful: http://www2.ivcc.edu/rambo/eng1001/sentences.htm

Comment [SC14]: Describe this "it".

Comment [SC15]: Are you referring to the theory of symbolic interaction?

Comment [SC16]: Improve the formulation. An approach cannot contain a concept.

Comment [SC17]: Or "views" because it is an assumption underlying this theory?

Comment [SC18]: "At the same time" as? Reformulate.

Comment [SC19]: Referring to?

c) The interpretation of facts is based on the available meanings and symbols.

In other words, the supporters of symbolic interaction perceive the world as a "socially constructed reality" and the school as a close sub-system attempting to interpret everything that takes place in it (Hughes & Kroehler, 2007:88, 567). Communication is one of the major processes that takes place in the school (Hughes & Kroehler, 2007:567).

Theprincipal, as the main school leader (Kirkigianni, 2011) is responsible for developing positive relations and cultivating a positive school climate among all stakeholders. To achieve the above, communication is perceived as one of the basic processes that take place in the school unit (Hughes & Kroehler, 2007). Hence, the principal's social / communicative skills are considered of primary importance and are part of the skills an effective principal is expected to have (Argyropoulou & Symeonidis, 2017; Anthis & Kaklamanis, 2006).

By extension, the aim of this study is to explore, with respect to symbolic interaction, the phenomenon of communication in school and, particularly, the one between the educational leadership and students' parents about the effective school operation.

Our goal is to delve into the issue of parents-—educational leadership communication (parents or members of the Parents and Guardians Association) so as to highlight possible differentiations of their views. Therefore, the research objectives are:

a) To investigate the reasons, ways and frequency of communication
b) To trace the quality of communication and possible factors that negatively affect communication and
c) To outline the principal's communicative profile and highlight their partial features considered to promote or hinder this form of communication.

Based on the literature review, it was found that studying communication as a factor of forming positive school-—family relations is rather limited. At the same time, as it has already been supported, more research is needed on school leaders' communicative skills (National Association of Secondary School principals & National Association of Elementary School principals, 2013). Finally, there is not extensive research activity in the Greek literature focusing on school principal-—parent communication.

Comment [SC20]: Critically consider the formulation. Can the school "attempt to interpret everything that takes place in it"?

Comment [SC21]: Moving this paragraph here improves the flow of argument.

Comment [SC22]: Of importance to?

Comment [SC23]: Extension of what? Just omit this phrase.

Comment [SC24]: Is it thus an ongoing study?

Comment [SC25]: Reformulate. The sentence does not make sense.

2. Effective school–family communication: importance, deterrents and consequences

The school–family relation has gone through various stages up to date while it is considered one of the most significant social patterns of association with school.Over the course of time, different models have been developed relevant to school–family partnership, out of which the most popular ones are the following (Andrianaki & Vasileiadis, 2010; Kirkigianni, 2012; Thoma & Kolovos, 2015):

a) The *gradual* model based on Erikson and Piaget's developmental theories,
b) The *organizational* model, which derives from Parsons and Weber's sociological theories
c) Bronfenbrenner's *ecosystemic* model
d) Epstein's *spheres of influence* model or model of overlapping spheres of influence
e) The model of *political systems,* which derives from the domain of school administration according to Kirkigianni (2012:103-104).

In Greece, there is not an institutionalized frame of co-operation (Gioka & Salmond, 2015). However, school administration is considered to be responsible for promoting participation and good communication with parents and members of the Parents and Guardians Association (Dinidou, 2013).

Comment [SC26]: Improve the formulation. It is not clear what you mean.

Moreover, to achieve the pedagogical and educational mission of school, it is the school and teachers' duty to build positive continuous communication with parents, since parents play a crucial role in the administrative decision making and overall school operation (Sheldon, 2005; Tzotzou & Anastasopoulos, 2013). Building productive communication is based on the formation of a common reciprocal system of school–family communication in which each and every one is fully aware of their role and act as allies to students' effective education (Saitis, 2008; Tsetsos, 2015). According to Pasiardis (as cited in Kirkigianni, 2012:95) the one-way communication takes place when "the transmitter does not expect any response from the receiver (or receivers)" and reciprocal communication takes place when "the receiver responds and there is interaction between the participants".

Additionally, the school-family relation can be regarded as cooperative provided that school promotes parental participation and parents assume an active role (Symeou, 2003). Contrary to this, one could refer to parental involvement meaning that parents' authority is limited and defined by school in the sense that parents assume a positive role of receiver (Petroglou, 2014; Symeou, 2003).

The effective communication in the school unit is the basic component for developing all forms of parental participation in education (American Federation of Teachers, 2007) and positively contributes to creating the necessary conditions for everyday stable school operation (Dinidou, 2013). At the same time, it has multiple benefits for students, parents and teachers (American Federation of Teachers, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002; Saitis, 2008).

Nevertheless, a number of families and teachers face deterrents relevant to their communication between each other (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002; Gioka & Salmond, 2015). These deterrents can be associated with life conditions of the particular families and/or practices of approach implemented by the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002:10-11). Their limitation presupposes the recognition of their understanding (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002:25).

Comment [SC27]: Improve the formulation.

Comment [SC28]: Improve the formulation.

Comment [SC29]: Or "Limiting these deterrents presupposes…"?

As far as parents are concerned, these deterrents can be the outcome of: a) difficulties related to their financial condition (i.e. low income) (Gioka & Salmond, 2015), family conditions (i.e. divorced parents) or their educational capital, b) realistic difficulties that can be related to increased responsibilities (i.e. occupation), c) difficulties that derive from previous negative experiences with the teaching personnel (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002), d) cultural or linguistic differences (Gioka & Salmond, 2015; Nawrotzki, 2012; Saitis, 2008:101).

Respectively, teachers can find difficulties in issues tied to personal, psychological or cultural factors (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002) such as: a) fear for becoming the receivers of parents' negative criticism (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002), b) maintaining a defensive or judgmental attitude (Gioka & Salmond, 2015), c) perceptions about parents' duties and responsibilities to be limited in the out-of-school space, d) limitation of the discussion about what parents should not do (Saitis, 2008).

Moreover, oftentimes teachers and parents hold different interests resulting in various conflicts (Zachos, 2007). ~~The generation of c~~Conflicts or tensions directly affect school effectiveness and operation, while many times it is the outcome of planning or existence of vague limits of action (Tsetsos, 2015).

Insufficient or absence of~~lacking~~ parental participation in school activities, resulting in absent interaction within a frame of mutual acceptance and understanding,may~~affect negatively~~negatively affect school-~~–~~family relations (Tsetsos, 2015).

In particular, when the positive or effective parent – teacher communication is absent, ~~various conditions can emerge (either for one or both sides) being the outcome of~~ negative emotions such as: frustration, disappointment, disbelief or anger can result on the part of one or both of the parties~~, etc~~. Cooperation will then seize and ~~In the event of these conditions,~~ each side will be~~is~~ limited to their own attempts to ~~provide~~ support ~~to~~ children's learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002; Lau & Ng, 2019).

3. The educational leadership contribution to school-~~–~~family communication

One of the basic elements of the principal's role is to function as the missing link among various groups and sub-systems that compose the school unit so as to maintain balance among all of them (Sagri & Vournouka, 2015; Tzotzou & Anastasopoulos, 2013). However, other stakeholders' different perception (i.e. parents, teachers, etc.) can be a major deterrent conducive to communication disfigurement or conflicts which can be reduced and/or eliminated through getting to know and understanding other human beings (Apostol, 2017).

According to Kirkigianni (2011), the effective principal, as educational leader, can function as: a) a model in the school in terms of "teaching, pedagogical, occupational, administrative or interpersonal" issues, b) facilitator of communication among all stakeholders, responsible for school operation, c) manager of pedagogical issues and problems, etc.

On the other hand, as regards parents, the dynamic school leader can achieve their involvement in the educational process by meeting their

Comment [SC30]: The second part of the sentence does not form a logical whole together with the first part. Also see my comment on the use of "while" above.

Comment [SC31]: Improve the formulation.

Comment [SC32]: Improve the formulation.

needs, supporting them and promoting frequent and multi-faceted school-– family communication (Kirkigianni, 2012).

Argyropoulou and~~&~~ Symeonidis (2017:55-59) refer to the effective principal's distinctive features as they have been outlined through studying relevant legislation and literature for the purpose of their research. Some of them refer to: a) *objects or measurable qualifications* (continuous training, certified computer / ICT skills, etc.), b) *skills* (innovation, determination, especially in what is related to taking initiatives, etc.) and c) *personality traits* (communicative, hard-working, democratic, honest, fair, etc.).

Moreover, as Anthisand~~&~~ Kaklamanis (2006) contend, the educational leader should have an array of social and communicative skills ~~out of~~amongst which the most important are: a) *empathy* (it presupposes continuous understanding, careful and attentive listening and full acceptance of what other people say), b) *active listening* (mainly relevant to the manner by which someone listens to their interlocutor which can be achieved through certain techniques or methods such as: continuous eye contact, unconditional acceptance of the interlocutor throughout the conversation etc.), c) *emotional intelligence* (which refers to understanding their emotions as well as other people's emotions (i.e. parents, teachers), d) *sense of humor* (which can contribute to forming a positive climate, preventing conflicts and leading to higher levels of agreement when decision making takes place, functioning as a tool or shield against stress).

Most theoretical studies support the idea that an effective educational leader can develop formal or informal procedures aiming at developing communication and good cooperation between school and family (Babalis, Kirkigianni & Tsali, 2015). By extension, the principal's communicative role should include elements such as mutual respect, honesty and cooperation (Vardiabasi, Makri & Xarli, 2016).

Therefore, in the frame of formal or informal procedures and practices to enhance school – family communication, educational leaders can undertake or pursue a number of actions such as: a) communication through e-mail, b) setting a time schedule about available days and hours for parents' visits to school, c) developing a sense of responsibility among parents and encouraging their volunteer participation in the Parents and Guardians Association and events organization, d) promoting continuous reciprocal and qualitative parent – teacher communication (Babalis et al., 2015).

Moreover, school leaders should act as role models and encourage the use of ICT (Aurelian, 2017) as they provide: a) transparency in every procedure for decision making and b) possibility for faster and more effective communication.

As regards the communication between the contemporary school and its external environment, this can be ensured by the communication between the school principal and the Parents and Guardians Association. The principal is responsible for: a) their participation in the meeting held by the Association and communication of their viewpoint in respect of legitimacy of their actions, b) maintaining positive communicative relations with parents and pursuing continuous meetings for conversation and interaction between them and the Association (Tzotzou & Anastasopoulos, 2013).

However, despite the fact that the proper use of communication techniques and methods is primarily important for an effective school unit, it has been found that there is little attention to administrative leader personnel's training or the use of good practices on behalf of the school principal(Merkuri & Stamatis, 2009).

Comment [SC33]: Who are the "they"? Rephrase.

Comment [SC34]: This does not make sense. How can "communication" be ensured through "communication"?

Comment [SC35]: Or rather "essential"?

Comment [SC36]: Not clear what you mean here?

4. Research Methodology

An attempt is made to showcase special elements about the parent-~~–~~teacher relationship in the context of educational culture. In other words, emphasis is placed on the exploration of formed normative and value models that define the everyday reality of individuals involved in the educational process.

Crete is an island that combines both traditional and modern conditions of living. For the purpose of this case study~~, a representative school was selected, whereas~~ schools in villages were excluded because of their entirely traditional features and schools in large urban areas were excluded due to their entirely modern characteristics. The school under exploration is in the outskirts of a semi-urban area. There are 150 students in the school and their parents have been permanent residents of the area for more than 15 years. Based on our initial effort to highlight differences among parents of different ethnicities, it was found that there are no differences, perhaps due to the fact that a number of parents belong to the Albanian migrant community and they have been residing in Greece for many~~long~~ years~~, as shown by other researches~~. As a result, they have adopted attitudes and

behaviors similar to those of Greek parents and apply the same patterns regarding their children's ~~offspring~~ education (Zachou & Kalerante, 2007).

In this framework, this is a case study addressed to parents of Primary education students. The research sample consists of eighteen (18) parents whose children attend one certain Primary school in the region of Crete. Five (5) of the participants are members of the Parents and Guardians Association.

The researchers took into consideration an important fact that in the particular school there are two types of parents: a) those who simply participate as parents and pay attention to their children's school progress in terms of individual progress and b) those who actively participate, intervene, voice their opinion and act as a pressure group. Therefore, emphasis is placed on depicting school operation with its distinctive features of school culture which is developing within the dynamics of the educational space and the role of the two different groups of parents. Therefore, the in-depth exploration of the aforementioned issues through a qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews was considered to be necessary, as there is full documentation of the social subjects' discourse along with specific emotional elements and a parallel representation of the tension and range of phenomena, facts and incidents (Seidman, 2019).

The convenience and purposive sampling method ~~was~~were applied because it was found most suitable for this study. As indicated by ~~(~~Nova-Kaltsouni, (2006) the convenience and purposive sampling method allow for the sampling of~~and the~~ participants ~~were selected~~ based on their availability (parents of male and female students), the degree of their awareness and the time devoted to the phenomenon under exploration (members of the Parents and Guardians Association) ~~(Nova-Kaltsouni, 2006)~~.

In order to certify the possibility to obtain accurate responses, it is important that all parents selected to participate in this research reported their availability to devote time for the interview as well as provide supplementary clarifications when necessary. The research group consisted of university professors, who contributed to questionnaire organization and validation, as well as the exploration of specific elements throughout the research process. Two different types of schoolteachersalsoparticipatedintheresearchgroup, a teacher working in the specific school and the other one working in education, but not in the specific school.

Comment [SC37]: Improve the formulation.

Comment [SC38]: "Therefore" indicates that you are drawing a conclusion. Here you draw a conclusion on a conclusion.

Comment [SC39]: Don't use a text reference when you refer to what you have done because the author(s) referenced cannot have known what you will do some years later. See my comment in my report.

Comment [SC40]: Shouldn't you discuss this first?

Comment [SC41]: Vague. What "specific elements"?

Thiswasdeemednecessarysincethroughouttheresearchprocessquestions were readapted and the research stages – phases were further modified. The issue of locality was also taken into consideration so as to avoid single-sided readings due to local and in-school relationships. At this level, the theoretical and methodological interventions of the university professors – researchers were significant. Finally, asocialworkerparticipatedintheresearchgroupand contributed to research monitoring, based on her work experience in various educational institutes, by pointing out the fields to be further explored. The school principal's role – member of the research group - was also important, as she was able to understand issues of educational leadership and share her experience on issues for investigation. Over the past years, the combination of the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary is necessary in terms of research organization and application since different theoretical capitals in association with social and professional experience can provide a different content in a research.

The semi-structured interview was selected and applied since it is amore relaxed type of interview and the interviewee is not limited. Moreover, it is used as one of the major tools to collect data in descriptive ~~researches~~research (Nova-Kaltsouni, 2006).

Our research tool, the interview guide, was composed according to the aim, objectives and research questions. The research questions are as follow:

1) What are the reasons, ways and frequency of communication of parents and parents – members of the Parents and Guardians Association with the school principal?
2) How is the quality of communication characterized and what are the possible factors that negatively affect the communication between parents and parents – members of the Parents and Guardians Association with the school principal?
3) What are the views of parents and parents – members of the Parents and Guardians Association about the Principal's communicative profile and theirindividual distinctive features that hinder or facilitate the communication between the two sides?

The research was primarily piloted to two parents (one parent and one parent-member of the Parents and Guardians Association) to find out whether the interview questions should be modified or articulated with more clarity.

Comment [SC42]: What is the relation between these and the need to include two types of teachers to the researcher-group?

Comment [SC43]: To which level are you referring?

Comment [SC44]: With regard to?

Comment [SC45]: Perhaps you should rather focus on other, more applicable characteristics of semi-structured interviews to explain why it was a suitable data-collection method for this specific study. Consider using a more current research source dealing specifically with interviews as data-collection method.

Comment [SC46]: "parent-members"?

Comment [SC47]: "parent-members"?

Comment [SC48]: "parent-members"?

Eighteen (18) semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain research data. Each interview was conducted separately and ~~it was~~ recorded. The interview process commenced in the middle of January 2020 and lasted until the end of the same month of the same year.

The initial step to analyze the research data was based on the combination of transcription, writing down the content of interviews (Tsiolis, 2018) and organizing the material in separate files for each interview in the computer (Creswell, 2016). The transcription of the verbal material into written was based on "speechnotes" (hhtps://speechnotes.co/), a program which turns the conversation into written text. Throughout this procedure, the researchers also documented the necessary paralinguistic elements of each participant (Tsiolis, 2018).

Comment [SC49]: Isn't "writing down the content of interviews" what transcription is?

Comment [SC50]: Don't use a text reference when you refer to what you have done because the author(s) referenced cannot have known what you will do some years later. See my comment in my report.

The next step was the careful reading of the transcribed texts so as to trace those parts of interviews that contained useful information to answer the research questions. This material was written down in a separate file (Tsiolis, 2018).

The procedure of codification followed, meaning that an attempt was made to develop full understanding of the research data and their conceptual framework (Tsiolis, 2018). At the same time, ideas and categories that had derived from the literature review were also taken into consideration (Tsiolis, 2018). Then, the emerging codes were unitized and thematic units were developed containing primary or secondary categories and / or sub-categories (Creswell, 2016; Tsiolis, 2018). It should be noted that for the purpose of this research the theory of symbolic interaction was utilized, as it provides the general context and the conceptual tools for organizing and analyzing the research data (Kyriazi, 2011).

The final stage of thematic analysis included the report of the emerging themes that answered our research questions and the presentation of interview excerpts to provide validation of our findings (Tsiolis, 2018).

5. Research Results

This section presents the most significant results of our research per thematic unit and category of participants (parents and parents – members of the Parents and Guardians Association). Some of the results are enriched with relevant interview excerpts to better present and understand them.

Comment [SC51]: "In this section, the author(s) presents …"

Comment [SC52]: "parent-members"?

5.1 First Thematic Unit: Frequency, reasons and ways of communication between parents and the school principal.

a) Communication with parents / members of the Parents and Guardians Association.

Comment [SC53]: This the same as "parent-members" or two different groups?

The communication with the school principal is rather rare and it takes place on a non-systematic basis, through telephone and in the form of individual non-scheduled meetings.

A.1: *"Through the telephone and face-to-face, if necessary. Most times through the telephone… and we meet the school principal, when necessary".*

A.2: *"I will either go there or through the telephone. We talk on the phone or I go there".*

The major reasons for communication are meeting certain needs and problems management.

A.1: *"About what subjects (.), school-related issues, in case a child faces a problem".*

A.2: *"… in case of a problem. If there is a problem. And when there is need after all, when something happens or when I want to ask for something, to do some things at school".*

A.5: *"In case we are asked for it or by a parent or when we want something from the school or if the school wants something from us".*

b) Communication with parents

The majority of parents communicate ~~rather~~ rarely, randomly or in a non-systematic way with the school principal.

B.8: *"Hm (…), I do not, not at all frequently".*

B.9: *"I do it as frequently as I want to (.), nobody else decides about it… I do not speak with the Principal very much, almost quite rarely".*

B.11: *"… I mean I do not often, only in case there is something, if something happens. After that we do not communicate (.) meaning that it is not necessary".*

The most popular way of communication is the telephone communication.

Comment [SC54]: "by telephone"?

B.5: *"… I call her in case it is necessary… Yes, only through the telephone…".*

B.8: *"… again through the telephone (…)…"*

B.13: *"We communicate through the telephone… To tell you the truth there has been no need to communicate face-to-face".*

At the same time, the research data analysis has revealed that some parents do not communicate with the school principal at all.

Comment [SC55]: Or just "data"?

B.1: *"I have never communicated…".*

B.2: *"No, there was no need to talk with her… we have never met face-to-face".*

Some parents choose personal meetings exclusively to communicate with the school principal.

B.9: *"… always privately… I never use the telephone…".*

B.10: *"… it is face-to-face".*

B.11: *"I go there, I go, no, no, no, I go and meet her at school".*

The use of a combination of telephone and face-to-face communication was reported by one parent only and it seemed to be the least preferable way.

B.6: *"… we speak over the phone… due to my occupation, but even as a parent… over the phone and then we discuss any arising issues on a face-to-face basis".*

The major issue for communication is to meet certain needs and problem management, which are not related to any predefined schedule of meetings. On the other hand, the least preferable reason for communication was parents' being informed about their offspring's school performance and behavior.

Comment [SC56]: Or "reasons … are"?

Some participants communicate with the school principal upon their own initiative due to realistic difficulties they face (e.g. occupation) (B.12) or to inform about personal problems (such as the loss of a relative) about which they are concerned given the impact these difficulties may have on their children's learning and behavior (B.4).

B.12: *"I usually communicate when I have a problem…when I needed to stay at work longer than usual (.) or in case the child must leave the morning school program…".*

B.4: *"… I went to her to inform her about the issue of my mother* ((loss))… *I told her that I had that problem and I was concerned about my girl… I am afraid of her having those outbursts…".*

Moreover, communication on the parents' side can take place in case of a problem in their communication with a teacher or when they want to inform the school about their child's health problem.

B.4: *"…when I had to account for her absences or when my daughter had a small accident".*

B.9: *"… I will go only in case I cannot figure out anything with the teacher… in case there is a problem with the child and they would tell me what had happened…".*

B.13: *"I mainly inform the school when the child is ill and cannot go to school".*

5.2 Second thematic unit: Quality of communication and factors of negative impact on the communication with the school principal

a) Views of parents – membersof the Parents and Guardians Association

Comment [SC57]: "parent-members"?

The majority of them reported positive communication and relations with the school principal, while acceptance is the major adopted attitude.

A.1: *"As regards me, excellent… my needs are fulfilled".*

A.2:*"Quite well".*

The school principal was reported to maintain a closer relation with the President of the Parents and Guardians Association (A.2). In this respect, it was found that the relation with the members of the Association were neutral or dull.

A.2: *"in case of any arising problem she calls me or I call her to talk over it* ((President))*".*

A.4: *"The President takes care of most issues, no, no…".*

On the contrary, the minority of them were reported to maintain negative relations.

A.3: *"As regards communication, meaning communication between us (.) there is not such a thing. There is no communication with the Principal, for me… I do not believe that there is communication. In some cases we did not communicate. I believe that the level of communication is very low".*

In this context, negative attitudes of disdain, rejection, disappointment, suspicion / disbelief and hostility are developed and reproduced.

A.3: *"Hm (.) unless for a reason, "fingers crossed"* ((if necessary))*… Had she not been here, without the school principal, things would be better, believe me… I do not think I need to have further relations with the particular person (.). Now, when it comes to any school principal, on a scale from 0 to 10? It is 2, no more than 2, I believe I am very lenient with this grading* ((the participant refers to their personal judgment about the school principal*)… each President* ((of the Parents and Guardians Association)) *has to lower themselves in this type of school principals (.) to figure out what is going on… Humiliation!* [laughing]".

A.5: *"I believe that she should not hold this position. Not even in a school, that's what I think. She should be working in an office, paperwork, something else… I regard her knowledge insufficient to hold such a position…".*

A.5: *"Very disappointing… of course, OK, you see… in our school, unfortunately, there are not such limits… Unfortunately yes… Unfortunately. To our disappointment it did not happen in our school".*

A.5: *"One covers the other* ((referring to teachers))*… not for the school principal to evaluate the teachers… what the teachers would say about the school principal? Something negative? Since they are evaluated by the Principal? Nobody will say nothing (.). Nobody will talk (.)… since they are together every day, have a cup of coffee together, the teachers will certainly not say anything negative to her".*

A.3: *"OK!... I have a disadvantage, I'd rather say a negative aspect, I am sort of vociferous… I show this kind of behavior because there are moments, I am fed up with everything and everyone there".*

The major factors of negative impact on communication and the development of negative relations were reported as follows:

a) Previous negative experiences

A.5: *"There has been an issue with a child who had broken its arm at school… a child who had banged its head… and was transferred to hospital… a child who spent two weeks in the hospital, particularly my child… and when I was informed about the incident I got mad because the child said that it was involved in a fight and all this happened at school".*

b) Disappointment tied to the practices about the communication and updating of parents

Comment [SC58]: Improve the formulation.

A.5:*"There was just a post on the school website* ((announcement))*… and all this and it was just an update. But this is not the proper type of information because a number of parents are not Facebook or Internet users or whatever, is that so? The Principal should send a letter or make a proper announcement. Or send a message. There is a computer application and based on all parents' telephone numbers the Principal can send a message through the Internet to inform them. This did not happen".*

c) Comparisons and subjective perceptions about the school principal'scommunication effectiveness.

A.3: *"…they should be activated, be more energetic and motivating… to prevent situations before they happen, before they commence. TO SOLVE PROBLEMS DIRECTLY… The Principal should collaborate with teachers about these issues… A school principal is incorruptible, integral and unbiased… and objective and this does not apply only to children (.) You should start from the teachers and then deal with the children…".*

A.5: *"Because he had many acquaintances, he was more than brilliant! He was a different type of Principal and I can tell that he had many acquaintances and smartness and staff like that, but he did his job well. In the first place, teachers respected one another and they respected their Principal, too. This means that he suggested things and there were no objections. He treated both teachers and parents in the same way… our school used to be in a mess and he managed to set limits. He set limits to everyone, teachers, parents and children".*

Moreover, data analysis revealed that some factors that affect the quality and quantity of relations result in attitudes of non-acceptance due to previous negative experiences with the teaching personnel. Some deterrents to communication and development of positive relations between parents

and teachers are associated with attitudes and beliefs of the teachers or the limited discussion of "what parents should not do".

b) Parents' views

The majority of participants characterized the communication with the school principal as positive. ~~However,~~Even though, most of them were found to maintain conventional or neutral / superficial relations with her.

B. 1: *"If I have a problem I will meet her, if I do not have a problem there is no reason to meet her… if I want to communicate with her or if she wants to do so, she will do it".*

B.2: *"Good afternoon, this, good morning, nothing else. No, it has not been necessary to talk with her.. it has not occurred".*

At the same time, three of the participants seemed to have developed informal / positive relations with the school principal and have adopted an attitude of acceptance.

B.6: *"We have a very good collaboration… I think that every Principal (.) intends to do the best for the school they work for, so I say the same about our Principal".*

B.10: *"… I am very pleased and satisfied…".*

Finally, two parents reported negative communication.

B.3: *"…as worse as she can be, no, no way".*

B.8: *"(…) I would say negative".*

Negative communication seemed to have been directly associated with negative relations with the school principal. In this context, attitudes of disdain and suspicion / disbelief were adopted.

B.3: *"An attempt has been made to cover some colleagues and their mistakes… the specific Principal is unaware... unaware of things, she does not (...), she lives in her own world (.) I believe she is unaware of the school environment, this one… falls sort (…) in many things…".*

B.8: *"… you cannot handle many things with this Principal…".*

The most important factor of negative impact on the quality and quantity of communication with the school principal(when taking into consideration

parents who do not communicate) was found to be most participants' pursuit of a more systematic communication with the classroom teacher. Other factors relate to school introversion. Individual factors of positive or negative impact were found to be~~:~~ comparisons with previous p~~P~~rincipals, subjective perceptions and preference to communicate with the Parents and Guardians Association.

5.2 Third thematic unit: The Principal's communicative profile and distinctive features that promote or hinder communication with parents

a) Views of parents – members of the Parents and Guardians Association

In terms of the Principal's communicative role, it was discovered that the majority of participants consider her to be an extrovert, communicativeand capable of maintaining an objective and collaborative attitude.~~As regards the Principal's communicative role, it was found that the majority of the participants stated that she is communicative and extrovert, maintaining an objective and collaborative attitude in the frame of their communication~~.

A.1: *"She is talkative, hm (.)… She communicates… say, in whatever we need, meaning that she will deal with it, trying to meet the required needs, that is (…), that's it… anything… I will call her, yes, to deal with my problem, to say something to another teacher".*

A.2: *"… she is communicative, at least with me".*

A.4: *"… I do not think that she exaggerates in certain issues, I believe that she is objective as far as I am concerned".*

Nevertheless, reports on displeasure outweigh. Some participants' negative perceptions are thatthe principal lack communicative and problem-solvingskills and receptiveness and empathy when communicating. These participants further perceive the principal ashaving an inability to take initiative or assume responsibilities.~~The negative view formed by some participants is associated with lacking communicative skills, inability in taking initiatives or assuming responsibilities and problem solving as well as lack of receptiveness and empathy of the school principal when communicating~~.

Comment [SC59]: Check the numbering.

Comment [SC60]: "parent-members"?

Comment [SC61]: Outweigh what?

A.2: *"What I'm saying is that she sometimes does not want to assume responsibilities. That is what is the most negative about her, she is afraid of some things (...)".*

A.3: *"Hm (...) grading from not at all to very much, I would say a little. She is inadequate as far as I am concerned. A Principal who knows how to solve problems is adequate, not how to create problems. She cannot, cannot understand some things... I believe that she does not want to listen, she is not there; she does not want to listen... she does not pursue communication. She demands our attention, listening to her, she only, because she does not accept my demand to be (.) heard. She is (.) clearly, that's the problem... major problem".*

A.5: *"In the first place, our Principal is basically afraid of responsibilities, she does not want to assume responsibilities, not at all. And this is a negative aspect for a Principal... she is not energetic (.) to be able to control the school".*

Additionally, the research results revealed that the limited participation of parents – members in administration and decision making about school issues as well as the insufficient information they received ~~by the Parents~~and Guardians Association generates displeasure which was referred to as difficulty by the President of the Parents and Guardians Association (A.2).

Comment [SC62]: Should it be "parent-members"?

Comment [SC63]: Avoid the passive voice.

A.2: *"OK, the Principal sometimes takes initiatives, but, OK, due to her responsibility for the school, hm (...) this, about the initiatives she takes... with teachers, sometimes she makes decisions about the Association which I'd rather be aware of".*

b) Parents' views

The majority of participants described the Principal as a communicative person. According to them, during the communication between the two sides she showed understanding and true interest. They believe that she is approachable and they can discuss their suggestions with her in the frame of fruitful dialogue. Some of them reported:

B.2: *"She is open to receiving our phone calls, talking with her... I believe that in case I call her, yes, she will talk with me and listen to my considerations".*

B.5: *"... you can freely talk to her... she can develop understanding...".*

B.7: *"… to my mind she is open to suggestions".*

B.9: *"She is a very collaborative woman… an easy-going person".*

Some mothers reported that she is discreet, polite, patient and honest, being able to judge objectively and reward or pinpoint possible weaknesses.

B.5: *"… the Principal is very patient…".*

B.8: *"OK, she is polite, hm (…) she is well-intentioned…".*

B.10: *"… she is very discreet, she does not humiliate you, she can tell you things in a nice way (.) for everything even your details, she can tell in a proper way… she rewards you about the right and wrong".*

B.12: *"… this woman is very (.) friendly with ~~me..~~me...".*

One mother reported that the Principal's young age is a distinctive feature that facilitates communication. Furthermore, another participant, due to her realistic difficulties (occupation), particularly appreciates the fact that the Principal is helpful and supportive to her (B.12).

B.12: *"… she has helped med a great deal, a lot… when I had to work longer hours… this woman has never refused even when I called her the very last moment… She is helpful and (…) she helps, meaning any time I ask for, ten times or more, basically, to keep my child at school, she has never refused… Me, personally, for simple things, she has helped me".*

To sum up, the analysis of the research results revealed that the majority of the participants regard the Principal as an agreeable person, quite approachable when communicating. Most of them believe that she shows true interest and empathy, while she is honest, polite and patient; features that facilitate communication. Feelings of displeasure were expressed only by two participants who described the Principal as introvert, indifferent, remote and formal. According to them, the negative view is associated with her lack of objectivity and effectiveness.

Comment [SC64]: This in contrast to the statement: "Nevertheless, reports on displeasure outweigh"

6. Discussion and Interpretation

Based on the research results and Epstein's model of overlapping spheres of influence (Andrianaki & Vasileiadis, 2010; Kirkigianni, 2012; Thoma & Kolovos, 2015), it can be inferred that school can be perceived either as a

field of conflicts or as a context of fruitful collaboration, promotion, respect and actions conducive to its steady and regular operation.

According to the theory of symbolic interaction (Hughes & Koehler, 2007; Kyriazi, 2011), it has been found that the factors: a) attitudes and perceptions of teachers, parents, members of the Parents and Guardians Association and the principal and b) the meanings given to the interaction among each other or to various situations and facts, decisively affect the quality and quantity of communication and the relations of the stakeholders.

The participation of parents – members of the Parents and Guardians Association in administration and decision making about school issues is limited or entirely absent. The above have resulted in their displeasure and / or the adoption of rejection or other kinds of negative attitudes on their side. The relations are influenced and this has an impact on communication and, by extent, on the school climate. Moreover, our findings converge partially with those of Stravakou's research in which it was found that the Principals often collaborate with the Parents and Guardians Association (as cited in Babalis et al., 2015). At the same time, they contrast the findings of Merkouri and~~&~~ Stamatis' research (2009) who found that principals, apart from unscheduled meetings, organized monthly meetings with the Parents and Guardians Association.

Thus, it can be inferred that: a) some parents have never communicated with the principal, b) communication for the majority of the members of the Parents and Guardians Association as well as for the other parents is rare, mainly conducted through the telephone, unscheduled and, therefore, the viewpoint that the school does not invite parents to meetings very often is confirmed (Manesis & Tseregouni, 2005). The efforts to attract, improve or enhance communication and the relations with parents are particularly limited and parental participation is not encouraged. In contrast to another research, it is reported that the communication practices of the school included the effort to attract parents who did not communicate with the school (Liakopoulou, 2018).

A fact for further consideration by the educational community is linked to the parents – members of the Parents and Guardians Association since, theoretically speaking, participation in associations is interpreted as participation in civil affairs. A collectivity as such has an active role as pressure group, both addressing the school teachers and broader

Comment [SC65]: In this section the theory should be used to interpret findings. You only mentioned that this is one of the models relevant to school--family partnership, but you did not discuss it. You indicated that the theoretical framework underlying this study was the theory of symbolic interaction.

Comment [SC66]: "parent-members"?

Comment [SC67]: "by"?

Comment [SC68]: Why reference another source where you present your findings. Was the finding that you confirmed drawn by these authors and with regard to the same research population?

Comment [SC69]: "parent-members"?

collectivities like municipalities, public welfare services and other local carriers. In this respect, participating in a collectivity does not entail certain tasks and it is not defined by any association principles (Tsatsos, 2006).

The research shows that the educational environment, teachers and parents, are not involved in viewpoint sharing; they do not communicate. It is obvious that there is only a simple, typical communication, mostly relevant to getting grade reports and, in some cases, parents' information about their children's progress. This research also emphasizes the role of Parents and Guardians Association, although it was expected to have an important intervening role in the educational process, their presence is rather typical, without scope and, oftentimes, selective. Neither do they behave as pressure groups, nor do they intervene, therefore, not developing a broader collectivity.

The research results also confirm more general remarks of other intellectuals about the atomocentric school operation, the loss of collectivities and personal progress as the main goal along with downgraded elements of collective participation, interaction, offering to society and the fellow citizen. It can be said that the neoliberal model defines progress with concentration on the person, in the sense of private space and the dominant mentality of modern societies, in particular the educational environment as social environment. The fact that education generates knowledge to enter the labor market and engage in competition simultaneously ignoring knowledge as content and value and highlighting administrative knowledge and its distinctive features, namely exams and grades. Therefore, both parents and children regard their presence at school as a "passage", a transitional period, without paying attention to the special features of the educational space. In other words, they do not define school as part of their life, a place to build essential knowledge, interact, develop considerations and engage their thought in more general issues like the environmental crisis or social equality targeting abuse, wars, etc.

It is noteworthy that a case study can showcase the tension and range of the situation by taking into consideration all the viewpoints and emotions. In this way, the educational space can be highlighted as a place where administrative knowledge is generated while teachers and students are simply the "players" who maximize their profit through grades, without substantial presence (Kontopodis, 2012). In this respect, educational issues of consideration can be the creation of prerequisites to operate a democratic school where all parents, teachers and students can look deep into the true

Comment [SC70]: In this specific school?

Comment [SC71]: Such as?

Comment [SC72]: What does this model entail?

Comment [SC73]: Don't use "etc" in academic writing.

Comment [SC74]: This sentence does not make sense.

social, political and cultural problems, while keeping distances from the single-sided procedural work of defining success and progress through high scores. Although it is not a subject under exploration in this research, it is evident that in Greece there is a growing number of people with limited knowledge in humanitarian studies resulting in low interest in the true social and cultural issues.

The use of contemporary techniques / methods of communication is primarily important and the principal should be a role model by encouraging their use (Aurelian, 2017). However, it seems that no special attention is paid to their effective use or parents' needs, since it does not result in informing the total number of parents of the school and it does not provide transparency in terms of the decision making process.

Comment [SC75]: Choose the most appropriate phrase.

Personality traits, objective / measurable qualities of the principal such as training, communicative and social skills seem to affect decisively the communication and relations with parents (Argyropoulou & Symeonidis, 2017; Anthis & Kaklamanis, 2006). Energetic listening, empathy, extroversion, objectivity and honesty constitute the factors of positive influence. Reciprocal communication is conducive to developing effective communication, cultivating positive attitudes and relations (Babalis et al., 2015). On the contrary, one-way communication, parents' limitation regarding administration or decision making about school issues, the principal's typical attitude and other individual factors can altogether disturb and affect the school–family communication. Our research findings seem to coincide with Liakopoulou's findings (2018) about difficulties in communication and the frequency of meeting, since the results of both studies~~researches~~ converge in terms of non-organized regular meetings and the difficulties of one-way communication (Liakopoulou, 2018).

Comment [SC76]: Rephrase in sentence format and avoid using the slash.

Comment [SC77]: Reconsider the word choice.

Communication is mainly limited to problem solving and, secondarily, to updating about school performance and behavior. The above finding coincides with the findings of literature review regarding the conclusion that the principal is the manager of pedagogical issues and problems (Kirkigianni, 2011). Yet, in case the parent–principal conversations are limited and processing or confrontation of other issues or parents' considerations are not promoted, then the relations, attitudes and parental communication with the educational leadership are negatively affected. This means that they become conventional, indifferent or negative, thus, affecting in their turn the school climate as well as parents' attitudes and

Comment [SC78]: Improve the formulation.

perceptions. Some parents perceive school as a distant and introvert organization and, as a result, they were limited to provide support to the students (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002:12).

Additionally, in our research, the size of the sample of parents – members of the Parents and Guardians Association compared with the sample of parents – non-members, who were interviewed, is disproportionate. In this respect, it could be said that the general sense that is depicted about communication is similar between the two different sample groups. Despite the fact that most participants considered the communication with the principal positive, the continuous, substantial and positive interaction is absent. As a consequence, contrasting forces are developed between each other (positive or negative) that affect the communication of the entire school system.

Besides, factors such as: a) the phenomenon of school violence or injuries and b) teachers' attitudes negatively affect both school-family communication and the parents' sense of security and satisfaction. As regards teachers, deterrents to communication may derive from their own attitudes and perceptions. In particular, disbelief, distant or omniscient attitudes, perceptions about the limitation of parents' responsibilities outside school negatively affect the school-family communication (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002; Gioka& Salmond, 2015; Saitis, 2008). However, most parents were found to expect closer and more regular meetings with the classroom teacher. So, it can be inferred that there is need for updating, guidance, information exchange and reassurance through discussing parents' considerations. It is noted that the most systematic participation and communication between parents and school can be conducive to cultivating positive perceptions about teachers and the consequent improvement of teachers' morale (American Federation of Teachers, 2007).

7. Final Conclusions, Limitations and Suggestions

All in all, according to relevant literature (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002), it can be said that in the school under exploration the deterrents to communication stem from sources inside the school (e.g. educational leader – teacher partnership towards the formation of positive and regular communication with parents) as well as from sources outside of school (e.g. parents' realistic difficulties, etc.). In this context, the educational

Comment [SC79]: "parent-members"?

Comment [SC80]: You only mention one source?

Comment [SC81]: Critically consider this statement. You did not obtain the information on the sources of deterrents to communication present at the participant school from "literature".

Comment [SC82]: To which context are you referring?

leader seems to play a crucial role by ~~affecting significantly~~significantly affecting the relation, collaboration and communication between school and family.

As regards the reasons, ways and frequency of communication with parents it can be inferred that face-to-face communication with the school principal is mainly rare, unscheduled and non-systematic. The telephone seems to be the most preferable means of communication, while the main reason for communicating with the school principal is problem solving and management as well as needs fulfillment. When it comes to the quality of communication with parents and the possible factors that negatively affect it, it can be inferred that the majority of the participants maintain a conventional, neutral or weak relation with the school principal although they regard their communication with her positive. It is noteworthy that there is also negative impact on the school principal-~~ ~~parents' communication due to parents' previous negative experiences as well as disappointment tied to insufficient communication practices and parents' updating. The negative climate is further reinforced by the participants' comparisons and subjective perceptions about the principal's effectiveness along with parents' views about the principal's communicative profile and her distinctive features that affect communication between the two sides. On the other hand, the interviewees report their tendency to pursue more systematic communication with the class teacher.

The majority of the participants were positive about the principal's communicative profile, considering that her distinctive features that promote communication between the two sides are: communicative, approachable and extrovert, her objective and collaborative attitude, receptiveness, understanding – empathy, politeness, discretion, patience, honesty and young age.

The minority of them were negative about the principal's communicative profile, considering that her distinctive features that hinder communication between the two sides are: weakness in taking initiatives and assuming responsibilities and problem solving, lack of receptiveness and empathy, limited participation in decision making about the school and parents' inadequate updating.

The *limitations* concerning our findings and the conclusions of this research are: a) the method that has been utilized, a case study, does not allow for generalization of the results, b) the data were collected by means of one

research tool only, the semi-structured interview, c) telephone interviews have limited the documentation of paralinguistic elements, d) the selection of the participants was based on purposive sampling since it concerned a certain school in the region of Crete, and e) in terms of anonymity and confidentiality the exact region, where the research was conducted, is not stated.

Based on the above limitations, some *suggestions for future research* can be conducting similar qualitative or quantitative ~~researches~~research with different research tools (e.g. a questionnaire with open-ended questions) so as to obtain more insights about the school principal-parents relation and communication. Further exploration of the factors that affect the quality of the principal-parents' communication and the impact on communication between the two sides is also needed to develop deep understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of this relation. Moreover, exploration of the school principal's training needs regarding practices of approach and communication with parents can also be useful.

The following *suggestions for pedagogical implementation* refer to the development and upgrading of education administration, the improvement of the educational process and the school principal's support by the State. First and foremost, the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs can implement training courses emphasizing the reinforcement of the school principal's social and communicative skills and learning best practices in school-family communication. Furthermore, the development of an official State plan about ways or methods of approach, communication and partnership between school and family could be beneficial for both sides, as both parents and teaching personnel could have the means to build honest and effective relations for the shake of students. On top of that, certain policymaking on special practices of approach and attraction of parents who do not communicate with the school could have a positive impact on parents' encouragement to develop honest relations with the school.

Finally, taking literature (Merkouri & Stamatis, 2009) into consideration, it can be argued that the sensitization, preparation, continuous professional development and training of Principals for the proper use of techniques / methods of communication is very significant for an effective school operation.

Comment [SC83]: Improve the formulation.

Comment [SC84]: Or the view of these authors?

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