

## Greek Teachers on Micro-Level Lesson Preparation and Planning

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### Abstract

*The present paper explores lesson preparation and planning on a daily basis from an empirical point of view. 316 Greek teachers of primary and secondary education participated in the questionnaire study. Some of the main issues examined were the frequency of teachers' preparation for next day's lessons and the amount of time they spend, the benefits of lesson preparation, the questions they pose to themselves while preparing the teaching procedure, the difficulties they face during preparation and the ways they overcome them, the collaboration with other teachers while making lesson plans and their satisfaction with their preparation. Frequency analysis of all the variables and a cross-tabulation between the independent and dependent variables were performed with the use of the SPSS. The findings of the research indicated, among others, that teachers enquired spend much time on lesson preparation and that it enhances teachers' confidence.*

**Keywords:** lesson preparation, lesson planning, teacher training, teaching practice

### 1. Introduction

Despite their importance, preparation and planning of the teaching procedure have not yet gained due attention in Greece neither from the majority of the education experts (Chatzidimou, 1988; Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992) and teacher training institutions nor from the Greek state. Going through the university undergraduate curricula, it is easily noticeable that only few departments include subjects on lesson preparation and planning. Therefore, with the exception of a few projects and in-service training programmes (such as the Major In-Service Training Programme), it could be argued that this subject is still not adequately addressed (Chatzidimou & Chatzidimou, 2014), whereas in other countries, such as Germany, plenty of studies, both theoretical and empirical, have focused on the issue (Apel, 2007; Bohl, 2012; Brüning & Saum, 2009; Gehlert & Pohlmann, 2010; Kiper & Mischke, 2009; Meyer, 2010; Plöger, 2008).

### 2. Purpose and Aims of the Study

Given the lack of empirical studies that tackle preparation and planning of the teaching procedure in Greece, the main purpose of this study was to address, up to a point, this existent gap. The research findings presented below could prove to be useful for teachers and for anyone interested in education. The particular aims of the study were to pose and examine specific questions regarding lesson preparation and planning at a micro-level<sup>1</sup> such as, whether teachers prepare their lesson the day before, whether their preparation is beneficial for them, how much time they dedicate for their preparation, whether they collaborate with their colleagues while planning their lesson etc.

### 3. The Investigating Tool and the Sample of the Study

The questionnaire was used as the investigating tool of this study. It consisted of 42 closed questions; 31 questions were on the participants' points of view regarding their lesson preparation (three of these questions included an open choice in the possible answers), while the remaining eleven questions were about the participants' demographic data. The questions of this questionnaire were divided into thirteen thematic fields<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> We refer to the daily lesson-planning.

<sup>2</sup> It should be clarified that the number of questions under each thematic field is not the same.

The structure of the questionnaire was based on the theoretical frame provided, on the one hand, by the very few relevant studies found in the Greek literature (Alexiadis, 1989; Mager, 1985; Chatzidimou, 1988; Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992), and by a vast number of theoretical studies found in the international literature (Mittelstädt & Tewes, 2012; Tschekan, 2011), and, on the other hand, by a questionnaire of a previously conducted empirical study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992). The structure of the questionnaire was finalized, though, after a pilot implementation with ten working teachers, who were not included in the final sample of the study. This pilot investigation and the study of the literature reinforced the validity of the questionnaire.

The finalized questionnaire tackled the following issues: the frequency of teachers' preparation for next day's lessons and the amount of time they spend, the benefits of preparation, the questions they pose to themselves while preparing the teaching procedure, the connection between the educational level and the time devoted for preparation, the difficulties they face during preparation and the ways to overcome them, the collaboration with other teachers while making lesson plans, their satisfaction with their preparation, the sources of information they use etc.

The questionnaires were distributed to permanent and non permanent teachers of primary and secondary education who attended the introductory training programme of the year 2011-2012 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Training Centre (PEK) of Thessaloniki and the training programme for the "new school", the digital school, in the winter of 2012. The study sample was 316 teachers from schools of the eastern part of Thessaloniki and of the Prefectures of Pieria, Imathia and Pella (these Prefectures fall under the training responsibility of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Training Centre of Thessaloniki)<sup>3</sup>. The study took place between September, 2011 and February, 2012<sup>4</sup>.

#### **4. Data Analysis and Discussion Over the Results of the Study**

The data of the study were codified and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0). In the first step of the data analysis, the descriptive statistics, there is a presentation of the frequency of the answers given by the participants to every question of the thematic fields of the questionnaire, whereas, in the second one, there is cross-tabulation between dependent and independent variables (Howitt & Cramer, 2008).

##### **4.1 General Personal Details of the Participants**

The number of the teachers involved in this study was 316, 70.3% of whom were women and 29.7% men. 89.9% were permanent public school teachers, whereas 10.1% were non permanent public school teachers. The teachers participating in the study, taught in nursery schools (10.8%), in primary schools (42.1%) and in secondary schools (47.2%). 27.5% of them had got a second university degree, 23.1% had got a post university degree in primary education ("Didaskaleio"), 25.3% had got a post graduate degree (Master) and 6.3% had got a doctorate (Phd). Furthermore, 88.9% of the teachers participating in the study had attended a training programme.

Based on the aforementioned percentages regarding the sample's learning profile, it is obvious that the teachers who participated in the study were highly qualified. Almost one third of the primary education teachers hold a post university degree in primary education ("Didaskaleio"), a high percentage of primary education teachers (27.5%) and of secondary education teachers (25.3%) hold a second university degree and a low, yet considerable percentage of 6.3% hold a doctorate (Phd). However, the most noticeable point is the fact that almost all the participants in our study had attended a training seminar; only 10% of them had never attended any seminar. It is quite possible that this percentage refers to non permanent teachers, given the fact that, at the time, it was not possible for them to attend any training programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> The findings of this study do not refer to the total number of the primary and secondary school teachers of the specific Prefectures. Yet, they are quite interesting because they are derived from primary data given from school teachers from various Prefectures that can become the starting point for future relevant studies. They can also be compared to the findings of another study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992) with the participating primary and secondary school teachers coming from the Thessaloniki Prefecture.

<sup>4</sup> Special thanks should be given to Mrs Christina Archonti, a primary school teacher who served the 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Training Centre of Thessaloniki at that period, for her assistance in the collection of the questionnaires.

The inference that almost all the teachers that participated in our study had, in a way, attended some training programmes may be down to the fact that they were selected by the former Teachers' Training Organization ("OEPEK")<sup>5</sup> for their high qualifications. It was stipulated that these teachers had to apply in the classroom the principles of the so called "new school", that is, of the digital modern school during the school year 2011-2012.

## 4.2 Thematic Fields of the Study

The analysis of the findings of the study based on the inspection of the various parameters of the thirteen thematic fields gave the following results:

### 4.2.1 The Frequency of Teachers' Preparation

The teachers who participated in the study seemed to be greatly familiar with and aware of the importance of the preparation and the planning of the teaching procedure at a micro-level. 64.7% of them answered "very often" and 28.2% of them answered "often" to the question "How often do you prepare a day before the lesson that you will teach the next day?". Only 6.1%, 0.6% and 0.3% of them gave the answers "sometimes", "seldom" or "never" respectively. *The answers above indicate that the majority of the teachers of our sample are prepared when they start their lessons. These answers also contradict the belief of many people that teachers of all teaching grades neglect their tasks, are unprepared for their classes or they get prepared at the very last moment.*

### 4.2.2 Benefits from Teachers' Preparation

The major benefit of their preparation at a micro-level, as stated by the teachers of our study, is an increased self-confidence in their teaching. Another benefit is the respect they gain from their students, their colleagues and their school principals. It should be specifically pointed out that in the open choice "something else", some of the participants mentioned as a benefit the fact that they get better teaching results and that they gain time during their teaching procedure. This focus on professionalism as a feature of the teachers' daily preparation is also interesting as a feature of the teachers' preparation on a daily basis<sup>6</sup>, as well as their personal need to get daily prepared and consequently to be effective in their working place<sup>7</sup>. *If we exclude the answers given by the participants in the open choice question, there is little difference in the conclusions between this study and an older study previously mentioned (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 42).*

### 4.2.3 Questions that the Teachers Pose to Themselves during the Preparation of their Lesson

The main questions that seem to be posed by the teachers of this study to themselves during the preparation of their lesson were how they would teach and what teaching content they would teach. The questions that followed were: what are the teaching and learning objectives, how will they check if they accomplished their objectives, which class will they teach to. The focus of some teachers of our study on the needs and the interests of their students is also interesting, as it was revealed from their answers in the open question "Something else. What else?". *Judging from the answers above, it could be deducted that the teachers in the current study were mostly concerned, while planning the teaching procedure, with the teaching subject and with the proper way of teaching it. This fact reveals their anxiety and their strong will to succeed in the educational procedure. Maybe the training programmes and seminars that they had attended, did not help them as much as they should in order to acquire the necessary teaching tools.*

### 4.2.4 The Focus of the Teachers during their Lesson Planning on their Students Related to their School Performance

In the question: "Keeping in mind the school performance of your class students, which students do you take mostly under consideration when you plan the forthcoming lessons?", 55.5% of the participating teachers answered that they gave priority to the average performance of each class, 26.1% answered that they gave priority to each student's individual performance, 15.9% answered that they gave priority to low performing students and 2.5% answered that they gave priority to high performing students.

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<sup>5</sup> The Teachers' Training Organization as well as other organizations such as the Pedagogical Institute and the Education Research Centre has been abolished since June 2011 and its responsibilities have been taken over by the newly established "Institute of Educational Policy (IEP)".

<sup>6</sup> Some relevant answers from the participants were the following: "I gain the respect from the society and my work is more up to date", "I do my job professionally", "I believe that I serve my duty".

<sup>7</sup> Some relevant answers from the participants were the following: "Joy, satisfaction", "It is a personal need", "Self respect", "I am calm".

The answers above indicate that the teachers of the study focus their attention not only on the very good and excellent students but on every student, thus it could be argued that these teachers have got a sufficient pedagogical training. On the other hand, if we take into consideration the fact that the teacher has to plan the teaching procedure based on each student's personal learning pace, then some objections could be expressed to the sufficiency of the pedagogical training of the teachers of our study.

#### 4.2.5 The Difficulties of the Teachers during Their Preparation and How they Face Them

The answers to the question concerning the frequency of the difficulties that the teachers face during their daily preparation reveal that the teachers do face difficulties quite frequently<sup>8</sup>. To overcome the possible everyday preparation difficulties, the teachers of the study refer mostly to articles and books relevant to the content of the lesson as well as the teacher's book, and to a lesser degree to books about didactics and to their colleagues. Only a few teachers contact the school counselors for help. In the choice "Anything else? What else?" a small number of the participants in the study (36) mentioned the internet, whereas only two participants mentioned their parents. The next question was about the factors that help teachers face fewer difficulties during their lesson preparation. According to their answers, the first factor is their long educational experience, the second one is that they get sufficiently informed by papers and books relevant to their teaching subject; the third one is that they are sufficiently trained on their teaching subject and the fourth one is that they are adequately trained, both pedagogically and didactically. *The findings of this thematic field confirm the findings of a previous study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 42-45), with only some slight statistic deviations. It is remarkable, though, that the participating teachers of the present survey read articles and books relevant to their teaching subject in order to overcome their difficulties during their preparation. Therefore, it is obvious that they don't expect readymade solutions from the state and they don't remain inactive, contrary to what a large part of the society's claims. Definitely, further investigation of the subject is needed in order to support this point of view. As far as the present findings are concerned, it is obvious that the teachers of this study and the ones of the study in 1992 get informed about subjects concerning their teaching procedure from many sources.*

#### 4.2.6 The Teachers' Preparation for a Successful Teaching Procedure

The vast majority of the participants in the study greatly acknowledged the importance of the lesson preparation in order to reach the teaching and learning objectives. In the question about "how often they realize that they have succeeded in their teaching when they prepare it the day before", 47.8% of the participants answered "often", 45.3% answered "very often", 6.0% answered "sometimes" and 0.9% answered "seldom". Moreover, they answered the question about "how often they realize that they have not succeeded in their teaching even though they have prepared it the previous day" as follows: 54.4% of the participants answered "sometimes", 37.7% answered "seldom", 4.4% answered "often", 2.8% answered "never" and 0,6% answered "very often". Finally, the question "How often do you realize that you have succeeded in your teaching when you do not prepare it the day before?" was answered "sometimes" by 48.4% of them, whereas 24.5% of them answered "often", 17.2% of them answered "seldom", 6.4% of them answered "very often" and 3.5% of them answered "never". *The previous answers of the participants reveal a close connection between the teaching success and its preparation the previous day<sup>9</sup>, without excluding possible success with no preparation whatsoever; the last case is highly improbable, though. The dependence of a successful teaching on the teacher's preparation is also evident in another study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 43). These findings underline, up to a point, something very familiar to teachers, that there are certain reasons behind a failure of a teaching and there are certain secrets behind its success (Chatzidimou, 2007: 191); one of these secrets is the teacher's systematic preparation for it (Chatzidimou & Chatzidimou, 2014).*

#### 4.2.7 Carrying Out the Teaching Procedure without Any Preparation from the Teachers

Their first choice to the question "when do you go unprepared for the next day's lesson?" was "never"; their second choice was "after a heavy school programme", their third choice was "after Christmas and Easter holidays", their fourth choice was "after a school day trip", their fifth choice was "after school holidays and festivities" and their sixth choice was "after the weekend". *The majority of the answers of the participants agree firstly with "never" and secondly with the "heavy school programme".*

<sup>8</sup> For the difficulties in lesson planning see more in Gassmann (2012).

<sup>9</sup> About the dependence of the teaching success on preparation and planning, see Esslinger-Hinz, Unseld, Reinhardlank-Hauck, Fischer, Kust & Däschler-Seiler (2007).

That second choice, as well as the others that follow, are also noticed in another study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 43-44), therefore it is obvious that the heavy school programme affects the students' school performance as well as the quality of the performance of the school unit, given the fact that everything depends on how systematically and methodically teachers prepare themselves.

#### **4.2.8 The Students realize that the Teacher has Come Unprepared in Class**

When asked "to what extent they believe that the students realize that the teacher has come unprepared in class", most of the participants answered that they slightly realize it, indicating that the students are not in a position to realize it. Those who claim that the students realize it, report as the main reason their teaching weaknesses based on the methods, the learning ways and the teaching means they use. They also mention as reasons their cognitive weaknesses concerning the content of the lesson, the great amount of time given to the students' examination during the lesson and their stress. Most of the participants who answered the open question "Something else. What else?" mentioned three more reasons: the bad management of the teaching time, the teacher's bad temper and the fact that the lesson is not very pleasant. The main reasons that the students do not realize it when a teacher has come unprepared in class are, according to the participants' answers: "I am experienced enough, so as to meet the teaching needs of a lesson even without preparation" and "The students are not familiar with my teaching subject". In the last two places we find the answer "They are not familiar with pedagogical and didactic theories as well as teaching techniques". *The participants in the study seem to give particular emphasis on their teaching experience, which they consider sufficient up to a great extent, so as to meet the needs of their teaching even if they are not prepared for the class. The same conclusion, that the students do not realize that the teacher has come unprepared in class, as presented in a previous study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 44), shows a slight variation regarding the reason: the reason mentioned was the students' weaknesses related to the teaching content of their lesson, whereas the main reason mentioned in the present study is the teachers' experience.*

#### **4.2.9 Teachers' Satisfaction with their way of Preparation and from the help they Get in their Daily Preparation**

The participants were asked about their level of satisfaction with the way of their preparation. The vast majority of them (85%) appeared to be satisfied to a great extent, a small yet remarkable percentage of the participants (13.1%) appeared to be very little satisfied and less than 1.0% (0.6%) appeared to be unsatisfied. In the open choice question, the participants of the study were asked to justify their answers. The analysis of this open question showed that the most important factor, which mostly contributes to the teachers' satisfaction with the daily lesson preparation, was their educational experience. Another important factor was the training which they try to acquire by themselves. Furthermore, important factors in their daily preparations were their additional academic studies and their in-service teacher training. Finally, the last factor mentioned was the undergraduate academic studies of the participants in the study. In an attempt to examine more closely the particular parts of the participating teachers' pre-graduate curricula and their contribution to the effective preparation of a lesson, the participants were asked to point out which one of the three particular parts of their pre-graduate curricula contributed mostly to make them more effective in the preparation of a lesson. The answers of the participants gave priority to the part of Teaching Methodology (courses of General and Special Didactics) and to the part of Student Teaching. The next parts are related to general courses of Pedagogy, Psychology and Sociology and to Subject Didactics. A small number of the participants gave priority to the answer: "None of the above". *The answers of the participants in the study verify the fact that the teachers are satisfied with the way they get prepared, that they have not been helped by their undergraduate academic studies as much as by their teaching experience, and, finally, that the part that helped them out the most, from their studies, are those of Teaching Methodology and Student Teaching. The same findings, with some minor differences, were also presented in another study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 44-45). These findings, even though they cannot be generalized, are of scientific interest and seem important. The initial academic studies of candidate teachers still seem to face problems despite the twenty years intervening between the present and the last published research mentioned above. However, Teaching Methodology plays a major role in teachers' training and it is very important that it is present in the various teacher training programmes, such as the state's introductory training programmes that take place at the beginning of every school year.*

#### 4.2.10 Time that Teachers Spend on their Preparation

As far as time is concerned, the time that most participating teachers spend on the preparation of the next day's lessons is one to two hours in total. A second answer to this question is from two to three hours, a third answer is less than one hour and the final answer (10.9%) is more than three hours. The participants were asked if they consider sufficient the time that they spend on their daily school preparation. The majority of the participating teachers consider the time to be sufficient to "a great extent", 16.8% consider the time to be sufficient to a "small extent" and 0.3% consider it "not sufficient at all". The basic reason that withholds them from spending more time on their daily preparation is family obligations. Therefore, they were asked "if you think that the time you spend on school preparation is insufficient, why don't you spend more time?" and the first reason to mention was "family obligations", the second one was the "great amount of school work besides the teaching timetable" and the third one was the statement "because I teach a lot of school subjects". The final reason with a small percentage among the participants in the study (8.8%) was the choice "because I don't get paid well enough". *The findings of the present study, according to this thematic field, agree with the findings of a previously conducted study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 45) and this proves that, up to a point, they can be considered reliable, even though they cannot refer to general situations.*

#### 4.2.11 Time of Preparation for Nursery, Primary and Secondary School Teachers

The participants in this study were asked about which educational level teachers (nursery, primary, secondary teachers) spend more time on daily preparation. They answered that the primary and secondary school teachers spend more time than the nursery teachers and that both primary and secondary school teachers spend almost the same amount of time. They were also asked whether "working in a public or a private school affects the time of their preparation". Most of them answered that this is irrelevant to their preparation. More specifically, there were asked: "Which of the following educational levels of teachers (nursery, primary, secondary teachers) do you consider that they spend more time on planning the next day's lessons?". 63.9% of the participants answered that both primary and secondary school teachers spend the same amount of time, 31.6% of them answered that private school teachers spend more time and 4.4% of them answered that public school teachers spend a greater amount of time on their preparation. In the next step, the participants were asked to state the degree of their agreement or disagreement with the statement that the less teaching experience a teacher has, the more time he/she spends on the daily preparation of next day's classes. From the answers given by the participants in the study it is clear that those who disagreed were less than those who agreed. Through the answers given by those who agreed with the above statement, the reasons were evident. The first reason was that are not yet very familiar with the teaching practice, and the other reasons were that they are not very familiar with their subject matter and that they don't possess a wide repertoire of alternative solutions to their everyday teaching problems. Only 1.7% of them reported as the first reason that they are not well acquainted with their students. *The answers of the participants in the study show that, according to the participants' statements: a) both primary and secondary school teachers spend almost the same amount of time on their daily preparation, b) the nursery teachers don't spend a lot of time on their preparation, c) teachers with less teaching experience spend more time on their preparation due to their inexperience. These findings agree with the findings of a past survey conducted in 1992 which is already mentioned in the previous thematic fields (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 45-46).*

#### 4.2.12 Teacher's Book

The teachers participating in the study seem to get prepared without giving particular emphasis on the instructions of the teacher's book. They were asked: "To what extent do you prepare yourself daily for your teaching according to the instructions of the teacher's book?" and 58.6% of them answered to a small degree, 33.7% of them answered to a large degree and 7.8% of them answered that they don't do it at all. Those who answered "to a large degree" justified their answers as follows: 80.6% of them answered "because this way I get better results", 13.6% answered "because my time is little and the lessons are many" and 5.8% answered "because this way I follow the state's directions". On the other hand, those who answered "not at all" or "to a small degree" also gave their reasons for not following the teacher's book. Most mentioned that they don't refer to the teacher's book "because this way the lesson would be boring for the students"; their second choice was "because this would oppose my pedagogical and didactic theories" and the next choice was "because the lesson would be boring for me". *Most of the teachers participating in the current study seem to take into consideration the instructions from the teacher's book only to a small degree, and this is in agreement with the findings of an earlier study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 46).*

Those who follow them to a large degree believe that this way they get better results and finally, those who follow them to a small degree justify their answers with the argument that this would make the lesson boring for their students. The fact that most of the teachers in the study admit that they don't quite follow the teacher's book for their preparation shows, in a way, that they seek help from other sources and that is a promising finding for the educational procedure.

#### 4.2.13 Lesson Preparation in Collaboration with Colleagues

The participants in the study were asked if teacher preparation in collaboration with other teachers contributes to the success of the teaching. Most of the teachers replied that this collaboration contributes to a "large degree", fewer answered "to a small degree" and very few of them answered "not at all". Even though the teachers' collaboration with their colleagues contributes to a large degree to the success of their teaching, it does not seem to take place quite often. To the relevant question posed to them "how often do you prepare your daily teachings in collaboration with your colleagues?" only a small percentage (20.7%) answered "often" and "very often". *The findings of the present thematic field indicate that the teachers participating in this study consider that teachers' collaboration with their colleagues contributes to the success of the teaching procedure. Nevertheless, they don't collaborate, despite the experts' notifications that they can reach a successful teaching through cooperative learning (Brüning & Saum, 2007; Hoffmann, 2010); the same was found in a previous study (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 46). These findings reveal a "paradox" that characterizes the teachers of the present study, who, on one hand, acknowledge the importance of cooperation<sup>10</sup>, but, on the other hand, don't promote it. Maybe this phenomenon, despite the many attempts over the last years (through the state's various training programmes, through the published studies of the experts etc.), is due to the fact that teachers haven't learned how to work in groups and they don't have first-hand experience of the positive aspects of cooperation. Collaboration, especially the one reinforced in the school and education grounds, promotes and attains, up to a point, what both the individual and the society really need, that is collegiality, team spirit, solidarity and understanding.*

#### 4.3 Cross-Tabulations

From the cross-tabulation of the "independent" and the "dependent" variables and the use of Gamma, T-Test and ANOVA tests the following relations are found<sup>11</sup>:

- **Female teachers** who participated in the study, compared to their male colleagues, agree to a greater degree that through their everyday preparation, they become more confident in their teaching ( $t=-2,132$ ,  $p=0,034$ ) and that, during their everyday preparation, they pose to themselves the questions "how will I teach the teaching content?" and "how will this become part of the students' knowledge?" ( $t=-2,227$ ,  $p=0,027$ ). Moreover, women, compared to men, consider that the time teachers of secondary education spend on their daily preparation is quite a lot ( $t=-2,647$ ,  $p=0,009$ ), that the teachers with fewer working years in schools spend more time for preparing the next day's lessons because they are not that well acquainted with students ( $t=-2,043$ ,  $p=0,042$ ), and that the teachers with more working years in schools spend less time on preparing the next day's lessons because they are well acquainted with students ( $t=-2,700$ ,  $p=0,007$ ). On the other hand, male teachers consider, to a greater degree than women, that they don't face difficulties quite often when they are preparing their teaching plans due to the fact that they have got a long educational experience ( $t=-2,569$ ,  $p=0,011$ ). They also declare to a greater degree than women that they are *never* unprepared for the next day's lessons ( $t=-2,409$ ,  $p=0,017$ ) and that the students can understand when their teachers come unprepared in class, firstly because of their weaknesses in the methods and the teaching ways and means that they use ( $t=-2,281$ ,  $p=0,023$ ), and secondly because they spend too much time of their lesson to examine their students ( $t=-2,797$ ,  $p=0,005$ ). Finally, the male teachers who participated in the study point out, to a greater degree than their female colleagues, the fact that they are not well paid as a reason for which they don't spend more time on the preparation of the next day's lessons ( $t=-2,067$ ,  $p=0,040$ ).

<sup>10</sup> The importance of cooperative teaching and learning is pointed out, especially over the last years, very often; see, for example, Borsch (2010), Brüning & Saum (2009).

<sup>11</sup> The interpretations provided in the present study for the given relations should be by no means regarded as the only possible ones.

For the findings above one could give the following explanations. Female teachers that participated in the study seem to: a) gain in certainty and self-confidence for the purpose they serve through their daily preparation, b) put a lot of effort to accomplish their teaching objectives and to make the teaching content part of the students' knowledge, and c) have realized that, in order to become more effective in their teaching, they should spend more time on their daily preparation and that they should also get well acquainted with the students in their class. On the other hand, male teachers seem to be: a) "followers" of the "educational empiricism", that is they are self-trapped in their educative experience (Chatzidimou & Taratori, 1992: 31), because they greatly value their teaching experience as far as preparation is concerned, and, also, because they claim that their students can realize when their teachers are "good" at teaching them, and b) realists and, possibly, sincere because they claim that their preparation is closely related to their working years as teachers and that they do not spend a lot of time on their preparation because they are not paid as well as they should be.

- The participating teachers in this study who have additional academic studies, compared to those who haven't, admit to a greater degree that, during the daily preparation of their teaching, they pose to themselves the question "What kind of class will I teach to?" ( $\chi^2=8,348$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,367$ ,  $p=0,007$ ).

This finding shows that the teachers' additional academic studies help the teachers realize how important it is for them to be well acquainted with their students because this acquaintance helps them succeed in their teaching objectives and process. This belief is also expressed and pointed out by education experts (see Chatzidimou & Chatzidimou, 2014). It is common place that teachers will never succeed in their work unless they make a great effort to get to know the people in front of them, the people they will work with in order to become more successful, the people they have to develop good interpersonal relationships with, the people with whom they will coexist in the same school premises for one or more years until they complete their, at the present, nine-year compulsory education.

- The teachers with a second university degree, compared to ones with no second degree, state to a greater extent that: a) during the daily preparation of their teaching they pose to themselves the questions "how will I teach the teaching content?" and "how will this content become part of the students' knowledge?" ( $\chi^2=5,580$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,502$ ,  $p=0,003$ ), b) they turn to their colleagues more often for help, when they find difficulties in their daily preparation ( $\chi^2=13,952$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $\gamma=-0,301$ ,  $p=0,002$ ), and c) the students can understand it when the teachers come unprepared in their classes ( $\chi^2=12,724$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,376$ ,  $p=0,000$ ).

To the findings above one could give the following explanations: This category of the teachers of the present study: a) realizes that teaching cannot succeed unless the teacher have previously taken good care of their personal training and of the question "how could every student integrate the aims that are set by the teacher during his/her preparation?", b) acknowledges the meaning and the importance of the teachers' collaboration with their colleagues in order to overcome the difficulties that may be faced during preparation<sup>12</sup> and c) recognizes that the students can notice it, maybe through the good personal relations that the teacher has developed with them and, also, through the skills they have acquired with the teacher's help, whenever the teacher comes in class unprepared, whenever he/she is not properly prepared for the class, whenever he/she has succeeded or failed in his/her teaching etc.

- The teachers in our study with the degree from the "Didaskaleio" (post graduate studies for elementary school teachers), compared to those with no such degree, state to a greater extent that: a) during the daily preparation of their teaching they ask themselves the question "how will I check if the teaching and learning objectives were reached?", b) the additional academic studies help them in the daily preparation of their teaching ( $\chi^2=5,587$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,362$ ,  $p=0,017$ ), c) the daily preparation of their teaching in collaboration with their colleagues contributes to the success of their teaching ( $\chi^2=7,069$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,330$ ,  $p=0,011$ ). Finally, the teachers participating in the study who haven't attended "Didaskaleio", compared to those who have, claim to a greater degree that teachers of secondary education spend a lot of time on their daily preparation ( $\chi^2=6,143$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=0,307$ ,  $p=0,031$ ).

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<sup>12</sup> It should be stressed out that, nowadays, there is a common belief, at least among the experts that the improvement in the teaching work comes along with the cooperation between the teacher and everyone else involved in the educational procedure, that is the students, the parents, the teachers etc.



The findings above show that those who have graduated from “Didaskaleio” (who are all primary education teachers) don’t think that teachers of secondary education spend a lot of time preparing for their daily teaching. Their answers indicate that: a) the teachers’ cooperation with their colleagues contributes to the success of their teaching. This fact may mean that the participants in the study have realized the pedagogical importance and the instructive value of cooperation among teachers and this is very encouraging for the educational activities in and out of school, b) the degree from Didaskaleio seems to help teachers prepare their lesson and this makes it obvious that it’s worth trying to acquire further training, and c) the teachers are preoccupied with the question concerning the verification of the accomplishment of the teaching and learning objectives. An explanation that could be given to this last finding is that the participants in the present study who haven’t got a degree from Didaskaleio haven’t been trained during their undergraduate studies in skills related to teaching and learning objectives’ verification (Tschekan, 2011). This happens because student practice programmes and pedagogical and didactic training of teachers, and particularly of secondary school teachers, are totally absent from teacher training schools’ curricula (Chatzidimou & Chatzidimou, 2013).

- The teachers with a **Master’s degree**, compared to those with no Master’s, state to a greater extent that: a) during the daily preparation of their teaching they pose to themselves the question “What kind of class will I teach to?” ( $\chi^2=952$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,433$ ,  $p=0,005$ ), b) the students can understand it when the teachers come unprepared in their classes ( $\chi^2=10,815$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,354$ ,  $p=0,001$ ), c) the additional academic studies help them in the daily preparation of their teaching ( $\chi^2=10,815$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,354$ ,  $p=0,001$ ).

It is obvious for the teachers with a Master’s degree, that their postgraduate studies help them in their pedagogical training too, even though this kind of studies mainly aim at the acquisition of qualifications and skills that help postgraduate students to learn how to seek information and not so much to acquire pedagogical and didactic training skills.

- The teachers in our study with a **doctorate degree**, compared to those without one, agree to a greater extent with the statement that the teachers: a) with their daily preparation for the next day’s lesson gain their students’ respect ( $\chi^2=5,836$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $\gamma=-0,473$ ,  $p=0,010$ ), as well as their colleagues’ respect ( $\chi^2=8,212$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $\gamma=-0,487$ ,  $p=0,007$ ), b) during the daily preparation of their teaching they ask themselves the question “What kind of students will I teach to?” ( $\chi^2=5,158$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-1,000$ ,  $p=0,000$ ), c) seek help more often from papers and books relevant to the content of the lesson when they about to teach in order to solve possible problems they come across during their daily preparation ( $\chi^2=9,106$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $\gamma=-0,503$ ,  $p=0,006$ ).

The above findings seem to indicate that the participating teachers in the present study with a doctorate degree have got a broader training background than the other participants, because they chose different answers from the rest of their colleagues concerning the subject of the study (they get prepared for their teachings using other sources as well and not only the teacher’s book). They find out and, maybe, they realize that the information given to them by the state through the instructions in the curricula and in the teacher’s books is not enough or they are not satisfied with it. Therefore, they seek additional information through other sources beyond the limited outlines of the official educational policy.

- The teachers in the study who have attended **training programmes** state, more often than the ones who haven’t, that they prepare the previous day the lessons that they are going to teach the next day ( $\chi^2=23,661$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $\gamma=-0,496$ ,  $p=0,004$ ), that nursery school teachers spend much time on their daily preparation ( $\chi^2=9,103$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,457$ ,  $p=0,010$ ) and that they prepare their teaching according to the teacher’s books ( $\chi^2=6,817$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=-0,451$ ,  $p=0,007$ ) and in cooperation with their colleagues ( $\chi^2=11,681$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $\gamma=-0,339$ ,  $p=0,022$ ).

The teachers of the present study who have attended an in-service training programme seem to have attended the kind of training programmes that gave emphasis to subjects related to the classroom and especially to the teaching process and to subjects related to the pedagogical and didactic importance of the cooperation among teachers. This is evident when they point out that they take under consideration the instructions given by the state through the teacher’s books and that they consider the cooperation among teachers a very important factor in the lesson planning.

- The cross check of the variable “**category of teachers**” (permanent or non permanent) revealed that the non permanent teachers that participated in the study state, to a greater degree than the permanent ones, that during their daily preparation they ask themselves the question “What kind of class will I teach to?”

( $\chi^2=4,372$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=0,606$ ,  $p=0,003$ ) as well as the question “which teaching content will I teach which will become part of the students’ knowledge?” ( $\chi^2=2,432$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=0,627$ ,  $p=0,018$ ). Moreover, they believe that their undergraduate studies help them in the daily preparation of their lesson ( $\chi^2=5,980$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=0,451$ ,  $p=0,010$ ). On the other hand, the permanent teachers of the study state, to a greater degree than the non permanent ones, that in-service training helps them in the daily preparation of their lesson ( $\chi^2=5,929$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=0,420$ ,  $p=0,037$ ) and that they consider sufficient the time they spend on the preparation of the next day’s lessons ( $\chi^2=7,910$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $\gamma=0,486$ ,  $p=0,036$ ).

The non permanent teachers participating in the study give the impression that they feel more insecure to perform their teaching than the permanent teachers and this feeling may be the result of the absence of educational and teaching experience as well as of not attending training programmes. It seems that the teaching experience and the security of their permanency plays an important role in the self confidence of the permanent teachers for the realization of their educational work, and especially for the planning of their lesson. This does not mean that the teachers shouldn’t be well informed of the necessary pedagogical and teaching theories and that they should be limited in their pedagogical experience (Chatzidimou, 1992: 31). Evidently, the connection of theory and practice is necessary and it is truly required for the successful realization of school teaching and learning. Moreover, with some reservations, one could give an explanation about the finding that non permanent teachers compared to permanent ones claim to a larger degree that undergraduate studies in teacher training schools help them in their preparation. The explanation might be that teacher training schools’ curricula have been nowadays partially improved regarding the field of pedagogy and teaching training of future teachers.

### 5. Findings of the Study

The findings that resulted from the analysis of the given data of the study could be summarized below:

- Most teachers of the sample of the study seem to:
  - a) Get often prepared for the next day’s lessons and to claim that the daily preparation for these lessons helps them acquire certainty and self-confidence for their lesson and to fulfill the teaching and learning objectives,
  - b) Believe that their preparation plays an important role in the fulfillment of the teaching objectives and generally in the success of teaching. They also seem to believe that they face certain difficulties during their preparation and that they overcome them mainly with the study of papers and books related to the content of their teaching subject. Those who state that they don’t face any difficulties attribute it to their educational experience,
  - c) Get prepared for the next day’s lessons without taking into consideration each student’s learning pace,
  - d) Be satisfied with their way of preparation,
  - e) Believe that their students don’t realize it whenever the teachers come in class unprepared. Those who answer that the students do realize it, base it on the teacher’s weaknesses and deficiency in the teaching and subject matter sector,
  - f) Get prepared more than two hours daily and to claim that family obligations is the factor that prevents them from spending more time on their preparation,
  - g) Consider the educational experience as the most important factor in their preparation, and
  - h) To associate time to the educational level they teach. The lower the educational level, the less time they believe that teachers spend on the preparation of their lesson.
- According to the subjects’ answers, teachers with little teaching experience, regardless of the educational level they teach to and their subject specialty, seem to spend more time on the preparation of next day’s lessons because they are not well acquainted with students. On the contrary, teachers with a lot of teaching experience seem to spend less time on the preparation of next day’s lessons because they are well acquainted with students, as stated in the study by the teachers themselves.
- During the daily preparation of their teaching, temporary teachers ask themselves the questions “What kind of class will I teach to?” and “which teaching content will I teach?”. They also believe that they spend more time on the preparation of their teaching than the permanent teachers. On the other hand, permanent teachers believe that the time they spend on next day’s lesson preparation is sufficient.
- There are basic differences between permanent and non permanent teachers, between high qualified (second university degree, Master’s, doctorate, teacher training) and low qualified teachers, between primary and secondary school teachers, between men and women.

## 6. Suggestion

The findings above show that the teachers participating in the study, regardless of their sex, qualifications, specialty, school level, teaching years in schools, acknowledge that: a) the preparation and the planning of teaching plays an important role to the success of it, b) through preparation teachers become more confident, they realize that they won't succeed in teaching unless they make an effort to get to know their students in order to set the equivalent aims and to behave in a pedagogical manner and unless they cooperate with their students and their colleagues. Given all the above, it would be beneficial if the foremen of the official educational policy, the experts, the teacher trainers and generally everybody involved in education, each one in his own way did his best to inform, educate and train the teachers on such thematic fields. The preparation and the planning of teaching at micro and macro- level constitute the basis for the success of teaching. Consequently, the success of teaching is closely connected to teachers' preparation (Chatzidimou & Chatzidimou, 2014).

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