



## ACQUISITION OF SKILLS WITHIN CLASSES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRIOR TO ENTERING THE ELEMENTARY GREEK SCHOOL

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### **Abstract:**

The current study investigates the co-education of typically and non-typically developed children within the Greek schools, while it presents the conclusions concerning our research which has been conducted with the implementation of an annual intervention educational curriculum about the co-inclusion of disordered children within the autism spectrum into the general class in two kindergartens and one preschool centre. It investigates effective ways of supporting the growth and learning of children with non-typical development through interventions, study courses, educational practices and multi-leveled support systems. Our specimen consisted of twelve (12) pupils falling under the autism spectrum who had been attending general classes, from whom seven (7) were the actual participants whereas five (5) pupils worked as the control group. The toddlers were 5 to 6 years of age and they were to be enrolled in the Elementary School the following year. The research showed that the interventions ameliorate the quality along with the quantity of basic skills and that all children can, in fact, participate on equal terms in the School Curriculum, however the readiness of the school units to accept them in an equal rank, providing them with suitable curricula, is essential.

**Keywords:** co-education, intervention curricula, development disorders, educational quality

### **1. Introduction**

In Greece, the philosophy of co-education commences during the year 2000 when the 2817/2000 Law is put into act and the right of children who undergo development

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disorders to take part in the educational process, is acknowledged. Their right to the same opportunities as the typically developed children, is established. With the 3699/2008 Law, special guidance and education is considered to be compulsory and functions as an inseparable educational part. Those children presenting diffuse development disorders are entitled to accessing the curricula where besides subject modules they will be offered the opportunity to be taught of social skills and self-efficiency. The planning of curricula providing medical, social and educational services towards under-aged children who present development disorders, as well as towards their families is considered to be a timely intervention.

The sense of a timely intervention is imminently attached to the infantile and pre-school ages. The period starting from a child's birth extending to their entering school is of crucial importance as far as their cognitive, social and emotional development is concerned (Anagnostopoulou, 2017; Bailey, Bruer, Symons & Lichman, 2001; Data accountability Center, 2010; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004; Shore, 1997). Timely intervention is a responsibility of the State, the Society and the Community on the purpose of supporting the handicapped children and their families (Carpenter, 2007; Meisels & Shonkoff, 2000). The goal of the timely intervention Curricula which are being designed is to prevent and diminish the development disorders of the children taking part in these. Observation and tracking begin during the latter years since the pregnancy period (Benn, Egan, Fang & Smith-Bindman, 2004).

The high quality services of early intervention alongside the "qualified" analytical curricula can alter a child's development path thus imposing positive effects on the children themselves as well as on their families, furthermore the communities. The intervention concerning young children who have or are in peril of development retardation has proven to be ameliorating of their development in the sections of health (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2010), linguistic skills and communication (American Speech-Language- Hearing Association, 2008; Branson & Demchack, 2009; Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, 2007), cognitive development (Hebbeler, Spiker, Bailey, Scarborough, Mallik, Simeonsson & Singer, 2007), social and emotional evolution (Land, Holman, O'Neil & Stuart, 2010).

The families benefit on the aforementioned curricula and are able to respond in a better manner towards the children's needs from an early age throughout their life (Bailey, Hebbeler, Spiker, Scarborough, Mallik & Nelson, 2005; Hebbeler, Spiker, Bailey, Scarborough, Mallik, Simeonsson & Singer, 2007). Benefits also occur to the society since the financial burden can be significantly reduced through the academic success and the low need for specialized education (Hebbeler, Spiker, Bailey, Scarborough, Mallik, Simeonsson & Singer, 2007; Hebbeler, 2009). There is a remarkable need of high-quality timely intervention curricula. According to a high number of researchers, the positive attitude of the educators is one of the main variables affecting the successful admission of children with special educational needs into general classes (Lamberson, 2006- Lohrmann & Bamburg, 2006; Strati, 2017).

The question for the general, special guidance and education personnel, as well as for the specialized educational one, is whether the interventions should be carried out in a personalized way or be embodied in the daily school routine. The attitude of the teachers who are to undertake the adaptation and learning of the children shall pose an important effect on their intervention inside the school. By revising on the bibliography one concludes that the training and occupational evolution of the educators both have an effect on their behavior as to placing in the defective children (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Scruggs & Mastropietri, 1996) and the children with disorders within the autism spectrum (Messemer, 2010; Park & Chitiyo, 2011). The educators must acquire knowledge about children's learning and developing, but, in addition to this, they must be constantly keeping themselves up-to-date (Sakellariou, 2012).

The objective of an annual curriculum is to researchfully contribute to the following:

- a) Whether children with disorders within the autism spectrum gain on obtaining skills during the school year inside the co-educational courses by being provided with suitable educational curricula.
- b) Whether the progress of children with disorders within the autism spectrum connects to the positive attitude of their educators towards their placing in.
- c) Whether the quality of the education that is offered to the general class connects to developing the children's skills.

For the purposes of the present study in terms of the annual intervention, quality goes along with the classes in which the teachers support and encourage the children's learning as well as their acceptance and participation. Through questionnaires, evaluation scales and registration tools, we observed the children's behaviour, evaluated the ambience of the class and recorded the educators' responses. In a high-quality, enhanced co-educational practices' class the educators plan and apply, differentiate and adjust so that all children are occupied on each one's level. Within the regarded-to-be high-quality classes, the educators provide all children with opportunities and accept their differences.

## **2. Dealing with behavioral problems as a form of early intervention**

A child, being a complex mental organism, is joined together inside an intricate system of diachronic relations and interaction sets (family, school, neighbourhood, social affairs) which is perpetually evolving and changing (Kourkoutas, 2009). A child's problematic behaviour should not be dealt with as an autonomous disorder without any reference to their general psychological organization and functions or to the parameters and conditions under which this sort of behaviour is manifested and, mainly, to the role of the background (Kourkoutas, 2006, Kourkoutas, 2013). The basic factors resulting in the appearance of behavioral problems seem to be the absence of older siblings, the restricted size and the single-parent structure of the family,

aggression or inter-parental conflicts (Gustafsson, Barnett, Towe-Goodman, Mills-Koonce & Cox, 2014; Nes, Hauge, Kornstad, Landolt, Irgens, Eskedal, Kristensen & Vollrath, 2015).

The more one child evolve and develop their interaction with their surroundings, organizing their cognitive and psycho-emotional structures and as their experiences and history through those interactions build up, the more the possibility of manifesting aggressive behaviour and actions which may or may not have a purposed character, is increased. Aggression, as a behavioral form or element is considered to extend through a long range of reactions that vary compared to each other based on certain features such as volume, duration, form, goal, incentive, by-standing emotions (Kourkoutas, 2009; Gendreau & Archer, 2005; Tremblay, 2003).

The data that have been extracted from the research indicate that disorderly behaviours during the pre-school age have different form and characteristics than those of adolescence. Their evolution and modification are a result not only of indigenous evolutionary parameters but also of complex external factors such as the absence of a specialized intervention as well as the way of managing them by the school and family environments. Children who manifest psychological / emotional difficulty and behavioral problems show one or more of the following characteristics (Kourkoutas, 2009):

- Inability to learn;
- Inability to build and preserve satisfactory intra- personal relations with their classmates and educators;
- Inappropriate patterns of behaviour or emotional reactions;
- Generalized feeling of discomfort, misery and depressed mood;
- Phobias inhibiting the undertaking of initiatives thus making the child vulnerable towards the manifestation of derogating reactions.

The behavioral disorders during childhood seem to highly connect to a number of severe functional problems within the family. Negative family conditions, under which the parents manifest various disorders and malfunctions on both, social and behavioral levels, can respectively cause serious conduct problems to their children (Sherbin & Krap, 2004). Modern Scientists suggest that the socialization process is a basic component of attaining suitable adaptation mechanisms to the environment (Kourkoutas, 2009). Children who have been diagnosed with aggressive behaviour are very likely to present severe derogations during their adolescence or adult life, if they fail to be assisted on developing socially acceptable behaviour. Such derogations are (Kourkoutas, 2009):

- Abandoning school;
- Deviating, anti-social acts;
- Psychological disorders;
- Occupational instability;
- Problems that concern maintaining harmonic and well- balanced relationships;
- High risk of manifesting inclination towards collective violence.

The pupils' relations with each other as well as those between them and the educator, the atmosphere inside the class in general, hold a critical role to the pupils' behaviour. More specifically, it has been proven that factors such as the child-educator (McCormick, Turbeville, Barnes & McClowry, 2014) child-peers (Yoleri, 2013) and family-school community (Papatheodorou, 2005) relations, all have an impact on the possibility of presenting behavioral problems. Management of such problems inside the class is extremely difficult and demanding. The timely pinpointing of the problems is necessary since it affects the academic and inter-personal growth of a pupil (Plotts, 2012). The positive relationship between an educator and the pupils affect the children's adaptation to the school, the learning process and prevent the development of behavioral problems (Poulou, 2015). The quality of the pupil-educator relationship points out a quite strong factor of the social sufficiency precognition (Burchinal, Vandergriff, Pianta & Mashburn, 2010).

### 3. Methodology

On the purpose of collecting data, open and free techniques were used, e.g. logbooks, photographic material and keeping of a diary as well as quantitative techniques such as questionnaires and observation keys. A multi-methodological approach was followed by using the dimensions of the quality and quantity models (King, 1994). The credibility of the collected data was ensured, to a certain degree, by the use of the "triangulation" method which, according to Hopkins (1993) constitutes a "reliability test". Data were extracted from three different sources but also from the use of different methods (Neumah, 2000; Yin, 2003), the questionnaires that were acquired from the general and specialized education teachers, the researchers' observations and the interviews of the educators all of which ensure the intra-subjective testing of the conclusions. We were offered the opportunity of a spherical assessment of the situation; we scrutinized on and evaluated the results in a more definite way. Triangulation is the combination of a variety of methods in order of the hypotheses of our research to be tested (Rentzou & Sakellariou, 2014).

The measurements were carried out on the basis of achieving teaching goals on the analytical curricula and on that of the all-day kindergarten taking under account the transition of handicapped children (Alevriadou, Vrynioti, Kyridis, Sivropoulou, Theodosiadou & Chrysafidis, 2008). We focused on the cognitive, emotional and psycho-kinetic sections:

- We determined the pupils' level, studied the diagnoses from the Differential Diagnosis and Support Centres (DDSC- ΚΕΔΔΥ).
- We decided on the teaching areas.
- We planned the steps of learning and obtaining skills
- We selected teaching methods and moved on to the implementation of the "Coo coo Listen, Coo coo Look" programme.
- We recorded and assessed the overall progress.

The tools that were used for the quantitative and qualitative data are the following:

- Questionnaires including open and closed-type questions;
- Observation keys;
- Individualized curricula;
- Interviewing the educators;
- Observation;
- Diversified teaching;
- Musical activities- songs about each one of the learning objectives;
- The pre-school education Montessori, Reggio Emilia (High/Scope) programmes, concerning space and material; (Rentzou & Sakellariou, 2014)
- Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT- TITE).

### **a. Interviewing**

As a complementary to the questionnaires one, technique, in order the validity of the already collected data to be achieved. They were used as a tool in the form of a free conversation and spontaneous, rich, informational material and specific relative responses were selected. They were held in the form of an open dialogue providing an interactive facility between the conductor of the research and the interviewee who was given the chance to speak freely about the posed issues. The duration of the interviews spanned between thirty and forty five minutes for each educator. The interviews were carried out during October, February- the middle of the programme- when the modifying evaluation was taking place and the educational goals were again examined, as well as at the end of the programme.

### **b. Observation**

The researchers implemented participatory observation. They took part in the group activities. They had been observing the reactions along with the behaviour of the pupils in the group. The researcher is highly experienced on the use of this kind of tool but is also qualified on recording the information. Participatory observation is a method suitable for comprehending social phenomena, views, values and attitudes of a general population group (Strati, 2017).

### **c. The Differentiated Teaching**

In order to successfully apply the Differentiated teaching, we:

- a) Attempted to assure the cooperation of every employee in every field of expertise;
- b) Attempted to familiarize ourselves with the characteristics and needs of the pupils, to the highest degree possible;
- c) Gathered information on the socio-cultural background of the pupils as well as about their families' anticipations.

We took on account the following clues in order to implement the differentiated teaching in the most effective way (Vallianti & Ioannidou-Koutselini, 2008; Tomlinson, 2003):

- We scheduled a differentiated teaching curriculum;
- We worked with small, flexible and cognitively non-homogenous groups;
- We diversified the teaching material;
- We modified the pace with respect to the children's needs;
- We emphasized on acquiring basic knowledge and skills.

### **3.1 The research specimen**

During the curriculum the sampling was not random as we were aiming at a profound investigation on co-education of children with diffuse development disorders; we clarified and comprehended parameters which concern the education of defective children. Our sample consisted of twelve (12) pupils with disorders within the autism spectrum of whom seven (7) were the actual participants while the remaining five (5) constituted the control group.

### **3.2 Methodological approach of the Educational Curriculum**

The experimental research includes two interacting variables. Of these, we called the one which works as the cause of the alterations, "independent variable", whereas the one which changes as a result of the first variable's variation will be called "dependent variable". During the conduction of an experimental research several practical inhibitions may occur in terms of checking all the potential factors that can affect the values of the dependent variable. We gathered information from the available bibliography (theoretical aspects as well as findings of previous researches) concerning the existence and importance of several external variables in order to investigate the phenomenon of our interest. A variable can be measured towards both, its quantity and its quality. During the current research:

The implementation of the "Coo coo Listen, Coo coo Look" curriculum was determined to act as the independent variable. Learning, obtaining skills and abilities by children with Disorders within the Autism Spectrum was determined to act as the dependent variable.

Under the state of experimental manipulation we formed the proper experimental conditions on whose basis we provoked changes to the values of the independent variable in order to record the variations that would take place into the phenomenon which is examined (dependent variable). We formulated a research hypothesis towards the effect of the independent variable to the dependent one and carried out the experimental plan so that we would be able to check up (verify or reject that is) this hypothesis.

Stages of the experimental process:

1. Hypothesis. Children with disabilities who are embodied into the general class need a modification of the curriculum in order their admission to be successful.


Children with diffuse Development Disorders learn more efficiently through programmes that combine pictures and sounds (seeing, listening).

2. Formation of conditions which control the independent variable.
3. Measurement of the dependent variable values for each of the different value levels of the independent one.
4. Results' analysis.
5. Confirmation or rejection of the hypothesis.

The most elemental form of experimental planning includes the comparison between two groups; the experimental and the control ones. Groups which undergo the experimental manipulation of the independent variable are called experimental groups whereas the one that is not subject to such manipulation will be called control group. The values of the independent variable concerning the experimental group are put under comparison to the ones of the control group in order the existence or absence of any significant statistical differences to be ascertained.

The experimental research was conducted with the cooperation of the pre-school centre educators, the two kindergartens and the families. The educators participated throughout the whole research process from the initial planning all the way to the evaluation and rescheduling. Our goal was to comprehend the educational status under the co-existence of typically and non-typically developed children, to interpret its malfunctions, to diagnose any problems that existed and to investigate on their solution perspectives. Our desire was, in fact, not only to improve our practices but also to ameliorate the conditions under which we had been acting. More specifically:

Experimentation	Research
We acted	We investigated
We intervened	We revised
We aimed	We moved cautiously
We decided	We had a schedule
We were motivated	Testimonies/ Proofs
We were passionate	We acted systematically



**Figure 1:** Experimentation and research

Basic features of the experimental research within our project:

- Constant (repetitive) evaluation of abilities and skills;
- Effects of repetitive interventions;
- The repetitive evaluation is conducted prior to, during and after the intervention
- The participation and cooperation among the educators, the families and the pupils;
- The synthesis of theory and action, the teaching is systematically subjected to observation, critical thinking and alteration. Theory supplemented and enriched the practical judgement of the educators;
- The participants acted and thought with aims at comprehending, changing and improving.



### 3.3. Teaching techniques

- Endorsement of positive acting. The positive experience inside the class along with faith in the educators creates a solid environment for the pupils with special educational needs or disabilities.
- Individualized educational curricula and suitable educational goals. Drawing was utilized as a means of developing oral skills:
  - Using visual cards helped the children remain focused on the activities;
  - The daily schedule of the class reminded the children of what they were to do during the day;
  - “Organization cards” placed on a central spot of the classroom which the pupils resorted to as frequently as the needed.
- Eloquent instructions. The use of a simple and non-ambiguous language was a significant asset to communicating with children within the autism spectrum. By using a natural guidance by the whole school personnel, the feeling of stability was enhanced and there was an attempt of generalizing learning throughout different places and with different individuals.
- Averting anxiety. The perpetual observation and good knowledge of the children’s communicational patterns, was constantly informing us on the things they were preoccupied with.

### 3.4. Educational practices in the general class

- Use of ICT and audio-visual aids. Software (calculating platforms for teaching and learning) conceptual charts, photographic material, videos. All of the above activate the children’s interests, help them focus on a specific purpose and facilitate learning. In addition, computers assist on an easier comprehension of meanings and processes.
- Investigation and discovery (energetic approach of knowledge); Children are led to knowledge by themselves; they learn “how to learn”, that is. This is based on the socio-cultural aspect of cognition, by Bruner and Vygotsky.
- Conversation- dialogue between the educator and the pupils or group debate. By debating, the children contemplate, evaluate and formulate views.
- Group-cooperative forms of teaching. They are called for organizing activities via the use of technology. Through co-working activities between toddlers and adults –the second ones holding the role of the intermediaries- thinking abilities are developed and gradually build, according to Vygotsky. A key role to the above is played by the tools that are used (educational software and language) as well as the apportionment of tasks (activity theory).

### 3.5 Restrictions on the research

Within the Curriculum, all children taking part should, beforehand, be provided with a diagnosis report from their local DDSC or from a Child Guidance Medical Centre (CGMC), on which the term “Diffuse Development Disorders” should be clearly stated.

The children must be toddlers, with an age span between 5-6 years old and were to be enrolled in the Elementary School the following year.

#### 4. Presentation of the research educational curriculum results

**4.1 Question:** Please, evaluate the general abilities level of the child on speech, comprehension of short-length texts, on the use of computer and on music

##### A. Oral speech

**Table 1:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on oral speech

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Oral Speech mid – Oral Speech pre	Improvement	1	0,317
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	
		Total	5	
	Oral Speech post – Oral Speech pre	Improvement	2	0,157
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	3	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Oral Speech mid – Oral Speech pre	Improvement	5	0,034
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	7	
	Oral Speech post – Oral Speech pre	Improvement	7	0,015
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

As far as oral speech is concerned, it is obvious that during the middle (mid) of the project (February) five (5) of the participating pupils improved, whereas two (2) remained unchanged. At the end (post) of the project all pupils had showed improvement. Within the control group, in February, one (1) of the pupils improved, while the remaining four (4) were unchanged. At the end, two (2) pupils had improved and the rest (3) of them were unchanged. *The only significant statistical variation observed, concerns the toddlers who took part in the curriculum during the middle  $p=0,034$  and the end  $p=0,015$  of it.*

## B. Comprehension of short-length texts

**Table 2:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on comprehending short-length texts

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Comprehension of short-length texts mid - Comprehension of short-length texts pre	Improvement	2	0,157
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	3	
		Total	5	
	Comprehension of short-length texts post - Comprehension of short-length texts pre	Improvement	3	0,083
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Comprehension of short-length texts mid - Comprehension of short-length texts pre	Improvement	5	0,025
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	7	
	Comprehension of short-length texts post - Comprehension of short-length texts pre	Improvement	6	0,024
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	1	
		Total	7	

We see that, as far as the comprehension of short-length texts is concerned, during the middle (mid) of the project (February) five (5) of the participants showed improvement while two (2) remained unchanged. At the end (post) of the project six (6) of the pupils had improved whereas one (1) had shown no change. Within the control group, during February, two (2) of the pupils who had taken part improved, while the remaining three (3) showed no change. At the end three (3) pupils had improved and the remaining two (2) were unchanged. *A significant statistical variation is present only for the toddlers that took part in the curriculum, in the middle  $p=0,025$  and at the end  $p=0,024$  of it.*

## C. Computers

**Table 3:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on computers

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Computers mid - Computers pre	Improvement	1	0,317
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	
		Total	5	
	Computers post - Computers pre	Improvement	1	0,317
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Computers mid - Computers pre	Improvement	5	0,034
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	7	

	Computers post - Computers pre	Improvement	7	0,014
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

Regarding computers, during the middle (mid) of the curriculum (February) five (5) of the participants improved whereas the remaining two (2) were unchanged. At the end (post) of the curriculum all pupils (7) had improved. As to the control group, in February, one (1) of the pupils improved while the other four (4) showed no change whatsoever. The situation remained stagnant in June (post) also. *There was a significant statistical variation only among the participating toddlers during the middle  $p=0,034$  and at the end  $p=0,014$  of the project.*

#### D. Music

**Table 4:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on music

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Music mid - Music pre	Improvement	4	0,083
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	1	
		Total	5	
	Music post - Music pre	Improvement	5	0,046
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Music mid - Music pre	Improvement	7	0,008
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	
	Music post - Music pre	Improvement	7	0,011
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

We can see that concerning music, during the middle (mid) of the curriculum (February) all seven (7) of the participants showed an improvement. At the end (post) of the curriculum, again all pupils (7) had improved. Among the control group, during February, four (4) of the pupils showed an improvement while one (1) remained unchanged. At the end, all five (5) had showed a certain improvement. *A significant statistical variation, however, is present only among the toddlers who had taken part in the curriculum, during the middle  $p=0,008$  and by its end,  $p=0,011$ , while there has been a boundary improvement at the end  $p=0,046$ .*

**4.2. Question:** The following Social Skills have been proven to be; easy, neither easy nor difficult, difficult for a pupil:

- To establish friendships;
- To abide by the school regulations;
- To work in teams;
- To express their feelings.

### A. Social skill; establishing friendships

**Table 5:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on the social skill:  
Establishing friendships

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Establishing friendships mid – Establishing friendships pre	Improvement	0	1,000
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	5	
		Total	5	
	Establishing friendships post – Establishing friendships pre	Improvement	3	0,083
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Establishing friendships mid – Establishing friendships pre	Improvement	6	0,014
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	1	
		Total	7	
	Establishing friendships post – Establishing friendships pre	Improvement	7	0,011
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

Regarding the social skill “to establish friendships”, during the middle of the project (February), six (6) of the participating pupils showed an improvement while one (1) remained unchanged. At the end (post) of the project, all pupils (7) had improved. As to the control group in February all five (5) pupils showed no change. In June (post) three (3) pupils had improved while two (2) remained unchanged. *A significant statistical variation can only be detected among the toddlers who participated in the curriculum in the middle  $p=0,014$  and by the end  $p=0,011$  of it.*

### B. Social skill: Abiding by the school regulations

**Table 6:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on the social skill:  
Abiding by the school regulation

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Abiding by the school regulations mid – Abiding by the school regulations pre	Improvement	0	1,000
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	5	
		Total	5	

	Abiding by the school regulations post – Abiding by the school regulations pre	Improvement	1	0,317
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	
		Total	5	
<b>Intervention</b>	Abiding by the school regulations mid – Abiding by the school regulations pre	Improvement	6	0,014
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	1	
		Total	7	
	Abiding by the school regulations post – Abiding by the school regulations pre	Improvement	7	0,015
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

As for the social skill “to abide by the school regulations, in the middle (mid) of the curriculum (February) six (6) of the participants showed an improvement but one (1) remained unchanged. At the end (post) of the curriculum all of the pupils had improved. Within the control group, in February all five (5) pupils remained unchanged. By June (post) one pupil had improved whereas the remaining four (4) had no change at all. *The only significant statistical variation existing, concerns the toddlers who took part in the project, during the middle  $p=0,014$  and the end  $p=0,015$  of it.*

### C. Social skill: Working in teams

**Table 7:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on the social skill:  
Working in teams

Group			Amount	p-value
<b>Control</b>	Working in teams mid – Working in teams pre	Improvement	1	0,317
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	
		Total	5	
	Working in teams post – Working in teams pre	Improvement	3	0,083
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	5	
<b>Intervention</b>	Working in teams mid – Working in teams pre	Improvement	3	0,083
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	
		Total	7	
	Working in teams post – Working in teams pre	Improvement	7	0,008
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

Concerning the Social skill: “Working in teams”, in the middle (mid) of the curriculum (February) three out of the seven (7) participants improved while the other four (4) remained unchanged. By the end (post) of the curriculum all seven (7) pupils had

showed an improvement. Within the control group, in February four (4) pupils showed no change whereas to one (1) who improved. In June (post) three (3) pupils showed an improvement while the remaining two (2) were unchanged. *The only significant statistical variation to be found, concerns the toddlers who took part in the curriculum and only to its end  $p=0,008$ .*

#### D. Social skill: Expressing feelings

**Table 8:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on the social skill:  
Expressing their feelings

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Expressing feelings mid – Expressing feelings pre	Improvement	0	1,000
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	5	
		Total	5	
	Expressing feelings post – Expressing feelings pre	Improvement	0	1,000
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	5	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Expressing feelings mid – Expressing feelings pre	Improvement	5	0,025
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	7	
	Expressing feelings post – Expressing feelings pre	Improvement	6	0,058
		Deterioration	1	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

Concerning the social skill: “To express their feelings”, in the middle (mid) of the curriculum (February), five (5) out of the seven (7) participants showed an improvement while the remaining two (2) showed no change. By the end (post) of the curriculum six (6) pupils had improved and the remaining one (1) had deteriorated. Within the control group, in February, all five (5) pupils were unchanged. In June, again all five (5) pupils showed no change as well. *The only significant statistical variation was observed among the toddlers who had participated in the curriculum and only in the middle of it  $p=0,025$ .*

#### 4.3. Conclusion charts regarding the observation key

### A. Do They Participate in Pretend Play?

**Table 9:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level  
on participating in pretend play

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Participates in pretend play mid – Participates in pretend play pre	Improvement	0	1,000
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	5	
		Total	5	
	Participates in pretend play post – Participates in pretend play pre	Improvement	1	0,317
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Participates in pretend play mid – Participates in pretend play pre	Improvement	4	0,046
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	3	
		Total	7	
	Participates in pretend play post – Participates in pretend play pre	Improvement	5	0,025
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	7	

Relatively to pretend play, in the middle (mid) of the curriculum (February) four (4) of the participants improved whereas three (3) remained unchanged. By the end (post) of the curriculum five (5) of the pupils had improved while two (2) had shown no change at all. Within the control group in February, all five (5) pupils remained unchanged. In June (post) four (4) pupils showed no change whatsoever, while only one (1) had improved. *A significant statistical variation is present only concerning the toddlers who participated in the project by the end of it  $p=0,025$ , with a boundary improvement occurring in its middle  $p=0,046$ .*

### B. Is He/She Capable of Coping with Minor Everyday Problems by Himself/Herself?

**Table 10:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level  
on coping with minor everyday problems, by themselves

Group			Amount	p-value
Control	Is he/she capable of coping with minor everyday problems by himself/herself mid - Is he/she capable of coping with minor everyday problems by himself/herself pre	Improvement	1	0,317
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	
		Total	5	
	Is he/she capable of coping with minor everyday problems by himself/herself post - Is he/she capable of coping with minor everyday problems by himself/herself pre	Improvement	3	0,083
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Is he/she capable of coping with minor everyday problems by himself/herself mid - Is he/she capable of coping with minor everyday problems by	Improvement	3	0,083
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	4	



	himself/herself pre	Total	7	
	Is he/she capable of coping with minor everyday problems by himself/herself post - Is he/she capable of coping with minor everyday problems by himself/herself pre	Improvement	7	0,011
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

Assuming that they had to deal with minor everyday-life problems by themselves, in the middle (mid) of the curriculum (February) three (3) of the participants showed an improvement while the remaining four (4) showed no change at all. At the end (post) of the curriculum, all seven (7) pupils had improved. Within the control group, in February, four (4) of the pupils remained unchanged whereas one (1) improved. In June (post), three out of five (5) pupils had improved while the remaining two (2) showed no change. *A significant statistical variation was observed only among the toddlers participating in the curriculum and only at its end  $p=0,011$ .*

### C. Does He/She Refuse to Engage Himself/Herself with Anything beyond His/Her Own Interests?

**Table 11:** Distribution of pupils respectively to their efficiency level on engaging themselves with anything beyond their own interests

Group		Amount	p-value	
Control	Refuses to engage himself/herself with anything beyond his/her own interests mid – Refuses to engage himself/herself with anything beyond his/her own interests pre	Improvement	3	0,157
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	2	
		Total	5	
	Refuses to engage himself/herself with anything beyond his/her own interests post – Refuses to engage himself/herself with anything beyond his/her own interests pre	Improvement	4	0,102
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	1	
		Total	5	
Intervention	Refuses to engage himself/herself with anything beyond his/her own interests mid – Refuses to engage himself/herself with anything beyond his/her own interests pre	Improvement	7	0,008
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	
	Refuses to engage himself/herself with anything beyond his/her own interests post – Refuses to engage himself/herself with anything beyond his/her own interests pre	Improvement	7	0,015
		Deterioration	0	
		Unchanged	0	
		Total	7	

Regarding whether the pupils refused to engage themselves with anything beyond their own interests, in the middle (mid) of the curriculum (February) all seven (7) of them improved. By the end (post) of the curriculum, again all of them had improved. Within the control group in February, two (2) of the pupils showed no change at all, whereas the remaining three (3) improved. In June (post), four (4) pupils had improved but the fifth one remained unchanged. *A significant statistical variation exists only among the toddlers who took part in the curriculum during the middle  $p=0,008$  and at the end  $p=0,015$  of it.*

## 5. Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

Interventions help ameliorate both, the quality and the quantity of basic skills. Practices that reimburse the versatile and functional interaction within natural environments consisting of a limited group of classmates and adults have been proven to promote the communication and cognitive development of the children (Hebbeler & Spiker 2016; Kaiser & Trent, 2007). Defective children have problems interacting with children of the same age as well as with adults so they need to be taught of social skills such as communicating, resolving issues and making decisions. Studies in which children from three (3) to five (5) years of age took part, have indicated that social interventions on the purpose of skills development can provide a positive increase onto their social interaction thus reducing their behavioral problems (Vaughn, Kim, Sloan & Sridhar, 2003). Our own research has reached the same conclusion by taking under account the views of the educators through their experience and the results of the intervention Curriculum.

The educators can develop a variety of approach methods towards the development of social skills. They can use a well-structured approach in order to explain to their pupils a desirable behavioral pattern, using examples along with the enhancement of a targeted behavioral model via questions, responses and feedback. Within a versatile approach the educators correspond towards their pupils' interests and encourage desirable social abilities by interacting and endorsing a positive attitude. The conductors of the research do believe that didactics through mutual influence between typically and non-typically developed children can truly help children with special educational needs or defectiveness to be taught of new social, linguistic, kinetic, self-sufficiency and academic skills (Snyder, Rakap, Hemmeter & McLean, 2015). This same aspect is also being shared among the educators participating in our research. Education within the general class ought to be using documented practices which should be based upon the curricula and provide all children with the opportunity to achieve a well-established education.

We ascertained that admission is determined by the following three components:

- Access to the typical environments and a catholic scheduling to uphold a full admission;
- Methods of participation and teaching approach towards support and promotion of the children's full participation;
- Supporting infrastructure for backing the personnel, suitable occupational evolution as well as opportunities of specialized service.

## 6. Conclusion

Differentiation can support an effective teaching and learning for all pupils (Hattie, 2009) always aiming at the overstepping of inequities and promoting social justice (Koutselini & Agathaggelou, 2009). In a democratic school, variation of teaching is

focused on acknowledgement of characteristics, particularity and pupils' needs on a cognitive level as well as one of abilities but also on their socio-emotional and cultural layer. One must understand that according to the diversified teaching philosophy not only pupils, but educators as well, are unique and special individuals. Implementation, Cultivation and Growth of any teaching skill should by no means be seen as compulsory (Neophytou & Valiandi, 2015). Each educator, bearing their very own "teaching style" should be offered the opportunity of a substantial training so that they shape their teaching profile aptly, thus allowing them to diversify their teaching.

In conclusion, we deem that the continuation of the Curriculum in more Kindergartens and Pre-school Establishments would be necessary in order our conclusions to be generalized in a more secure way. Our goal was to prove that children of pre-school ages having special educational needs are highly benefited by attending the general class and that teaching differentiation is necessary. They obtain skills as to their transition from the Kindergarten to the Elementary School. By implementing this Curriculum on more Schools, really useful conclusions concerning co-education, shall be extracted. Hopefully, we will be able to continue with the implementation of the "Coo coo, Listen! Coo coo, Look!" curriculum in the future, within Elementary School classes, as well.

### **About the authors**

**Maria Sakellariou** is a Professor, President of The Department of Early Childhood Education (T.P.N.) of the University of Ioannina and Managing Director of the Post-graduate Studies Programme. She studied at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) where she completed her Post- Graduate studies as well as her Doctoral Thesis, with particular emphasis on Pedagogy and Preschool Pedagogy. Her studies also include international seminars in Pedagogy and Preschool Pedagogy at Zurich University, Switzerland. She has taught as a visiting professor on the Educational Sciences Department at the University of Cyprus and on the post- graduate course under the title "Gender and New technologies within Education" which is being implemented by the Department of Pre-school Education and Educational Design (ΤΕΠΙΑΕΣ- DPEED) of the University of the Aegean. Her research interests and her bibliography focus mainly on Pedagogy and Preschool/ Primary School Education, in particular on the cognitive domains of Teaching Methodology and Curricula Design, Socio- Ethical Cognition as well as School- Family- Community Collaboration. She is the author, co- publisher and editor of 13 books- scientific manuals some of which are: Cooperation between Family and the Kindergarten: Theory- Research- Teaching Proposals (2008), Teaching Methods Enhancement of Cognition for Children from Kindergarten to High School (2009), Ethics and Education: Dilemmas and Perspectives (2011), Introduction to the Didactics of Pedagogical Labor in the Kindergarten: Theoretical Approaches and Teaching Implementations (2012), Space, seen as a Pedagogical Domain within Preschool Cognitive Environments: Planning and Organizing (2014), Playing Pedagogy within Preschool and School Education. Learning

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Maria Sakellariou, Panagiota Strati, Rodokleia Anagnostopoulou  
ACQUISITION OF SKILLS WITHIN CLASSES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRIOR  
TO ENTERING THE ELEMENTARY GREEK SCHOOL

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