




© 2017 Koutrouba et al. This article follows the  Open Access policy of CC BY NC under Creative Commons attribution license v 4.0.



Submitted: 14/02/2017 - Accepted: 14/03/2017 - Published: 28/04/2017

When Teachers Become Parents: Parenthood Influence on Greek Teachers' Professional Lives

Konstantina Koutrouba^{1*}

Eirini Kalantzaki²

Ioannis Christopoulos³

¹Department of Home Economics and Ecology, Harokopio University, Athens, Greece

²High School Teacher, Athens, Greece

³High School Teacher, Arsakeia-Tositseia Schools, Athens, Greece

*Email: kkout@hua.gr

DOI: 10.26417/ejser.v7i1.p20-30

Abstract

The present study examines 30 Greek teachers' views about changes that took place after they became parents regarding teaching and learning, communication and cooperation with students and parents, and attitudes towards teacher profession. The data were collected through semi-structured face to face in-depth interviews, based on 25 close- and open-ended questions, and classified into categories using content analysis. The research indicates, inter alia, that parenthood had a major impact on teachers' empathy, on attitudes towards low-achievers, and on the implemented teaching procedures per se. It also shows that teachers who became parents tend to improve their communication with their students' parents, to be more tolerant of criticism, and to be more patient and supportive as regards students' academic and socio-affective achievements. Regarding at-home planning and preparation, and physical, mental and emotional fatigue of teachers during parenthood, the present study reveals developing burning-out symptoms, which are, however, counterbalanced by strong feelings of

rewarding love and acceptance displayed by their students. It finally shows that parenthood does not subjugate the professional aspirations of vivid, ambitious teachers, although female teachers who became parents are expected to face more obstacles than their male colleagues during their professional and family life, especially if they hold a position in school administration, lack the provision of at-home help or have family children who display learning or other physical disabilities or misbehavior problems.

Keywords: teachers; parenthood; changes; education; Greece

Introduction

Extensive research over the past years has convincingly shown that parenthood has a major impact on professional life. since, after becoming parents, both men and women have to redefine their values, re-hierarchize their priorities and develop personal traits and features that facilitate effectiveness in both roles, the professional and the parenting one (Drago, 2001; Frone, 2003; Hudson et al., 2001). Although, however, such changes are expected to happen whenever professionals become parents, their extent, depth and impact, and the experiences they produce are difficult to be monitored, controlled or managed, since they depend on a great variety of factors regarding the personality and the life of the parent such as the gender, the system of pre-existed beliefs, values expectations, and aspirations, his/her physical, mental, emotional, and social abilities and dexterities, the social and financial setting, the support s/he gets from others, the demands of his/her profession and so on (Bailey, 2000; Cosford & Draper, 2002; MacLure, 1993).

The difficulty of so many factors' effective management by professionals who became parents is further aggravated when professional and parental demands are conflicting (MacDonald, 1994; O'Connor, 2008), for example when the same person is expected to be strict and over demanding at work but pliant and consenting at home. From this point of view, the teacher profession seems to be privileged, given the fact that, prima facie, the same person is expected to deal with children at work and at home, to develop in the course of time unified personality traits that are equally effective in job and in family (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008; Zembylas, 2003), to organize personal and professional life in a compact, unaltered way and in the form of harmoniously communicating vessels, or, in other words, to conveniently develop only one role practised in two different places, at school and at home (Parker et al., 2012; Rice, 2003).

Such oversimplified misleading expectations and misconceptions could probably provide reasons for the lack of extensive research on the field of parenthood influences on teachers' professional lives. The existing, however, research clearly reveals teachers' effort to achieve balance between professional, family and personal life, not always with successful outcomes (Day et al., 2007; MacDonald, 1994);

sometimes imbalance derives from the excessive demands and expectations that parent teachers have from themselves and the social environment they live in (Edwards et al., 2002; O'Connor, 2008), in other cases the professional knowledge accumulated from work seems to be ineffectively applied in the family setting, and, conversely, the experience deriving from in-family life cannot be easily utilised at school since students' expectations and needs are shaped in different social and financial settings, or the students seem to have completely different cognitive, affective and social abilities than teacher's family children (Gannerud, 2001; Wentzel, 2002). In many cases, however, teachers perceive such differences as interesting challenges which prevent professional stagnation and possible burning-out, and enrich daily life with motivating or mind-provoking experiences (Eren, 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

In addition, parenthood seems to have an apparent impact on the organization of parent teachers' daily tasks and time. Inevitably, after becoming parents, teachers have to consider whether their family children are of the same, of lower or of higher importance than their students – a dilemma also common to almost all other occupations where professionals have to prioritize their family or/and their work (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Marston et al., 2006). It has been reported (Cinamon & Rich, 2002) that parent teachers who are young or does not have long professional experience tend to consider job and family as being of the same importance, while the perception of family's priority grows and strengthens as parent teachers age or obtain long and consolidated educational experiences (Farkas et al., 2000; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In every case, however, parent teachers are expected to spend a lot of care, time and energy in their children's raising at the expense of personal leisure time, self-education (an oxymoron for professional educators), or even professional aspirations (Drago, 2001). As a consequence, the risk of professional burn-out remain high in parent teachers, especially when physical and emotional fatigue is further aggravated due to feelings of inadequacy and guilt since usually they have to spend more time with other people's children than with their own ones (Knowles et al., 2009). It has been also shown that for female parent teachers, parenthood constitutes an important obstacle when women want to make a career in the administration of education, given the fact that, due to consolidated social stereotypes, women were considered more suitable as mothers to raise and as teachers to teach children but men were expected to administer the schools or make demanding careers (Sikes, 1997; Stoel & Thant, 2002). It is rather obvious that such stereotypes highly contribute to the development of remorseful feelings of inadequacy when women have to come up to personal, family, professional and social expectations at the same time (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

The complexity and the multiplicity of factors that influence the double roles of parent teachers can apparently explain why so far there is no enough evidence from relevant research about more specific issues regarding changes in the teaching process per se, or changes in teacher attitudes towards their students' academic, affective, and social

achievements (McFarlin, 2007; Sikes, 1998). Moreover, we do not have yet extensive findings regarding changes that teachers reported after they became parents regarding their attitudes towards their students' parents.

As regards Greece, relevant research findings about changes in teachers' behaviour, attitudes, professional beliefs due to parenthood are similarly poor. Greek educational system remains highly conservative, despite minor reforms that introduced several teaching innovations in Greek in-class reality (Georgiadis, 2007; Koutsourakis, 2007; Traianou, 2009). Such innovations regarding mainly experiential learning activities in primary education, and cooperative and project-based learning procedures in secondary education, seem to be welcome by Greek teachers, parents and students as well, but only on the condition that the core academic, cognitive objectives of the teaching procedure are not underestimated or downgraded (Koulaidis et al., 2006; OECD, 2015). In-depth changes as regards students' socio-emotional development rarely happen, since the educational system disseminates long-established traditional knowledge, beliefs and values through well-accepted teacher-centred techniques which are considered to help students more easily and quickly perform measurable, credible academic achievements (Kassotakis, 2000; Koutrouba, 2012). At the same time, the bureaucratic character of Greek education, through the domination of quantity over quality of the provided learning material, the rapid pace of knowledge dissemination and the strict assessment procedures discourage teachers who would like to diversify, to experiment or innovate freely their teaching techniques (Eurydice, 2015; OECD, 2011). In such learning settings, many Greek teachers' prime objective is to evolve their students' academic performance, often neglecting, this way, in their classrooms students who present learning disabilities, need individualised assistance or are, simply, academically low-achievers (Ifanti & Fotopoulou, 2011; Koutrouba & Christopoulos, 2015).

The present study aims at examining Greek teachers' views about changes that took place after they became parents regarding teaching and learning, communication and cooperation with students and parents, and attitudes towards teacher profession.

Methodology

Participants

Of the 30 teachers who participated in the research, 70 percent were women, while 30 percent were men. Fifty percent of the participants were elementary education teachers (with students 7-12 years old), 20% were junior high school teachers (with students 13-15 years old) while 30% were upper high school teachers (with students 16-18 years old). The working experience of the majority of them (53.3%) ranged from 21 to 35 years, while 20% of the reviewees held a position in school administration. Moreover, the overwhelming majority (60%) of the participants did not possess any postgraduate degree in Education. Finally, the majority of the

participants (46.7%) had two children, (43.3%) had one child, 6.7% had three, and 3.3% of the reviewees had four or more children.

Data Collection and Analysis

The present study was conducted in Athens, Greece, in 2015. A qualitative approach was selected as the most suitable method to carry out the present research. A qualitative approach allows researchers to “get in participants’ position” and see the world through their eyes without being misled to arbitrary conclusions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Mason, 2002; Silverman, 1998). Specifically, the *semi-structured* interview was used to collect all the data of the present study. According to Oppenheim (1992) interview is the most popular and widespread way to collect qualitative data. One of the reasons for the suitability of interview as a method for data collection is that allows an in-depth interpretation of the data as the interviewees get more involved in comparison to other methods of data collection and more willing to share pieces of information. Semi-structured interviews may contain a series of specific and predefined questions, but at the same time they offer a lot more flexibility on the organization of the questions, on possible modifications if necessary or on adding or skipping any questions depending on each different interview. A guide of twenty-five (25) predefined questions was created for the purpose of the present study. All interview questions were based on research questions. Of the 25 questions, 9 required teachers to provide information about personal and family profile and professional background, 10 were closed-ended questions, organized in a five-point Likert-like scale on which Greek teachers-parents were asked a set of questions and had to choose the level of their agreement between 1 (i.e. I don’t agree at all) and 5 (I absolutely agree), and 6 questions were open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were asked first in the interview so that interviewees to be spontaneous in their answers about the effects of parenthood on them. Close-ended questions followed right after and aimed to get more detailed answers and information from teachers-parents about parenthood. The combined use of both open- and close-ended questions in a qualitative approach of a study is quite new. Close-ended questions after open-ended ones help researchers contrast the data that come up from both kinds. As a result, they are able to crosscheck before analyzing in depth the collected information (Cohen et al., 2007). The interviews were conducted face to face, and each one of them lasted typically 30 minutes though plenty of time was given to interviewees to freely express their thoughts during inter-subjective conversation. Reviewees voluntarily consented to participate in the research without any reward and with the anonymity of their identities protected with the use of aliases in the entire procedure.

All the data that came up after the completion of the interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using *content analysis* (Weber, 1990). According to the procedure, an analysis unit has to be chosen before coding the data. The unit of analysis in the present study was the *theme* (Cohen et al., 2007). It was considered as the most

suitable because the present study aimed to investigate the views and opinions as depicted on transcriptions. Next followed the coding of qualitative data. These codes had been pre-decided and are useful for the researcher to find out how many times each one of them come up on transcriptions. Organization of categories came as the next steps. These categories were not designed in advance but they were formed through the themes that came up after coding. Finally, as regards close-ended questions' quantitative data, elaboration and statistical analysis were performed using Predictive Analytics Software [PASW] Statistics 21.

Results

The reviewees were asked to report whether the experience they accumulated from parenthood made them more experienced as professionals. The majority of them reported interesting changes regarding mainly their ability to empathetically understand and very often to precisely foresee students' cognitive and affective reactions, and different, varied and changeable patterns of behaviour. They also reported that, after becoming parents, they more easily separate pedagogic theory from reality, loosen their demands and reduce excessive academic expectations, homework assignments, criticism and reprimands. Interesting changes have also been reported regarding teaching techniques and teacher attitudes towards their students' learning effort. The majority of the participants reported that, after becoming parents, they tend to be more supportive of low-achievers, to more promptly adapt teaching to the individualized needs of the students, and to provide more extensive and simplified definitions of complicated scientific terms, notions, facts and phenomena. In many cases they noticed that they encouraged more easily students' cooperation, they were more willing to enhance teaching procedures with experiential activities, and they became more careful during the scaffolding and linking of prior knowledge to new information.

On the other hand, a significant percentage of the participants reported a negative impact of experience from parenthood on professional experience and vice versa. These teacher reported that the sensitivity and compassion they developed due to parenthood made them more yielding, compromising and pliant, letting their students take advantage of it, while, in other cases, personal experiences deriving from family children upbringing misled teachers to misunderstand their students' reactions, potentials, needs or expectations. And, vice versa, extreme or negative experiences from the classroom (mainly regarding students' health problems and disabilities, low achievements, and misbehaviour) triggered teachers' feelings of fear and insecurity as regards family children's upbringing.

As regards changes in teacher behaviour during the communication and cooperation with their students' parents, the majority of the participants reported an outstanding shift in their understanding of parents' expectations, limitations and, also, affective vulnerability. More specifically, most teachers, after becoming parents, tend to justify more easily parental interventions in school life and, even, teaching procedures,

while, in some cases, they are more tolerant of criticism, even in cases where their students' parents make unreasonable demands upon their children's teachers. Moreover, these participants reported a determined effort to provide parents with integrated and accurate, albeit mildly and discreetly expressed information about their children's academic achievements and cognitive performance and, also, about their affective profile and social behaviour, feeling this way that they help parents make appropriate interventions to improve their child's self-confidence and learning effectiveness. In addition, these teachers tend to make more constructive suggestions, to display more easily empathy and, also to reveal to their students' parent their personal relevant experiences, in order to relief parents' inmost though discernible feelings of guilt, remorse or inadequacy.

Regarding at-home planning and preparation of next day's school procedure, notable changes have been reported. For the majority of the participants a daily load of work was transferred from home to school, so that evening tasks focus more on family children's needs and housekeeping without decreasing the quality of professional performance. However, such an effort is reported to significantly reduce leisure time, especially in cases where teachers' children are very young and supportive help for their raising is not provided by spouses, grandparents or professional personnel. The majority of the participants, however, reported that their accumulated teaching experience, before they became parents, or the already-constructed perception of professional self-adequacy counterbalanced to some extent numerous impediments or setbacks in time-managing, work-planning, and life-adapting during parenthood. Conversely, for younger, inexperienced or unsupported teachers, parenthood had a negative impact on their feelings of professional effectiveness despite the effort they made to develop personal 'survival' strategies.

Regardless, however, participants' ability to 'survive' after parenthood, a majority of them report strong feelings of physical fatigue due to the intensification of working demands in modern school settings and given the fact that for a conscientious parent-teacher the duties at school and at home are considered as duties of two 'full-time jobs'. For a smaller, however, percentage of teachers, their active involvement in daily in-class teaching procedures, and the refreshing contact with the vividness and the cheerfulness of students, provides them with a constructive, almost psychotherapeutic, outlet from family concerns and personal difficulties. When teachers were asked more specifically to report whether they feel able to 'disconnect' their personal problems concerning children-raising from their in-class performance and mood during communication with their students, the majority of them reported that they try to leave personal concerns out of the classrooms, although this seems quite difficult especially when serious family problems overwhelm their mind. These teachers also reported that as professionals they feel like actors performing on a stage where the role character dominates over the personality of the actor and sweeps aside all obstacles in the benefit of a good theatrical performance. A noteworthy, however, percentage of the participants described students as highly sensitive

perceivers of their teacher's mood and such attempted 'disconnections' as only temporary and strongly dependent on the severity and the duration of the teacher's personal problem, on his/her sensitivity and sentimentality, and on his/her physical and emotional strength, all being factors not easily realized or controlled by the teacher him-/herself.

Concerning the professional ambitions of teachers who became parents, interesting views and attitudes were reported. For the majority of the participants professional aspirations did not change radically, although most of the teachers were obliged to rethink and readapt their plans for professional advancement. Teachers, irrespective of their gender, who before becoming parents were devoted to postgraduate studies or further education, or participated zealously in the carrying-out of school programmes, social and educational activities, or were actively involved in administration procedures displayed little change after they became parents. Moreover, in some cases, they expressed their intimate fear that professional stagnation could make them worse teachers and parents as well, since their students and their family children would bear their teacher's and parent's feelings of disappointment, routine and inertia. It is, also, interesting that for only one single-parent participant, the birth of her child triggered a non-existing to that time will for professional advancement so that her child could have a professionally successful and 'socially recognized mother'. On the other hand, a significant number of teachers reported hard dilemmas concerning professional advancement during the period of their children-raising; They had to give priority to their children and leave personal plans for professional advancement and integration for the future.

Despite, however, the resistance of aspiring teachers, regardless their gender, against family burdens for the benefit of professional advancement, a majority of both men and women tend to believe that a female teacher, compared to a male one, due to social prejudice, stereotypes, consolidated beliefs, and insufficient institutional protection of and concern for motherhood, will have to overcome many more obstacles to get a promotion or to retain successfully her position in school administration. Relevant difficulties are expected to grow further especially in cases where her family children present learning or behaviour difficulties, demanding thus her devotion to her family, or in cases where no help is provided by her spouse or other family members.

Finally, the reviewees were asked to report whether, after becoming parents, they would reconsider their decision to become teachers. Surprisingly, not even one of them would change his/her profession or would retire earlier. The majority of the participants reported that their profession provides them with remarkable benefits that facilitate parenthood such as long vacations coincided with their family children vacations, reasonable working hours, and knowledge about children's upbringing and support. A great also percentage of the respondents would not change teaching profession since, as already mentioned, acquaintance with the youth actually

'transfuses' life, optimism, and positivity to the teachers who 'seem to age in a slower way'. Finally, for the rest of the participants, the teaching profession is directly rewarding and reciprocal when compared to children upbringing, namely students tend to reciprocate their teacher's love and attention in a more direct and spontaneous way than family children do. For these participants the positive influence of the teacher on the affective reactions of the students can be visible in less than a year of student-teacher communication (providing thus immediately the teacher with feelings of satisfaction, fulfillment, and reward), while the impact of the parent on his/her family children is deeper, broader and discernible only in the long-run.

Conclusions and Discussion

The present study, contributing to the limited literature, examined Greek teachers' views about changes that took place after they became parents regarding teaching and learning, communication and cooperation with students and parents, and attitudes towards teacher profession.

The results revealed, first of all, that for the majority of the participants the parental role triggers a series of changes in their professional identities, though not always to a positive direction. Teachers who experienced parenthood report a developing professional interest in the academic attainments of their low-achieving students and a more decisive provision of personalized assistance to students who very often stay marginalized during the teaching/learning process (Saiti & Mitošili, 2005). Their willingness to enhance students' daily learning routine with cooperative, experiential activities that obviously provide greater numbers of students with stimuli for participatory active learning (Cohen et al., 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007) probably indicates that teachers, after becoming parents, tend more clearly to help their students achieve, through the learning procedure, not only cognitive but also affective and social objectives as well (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Matsumura & Pascal, 2003; Sharan, 2010). In addition, regarding students' academic performance, teachers seem to try more consciously to reduce academic load and facilitate assimilation of newly-provided knowledge by both low- and high-achievers (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Sharan, 2015). To realize the importance of this shift in the taxonomy of educational objectives of a teacher, one must take into account that the Greek educational system is highly inflexible and conservative and the teaching procedure rarely deviates from teacher-centred frontal lecturing, while very often traditional Greek teachers tend to be sceptical about innovative teaching strategies where the academic achievements are vague or mixed with socio-affective attainments, or are not clearly defined and easily assessed (Alahiotis & Karatzia, 2006; Ifanti & Fotopoulou, 2011; Koutrouba & Christopoulos, 2015). In such an educational framework the changes reported and attributed to parenthood seem to constitute an important positive step.

Similar changes are reported as regards almost all levels of teachers' communication with students' parents. The results of the present study indicate that teachers who

became parents tend more easily to put themselves in their students' parents' shoes (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Poulou & Matsagouras, 2007). The participants reported that before parenthood they mainly focused, during communication with students' parents, on students' learning performance, while, after becoming parents, the scope of communication broadened and deepened to incorporate exchange of information about many different aspects of students' personalities (Epstein, 2001). Growing empathy, discretion, tactfulness, and supportiveness can also be seen in teachers' effort to provide parents with advice about their children and, also, in their willingness to share common experiences in order to reduce the phenomenon of parents' negative self-criticism (Mylonakou & Kekes, 2007; Tett, 2001).

However, what sounds positive for many participants, seems to be negative for others. More specifically, some interviewees described themselves as more vulnerable due to parenthood, not only because they feel that they lost the profile of the distant, almost impersonal, authoritative-style educator, but also because they tend to use, in an unsuccessful way, experiences from their family children to interpret, understand and address their students' behaviours, learning traits and demands, and vice versa (Edwards et al., 2002; Tsouloupas et al., 2010). These teachers describe, in fact, a feeling of wavering of their professional self-confidence, determination, and authority, which probably derives from over-developed unbalanced empathy that hinders the constructive elaboration and merging of in-school and at-home experiences (Day et al., 2007).

Considering the positive and negative changes above mentioned, one should keep in mind that parenthood does not happen in a social or financial vacuum (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). On the one hand it seems reasonable for teachers who became parents to understand more easily how parents feel, what they need, how many restrictions they face regarding their expectations, how many failures and disappointments they have experienced, how tired they are, how vulnerable they are as regards their children. At the same time, it is easier for them to 'see' in their students' faces their own children, and thus to loosen their demands, to pass over incidents of misbehaviour, to support students' various weaknesses (Devine et al., 2013; Hargreaves, 2000). The results of the present research also showed that for the majority of the teachers their effort to address effectively the increasing professional demands during parenthood forces them to develop flexible, alternative 'self-survival' strategies (regarding effective management of time, of physical strength, of mental and emotional stimuli and experiences, and of student and family children needs and demands) (Sutton et al., 2009) that in the long-run make them better (though not less tired) professionals and parents as well (Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2006; Stoel & Thant, 2002). On the other hand, however, in social settings where parenthood is, to a great extent, institutionally and financially unsupported and, at the same time, the teacher remains unassisted as regards professional development education, planning and guiding, the risk of a negative impact of parenthood on teacher professional performance and behaviour seems to be quite big and understandable. The fear of

professional failure can be rather easily seen in some reviewees' comments that reveal feelings of disappointment and burning-out symptoms which are further aggravated when the teachers face serious family problems (Bennetts, 2003; Greany & Rodd, 2003). The opportune effective intervention of education and social advisory and supporting services would probably create a safe professional framework wherein teachers would learn to manage effectively and take full advantage of their double roles (Connelly & Ghodsee, 2011; Evans & Grant, 2009). Nonetheless, if a significant help has to be provided to parent teachers who seem to 'lose their way', major changes have to be made regarding the redefinition of the in-family roles of the spouses, the provision of social assistance to single-parent families, the decent financial rewarding of the teacher profession, the scientific support of the families who have children with disabilities and so on (Parker et al., 2012; Poulou & Norwich, 2000; Weiqi, 2007).

The results of the present study also reveal that for the majority of the participants, parenthood did not hinder substantially their professional aspirations or, at least, did not change the attitude they had towards professional advancement before they became parents (Eren, 2015; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). On the contrary, in some cases, it seems that parenthood strengthened teachers' willingness to face professional challenges, although mild feelings of 'remorse' can be detected in the interviews of parents who felt obliged to explain that they did not set back their professional ambitions after parenthood because such a passive stance would make them unhappy and "a child would not be happy having an unhappy parent". It is also interesting, though not incomprehensible, the fact that both male and female reviewees believe that it is more difficult for women to retain a balance between professional advancement and family duties (Acker, 1992; Casey, 1990; Cinamon & Rich, 2005). It seems, in fact, to be a plain description of Greek social reality, where women seemingly have the same professional rights and opportunities as their male colleagues do, although, in practice, the double role of being a parent and a professional at the same time hinders women more than men (Hewlett, 2002; Mason & Mason-Ekman, 2007) due to the obstructive combination of existing social stereotypes and the lack of institutional support to motherhood (insufficient number of public nursery schools and kindergartens, insufficient children and parent health care, low family allowances, insufficient teacher salary and so on) (Hargreaves, 1994; Johnston et al., 1999).

Despite the abovementioned difficulties, all the Greek teachers who participated in the present study reported that parenthood did not change their will to be teachers. In Greece teachers enjoy long vacations (at least in comparison to other occupations and professions), flexible or manageable working hours, and still, to a great extent, social respect and acceptance by a society that highly estimates education and learning (Ifanti & Fotopoulou, 2011), not only due to the long historical devotion of Greeks to knowledge but, also, because of the contribution of education to the social advancement of the students, and to their professional and financial survival within

the highly competitive and demanding job market of the Greek developing economy (Cairns et al., 2001; Koutrouba, 2012; Vouyoukas, 2007). The participants in the study, also, seem, at least in some cases, to turn difficulties into advantages. They report that students' livelihood keeps teachers young, distracting them from daily family concerns. And, vice versa, family concerns make teachers resisting against usual at-school problems (Farkas et al., 2000). Such an optimistic view of parental and professional reality is undoubtedly welcome. It implies, however, that for parent teachers who face hardly manageable family problems or work in less productive or rewarding school environments, social support to the family and professional assistance from the administration of the school remains necessary if we want the teacher to feel professionally satisfied and, at the same time, parentally integrated (Dimakos, 2006).

The present research had some apparent restrictions which are linked to the lack of prior extensive relevant research and literature. Focused completely on teachers who became parents does not reveal whether the changes reported by the interviewees exclusively derive from parenthood and not from other factors such as the professional experience that is accumulated in the course of time (Bransford et al., 2000; Stoel & Thant, 2002), given the fact that family children-raising temporally coincides with the professional experience acquirement at school. A comparative survey on similar changes reported by non-parents could possibly enhance and expand the findings of the present study. In any case, parenthood must not be considered as an exclusive factor that produces the relevant changes, since, something like that would lead us to the misleading, arbitrary and unacceptable conclusion that teachers who are parents are more effective professionals than non-parents. Moreover, the present research records what the participants believe or feel to be a change after they became parents. It does not record if this change is real, actual, and, above all, discernible either by the students or by the family children. A wide-range research on the beliefs of the parent-teacher, the family children, and his/her students and their parents would probably reveal if the teacher really changes as a professional due to parenthood or if s/he simply feels that s/he changes although no measurable, traceable change can be detected by the people who live or work with him/her (Rice, 2003). Finally, the limited number of the participants, their varied personalities with the different values, professional objectives and potentials, their different family and social or financial status, their different working places provide us with findings that can significantly change when the participants change.

Despite, however, these restrictions, the present research could help us examine how parenthood influences teachers' professional lives, and, vice versa, how the teacher profession strengthens or, on the contrary, weakens the traditional parental roles. In any case, it is rather obvious that the parental and professional roles are not contradictory, as long as they remain equalized, balanced, and widely supported by both the family and the school environment of the parent-teacher.

References

- [1] Acker, S. (1992). Special series on girls and women in education. Creating careers: Women teachers at work. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 22(2), 141-163.
- [2] Alahiotis, S., & Karatzia, E. (2006). Effective curriculum policy and cross-curricularity: Analysis of the new curriculum design of the Hellenic Pedagogical Institute. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 14(2), 119-147.
- [3] Arnon, S., & Reichel, N. (2007). Who is the ideal teacher? Am I? Similarity and difference in perception of students of education regarding the qualities of a good teacher and of their own qualities as teachers. *Teachers and Teaching*, 13(5), 441-464.
- [4] Bailey, L. (2000). Bridging home and work in the transition to motherhood: A discursive study. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 7(1), 53-70.
- [5] Bennetts, C. (2003). The impact of transformational learning on individuals, families and communities. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 22(5), 457-480.
- [6] Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (1992). *Qualitative research methods for education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- [7] Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., & Cocking, R.R. (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- [8] Cairns, J., Lawton, D., & Gardner, R. (Eds.) (2001). *Values, culture and education*. London: Kogan Page.
- [9] Casey, K. (1990). Teacher as mother: Curriculum theorizing in the life histories of contemporary women teachers. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 20(3), 301-320.
- [10] Christenson, S.L., & Sheridan, S.M. (2001). *Schools and families: Creating essential connections for learning*. New York: Guildford Press.
- [11] Cinamon, R.G., & Rich, Y. (2002). Gender differences in the importance of work and family roles: Implications for work-family conflict. *Sex Roles*, 11-12(47), 531-541.
- [12] Cinamon, R.G., & Rich, Y. (2005). Work-family conflict among female teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(4), 365-378.
- [13] Cohen, E.G., Brody, C., & Sapon-Shevin, M. (Eds.) (2004). *Teaching cooperative learning: The challenge for teacher education*. Albany, NY: Suny Press.
- [14] Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). London: Routledge.

- [15] Connelly, R., & Ghodsee, K. (2011). *Professor mommy: Finding work-family balance in Academia*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- [16] Cornelius-White, J. (2007). Learner-centered teacher-student relationships are effective: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 113-143.
- [17] Cosford, B., & Draper, J. (2002). 'It's almost like a secondment': Parenting as professional development for teachers. *Teacher Development*, 6(3), 347-362.
- [18] Day, C., Sammons, P., Stobart, G., Kington, A., & Gu, Q. (2007). *Teachers matter: Connecting lives, work and effectiveness*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- [19] Devine, D., Fahie, D., & McGillicuddy, D. (2013). What is 'good' teaching? Teacher beliefs and practices about their teaching. *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(1), 83-108.
- [20] Dimakos, C.I. (2006). The attitudes of Greek teachers and trainee teachers toward the development of school psychological and counselling services. *School Psychology International*, 27(4), 415-425.
- [21] Drago, R. (2001). Time on the job and time with their kids: Cultures of teaching and parenthood in the US. *Feminist Economics*, 7(3), 1-31.
- [22] Edwards, J.L., Green, K.E., & Lyons, C.A. (2002). Personal empowerment, efficacy, and environmental characteristics. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40(1), 67-86.
- [23] Epstein, J.L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- [24] Eren, A. (2015). 'Not only satisfied and responsible, but also hopeful': Prospective teachers' career choice satisfaction, hope, and personal responsibility. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 45(2), 149-166.
- [25] Eurydice (2015). *The structure of the European education systems 2014/15: Schematic diagrams*. Eurydice: European Commission, EACEA. Available online:
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/05/192EN.pdf> [Accessed: 1-6-2016]
- [26] Evans, E., & Grant, C. (2009). *Mama PhD: Women write about motherhood and academic life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- [27] Farkas, S., Johnson, J., & Foleno, T. (2000). *A sense of calling: Who teaches and why*. New York: Public Agenda.
- [28] Ferreira, M.M., & Bosworth, K. (2001). Defining caring teachers: Adolescents' perspective. *Journal of Classroom Interaction* 36(1), 24-30.

- [29] Frone, M.F. (2003). Work-family balance. In J.C. Quick, & L.E. Tetrick (Eds.). *Handbook of occupational health psychology* (pp. 143-162). Washington: APA.
- [30] Gannerud, E. (2001). A gender perspective on the work and lives of women primary school teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 45(1), 55-70.
- [31] Georgiadis, M.N. (2007). Educational reforms in Greece (1959-1997) and human capital theory. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 5(2), 342-368.
- [32] Greany, T., & Rodd, J. (2003). *Creating a learning to learn school: Research and practice for raising standards, motivation and morale*. London: Campaign for Learning.
- [33] Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- [34] Hargreaves, A. (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(8), 811-826.
- [35] Hewlett, S.A. (2002). *Creating a life: Professional women and the quest for children*. New York: Talk Miramax Books.
- [36] Hudson, D.B., Elek, S.M., & Fleck, M.O. (2001). First-time mothers' and fathers' transition to parenthood: Infant care self-efficacy, parenting satisfaction, and infant sex. *Issues in Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing*, 24(1), 31-43.
- [37] Ifanti, A., & Fotopoulou, V. (2011). Teachers' perceptions of professionalism and professional development: A case study in Greece. *World Journal of Education*, 1(1), 40-51.
- [38] Johnston, J., McKeown, E., & McEwen, A. (1999). Choosing primary teaching as a career: The perspectives of males and females in training. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 25(1), 55-64.
- [39] Kassotakis, M. (2000). Greece. In C. Brock and W. Tulasiewicz (Eds.), *Education in a single Europe*, (pp. 184-205). 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- [40] Klassen, R.M., & Chiu, M.M. (2010). Effects on teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction: Teacher gender, years of experience, and job stress. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 741-756.
- [41] Knowles, M., Nieuwenhuis, J., & Smit, B. (2009). A narrative analysis of educators' lived experiences of motherhood and teaching. *South African Journal of Education*, 29(3), 333-344.
- [42] Koulaidis, V., Dimopoulos, K., Tsatsaroni, A., & Katsis, A. (2006). Young people relationship to education: The case of Greek youth. *Educational Studies*, 32(4), 343-359.

- [43] Koutrouba, K. (2012). A profile of the effective teacher: Greek secondary education teachers' perceptions. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 35(3), 359-374.
- [44] Koutrouba, K., & Christopoulos, I. (2015). Cooperative learning effectiveness in the bureaucratic school: Views of Greek secondary education teachers. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 12(2), 64-88.
- [45] Koutsourakis, G. (2007). The new educational policy for the reform of the curriculum and the change of school knowledge in the case of Greek compulsory education. *International Studies of Sociology of Education*, 17(1-2), 131-146.
- [46] Kyriacou, C., & Coulthard, M. (2000). Undergraduates' views of teaching as a career choice. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy*, 26(2), 117-126.
- [47] MacDonald, J.B. (1994). *Teaching and parenting: Effects of the dual role*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- [48] MacLure, M. (1993). Arguing for your self: Identity as an organising principle in teachers' jobs and lives. *British Educational Research Journal*, 19(4), 311-322.
- [49] Marston, S., Courtney, V., & Brunetti, G. (2006). The voices of experienced elementary teachers: Their insights about the profession. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 33(2), 111-131.
- [50] Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.
- [51] Mason, M.A., & Mason-Ekman, E. (2007). *Mothers on the fast track. How a new generation can balance family and careers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [52] Matsumura, L.C., & Pascal, J. (2003). *Teachers' assignments and student work: Opening a window on classroom practice*. Los Angeles: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, University of California at Los Angeles.
- [53] McFarlin, I. (2007). Do school teacher parents make a difference? *Economics of Education Review*, 26(5), 615-628.
- [54] Mylonakou, I., & Kekes, I. (2007). School-family relations: Greek parents' perceptions of parental involvement. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 1, 73-82.
- [55] O'Connor, K.E. (2008). "You choose to care": Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(1), 117-126.

- [56] OECD (2015). Education policy outlook: Making reforms happen. OECD Publishing. Available online: <http://www.oecd.org/publications/education-policy-outlook-2015-9789264225442-en.htm> [Accessed: 1-6-2016]
- [57] OECD [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development] (2011). Education policy advice for Greece. Strong performers and successful reformers in education. OECD Publishing. Available online: <http://www.oecd.org/greece/48407731.pdf> [Accessed: 1-6-2016]
- [58] Opdenakker, M.C., & Van Damme, J. (2006). Teacher characteristics and teaching styles as effectiveness enhancing factors of classroom practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(1), 1-21.
- [59] Oppenheim, A.N. (1992). Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement. London: Pinter Publishers.
- [60] Parker, P.D., Martin, A.J., Colmar, S., & Liem, G.A. (2012). Teachers' workplace well-being: Exploring a process model of goal orientation, coping behavior, engagement, and burnout. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(4), 503-513.
- [61] Poulou, M., & Matsagouras, E. (2007). School-family relations: Greek parents' perceptions of parental involvement. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 1, 83-89.
- [62] Poulou, M., & Norwich, B. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties: Severity and prevalence. *European Journal of Special Educational Needs Education*, 15(2), 171-187.
- [63] Rice, J.K. (2003). Teacher quality: Understanding the effectiveness of teacher attributes. Washington, DC: National Economic Policy Institute.
- [64] Saiti, A., & Mitosili, E. (2005). Parental perception of the education of their adolescent children: Evidence from Greek secondary education. *Journal of Career and Technical Education*, 22(1), 9-30.
- [65] Schaufeli, W.B., & Bakker, A.B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25(3), 293-315.
- [66] Sharan, Y. (2010). Cooperative learning for academic and social gains: Valued pedagogy, problematic practice. *European Journal of Education*, 45(2), 300-313.
- [67] Sharan, Y. (2015). Meaningful learning in the cooperative classroom. *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, 43(1), 83-94.
- [68] Sikes, P. (1998). Parent teachers: Reconciling the roles. *Teacher Development*, 2(1), 87-105.

- [69] Sikes, P. (1997). *Parents who teach: Stories from home and from school*. London: Casell.
- [70] Silverman, D. (1998). Qualitative research: meanings or practices? *Information Systems Journal*, 8(1), 3-20.
- [71] Skaalvik, E.M., & Skaalvik, S. (2011). Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with school context, feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(6), 1029-1038.
- [72] Stoeber, J., & Rennert, D. (2008). Perfectionism in school teachers: Relations with stress appraisals, coping styles, and burnout. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping. An International Journal*, 21(1), 37-53.
- [73] Stoel, C.F., & Thant, T.S. (2002). *Teachers' professional lives: A view from nine industrialized countries*. Washington, DC: Milken Family Foundation and the Council for Basic Education.
- [74] Sutton, E.E., Mudrey-Camino, R., & Knight, C.C. (2009). Teachers' emotion regulation and classroom management. *Theory into Practice*, 48(2), 130-137.
- [75] Tett, L. (2001). Parents as problems or parents as people? Parental involvement programmes, schools and adult educators. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(3), 188-198.
- [76] Traianou, A. (2009). The uncertain character of recent educational reform in Greece. *Forum*, 51(2), 131-142.
- [77] Tsouloupas, C.N., Carson, R.L., Matthews, R., Grawitch, M.J., & Barber, L.K. (2010). Exploring the association between teachers' perceived student misbehaviour and emotional exhaustion: The importance of teacher efficacy beliefs and emotion regulation. *Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 30(2), 173-189.
- [78] Vouyoukas, A.C. (2007). An analysis of equality, legislation, attitudes and values in education: The case of Greece. *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, 12(2), 115-134.
- [79] Weber, R.P. (1990). *Basic content analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [80] Weiqi, C. (2007). The structure of secondary school teacher job satisfaction and its relationship with attrition and work enthusiasm. *Chinese Education and Society*, 40(5), 17-31.
- [81] Wentzel, K.R. (2002). Are effective teachers like good parents? Teaching styles and student adjustment in early adolescence. *Child Development*, 73(1), 287-301.

- [82] Zembylas, M. (2003). Interrogating 'teacher identity': Emotion, resistance, and self-formation. *Educational Theory*, 53(1), 107-127.