Analytical report

"Children after the Social Isolation due to Covid-19"

Country: Greece

Done by Athens Network of Collaborating Experts

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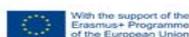
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Theoretical background

Education in Greece during COVID-19

The right to education is described by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and it is recognized as a basic, inalienable right for every person and every child. During the COVID-19 pandemic, education was one of the most affected pillars that were subject to adjustments. The COVID-19 pandemic created a crisis that set the world in an emergency mode and requested ICT skills to have a fast response to the needs of education and facilitate the environment for online learning (Anastasiadis, 2020). Governments were forced to take measures against the spread of the virus, among students and the school society in general.

In Greece before the pandemic, the compulsory part of the curriculum in primary education, represented approximately 24 hours of face-to-face classes per week. In March 2020, the Greek government took various measures to combat the effects of the pandemic in terms of society, economy, health and education[1]. The suspension of face-to-face schooling was decided, at first only for two weeks. Afterwards, the government decided the implementation of online learning, to offer the students the opportunity to continue their school year. The suspension of face-to-face teaching was extended for three more weeks and then for one extra month[2]. On the 6th of May 2020, the Government decided to restart some face-to-face classes, starting with the final grade of high school and progressively for the rest of school grades. The Ministry of Education published guidelines for the restarting of face-to-face teaching, with opportunities for online teaching for those students who couldn't attend the classes. The school year was extended for 2 weeks, until the 12th of June 2020[3]. For the next school year, the school followed various regulations with the main aim to prevent the spread of the virus, such as the mandatory use of masks inside and outside of the classes, suggestions on how the school breaks should be planned,[4] etc. However, on the 14th of November 2020, schools were once again forced to adapt to the new regulations and start the distance learning which lasted until the winter break (8th of January 2021), when schools opened again their doors to the students. On the 10th of February, it was decided to turn back to the online learning in specific areas which were characterized as "Red" zones and periodically started including more and more areas all over the country.

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[1] Governmental decision: *Έκτακτα μέτρα απόκρισης για την καταπολέμηση των επιπτώσεων της πανδημίας COVID και την ανάγκη περιορισμού της διασποράς της, 11η Μαρτίου 2020.* Retrieved on 1/6/2022 from: https://covid19.gov.gr/nomothesia-gia-ton-covid-19/

[2] Governmental decision: ΦΕΚ 956/Β/21.03.2020 & ΦΕΚ 24343/Β/10.4.2020 & 1293/Β/10.04.2020

[3] Governmental decision ΦΕΚ 1764/Β/08.05.2020.

[4] Governmental decision ΦΕΚ 3780/08-09-2020

Figure 1: Unesco Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19 - Greece

More specifically, distance learning was designed in three ways: synchronous, asynchronous and educational TV. For synchronous learning, the Greek government created a digital platform[5] (WebEx) for students between 4-17 years old where they had the opportunity to participate online in their classes. WebEx was used in the public institutions. Private schools could use any platform they preferred for their classes, including the one offered by the Ministry, but they had to pay for its expenses and extra features. For the asynchronous part of the education, digital tools and platforms were used that students could access anytime. The available digital tools were organized by the Ministry of Education in interactive platforms (e-books) as well as the digital space for the educators to be able to create their digital classes. The educational TV[6], broadcasted daily, recorded lessons for the primary and secondary education levels.

Thus, to achieve equal access to digital education, more than 2.200 laptops and 15.200 tablets were distributed from private donors and funded programs[7] to students all over the country, especially to those in need, to be able to follow up on distance learning. Following the needs of society, mobile

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[5] https://mathainoumeasfaleis.gov.gr/

[6] https://edutv.minedu.gov.gr/

[7] https://www.minedu.gov.gr/news/44851-07-05-20-triti-apostoli-texnologikoy-eksoplismoy-sta-sxoleia-mas-apo-dorees-gia-xrisi-apo-mathites-kai-ekpaideftikoys-synoliki-os-tora-aksia-doreon-3-125-000-evro%20

companies offered free of charge (zero-rating)[8] access to those digital platforms offered for the needs of distance learning. Additionally, school psychologists, social workers and other professionals were hired in schools to support children during the pandemic.

Some educators were lacking basic technological knowledge which was necessary for distance learning, since there was a wide number of educators who had never received training and seminars on the topic, although there were programs offered by the state for the development of the technological teachers' skills (Anastasiadis, 2020). During the outbreak of the pandemic, the Ministry of Education facilitated actions for the support of the educational society through the program "Digital Care"[9] which offered technical support and guidance to all schools and funds for equipping school facilities. Other notable actions were organized and implemented by various institutions, such as the Greek Open University, the University of Aegean and the Institute of Educational Policies that provided Open Online Classes (MOOC) for the school online/ distance learning and the program "Odysseas"[10] implemented by University of Crete, which provided free of charge educational seminars.

Distance learning appeared as the possible option for the continuation of school education. Before the beginning of the pandemic, distance learning in Greece was in a premature stage and mostly implemented in specific cases in tertiary education. In the beginning, the transit from face-to-face classes to online ones was described as a difficult and stressful procedure. In 2020[11] OECD mentions that Greece is trying to balance the short-term responsiveness with the long-term strategic aims and resilience to engage and enrich the digital learning in the school's curriculum. The Greek Government announced in March 2020 "the Education Policy Outlook", which had 5 basis points[12]: 1. Ensuring the continuation and accessibility to smooth and permeable pathways through the education system in terms of sustainability and digital transition. 2. Strengthening the internal world of the student through reports and guides for parents and teachers. 3. Providing targeted support and interventions for vulnerable children and families to facilitate their access to digital education. 4. Harnessing wider support and engagement at the local and central levels. 5. Collecting, disseminating and improving the use of information through statistics and publications.

As for the outside school activities, during the lockdown most of them were forced to stop or postpone their activities until they were adjusted to the digital era. Educational centers, private classes,

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[8] https://covid19.gov.gr/choris-chreosi-apo-kinita-diktya-i-prosvasi-se-psifiakes-platformes-gia-tin-ex-apostaseos-ekpedefsi/

[9] Translation in Greek: Ψηφιακή μέριμνα

[10] https://www.uoc.gr/announce/proto-/odysseas2021.html

[11] https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/covid-snapshot-Greece.pdf

[12] https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/covid-snapshot-Greece.pdf

sport activities and mostly activities that were implemented in groups were forced to be canceled until further notice. In the beginning, activities that were planned to be implemented in groups, had to chance their formats and re-adjust to the new realities. There are not enough data about the number of activities that were canceled, changed or postponed during the lockdowns. Though many of the extra-curriculum activity centers used their platforms, websites and social media in order to share their work –many times for free- through videos, online meetings etc.

Skills during the pandemic:

To better understand the possible changes and losses in the knowledge and skills of students, it is necessary to identify the framework and the processes that impacted the opportunities to learn (Reimers, 2022). Education is not only about getting grades and diplomas, rather it is about acquiring transferable skills that are developed in the classroom and generally within the school environment and used in all aspects of the student's life. The students' routines changed during the pandemic and had to face different realities which affected the development of skills. In our quantitative research, which was implemented in March-May 2022 in Greece, we interviewed **51** teachers and **50** parents, with the main goal to create a better understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the soft skills of children 6-12 years old. We interviewed education professionals from various fields such as private and public school teachers, tutors, teachers of arts, sports, etc., teachers at creative and leisure centers. The main focus of this field research was to develop an analytical report which will present the current situation of education in Greece and more specifically the development of skills of children in primary education (aged 6 to 12 years old). The results of the research show that parents and teachers focused on the loss of comprehension and analytical skills. The Greek education system is particularly orientated towards the cognitive skills of the students. Another main aspect of education is the deeper development of social skills which are defined as necessities for society (Senge,2009). Our research shows that some skills are more affected than others, as it is presented in the following section.

Methodology

The overall research was focused on the discussion on the COVID-19 pandemic and the educational challenges that occurred during the quarantines and social isolation period. The research had both qualitative and quantitative indicators. The basic tool for collecting the quantitative information was the online questionnaire (through google forms) that was completed by 50 parents and 51 teachers. The questionnaire was built from the project's consortium and was distributed in all partner countries. The distribution and the promotion of the questionnaire were delivered within the time frame of 3 weeks. To reach out to the target group we published the questionnaires on ANCE's social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) and ANCE's website. We contacted various parent Unions within Greece, schools, afternoon centers for creative education and personal contacts. The contact was done via emails and in a few cases

via phone calls, while snowball sampling was used and applied during the collection of the responses. In all phases of the research (conducting, writing and publishing of the results) we followed the ethical lines requested (consent of the responders, privacy protection, equal treatment, transparency, validity, and reliability). Additionally, the qualitative part was conducted via interviews that took place on ANCE's premises and in some cases via skype/zoom or phone calls. The interviewees were chosen through the network of parents and teachers that ANCE holds. In the following unit, we describe the outcomes of quantitative and qualitative research.

The quantitative Results

The target groups

The research focused on two target groups: parents and teachers.

Demographics

Parents

Given the 50 answers we received in total, 86% came by mothers and 14% by fathers. The majority of the sample belonged to the age spectrum between 30 to 49 years old: 46% belongs to the age group of 40-49 years, with the second group 42% 30-39 years, 8% was until 29 years and only 4% was over 50 years old.
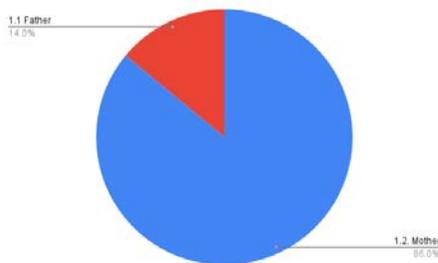
Figure 2 parents
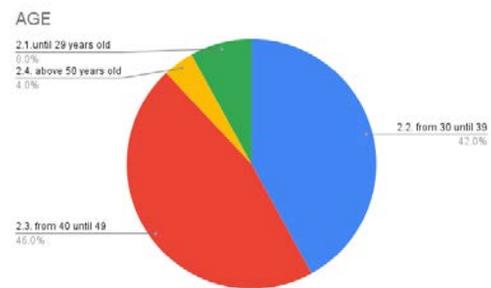
Figure 3 Age of the parents

As far as the educational level is concerned, 66% of the parents had a higher level, 28% had graduated from an upper secondary educational institution, such as vocational school or college, only 2% had graduated from high school and 4% had a primary or lower secondary educational background. The majority of the answers (72%) came from Athens, the capital of Greece, 22% from other cities and 6% from villages around the country. Most of the parents (58%) had only one kid in the primary school, 32% had 2 and only 10% had 3 kids in that age range. Most of the parents answered that their kids are between 6-7 years old (64%) which in Greece refers to the first grade of primary school, 40% between 8-9 years old, and 20% 10-12 years old accordingly.
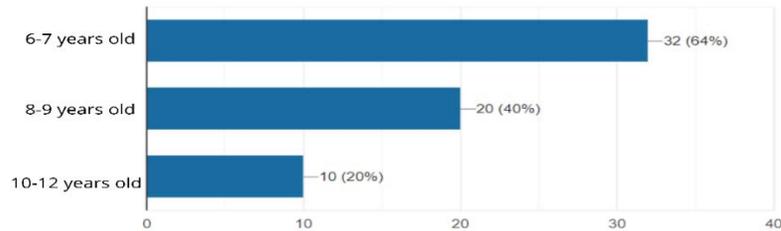
Teachers /Educators

The questionnaire was completed by 51 individuals. The responders were 80.4% female and 19.6% male teachers/educators with the majority of them coming from Athens (66.7%), 27.5% coming from big cities and only 5.9% from towns and villages. The age group of the responders was diverse with the majority being up to 29 years old (41.2%), 30-39 years old the 27.5% and 40-49 years old the 15.7% (figures 4 and 5). The target group was educators from various sectors. The majority (51%) were teachers in schools, 11.8% worked in NGOs, 11.8% worked in complementary education, 9.8% were physical education teachers and trainers, and 2% were teachers in arts. The teachers who participated in the questionnaire were mostly working in public education (54%) and only 2% were working both in public and private education.
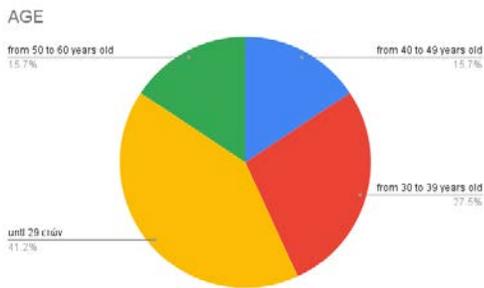
Figure 4 Age of the educators who responded to the Questionnaire

Figure 5 fields of work

You are an educator in an entity located in:

2.1. in the capital	
2.2. in a big city	
2.3. in a small town / village	

0   5   10   15   20   25   30   35   40
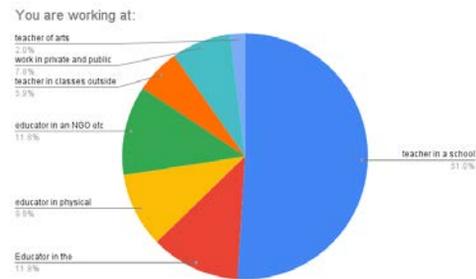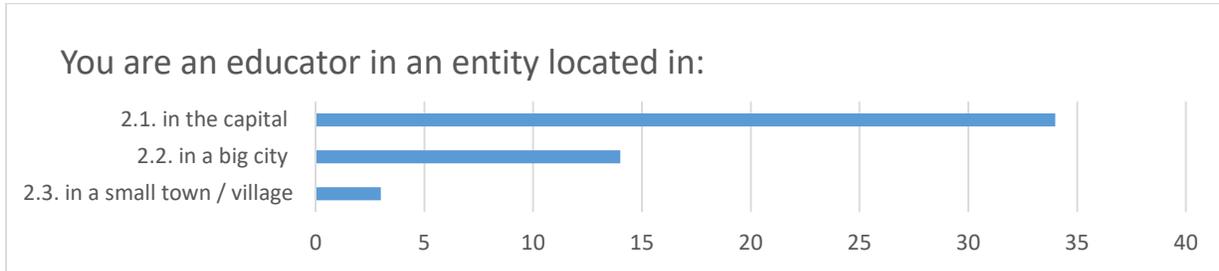
Figure 6 Teachers' location

Self-Learning Skills

Parents were asked to describe how their children studied during the online learning. 72% of the answers pointed out that their kids needed support from a member of the family to complete their online lessons, while 26% were studying alone. 32% of the parents mentioned that their kids needed a personal device such as a tablet, computer, or mobile phone with an additional 22% of them sharing the device with another sibling and only 2% are following the lessons on the TV.

54% of the students needed extra support from a family member to complete their homework, while only 28% of the students was able to study on their own, 20% were not devoting much time to their homework and 20% received assistance and support from a private tutor.

Evaluation of the learning achievements of the students

The evaluation and reflection on the students' learning processes were shown as one of the most difficult tasks for the teachers. In the primary education system in Greece, conversations and oral exams were mainly used, as well as some additional written papers in a few cases (in the last grade of primary school). The first grade evaluation process was even more challenging for them since the students were less independent participants in the classes.

The majority of the teachers have noticed a significant gap in the acquired knowledge of pupils (58.8%) while 13,7% believe that practically the students didn't learn much during the online learning period. On the contrary, 17,6% believed that apart from certain difficulties, the results were satisfactory and children didn't lose many of their learning competencies. The 9.8% of the teachers mentioned that the level of knowledge acquisition was similar to the one before the pandemic and during the face-to-face teaching.

76% of the parents identified the use of electronic devices such as computers, tablets, or mobile phones as an easy task for their children when it comes to studying or looking for information. On the contrary, 74% of the students during the pandemic lost their interest in studying or reading and 66% had less curiosity related to new information and 34% were asking more "why". The majority of the kids needed to

communicate and interact with others such as friends, peers, and adults, while 36% of the answers mentioned that kids have lost their interest to spend time outside of the house. The majority of the parents, when asked about the decision-making of their children, have observed their kids waiting for external support (62%). An interesting figure came from the question about the communication skills of the children, where half of the responders observed their kids opening up and sharing stories and experiences with their other relatives and family members while the other half of the parents saw their kids as more introverted and with less self-esteem. A follow-up question about the self-esteem of the kids showed that most of them felt more insecure for their actions (66%), while at the same time only 34% of the parents observed their kids becoming more independent and self-confident in thinking and acting. When it came to the expression, 54% of the responders mentioned that they would characterize their children as less expressive and more passive in the discussions, while 46% of the parents saw their kids having better arguments and being more active in sharing their thoughts. Finally, the vast majority of the parents bring to attention that their kids don't admit their mistakes (78%).

The vast majority of the teachers responded positively to the question about the loss of the learning habits of the children (88.2%). Almost all teachers (98%) pointed out that their students had reduced vocabulary and faced difficulties in expressing themselves. 90.2% of the teachers have noticed a difficulty in students' comprehension both on oral and written levels while at the same time 58,8% believed that their students were ready to try new things and explore new methods. 58,8% of the answers showed that students are looking for more practical and effective solutions for the given tasks and 70.6% characterized the students as more passive receivers of information and lessons. The majority of the teachers believe that the students are now less interested to stand out in front of the class as well as they are more satisfied with standard answers and they stopped addressing direct questions to their teachers (74.5%). Teachers believed that students prefer not to admit their mistakes, they are less attentive during the lesson and seem to be bored.

Communication between parents, students, and teachers.

Most of the communications between parents and teachers (according to the second group) started by teachers' initiatives (62%), 16% had more frequent contact during the pandemic than before, 14% mentioned that there was no way to do so and 8% said that there was no need to do so. As for the collaboration between parents and teachers in regards to the development of the transversal skills of the kids, 50% found it necessary and 30% answered "perhaps" it is necessary. 20% didn't know how they can collaborate with the teachers for that matter and there were zero (0) negative answers.

Teachers were asked to reflect on their relations with their students and in particular, whether blended learning could support the improvement of the personalized relations among them. 84.3% of the teachers answered negatively, whereas 9.8% answered positively and 5.8% answered they didn't know.

Blended Learning

58,8% of the teachers believed that much more time is needed to prepare the lesson's materials while 45.1% suggested that it was very difficult to re-create and re-plan the lessons. The two most frequently given answers were the difficulty in the evaluation (51%) of the learning and the lack of team work (49%). 35.3% of the educators confirmed that during the blended learning was difficult to empower the dialogue and the communication between the students and 29.4% claimed that was difficult to replace the lack of contact with the close circles and friends.

Teachers were asked about the working methodologies they used during the online teaching and blended learning period. The majority with 27.5% responded that based on their interest and will, they organized private lessons with students while 25.5% answered that there was no need to do so and another 25.5% said it was impossible to plan such an activity. 19.6% organized personal lessons with the students after parents' suggestion and only 2% said there was no change to the planned methodology.

The majority of the teachers stated that the basic difficulty they faced, was the adaptation of the teaching methodologies they had organized for the face-to-face teaching to the online teaching (52.9%). 51% of the teachers felt it was hard to keep students' attention during the lesson as well as to evaluate their learning achievements (41.2%) and receive objective feedback from them (37.3%). Educators answered it was difficult to use the technology platforms needed for online learning (37.3%) and activate the students through these platforms (39.2%).

Extra Curriculum activities during the pandemic

During the pandemic in Greece, most of the time the measures regarding social isolation were very strict. In the questionnaire, we asked parents about their children's participation in activities outside of school giving them 3 options "yes, always", "yes, sometimes" and "no, never". 76% of the answers said that sometimes their kids participated in activities and 24% that they had never such an opportunity. From the 37 answers that came from the capital (Athens), 27 said that their kids sometimes participated in activities, whereas 10 replied they never did. Out of the 14 responders who were in villages or cities other than the capital, the vast majority answered that their kids continued their participation in activities. This analysis shows the differences between the capital and the other cities/ villages around the country.

Skills development during the pandemic

Most of the parents mentioned that their kids now know that digital devices are not only used for games, but for studying and working as well (56%). Additionally, most of the parents during the pandemic found more time to spend with their kids and unite with their families (40%). 28% of the parents couldn't find any positive impact of the pandemic neither in the relationship with their kids and family members nor in their education and skills. 12% answered they are happy that their kids could learn how to search for information

on the web, 18% felt that created better bonds and understanding with their kids and 14% found better cooperation ways with the teachers and educators.

51 educators were asked to give their perspective on the positive impact of the pandemic on the students' development as well as the education in the form of an open question. The majority of the answers were focused on the digital literacy and competencies that were acquired and developed during the period of online learning. The teachers said that the digital skills, technologies, and the use of digital platforms and tools were the main improvement of this period (25 answers – almost 50% of the responders). On the other hand, 25.4% believed there was no positive impact on education during the pandemic. A few teachers answered that their students and themselves improved their adaptability skills, there were many opportunities to implement experiential and diversified education as well as the possibility to continue their learning during that period. Few answers focused on the importance of face-to-face learning as the most efficient learning method while some others saw their student acquire new skills and adapt to the new learning opportunities. Though the majority of the teachers had a negative point of view towards online schooling, some of them saw themselves and their students to build up new digital competencies.

Changes in children's learning behavior

64% of the parents mentioned that have noticed important changes in the behavior and attitudes of their children, while the rest of the answers were equally divided between parents who didn't come across any changes or who weren't sure of it. Concerning the learning assessment, the majority of the parents (60%) agreed that children were frequently losing interest and became bored during the online lessons, as well as they underlined the difficulty of their children to understand the lessons and the extended loss of schooling hours. 12% of the parents have seen their kids struggling with the techniques used during the online lessons and 22% believe they need extra support and assistance to complete the lessons and homework. Through this questionnaire, parents were asked to mention their opinion on the principal changes they have identified in the learning progress of their children during distance education. Most of the parents answered that their kids need to replace the lost time in regards to interpersonal relations with their peers, inside and outside of the class. Additionally, 38% of the answers mentioned there is needed more time to understand the classes while 16% mentioned that there are severe difficulties in the evaluation.

84.3% of the teachers mentioned that they have noticed changes in the behavior of their students during the social isolation period. On the contrary, 7.8% answered negatively and 7.8% that they are not sure. The vast majority of the teachers responded positively to the question about the loss of the learning habits of the children (88.2%). Almost all teachers (98%) pointed out that their students had reduced vocabulary and faced difficulties in expressing themselves. 90.2% of the teachers have noticed a difficulty in students' comprehension both oral and written levels while at the same time 58,8% believed that their students are ready to try new things and explore new methods. 58,8% of the answers showed that students are looking for more practical and effective solutions for the given tasks and 70.6% characterized the students as more

passive receivers of information and lessons. The majority of the teachers believed that the students are now less interested to stand out in front of the class as well as they are more satisfied with standard answers and they stopped direct questions at their teachers (74.5%). Teachers consider that students preferred not to admit their mistakes, they were less attentive during the lesson and seemed to be bored.

Skills and knowledge from blended learning to the after- COVID-19 era

66.7% of the teachers believed that ruby ring to the face-to-face learning they will continue implementing digital technologies in their lessons and 52.9% will continue using audiovisual materials and tools during their classes. 39.2% of the teachers felt more empowered to use non-formal educational methods in their classes as well as they will continue working on digital learning platforms to teach pupils at home if necessary. Though, the vast majority of 94.1% of the teachers were confident that blended learning could not replace face-to-face learning while only 2% said that it could be possible and 3.9% answered positively. Moreover, 84.3% of the teachers believed that their students are less curious and less open-minded while 17.3% cannot have an affirmative or a negative answer.

Teachers' support during the COVID-19 pandemic

The majority of the teachers believed they needed technical support to successfully implement their lessons including software and programs that will enrich their teaching in more attractive ways (68.6%). Secondly, the educators underlined the importance of boosting the collaboration between teachers and parents for further supporting the children in 52,9% while 43,1% believed they needed support in developing forms of dialogue during the blended learning period. 37.3% answered that they need external support in the development of evaluation mechanisms while another 27.3% answered positively about the need of keeping a balance between the active and interactive learning methods in both the online and face-to-face lessons.

The qualitative Results

Teachers/Educators

The second phase of the research was dedicated to interviews with parents and teachers. The interviews were contacted mainly face-to-face but in some cases, phones and/or tele-meetings were used to facilitate the conversation. The interviewees were selected through the network of parents and teachers that ANCE holds. In this second phase, we wanted to include interviewees from different parts of the country and have a better understanding of the situation in the capital, in smaller cities and villages, and the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 lockdown. Through the questionnaire analysis, we realized that **teachers from the countryside described differently the effect of the pandemic on children than those in bigger cities or the capital**. Therefore, we wanted to further investigate this and listen to the experiences and opinions of the teachers. Overall, we interviewed 6 teachers and 3 parents. Teachers were chosen according to their diverse experiences in different educational fields. The following table describes the profiles of the teachers.

	Profession	The school year 2019-2020	The school year 2020-2021	Age	Location
T1	Physical education teacher	All primary education	All primary education	26	Small City
T2	Music Teacher (school and private classes)	All primary education	All primary education	28	Capital
T3	Special Education Teacher (school and private classes)	5th grade	6th grade	38	Capital
T4	Teacher in primary school / Special Education Teacher	4th grade	4th grade	33	City
T5	Primary Education teacher	2nd grade	6th grade	36	Capital
T6	Foreign Language teacher in after-school activities (within the school)	1st -3rd grade	1st - 3rd grade	38	Capital

Figure 7 Profile of the teachers

The situation in Greece during the lockdown

Interviews with teachers offered a wide range of information which was important for the research. Teachers that were interviewed had a wide experience in teaching before the pandemic. We focused on professionals that had worked with students of that age before the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak to be

able to develop a comparative discussion. Responders from the capital described the overall closure of the schools in an unfavorable way which affected the social and behavioral skills of the students, but all of them mentioned that an important factor in the skills and overall development of the students was the social status of the parents. Students from wealthy neighborhoods had access to technological tools and devices as well as they had extra support at home (from tutors or family members). On the other hand, students from less privileged areas encountered obstacles accessing online classes and the internet in general. In some cases, students didn't have computers/ laptops or mobile phones with access to the internet and couldn't attend the classes throughout this period, while in other cases students had devices with access to the internet but without microphones and/or cameras and/or the necessary equipment. A big number of students had siblings attending school at the same time and/or working parents creating accessibility problems and even unstable internet excluding them from the participation in the synchronous classes.

T5 described that situation as follows:

> "There were families with the minimum access to digital devices. For example, 2 of my students were sharing their computers with their parents who were working during school hours. These students didn't have access to synchronous education. At the same time, there were students with computers but without cameras and/or microphones which created a big issue for their active participation, they couldn't speak or address questions, the only thing they could do is listen. There were also students with no access at all. At the beginning of the pandemic in some cases we as teachers saw that education was for the privileged students.
>
> During the two years of the pandemic, I worked in 2 different areas of Athens. One is a wealthy, historic neighborhood of the city and the other is a bit disadvantaged. The differences I saw were massive."

T6 added:

> There was a huge difference between the students who had support at home and those who didn't. Working in a private school states that already the students are more privileged than others, but still, there were students with working parents that couldn't support the kids during their morning classes.

Accessibility problems occurred for the teachers as well. The lack of training and general knowledge of digital skills was an overall conclusion from the teachers. The use of digital technologies was forced with the pandemic outbreak and they had to act very fast, with a good number of teachers to be unable to adjust to the new educational needs. In the question regarding the support teachers received from their colleagues or supervisors, all of them responded that there were no constructive meetings or online guidance. Teachers unofficially discussed and supported each other based on their personal skills and

experiences. One of the responders mentioned that "teachers were able to go to school and connect to the e-classes there. Even that, was difficult most of the time because of the bad internet connection, the social distance we needed to keep from each other, and other practical matters". Additionally, responders underlined that in the beginning there was an adjustment period from anyone which more or less took 2 months. In the first weeks, teachers needed to buy new equipment which can support the implementation of the lessons. For example, the musicians had to buy e-pens, tablets, and other specialized tools to transform the e-classes into more interactive ones. Other practical difficulties that were described by the majority of the teachers were the attendance and the active participation of the students. All in all, teachers described the beginning of online education as a huge effort from their side, to keep the classes interested and motivate the students to be actively involved. Online education was time-consuming from their side, they needed to react fast and re-organize their classes and their materials in a more digital format.

T6 mentioned regarding that topic:

> "I used many digital tools in my classes before the pandemic as well. I was familiar with it. Though it's different to have a class of students at school and another story to be in front of the computer. My students were very small to be independently using the computers and the assistance from their parents was mandatory. [...] In the beginning, it was very difficult to keep students at that young age concentrated and focused during the class, keep the class educative and provide activities that will not be boring for them."

T1 said about the adjustment to the digital education:

> "The transition from the face-to-face to the online classes was time-consuming until I adjusted to it. The format of my classes (physical education class) was not really easy to be continued as it was. I had to keep the attention of my students as well as continue with the curriculum and achieve some of the goals of the class. I had to change the approaches used until then and provide some theory and some practice while taking into consideration the safety of the students (exercising alone at home). It wasn't easy to exercise via tele-rooms both for safety reasons and because of the lack of interest."

Parents' involvement

In many cases, teachers underlined that parents' involvement in the schooling of their children was very important and useful. For the younger students, the parents' involvement was crucial for the implementation of the class and the completion of the homework. Teachers, in this case, were in direct contact with the parents and created new patterns for the correction of the exercises and the participation in the e-classes.

T6 mentioned:

"I got in contact with the parents to involve them in the homework for example to help in the correction of the writing exercises. I worked with students in the first grades of primary school, it was very difficult to support the writing skills of the children. Those students had to be in contact with the paper and pencil, but how could I correct the letters that were practiced via the teleclass. For that reason, I asked the parents to do so, we were in constant contact via email, video calls, or phone calls if needed. In some cases, parents were attending the classes (to support the kids during the lesson) and I was gathering them at the end of the class to discuss the progress and give them relative information."

T5 stated:

"Parents played a significant role in the participation of their kids in the classes. I communicated with them via email, phone, etc. to inform them about the homework and discuss possible topics that arose, the development, or the needs of the children. Especially for my students in the 2nd grade, that reading skills are not that developed, the parents' intervention was essential."

T4 said:

"When the parents were aware and wanted to collaborate with me, there was a continuous development from the kids, when parents were absent, students had to spend their day alone at home and those were mostly the students that didn't participate in the classes."

Class goals & adjustment

Teachers, working with those classes, had to re-evaluate the learning goals set at the beginning of the year and target new ones which could be achieved with the tools, methods, and techniques they had in hand. First and second-grade classes are devoted by the school's curriculum to the development of the writing and analytical skills of the students. The school's closure raised obstacles towards reaching these achievements since the students "lost contact with the paper and pencil", as one of the responders mentioned. The same situation describes the reading skills which couldn't be solidified during distance learning. Teachers mention that basic skills such as reading and writing were at a lower level compared to the expected one for the majority of the students.

T3 said:

"The goals during the online education changed. The requirements of the teachers towards the students were less, and we tried not to overload the students in order not to stress them more. We gave them less homework and the level in the class got lower

because we as teachers couldn't have the overall supervision of the students. We couldn't really evaluate the development of the students and sometimes we didn't know if the students were participating or not if they understand or if they need further explanation."

T5 underlined:

"I had to adjust the materials used in the class and put them in a digital format. Though, not all the students had access to printing materials and scanning them back for corrections. Students in second grade need to practice their writing and reading skills. The e-classed raised a lot of issues regarding copyrights. We couldn't upload fairytales, texts, or other documents taken from books even if it was downloaded from open sources, we had to use only our own materials which was not always the case. I wanted to use videos, but I couldn't use the ones from YouTube because of the appearance of the advertisements."

Social Skills development

One of the main topics that all teachers stressed was the loss of social skills of the students. Teachers mentioned that there was an "extensive tension" that they cannot define the source or the reason for. Returning to school found most of the students happy but at the same time, various behavioral issues arose such as difficulties in the adjustment to the school environment, worries, anxiety and fear of contact with others. Teachers mentioned that students had to re-adjust to school rules and rebuild their concentration. Moreover, they mentioned that many behaviors were not "age-appropriate" and they connected it with the effects of the social isolation during the pandemic.

T1 underlined that:

"Returning to school was not easy. Students had to re-adjust to the rules of the school and it was very difficult for them to concentrate. Especially in my class (physical education), they thought it was a break, they wanted to play, interact and spend time with their friends. They had a lot of energy, and mainly they wanted to do whatever they wanted."

T3 stated that:

"Students had a lot of tension when they returned to school. They needed to work a lot on their social skills in order to re-adjust to the school environment, they had forgotten some of the procedures they used to follow in the class and they were very worried and anxious."

T4 mentioned that:

> "Children became more afraid of being lonely and of the future. Bullying increased in our class, and we asked for support from a psychologist. Unfortunately, she didn't stay for long. So, all teachers we tried to create a safe environment where students could discuss empathy, gender, awareness, way of living, values etc. We felt they needed to speak and discuss their lives. The overall outcome was very important. Of course, we needed to sacrifice a lot of "school hours" and put in a second line the development of the skills connected with the cognitive skills."

T5 mentioned that:

> "The skills development of the students was a result of the combination between support from their families, participation in the online classes, and the other supportive factors."

Teamwork

Teachers mention in their interviews that it was very difficult to work in teams during the period of online education. T5, working with second graders notes that teamwork was impossible during that time since the platforms used, needed specific guidance for entering break-out rooms and re-entering the plenary session so "second graders couldn't find the right way to do it without assistance, so we didn't even try it". After their return to school, it was still difficult to implement team activities.

T5, mentioned that:

> "There was a written instruction from the Directorate of Primary education saying that we need to keep the distance, and sanitize frequently the materials used and the class. This situation demotivated teachers from implementing any kind of group task. Additionally, we need to keep in mind that there were students that were afraid of the pandemic and the contact and we needed to respect that as well. There were cases, where we needed to spend too much time when one of the students needed a spare pencil or a rudder. Nobody was offering their own pen and then there was a starting point of a huge discussion in the class on what should or shouldn't be done."

Socio-psychological development

According to one of the teachers, at the social level, students reacted differently to the COVID-19 isolation and lockdown. She mentions that this was very well connected with the reactions of the family as well as with the vulnerability of the family members.

T3 said:

> "At the social level, students experienced the isolation period differently and this really depended on the family. If parents were very worried, then the kids were more isolated than others. For example, even now after the isolation and restrictions (May 2022), there were many students at school that never went to birthday parties with their friends. There are cases in that students don't know how to behave when they are with others during free time. These kids, especially those between 6-10 years old lost many opportunities to spend free time with their friends, play, and enjoy with each other and it's something that really affects their social growth and created a lot of tension when they returned to school. This can be summarized in "a lot of energy" and "loss of concentration". All students were very happy to return to school."

T4 underlined:

> "As a special education teacher, I was asked to support my students during their classes. I was at home and they were at theirs. I couldn't do much through skype, it was very difficult to support the student through the screen. I couldn't teach empathy or life skills through the screen and it was impossible to teach the student how to be present and concentrated without activities, projects and personal contact."

T5 mentioned:

> "There were students with genius stress in relation to the pandemic. This was a situation that found teachers very unprepared and had to balance a stressful reality. Those students were mostly afraid of the pandemic and were more isolated at school as well."

Assessment and Skills Evaluation

Primary Education in Greece follows different evaluation systems in different grades. In the first two grades, the assessment is only descriptive. This type of assessment allows teachers to inform pupils and their parents about the results of their efforts, abilities and skills. In the 3nd and 4th grade, there is a performance assessment apart from the descriptive assessment which scales between A (excellent), B (very good), C (Good), and D (almost good). In 5th and 6th grade, the scale goes from 1 to 10 and comes with both verbal and arithmetical descriptions when 10 refers to "Excellent performance" and 1-4 to "almost good". Students with 1-4 grades can benefit from remedial teaching programs. At the end of the 6th grade,

students with a grade equal to or above 6 are awarded with a "leaving certificate", while in the previous classes graduates are awarded with a "progress certificate".[13]

Discussing with the teachers about the evaluation and assessment of the students' skills during the pandemic, they described it as a difficult task to implement under those conditions. More specifically, teachers mentioned that overall they didn't see the expected development and at times they felt that some students did some steps back.

T1 mentions:

> *"The students lost their ability to concentrate and their learning pace. I observed a lot of differences in my student's behavior and learning level. I saw that, in my class, the students had lost basic skills."*

T4:

> *"Since I'm hired as a special education teacher, for my students I need to report at the end of the school year a calendar of actions. At the beginning of the year, I set goals, the general objectives, and the methodologies to support the development of my students. At the end of the school year, I write a descriptive evaluation for each student and I have to make a "suggestion" as it is called, for example, if the students should / should not graduate, if they still need the parallel support next year, etc."*

Conclusions from the Teachers interviews

During the last part of the interviews, teachers were asked to reflect on the pandemic and the school closure which led to this new form of online teaching. It is worth to be mentioned that interviews were realized during the end of the school year which were mostly implemented face-to-face and could see the outcomes of the pandemic in their everyday work. Teachers reflected both the positive and the negative results of the pandemic and underlined very important issues.

T1:

> *The overall outcome of the pandemic for me was a reflection of us, as educators. The fact that we had to motivate ourselves and find a solution for the implementation of the classes made us better teachers. I will keep some methodologies that I implemented in the online classes to the face-to-face ones. For example, I will continue sharing videos from sports professionals and analyze their techniques, etc.*

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[13] https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/assessment-primary-education-20_en

T2:

I developed myself, and my skills and I focused on my adaptability.

T3:

For me as a teacher the online lessons were very difficult because we missed the contact with students, I prefer the face-to-face classes. […] the positive aspect for her is the contact with the technologies and that the problems of online education brought up the need for skills development and to reach an up-to-date knowledge. Though I don't believe that online education can replace the actual face-to-face classes.

T5:

I don't keep anything from the pandemic and the online learning because of most of the tools and methods I used before as well. For me, the results of the pandemic in terms of socio-psychological development were negative for the majority of the students and the school society in general. I will keep some positive aspects such as the collaboration and the involvement of the parents, the accessibility –to those who had of course- to the education even under those circumstances. The negative aspects of this period were focused on the wide exposure to the internet and sometimes with no supervision, the great fear of sickness, and the widespread lack of interaction which had a lot of effects on the children's behaviors.

Parents

In the second phase of the qualitative research, 3 parents were interviewed. 2 of the interviews took place in person on ANCE's premises and one took place online via skype. The interviewees were chosen among the contacts of the organization and one of them came as a reference and was willing to support the development of the research. The following table describes the profile of the parents.

	Parent	Type of family	Educational Background	Working conditions during the lockdown	Number of children	Age of children	Type of school	Location
P1	Mother	Nuclear	Higher education	Working online	1	7-year-old (first grade)	Private	Capital
P2	Mother	Nuclear	Higher education	Not working	2	7 and a half (second grade),	public	Capital

						3 and half		
P3	Mother	Nuclear	Higher education	Working in a hospital	2	9-year-old twins (third grade)	public	Capital

Figure 8 Table of parents

As described in the table above all 3 interviewees were mothers with higher education levels coming from the Capital, Athens. The children we referred to, at the moment of the interview were in the first, second, and third grade which means that at the moment of the COVID-19 outbreak were 5-7 years old.

The general overview

Generally, parents described this period as a very demanding and stressful period both for them and their children. For the working parents, the situation was very uncomfortable since as they said, they couldn't perform well at work, and there was a lot of destruction and noise at home. In some cases, parents had to lend their computers or phones to their kids in order to attend the online classes. When this was happening during the morning, parents had to stop working and support their kids entering the digital platforms, following the directions of the teacher, etc.

Transferable skills

Parents agreed that they saw many differences in the behavior of their children before-during and after the social isolation period. Children were attending their classes from their rooms and homes, in their "safe environment" and most of the time didn't respond to the online classes as they should. Specifically, parents mention the following:

> *P1: I think my daughter during that time became close and easily started to be bored with the online school. In the beginning, she liked it, because the pandemic brought all the family members together and we got to spend more time with each other. I understood that my kid was more afraid now than before, even if we discussed the pandemic and we tried not to stress her out. She was wearing the mask even in places that were not mandatory to do so. At the beginning of the school year, I think it took her 1 month to adapt to the school environment and she had good contact with her classmates.*

> *P2: for kids, meeting online was a game. They started showing the things they have at home to each other and it was difficult to stay quiet and concentrate. He always*

wanted to move across the room, but he couldn't concentrate, he felt at home so he thought he could do whatever he wanted.

P3: since I have twins, I could say that they didn't miss interaction because they had each other and they could play together. Though, they missed the interaction with friends and relatives.

All teachers that were interviewed as described in the previous section, mentioned the crucial involvement of the parents during the online learning. We asked parents about the support they offered to their kids during that time and we received the following answers:

P1:

Online education was very difficult at that age. At the kindergarten there is not a specific curriculum with specific teaching units and materials, so every school did different things. In our case, the children did only 1 hour of the lesson during the evening.

P2:

Overall it was difficult for the parents to support their children during the pandemic since we are not educators, teachers, or professionals to give proper guidance to the children. At the same time, it was difficult for the children to follow some routines, wake up on time and be in a program. Sometimes they were late to attend the class and they needed a lot of push from our side. […] He was adjusted to the internet and the use of the computer. He needed support only at the beginning of the online classes and then he learned how to do it on his own.

 P3:

We spent a lot of time with our kids during the online classes but also before and after to support them with extra-curriculum books and materials to their learning skills. We felt that online classes were not enough. Though I feel my children didn't develop their skills, they maintained the level they had before. […] For my kids, it was impossible to attend their classes without our support. The internet had a lot of problems, the task allocation had some digital procedures that kids had to follow, etc. We should mention that WebEx as a platform was not easy for a 7-year-old.

Parents were asked to think about their own observations on the skills development of their child/children during the distance learning. The immediate response of all three parents was negative and according to their opinion, even if they tried to support their children's learning, they didn't see any other progress than the digital skills development. Their kids had the digital competencies to manage the computers and tablets at ease, follow the instructions of their teacher and complete the tasks. Especially, after some adjustment period, the students were independently using the devices with minimum support from the parents.

P2:

He adjusted to the internet and the use of the computer easily. He needed support only at the beginning of the online education. […] There were times that turning on and off the microphone/ camera for such a small kid was challenging. There was a time when students didn't do it properly and they received comments from the teacher which felt wrong by the parent to listen. The parents during this phase of online education became part of the class, they were able to listen to the teacher, something that until then didn't happen and I witnessed things I didn't like.

P3:

Before the pandemic, as parents, we had decided not to have tablets for our kids, so as for the kids to learn how to play with games of their age and let them develop other social skills. During the pandemic, we had to buy tablets and change our approach to that. We spoke with our kids and we set a new rule of 1-hour per week, until now it works.

Parents during the interview reflected on the positive aspects of the pandemic. They mentioned that during that period they had more time to spend with their family and kids. They felt that they came closer, learned each other better, and had the opportunity to have quality time.

P1: As a family, we took this opportunity to spend time with each other at home, exercise as much as we could, and play games. […] During that time, my kid had stopped the extra curriculum activities.

P2: Socialisolation period bonded us as a family, we had the chance to spend time all together. I don't think that it was bad for our family, we found ways to spend our time in a creative way. […] During that time, my kids didn't have extra curriculum activities.

P3: We as parents, spent a lot of time with our kids. We try to support them with extra-curriculum activities, books, and materials in order to develop their learning skills.

Conclusions from the Parents' interviews

Overall, parents tend to believe that online education didn't really work for their children. The overall feelings of the parents were negative regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of this new era of education both for them and their children. Parents faced problems with their own jobs and tasks since they had to focus on the support of their children during the e-lessons as well as they were not in favor of letting their children for too many hours in front of the computer screen. International research conducted in various corners of the world showed that parents usually prefer the traditional education for their children because they feel safe with that option and they are reluctant towards the online – distance learning (Dong, Cao, Li, 2020).

Parents had an active role during the tele-education. At smaller ages, parents' participation during the lessons was mandatory either with a supportive role for technical matters or they actively engaged in the class. Especially at that age, the participation of the parents supported the work of the teachers who mentioned that it was difficult for them to engage the children via the screen. Researchers underlined that parental participation in the school education of the children has an important role in their educational success (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). The active participation of the parents was not easy in a family with more than one child or when children were in different grades of school, both for accessibility reasons and for the lack of support from their side.

Additionally, parents are concerned about the children's skills development. They believe that children during the pandemic missed a wide range of transferable skills and still, there are many steps to be done in order to catch up. Social skills are the ones, according to them that are mostly affected. Learning at that age is focusing on the development of the socialization of the children, learning to cooperate, communicate, express their opinion and justify their arguments. They saw their children become more introverted and distant. Kids, returning to school needed to be adjusted to the new reality and learn from the beginning how to work in a team and respond to the rules of the school and the class.

Parents mentioned their extensive effort to keep up with the school and the homework and give extra tasks to their children in order to continue with their learning process. Though the general outcome is that none of the 3 parents felt that they could improve the skills of the children and they were satisfied by maintaining the same level as they had before the pandemic. All parents mentioned that during the pandemic spend a lot of time with their children trying to have quality time with each other. The activities they developed together focused mostly on crafts, painting, and in case exercising. Even if they tried to focus on the "school curriculum" parents mentioned that they didn't have the knowledge and skills to plan such lessons.

Overall, the pandemic and the school closure were described as unique situations by parents. Their involvement is characterized as crucial and necessary in order to support the learning development of the children. Though, for parents interviewed in the framework of this research, nothing could be compared to face-to-face education.

Other research about COVID-19 and education in Greece

Similar research around the world, which was focused on different age groups showed that there was a demanding number of students who were negatively affected by the lockdown not only in terms of academic and cognitive level but also in their personal and interpersonal behaviors (Means, Neisler, 2020).

The pandemic has raised a wide interest from scholars who have studied the impact of isolation on education. Thus, there are various researches during the different stages of the pandemic, during the first lockdown with the first closure of the schools between March and May 2020, in the September's return (of 2020) when students had to adjust to the new legislation in regards of their protection towards the virus, as well as during the second and third lockdown. There are field researches implemented by various educational institutions and organizations to improve the knowledge around education during the COVID-19 times.

ActionAid[14] conducted a report in April 2021, focusing on the school year 2020-21 researching the terms and conditions of education in Greece during the pandemic. The research focused on the opinions of the educators regarding the difficulties they faced, the accessibility of their students to lessons, as well as the support needed by their students. The outcomes of the research show that educators at all levels responded well to the challenges, adapted their teaching methods to the needs of distance learning, and acquired new knowledge about technologies which was characterized both as a challenge and a chance to enrich their skills. On the other hand, educators mentioned the insufficient equipment they had access to, as one of the biggest impediments they had to overcome together with the lack of training in the needs of digital education. The research doesn't provide clear information on the actual correspondence of the students, since the proven interaction was very low (turned off cameras, bad connection to the internet, big groups of students in the same teleclasses) but at the same time, some of the students made some effort to actively participate and interact with their classmates. Finally, the educators claim that the inequalities among their students were increased during the pandemic, something that arose firstly from the access to the technological means and tools, as well as from the technological knowledge and digital culture of the parents.

Unicef Greece[15] researched the impact of the restrictions on the rights of the children focusing on 3 pillars: education, mental health, and domestic violence. The research tried to answer three basic

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[14] https://www.actionaid.gr/ta-nea-mas/oi-anisotites-stin-ekpaideysi-kata-tin-periodo-tis-pandimias-stin-ellada
[15] UNICEF (2021) *Οι Επιπτώσεις των περιοριστικών μέτρων COVID-19 στα δικαιώματα του παιδιού.*

questions focusing on the adequacy of the measures to the needs of the children, the impact of the legislation on the rights of the children as well as if the legislators took into their consideration the rights of the children while they were designing and implementing the restrictions. The research was based on electronic questionnaires that were distributed to children at all educational levels (starting from kindergartens to tertiary education) as well as educators, parents, and professionals from the field of human/ children's rights. The main outcomes showed that there was a big adjustment in the teaching materials to become more interactive and experiential. Moreover, according to Unicef, students were discriminated against because of the lack of equipment and necessary support and knowledge from their family members together with the lack of equipment and knowledge from the side of the teachers who couldn't respond to the new educational circumstances that arose from the pandemic. The research underlines the effect of the pandemic on the education of the most vulnerable groups such as Roma, migrants, or refugees. As far as the mental health and growth of the children, the researchers suggest that the lack of interaction between the children provoked additional anxiety and behavioral problems.

During Summer 2020, the **University of Aegean** organized an online conference about the impact of the pandemic in the education field, with the title "From the 20th to the 21rst century within 15 days: The abrupt transition of the educational reality into the digital environment. Attitudes, Perceptions – scenarios – perspectives- proposals."[16]. During the conference, qualitative and quantitative educational research was presented about distance learning in primary education teachers in the Preveza region (Western Greece). The scholars concluded that the transition to digital education during the pandemic was generally successful, the educators adjusted to the new requirements. As we mentioned before, it is very important to take into consideration the period of the research. The mentioned research was conducted in an early pandemic stage and the data received at the qualitative level –as the scholars mentioned in their conclusions- needed further development and re-consideration.

According to a research report[17] of **the University of Athens** in the framework of the Master Program "*Technologies of information and Communication for Education*" students in primary education needed support from a family member to adjust to the new circumstances of distance learning. The report shows that especially in early ages, such as kindergarten and primary schools, students needed the support of their siblings, parents, and family members to work as mediators assuring their participation (p.21). The report underlines the importance of the student's active participation in experiential learning, especially in the early school years of kindergarten and primary education. The interactive activities as well as the access to school, according to scholars, have an important role in the prevention of school failure. Distance learning created inequalities in accessing the lessons, especially for children coming from families with

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Retrieved last on 6/6/2022 from: https://uni.cf/3QkIe9f
[16] Retrieved last on 6/6/2022 from: https://bit.ly/3zOaH10
[17] http://icte.ecd.uoa.gr/images/announcements/covid19_report.pdf

lower income, something that has been vital for democratic schools and the equal participation of all students.

The University of Athens and the Department of School Psychology researched the "challenges, needs and prospects for the empowerment of the psycho-social adjustment of students"[18] for the school year of 2021-2022. The research was based on the beliefs of the school's social and specifically educators, students, and parents about returning to school, their motivation, the cooperation between the students, their teachers, and parents as well as the support they received during the isolation period. The scholars suggest, from the prism of school psychology the importance of interaction between students and the interdisciplinary collaboration during times of crisis to create a wide supporting network for the development of the students.

The School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (ASPETE) in Athens researched "how Greek Students Experienced Online Education During Covid-19 Pandemic to adjust to a Post-lockdown Period"[19]. The research was conducted between the 16th of May and June 18th during the partial reopening of the academic year and focused on students in Higher Education who were asked to complete a voluntary survey about their learning experience during the Covid-19 lockdown concerning the synchronous communication educational practices and the way their classes were organized and facilitated. Students identified the technical difficulties that appeared during the online teaching, both from the students' side and professors' side (slow internet connection, low participation, lack of communication, etc.) nevertheless, despite the problems, they would be interested in continuing with blended forms of education. Moreover, the research underlines the fact that the pandemic was an opportunity for the majority of the students to improve their ICT skills, and adjusted to the time and pace of the new learning environment which benefitted their skills development.

Conclusions

Online learning is a new technological approach that, especially in Greece is very new for teachers, parents and students. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, it was the first time that online learning was widely applied in primary and secondary education in Greece. Distance/ online learning can be a very useful methodology if it is implemented in a specific and oriented strategy, especially for students who are facing difficulties in physically participating in face-to-face classes. The urgent need for reacting to the emergency of the COVID-19 commenced a new discussion for the development of education, practices and policies which are needed to be implemented to re-generate the system and enable adjustment to the different needs of the school society, although the lack of equipment and training both from teachers and students has raised a

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[18] http://www.centerschoolpsych.psych.uoa.gr/index.php/2020-03-27-17-58-58

[19] https://academic-publishing.org/index.php/ejel/article/view/2347

very important issue of digital skills development through the mainstream educational system. There were few initiatives from private and public donors who offered tablets and laptops to students facing economic and/or social issues and few courses for teachers to enhance their digital skills. Though, this was not enough for students and teachers with low digital skills who faced wide difficulties with the use of the platforms, tools and technologies in general.

Overall, parents and teachers have mentioned various changes in the behavior and performance of students during the pandemic. The isolation had a big effect on the cognitive and social skills of the students which, according to the results of the research is an outcome of the difficulties and the non-trained school community in the online/ distance learning. Experts both from the educational and socio-psychological field have stressed the importance of the mental resilience of the teachers, the students and the school society in general. Creating bonds among the school community builds a safe space for all where they can express themselves and share their feelings about stressful situations such as the pandemic and its effects (Chatzichristou, 2021). During the time of the COVID-19 crisis, when students, teachers, and parents, were facing an emotional and personal crisis, due to the overwhelming stress, tension, and pressure education had to change its goals and target the empowerment of its members. Many researchers have underlined that the lack of socialization and interaction between peers at young ages are major issues that arise with distance / online learning since the opportunities for teamwork, dialogue and discussion are minimized. The concerns of parents and educators were also focused on the socialization of the students. During the first years of primary education, this is one of the main priorities which is partially developed during the class and the free time within the school environment. During the school closure, sincere feelings couldn't be evolved, such as trust, solidarity, dialogue, etc.

The COVID-19 crisis has stressed the importance of lifelong learning and adaptability skills in new environments for educators. Due to the abrupt changes in the educational system, the school community didn't have the time to implement a long-term implementation plan which could foster the transmission of the methodical integration of new practices in the traditional school. For sure, this crisis can bring new approaches and methodological suggestions to the educational system. For example, Bozkurt & Sharma (2020) argue that this moment can become the starting point for a future discussion about new, innovative open-source educational activities which can lead to an open society. 3 out of 6 teachers, agreed that digital skills are important for the teachers and that digital materials should be included in the current teaching methodologies.

Parents and teachers interviewed within the framework of this research agreed that in most cases, the school society did "everything they could" in order to adapt to the new realities, support the students' development, and keep up with the school's curriculum. Though, all of them agreed there is an important need on focusing in the needs of the children and learners and create a supporting system that will foster those needs. Accessibility for all is a demand that the school society underlines on every occasion. During the 2 years of the pandemic, there are students in Greece that didn't have the opportunity to attend the online classes. Those students lost a fundamental right – the right to education and we all should reflect

on that. Collecting important information and conducting research in that field could offer useful information for the creation of new policies which will ensure accessibility for all students.

One of the main conclusions could be focused on the diverse answers regarding the effectiveness of distance/ online learning. Teachers and parents interviewed, focused both on the positive and negative aspects of online education addressing both the problems that arose and the possibilities that now are visible. The dichotomy of the answers is reflecting on the broader, international discussion on the role of distance learning in the educational system.

The school society besides the urgent reaction and the minimum preparation for the transmission to the tele-education, showed a general vigilance and tried to adjust to the new educational requirements. During the pandemic, a big number of educators were seeking to develop their skills through online seminars, MOOCs, and courses. In addition, there was noted solidarity and mutual support among the teachers and educators for the development and implementation of distance learning. All teachers mentioned that they exchanged ideas, knowledge and materials with each other, in order to support the quality and efficiency of the lessons. Apart from the difficulties, the school society improved the digital skills which can benefit the future implementation and the upgrade of the classes.

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