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ΔΙΔΑΚΤΟΡΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΤΡΙΒΗ

***"The OECD as an Arbiter of Regulation in Early Childhood
Education and Care Policies: Recontextualizations of Quality
Assessment Technologies in Greece in times of Austerity"***

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Στην Ευτυχία και στον μικρό Νικόλα

Abstract

The field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is under variable and increasing regulation within and without Europe in an effort to guarantee and enhance quality standards. The urge for quality assurance and efficiency contributes to the dominance of ideas pushing towards a shift from bureaucratic to market mechanisms. Since standardization has become prominent, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been established as a global promoter of best practices and quality standards within nation-states and their education institutions. In this Thesis I unpack the re - contextualization of the OECD's notion of quality and autonomy in the Greek municipal ECEC. I explored how the period of economic crisis has affected the relevant debate and influenced the unfolding of governance and (de) - regulation processes with potential implications on ECEC's future direction. Drawing on critical literature review, analysis of the OECD's regulation tool for ECEC and data from interviews and questionnaires of those responsible for ECEC, the study documents an emerging diversity regarding not only the nature of ECEC, but also the notion of quality in ECEC provision in the country. Indeed, while one of the shifts of the EU and the OECD's policies is to place ECEC in the portfolio of education, we have evidence of an intensification of care concerns - triggered by the on-going crisis. In terms of the autonomy of those involved in the design and implementation of education policies, data suggest that there is a constant negotiation between local and central state agencies, precisely around the space, in which the former could act autonomously – an overlapping of state control and local autonomy. Furthermore, an important governance issue that arises from this Thesis is the possibility of integrating ECEC provision to compulsory education, under the Ministry of Education and thus leading to new forms of government. This research is not taking the OECD's dominant agenda on ECEC quality as a fixed reality, but rather scrutinizes it as a pedagogic device that shapes identities and defines what quality in ECEC is - or should be.

Περίληψη

Το πεδίο της προσχολικής εκπαίδευσης και φροντίδας (ΠΕΦ) υπόκειται σε διαρκώς μεταβαλλόμενη και εντεινόμενη ρύθμιση εντός και εκτός Ευρώπης σε μια προσπάθεια να διασφαλιστούν και να ενισχυθούν τα πρότυπα της ποιότητας. Η εμφατική προτροπή για διασφάλιση της ποιότητας και αποτελεσματικότητας συμβάλλει στην κυριαρχία των ιδεών που προωθούν τη στροφή από τους γραφειοκρατικούς προς τους μηχανισμούς της αγοράς. Στην εποχή που η τυποποίηση αναδεικνύεται σε βασικό μέσο αξιολόγησης του εκπαιδευτικού έργου, ο Οργανισμός Οικονομικής Συνεργασίας και Ανάπτυξης (ΟΟΣΑ) έχει καθιερωθεί ως παγκόσμιος προωθητής των βέλτιστων πρακτικών και των προτύπων ποιότητας μεταξύ των εθνικών κρατών και των εκπαιδευτικών τους ιδρυμάτων. Στην παρούσα διατριβή μελετάται η αναπλαισίωση της έννοιας της ποιότητας - όπως αυτή προωθείται από τον ΟΟΣΑ - και της αυτονομίας στην ελληνική δημοτική ΠΕΦ. Ειδικότερα διερευνήθηκαν οι επιδράσεις της οικονομικής κρίσης στη σχετική συζήτηση καθώς επίσης και οι εξελίξεις των διαδικασιών διακυβέρνησης και ρύθμισης με πιθανές επιπτώσεις στη μελλοντική κατεύθυνση της ΠΕΦ. Με βάση τη μελέτη της κριτικής βιβλιογραφίας, την ανάλυση του εργαλείου ρύθμισης του ΟΟΣΑ για την ΠΕΦ και τα δεδομένα από συνεντεύξεις και ερωτηματολόγια των υπευθύνων για τη δημοτική προσχολική εκπαίδευση και φροντίδα, η παρούσα μελέτη δείχνει την αναδυόμενη πολυμορφία όσον αφορά όχι μόνο τη φύση της ΠΕΦ, αλλά και τις έννοιες της ποιότητας των παρεχόμενων υπηρεσιών της ΠΕΦ στη χώρα. Πράγματι, ενώ μια από τις μετατοπίσεις των πολιτικών της ΕΕ και του ΟΟΣΑ συνίσταται στη μετάθεση της ΠΕΦ στο «χαρτοφυλάκιο» της εκπαίδευσης, παρατηρούμε προβληματισμούς σχετικά με την εντατικοποίηση των αναγκών φροντίδας - που προκλήθηκαν από τη συνεχιζόμενη κρίση. Όσον αφορά την αυτονομία όσων εμπλέκονται στον σχεδιασμό και την εφαρμογή των εκπαιδευτικών πολιτικών, καταδεικνύεται μια συνεχής διαπραγμάτευση μεταξύ τοπικών και κεντρικών κρατικών φορέων, ακριβώς γύρω από τον χώρο στον οποίο οι πρώτοι θα μπορούσαν να δράσουν αυτόνομα - μια επικάλυψη και ένας ασαφής συνδυασμός κρατικού ελέγχου και τοπικής αυτονομίας. Επιπλέον, σημαντικό ζήτημα διακυβέρνησης που προκύπτει από αυτή τη διατριβή είναι η πιθανότητα ενσωμάτωσης της ΠΕΦ στην υποχρεωτική εκπαίδευση, υπό την αιγίδα του Υπουργείου Παιδείας, οδηγώντας έτσι σε νέες μορφές δια - κυβέρνησης. Η έρευνα αυτή δεν εκλαμβάνει την κυρίαρχη ατζέντα του ΟΟΣΑ για την ποιότητα της ΠΕΦ ως μία δεδομένη πραγματικότητα, αλλά την προσεγγίζει κριτικά ως παιδαγωγικό μηχανισμό που διαμορφώνει ταυτότητες και ορίζει ποια είναι - ή ποια πρέπει να είναι - η ποιότητα στην ΠΕΦ.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANT Actor Network Theory

CEDEFOP European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

CRELL Centre for Research and Lifelong Learning

EC European Commission

ECEC Early Childhood Education and Care

EENEE European Expert Network on Economics of Education

ET 2020 Education and Training Work Programme 2020 (European Union)

EU European Union

GDP Gross Domestic Product

IMF International Monetary Fund

IO International Organization

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OEEC - Organization for European Economic Cooperation

OMC Open Method of Coordination

KBRT Knowledge Based Regulation Tool

MOU Memorandum of Understanding

NESSE Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training

NGO Non Governmental Organization

NSRF National Strategic Reference Framework

PIAAC Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

PISA Programme for International Student Assessment

SAP Structural Adjustment Program

TALIS Teaching and Learning International Survey

TPS Totally Pedagogized Society

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WB World Bank

WTO World Trade Organization

Chapter One: Introduction to the Thesis

The Knowledge Interest

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services are currently under variable and intensive government regulation (Osgood, 2004). Governments through rules, rewards and sanctions seek to foster and guarantee quality standards. Consequently, there has been an increase of regulation regarding ECEC services in countries both within and without Europe (Vincent and Braun, 2011). However, the expressed concerns regard tendencies towards 'a narrowing and normalizing of what constitutes quality to a prescribed technical list of outcomes and practices'; 'a constraining of teachers' autonomy in their professional decision-making'; and 'a perception by teachers that administrative requirements are time consuming, unnecessary and of limited benefit to children or staff' (Fenech and Sumsion, 2007: 264).

The need for efficiency, comparison and competition in educational policy has established International Organizations (IOs) as 'diagnosticians, judges and policy advisors' to educational systems and their 'knowledge based regulation tools' (KBRTs) (Meyer and Benavot, 2013: 9) as key indicators of global best practices. Such conception of knowledge perceives education as a site of policy intervention - through market mechanisms - to improve the well - being of individuals and economic strength of nations. Hence, the utilization but also the consequences of this new political regime for education being ushered in globally, pose as key issues of this research.

Since standardization has become prominent, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has inevitably been established as a global 'bench-maker' of standards between nation-states and their education institutions (Rinne & Ozga, 2013: 98). Apparently comparison becomes a principal procedure structuring educational realities as much as explaining them and through categorization and classification proposes best practices. The rise of this 'transnational policy orthodoxy' (Jones, 2013: 1) developed by

the European Union (EU) and the OECD and expressed in regulation mechanisms of governance, calibrates the policies of member-states and leads to a constraining of policy makers and educators' autonomy.

Knowledge based regulation tools (KBRTs) tend to de-contextualize policy making by displaying objective data as 'knowledge for policy', which simultaneously constructs a definition of a problem and a discussion of its solution (Rinne and Ozga, 2013: 111). Such instruments act as an impetus for education actors towards 'consciousness' and towards 'doing something they otherwise might not do (or not in this form)' (Kiss and Fejes, 2011: 69). By diffusing a specific type of knowledge - quality assurance based on standards - and introducing minutely specified procedures for action, they seek to form 'behavior, consciousness, accountability and education quality management issues' in different nation-states (Ibid).

The urge for quality assurance and efficiency contributes to the dominance of ideas pushing towards a shift from bureaucratic to market mechanisms. However, by approaching notions such as education or welfare from an efficiency angle, their civic role declines to a financial calculus. The OECD's enhanced role in education governance provides a policy pattern for the OECD to expand its regulation tools to different domains. The OECD suggests that skills have become the global currency of 21st century economies. However, their conception of skills draws concepts of human capital and knowledge-based economies into an 'overarching policy narrative' that presents education as a 'primary site of policy intervention to improve both the well - being of individuals and the economic strength of nations' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013b: 191).

Such a neoliberal positioning of the purpose of education as the creation of 'Homo economicus' is based on and justified by the notion of children as an investment for the future, hence children are not valued for 'who they are now', but for the prospect of them being 'compliant, productive and employable citizens' (Sims and Waniganayake, 2015: 336). Moreover, by perceiving education as human capital, rather than seeing it as being a crucial

social institution 'involved in both the production and social reproduction of capitalist societies', one fails to realize the fact that education also produces 'social relations including class, race and gender, which mediate ongoing income and wealth inequalities' (Robertson, 2016: 824). The dimension of inequality is significant when studying the changes in governance and regulation of the Greek ECEC field.

The quality issue at all levels of education and especially in the 'peculiar' (Ball and Vincent, 2006: 39) ECEC sector has become a policy priority for the European Commission, emphasizing its role in eliminating social and cultural inequalities and underachievement (Leseman, 2009). Considering the complexity of different structures and rules currently governing ECEC internationally, the European Commission and the OECD's intention has been to mutually explore ways of identifying best policy practices from their members. The OECD (2012) has published a reference guide intending to highlight quality in ECEC with a special emphasis on policy. This 'Quality Toolbox' is assumed to provide realistic solutions making the enhancement of quality in the early childhood sector a manageable problem for stakeholders and policy makers around the world.

The OECD (2012) suggests that its tool provides a context that prepares governments for action and helps set policy agendas, hence it is intended to become a reference tool for anyone with a role to play in promoting quality in ECEC with a special focus on policy. The debates regarding policies on quality are contextualized in the processes of the Europeanization (Sifakakis et al, 2015; Lawn and Grek, 2012) of education, where the traditional command and control bureaucratic systems are being replaced by data systems and best practices. The latter construct policy problems and frame policy solutions by taking the European into the national level (Ozga, 2012).

An Introduction to the Greek Context

As Paananen *et al* (2015) underline, the content and meaning of the notion of quality could change when located in a new discursive, political and social context. It thus appears that in Greece, where the economic crisis is ongoing and severe, there is a de-contextualization of the debate and a re-contextualization of it on the premises of the paradoxical shifts from deregulation to regulation triggered by the austerity measures. Since 2010 the Greek state has undergone strict fiscal consolidation and a number of budgetary cuts is still taking place under the economic adjustment programs, also known as Memoranda of Understanding (M.O.U) (European Commission, 2015). The Greek crisis was the 'deepest and longest ever recorded in an OECD country in the postwar period' (Andriopoulou *et al*, 2017: 1).

The macroeconomic adjustment conditions - imposed for the provision of financial assistance right from the first M.O.U. - have impacted negatively the exercise of socio-economic rights of people in Greece (Schutter and Salomon, 2015). The impact of the crisis appears to be more significant in big cities, such as the capital - Athens, Piraeus and Thessaloniki, while peripheral regions like Peloponnese and Epirus have been less affected (Artelaris and Kandyliis, 2014). Through a 'discourse of uncertainty', in the sense of 'unpredictability' and the 'always imminent worse that surrounds the crisis', the state is morally deemed as the legitimate power to make sure that Greece exits the crisis (Dalakoglou *et al*, 2018: 4). However, during that process, the human rights that have been, and continue to be, affected include a range of labor rights, the right to social security, the right to health and healthcare, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to housing, and gender equality, among others. Findings also indicate that particular groups were disproportionately affected, including women, the young and pensioners (see Schutter and Salomon, 2015; Dalakoglou and Agelopoulos, 2018; Andriopoulou *et al*, 2017).

Inevitably the Greek education and training sectors have been strongly affected as well by the very low and constantly decreasing public spending (OECD, 2017b). To be specific, general government expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP is among the lowest in the EU and stood at 4.5% in 2013, compared to an EU average of 5.0%. From the beginning of the M.O.U.s the ratio of expenditure to GDP has followed a cumulative GDP reduction of approximately 25% during this time period, so spending on education was reduced by at least the same proportion (European Commission, 2015: 3). The education system still 'struggles with a low level of public funding', since expenditure on education was '4.3% of GDP in 2015' and 'the share of education spending relative to total government expenditure was the lowest among EU member states - 7.8% in 2015 from 8.7 in 2014 - (European Commission, 2017: 6).

There is little doubt that the Greek crisis, which is also European, is not only financial but also social and political. Further, it would be also difficult to disagree with the view that high standard education provision is a crucial factor in overcoming such multidimensional crises and in promoting societal progress more generally. In that direction, the European Commission (2015: 18) states that quality 'needs to start early' and therefore recognizes ECEC as a constitutive part of the education and training systems in Europe, because it not only adds to children's well-being now and in the long term, but also to the foundation of skills and competences that are vital to achieving high learning outcomes later in life. Furthermore, it is argued that this stage could prove particularly beneficial to children from underprivileged backgrounds and also contribute to the reduction of educational poverty.

At the same time it appears that Greece is among the bottom performer countries (76.4% in 2013 when the EU average was 93.1% and 79.6% in 2015) regarding participation in ECEC and well below the Education and Training 2020 benchmark of 95% (European Commission, 2015: 50; European Commission, 2017). It should be stressed that in 2012 only 55.6% of 4 year-olds took part in pre-primary education, compared to an EU average of 86.7% (European Commission, 2015: 4). Attiki was the only Greek region

where less than half of all 4 year-olds were in pre-primary education. In the Greek capital, 30.8% of 4 year-olds took part in ECEC, approximately one third of the EU average (Ibid). Such regional disparities in terms of ECEC participation reflect the significant socio-economic divides or gaps exacerbated if not produced by austerity measures that Greece and other European countries face.

The above figures could be explained if we consider that family poverty reduces the likelihood of children's participation in ECEC (Bennett, 2013) or hampers their access to quality provision (Gambaro et al, 2013). Furthermore, it has been argued that austerity, a consequence of globalizing processes, may lead to shrinking provision within childcare markets, since their "clientele" is affected by growing unemployment, which inevitably generates the risk of ECEC becoming out of reach (Lloyd and Penn, 2014) and of low quality for deprived children (Vandenbroeck and Lazzari, 2014). Given that there are no significant data in Greece, we assume that the above arguments are of relevance for the Greek context as well.

It should also be mentioned that this fiscal crisis generates what Lloyd and Penn (2014) identified as 'market pressures', which cause a deregulation of the field evident in the relaxation of quality standards. Such conditions could directly affect quality and may reflect the natural tendency of ECEC providers - If seen as a market - to favor economically sound localities and maybe withdraw from disadvantaged areas.

The Contribution of This Study

The apparent deregulation, driven by the economic crisis, collides with the urge for regulation of the rather chaotic field of the Greek ECEC provision and brings to the fore the problematic behind the dominant global discourse and the re - contextualization of the notion of quality in the "peculiar" Greek

context and in other European contexts that face similar crises. The way IOs perceive education - and particularly ECEC - as a market, could potentially create risks exacerbated by the current Greek economic austerity. The literature suggests that the outcomes of such market-efficient models range from social equity and state solidarity risks to lurking privatisation, which is suggested as a universal panacea to issues of funding and quality (Peters, 2012). Such arguments raise concerns and generate 'combative, tumultuous and desperate responses' in Greece and other southern European countries (Jones, 2013: 7).

This Thesis is oriented towards the global/ European debates surrounding policies related to ECEC and practices in Greece. The aim is to research the role of International Organizations - especially the OECD - in the simultaneous 'economization' of education policy and the 'educationalization' of economic policy (Sellar and Lingard, 2013b: 200). By researching the role of such organizations and their possible influences on the Greek ECEC provision, this research seeks to explore the complex notions of quality and autonomy in ECEC. Hence, the issues of governance and relevant processes of regulation and deregulation, the way they are decontextualized and recontextualized at national and municipal level and the consequences for ECEC pose as key issues of this research.

The starting point of the present study is the observation that several key players of this field seek to play a role in its regulation through the dissemination of "good" practices - such mechanisms are mainly suggested by supranational organizations like the OECD and the EU - though not without reservations regarding the impact of such supranational organizations on the education system and the society, more generally. Partly, such reservations have been triggered by perceptions concerning the role of the OECD's toolboxes (or similar, according to the participants, organizations like the IMF, or the World Bank) in the severities that the majority of the Greek people have suffered during the economic crisis. Using as a driver of change "policy networking" agents in the Greek field of ECEC engage in the exchange of good practices, aiming to influence service delivery in the sector. Following

Ball and Junemann (2012) it is important to identify the actors and interactions within and across this network, whether and how governance networks bring into play particular kinds of expert knowledge, and the possible effects of such activity in the reshaping of the field.

The Research Questions and Breakdown of the Thesis

Basic research questions of this study are: Who defines quality in ECEC? Through what processes and which contexts? How the notions of autonomy and quality are being shaped and re - contextualized in the Greek ECEC in times of economic crisis? How governance and regulation are played out in the field of ECEC? How do those involved in the Greek context perceive the OECD's work/ involvement in ECEC? With what consequences?

This Thesis is structured in seven chapters. Chapter two describes the OECD's perception of "quality education" with a special emphasis on ECEC policies, based on its regulation toolbox for ECEC, "Starting Strong 3". Chapter three presents the review of the critical literature and the theoretical grounding of the study. After an introduction of doing policy in education, we grapple with the critical literature on the leading role of the OECD in education policy and its potential repercussions on in - e - quality. Furthermore, we engage with the concepts of New Public Management and the way notions such as autonomy and governance of education are played out in times of globalization. The chapter is concluded by introducing Bernstein's concepts, namely the Totally Pedagogized Society (TPS), the field of symbolic control and the pedagogic device, in order to uncover the OECD's involvement in ECEC and its effects on ECEC quality provision and those involved in the field.

Chapter four presents the Greek context of ECEC provision and the research methods and methodology. The empirical part of the study begins with chapter five, which is based on the qualitative part of the research - the

interviews of those involved in making decisions at the level of municipalities. In each sub - section we present our findings and we discuss our analyses. Chapter six presents the quantitative data from the educators involved in the municipal ECEC, followed by the discussion of our analysis of the findings and challenges emanating from key concepts of the OECD's "Starting Strong 3". Finally, chapter seven presents the conclusions of the Thesis.

Chapter Two: The OECD's Toolkit for ECEC Quality

Introduction

The quality issue at all levels of education and especially in the 'peculiar' (Ball and Vincent, 2006: 39) ECEC sector has become a policy priority for the European Commission, emphasizing its role in eliminating social and cultural inequalities and underachievement (Leseman, 2009). Considering the complexity of different structures and rules currently governing ECEC internationally, the European Commission and the OECD's intention has been to mutually explore ways of identifying best policy practices from their members. The OECD (2012) has published a reference guide intending to underscore quality in ECEC with a special emphasis on policy. This 'Quality Toolbox' is assumed to provide realistic solutions making the enhancement of quality in the early childhood sector a manageable problem for stakeholders and policy makers around the world.

The OECD (2012) suggests that the presented tool provides a context that prepares governments for action and helps set policy agendas, hence it is intended to become a reference tool for anyone with a role to play in promoting quality in ECEC with a special focus on policy. The debates regarding policies on quality are contextualized in the processes of the Europeanization of education, where the traditional command and control bureaucratic mechanisms are being pressured to alter their mode of governance by data systems and best practices. The latter construct policy problems and frame policy solutions by taking the European into the national level (Ozga, 2012). However, as Paananen *et al* (2015) underline, the content and meaning of the notion of quality could change when located in a new discursive, political and social context.

This chapter presents the OECD's policy for the field of ECEC and describes in detail "Starting Strong 3" (2012), a report developed by the OECD intended to become a reference tool for anyone with a role to play in promoting quality

in ECEC with a special focus on policy. Therefore, quality, as defined in this publication, is framed within characteristics that are more easily amenable to policy' (OECD, 2012: 3). The analytical framework has been set up based on "Starting Strong I and II" (2001 and 2006 respectively) and - as the report underlines - the latest findings from the international literature. These two reports have established the international comparative basis on ECEC policy in OECD members and aim to foster a number of actions to broaden access, guarantee equity and improve quality of ECEC provision.

Quality - generally and specifically for ECEC - is an elusive and multifaceted notion, hence the enhancement of quality may differ depending on each national context (OECD, 2012). In that direction, the OECD Education Policy Committee introduced the "Encouraging Quality in ECEC" project and the relevant "Survey for the Quality toolbox and ECEC Portal" (2011) to 'define or redefine quality from policy perspectives', explore the relevant literature to introduce 'effective policy levers' and 'set out' diverse national contexts 'under which such levers' can be successfully implemented (OECD, 2012: 3). That evolving process resulted in "Starting Strong 3". Within this report we find the following five suggested policy axes (OECD, 2012):

- *Policy Lever 1: Setting out quality goals and regulations*
- *Policy Lever 2: Designing and implementing curriculum and standards*
- *Policy Lever 3: Improving qualifications, training and working conditions*
- *Policy Lever 4: Engaging families and communities*
- *Policy Lever 5: Advancing data collection, research and monitoring*

For each policy lever, five action areas are presented:

- *Action Area 1: Using research to inform policy and the public*
- *Action Area 2: Broadening perspectives through international comparison*
- *Action Area 3: Selecting a strategy option*
- *Action Area 4: Managing risks: learning from other countries' policy*

experiences

- *Action Area 5: Reflecting on the current state of play*

The OECD's Quality Toolbox for ECEC offers 'practical solutions' (2012: 15) for stakeholders by presenting the above five levers, which - according to the OECD - have the potential to enhance quality. Each lever is supplemented by supporting materials that serve as resources to help implement policy initiatives. Such materials include research sections, international comparisons, list compilations of strategy options based on other countries' implementation experiences, lessons learned and self-reflection sheets.

In its introduction, "Starting Strong 3" defines the main purposes for which the OECD has developed it. It begins by acknowledging that a number of OECD member - countries have made efforts to foster quality in ECEC, while others focus on aspects like access and affordability. Hence, it should be stressed that countries are at different stages of policy implementation to encourage quality in ECEC. Therefore, the OECD (2012) suggests that its members could find it useful to explore what research indicates and how other countries act accordingly. Policy advisors are frequently asked to come up with innovative policy ideas, design analytic structures, or prepare responses to rising challenges, hence the above levers are expected to provide strong support by focusing on the most frequently and urgently asked requests.

To do so, the OECD fills each section of its framework with 'practical tools' aiming to aid policy-developers to 'respond to government directions', be knowledgeable regarding other countries best practices, - or 'quick wins' as the report puts it - investigate most cost-effective actions and examine 'trade-offs' between long and short-term strategic steps (OECD, 2012: 16). Thus, the presented tool aims to provide a context that shall enable governments to act, but also 'set policy agendas' (ibid). Interestingly enough, as highlighted in the report the extensive list of paradigms from "Starting Strong 3" are not to be perceived as 'policy recommendations', but more like a 'menu of policy options' from which those who are responsible for policy may 'get some food for thought' and 'exposure to other countries' experiences' (OECD, 2012: 4).

Policy lever 1: Setting out Quality Goals and Regulations

The basic premise of "Starting Strong 3" is that fostering quality in ECEC requires setting out quality goals and regulations. By making reference to the research literature, the document argues that setting goals and stating them explicitly can help *'i) consolidate political will and strategically align resources with prioritized areas; ii) anchor discussions between ministries and improve government leadership in ECEC; iii) promote more consistent, coordinated and child-centered services with shared social and pedagogical objectives; and iv) provide guidance for providers, direction for practitioners and clarity for parents'* (2012: 23). Similarly, setting out clear regulations is another significant aspect of this lever. The OECD suggests that such minimum standard policies could safeguard the health and safety of children in high quality environments by: *'i) leveling the playing field to ensure the quality of all providers; ii) ensuring conditions of learning and care through structural indicators that can enhance child development; and iii) communicating with parents about the quality of services and helping them make informed choices'* (*ibid*).

As described previously, when referring to the regulation tool's levers, the OECD seeks to support its concepts by first using research to inform policy and the public ("Action Area 1"). "Starting Strong 3" raises the importance of the context in defining the nature of the selected quality goals. There are different foci for governments, working parents and minority groups. Those quality goals could range from 'school preparedness and healthy socio-emotional child development', to 'just access to high quality ECEC' and 'transmitting the native culture and language' (OECD, 2012: 24). Such targets differ depending on each country, but according to this action area, it is commonly suggested that quality goals should be set to foster the improvement of ECEC provision.

This section of the document continues with presentations of relevant literature regarding the importance of setting quality goals. To be particular,

according to this lever, quality goals tend to motivate governments to strongly support ECEC leadership and 'align resources with prioritized quality areas and also provide 'more coherent ECEC services at every level' (2012: 25). Common objectives leading to a holistic approach could block the fragmentation of services, and thus promote the knowledge process and child development (Eurydice, 2009 in OECD, 2012). In a similar manner, as far as minimum standards are concerned, a regulatory analytical framework could guarantee the wellbeing of young children and safeguard a minimum standard of quality. Minimum standards goals also work well with parents and assist their 'informed choices' (OECD, 2012: 26).

Several areas that could benefit from minimum standards are according to "policy lever 1": staff-child ratios and group size, educators' qualifications and specialized training, staff wages, program duration, curriculum planning and implementation, facilities, staff gender and diversity. The reader/ recipient of the report is always reminded that the context is significant, since the discussion on quality minimum standards depends on each country's current level of quality.

As will be described in the critical literature review (see chapter three) the OECD has a very specific way to convey and further expand its agenda: International comparisons/ country paradigms are OECD's preferred method and in this report are used to broaden perspectives on policy goals and standards for ECEC in OECD member states. So after the conclusion of action area 1, "Starting Strong' s policy lever 1" continues by "Broadening Perspectives Through International Comparison" (Action Area 2). This area contains international comparisons of policy goals and minimum standards. As far as policy goals are concerned, 'equity measures' is the most frequently mentioned policy goal, followed by 'public responsibility and investment' (OECD, 2012: 43). Furthermore, the document suggests that ECEC policy appears to be designed and developed not only as part of 'education and child-care, but also labor market policy'. However, and despite the fact that ECEC is often referenced as a fertility rates booster - only a few countries seem to consider ECEC as a tool for 'tackling demographic challenges' (*ibid*).

In a similar manner the focus of quality goals in ECEC refers to 'learning standards, curriculum and pedagogy' (: 43), which are perceived as efficient tools to guide ECEC staff to enhance their educational approaches and to foster child development. Other key foci involve 'workforce/ working conditions', 'parental and community engagement' and 'monitoring and evaluation', while some countries - according to "Action area 2" - do not set out any quality-specific goals (OECD, 2012: 44).

The next part of "Starting Strong's Lever 1" seeks to address the challenges of quality goal - setting. To be specific, through "Selecting a strategy option" (Action area 3), this regulation tool aims to tackle challenges such as 'building consensus among stakeholders, practitioners, parents and managers on the targets for quality enhancement or scope of ECEC' (OECD, 2012: 52). In this area certain paradigms of OECD members are presented in order for the reader to grasp the different approaches regarding the role and scope of ECEC. To name a few, Norway acknowledges the role of kindergartens as an initiation of lifelong learning, Czech Republic sees ECEC as a guarantee for equal access for all children, while Sweden points towards a more education focused approach.

When it comes to the implementation of the selected strategic goals, "Starting Strong" calls for a 'coherent framework' so that all organized actions aim at the same agreed direction (OECD, 2012: 54) and also demands stakeholders' commitment, 'strategic thinking, realistic timelines, adequate funding and strong political leadership' - even though a number of OECD members report a shortage of funds and human resources for the implementation of strategy goals (OECD, 2012: 59). In addition to the above, the OECD raises the issue of diversity regarding regulations that are followed by different providers - different providers equals different standards - which could trigger 'uneven quality standards across a country', or 'issues of affordability and equity' (2012: 64). Therefore, it is critical for minimum standards to be 'defined at the national level and be followed, while adapting to the local needs' (OECD, 2012: 66).

"Policy lever 1" is concluded by "Learning from other countries' policy experiences (Action area 4) and "Reflecting on the current state of play" (Action area 5). Through the exploration of OECD member countries' experiences from setting out quality goals and regulations, "Starting Strong's Policy lever 1" aims to become a quick guide concerning relevant challenges. The last action area focuses on promoting reflections on and finally determining the position of each/ one's country regarding quality goals and minimum standards. This part is aimed for anyone with a role to play in boosting quality in ECEC and its purpose is - through the use of a Likert scale questionnaire/ sheet - to 'raise awareness about new issues and identify areas where changes could be made' (OECD, 2012: 78).

Policy lever 2: Designing and Implementing Curriculum and Standards

The second policy lever of OECD's "Starting Strong 3" focuses on the curriculum and perceives 'designing and implementing curriculum and standards' as a tool of major significance for reinforcing positive impact on children's learning and development (OECD, 2012: 81). In particular, curriculum and standards can act as promoters of quality in different settings and may provide 'guidance to staff, on how to improve children's well being' (*ibid*). Similarly, they could inform parents regarding children's learning and progress. The tool mentions that different countries based on different criteria, choose different paths during curriculum design processes.

As suggested by OECD's "Starting Strong", it is essential to overcome 'curriculum dichotomies' (e.g. academic-oriented vs. comprehensive approaches, staff-initiated instruction vs. child-initiated activities, etc.) and consolidate the 'added value' of individual approaches (*ibid*). The document notes that the majority of OECD countries have established a relevant

framework from age three to compulsory schooling, while several countries have started to address continuous child development from early childhood throughout older ages (OECD, 2012).

"Policy lever 2" continues by presenting the relevant literature that informs policy and the public on curriculum and minimum standards (Action area 1). After defining it - curriculum refers to 'what to teach' and 'how to teach it' (OECD, 2012: 82) - it describes it as a multifaceted notion involving targets, content, values and pedagogical practices (Litjens and Taguma, 2010 in OECD, 2012). Most OECD member countries currently use a curriculum in early childhood services, which usually accepts some broad structuring and orientation towards educational aims. Yet, the OECD suggests that there is a consensus on the significance of an explicit curriculum structure (Bertrand 2007 in OECD, 2012), with clear purpose and targets leading to encouraging outcomes.

Debate remains over which curriculum targeting could prove more rewarding for ECEC provision. This, according to the OECD, raises issues regarding aspects such as the 'scope, relevance, focus and age-appropriateness of content; depth and length of descriptions; and input - or outcome - based descriptions' (2012: 83). Depending on the national context there are different emphases, ranging from open to more academic - approach frameworks. "Starting Strong" raises also the issue of cultural diversity in ECEC and suggests - based on the relevant literature - an individualized approach to the curriculum design and development. To do so, 'all stakeholders' agreement' is required (OECD, 2012: 84). Curricula can contribute to addressing disagreements and can also ensure that what is agreed upon will be met (Bennett, 2011 in OECD, 2012).

"Starting Strong's policy lever 2' highlights a dichotomy between academic and more comprehensive ECEC models. The first ones prioritize a staff-initiated curriculum with cognitive purposes for primary education preparation, while the latter ones view a holistic approach as the ideal route (Bertrand, 2007; OECD, 2006 in OECD, 2012).

Nevertheless, the OECD proposes that ECEC settings accomplish superior quality through the integration of the above models, by creating a hybrid curriculum in which cognitive and social progress are perceived as of equal significance. To support its claims the OECD's Quality Toolbox (2012) refers to Sweden, as a perfect example of the previous scenario, although it also refers to indications of failed mixed ECEC curricula in different OECD member countries. "Starting Strong 3" concludes that curriculum design and development should focus 'beyond such dichotomies', making a turn from 'type' of curriculum to 'critical learning areas' (such as 'literacy, numeracy, ICT, science, art and music, physical and health development, play and finally choice and self-determination', as well as 'implementation' (Eurydice, 2009 in OECD, 2012: 85 - 88).

The next segment of "Policy lever 2" includes an international comparison of ECEC curriculum frameworks and relevant content (Action area 2). Almost all OECD countries, the document notes, have established a form of framework – either a curriculum structure, or standards. The age groups differ among states and usually are from around age two-and-a-half to compulsory schooling. Several OECD countries aiming to deliver the – previously mentioned – integrated ECEC services, use a structure that covers ages from zero to compulsory education (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, Nordic Countries and Canada). In a similar manner, Germany and Scotland seek to capture continuous child progress in early years and beyond. Such stance is reflected in the age coverage of the curriculum, where in the first case the framework covers ages from zero to ten and in the second one from age three to eighteen with age-appropriate content for different age groups (OECD, 2012).

As far as content and subjects are concerned, curriculum descriptions could be separated to 'input based' or 'outcome based' approaches. To be particular, most ECEC curriculum structures highlight specific requirements as to what is needed or expected of ECEC staff – input – (OECD, 2012: 98). Notions such as 'values and principles' are also frequently stressed, while the term 'child outcomes' is used by fewer – especially Anglo-Saxon – countries

(Nordic nations tend to avoid the latter term). Moreover, the majority of OECD countries place a high significance on subjects like 'literacy, numeracy, physical education, science and arts' in their curriculum frameworks, while music, play and practical skills are also common (ibid). Finally, countries like Spain, Slovak Republic and Korea have integrated newly emerging subject matters such as ICT and learning foreign languages.

Significant challenges of "Policy lever 2" are the ones that arise from developing and implementing a curriculum framework (Action area 3 - Selecting a strategy option). This action area contains a list of strategy options that aim to address those challenges. To begin with, 'defining goals and content' and the 'extent of detail' are challenges in many countries due to the different viewpoints of stakeholders on what curriculum content should be (OECD, 2012: 103). Numerous ECEC educators request specific pedagogical guidance and a more detailed approach, whereas others prefer to implement a more open curriculum adapted to each country's local context (OECD, 2012).

Another significant challenge as identified by the OECD is 'dissemination and communication about the framework' (OECD, 2012: 120). It appears that several countries experience difficulties in terms of keeping the local ECEC provision informed regarding the reforms made. Therefore, the OECD's quality toolbox suggests that 'informing stakeholders about curriculum changes (seminars and meetings), communicating with staff through written forms of dissemination and communicating with parents', are three key initiatives, which could address the above issues (2012: 120 - 122).

The last challenge of this action area is the 'curriculum's systematic evaluation and assessment' (OECD, 2012: 130). The lack of curriculum evaluation processes in ECEC is linked to limited data and lack of policy capacity to run evaluations, however through the presentation of member countries' best practices, the OECD aims to shape a different stance towards evaluation and assessment in ECEC.

The next part (Action area 4) of the presented tool discusses '6 lessons learned' from different countries' (including - among others - Italy, Belgium, Ireland, Spain, Japan, Slovenia, Sweden) experiences during the design and implementation process of curriculum and standards (OECD, 2012: 134). According to "Starting Strong's" (OECD, 2012: 134 - 137) policy lever 2 those lessons are:

- *'Lesson 1: Orient the curriculum reform to focus on "child" and "holistic development'.*
- *'Lesson 2: Engage key stakeholders and relevant experts in the curriculum revision process'.*
- *'Lesson 3: Ensure coherency in learning and upbringing for continuous child development'.*
- *'Lesson 4: Plan sufficient time to raise awareness of the curriculum change and to implement the change; plan a feasible review exercise'.*
- *'Lesson 5: Ensure that ECEC center leaders can effectively manage financial and human resources as well as pedagogic practices and, in addition, train staff for effective implementation'.*
- *'Lesson 6: Use simple and common language to draft the curriculum that can be easily understood by staff and parents'.*

The last part of this policy lever (Action area 5) is designed to generate reflections about the positioning of each country regarding curriculum frameworks, standards and guidelines. According to this action area, the aim is to 'raise awareness about new issues and identify areas where changes could be made' (OECD, 2012: 138).

Policy lever 3: Improving Qualifications Training and Working Conditions

The third section of OECD's "Starting Strong 3" puts emphasis to "improving qualifications, training and working conditions" in ECEC. According to the OECD, these aspects play a significant part in 'enhancing pedagogical quality

– directly linked to better child outcomes – through the ability of staff members to create a high quality pedagogic environment' (2012: 143). Crucial elements of high staff quality are the ways in which staff 'involve children', 'stimulate interaction' with and between children and use 'diverse scaffolding strategies' (Ibid). Working conditions could prove to be a significant lever for improving the quality of ECEC services as well. The OECD (2012: 143) underlines, certain conditions that can influence the quality of ECEC provision:

- *'High staff-child ratio and low group size.*
- *Competitive wages and other benefits.*
- *Reasonable schedule/ workload.*
- *Low staff turnover.*
- *A good physical environment.*
- *Competent and supportive centre manager'.*

The first section (Action area 1) of this policy lever contains the following research briefs: "Qualifications, Education, Training and Working Conditions Matter". According to the OECD (2012: 144), educators' qualifications are of major significance for ECEC provision because they set their 'level and forms of knowledge, abilities and competencies'. Professional development offers chances for working staff to 'update their educational practices' – often referred to as 'continuous education' or 'professional training' (ibid).

As emphasized in "Teachers' Review" (OECD, 2005 in OECD, 2012), governments need to invest in teacher education and training, if teachers are to produce high quality results. Despite the consensus on raising staff qualifications, it seems that stakeholders are in doubt regarding wage demands that frequently come with higher qualifications. Hence, governments often decide not to 'invest' in 'raising qualifications or supporting staff training' (OECD, 2006 in OECD 2012: 145), which could result in low ECEC quality.

But why and which educators' qualifications matter after all for the OECD? The competences that research recognizes as vital in fostering ECEC quality are 'the increased understanding of child development; the ability to develop

and praise perspectives, comfort and question; leadership skills, problem solving and development of targeted lesson plans; good vocabulary and the ability to stimulate children's ideas. In addition to the above, equally significant is the intangible ability of better-qualified staff members to provide stimulating pedagogical environments' (OECD, 2012: 145 - 146).

The OECD often refers to working conditions as 'structural quality indicators' (e.g. salaries, educator-child ratio, hours of work) that can enhance the potential of professionals to 'do their work well' and foster 'their satisfaction with the workplace, work tasks and nature of the job' (OECD, 2012: 153). Yet, it appears that the ECEC area is usually linked to low quality of working conditions and limited wages. In order to boost the status and quality of ECEC, The OECD (2012) suggests that governments may need to choose to invest more, by securing equal working conditions for equally qualified educators across ECEC.

The next segment (Action area 2) of "Starting Strong 3" includes international comparisons of "job titles, qualifications and requirements; staff working conditions; and professional development". As far as qualifications are concerned, there are different requirements in the OECD's members depending on the age group of children. Some require higher qualifications for educators working with children from zero to three years of age and other countries require unified qualifications for those working with children from the beginning of ECEC to compulsory schooling (OECD, 2012). Furthermore, the OECD highlights the highly uneven gender balance in the ECEC workforce (ibid). The example of Mexico is the only one that manages to score a 17% figure for male educators - women in the majority of the OECD members usually reach 95% or higher.

"Starting Strong's policy lever 3 states that another significant factor for ECEC quality is "professional development" and presents several diverse financing models (Co-funded by governments and employers and also solely funded) that are observed in different OECD members. Significant dissimilarities are also observed in terms of wages across the OECD member states. In many

countries, pre-primary and primary educators are paid similarly - such as in Portugal and Canada - but primary teachers receive higher salaries than ECEC teachers in countries such as England, Poland and Slovenia (OECD, 2012).

Action area 3 of "Policy lever 3" refers to strategy options to tackle the challenges concerning workforce development and working conditions. The first challenge is to 'improve staff qualifications' (OECD, 2012: 184). Since different segments – within ECEC – have different targets and visions for educators' qualifications and training, revising, unifying, or raising the bar regarding ECEC qualifications pose a significant difficulty (OECD, 2012).

"Starting Strong's policy lever 3 presents several paradigms from member countries' best practices. Indicatively, Canada revised the Educators' training framework with more explicit requirements in an effort to enhance quality of the training process. Similarly, in Germany degree - level ECEC programs are on the rise. In 2011 there was a consensus on a common title for ECEC educators and common contents for the previously mentioned degree frameworks.

Another significant challenge mentioned in this Action area is "securing a high quality workforce supply". The main reasons for the shortages are often cited as: 'Low wages, low social status, heavy workload and lack of career progression paths', which make the profession unattractive (OECD, 2012: 190). Therefore the OECD suggests certain approaches taken from several member countries in order to tackle those challenges (OECD, 2012: 191 - 195):

- *'Funding students and professionals* (e.g. The cases of Australia and England)
- *Funding education and training programs.* (e.g. The case of Japan)
- *Raising the status of ECEC professionals.* (e.g. The case of Slovak Republic)
- *Stimulating demand for a qualified workforce through employers and*

parents. (e.g. The case of Slovenia)

- *Validating existing competencies to allow easier entry into the profession. (e.g. The cases of England (United Kingdom) and Australia)*
- *Promoting workforce mobility across different regions and different countries. (e.g. The cases of British Columbia (Canada) and New Zealand'.*

According to "Starting Strong 3" another significant difficulty for ECEC is "workforce retention". Factors like limited salaries and low status are the ones that discourage people from working in ECEC, therefore the OECD members have taken the following measures (OECD, 2012: 195 - 199):

- *Improving salaries, minimum wage and benefits. (e.g. The cases of New Zealand, Portugal and Slovak Republic, which pay equally ECEC educators and primary - secondary teachers)*
- *Inviting innovations from stakeholders through awards system. (e.g. The case of Australia that has introduced the *Fair Work Act 2009*)*
- *Assisting in bargaining or negotiating for working conditions in the ECEC sector. (e.g. Again the case of Australia, which has adopted multi-employer bargaining for low paid jobs)*
- *Targeting experienced workers or returning staff. (e.g. The case of Belgium, where bonuses have been introduced for qualified, experienced, educators)*
- *Offering status, benefits or social values equal to other professions in education. (e.g. In Belgium the government plans to regulate the child care sector and grant full employee status to different categories of educators)*
- *Providing career opportunities for promotion and mobility. (e.g. Belgium is designing a new qualification structure that fosters multidirectional mobility of employees)*
- *Offering adequate support for new staff. (e.g. The case of Italy which provides e learning platforms and tutoring for ECEC educators)*
- *Monitoring working conditions. (e.g. The case of Chile that currently*

monitors ECEC and aims to implement a Quality Care Assurance Model)

The fourth challenge of this Action area refers to “workforce development”. Many countries offer professional development prospects for ECEC staff, however the take-up rates are not positive. Measures taken from member countries in this direction include (OECD, 2012: 199 - 206):

- *'Focusing on professional development for quality enhancement*
- *Making continuous training a job requirement*
- *Raising awareness of the importance of continuous training among staff and their employers*
- *Designing demands-driven training*
- *Offering diversity training*
- *Offering training for curriculum implementation*
- *Supporting employers for staff replacement*
- *Financing training costs*
- *Funding institutions that provide continuous training'*

The final challenge indicated in action area 3 is the “role of private provision”, and specifically how policy challenges are tackled, where a significant extent of ECEC provision is private. In cases where provision is mainly public, changes can be achieved through government interference, whereas when the private market is largely involved in ECEC services, action may need to be taken through a regulative process (OECD, 2012). Private services are usually under-funded and may not be able to follow structural standards with detrimental effects on ECEC quality. Hence, 'regulating private ECEC provision as rigorously as the public sector' is the way forward as witnessed in countries such as England, Finland and Belgium (OECD, 2012: 206 - 207).

According to "Policy lever 3" (Action area 4) the lessons that the experiences of the OECD members have taught us are focused on - among others - 'cost implications', 'staff preparation' before the implementation of the measures, full engagement of stakeholders and assuring 'diversity' (OECD, 2012: 208 -

212). The final segment (Action area 5) of this lever is concluded by presenting the relevant questionnaire to be filled in by anyone with a role to play in enhancing quality in order to raise issues and target changes.

Policy lever 4: Engaging Families and Communities

The OECD (2012) perceives parental engagement as a key policy lever for promoting child development and learning. It is of major importance for parents to be actively involved in their children's educational process. "Starting Strong 3" indicates that literature links parental involvement with 'children's future academic success, high school completion and socio-emotional development and adaptation in society' (OECD, 2012: 217). Action area 1 further elaborates the relevant research findings. Specifically, the OECD (2006 in OECD, 2012) and UNICEF (2008a in OECD, 2012) suggest that ECEC provision should acknowledge parents' right to be informed and to participate actively in their children's lives.

Links between schools and communities could promote important competences that can ensure a socially and emotionally, physically and academically, successful life (Edwards et al, 2008 and OECD, 2006 in OECD, 2012). However, according to "Starting Strong 3", there is a lack of knowledge on efficient ways of boosting parental engagement in hard-to-reach groups (Harris and Goodall, 2006 in OECD, 2012) and further research needs to be carried out on strategies to help parental involvement of ethnic minority groups.

Action area 2 refers to international comparisons regarding "Parental and Community Engagement" (OECD, 2012: 238):

- Findings indicate that the most common routes for family and community involvement include: '1) making it a legal obligation, and 2) involving parents or communities in decision-making bodies'.
- While the majority of OECD members require from ECEC services to

engage parents in their undertakings, a few countries (e.g., Slovenia and Sweden) also make it a parent's 'right'.

- In several countries (e.g., the Flemish and French communities of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand), parents and community members can run an ECEC center and accept public grants for achieving minimum standards or quality framework.
- Some countries include parents in the evaluation of ECEC services. Finland is unique in a sense that children are also viewed as parts of the evaluation process along with ECEC staff and parents.
- Several member countries - local authorities (e.g., Denmark and Sweden), evaluation institutes (Spain), or ECEC centers themselves (e.g., Norway and Slovenia) - administer parental satisfaction questionnaires.

The third action area of this policy lever contains lists of strategy options to tackle challenges produced by the process of engaging families in ECEC provision. To be particular, a significant issue is parents' 'lack of awareness and motivation' (OECD, 2012: 242), therefore the OECD identifies initiatives from its members that serve this purpose (: 243 - 254):

- *'Making family engagement a policy priority, an obligation or right.*
- *Providing public financial resources to involved parents.*
- *Providing public financial resources to ECEC programs.*
- *Engaging parents as providers or support to providers.*
- *Engaging parents in an advisory or management body for ECEC policies and services.*
- *Engaging parents in setting the curriculum.*
- *Supporting and training staff to engage parents.*
- *Providing support materials to parents.*
- *Engaging parents in evaluating ECEC provisions.*
- *Assessing and evaluating family engagement'.*

Another common challenge among the OECD's members is "communication and outreach". Lack of communication between the national and local level,

ECEC educators and parents affects ECEC quality. Therefore "Starting Strong 3" suggests the following ways forward (OECD, 2012: 254 - 259):

- *'Using written forms of dissemination.*
- *Creating a central information contact point.*
- *Organizing meetings and activities.*
- *Developing contact books.*
- *Ensuring that parents can make informed choices in market-oriented services'.*

Next, "time constraints" pose as another challenge for parental engagement. In order to tackle this difficulty the OECD proposes (2012: 259 - 260):

- *'Changing the operational hours.*
- *Guiding ECEC centers in setting more flexible times for contacts and communication'.*

The last challenge highlighted in this segment is the constantly "increasing inequity" in economic, social and cultural backgrounds of children in ECEC centers. Underprivileged families, despite their urge for high-quality ECEC, often are not interested in being involved in ECEC, thus socio-economic backgrounds could produce greater inequity. Therefore, the OECD suggests certain proposals to tackle this challenge (: 261 - 265):

- *Prioritizing participation of children with an immigrant or low-educational background.*
- *Providing free ECEC services to families in need.*
- *Developing targeted interventions.*
- *Providing home visits.*
- *Assisting parents to provide qualitative home learning environments.*
- *Providing training for parents.*
- *Providing support in different languages.*

The lessons learned (Action area 4) from the report indicate that regarding family and community engagement ECEC needs to surpass 'administrative boundaries'; diversify 'according to different family backgrounds and needs;

and 'make sure that governments, ECEC managers and staff know how to engage with families and the community' (OECD, 2012: 278 - 281). Finally the last segment of this policy lever (Action area 5) aims to trigger reflections from those who are involved in ECEC, concerning practices of "family and community engagement" in their country.

Policy lever 5: Advancing Data Collection, Research and Monitoring

"Starting Strong 3" perceives data collection and monitoring processes as vital promoters of ECEC quality. This report reiterates that apart from 'ensuring accountability', data collection and monitoring can help analyze and establish 'appropriate policy responses with appropriate indicators' and also assist parents' informed decisions about their choice of services (OECD, 2012: 285). Countries use research and numerous monitoring tools (e.g. interviews, quality comparisons, observations, or surveys) to inform policy and practice. The OECD in particular uses research on ECEC to shed light on the 'success or failure' of ECEC programs, 'prioritizing important areas for ECEC investment' and 'informing ECEC practices through evidence' (*Ibid*).

The first action area of the final policy lever grapples with research on data collection and monitoring. Data collection in ECEC is about gathering strategic information on ECEC provision to buttress national and local policies (OECD, 2001 in OECD, 2012). On the other hand, monitoring in ECEC involves evaluation processes aiming at enhancing quality and promoting accountability (OECD, 2006 in OECD, 2012). Especially in times of economic crisis, the urge for 'value for money' and 'accountability' in education is evident (OECD, 2012: 286). However, data on ECEC often come from data sets intended for other purposes, which cause ambiguity and further absence of comparative data (OECD, 2006 in OECD, 2012).

"Starting Strong 3" notes that collecting data without an understanding of why

and how to use them is pointless. Internationally, data on ECEC are limited (Hustedt and Barnett, 2010 in OECD, 2012) and specific information on the number of the receivers, the characteristics of those employed in ECEC provision and even funding is limited as well. In terms of studies on ECEC, the report mentions that both qualitative and quantitative research have been produced with different methodological approaches.

Within ECEC, the research foci usually involve topics such as ‘how child developments are facilitated; how staff and parents interact with children and how these different interactions are related to child development; how positive interactions can be facilitated for staff and parents; how staff job satisfaction or parental satisfaction is affected; etc.’ (OECD, 2012: 297). On the other hand, quantitative research in ECEC settings includes ‘standardized measures and other measures that can be numerically coded, administered on a large scale and analyzed statistically’ (*Ibid*). According to the OECD (2012: 303), governments should ‘create and support systematic research frameworks focused on key issues of policy and practice’ and also design useful frameworks to ‘build information over time on policies and program features’.

This section (Action area 2) contains international comparisons of “monitoring practices”. Based on country responses to the “Survey for the Quality Toolbox and ECEC Portal”, monitoring practices are categorized into seven types depending on the purpose/ target of the exercise (OECD, 2012: 307 - 309):

- *Child development and outcomes.* (Commonly used monitoring mechanisms comprise of rating scales, observations, inspections and questionnaires)
- *Staff performance.* (Common tools for external and internal assessments include surveys, rating scales, observations and inspections)
- *Service quality.* (A variety of devices was described by members, including inspections, observations, surveys, questionnaires, rating scales and checklists, evaluation reports and portfolios)

- *Regulation compliance.* (In this case, more external evaluations are reported than internal evaluations)
- *Curriculum implementation.* (The tools used to monitor curriculum implementation are similar to those of the preceding cases)
- *Parental satisfaction.*
- *Workforce supply / working conditions.* (Only a limited number of countries monitor workforce-related features. It is mostly conducted through external assessments by national or local structures or statistics agencies; e.g. in Finland, New Zealand and Norway)

The next part (Action area 3) of this "policy lever" addresses challenges of "Data collection and Monitoring" and also "Research". According to "Starting Strong 3", the first challenge of data collection is the 'lack of data on demand and supply of ECEC' provision (OECD, 2012: 329). The potential for consistent and valid info on demand and supply of ECEC is quite limited, hence the OECD members in order to address this lack took certain initiatives including unified ECEC data structures linked to national or local targets, inclusive child focused databases and revised legal frameworks to underpin ECEC monitoring (OECD, 2012).

Furthermore, "data on workforce quality and working conditions" are limited as well. Most OECD members do not systematically collect such data, since policy makers do not perceive them as significant elements for ECEC. Finally, many OECD countries set monitoring systems related to national ECEC targets and also monitor quality through the renewal of certificates/ licensing. The third challenge is related to the lack of data on "financing and costs" and the fourth challenge that "Starting Strong" seeks to address is the "lack of data on child development" (OECD, 2012: 333). The OECD suggests that the success of policies needs 'measuring progress made on child outcomes and evaluation is critically important to design evidence-based interventions' (2012: 333).

Similarly, in terms of producing / collecting more data on the "quality of ECEC services" (challenge 5), the OECD presents numerous best practices including (2012: 336 - 342): 'Publishing quality reports on a regular basis and communicating quality'; 'Establishing a framework and providing materials for inspection' and 'Developing monitoring tools and providing support for parents and staff'. The sixth challenge is related to the "lack of feedback cycles". Particularly, "Starting Strong 3" strongly supports 'assessment' for 'reflection' and 'improvement' purposes (OECD, 2012: 343) and also the provision of 'support on how to use monitoring' outcomes. As far as challenges from research on ECEC are concerned, the OECD encourages - among others - longitudinal studies to provide evidence on the impact of ECEC and also research on learning environments and relevant pedagogical interventions (OECD, 2012).

Action area 4 presents 7 lessons learned from other countries' experiences from data collection, research and monitoring (OECD, 2012: 355 - 359):

Lesson 1: 'Communicate progress to the wider public and disseminate knowledge through networks and workshops'. (e.g. Australia's annual reports)

Lesson 2: Link research findings and monitoring results to policies and practices. (e.g. Korea established the Korea Institute of Child Care and Education (KICCE) in 2005, devoted specifically to the field of ECEC)

Lesson 3: Track financing and costs to justify education spending (e.g. The cases of Australia and Portugal)

Lesson 4: Place key actors at the center of monitoring, data collection and research. (e.g. The cases of Australia and Belgium)

Lesson 5: Collect data on ECEC services consistently across providers, including those not subsidized by government. (e.g. in Belgium)

Lesson 6: Consider both the advantages and disadvantages when giving local authorities the responsibility of monitoring quality. (e.g. Japan, Mexico and Portugal agree that it can be advantageous to give more autonomy to local authorities)

Lesson 7: Use monitoring as an opportunity to effectuate compliance and process quality. (e.g. the cases of British Columbia (Canada) and Korea)'.

The final Action area (5) of this "policy lever" is developed to promote reflections 'one the current state of play' regarding data collection and monitoring processes by completing a relevant questionnaire (OECD, 2012: 360).

Raising Issues

"Starting Strong 3" is a document that is based on and extends work appearing in two previous reports, "Starting Strong 1" (2001) and "Starting Strong 2" (2006), and it crystallises the OECD's policy agenda for the field of ECEC globally. It is a very long document consisted of 374 pages. The report highlights - and reiterates - that it does not 'intend to suggest country examples' as "policy recommendations"; on the contrary it aims to be a 'practical guide', like a "menu of policy options", from which those involved in ECEC policy may get 'some food for thought and 'exposure to a wide range of country experiences' (OECD, 2012: 4). However, it obviously contradicts itself. In a telling analogy, what if there is only one restaurant in the area and hence, its menu is the only one available? One could argue that in that case it is the menu that shapes the appetite and not the other way round. Furthermore, what is in the menu is in accordance with and formed by the restaurant's philosophy and mentality - in a sense recommended - dictated by the connoisseur.

The modus operandi of "Starting Strong 3" (OECD, 2012) puts the emphasis on offering 'practical solutions' (: 15) in order to 'respond to government directions' based on other countries' 'quick wins' and 'cost effective actions' for governments to act and 'set policy agendas' (: 16). This allows us to reflect on the pressure exerted on bureaucracies to alter / reshape their modes of governance. The document exposes the way the OECD produces and expands its agenda: international comparison of data and countries' paradigms - learning from others' experiences - are the OECD's preferred methods and in this report they are used to promote perspectives on policy goals and standards in ECEC for the OECD member states.

One of the most frequently referred to and clearly articulated policy goals in this report are 'equity measures' and 'public responsibility and investment', which link ECEC not only to education and child care but also to labour market policy (OECD, 2012: 43). Equity for the OECD - as discussed in Chapter 3 of this Thesis - is perceived as significant from an economic point of view and thus is expected to pay off in the long term, since it implies that no human capital is left unused (see Lingard et al, 2014; Boyum, 2014). "Starting Strong 3" uses a selected literature to validate and finally promote its equity agenda addressing directly states/ governments, who are called to implement measures nationally. To be specific, based on certain sets of research findings, the report calls for the introduction of 'minimum standards' at the national level before 'adapting to local needs' (OECD, 2012: 66).

Despite its claim that this document does not offer policy recommendations, "Starting Strong 3" uses research and countries' paradigms to buttress the need for an 'explicit curriculum structure' for ECEC that views cognitive and social progress as of equal significance. Furthermore, it introduces 'critical learning areas' (including literacy, numeracy, ICT etc.) and - through best practices - aims to shape a different stance towards assessment processes (OECD, 2012: 98 & 130). ECEC educators are another significant aspect of the OECD's ECEC quality agenda. "Starting Strong 3" defines and promotes the elements and the conditions, which are crucial for high staff quality. In that direction, the report raises the need for governments to "invest" in certain aspects of ECEC provision and particularly in teacher education and training.

The discourse on critical learning areas and investment is directly linked to OECD's lifelong learning and key competences agenda wherein the investment in human intellect becomes a state's key economic strategy (see Takayama, 2013 in Chapter three) and "Starting Strong 3" is quite 'explicit' regarding the competences that it deems as vital for fostering ECEC quality (OECD, 2012: 145 - 146). Apart from setting standards and defining quality in ECEC, the OECD also sets the agenda for the scope and aim of research that needs to be carried out concerning the field of ECEC. An example of this is

the call for further research on strategies to help parental involvement of ethnic minority groups in "Policy Lever 4" (OECD, 2012).

Moreover, the document specifies data collection and monitoring devices (such as rating scales, observations, inspections, checklists etc.) as the appropriate means for developing national policies, assisting parents' 'informed decisions' and to 'promoting accountability' (OECD, 2012: 285). It is evident that the OECD uses research findings and data collection as tools to evaluate the 'success or failure' of ECEC programs; prioritize 'important areas for ECEC investment' and inform 'ECEC practices through evidence' (*Ibid*). Hence it appears that there is a variety of ways and respective terms - not only testing regimes - for fostering the OECD's accountability agenda - accountability, evaluation, choice among others - an alias of the culture of performativity.

To conclude, "Starting Strong 3" claims that particularly in times of austerity the urge for 'value for money' and 'accountability' in education is evident (OECD, 2012: 286) and raises again the issue of lack of comparative data for ECEC. We observe explicit links between the current document and other OECD reports on education - though not linked with ECEC - thus painting the portrait of the OECD as a key agent of the marketization of education (see next chapter).

The OECD's involvement in ECEC is ongoing. In October 2015 the OECD published a new report - "Monitoring Quality in ECEC" - exploring how states can develop and use monitoring systems to improve service and staff quality. Through international approaches and paradigms it claims that it can assist those involved in ECEC to develop their own monitoring and practices (OECD, 2015). In June 2017 the OECD published its latest report titled: "Transitions from ECEC to primary education". It compares the situation across 30 countries and puts emphasis on the organization and governance of the transitions and also describes the main policy challenges (OECD, 2017c).

At the same time the OECD has introduced "The International Early Learning and Child Well being Study", an international survey - expected to end in 2020 - assessing 5 year olds identifying key factors that promote or hamper the development of early learning (OECD, 2017d). Through direct assessment of emergent literacy, emergent numeracy, executive function, empathy and trust and also indirect assessment of children's skills from parents and staff, the study is expected to provide an overview of children's development (ibid). This is what Pence (2016) identified as "baby Pisa" (see subsequent chapters).

Chapter Three: Literature Review and Theoretical Grounding

Doing Education Policy

Over the last decades, policy-making has become a widespread global reality (Braun et al, 2010). Education policy-making, in particular, has become a tool of central state control and management that can transform society, but also reform education by raising standards. In the European context the role of the local education authorities has been subordinated to and by these national policy imperatives (Fullan 2003 in Braun et al, 2010). What is being demanded of educational institutions and their role in national economic competitiveness is encoded in a litany of policy statements, documents and legislation (Ball 2008); in short, a form of initiatives inscribed in a series of fast policies which aim to raise standards and reform schools (Moss 2007 in Braun et al, 2010). However, individual policies and policy-makers do not normally take account of the complexity of the intervened environments and the need for educational institutions to simultaneously respond to multiple policy - and several other - demands and expectations.

Moutsios (2010: 122) grapples with the notions of policy making and education politics, attempting to clarify these two terms, which are hardly distinguished in the relevant literature, while also asking the question of what exactly is the 'concept of being trans-nationalized', what makes those policies 'global in their reach'? In many European languages, politics and policy-making are articulated with the same term, an adoption of the Greek word *πολιτική* (e.g., German: *politik* and French: *politique*), whose meaning, however, is diverse, therefore the English terminological distinction is helpful to highlight their difference and emphasize that 'politics should not be confounded with policy-making' (ibid).

Politics is perceived as 'negotiating or lobbying' with stakeholders, or as the management of interest groups by politicians prior to the production of

governmental decisions, or in a rather 'vulgarized' view nowadays politics is understood as 'demagoguery, intrigues, manipulation of public opinion', or 'information management' through the media (Moutsios, 2010: 123). However, common perception is inadequate in terms of covering the fundamentals of politics: Politics requires a *space of communicative rationality* - in Habermas (1986 in Moutsios, 2010) terms - based on the recognition of criticisable validity claims. In its fundamental sense, elaborated by Cornelius Castoriadis (1991 in Moutsios, 2010), politics refers to the *conscious, critical, self-critical, and rational activity*, which is concerned with the institution of society. In other words, politics is the activity of questioning the directions, projects, laws and institutions of a society, thus unleashing people's resourcefulness and enabling the formulation of new projects and work for their accomplishment (Moutsios, 2010).

Hence, *education politics* are the explicit activities of those involved in education – parents, teachers/ academics and students – who 'question, reflect and deliberate on the purpose, the contents and the pedagogic mode of learning and, if considered necessary, to alter them accordingly' (Moutsios, 2010: 124). On the other hand, policy-making is an activity situated away from politics. Policy-making assumes 'authorized decision-makers and specialized expertise'; it is thus a 'hierarchical and instrumental process', which sets an agenda, determines goals, uses data, chooses courses of implementation, evaluates results and modifies initial goals' (see Colebatch 2002 in Moutsios, 2010: 124). To put it again in Habermas' (1986 in Moutsios, 2010) terms, policy-making is a process of *instrumental rationality*. However, despite the fact that policy-making appears as purely technical and thus neutral, in reality it is grounded on political opinion. In this sense, *education policy-making* should be considered as a 'hierarchical, expert-driven and goal-oriented process of decision-making which is based on a taken - for granted or implicit political opinion about the purpose, the content and the pedagogic mode of learning' (Moutsios, 2010: 124).

In modern education systems the production of policies has been an affair of the state, especially of its bureaucracies. Education policy has certainly not

been an exception, since ministries, directorates, inspectorates, governmental and quasi-governmental bodies, statistical services, and evaluation agencies 'have been and are the main mechanisms of education policy-making' (Moutsios, 2010: 125). The so-called New Public Management creates a 'mechanism of objective-based and outcome-driven surveillance over educational institutions, coordinated by central and local bureaucracies which measure performances and reward or castigate' (ibid). Furthermore, today, policy-making is based on data and objectives not only produced by nation state bureaucracies, but also by international organizations and inter-state political entities (such as the EU and the EC). However, such organizations are bureaucracies too (see Barnett and Finnemore, 2004).

Those supranational agencies / IOs are formed by different states and as such they appear balanced, impartial and technical (ibid). To be specific, the OECD is an IO organized in a labyrinth of directorates, departments, committees, working and expert groups, and it involves networks of specialists, consultants, researchers and policy analysts, which produce a huge amount of publications each year covering all policy areas (Moutsios, 2010). In education the OECD manages - well known - comparative programs and also produces national thematic reports about educational issues on higher, adult, lifelong and early childhood education, for everybody willing to pay for them. In the case of the EU, education policy making takes place through the Commission directorates and services, various agencies and networks (e.g., CEDEFOP, ETF, CRELL, EENEE and NESSE) and through mechanisms, such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), which involve member countries in the definition of policy goals and their realization through fixed guidelines, timeframes, indicators and benchmarks, targets, comparative evaluations, monitoring, peer review and promotion of best practices (see Dale 2006; Moutsios 2007; Moutsios, 2010).

Overall, transnational bureaucracies generate or promote academic research networks or private consultancy companies to produce indicators, proposals, consultation reports, or evaluation findings. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) may also do policy and operate transnationally - often based on state

funding - within the same problem-solving pattern as managerial bureaucracies - in the sense that they undertake funded projects, complete reports, lobby with stakeholders etc (Moutsios, 2010). The dominance of doing policy via managerial bureaucracies - nationally and internationally - is directly linked with economic globalization, which undermines democratic decision - making processes (see Beck 2005; Held 2006; Moutsios 2008 in Moutsios, 2010; Robertson, 2013).

Undeniably, globalization is about a change of locus regarding important decision-making. To be specific, decision making for societies is happening within supranational economic and political networks rather than by national or local organizations, hence the production of major policies becomes an affair of what Castells (2004; Moutsios, 2008 in Moutsios, 2010) calls the "network state", comprising by governments, inter-state entities, IOs and NGOs, whose operation is disproportionate in terms of power distribution governed by global markets. It is a space that develops and fosters legal norms, regulations and political decisions regarding the nation state, whose monopoly in the construction of law, as Beck notes, is thus 'broken' (2005: 72 in Moutsios, 2010: 127).

Prime among the international organizations that played a vital role in globalizing education policy is the OECD (Boyum, 2014; Sellar and Lingard, 2013). Although the OECD does not make binding decisions but only policy recommendations, it is one of the significant policy actors that have endorsed what Grek (2009) identified as policy convergence across nations. Jacobi and Teltemann (2011) also refer to the terms convergence and divergence in national educational policies. In particular, debates on international organizations and policy exchange are directed to international influences. These analyses highlight that education policy is no longer a field in which principally national forces are at work, but it is rather an ascending global policy field. The growing importance of the global knowledge society is in contrast with earlier approaches in which the history and the functions of national education systems have been central for explaining the education systems' development (ibid). Convergence is the 'tendency of countries to

become more similar over time' (Jacobi and Teltemann, 2011: 820), a tendency ranging from the economy field to welfare and education (see Meseguer and Gilardi 2009 in Jacobi and Teltemann, 2011).

The literature locates five causal mechanisms for policy convergence (Knill 2005 in Jacobi and Teltemann, 2011). First, in educational terms, this could mean that countries are facing similar problems and the independent change of policies results in convergence. Second, international regulations could impose convergence, which in educational terms could pertain to regulations of World Bank policies - probably irrelevant since Greece or other OECD members are not drastically affected by World Bank policies. Third, the process of harmonization via EU directives; however, the EU is deemed as traditionally weak in education policy, as only areas like vocational education have received the European emphasis - the Bologna process and the OMC have slightly altered that reality (Jacobi and Teltemann, 2011). A fourth cause of convergence is an international competitive process, resulting in a competition of regulations that bolster financial investments. The last cause of convergence is transnational communication and policy exchange. Countries communicate with regard to political challenges and best practices which are finally implemented in other countries (ibid).

It is also important to differentiate between different levels of policy convergence, which are linked to the various phases of the policy process. Countries may well meet in terms of implementing specific policies – for example the Bologna goals in higher education – but they may differ widely in how they achieve these aims and what takes place - usually - in the micro level of policy (ibid). Jacobi and Teltemann (2011: 581) hypothesize that 'Countries will converge with respect to general policy aims, for example, in an increased investment in education or in length of schooling'. In contrast, in the case of indicators that are linked to micro level policies local circumstances come into play leading to resistance to the central government's objectives. Following from that, they suggest that indicators linked to macro-level differentiations are more likely to converge than indicators that represent micro-level changes.

Braun, Maguire and Ball (2010: 549) use the notion of 'policy enactment' in order to establish an understanding that policies are 'interpreted' and 'translated' by diverse policy actors in an educational environment, rather than simply implemented. Such a view is based on the premises that 'policies do not tell you what to do, but they create conditions in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or even changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set' (Ball, 1994: 19 in Braun et al, 2010: 549).

As such, putting policies into practice is a creative, sophisticated and complex process that is always also located in a particular context and place imbued with power relations. Braun et al's analytical and conceptual approach towards what happens to educational environments in relation to policy also foregrounds those involved in education as key actors, rather than merely as subjects in the policy process (Hodgson, Edward, and Gregson 2007 in Braun et al, 2010). Policy enactments involve creative processes of interpretation and re - contextualization – that is, the 'translation through reading, writing and talking of text into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualized practices (Braun et al, 2010: 549).

Heimans (2012) also uses the term enactment and underlines the different senses of policy enacting. To be specific, enacting in its first sense assumes an actor - e.g. the educator - who enacts this policy. In the second sense, policy itself may be an actor; taking policy as an actor seriously involves moving the 'human' away from the gaze of analysis. He also raises the question of how - through policy processes - people and things 'emerge, have effects and come to matter, towards making differences to', and in what might be called, education (Heimans, 2012: 315).

According to Heimans (2012: 317), policy enactment might best be described as a 'meshwork of policy practices'. Such practices draw on divergent material and discursive resources for their 'ongoing emergent re - constitution' (ibid). Meshwork, builds on intra-active (Barad, 2007 in Heimans, 2012)

understandings of what reality is and what production is and what people, things and so on are. In contrast to the usual notion of 'interaction', which assumes that there are 'separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge' through their course of action (Barad, 2007: 33 in Heimans, 2012: 317). Boundaries in emergence are always subject to the possibility of overflows (Callon, Lascoumes, & Barthe, 2009 in Heimans, 2012) and these unsettle and blur what might be distinctive exclusions suggesting that emergence occurs in 'open systems, which interact with their environment' . . . and . . . 'change themselves and the environment in the process' (Osberg & Biesta, 2007: 36 in Heimans, 2012: 317). An essential idea here is that policy generates open systems. Policy is not entirely a creation of the environment in which it acts, or from which it is produced, but is always 'more than what it is and more than what the environment it enters is'; it 'always is both plus a bit more, and this bit more', which is where Heimans' (2012: 317) interest lies.

As Ball et al (2011) argue, much of the policy interpretation genre tends to perceive all actors in the policy process to be equal and to be working on and with policy in the same ways, as receivers and agents. A great deal of the multifaceted and differentiated activity that goes into the 'responses' of educational institutions and their work with policy is 'thus obscured and distorted' since actors in schools are positioned differently and take up different positions in relation to policy, including positions of indifference or avoidance or irrelevance (Ball et al, 2011: 625). In their research they seek to unpack doing policy in two ways.

First by the development of 'heuristic tools of interpretation and translation'; and second by attempting to identify different 'sorts of roles, actions and engagements' embedded in the processes of interpretation and translation (ibid). The roles that these policy actors apprehend are not necessarily 'specific individuals nor fixed, unified and mutually exclusive 'types' of teacher in every case, people may move between these roles' (Ball et al, 2011: 626). Within this context, educators are positioned differently in relation to policy in

many ways. They are at different points in their careers, with different extents of experience, different responsibilities, different ambitions and skills. Some of them 'advance while others are worn down' and produce possibilities 'for and limits to fulfillment' (Ball et al, 2011: 636).

Similarly in educational contexts that gather different extents of policy attention there could be different spaces or pressures. However, being outside the direct gaze of policy is 'double-edged' it can mean being deprived of resources or even being neglected (Ball et al, 2011: 636). Ball et al's (2011: 637) view is that an educational institution is not always 'sensible as the unit of analysis for policy research' and policy - in general - cannot be reduced to an 'algorithm and the school cannot be reduced to policy'. According to their analysis, educational institutions are more a 'creaky social assemblage' that is continually 'revalidated and shorn up and moved on by the various efforts of networks of social actors with disparate but more or less focused interests and commitments' (ibid).

Examining policy making from a different perspective, Hult and Segerholm (2013) explore education-governing tensions in policy landscapes where deregulation, decentralization, governing by objectives and outcomes and a performativity fixation are the reality. Such tensions are identified in different mixtures of formal regulations and more persuasive activities depending on time and context (local or national). They understand governing as a 'process, where several means are applied and used to attain certain goals' (policy), but simultaneously also processes where several instances are involved in 'brokering, mediating, negotiating, translating, teaching and learning, and acting policy' (Hult and Segerholm, 2013: 3).

Hult and Segerholm (2013) adopt Jacobsson's (2006, 2010) theoretical approach but in a different setting. To be particular, drawing on Jacobsson, these authors perceive processes of governing as reciprocal or dialectical, and the products of governing as context-dependent including several layers and actors in organizations. In the context of education there are attempts to govern or direct in certain paths by governments and organizations, and there

are actions in schools and local educational organizations that adapt or resist these efforts.

Jacobsson writes about three types of governance activities, through which policy, intentions and change is to come about. These are: 'regulative activities, inquisitive activities and meditative activities' (Jacobsson 2010: 4-6 in Hult and Segerholm, 2013: 3). Specifically, regulative activities are what '...we traditionally think of as rule-making, that is, obligatory rules and penalties for their violation.' (Jacobsson 2010: 4 - 5 in Hult and Segerholm, 2013: 3). Inquisitive activities are activities that require schools and principal organizers '...to "open up" and let others examine and critically judge what they are doing' (ibid). Meditative activities finally, are activities that form the basis for the other two activities, but can also be an activity in itself. Meditative activities, writes Jacobsson (2010: 5-6 in Hult and Segerholm, 2013: 4), are about 'discussing', 'exchanging experiences', and 'probing' into common areas of concern.

Other writers point to the increased complexity of the policy making field, a field characterized by tensions and contradictions. To be particular, Lassnigg (2012: 299) highlights the widely observed governing 'shift to learning outcomes' as a major new policy device in education and training at the European level. If one looks closer to policy discourses in the Bologna and in the Copenhagen process, one realizes that learning outcomes is a driver of change in Europe and the OECD (see: European Communities 2008; European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [CEDEFOP] 2009a). Lassnigg is primarily concerned with the constantly increasing complexities of the policies involved due to the 'emergence of a European and international policy space' and secondly with a 'conceptual separation of the fields of policy practice on the one hand and of education and training practice on the other' by which these contradictions may be explained (Lassnigg, (2012: 300 - 301).

Similarly, Bulle (2011) stresses the emerging comparison processes of educational systems through the interpretation of international rankings, which

eventually drive the national school policies in a normative fashion. These devices serve as political tools for experts and technocrats who directly influence their design and handling. Countries have been gradually adopting shared ideas with regard to educational objectives and relevant solutions. However, they tend to model pieces of their own policies over international practices without a systematic analysis of the context (ibid). These policy elements are transferred from one country to another resembling an "epidemic" far away from aspirations for mutual learning (Levin 1998 in Bulle, 2011).

Evidently, there has been developed an 'endogenous process of fabricating an educational orthodoxy which lacks real rationality' (Bulle, 2011: 503). The fabrication of an international educational "doxa" is broadly based on results able to exert pressure over those who make the decisions at a national level (ibid). The comparisons made nurture an environment of competition made up of leading countries from which one retains only the "promoted" characteristics, and of countries which act as a foil. Generalities are deduced from particular cases and the counter-examples, which contradict the links established, are neglected. It is through such processes that normative criteria concerning educational policies are designed and developed (ibid).

The standardization of the educational policies and of the proposed solutions has led countries to gradually establish a common concept of 'best practice' and to implement similar policies, so much so that the latter are deemed as inevitable (Novoa and Yariv-Mashal, 2003 in Bulle, 2011). Bulle (2011) emphasizes the need for a thorough knowledge of the different educational systems, their background and context, and also for distinguishing between the impact of general characteristics and that of factors more specific to local situations.

Drawing on Bourdieu, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) have characterized the global policy field as a field of struggle. As they note, globalization has 'reconfigured the state and its authority in developing public policies', hence 'national and local policies are now linked to globalized educational policy discourses,

pressures from IOs and global policy networks (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: x). Rizvi and Lingard (2010: 3) underscore that the 'concept of globalization does not have a single uniform meaning', and that, on the contrary, its 'expressions are as dynamic' as they are 'context specific'. Rizvi and Lingard (2010: 187) argue that the 'neoliberal imaginary of globalization is in the long run economically, politically and environmentally unsustainable - economically so because of the social inequalities and economic instability it produces, politically because of its undemocratic character, and environmentally because it assumes that the world's exploitable resources are inexhaustible'. It is not the globalization's problem, but it is how 'global interconnectivity has been interpreted - with the "help" of the Press (Tsakiris and Nikita, 2017) - through the conceptual prism of a neoliberal social imaginary' (Rizvi and Lingard (2010: 196).

Exley, Braun and Ball (2011: 217) attempt a closer look at individual countries outside the light of a global education policy discourse - stories of local 'interpretation, enactment, re-contextualization and resistance' to global policy solutions. They identify a 'distinction between the spread of neo-liberal ideas (policy packages and concepts) and a neo-liberal spread of ideas (the networks and flows by which these ideas travel)'. So they argue that not all countries respond in the same way to global neo - liberal policy solutions. The fact that countries depend on support and international contributions unsurprisingly compromises their ability to hold their sovereign ground in terms of education policy (Exley et al (2011). Some countries appear to be able to overlook a neo-liberal diktat of their education policy, while others receive these external ideas re - contextualized and transformed in order to bolster their national priorities; hence neoliberalism is not happening in a straightforward way (ibid).

Ozga (2012) explores education and learning policy as an aspect of a process of Europeanization, and is thus directly concerned with the connection between nation-states and the European Commission in this significant policy field. Her work draws on ideas from political science and policy sociology to address the 'shifting place of the nation-state in education and learning policy'

in a variety of European contexts (Ozga, 2012: 439). She suggests that Europeanization is not top down and argues for attention to the role of the soft governance strategies of the European Commission and the responses of nation-states in fabricating a European Education Policy Space in recent years (ibid).

The making of Europe in and through education and learning policy is a process in which nation-states continue to be strategic actors (Castells 2000 in Ozga, 2012), albeit with varying capabilities to absorb external pressures. The European Education Policy Space is one in which policy actors use new policy mechanisms and project the concept of "Europe" through the reshaping of institutions, the construction of networks and the flow of comparative knowledge and data (Ozga, 2012). These policy actors may be understood as 'brokers' or 'translators' between the European and the national - they take the European into the national, and vice versa (Ozga, 2012: 440).

As Ozga (2012: 440) notes, there appears to be a 'replacement of traditional, bureaucratically organized, command and control systems with networks of relationships' in which collaboration and structure must be constantly 'negotiated and managed' (see Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999 in Ozga, 2012), and which depend on a combination of policy technologies and action by policy makers to preserve contacts and coherence in re - spatialized governing relations. These types of technologies incorporate data systems that construct policy problems and promote policy solutions beyond the national level (see Ozga, 2009). They also involve European and national inspectorates, where expertise challenges, interprets and ultimately uses the amount of information carried by data within and across Europe (Lawn and Grek 2012 in Ozga, 2012).

Education and learning constitute a policy field that is essential to the concept of state transformation. The ideas of education are being shifted by utilitarian concepts of learning, as an outcome of contemporary challenges in governing across the European Union. It appears that the 'Europeanizing' of the education field has 'gathered momentum', and has 'profound effects on the

future of institutions and individuals' (Ozga, 2012: 440). This framing of education systems positioned education towards a "problem solving" route in relation to what Dale (2006 in Ozga, 2012) calls persistent problems within capitalism: 'preparation of the workforce, disciplining identities to ensure social order and cohesion, and legitimizing social ordering despite the continued existence of inequalities' (Ozga, 2012: 441).

As is well known, education in the past played a vital role constructing a national identity depending on the political history of the nation-state. However, the knowledge economy agenda of the EU disrupts nationally embedded and institutionalized practices and norms in education (Ozga, 2012). The desired attitudes and stances fostered by current lifelong and life-wide learning agendas and stimulated by new knowledge practices are coherent across educational organizations, from ECEC throughout adult working life. This new - global and European - agenda brings a change in governing education within the nation-state, from national and institutionally based governing to governing through networks of fresh players, along with 'individual self-governance, informed by constant self-evaluation of performance, driven by the benchmarking and competition regimes of transnational organizations' (Ozga, 2012: 442).

Furthermore, Ozga (2012: 442) perceives governing as a continuous process of 'managing tensions between centralized and decentralized levels of governance, deregulation and existing or new (re-) regulatory instruments of governance within nation-states and between the pressures for European and global convergence and embedded national practices and priorities'. In her research she examines how transnational organizations - such as the OECD and the EU - work in the field of education within and beyond borders, setting up direct contacts with individuals and institutions, rather than working hierarchically. Exploration of governing relations in local authorities/municipalities and in relation to educators reveals that hierarchies of vertical relationships are often relocated or written over by horizontal networks and processes (see also Gray et al. 2011 in Ozga, 2012).

Therefore, few could deny that today national systems are open to external influence, since the constantly increasing impact of international comparison exposes national systems to each other and leads to increasing convergence in education policy (Ozga and Lingard 2007). Ozga (2012), through the example of Denmark and Sweden, highlights that nation-states are able to use comparative data as a source for redesigning/ redirecting policy within the state, which suggests that the nation-state has not lost its governing capacity. Rather, there is adaptation in governing (Pierre and Peters 2000: 68 in Ozga, 2012: 444) that provides nation-states with 'opportunities to exploit these data to govern national education, and national systems to display themselves as "good pupils" in Europe'. Hence, Ozga (2012: 444) stresses the fact that public education is still a policy domain in which nation-states have 'considerable governing capacity', and where 'local' authorities (in varying degrees in different national settings) also govern, so that the 'adoption of global or European policies should not be taken for granted'.

The shift away from hierarchical structures of governing has led nation-states to management through coordination rather than a direct regulating role. The cooperation between public and private sectors in educational matters and other new public management methods, as well as different local, national and international networks influencing education policies, can be threatening but also can provide opportunities to the nation-state (Ozga, 2012). 'Governing through data is not always an open, straightforward process because data do not always mean action; on the contrary data require 'constant attention and effort to build and sustain consensus, with struggles and opposition around their meaning always possible' (Ozga, 2012: 452).

Moutsios (2010) also explores changes in power distribution under the conditions of globalization, and in particular with regard to education policy. He suggests that power is located in the strategies and decisions of policy-making elites, which act in the transnational context comprised by global business, states, IOs and interstate entities. He also stresses the fact that education is of major importance for transnational policy-making because of the key role that knowledge plays for the global economy. Beck (2005 in

Moutsios, 2010) also points out the fact that in order to have access to and control over the human resources of national societies, global capital uses an extended arsenal of strategies from minimizing its dependency on individual states, to promoting and applying its comparative resources to acquire access to the cognitive possibilities of national societies.

Transnational institutions and their bureaucracies, undeniably, play a significant role in policy making - Beck (2005 in Moutsios, 2010) describes them as the 'midwives' of global markets - as they undertake to turn national states and societies into mechanisms of capital flows and production – consumption cycles. Indeed, such organizations call on education systems to create the most 'competitive knowledge-based economy in the world' (EU), to present high scores in production-related subjects and skills (OECD), to focus on human capital production (World Bank) or to become 'educational services' opened up to foreign investments (WTO) (Moutsios, 2010: 128). Particularly, it is the OECD that formally suggests that all types and aspects of education should serve productivity (OECD 2006a in Moutsios, 2010) through organizational, curricular and pedagogic adjustments and through the removal of boundaries between vocational and general education and between education and work (OECD 2007a in Moutsios, 2010). It is the first time that education systems, with deep roots in the history of their societies, are regarded 'so explicitly and so openly, as means to ends defined by the global production system' (Moutsios, 2010: 128).

The logic of international mechanisms of comparison and performativity affects a variety of social and educational characteristics, such as socioeconomic and national background of students, gender differences, parental input and pedagogic means - just to name a few. Societies, education systems and pedagogic arrangements are 'scanned, by the "evidence-based" policy-making of IOs, to identify performing "knowledge-based economies" and "best practices" for the production of human capital' (Moutsios, 2010: 129). Hence, power in contemporary education policy lies in the interaction between 'global capital, states and transnational institutions and the strategies, arrangements and decisions of their policy-making elites

who are able to mobilize economic, institutional and discursive resources to realize their agendas' (ibid). Despite the acknowledgement that educational discourses originate from broader social, economic and political power relations and discourses, and in spite of the principle that discourses embody meaning, often discourse theories do not focus adequately to the relation between meaning and power (Moutsios, 2010).

Indeed, discourses are discourses precisely because they convey meaning: They indicate 'what is worth and what is not worth, what is valued and what is not valued'; power in this respect is established not simply because individuals 'speak the dominant ('regulative') discourse but because they internalize the meaning it embodies'. In other words, power, at a fundamental level, lies in the 'adherence by societies or large segments of their population to the dominant social significations' (Moutsios, 2010: 131).

According to Moutsios (2010) there needs to be an emphasis on the fact that power in education policy is located not only in the decision-making authority of transnational elites and institutions, nor in the reproduced discourse in national legislations, local policies and pedagogic practices. But lies essentially in the prevalent global promotion of a specific concept of the purpose national education systems should be serving or the route they should be directed to. Hence, the prevalence of a set of reforms worldwide, aiming to serve economic competitiveness points not only to the 'transnationalization of education policy' but also to the 'superseding of education politics as a public activity' of citizens who question, reflect and 'deliberate on the purpose, the contents and the pedagogic modes of learning' (Moutsios, 2010: 136-137). In the absence of such activity, power is moving away from the public domain via transnational IOs who act as legitimate policy mechanisms.

This is why, according to Moutsios (2010: 137), education politics is practically being eliminated. For politics to exist, there should be a distinction between 'expertise and political opinion', so that 'decisions and the authorities which take them ("explicit power") are subject to questioning'. For politics to exist,

societies should be able to 'set into question the locus of power incarnated in their institutions, projects and policies'. Yet, both questioning and political opinion are 'displaced by the commonly acknowledged legitimacy of "evidence-based" policymaking institutions, but also more importantly by the global adherence to a linear and competitive notion of social progress' (ibid).

The role of the OECD in Educational Policy: A word on Neoliberalism

The globalization of economy and the globalization of policy making are parallel processes. According to Moutsios (2009) a complex association of nation-states, regional and local governments, governmental and non-governmental bodies and private schemes operate in transnational contexts producing a variety of policies. Certainly, the major international organizations, the World Bank (WB), the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the OECD, have existed in some form since the period after World War II. However, it is from the 1990s onwards that the size, the 'role and scope' of their policy agendas have expanded 'dramatically', 'expressing but also defining' (Moutsios, 2009: 469) the process of globalization.

This also applies to education policy. Since the birth of the "Bretton Woods twins", it was mainly the World Bank, which operated actively regarding education policy. This was the case since 1962 and was always combined with the IMF's loan programs, which continue to have a pivotal impact on the education policies of the countries in debt (Moutsios, 2009). Today the World Bank is the biggest external loan supplier for education programs. Nonetheless, despite those exchanges of capital and in spite of the large number of countries relying on its loans, it is not the World Bank's share in the global spending on education, which makes its role financially significant. It is its 'influence', along with that of the IMF, on external aid agencies that matters: once the 'twins' lend money to countries in need, the latter are

considered 'economically and politically credible'; 'credibility mobilizes loans and grants' by other organizations and states provided bilaterally (Moutsios, 2009: 470).

It goes without saying that such funding is provided on the basis of rules and instructions defining directly or in - directly the educational policy routes to be followed. On the other hand, the OECD is the globe's 'rich club' (ibid), as two-thirds of goods and services in the world are made or carried out in its member states. The OECD has 35 member states and co-operates with many other countries and organizations. Comprised of wide networks of consultants, researchers and policy makers, the OECD is a transnational assessor of economic performance and a fundamental sphere impacting the global political scene (Moutsios, 2009). The OECD's education policy has a history of over half a century, but it was mainly in the 1990s that it rose to the prominence it has today. The OECD's famous national reports on education systems now belong to the past. The subject of the analysis is no longer aimed to the national level, but impressively expanded to international themes subject to elaboration and problem solving by experts.

Nowadays, hardly any country linked to the OECD ignores its comparative data and relevant educational suggestions. Similarly, member states of the European Union can hardly ignore its education policies, particularly after the Council of Lisbon of 2000, the Bologna Process and the initiation of the 'European education space'. According to Beck's formulation (2005 in Moutsios, 2009), policy making is now international, since borders are ignored and power flows from a global to a national direction. As he argues, transnational politics encompasses national politics while nation-state politics is becoming the area where transnational politics is being formed and developed. Organizations and entities, such as the OECD and the EU are essential in this respect, as: 'It is essentially here, rather than in national arenas, public spheres or organization, that the rules of the meta-power game of global politics are being negotiated, written and re-written, rules which then change national politics and societies fundamentally' (Beck, 2005: 162 in Moutsios, 2009: 471).

Hence, this concerns education policy making too and deeply impacts current directions and developments in national education. Globalization, as many significant scholars have remarked (Castells 2005; Beck 2005; Held 2006 in Moutsios, 2009), de-democratizes decision making both in economy and in policy. Important policies are being produced within transnational networks of power and not in national bodies of representation, thus triggering a shift from democratic decision making to a network democracy of transnational political structures (Moutsios, 2009).

Such structures exclude or include members on the basis of common 'values, comparative data and performance standards; they possess the political, organizational, material and knowledge capacity to mobilize resources directed at their policy recommendations' (Moutsios, 2009: 472). The OECD is widely legitimized by the effectiveness it demonstrates in performing certain functions and achieving targets set. As Beck (2005: 143 in Moutsios, 2009: 472) argues their 'authoritarianism of efficiency' is a 'sub-form of self-legitimation based ... on expert rationality and the self-determination of the "rich guilds" of global business'.

National states support such policy-making processes by taking part in transnational network structures and by validating their choices to their people. Institutions, such as the OECD, are the expression and at the same time the actors of "netocratic" (see Becks 2005 in Moutsios, 2009) and cloudy procedures of transnational policy making. The OECD is a pure example of the importance of specialist knowledge as a procedure and as an instrument of policy making. When it comes to the OECD's modus operandi, the asymmetry of power relations is associated with the member states' financial contributions - the G7 cover almost 80% of the total budget, whereas the USA alone contributes 25% (Moutsios, 2009). Such financial disproportion is translated to disproportionate balance of power in decision-making regarding research and relevant policies (ibid).

This goes back to the early nineties, when the American and the British

representatives focused the OECD's research agenda to a "basic skills" priority, supporting the "Back to Basics Movement" taking place in the USA and the "National Curriculum" being introduced in England in that era (Papadopoulos, 1994 in Moutsios, 2009). Similarly, in the same period the USA pressured the OECD to conduct comparative studies based on performance indicators, by exerting direct pressure to the Organization. What was back in those days shocking is today the forefront of the OECD's research agenda and basis of policy making across countries (Moutsios, 2009). Producing and comparing performance data have become vital 'tools of restructuring and development in many education systems'; quantitative comparative data provide scientific justification 'to what has been identified as a problem' of legitimization regarding the proposed interferences (Moutsios, 2009: 474).

Moutsios (2009) concludes that national education policy comes as a consequence of international links operating in a transnational network of evidence based decision-making, in which the dominant members can foster their own objectives and transform them to objectives of the entire network. It appears that transnational policy making in education follows the tendency of 'de-democratization' characterizing the way decisions are taken under globalization processes (Moutsios, 2009: 474). The neoliberal economic agenda, which back in the days infiltrated all major international institutions (see Harvey, 2005 and Stiglitz, 2002 in Moutsios, 2009), promotes ideologically charged sets of policies including unrestricted markets, liberal entrepreneurship and minimal state interference. Such a set of 'homogeneous rules' (Moutsios, 2009: 475) has been applied directly or indirectly to education systems too: 'Liberalization, privatization and deregulation' are policies soaring in the last decades in education globally - international organizations foster the 'neoliberal agenda in the discourse, policies' and practices of educational institutions.

Drawing on Carroll and Kellow and Woodward, Sellar and Lingard (2013c) present a description of the history, evolution and development of the OECD and attempt to map its role in global governance. Carroll and Kellow (2011 in

Sellar and Lingard, 2013c) emphasize that the intergovernmental structure of the Organization is the source of its uniqueness among IOs and buttresses its exertion of soft power through the formation of epistemic communities of technocrats and politicians within the OECD and in member countries. The OECD originates back to 1961 from the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), which was created by the US in 1948 to supervise Marshall Plan rebuilding of post-war Europe and as a barricade against Communism through its support of liberal democracy and market economics (Sellar and Lingard, 2013c).

The key period of change for the Organization was the 1990s and into the 2000s, following the end of the cold war, when it presented a contrasting ideology in relation to Communism (Sellar and Lingard, 2013c). During this period several changes took place, including the accession of Eastern European nations and also of Mexico and Korea, leading to the Organization's expansion and to the increase of its attention to the Asia-Pacific region. These were just the initial steps of a broadening agenda of further accessions (Chile, Estonia, Slovenia and Israel) and of collaborations with major non-member economies such as Brazil, Russia, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa (ibid).

According to Carroll and Kellow (2011 in Sellar and Lingard, 2013c), the emergence of a new economic orthodoxy in the 1970s permeated the Organization and its technocrats to accelerate and restructure - from the mid 1990s - the OECD's statistical and policy analysis work into policy domains such as health, the environment and education. It also promoted the establishment of an increasing linkage with a wider group of member and non-member countries and economies in the context of globalization (ibid). Woodward (2009 in Sellar and Lingard, 2013c) outlines 4 overlapping dimensions of the OECD's role in global governance, namely, cognitive, normative, legal and palliative. As Sellar and Lingard (2013c) suggest, Woodward's argument is that the OECD achieves policy effects through soft modes of governance, modes endorsing the contemporary post-ideological world.

This is because the OECD has few 'carrots and sticks' to give effect to its policy preferences in member nations (Sellar and Lingard, 2013c: 715). Cognitive governance, according to Woodward, takes place through the common values of member nations and is a unique mode of influence of the OECD, as it does not have to settle opposing ideological viewpoints across current and future members. The second mode of OECD governance described by Woodward is normative governance, which picks up on and signifies the epistemological assumptions underpinning the OECD's policy work and its functioning as a 'laboratory of policy concepts' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013c: 715). Woodward (2009: 8 in Sellar and Lingard, 2013c) suggests that 'Normative governance is the vaguest dimension of the OECD but it is arguably through challenging and changing the mindsets of the people involved that the Organization achieves its greatest influence'. This is the impact on national policymakers from participation in OECD committees that affects their assumptive worlds and yields what is perceived as a particular 'policy habitus' (Lingard, Rawolle, and Taylor, 2005 in Sellar and Lingard, 2013c).

Palliative governance is the final mode in Woodward's typology and refers to its role in greasing 'the wheels of global governance' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013c: 715). The OECD, as Woodward emphasizes functions via soft power and cognitive - normative governance. This mode of operation is perhaps the future for IOs and global governance (ibid). Sellar and Lingard (2013: 722) argue, drawing on and extending Woodward's typology of OECD governance modes, that this agency is exerted through 'infrastructural governance', a 'product of the international networks and systems' established to 'collect and compare statistical data in education, and epistemological governance', which reflects its 'well-established capacity to shape the views of key actors in education across local, national and global scales'.

They perceive infrastructural governance as a subcategory of the palliative governance - described by Woodward - that encompasses the foundation of global infrastructures. Epistemological governance crosses the normative and

cognitive modes of governance described by Woodward. This mode of governance portrays the way in which common understandings on education and economic policy promote the education work of the OECD and this harmony is in turn bolstered by the OECD's education work and policy lessons drawn from systems that it has helped to classify as successful (ibid).

There is a 'self-perpetuating dynamic', through which the OECD both 'prescribes education policy approaches and assesses the performance of national education systems in these terms' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013c: 722-723). This dynamic drives the OECD's reinforced epistemological governance role in education globally and this is connected to the way in which the education work of the OECD has 'shaped the assumptive worlds or policy habitus of the policy-makers who drive reforms within nations' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013c: 723). However, the impact of the OECD's education policies largely depends on emphasizing the weight of policy factors over the importance of cultural and social context. 'Cultural and historical explanations for the success of education systems cannot be used to justify reforms in other nations, whereas pointing to specific policy settings as the cause of success can provide governments with leverage for internal reform agendas' (ibid).

Within the sociology of education policy analysis, the OECD is often perceived as the main advocate of 'the global education reform movement' (Sahlberg 2011: 99 in Boyum, 2014: 2), a 'neoliberal approach prescribing privatization, competition, and accountability' through testing. Along with many other scholars (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2006; 2010; Moutsios, 2009), Boyum (2014) argues that this development is framed by human capital approaches. Moreover, modernization, economic growth of the state and also equality of opportunity are also underpinned by the human capital theory (Sianou - Kyrgiou, 2006). Such a movement has been most pronounced in the Anglo-American countries and to a minor degree elsewhere - such as the Nordic countries - but its impact has been significant even there (Boyum, 2014).

The OECD exerts strong influence on its members and even non-members -

many of which seek to reach full member status (Porter & Webb, 2007 in Murphy, 2014). As already mentioned, its interest in education has been buttressed by a strong human capital standpoint. In its own words, 'the prosperity of countries now derives to a large extent from their human capital and, to succeed in a rapidly changing world, individuals need to advance their knowledge and competencies throughout their lives' (OECD, 2007b: 3 in Murphy, 2014: 896). According to Woodhall, 'The concept of human capital refers to the fact that human beings invest in themselves by means of education, training, or other activities, which raises their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings' (1997: 219 in Murphy, 2014: 896). After being first communicated in the early 1960s, this set of ideas was broadly used in educational contexts because it gave room for cost - benefit analyses of education funding and investment returns, both private and social. (Woodhall, 1997 in Murphy, 2014).

Theories of human capital view human resources as destined to upgrade developing economies and to ensure the development of the advanced economies (Moutsios, 2009). Such views hold that the economy has (and should) become more knowledge-based, and education should be accordingly seen as an aspect of economic policy (Boyum, 2014). They also argue that financial growth and social justice are linked to knowledge and competencies on demand from markets (Sianou - Kyrgiou 2006). Evidently, when economic progress and sustainability is correlated with the improvement of skillsets and flexibility, then the state is expected to "enhance" the opportunity of equal access to education (ibid). According to the human capital theory, knowledge and skills are the most significant investments for individual and social progress and are dependent on education, which hence is also perceived as an investment by governments (Sianou - Kyrgiou 2010).

Investing in human capital requires all domestic education policies to be directed towards raising productivity and competitiveness in the global economy (Moutsios, 2009). Liberalization of economies lies at the forefront of the IMF and World Bank policies too, which have been endorsed globally mainly through the infamous Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)

implemented by the IMF in weak economies. SAPs focus on boosting entrepreneurship in the borrowing country by eliminating restrictions in trade and investments and by minimizing deficits through cuts in public expenditure (Moutsios, 2009). The SAPs are expected to trigger temporary negative consequences, which are later balanced by the creation and distribution of new capital to those who need it (Moutsios, 2009).

However, instead of prosperity the SAPs caused further economic depression, social hardship, and political uncertainty (Stiglitz 2002 in Moutsios, 2009). The SAPs are linked to education - not directly, as it happens with the World Bank's programs - through the financial discipline measures, which deeply impact the borrowing countries' education systems (ibid). To be particular, a set of adjustment regimes demand limitation of public spending, this may result in decentralization of financial responsibilities to educational organizations, by tuition fees, or by promotion of private education. This agenda and the pursuit for human capital investment underpins the OECD's policies as well (Moutsios, 2009). With just a pause between the mid-1960s and mid- 1970s - when social movements in the West asked for more educational democratization - the OECD never seized to perceive education principally as an instrument of producing human resources destined to boost the economic progress of its members (Papadopoulos 1994 in Moutsios, 2009).

Back in the 1980s the OECD began to push the 'cost-effectiveness agenda in education, basic skills and the monitoring of students' achievement' and from the 1990s onwards, the focus on 'new technologies, lifelong learning, indicators and the production of performance data on selected subjects were added to those, thus largely defining debates and policies' in several countries (Moutsios, 2009: 477). According to Moutsios, this whole array of policy domains is driven by the OECD's main ideology on human capital, which is disseminated widely and repeatedly through various formal statements on what contemporary education reforms should seek: 'The prosperity of countries now derives to a large extent from their human capital and, to succeed in a rapidly changing world, individuals need to advance their

knowledge and competencies throughout their lives. Education systems need to lay strong foundations for this, by fostering knowledge and competences and by strengthening the capacity and motivation of adults to continue learning beyond school' (OECD 2004: 3).

The key issue for Dale and Robertson (2007: 225) is that the 'rules of recognition' that frame the action of the OECD (and other IOs), also frame what is required of education structures. These rules of recognition include two fundamental messages for education: first - as mentioned previously - knowledge is perceived as a key lever for economic growth and knowledge production leading to innovative ideas supporting progress is a basic element of education systems globally. Together with the 'redefinition of the purposes of education', it is also necessary to 'restructure education systems that have grown to serve a very different set of needs and which are now regarded as no longer fit for the new 'economic' purposes of education' (Dale and Robertson, 2007: 225). It appears that the education system - as presently regarded - inhibits the provision of effective support for the knowledge-based economy and thus is 'part of the problem not part of the solution' (ibid).

As Moutsios (2009: 478 - 479) concludes, education policymaking is no longer an 'exclusive affair of the nation-state', since supranational institutions are now the key settings forming the main educational aims. Through 'asymmetric, nondemocratic and opaque procedures' of decision making transnational organizations are 'devising policies derived from human capital and neoliberal ideologies' (ibid). Knowledge and educational policy borrowing are being positioned at the heart of global economic competition. 'Borrowing' is now looking for the 'best practices' required to achieve certain aims, but Moutsios (2009: 479) problematizes the conception of the aims of such an agenda and, more importantly, the fact that 'major directions of the education systems are increasingly matters of transnational policy making' - what he identified as the 'trans-nationalization' of education policy making but also the 'subjugation of education to the mandates of the global economy'.

Grek (2009) focused on the OECD's tools and suggested that via its impact

on national education systems - although seemingly detached - it plays an indirect, but still important role on the governance of the European education space. As it is well known, the OECD is not limited to Europe and has indeed a far greater, almost global, reach. Nonetheless, on the one hand, Europe is a significant part of the OECD world; on the other, as put by a key actor at the Education Directorate of the European Commission: 'We used to have great competition between the two institutions [OECD and the EC] which was that they were research-based, we were policy-based. And we needed that. They needed the policy aspect to mobilize the European consciousness ... it was in their interest working with us... We had some differences but we are working closer and closer together, we are very good friends now, there is no conflict' (Grek, 2009: 23).

Grek (2009) also identifies the reframing of education within the OECD's agenda and the new key role attributed to economic competitiveness driven by a human capital framework and linked to a rising knowledge economy. Progressively, the OECD has taken on an enhanced role as a policy actor (Rinne, Kallio, and Hokka 2004 in Grek, 2009) and has established strategic partnerships with other IOs such as the UNESCO, the European Union (EU) and the World Bank to vigorously foster its policy preferences. The case of the OECD is interesting because, unlike the EU, it does not possess the legal and financial means to promote policy-making at the national level within member states. However, the OECD through ranking mechanisms such as the "Education at a Glance" annual reports, its Indicators in Education project - the World Education Indicators developed with UNESCO and the World Bank - has managed to raise the importance of its educational agenda and to establish a global policy space in education (Grek, 2009).

But how has the OECD emerged as one of the most dominant agents of transnational education governance? Martens (2007: 42 in Grek, 2009: 25) has suggested that the 'comparative turn' - 'scientific approach to political decision making' has been the main explanation behind its success. Through its knowledge based rankings it has achieved an indisputable brand, since the OECD's policy recommendations are perceived as valid by policy makers and

academics 'without the author seeing any need beyond the label "OECD" to justify the authoritative character of the knowledge contained therein' (Porter and Webb 2004: 7 in Grek, 2009: 25). As Nóvoa (2002: 144 in Grek, 2009: 25) has pointed out, 'comparing must not be seen as a method, but as a policy ... the expert discourse builds its proposals through "comparative" strategies that tend to impose "naturally" similar answers in the different national settings'.

In its role as policy actor, the OECD has produced a niche as a technically expert agency for the development of educational indicators and comparative educational performance measures, which overlap with EU data and buttress the formation of a 'governable space of comparison and commensurability' (Grek, 2009: 25) – what is also perceived as the European education space (Nóvoa and Lawn 2002 in Grek, 2009). Policy tools such as indicators and monitoring have become a significant component of the 'shift from government to the governance of national education systems through new institutional forms' with the purpose of: 'orienting relations between political society (via the administrative executive) and civil society (via its administered subjects) through intermediaries in the form of devices that mix technical components (measuring, calculating the rule of law, procedure) and social components (representation, symbol)'. (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007: 6 in Grek, 2009: 25).

The educational aspect of the OECD has become a significant 'node' in this multifaceted policy field, as education policy is seen as a key to the competitive advantage of national economies in the face of globalization (Grek, 2009: 26). Tools at work are not 'neutral devices: they produce specific effects, independently of the objective pursued ... which structure public policy according to their own logic' (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007: 3 in Grek, 2009: 34). Grek (2009: 34 - 35) has documented that Europe has found in the OECD's tools a significant 'source of data about the systems it is meant to govern'. However, political choices, such as who produces these data and, who pays for their cost or how these data are used to understand 'different education histories and political contexts', are issues of concern (ibid). Hence,

as Grek argues, the use and meaning of the OECD's tools constitute a 'political technology': a 'governing resource for both the national agency and the transnational forces of EU and the OECD' (Grek, 2009: 35).

On the other hand, Gorur and Wu (2014: 4) aspire to treat the OECD's knowledge based regulation tools neither as 'purely political', nor as 'purely technical', but as a 'socio-technical hybrid'. Their analysis is based on the theoretical resources of actor-network theory (ANT) and particularly the approach of a 'sociology of measurement' (Derksen, 2000; Gorur, 2014) – from Woolgar's (1991 in Gorur, 2014: 5) use of the term 'sociology of measurement technologies' - to draw attention to the 'social and instrumental nature of measurement, as well as its productive capacity'.

To begin with, instrumentality signifies the 'influence of the instruments and methodologies' used in measurement, and to the way in which things are 'made to work', through 'cajoling, persuading, coercing, compromising' and so on – what in ANT is called the translation of interests (Gorur and Wu, 2014: 5). 'Productive capacity' invokes the idea that measurement not only represents or describes, but also produces realities (Latour, 2005 in Gorur, 2014). In other words, unlike 'technical' critique, which takes measurement to be representational or descriptive, Gorur and Wu's (2014: 5) perspective views measurement as 'world-making'. What needs to be highlighted is the fact that international comparisons, despite their epistemological level and meticulousness, are limited since comparability across a variety of contexts, histories and cultures can only be accomplished through limiting what is compared (Gorur, 2011).

Furthermore, the progress of education systems, even when narrowly defined for the sake of comparison, is deeply affected by a variety of correlated factors – and statistical methodologies cannot perceive the relationality of phenomena (Gorur and Wu, 2014). Particularly, longitudinal analyses - vastly used by the OECD - suffer from a limited focus and are not sensitive enough to spot the adjustments from year to year, so at best work as a broad portrait of the educational system (Gorur and Wu, 2014). According to Gorur and Wu,

significant factors affecting educational performance cannot be included in such analyses, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions from such data - causation cannot be reached through numbers alone, but only through expert analysis. As suggested in Gorur's previous work, interpreting the world via numbers and through comparison is complicated and usually there is no clarity and certainty through such interpretations (Gorur, 2010; Gorur & Koyama, 2013).

In a similar manner, Morgan and Shahjahan (2014) examine how International Organizations - particularly the OECD - produce their legitimacy and expertise during the initial production phases of what in the literature is referred to as their regulation tools. They suggest that the OECD gains substantial impact in governing education as it deploys three mechanisms of educational governance to update states on what counts in education. These mechanisms, each embodying a set of complex practices and processes, include: (1) 'building on past successes'; (2) 'assembling knowledge capacity'; and (3) 'deploying bureaucratic resources' (Morgan and Shanjahan, 2014: 193). The OECD is not a self-contained entity, but rather a complex structure of policy makers, technocrats, researchers and member states.

As suggested previously, the OECD lacks the financial influence of IOs such as the IMF or the WB and the legislative capacity of organizations such as the EU. Because the OECD's policy recommendations have no binding force for its member states, it has developed alternative mechanisms for transmitting and fostering uptake of policy ideas and expert guidance (ibid). As the OECD explores global educational developments, it has transformed itself as an indispensable actor in educational policy development and a key producer of science-based educational policy (Meyer and Benavot 2013 in Morgan and Shahjahan, 2014).

The OECD has been actively involved in the production and transmission of some of the most important international educational indicators and assessment instruments used in educational policy settings. When Morgan and Shahjahan (2014: 194) refer to mechanisms, they use this sociological

term to 'identify and group a complex set of OECD governance processes'. When they use the term 'fixing' ideas, they seek to describe the OECD 'governance processes that solidify previously ambiguous concepts among educational actors'. Finally, in discussing the 'diffusion' of ideas, they point to the 'process through which the OECD spreads or disseminates its ideas among networks and policy circles' (ibid).

The first mechanism of OECD governance sees the OECD 'building on its past successes' and through that process, 'gains authority as an expert and a reliable resource for evidence-based education policy' (Morgan and Shahjahan, 2014: 194). These "successes" influence significantly the OECD's position in governing education. In the process, the diffusion of OECD's products and tools help embed a common standpoint and an educational assessment - comparative culture among participating states. Morgan and Shahjahan (2014: 195) suggest that the second mechanism underlying OECD's governance mode is the potential of 'assembling knowledge capacity' via the creation of the OECD's own 'epistemic communities' ensuring 'validation of its technical expertise'. The third mechanism linked to the OECD's increasingly leading role in global educational governance is the formation of its own bureaucracy, which comprises of mostly rich nations and derives power from its 'rational-legal authority' - the consensus of member states that provides the OECD with this kind of authority - and 'control over expertise' (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 707 in Morgan and Shahjahan, 2014: 195). The OECD's influence in global educational governance is strengthened by its ability to deploy its administrative - bureaucratic structure to achieve its goals. OECD officials are proficient at capitalizing on their bureaucratic resources in order to achieve the organization's targets and turn the OECD to a global educational think tank (Morgan and Shahjahan, 2014).

As far as knowledge production is concerned, Morgan and Shahjahan suggest that the OECD accumulated its "science based and objective" technical expertise through the amassment of supporters for the development and implementation of its tools. More importantly, members of these expert groups were effective in mobilizing support and promoting OECD's tools - e.g.

PISA - within their larger networks of national and international experts. The OECD builds its knowledge capacity by reinforcing a globalized educational discourse that holds scientific-based evidence higher over other forms of educational knowledge. At the same time, the OECD imparts micro-practices related to a specific type of assessment, which seeks to measure what the OECD defines as student skills and thus pre-determines a competency-based curriculum that further validates the OECD's expertise (Morgan and Shahjahan, 2014). When the OECD adopted the production of indicators as 'a core activity' in the mid-1990s (Henry et al. 2001: 89 in Morgan and Shahjahan, 2014: 198), it also created a governance mechanism.

Morgan and Shahjahan (2014) conclude that the OECD deploys various governance mechanisms during the production phase of its tools to obtain legitimate power to define what is important in education. They also highlight the significance of the production phase of the OECD's tools (and specifically the early stages) because they are significant contexts for the validation and enactment of global educational governance - contexts that usually stay off the literature's focus. This early production stage of a regulation tool is 'fragile' (often with lots of tensions and criticisms) but crucial in terms of what knowledge needs to be learnt (Morgan and Shahjahan, 2014: 202). Hence, Morgan and Shahjahan (2014: 202 - 203) draw attention to the active role the IOs play as agents involved in the policy production process, 'using an arsenal of past experiences, epistemic networks and bureaucratic structures', for 'constructing, negotiating, disseminating and legitimizing what counts as knowledge and learning in a competitive global economy'.

To sum up, educational policy is currently being developed on a worldwide scale, with supranational organizations being crucial agents of change (Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014). There are objections regarding the displacement and re-interpretation of core educational values such as equality and autonomy (Rizvi and Lindard, 2010) such activity entails. In that regard, Tsatsaroni and Evans (2014) discuss the advent of competency discourse in the Global and European agenda.

In the context of the EU “Lisbon agenda”, the current economic environments are shaping the role of national governments in controlling educational outcomes and aim to achieve both social cohesion and economic competitiveness, a dualist view known as “inclusive liberalism” (Walker, 2009 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014). This competitive context leads nations' urge for pursuing competitive advantage — which is usually linked to the quality of national education and training systems assessed by international standards - in the form of tools developed by the OECD (e.g. PIAAC and PISA). Furthermore, such a context provides legitimation for OECD's and EU's agendas of "skills and competencies", as an educational policy and finally a public problem (Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014).

Specifically, the OECD and the EU are spreading ideas and practices that strongly impact national policy making around the world. These ideas involve the promotion of comparison between national education systems and also new forms of “soft governance” of national educational systems, incorporating the production and spreading of knowledge, the dissemination of comparative data such as educational and social indicators, so that these international organizations are practically governing by data (Ozga, 2009 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014). Tsatsaroni and Evans (2014) refer to a number of social science theorists who grappled with the way regulation tools (such as Pisa and PIAAC) serve to turn educational phenomena to measurable and comparable issues. To be particular Lingard (2011), Ozga (2009), and Grek (2010), draw upon a broadly Foucauldian viewpoint - the notion of governmentality by Foucault (1991) - to link developments in education policy formation with an argument about the emergence of new forms of soft governance.

This form of governing involves several key concepts like the state governing “at a distance” (i.e. enforcing standards of provision, rather than directly providing key public services) & marketization of public services like education (Rose, 1999 & Ball, 2008 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014). According to Tsatsaroni and Evans (2014), the above - mentioned literature suggests that part of what is at stake in education reforms that are a main element of

modern societies worldwide is to create a compliant self - governed workforce through acceptance of and involvement in newly created structures. Thus social theorists and researchers point to a shift from nation state policy production and implementation towards the forming of international policy networks and the utilization of multiple agencies and agents (Ball, 2012 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014). This involves governance by horizontal networks and various types of partnerships that simultaneously take place with hierarchical government forms (Beck, 2008; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014).

Making Sense of Quality in the Field of ECEC

Quality is a multifaceted and elusive notion. According to Rentzou (2017b), the importance of high quality ECEC provision is multidimensional. Its impact directly affects the general population and especially underprivileged children in terms of cognitive, linguistic and social development, while low quality provision could affect them detrimentally (ibid). She links the elusive nature of ECEC quality monitoring with the definition of ECEC quality itself, which is perceived as a multifaceted and constantly changing notion dependent on values and social, financial and political contexts (Rentzou, 2017b). ECEC can be seen as a 'system characterized by both its structural and dynamic features, where the first include 'child-adult ratio, the group size, the training and education of the educators, health and safety, stability of caregivers, and working conditions of caregivers, while the latter are more difficult to regulate and include 'adult-child interaction, peer interaction, inter-personal relationships, developmentally appropriate activities, and the emotional climate of care' (Rentzou, 2017b: 668; see also Melhuish, 2004 and Brownlee et al, 2009 in Rentzou, 2017b).

As far as the measurement of ECEC quality is concerned, there are also two kinds of quality measurement, process and structural (Rentzou, 2017b). The relevant research indicates a rise of rating scales, since the overarching target

for fostering quality is program assessment and continuous quality enhancement, though an emphasis on standardization and structures is rather limited in the ECEC field (ibid). On the other hand Rentzou (2017b) identifies practical challenges concerning a multifaceted approach of the dynamic and subjective essence of ECEC quality. Hence, there is a distinction between dynamic (developmental approach focused on the process) and static (static mechanisms seeking fixed standards) perceptions of quality (Williams, 1995 in Rentzou, 2017b), but conclusively quality is 'not a fixed, objective standard' (Rentzou, 2017b: 678).

Quality is defined differently depending on whether it refers to children, parents, providers, or societies (Rentzou, 2015). Rentzou (2015: 251) claims that when it comes to quality, 'everything matters' - even the slightest aspects are of significance. She puts emphasis on the 5 policy levers of the OECD's "Starting Strong 3" (2012) to explore the Greek context and highlights certain significant elements based on the relevant literature. To be specific, Rentzou (2015) points to significant discrepancies that occurred in the Greek ECEC after the provision of early childhood education and care passed from the central state and the responsibility of the Ministry of Health to the municipalities, under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior. Discrepancies emanating from the absence of central policies and the differences of the local context, she argues, have affected the structure, the operation and quality of Greek ECEC institutions and lead to a loose forms of practice in their day to day operation (see also Petrogiannis, 2010 and Rentzou, 2015).

The lack of a national curriculum for the municipal ECEC - contrary to the National Curriculum for the Greek kindergartens that fall under the Ministry of Education - leads to an emphasis on structural and a disregard of process characteristics (Rentzou, 2015). The relevant research on the Greek context views the absence of objectives and regulations for quality and the absence of a curriculum framework as deeply concerning (see Rentzou and Sakellariou, 2011; Mantziou and Petrogiannis, 2009 in Rentzou, 2015). Moreover, the absence of quality regulation and monitoring could be directly linked to the limited inspection mechanisms existing at the municipal level and to a

distinction - rooted in the historical development of this sector - between education and care, which produces a confusion regarding responsibilities for those involved (see Rentzou, 2015 and Petrogiannis and Melhuish, (2001).

Rentzou (2015), based on best practices from the OECD's member states and the research from Greece, suggests the reinforcement of current regulations, since there is inconsistency between the Greek quality regulations and the standards set by international organizations. Rentzou (2012 & 2013 in Rentzou, 2015) also argues that both educators and parents tend to overrate the provided ECEC quality, while the researchers' claims are more reserved. Rentzou (2015) also proposes the unification of ECEC (kindergarten and municipal ECEC organizations) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education in order to more efficiently aim for the concept of "edu - care". Certain competencies, such as the 'physical well-being, social and emotional development, culture and arts, literacy and communication, learning approaches and cognition, numeracy and mathematics, and science and technology' should be mastered via relevant frameworks (Rentzou, 2015: 255). Assessment - and relevant quality assessment organizations established by the state - is another significant way forward for the Greek ECEC (ibid).

Another significant aspect of ECEC quality, according to Rentzou and Sakellariou (2011), is the way educators interact with children. Their study indicates that Greek ECEC educators interact 'positively' with children, but they also 'tend to exhibit a detached and permissive attitude' (Rentzou and Sakellariou, 2011: 372). The relevant literature (see Mantziou, 2000; Petrogiannis, 2002 in Rentzou and Sakellariou, 2011) highlights the significance of the human factor for quality of ECEC, however Rentzou and Sakellariou (2011) claim that Greek ECEC educators' priority focuses on care and not on education. They also raise concerns regarding the high educator/child ratios and group sizes - observed in their research - that also affect/ limit overall quality. Moreover, educators' qualifications deeply impact the provision of ECEC and overall ECEC quality (ibid). Such structural elements are of major importance for quality ECEC, however it appears that Greek policy

makers set the bar low and allow reduced/ detrimental ECEC provision, which urges for 'dramatic interventions' (Rentzou and Sakellariou, 2011: 374).

ECEC in Greece is at a 'critical crossroad', since governmental policy initiatives are 'going back and forth', in terms of overcoming the dichotomy between education and care (Rentzou, 2017: 10). Internationally, the 'schoolification of ECEC' appears to be a rising 'trend', and standardized assessment is prominent (ibid). The OECD (2017 in Rentzou, 2017) describes a shift for pre academic skills - in comparison with a limiting of practical skills and a decline of social sciences - among its member countries and also an aligning process for pre-primary and primary curricula. In that direction the OECD has introduced the "International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study", a 4 year study that has raised concern (Moss et al, 2016 and Pence, 2016 in Rentzou 2017) and has been identified as 'baby PISA' (Pence, 2016: 54 in Rentzou, 2017: 10). Concerning the conceptual distinction between education and care, Rentzou (2017: 12) highlights the significance of training and professionalism for ECEC educators, who will be 'capable of working within a holistic framework' perceiving care and education as of equal importance to achieve quality ECEC provision.

Fotopoulou and Ifanti (2017: 8) explore Greek pre - primary educators' perceptions of professionalism and professional development and report that the participants in their research tend to 'attribute significant importance to the aspect of professionalism', which directly impacts their efforts to enhance students' learning. They also report that educators' cooperation with other educators, or parents and students is perceived of equal significance for the participants in their study (ibid). As they emphasize (Fotopoulou and Ifanti 2017: 9) their study revealed the multifaceted nature of professionalism and professional development for Greek pre - primary educators, who identify it as a major aspect of 'creatively transforming their educational contexts and extending their career as well as reinforcing students' efforts in the learning process'.

Concluding this section, it is worth referring to Pasiás and Roussakis's (2013:

25) view on quality of education, which is the central theme here. As many other critical researchers in the international literature, these authors perceive it as a 'panoptical discourse' related to 'market - driven' and 'managerialist' restructurings, which 'advocate a minimalist and evaluative state, envisage an audit society and promote accountability regimes in education'. This discourse, they argue promotes educational changes through evidence - based validation. Education is thus 'colonized by technocratic - instrumentalist' views and functions via a 'set of ideological principles and practices' (ibid). Pasiás and Roussakis (2013: 29) argue that the EU and the OECD - as already discussed in this chapter - foster a 'techno - preneurial' reformation of the educator via quality 'indicators standards and benchmarks' and via the 'deployment of accountability and performativity audits as policy devices'. Educators nowadays are expected to develop a variety of competences that will make them successful and worthy of more success in the future. But as Biesta (2012: 15 and 18 in Pasiás and Roussakis, 2013: 30) puts it competence 'is in itself never enough', it needs to be combined with the 'phronesis' that will inform 'wise educational judgments', which in the competitive European context seems to have been abandoned.

From a Social Justice Agenda to In - E - Quality: *A Posse ad Esse*

The OECD views equity as significant from an economic viewpoint and it has been fundamental in fostering a neo-social policy agenda in education and thus rerouting discussion away from the language of equality (Lingard et al, 2014). Being an intergovernmental organisation - involved in economic policy - the OECD claims that equity in education matters because of its economic benefits to nations and the global economy in general. Such framing of equity is clearly depicted in a chapter of a recent report on equity and quality in education entitled 'Investing in Equity in Education Pays Off' (OECD 2012a in Lingard et al, 2014).

According to Lingard et al (2014: 717), the emphasis on equity "paying off" is explained in terms of the 'role of equity in constructing human capital and boosting productivity'. Similarly, the OECD perceives inequity primarily in terms of 'economic losses and the wastage of human potential' (Lingard, 2014: 717). Particularly, the 'costs of inequity and school failure are high for individuals and societies', framing 'equitable outcomes' as a 'key for both economic prosperity and social cohesion' ... educational failure ... 'imposes high costs on society' (OECD, 2012a: 23 - 26 in Lingard et al, 2014).

Such arguments on equity are opposed to a wealth of research suggesting that global capitalism and social equality are incompatible forces, and that the extent of social inequality inhibits the degree of equity that can be achieved through schooling (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009 in Lingard et al, 2014). For the past decade the OECD has developed a definition of equity as a 'market-enhancing mechanism linked to macro-economic policies and investments in producing greater quality and quantities of human capital' (Lingard et al, 2014: 724). Lingard et al (2014: 724) have shown how social justice has been 'reconstituted as equity through technologies of measurement, comparison and governance' associated with the OECD's regulation tools.

They have also argued that 'social justice as equity has been redefined' in terms of comparison of scores, which ultimately has topological aspects because the globe and the nation are reconstituted as fields of measurement and comparison, which has produced the 'remaking of national and global spaces as relational in terms of the numerical measurement of equity' (ibid). Moreover, just as there have been increasing social and economic inequalities within nations, so too have there been increasing inequalities among nations (Rizvi and Lingard 2010 in Lingard et al, 2014), but such facts are being overlooked in illustrations of equity in the OECD's tools.

As mentioned previously, the OECD has been increasingly concerned with equity in education, but a critical issue could be whether this concern complements or conflicts with the neoliberal drive of the OECD's education policy (Boyum, 2014). Is this emphasis on equity compatible with the role of

the OECD as one of the main agents of the marketization of education? Chapman and Aspin (2013: 150 in Boyum, 2014: 2) regard the OECD's work on equity as an effort to balance the economic viewpoint on education with 'broader human and social concerns'. This take considers equity as essential in optimizing economic growth, since inequities 'imply that human resources are left unused' (ibid). Savage, Sellar, and Gorur (2013) on the other hand acknowledge that PISA, for example, has highlighted issues of inequity, such as the correlation between social background and educational performance, but suggest that the OECD's perception of equity has been incorporated into economic rationality. They see the growing social inequality in member countries as evidence that the OECD's promotion of equity is not reflected in their neoliberal agenda of market reform.

Rizvi and Lingard (2009: 448 in Boyum, 2014: 2) likewise argue that the OECD no longer views equality as a 'moral value in its own right', but as 'a means to human capital development', and that the OECD's notion of equity is therefore rather limited. Rizvi (2013 in Boyum, 2014) also describes this process as a shift from a social democratic to a market idea of equity. Hence, equity has become disconnected from traditional ideas of social justice and re-articulated as access to education and involvement in economy. Boyum (2014) attempts to shed light on the OECD's notion of equity. He suggests that the OECD explicitly operates with a 'loose idea of equal opportunity', compatible with even a merely formal equality, but implicitly with a 'meritocratic concept of fair equality of opportunity' (Boyum, 2014: 10-11).

Nowhere in the OECD's policy documents one finds an 'explicit or implicit advocacy of a complete eradication of the influence of social class'; the OECD does not 'commit to the concept of eradicating the influence of class, only that it should be of less significance' (Boyum, 2014: 11). The aim, therefore, is 'not equality of opportunity, but less inequality of opportunity' (ibid). To a large degree, there is an isolation of the question of educational justice from the question of social justice in general. There is hardly any attempt to 'relate fairness within the educational system to fairness within the social system in general, be it on the micro-level of individual action or the macro-level of

social structure' (Boyum, 2014: 12). Despite the fact that there is a strong focus on equality of opportunity as a way to rise in the social pyramid, there is on the one hand a lack of discussion on how fair is that hierarchy itself, and on the other, of whether or not learners from different social backgrounds may fairly choose different educational courses (Boyum, 2014).

Boyum's concluding point is that one cannot determine an educational system's fairness by looking at the education system alone or the correlations between its inputs and outputs and thus distinguishing fairness in education from fairness in society, treating them as two different stories. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Sellar and Lingard (2013: 723) who note that while there is a focus on the equity of schooling systems, the OECD often omits consideration of 'structural inequality in society beyond schooling' as explanation of educational inequities.

As part of his argument that egalitarianism is beneficial to educational excellence, Condron (2011: 54 in Boyum, 2014: 12) likewise 'contends that it is problematic to think that schools can reduce achievement disparities by themselves', since schools are 'embedded within the economic systems of their societies'. Reay (2012: 592–593 in Boyum, 2014: 12) also reminds us that 'educational inequalities are inextricably bound up with social inequalities and cannot be addressed in isolation from them'. Boyum moves this argument one step forward. He makes a clear distinction between a causal and a constitutive relation between educational fairness and social justice, which allows for a more accurate understanding of the way in which the OECD isolates one from the other.

In a just society, if parents "bequeath" their competences, values or knowledge to their children in a way that their children could follow their professional steps, it might be perceived as something positive. However, in an unequal society that very same kind of reproduction is morally intolerable (Boyum, 2014). What is of concern is not that the occupational structure is partly reproduced through education, but that this structure is largely unequal in terms of status, power, and other important resources. This perspective is

missing from the OECD's policy documents: As Boyum (2014: 13) puts it, 'while the OECD insists strongly that coming from a disadvantaged home should not be a disadvantage in education, they do not question whether there should be disadvantaged homes at all'.

Furthermore, Takayama (2013: 68) discusses the rise of OECD's significance and influence in shaping national education policy discourse (see also Bieber and Martens, 2011), through keywords such as 'skills and knowledge for life', 'key competencies' and 'knowledge economy' and also via its soft tools — the production and dissemination of comparative indicators and expert advices (see also Martens, 2007 in Takayama, 2013). Takayama suggests that the concept of 'key competencies' must be carefully examined - particularly through an equity perspective, as it grounds much of the OECD's lifelong learning policy agenda including its influential tools of regulation. The recent popularization of lifelong learning and key competencies in the international and national education policy discourses is in fact the emergence of a "knowledge society" wherein the 'investment in human intellect becomes nations' key 'economic strategy' (Takayama, 2013: 70).

Changes in economy are also related with the parallel social and cultural transformations of late modernity, wherein social, economic and cultural foundations of modern institutions that have provided citizens a sense of security and certainty are increasingly questioned for individual 'freedom'. In what Basil Bernstein (as analyzed later on this chapter) calls "the totally pedagogized society", therefore, people are to develop 'the ability to profit from continuous pedagogic reformations and so cope with the new requirements of "work" and "life" in order to survive the constantly changing "risky" world' (Bernstein 2001: 365-366 in Takayama, 2013: 70). In late modernity, or what Kariya (2010: 94 in Takayama, 2013: 71) calls a 'learning capital society', 'the ability to learn, adapt and improve by recognizing and exploiting disparate resources' has become a decisive factor in one's life chances, hence educational institutions are expected to 'provide an education that will make it possible for everyone to become "knowledge workers"' (OECD 2012: 16).

Takayama (2013: 78) also raises equity concerns about the OECD's concept of key competencies, which affects curricular policies - including curricula for teachers and training of educational professionals - globally. Specifically, key competencies can 'naturalize the re-production of educational inequalities', because they construct them as a result of emotional, psychological and social 'deficiencies' of underperforming children and their families. This is a significant issue in light of the rising educational inequalities ascending out of increasing decentralization and school choice, both of which are strong elements of the globally promoted education agenda. The integration of key competencies in formal schooling could alter the 'rules of meritocracy', since it 'tends to reintroduce class biases into the processes of teaching and learning, possibly to the extent that has not been witnessed in modern public education systems (Takayama, 2013: 77).

According to Gerrard (2015), there appears to exist a global urge for informing governmental policies through the field of educational research and the "evidence" it creates. It should be stressed however, that the connection between research and policy is not linear and straightforward. Policy makers follow certain agendas - that need justification for the public sphere - and often raise issues of equity and justice. Even when embedded within (often well intentioned) notions of best practice, 'policy is politics and politics is ideological' (Gerrard, 2015: 856).

Amidst the seemingly ferocious global shift to neoliberal educational policy reform, from schooling to higher education, Gerrard (2015) highlights the strong desire to claim and defend public education, which is often suggested as counteraction to various neoliberal market-based reforms. In contrast to the often 'technicist and formulated rationalities of neoliberalism – individual benefit, cost benefit analysis, value accrual, human capital' – the defence of public education views education as being beyond such notions (Gerrard, 2015: 856). Indeed, neoliberalism has noticeably altered the practice and understanding of the public, as markets and private interests become partners with the state in the field of education.

Gerrard (2015: 857) seeks to reflect the expected tensions that arise in desiring the 'elusive practice of public education' in the wake of widespread neoliberal reform. She suggests that neoliberalism can lead to a defensive stance, since relevant neoliberal changes regarding education happen rapidly. For Gerrard (2015: 857) the thirst for public education can be two - folded, both 'necessary and troublesome'. There is a constant urge for education beyond the logic and needs of capital and its market, but also there is the "broken" image of public education that paved the way for the political emergence of neoliberalism.

Contributing to these debates, Rowlands and Rawolle (2013 in Gerrard, 2015) have argued that neoliberalism has been problematically perceived as a theory of everything that applies to what researchers do not appreciate regarding educational reforms. Gerrard (2015: 858 - 859) agrees with Rowlands and Rawolle concerning the possibility for neoliberalism to assume analytic/ descriptive qualities and to become a 'cul-de-sac of false nostalgia for a prior public education under the welfare state, rinsed clean of the compromises and deficiencies that invariably featured in its practice'. Undoubtedly, neoliberalism has been acknowledged as a clear shift in capitalist governance. Most commonly, it is used to signify the entanglement of market based logics and practices within state governance, and thus by extension within education (see Connell 2013 in Gerrard, 2015).

From a governance perspective, neoliberal capitalism has altered the function of the state. To be specific, as Rose and Miller (2010 in Gerrard, 2015: 859) suggest, it "re-codes the locus of the state in the discourse of politics" through altering the relationships and governance practices between the state, private agents and the market. The notion of neoliberalism includes practices that have defined and established a certain logic in contemporary politics - competitive markets, privatisation, managerialism, competitive standardised testing and accountability measures, devolution of financial control and performance measurement (Gerrard, 2015).

Du Gay and Morgan (2013: 2) see neo-liberalism as a justification, a certain rationality, a way of 'linking up these diverse developments so they appeared to partake of a coherent logic' - a logic which 'once extracted from them, allowing translations between them, it could itself be redirected towards them'. Such rationalities came to be embodied in or infused a range of practices for governing many different aspects of everyday life (Rose, 1999 in Gerrard, 2015).

Lingard et al (2014) argue that in the context of the neo-liberal reworking of education policy and the rise of the neo-social, comparative tactics have become basic methods of national and global governance (Novoa and Yariv-Mashal 2003), especially as the state has been reorganized in line with new public management principles and new forms of network governance (Ball and Junemann 2012). Lingard et al (2014: 712) describe an empirical shift from philosophical discourses about 'social justice to a reliance on more data-driven practices of equity'. Data have become central in contemporary education policy regimes and this has repercussions on the influence of 'conceptual-discursive accounts of what constitutes social justice in schooling' (ibid). Such rationalities significantly impact the work of the private sector and governments in and through public policy, including the field of education.

Associated with the shift towards big data and comparison is what some have described as the becoming topological of culture (Lury, Terranova, and Parisi 2012 in Lingard et al, 2014) 'resulting from the production of new continuities and discontinuities through metrics, models, calculations and comparisons' (Lingard et al, 2014: 713). These facilitate new modes of governmentality and 'a new order of spatiotemporal continuity for forms of economic, political and cultural life' (Lury, Terranova, and Parisi 2012: 4 in Lingard et al, 2014: 713).

Moreover, Robertson and Dale (2013) grapple also with the social justice implications in education governance frameworks. They follow Connell's (2012: 681 in Robertson and Dale, 2013: 426) definition of social justice as 'concerning the nature of the educational service itself and the consequences for society through time'. The structures, processes and practices of

education governance frameworks are of significance, because they shape education policies and practices, the opportunities they offer and the results. Education governance frameworks, hence, have social justice implications in that they structure interests and social trajectories, since '... schools do not just produce culture, they shape the new society that is coming into existence all around us' (Connell, 2012: 681 in Robertson and Dale, 2013: 427).

Robertson and Dale also share Gewirtz's views noting that social justice in education tends to be taken as 'synonymous with distributional justice' — that is, the fair distribution of relevant resources (Gewirtz, 1998: 470 in Robertson and Dale, 2013: 427). However, a focus on social justice as fundamentally concerned with opportunities of access in and through education places restricts and finally constrains a holistic grasp of social justice because distributional accounts do not fully unveil the social justice implications - 'the structures that produce these distributions, or their outcomes' - of the ways in which education is governed (Robertson and Dale, 2013: 428).

Furthermore, Robertson and Dale identify as useful Iris Young's (2006 in Robertson and Dale, 2013) argument, who suggests that social justice cannot be narrowed to issues of outputs in the form of redistribution. Young believes that we need to think of the full extent of social structural phenomena, rather than restrict our analysis to the sphere of capitalist production. A critical theory of justice should hence be ready to evaluate a wide range of social structures and not only the distributional perspective. Individuals and institutions take different positions in social space, and those positions are the ones determining a social structure (Robertson and Dale, 2013). Likewise, education structures are multifaceted social structures. They are spaces of socially - differentiated loci (e.g. educational institutions from different social classes), which present students with options and provide some with opportunities to achieve those options, and at the same time inhibit others.

Young identifies three features of societies, which raise issues of justice - beyond the previously mentioned distributional aspect. These are: (a) the social division of labour; (b) decision-making power; and (c) normativity

(Young, 2006 in Dale and Robertson, 2013: 429 - 430). By the social division of labour, Young suggests issues of access and resources and how this is related to hierarchical occupational and social structures. By decision-making power, Young refers to people taking positions (social, political and economic), which provide them with the ability to make - alone or in small groups - institutional decisions affecting others. Finally by normativity, Young refers to the ways in which behaviours and everyday meanings associated with people, including what is perceived as normal, exclude some and not others, and which thus stigmatize people (ibid).

Robertson and Dale's (2013) basic argument is that all education governance frameworks need to be analysed in the light of the above three elements. In developing a relational account, they note, Young highlights the ways in which certain actions could produce outcomes that may be unintentional but not unexpected. For example, certain educational "choices" from middle class parents, could affect working class parents whose resources and positioning in the social structure mean their capacity to impact actions is limited (see Ball, 2003 in Robertson and Dale, 2013). Yet as education becomes more 'globalised — whether as a result of transformations in the field of symbolic control over education policies (such as global rankings), of the growth of global education firms, or the increased power of international and multilateral agencies—this results in education activity extending over national territorial boundaries', posing questions regarding how and where obligations and responsibilities are to be negotiated (Robertson and Dale, 2013: 427).

In earlier work, Dale (1997) viewed education governance as a relatively recent term created to define governing activity that is gradually happening not only by governments, but also by non-governmental actors. Governance as a concept also became a 'way of apprehending the governing actions of transnational and international organisations and firms who progressively operate above and across national territorial boundaries' (Robertson and Dale, 2013: 431). Applied to education, governing can be seen as more than just state activity. Finally, Robertson and Dale (2013: 434) set up four different "moments" of what constitutes education: 'the moment of educational

practice, the moment of education politics, the moment of the politics of education, and the moment of outcomes':

The key point to note in this context is that the moment of educational practice is set up in a way that assumes a range of distributions of educational experiences, starting from the question, 'who is taught what?' and then going on to link other factors affecting that distribution, such as the circumstances in which it takes place (how, where, by whom and so on). The moment of education politics raises issues around the relationship between policy and practice, such as 'how and by whom are these things decided?' (e.g. the state, the community, corporations, shareholders or international agencies), but always in the recognition that not everything that occurs at the moment of educational practice is a direct consequence of and response to something that happens at the moment of education politics. The moment of the politics of education is fundamentally concerned with social structures, with individuals and institutions occupying varying positions in those social structures dependent upon the contexts at play.

The moment of the politics of education is where we find the kinds of 'rules of the game' or 'paradigmatic settings' that set basic limits to what is considered possible and desirable from education. Here, the most significant and relevant shift for the analysis of social justice in education for many western societies is that the ideational underpinnings of the moment of the politics of education moved from a more 'social democratic welfare state' to a competitive 'neo-liberal' one that in turn set in motion a range of privatisation tendencies. In essence these two quite different governance paradigms set the conditions for the emergence of a new set of education governance frameworks which are anchored in different understandings of the model citizen (productive citizen versus consuming individual), in the role of the state (planning versus steering), in the nature of institutional organisation (bureaucratic versus New Public Management), and in the role of the private sector in public affairs

Finally, the moment of outcomes of education processes include not only the immediate consequences of educational practices, policies and politics for those directly involved, but also their wider personal, community, social and economic qualities. It allows us to ask such crucial questions in this context as: 'How far are the successes of some achieved at the expense of others?' and, 'What are the collective benefits of the conjunctions of the three moments?' These are key elements in explicitly considering the central issues of governance frameworks and their social justice implications and consequent obligations. In posing questions about the outcomes of education governance frameworks in social justice terms, we are highlighting the social outcomes of these frameworks for a society or societies; outcomes that might exaggerate, or ameliorate, existing patterns of division in social hierarchies, decision-making power, and forms of normativity. The 'education questions' thus enable us to address the key contexts, limits and preferences that broadly shape the social

structuring of education opportunities and outcomes in particular places, and which in turn place limits upon, or enable, the materialisation of different positions in social space (Robertson and Dale, 2013: 434 - 435).

On Being Autonomous in the Era of New Public Management

Governing education in times of Globalization

In an attempt to reduce the possibility of students receiving poor teaching, policy makers have attempted to standardize elements of instruction and to structure the educational process in a way that focuses on maximizing student achievement. The state, in national or local level, has adopted even more standardized policies and programs to implement the policies of regulation. Although the findings indicate that the goal of boosting student achievement is shared among stakeholders, having a common goal seems not enough to overcome strong resistance to state and district interventions, especially as they encroach on everyday practice (Berry and Herrington, 2012).

If this tension is to be surpassed, accountability policies should be more balanced between higher - level interference and professional knowledge, and be implemented in a way that respects district agents, professional educators and parents. Berry and Herrington (2012) point to the risk that in the name of enhancing student achievement on one hand and not insulting the professional autonomy on the other, the educational process - and more specifically students - may end up even further victimized, losses of the conflicts in a system in extended turmoil.

Education policy convergence is a reality in this era of growing globalization. Such global convergence in schools policy has been widely highlighted in the relevant literature. Specifically, Forsey (2007 in Murphy, 2014) describes a new global education policy consensus that fosters school autonomy linked to

efficiency, cost - saving and an emphasis on pre-specified outcomes and measurable skills. Robertson (2008 in Murphy, 2014) understands changes to educational systems as a re-mandating pushing educators and educational institutions to prove their effectiveness through national and global testing regimes, use funds more cost-effectively, and accept salaries based on their performance. Carnoy and Rhoten (2002 in Murphy, 2014) portray an ideological set of policies that affect education globally and consist of decentralization and privatization; choice and accountability; testing and assessment.

Similarly, Hargreaves (2003) and Ball (1998) refer to a new orthodoxy of education to define this convergence. Rinne et al (2002: 643 in Murphy, 2014: 894) point to the significance of the consent established 'among the political elite in favor of decentralization, goal steering, accountability, managerialism, evaluation, choice, competition and privatization'. Other researchers (Hargreaves 2003, 2006; Ball 2006; Green 2006; Moutsios 2009; Kamens and McNeely 2010 and Ravitch 2010) have identified similar characteristics comprising the global educational agenda (see Murphy, 2014). However, researchers point out that different countries implement this agenda to different extents, and that nevertheless there has been irrefutable convergence around these educational policies over the past 30 years.

The form of this convergence and relevant debates are deeply affected by influential actors and dominant policy examples (Murphy, 2014). As discussed in previous sections, IOs with an interest in education, such as the OECD and the WB are important players in this process. The OECD is one of the IOs that progressively develop the process of policy-making globalization, along with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization (Lingard & Grek, 2007; Moutsios, 2009). Particularly, as we saw earlier, Moutsios (2009) views transnational institutions as the definers of basic educational aims for most countries. IOs, specifically the WB and the OECD, have assumed a protagonistic role in debates over educational policies (Kamens & McNeely, 2010 in Murphy, 2014), what Grek (2009) identified as externalization - international paradigms spread by IOs becoming

reference countries/ systems for national policy making.

Today the main IOs exerting strong influence on global education policies subscribe, as we have already argued, to a human capital perception. This is to say that they do not just see education as a calculable investment, but also they attempt to persuade policy makers around the world that the key focus should be to generate human resources that will provide financial returns (Moutsios, 2009). In line with this viewpoint it should be stressed that the OECD cannot be characterized as an unbiased research organization. For a number of observers this IO not only blends dry research data with writing that assumes a lot, but also plays a leading role in steering the educational debate and related developments (Robertson et al, 2007; Kamens and McNeely, 2010 in Murphy, 2014).

The philosophy underpinning such trends – 'evaluative State, the intrusion of entrepreneurship in higher education, academic and educational capitalism and New Public Management – is neo-liberalism, market superiority and economic individualism' (Yokoyama, 2008: 231). The central concept of neo-liberalism embraces not only economic doctrines, such as cost 'effectiveness, efficiency, competition, consumerism and entrepreneurial individualism, privatization and deregulation, but also such governing modes as self-regulation, responsabilization and line management' (ibid). It should be stressed however that the aspects of such neo-liberal governmentality vary depending on the political, economic, socio-cultural and historical contexts.

Foucault, a post-structuralist criticizing liberalism, viewed neo-liberalism as the rationality of government or the art of government. He introduced the notion of "governmentality", which is related to 'technologies of governance', that is the means by which the doctrine is inserted and operationalized into policy and implementation. For Foucault, the notion of governmentality is linked to the ascent of liberalism in the eighteenth century and to modern societies that reconstruct particular 'techniques of power' or 'power/knowledge', designed to observe, monitor and control individuals' behaviors situated within social and economic institutions (Yokoyama, 2008:

233). Neo-liberalism, for Foucault, cannot be understood in an extreme model that relies upon either the state's intervention or the market order. 'Governmentality', for Foucault is:

(1) The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target populations, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.

(2) The tendency which, over a long period and throughout the West, has steadily led towards the pre-eminence over all other forms (sovereignty, discipline, etc.) of this type of power which may be termed government, resulting, on the one hand, in the formation of a whole series of specific governmental apparatuses and, on the other, in the development of a whole complex of savoirs.

(3) The process, or rather the result of the process, through which the state of justice of the Middle Ages, transformed into the administrative state during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gradually becomes 'governmentalized'.
(Burchell et al, 1991: 102 - 103)

Foucault claims that the crisis of Keynesianism and the end of welfare-state intervention led the state to lose its grip (Yokoyama, 2008). The state in the post-Keynesian or neo-liberal regime can instead be interpreted as a restructuring of government 'techniques', shifting the regulatory competence of the state onto 'responsible' and 'rational' individuals (Yokoyama, 2008: 233). Hence, neo-liberalism calls for the expansion of state indirect 'techniques' to 'steer' individuals, placing the responsibility of social risks, such as illness, unemployment and poverty, on the individual who - in order to avoid/ tackle them - is encouraged to 'self-care' or be self-governed as well as to be entrepreneurial (Ibid).

As Yokoyama (2008) suggests, Foucault's perception of neo-liberalism becomes clearer when compared with classical liberalism, which he addressed in his 1979 lectures at the College de France. In neoliberalism the

state's part is positive, redefining the link between the state and the economy, which is a different concept from liberalism – a principle promoting state's laissez-faire and market dominance (Olssen et al, 2004 in Yokoyama, 2008). According to Olssen, Codd and O'Neil (2004 in Yokoyama, 2008: 233) the state in a neo-liberal regime 'conditions the market niche, so that it does not remove state power over the market and individuals'. This neoliberal oxymoron in terms of state power is explained as follows: 'while subscribing to the doctrine of the minimal state, neoliberals have promoted the development of the strong state. While advocating privatization of resourcing and decentralization of provision of social services, neoliberal governments have built stronger state structures and introduced more robust modes of centralized control and regulation. (Olsen et al, 2004: 172 in Yokoyama, 2008: 233).

The issue in neo-liberalism is not the state's socio - economic interference, rather the technologies of steering. Foucault had already established this inconsistency within the concept of neo-liberalism by the late 1970s and his notion of governmentality clarifies paradoxical neo-liberal traits (Yokoyama, 2008: 233): 'the continuity of the state's involvement; the emphasis on individual institutions' self-governance and self-regulation; the shifting of the responsibility of social risk from the state to individual institutions'. The central concept behind Foucault's 'governmentality' is that of the 'technologies of rule', which are technologies 'imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of production of certain desired effects and averting certain undesired ones' (Rose 1999: 52 in Yokoyama, 2008: 233).

Foucault divided 'technologies of rule' into two groups: technologies of the self and technologies of the market. The first refers to technologies that make people change their way of being through affecting their mindsets and lifestyles. The enterprising self is, in the Foucauldian perspective, regarded as the 'modern form of hegemonic subjectivation – which is a transformational process in which individuals are subjected to a self-referencing form by both the rationality and the technology of governing' (Yokoyama, 2008: 234). On the other hand, the technologies of the market are defined as technologies

around commerce that provide us with the opportunity to express who we are or want to be. Moreover, the two kinds of technologies are not always separable.

According to Yokoyama (2008: 234), of great significance is to point to the difference between Foucault's governmentality and New Public Management, both of which are 'embedded in neo-liberal philosophy' and 'often overlap'. These two terms have in common that they emphasize the individual or individual institutions, as 'rational self-interested subjects' (ibid). Neo-liberal 'governmentality', however, differs from New Public Management in respect of its emphasis on 'bio-power, flexibility and a devolved steering mechanism in the relationship between state and individuals' (ibid). The concept of governmentality is helpful and relevant in 'understanding how new policy technologies, like performativity, work to produce new governance subjects, inviting and inciting us to make ourselves more effective, to work on ourselves to improve our productivity and to feel guilty or inadequate if we do not' (Ball, 2003 in Ball and Junemann, 2012: 8). New Public Management, on the other hand, in Foucault's terms is a technology, which highlights line management, places emphasis on hierarchy, and the social contract tradition based upon a principal agent model in the context of administration (see Hood 1991 in Yokoyama, 2008).

Lingard et al (2005) argue (along with many others) that we need to surpass the single-dimensional national character in the study of education policy. As has already become apparent in this chapter, educational policy as a field has multiple layers, and includes a global dimension, opened up by the rising influence of international agencies such as the World Bank, the OECD and UNESCO. The argument of these authors is that the organization, scope and operation of educational policy have changed with the current focus being on the role of education in economic progress and innovation, fostered by international agencies. So they point out that the term "global" describes a level of policy connection over the national. Therefore policy debates at this level should be perceived as constituting a different level within a global policy arena in education; a policy field which is 'multi-layered, stretching from the

local to the global' (Lingard et al, 2005: 760-761).

Furthermore, Lingard et al (2005) suggest that Mann's (2000 in Lingard et al, 2005) five socio-spatial networks (local, national, international (relations between nations), trans-national (pass through national boundaries) and global, cover the globe as a whole. They emphasize the need for recognition of the constantly increasing global character of relations between national policy fields and international fields, making also reference to Bourdieu's conceptualization of fields as social rather than geographical spaces. They also highlight that under conditions of globalization the autonomy of the educational policy field has been reduced. At the same time they remark that the state is no less significant today, though through its 'reconstitution' it works in different ways (Lingard et al, 2005: 762 see also Gewirtz, 2002).

As Held and McGrew (2002: 123 in Lingard et al, 2005: 762) put it, 'The locus of effective political power can no longer be assumed to be simply national governments - effective power is 'shared and bartered by diverse forces and agencies at national, regional and international levels'. This reformation of the state is a result of the rise of a global economic arena dominated by neo-liberalism. Simultaneously, for example the influence of OECD educational indicators can be seen to establish a new global space in educational policy. Still practices of educational policy also remain 'national and very localized, with the habitus of actors situated in various positions within the field, also reflecting and affecting differing local, national and global dispositions' (Lingard et al, 2005: 774).

Sellar and Lingard (2013) see the role of the OECD and similar supranational organizations as constituting a developing global education policy field. This "infrastructure" helps to establish the globe as a 'commensurate space of measurement, and provides an important policy lever that helps lubricate education policy making within and across nations and the global economy' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013: 464). Their analysis documents the increased weight of OECD's regulation tools and of education policy more generally, now understood in terms of human capital production and productivity).

Wiseman (2010: 18 in Sellar and Lingard, 2013: 466) encapsulates this new space for policy making by stating that 'what widely available international data on education has done is create an intellectual space where educational policy making is not geographically or politically bounded but is instead bounded by the extent of the legitimated evidence used to support one decision or policy versus another'. In such a global field, one identifies a new habitus of those involved in policymaking within nations and within international structures, operating via global networks of epistemic communities (Kallo 2009 in Sellar and Ligard, 2013) with a global perspective.

There is an additional significant point that Sellar and Lingard (2013) make about the influence of a small network of policy actors in globalizing education making processes. The reconstitution of reference societies - the concept of learning and borrowing from other systems/ mechanisms (Schriewer and Martinez, 2004 in Sellar and Lingard, 2013) - and the emergence of a global education policy field are being realized via the global habitus of those involved in policy. The latter refer to the main actors in global policy networks (Ball 2012 in Sellar and Lingard, 2013), which function through a 'semantics of globalization and a policy imagination that considers the positioning of national schooling system performance within the global education policy field' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013: 468). Hence, education policy analysis today 'must also extend its purview beyond the state and the role of multilateral agencies and NGOs to include transnational business practices' (Ball, 2012: 93 in Sellar and Lingard, 2013: 481).

Lingard and Rawolle (2011: 494) draw on Bourdieu's theory of social fields to highlight the connection between different national and global education policy fields and what they refer to as 'cross field effects'. The notion of fields is used by these authors to refer to different social spaces, both national and global, in which agents operate. They identify different types of fields, such as the 'field of policy', the 'field of politics', the 'field of higher education', the 'field of business' etc (ibid). Cross-field effects are used by Lingard and Rawolle (2011), to point to the importance of considering the repercussions (in practice

and in discourse) of policy developments in fields beyond the policy field and vice versa, and between different levels of policy fields - national and global.

The knowledge economy discourse is a globalized education policy discourse constructed by supranational policy actors and specifically the OECD. Especially, the OECD's educational indicators - published annually in *Education at a glance* - attempt to deal with input – output relationships in education systems. As already noted, the OECD is also involved with the World Bank and UNESCO in the creation of *World Education Indicators*, a project which seeks to produce additional indicators in education for nations of the global south, as a complement to its members' educational indicators. Furthermore, there is an alignment of statistical categories across the OECD, Eurostat, the EU's statistical agency, UNESCO and the World Bank (Lingard and Rawolle, 2011).

Rutkowski (2007 in Lingard and Rawolle, 2011) also highlights the creation of a multilateral global space of measurement in relation to the OECD's statistics contributing to soft policy convergence in education internationally. These are 'spatial technologies of governance' helping constitute 'the global field of education policy' (Lingard and Rawolle, 2011: 496). These observations and conceptualizations move the argument beyond that of the "governance without government" and rescaling of political authority, much debated in the literature, suggesting that within the domain of education policy there has emerged a 'global education policy field that has policy effects within national education policy and policy processes' (Lingard and Rawolle, 2011: 497).

Hence, there needs to be an emphasis on the multi-scalar character of educational governance. This includes 'new forms of educational multilateralism, restructured national policy processes, enhanced policy borrowing and transfer, and new regionalisms' (Lingard and Rawolle, 2011: 499). So these authors, drawing on Bourdieu's thinking tools, argue for the need to research and theorize the actors, capitals, habitus and logics of practice of the global education policy field and the way in which, through

cross-field effects, it 'reframes policy processes and content within national education systems' (ibid).

From Government to Governance to Government in Governance

As mentioned previously, in the last decades education systems in most European countries have experienced dramatic changes. Globalization, the dominance of neo - liberalism, the emergence of the knowledge economy and the demands of the new middle classes, characteristic feature of advanced capitalist societies, have generated significant challenges for education (Hudson, 2007). There have been demands for it to be more 'pluralistic and individualized; and standardized, uniform solutions have been seen as increasingly inappropriate' to meet the needs of more diverse and heterogeneous societies (Hudson, 2007: 266). In many countries, this has triggered changes in the way in which education is governed. There has, for example, been a greater 'fragmentation of responsibility' between the state, local government, schools, individuals (teachers, pupils and parents) and the market, often accompanied by a move from 'detailed regulation to framework legislation' (Ibid).

Such changes have been perceived as part of the process of governance, during which the state provides space for other interests to play a greater role in public policy structuring and service provision. According to Hudson (2007), this idea has been challenged and more restrained theoretical accounts of governance have been produced. As we have seen in the previous section, such accounts suggest that the state is still very much an active - and not withdrawn - element of governance, though it adapts to new environments and discovers new ways of governing. The multidimensional significance of education, not only in terms of constructing and upholding national identity but also for economic growth, suggests that this is an area from which the state will not willingly abdicate its position (ibid).

A widely accepted idea during the 1990s was the weakening of the nation state's capability to govern. On the one hand, changes like the deregulation of international markets and the appearance of international structures were seen as leading to economic, political and cultural integration and convergence, shifting power away from the state (Hudson, 2007). On the other hand, processes of 'regionalization, fragmentation and decentralization of authority were moving power downwards' (Hudson, 2007: 267). The expansion of neo-liberalism with its rhetoric regarding 'choice, accountability, efficiency, consumer empowerment and privatization of the public sector, and reinforced by the rise of the new middle class enamoring individualism and choice', have been regarded as presenting challenges to the state's policymaking and steering ability (ibid). Hence, there were strong voices in favor of more decentralization of responsibility to achieve flexibility and efficiency.

Many of these developments have been perceived as leading to a process of governance, in which policy is formed via interactions among agents in different networks and service provision is shared between a number of public and private agencies. First, many saw the move from government to governance as responsible for the weakening of the state's ability to govern through the traditional "from above" way. What characterized this shift was a growing intrusion of non-state actors who became more involved in doing societal coordination for themselves with limited (or without) central government involvement, which resulted in the clouding of the boundaries between public and private sector (Loughlin, 2004; Jordan et al, 2005 in Hudson, 2007).

However, governance has been perceived by many authors as something that has been around forever - 'in the sense that there have always been interest groups from outside the official political system involved in the policy-making system' (Loughlin, 2004: 13 in Hudson, 2007: 267) and also that the state never actually did everything by itself (Dale, 2005 in Hudson, 2007). Consequently, what has been taking place is a shift in the state's methods of steering rather than a resignation of its control. The fact that the state is

calling for other players to take responsibility and tackle social issues should not be taken as a sign that the state is reneging its responsibility or losing control (Hudson, 2007).

This position is consistent with the view that the complexity of the issues that the societies face today requires coordination between the state, the market and civil society. Hence, although the state could be viewed as being on the run, still it has retained its key principles and is an active institution of governance (see Kooiman, 2003; Davies, 2002; Pierre & Peters, 2000 in Hudson, 2007). Some writers move one step further arguing that governance may even be leading to new forms of government and notions such as privatization and new public management do require more and not less regulation (Jordan et al, 2005). Such forms of governance 'complement' rather than 'eclipse' government and fuse a mixture, which causes new 'hybrid forms of regulation or 'soft governance' like 'self-monitoring 'and 'self-organization' (benchmarking, best practices etc.) (Hudson, 2007: 268). Bache (2003 in Hudson, 2007) even suggests that governance leads to the enhancement of the state's position and gives room for the state to successfully accomplish its policy goals.

The increasing significance of education for a country's well-being and competitiveness has presented the state with a 'quandary – education is too important for the state to relax its hold completely, yet, at the same time, its means of regulation must not constrain the potential for finding new ways of meeting or adapting to increasingly diverse and changeable societies and problems' (Hudson, 2007: 277). One way to accomplish this seems to be the shift in focus from regulating the input to controlling the output side of education - demands for quality controls; standardized testing; assessment. This has been complemented by the introduction of more 'subtle "soft" forms of control' such as dissemination of information and joint analysis and linked, for example, to the growing use of assessment and quality control (Ibid). Specifically, the development of internal or self-evaluation methods, by which the educational institutions regulate themselves, seems to be an effective mode on the part of the state that has even provided opportunities for other

stakeholders - parents and pupils - to take part in regulating education. Consequently, the state is clearly keeping the presence of government in governance, 'albeit in varying ways and to varying degrees, thus lending support to the newer, more subtle theories of governance' (Hudson, 2007: 277).

Sifakakis et al (2015) use the term "good governance" to describe the aspirations of the European Commission regarding the elimination of national governments' flaws such as bureaucracy and failure to implement new policies. 'Technologies' of Governance (Foucault, 2003 in Sifakakis et al, 2015) - e.g. indicators and benchmarks, best practices and monitoring - have become invasive regarding the shaping of EU member states' educational policies. Such dynamics produce 'regimes of truth' and shape education professionals' subjectivities (Dale 2009, Ball 2010 in Sifakakis et al, 2015). The shift from government to governance has been spread in many parts of the world and in Europe specifically, but the nature of this shift depends on various factors including the recent crisis at the economic, social, and political levels.

The aim for decentralization and participation of civil society in decision-making processes for education has been supported as the solution that shall tackle the lack of trust and funding of public schools (Sifakakis et al, 2015). Distributed administration and the decentralization of decision-making have been promoted as the alternative to the established bureaucratic centralism, hence Sifakakis et al (2015) point to a different aspect of these new forms of governance. As policy and decision making in education have gradually adopted more and more the practices and principles which derive from fields outside education - such as the economy, the media and the field of politics - the education systems and policy making have abolished part of their autonomy and specificity (see also Ball and Youdell 2008, Gunter and Forrester 2009 in Sifakakis et al, 2015).

To conclude, neo-liberalism and the shift from government to governance played a significant role in the rise of policy as numbers both nationally and

globally. As Ozga (2009: 150) persuasively argues, 'data production and management were and are essential to the new governance turn; constant comparison is its symbolic feature, as well as a distinctive mode of operation'. Further, 'Data support and create new kinds of policy instruments that organize political relations through communication/information' (ibid). The contemporary centrality of education policy to economic policy via human capital theory and theories of productivity has also contributed to the OECD's enhanced global reach, and is vigorously stimulated by the OECD. The priority given to policy explanations for the OECD's comparative data, as opposed to culturalist and structural inequality accounts or a cross mix of these with policy explanations is a critical aspect of the OECD's strategy (ibid).

Clarifying Autonomy

Autonomy is about taking control of our undertakings, defining our goals and planning to achieve our needs through our own powers (Rose, 1996: 154).

If a neo liberal government is to fully realise its goals, individuals must come to recognise and act upon themselves as both free and responsible (Rose, 1999: 68).

Educational transformations demolishing centralized education bureaucracies have been occurring all over Europe. Their principal target is to enhance autonomy at local government and institutional levels (e.g. the new Autonomy Initiative, see Honig and Rainey, 2012: 467) and to increase educational institutions' decision making authority. Such educational policies focus primarily on 'increasing schools' decision-making authority as a lever of school improvement'. Consequently, new forms of regulation in education are being established (Helgoy et al, 2007). Lægreid and Christensen (2006) perceive the notion of regulation as the public activity, which is normatively established in the law and the legislative processes intending to supervise

and control what needs to be regulated. Hence, deregulation involves a decrease of centrally directed activity (Helgoy et al, 2007).

To be particular, the introduction of privatization in public education followed by the marketization of state schooling within devolved structures of control in which responsibilities are transferred to municipalities are paradigms of deregulation. On the other hand, re-regulation takes place when central government reclaims control - often indirectly - by target setting, performance measurement and quality indicators (Helgoy et al, 2007). Thus, deregulation emphasizing increased local autonomy seems to 'accommodate mechanisms, which paradoxically tend to increase central control' (Helgoy et al, 2007: 198).

A consequence of autonomy, understood as enhanced freedom and capacity to act (Lundquist, 1987 in Helgoy et al, 2007) at a local level is that the central government loses its control. However Helgoy et al (2007) highlight and explore the existence of an interaction and overlapping of state control and local autonomy. This interaction/ overlapping on the one hand consists of a considerable degree of independence for local political and professional decision makers and on the other the NPM has involved the use of central political decision making to achieve local autonomy. Therefore in practice, a 'clear-cut separation between autonomy and control and politics and professionalism is difficult to uphold' (ibid). The growing influence of the NPM in the field of education has a significant effect, enhancing the connection between politics and professionalism in significant ways. Devolution and NPM reforms are common ideas implying a shift from strong hierarchical educational systems (government) to decentralization and local autonomy (governance) including an extension of actors influencing education (Helgoy et al, 2007).

Cribb and Gewirtz (2007: 203) attempt to unpack and debate the linked concepts of autonomy and control by distinguishing between three dimensions of this pair of concepts: 'Loci and modes of autonomy, domains of autonomy - control and loci and modes of control'. Engaging with the first notion, they link loci and modes of autonomy to the issue of whose autonomy

is in question and how it is being applied. Autonomy presupposes heterogeneous educational agents (individual, collective and institutional). Often, increasing one agent's autonomy decreases that of another - e.g. increasing local municipal authorities autonomy could result in a decrease of collective agents' autonomy (union activity etc.) (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007).

Social and political life is characterized by continuous shifts, concessions and conflicts around the extent of autonomy of different agents. Hence, if one seeks to assess the effects on autonomy of new modes of regulation, there needs to be a focus on different agents and be 'sensitive to the differential impact of policies on different agents, including the way in which one agent's autonomy can foster or hinder the autonomy of others' (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007: 204). This second dimension is linked to the areas over which autonomy or control are being exerted and answers the question: "autonomy or control over what?" A classic way of understanding different domains of autonomy - control relates to the relative freedom classroom teachers have to make decisions about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. It is usual for one or two of these areas to be somewhat fixed, while relative freedom is allowed for the rest. Thus, as well as conceptually distinguishing between domains of autonomy, there is a need to be conscious regarding the way they interconnect and of the extent to which they are either separated from one another or jointly constitutive (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007).

The last dimension responds to the questions "*who are the agents of control and how is their agency exercised?*" Individual, collective and institutional agents, as well as 'being subject to control have the potential to exercise control' and sometimes the locus of control is unclear (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007: 205). For example, agents do not always exercise control self-consciously and deliberately. Control might also be the product of apparently impersonal processes (e.g. in markets, control is exercised in a range of ways using different procedures and instruments of influence). For example, contemporary governments are using a combination of 'input' controls (e.g. targeting of resources) and 'output' controls (e.g. performance measurement) (see Helgøy & Homme, 2007 in Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007). It is also possible

to distinguish between different styles of control - e.g. how far the forms of influence that 'control agents' use are bluntly coercive as opposed to gently persuasive.

To exemplify these complex ideas, Cribb and Gewirtz (2007: 206) refer to the educational autonomy at the level of the individual teacher autonomy, where the arguments that can be put forward are that autonomy is a 'precondition for the exercise of teachers' professional expertise, and that it can be a source of job satisfaction, health and well-being for teachers, a source of creativity, experimentation and variety and a source of effectiveness'. Autonomy is of great significance for educators because of the nature of their professional expertise. Technical - subject specific knowledge is not adequate, since an educator's job is about much more than meeting specified goals. Similarly, job satisfaction, creativity and ultimately effectiveness are directly linked to the extent of freedom to choose what and how to teach and also to the extent to which one is able to take part in decision - making regarding the conditions in which she teaches. On the other hand, Cribb and Gewirtz (2007) recognize arguments of educational agents in favor of state control. Their main argument endorses the views of those committed to social justice in education and regards the ensuring of equal access as of major significance.

To guarantee equal access, they argue, there needs to be a certain extent of state regulation. In order to make their argument plausible, they refer to the case of England's national curriculum as a means of establishing an equal entitlement to a proper standard of education. They also refer to arguments made about the importance of bureaucratic forms of organization in underpinning both fairness and social order (e.g. du Gay, 2000 in Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007). Furthermore, they argue that as the debates around multiculturalism and faith-based schooling indicate, diversity, like autonomy itself, comes with a price. National curricula are not just 'defended on the basis of a commitment to equal access to education but also on the basis of a commitment to access to, at least in large measure, a common educational experience' (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007: 208). Such an experience has the potential to promote social cohesion and to tackle forms of social, economic

and cultural fragmentation and instability that could be triggered by non-state forms of control, e.g. the use of market mechanisms or privatization (see Arnott & Menter, 2007 in Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007).

When referring to autonomy, a seemingly widespread assumption - normative presumption is that autonomy is good and control is bad. However as Cribb and Gewirtz (2007) suggest while autonomy is a notion to be valued and worth supporting or promoting in many conditions and contexts, autonomy does not outplay every other good. In fact, of great significance would be a debate concerning the value and different forms of and balances between autonomy and control. When one seeks to be in a position to make conclusions about when - where - for whom autonomy is something useful and effective and also to be able to assess policies that have altered patterns of autonomy and control, there is a strong need for a detailed understanding of the 'conceptual, empirical and normative complexities' surrounding autonomy and control as well as a good understanding of arguments about the value of autonomy and control (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007: 212).

Cribb and Gewirtz's (2007: 209) aim is to trouble the above 'blanket assumptions' - an *alias* for the perception that teacher autonomy is good and limiting it in any way is bad. There is strong argumentation backing the extensions of educational autonomy, but there are also good points for reducing it. Inequality and lack of social cohesion could result both from limiting or expanding autonomy / state control. Hence, the focus of the debate regarding the value of a particular form of autonomy - control should be pointed to its specific 'loci, modes and consequences in specific domains' (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007: 209). Such an account demonstrates that the relationship between autonomy and control is complicated and 'should not be read in a zero-sum fashion', that is, as 'if increases in control are necessarily inversely proportionate to decreases in autonomy or vice versa' (ibid). There is a number of ways in which autonomy and control overlap and, if anything, the theoretical link between autonomy and control has been evident by the shift from government to governance (new modes of regulation) where control is exerted via the practices of autonomy at different levels.

Cribb and Gewirtz argue that the development of a more differentiated view of autonomy is essential. They suggest that it is vital to differentiate the many different ways in which autonomy can be structured and constrained and the 'different modes of influence and degrees of coerciveness involved in the production of autonomous subjects' (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007: 212). There is a big difference, they note, between the state compelling educators to follow a very specific route in terms of what to teach, how to teach and how to assess it and the alternative of the state introducing a set of curricular objectives and pedagogical directions which, whilst restricting teachers to a considerable extent, are thereby developed to encourage creativeness and progressive practices on the part of educators (Cribb and Gewirtz, 2007). Despite being simplistic in their argument, to say so, they endorse the view that sees both autonomy and control as necessary and suggest that what is at issue is really the balance between these directly associated ideas and their different forms when combined.

It comes as no surprise that recent moves to fragment and devolve authority have been coupled in many cases by an intensification of central government steering, generating arguments about the fact that devolution systems of governance actually require and produce intensified central government control or even epitomize a central steering mechanism themselves (Majone, 1996; Bache, 2003, cited in Hudson, 2007). Evidently, as autonomy can be seen as a form of control or steering, so control can strengthen the exercise of autonomy. Behind this thought is a philosophical position, namely, that autonomy 'cannot exist in a vacuum but is always exercised within systems of constraints and conventions which at one and the same time both circumscribe action and make it possible' (Cribbs and Gewirtz, 2007: 211). This interaction between control and autonomy is an unavoidable and persistent phenomenon and 'parallels the Foucauldian notion of power as neither simply bad nor good, neither destructive nor productive' (Ibid).

In a similar manner, Hatcher (2012: 39) explores the sensitive issue of the powers that should be 'exercised by the local authority over individual schools

in order to ensure that they conform to policy democratically decided at the local authority level'. Educational institutions usually welcome increased autonomy and might appear hesitant to the interference of local authorities. On the other hand, referring to democracy - in terms of the democratic educational choices made in the local authority level - is rather pointless without the power to translate that policy into action in the school level (Hatcher, 2012). Ranson (2010 in Hatcher, 2012) suggests that in order for the vital role of the local authority in the layered system of school and community governance to be recognized and promoted, then its power and influence should be made clear and strong. As Fielding and Moss (2011) also suggest, the main role of the local authority should be through its engagement with schools to develop a local educational plan.

The issue that these authors raise is about the democratic governance of schools. So they suggest that the plan thus generated would have the democratic acceptability of a structure that has been produced after local/regional deliberations. At the same time, such a project would enhance the quality of provision and foster equality. This presupposes the power and also the financial and staff resources to bolster pedagogical and curricular advancement (e.g. opportunities for collaborative knowledge and practice transfer and innovation between schools, to ensure inclusive provision in an area, to support schools in addressing problems and to fund initiatives). Autonomy of educational institutions in such a context could be restrained or increased depending on whether it conflicts (or not) with community interests or raises social justice concerns (Hatcher, 2012).

New Public Management and Control

Over the past 30 years public sector management and service have been reorganized according to the so-called New Public Management (Murphy, 2014). A general assumption within much of the work on NPM is that reforms under this umbrella are intended to address problems like underperformance

of the public sector. This reorganization involves - among others - the establishment of business type models of organization in the public sector, an urge for greater efficiency, a shift from bureaucratic procedures to the empowerment of management and also the use of targets and benchmarks in order to guarantee compliance with policy and efficiency goals (Ibid). The OECD appears to be a major patron of new public management in different sectors of public provision (Lingard and Grek, 2007), but also the generator of the increasing demand for evidence-based decision-making. As we have seen in earlier sections of this chapter, this preference has been identified as a comparative shift in education policy design and development (see Martens, 2007 in Murphy, 2014) based on best-practice models, which are selected and transplanted into different contexts in a form of 'government by comparison' (Murphy, 2007: 54).

Similarly, the restructuring and modernization of public sector educational services is a process closely related to the notion of NPM. It has been labeled as the dominant standard for public management in North America, Australasia, the Pacific Rim, the UK and parts of Scandinavia - a long standing feature of the re - arrangement of the public sector globally (Hall et al. 2012). In England, for example, this shift began under the Thatcher governments (1979–1990) and continued by the Major (1990–1997), Blair (1997 -2007) and Brown (2007–2010) governments. So, NPM has now been underway for more than 30 years, a period during which significant changes occurred to its nature (ibid).

There has been a lot of debate concerning the essence of NPM and is undoubtedly located within a neo-liberal ideology that seeks the replacement of established, supposedly outdated and inefficient practices (Osborne, 2006 in Hall et al, 2012). Replacement works through a process involving the pathologization of the organizations of public sector and their employees, which are perceived as problems that require solutions (Clarke and Newman 1997, in Hall et al, 2012). Key elements of NPM are competition, marketization, the introduction of private sector types of management and explicit measures of performance (McLaughlin et al. 2002; Osborne, 2006 in

Hall et al. 2012). Education has been one of the public sectors where NPM has thrived. This is evident in the rise of quasi-markets for public sector educational provision, which involves business competition among schools and other educational institutions (Hall et al, 2012).

In a similar manner, standardized testing has placed an emphasis on performativity for everybody involved in such processes. Hence, what Hatcher (2005 in Hall et al. 2012) identified as head teacher managerialism came as a natural evolution. The rationale behind those public sector reforms was the generation of new 're - modeled', more effective and efficient public provision, responsive to the needs of 'customers' and in certain cases more 'transferrable to the private sector' (Hall et al. 2012: 175). Claims regarding the efficiency, effectiveness and overall gains of NPM have been scrutinized by many as 'limited, non-existent and illusory' (Hall et al. 2012: 176). However, beyond efficiency and effectiveness we could consider the socio-ideological aspect of NPM reforms in the field of education. For example, Hall et al. (2012) view NPM as a form of identity work, an effort seeking to actively transform the professional identities of those involved in public services as part of a 'wider process' that aims to 're-model schools and teachers' (ibid). When those employees are being pathologized (Newman and Clarke, 2009 in Hall et al. 2012) - positioned in 'deficit terms as problems to be solved' (Hall et al. 2012: 177), then NPM shapes accordingly their identities and professional practices.

Furthermore, Gewirtz et al (2007) problematize the way local autonomy is being played out - perceived within the NPM discourse. As we have showed in the previous section, they argue that the idea of NPM promotes a degree of independence for local and national decision makers, while at the same time it utilizes central authorities to frame local autonomy - thus the boundaries between autonomy and control are blurred. Both devolution and NPM educational differentiations have common characteristics suggesting a shift from government to governance, from educational hierarchies to decentralization and local autonomy including an expansion of those involved in educational decision making (ibid). The policy paradigm of the UK offers us

insights on the importance of the national context - despite globalization - in defining the way NPM is being unfolded. Globalization processes have blurred the borders between local and international policy agendas, but the national level is still strong because it reflects local priorities and thus translates international policies locally (Ozga and Jones, 2006).

Within the studies on NPM there are two interrelating issues: The connection between NPM and governance and their repercussions for the culture of educational structures. 'Regulation' has been used by governments as a way of controlling or 'steering' the policy process, while as Pollitt & Bouckaert (2004: 6 in Arnott and Menter, 2007: 252) stress, while 'public management reform is usually thought of as a means to an end, not an end in itself'. NPM has 'multiple ends', which are shaped by 'prevailing local political forces – the kind of political “starting point” from which the 'spread of new ideas and practices begins' (ibid). Such a starting point is significant in the sense that it forms the strategies used subsequently as part of NPM (Arnott and Menter, 2007). Arnott and Menter highlight that despite the use of similar NPM strategies by governments, these choices are directly linked to a country's culture or historical background. Context significance has been also stressed in other comparative studies of education (Crossley & Watson, 2003 in Arnott and Menter, 2007). Such approaches take a 'socio - historical and sociocultural stance' that recognizes the 'complex interplay between history, culture, national context and policy' (Arnott and Menter, 2007: 252).

The common reality of NPM is that as local democratic structures have been weakened, then their place is being filled by a combination of national agencies - often managed by the private sector - and private sector structures. Hence, as stated by Crouch (2003 in Arnott and Menter, 2007) education has become big business, based on another key feature of NPM, the culture of performativity that guarantees compliance and (managerial) accountability. The mixture of testing, league tables for schools, targets and target setting, key performance indicators, standards and inspection builds a discussion that oversimplifies comparison and where failure and success can be easily identified (Arnott and Menter, 2007). An important consequence of

this new regime is that it does not allow adequate time for democratic structures - public and professional participation - to scrutinize and question the related procedures, as these happen too fast. It is worth noting that the issue of democratic deficit in current policy making has been of concern to many educational and social science researchers (e.g. Crouch, 2003; Mahony et al, 2005 in Arnott and Menter, 2007; Robertson, 2013).

To conclude, Arnott and Menter (2007: 259) suggest that the form of NPM in different countries in relation to educational policy has been influenced by the 'cultural positioning of education', which is directly related to 'national identity'. This means that while globalization might be a 'convergent force', nationalism is (and always has been) a 'divergent force' (ibid). NPM however finds its way and develops in subtle ways (e.g. Sifakakis et al, 2016) while at the same time established democratic forms give their place to new more fluid working relationships. Policy analyses in different national education systems in Europe and beyond have documented that while different balances are evident in different countries, the influence of neo-liberalism is evident in all of them.

Engaging with Bernstein's Conceptual Grammar

According to Robertson and Sorensen (2017), the work on the OECD's governance - regulation tools that use numerical data as a means of governing - is rather limited as an approach and in fact it neglects issues of power, the social relations among the actors involved in educational processes and the identities that are formed as an outcome of policy formation and implementation processes. In this article, they set out to explore the possibilities that Bernstein's concepts offer in the systematic analysis of the worlds of educators and international agencies ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically. To be particular:

'Ontologically Bernstein is asking about how our social worlds, dispositions, identities and desires are constituted, as well as how they are disturbed, challenged and transformed, and through what mechanisms with what outcomes'. 'Epistemologically he guides us to theory-informed description that then moves to levels of abstraction, to determine the links between the real (or social base) and the structuring mechanisms at work, and the relations within and between. Methodologically, he asks us to be attentive to emergences, or 'announcements'; in other words, to refuse to regard categories as fixed and frozen, and the social world as unchanging (Robertson and Sorensen, 2017: 4).

Robertson and Sorensen (2017) focus their study on how the OECD's interference in structuring teacher policies impacted the discourse of the so-called "good teacher". Thus, in order to uncover and describe the shifts in related processes, they introduce several concepts from Bernstein's theory, starting from his theorization of the field of symbolic control and the concept of pedagogic device. In his analysis of the former, Bernstein makes a point about agents who may appear alike but they act in different fields, like for example psychologists who operate in the cultural field and others who operate in the symbolic field. Such differences could produce 'different dispositions, interests, motivations and ideologies' (Bernstein, 2001: 25 in Robertson and Sorensen, 2017: 4). But what are the repercussions for the symbolic agents, of the weakening or blurring of the boundary between the symbolic and the cultural/ economic field? Especially, what are the repercussions of 'rescaling' significant parts of national state 'powers' to 'global agencies such as the OECD - as this takes place in education policies - 'for how we understand the field of symbolic control' (ibid)? What are the implications for the notion of the symbolic control due to this close relation between the OECD and transnational capital and to what extent these types of symbolic agents move on as an outcome of transformations in governance, or form new structures (Robertson and Sorensen, 2017)?

Bernstein's notion of "pedagogic device" is of importance for grasping the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (Robertson and Sorensen, 2017). By pedagogic device Bernstein means 'the relay itself, as well as what is relayed; the relay itself has rules that regulate what can be relayed, and these rules are ideological' (Bernstein, 2000: 28 in Robertson

and Sorensen, 2017: 5). That is to say they contain ideas about the way the world could, and should operate. TALIS - as a device - uses hierarchy based on comparison between countries (from best to worst) without elaborating on the different contexts. Moreover, it sees educational systems as national - leaving the local context aside - since it is the national context (the governments) that usually funds the OECD's interventions (Robertson and Sorensen, 2017).

It needs to be stressed though, that not all educational systems are structured and managed nationally, leading to a number of layers that the relay needs to breach in order for it to work (ibid). The content of what is being transmitted by the device is based on / transfers ideas on how the educators should educate - as far as TALIS is concerned - and also on ways of surpassing their shortcomings, through a 'repair function offered by the OECD' (Robertson and Sorensen, 2015: 5). Therefore, Bernstein's pedagogic device is valuable because it helps researchers describe the links between creation, transmission and acquisition processes essential in shaping pedagogic identities: in Robertson and Sorensen's (2017: 5) research the potential for the OECD of using TALIS as the device for 'disrupting an old teacher identity and inserting a new one'.

Robertson and Sorensen suggest that the OECD is not only 'a nodal agent of symbolic control' that operates like a state globally, but also uses tools such as TALIS in a strategic manner as a pedagogic device to alter educators' identities into 'a part of, and producing, competitive knowledge economies' (2017: 7). Furthermore, they argue that the connection that the OECD attempts to establish between TALIS and PISA data sets might provide a considerable amount of power in the future for the OECD to 'govern pedagogically' and to become a 'powerful actor in the symbolic field'. At the same time, they raise the question of whether the OECD could continue to 'play a central role, as a global nodal point, in the face of tightening national boundaries, populist political projects and a growing sense that neoliberalism has delivered to the ruling class but not the middle and working classes', which educators are also part of (Robertson and Sorensen, 2017: 13 - 16).

Similarly, Singh (1997) presents Bernstein's model of pedagogic communication and shows its contribution for analyzing emerging issues in educational contexts. She explains key concepts from Bernstein's model and shows their importance in the analysis of transformations of equity policies and curricular justice in Queensland, Australia, suggesting 'research questions made possible by the concepts' (Singh, 1997: 5). Bernstein (1990, 1996 in Singh, 1997) describes pedagogic discourse as an ensemble of rules or processes for the structuring and dissemination of knowledge in pedagogic interactions. Such discourses act as principles of re - contextualization. Pedagogic discourse is in fact a 'principle or rule "which embeds two discourses: a discourse of skills of various kinds (instructional discourse) and their relations to each other, and a discourse of social order (regulative discourse)" (Bernstein, 1990: 46 in Singh, 1997: 6).

Re - contextualization refers to 'the rules or procedures by which educational knowledge is moved from one educational site to another' (Singh, 1997: 7). Such a movements leave room for alterations in power and control relations and thus in 'ideological meaning' (ibid). Bernstein's concept of re - contextualization offers researchers the opportunity to 'analyze how practices of pedagogic communication directly or indirectly relay dominant power and control relations and thus regulate cultural reproduction and change' (: 126 in Singh, 1997: 7).

Furthermore, Singh (2014: 3) understands Bernstein's concept of TPS as a 'conceptual device for critical policy scholars of educational globalization'. She suggests that the principles of the market regulate more and more the 'selection, organization and evaluation of learning, what is deemed valid learning, how it is to be taught and what is recognized as valid acquisition of learning' (Singh, 2014: 4). Singh (2014), utilizing the concept of pedagogic device, argues that state control is increasingly sidestepped by global flows of capital, communication and information, leading to what appears as the weakening of the power of the nation - state.

However, Singh (2014) agrees with many other researchers that the nation - state's influence is still there. In this context, Bernstein's concepts help researchers explore the changes in the structuring of discursive codes in the shift from education to learning and the impact of the state, in its new form, in the production, recontextualisation and evaluation of these discursive codes. As Singh (2014: 5) explains, discourse refers to 'systems of meanings' and 'codes' refer to 'communication principles, which select and integrate these meanings'. Bernstein (2001a: 365 in Singh, 2014: 5) focuses on the 'voice of pedagogic discourse' - the 'ensemble of principles/ rules of the pedagogic device', on the argument that the pedagogic device 'is the principal producer of symbolic control as well as of social destinies' (Tyler, 2010: 149 in Singh, 2014: 5).

Singh (2014: 6) refers to Tyler's (2010) work, which shows how the discursive roles are recontextualized to preserve the control of the state over education via 'new modes of pedagogic governance' (see also Kaner, Morgan and Tsatsaroni, 2014). In globalized conditions, 'control over the evaluative rule of the pedagogic device' becomes the way through which the state tries to 'reassert control over the increasing proliferation of modes of knowledge distribution and recontextualisation through new circuits or networks of pedagogic communication' (Singh, 2014: 6). Singh (2014: 7) exemplifies this idea by referring to the role played by international testing in education today. Evaluation as testing has been repositioned in an 'ensemble of techniques, instruments, data banks and machine logics of the state (international, supranational and nation - state)', at a time when the nation state increasingly loses power 'over the rules of knowledge dissemination and recontextualization' , and so it tries to 'exert control over evaluation and credentialing'.

As Foucault (1979: 20 in Singh, 2014: 7) writes, the state through 'general tactics of governmentality' has redefined 'what is within its competence and what is not, what needs to be outsourced, privatized and what is kept public'. Further, as Singh notes, the evaluative process of the pedagogic device is not only about international testing, but it also refers to structuring of the self

governing pedagogic subject. Her study on TPS reflects on the expansion of the field of symbolic control and the cultural field, as 'knowledge increasingly becomes the dominant mode of economic production' (Singh, 2014: 10).

According to Tsatsaroni et al, (2015) the critical literature on education policy focuses on three significant notions: modernization, NPM and governance. Modernization is about re - regulational trajectories/ political programs, which take place in education while nation - states develop and foster their regulative frames in times of globalization and weakening of welfare (ibid). Governance is another important concept, which is used as an analytical tool, or just as a generic term referring to the way educational practices and services are regulated in the modern local or global contexts through the use of new regulation tools (Tsatsaroni et al, 2015). Tsatsaroni et al, (2015) suggest that these notions are of importance in the analysis of current policies and raise 3 significant concerns/ issues: First the issue of democracy and the relevant concerns/ repercussions regarding the establishment and operation of international networks in the fields of education and decision making. Second the issue of power and control in education. Particularly, the new forms of educational governance represent a factual change that goes beyond the introduction of NPM practices. The last issue refers to the processes through which the control is exercised in today's national education systems.

The relevant literature indicates that governance is a complex concept involving deconcentration, diversification, flexibilization and centralization processes (see also Ball and Junemman, 2012). Tsatsaroni et al, (2015) suggest that the notions of governance and governmentality, could be developed and benefit further through Bernstein's sociological theory of symbolic control and totally pedagogized society (TPS) (1990, 2000, 2001a, b, c. in Tsatsaroni et al, 2015). Bernstein's symbolic control refers to the field, the agencies and the agents specializing in dominant discursive codes that shape legitimate ways of thinking, relating and feeling (Tsatsaroni et al, 2015b). Symbolic control is defined as 'the means whereby consciousness is given specialized form and distributed through forms of communication which relay a given distribution of power and dominant cultural categories'

(Bernstein, 1990: 134 in Tsatsaroni et al, 2015). Bernstein identifies two types of agencies that produce discursive codes: The ones funded by governments and operate in the field of symbolic control and those that receive funding from commercial interests and operate in the cultural field - a division of the field of economic production (see Bernstein 2001a; Singh, 2014). Bernstein (1990 in Tsatsaroni et al, 2015) suggests that the intrusion of the latter agencies into the education field blurs the distinction between the cultural field and the field of symbolic control.

Furthermore, the notion of TPS refers to the transformations in the production, circulation and use of knowledge and mainly the processes and practices of pedagogization in the age of globalization. Tsatsaroni et al (2015), refer to several scholars from critical policy studies who have used the concept of TPS to make sense of changes in the education field, which are usually approached through the concepts of governance and governmentality. So they refer to Robertson's (2011, 2012 and 2013 in Tsatsaroni et al, 2015) contribution, who studies educational transformations triggered by the actions of supranational organizations, and uses the notion of boundary to interpret alterations in power and control relations. A significant contribution from Robertson's analyses, according to these authors, is her conception of the international tools, which are utilized in educational contexts as pedagogic devices that govern nationally and produce legitimate knowledge (see Tsatsaroni et al, 2015b; Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014). They also point to Tyler's (2010 in Tsatsaroni et al, 2015) contribution to the discussion whose work further enriches the studies that connect the concepts of governance and TPS. This especially by arguing that international data attempt to re-center state control over education via standard setting validation in a decentralized context. Thus, what takes place is the introduction, by the state, of new forms of regulation of the expanding field of symbolic control, and the notion of TPS captures the rising pedagogisation of society, which reconfigures individuals and institutions so as to respond adequately to the demands of the new global world (Tsatsaroni et al, 2015b).

Tsatsaroni and Evans (2014) also argue for the significance of Bernstein's

analysis of the structuring of pedagogic institutions and discourses and suggest that his emphasis on changing forms of educational knowledge and practices could potentially illuminate important shifts, such as from education to (lifelong) learning; particularly how the advent of a society of skills and “competencies” relates to a Totally Pedagogised Society (TPS) (Bernstein, 2000, 2001 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014). In contemporary societies, the state functions in such a way as to ensure that there is less and less space or time left that is not pedagogised (Bernstein, 2001 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014). Thus, the advent of TPS means that across ever-widening areas of everyday life and occupational contexts, people are being subjected increasingly to pedagogic interventions.

Particularly useful in understanding such transformations in education is Bernstein’s distinction between two opposing pedagogical models in the process of transmission, acquisition and evaluation of knowledge, namely competence and performance models, roughly corresponding to “traditional” and “progressive” forms of pedagogic practice (see also Moore, 2013). Drawing also on Moore and Jones’s (2007 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014) work, based on Bernstein, they discuss the notion of competency. They argue that dominant educational policy discourses on skills, rely on a restricted conceptualization of the concept of competence, which leads to a decontextualized notion of skills, empty of any discipline - based content. They conclude that what separates competency from earlier understandings of the concept of competence is the fact that ‘competency draws on behaviorist notions of performance, while ignoring other traditions of social science research which have more complex (implicit or explicit) definitions of competence’ (Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014: 171). Furthermore, utilizing Bernstein’s concepts these authors suggest that the shift to new forms of governing (e.g. through data and standards) is coupled with a move from competence to “new performance” (competency) pedagogical models (Sarakinioti, Tsatsaroni, & Stamelos, 2011 in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014) – a move also suggested by Ball’s (2008) use of performativity, describing the excessive emphasis on performance that is pervasive in current education (or public) policy discourses (Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014).

Tsatsaroni and Evans conclude that the tools of comparison, produced and promoted by supranational organizations, exemplify a range of concepts that researchers have been using to portray global transitions in the field of education; namely: *the idea of a new mode of governing in education (and the public sector); the idea of de-differentiation of education institutions with the weakening of boundaries between e.g. formal and informal education, and between education and the world of work and life experiences; the idea of a performative society providing new spaces for identity formation; and the advent of knowledge as genericism and trainability as the mode of socialisation into the Totally Pedagogised Society (TPS). The emerging international policy discourse uses a human capital approach—in pursuit of economic efficiency, in the context of international competitiveness and globalisation. This is only one, from among all of the social scientific perspectives that could be used to understand the world and act in society* (in Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014: 179-180).

Their concern is to preserve a range of social science standpoints on educational policy research, so that supranational agencies and their international studies do not monopolize the concept of knowledge and skills. An obvious negative effect, they argue, is the pathologisation of countries, which fail to perform to standards — not necessarily by the sponsors, but by sections of the media, political parties, and new educational agencies (e.g. national assessment bodies). However, a less obvious one, they argue, is that the generic mode of knowledge that such international surveys promote may contribute to (and amplify) the social reproduction of existing divisions and inequalities, rather than help to change and progress towards a learning society.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods

ECEC in Greece

From the inception of the Greek ECEC there has been a distinction between education and care that structured two types of early years organizations, namely kindergartens and care centres (Papaprokopiou and Kammenou, 2012). The first category aims to address children's educational needs, while the latter focuses on care and welfare (ibid). Traditionally kindergartens have been running under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and care centres have been regulated by the Ministry of Health and nowadays by the Ministry of the Interior (Papaprokopiou and Kammenou, 2012).

That tradition was established back in 1896 when the Greek state initiated its efforts to introduce early years provision, which led to the first public kindergarten (1922) and state day care centres (1926) (Papaprokopiou and Kammenou, 2012). The dichotomy between the two types of early years organizations was made official by the Greek state, since there were 450 kindergartens in 1938 and just 8 state - care centres in 1936 (Papaprokopiou, 2003). It should be noted that state welfare policies, at the time, supported private institutions and particularly philanthropic initiatives (ibid). In 1935 there was some progress through the introduction of daily programs and trained staff, however child care centres operated - and had been operating for almost forty years like asylums / care institutions (Papaprokopiou, 2003).

Until 1960 state day care organizations' main purpose was to enhance language and literacy skills for the Greek rural populations. It was not until 1988 that day care centres introduced educational curricular activities; though their orientation was basically towards childcare and not education (Papaprokopiou and Kammenou, 2012). According to Petrogiannis (2013) the EU membership (since 1981) deeply impacted Greece's policy agenda on ECEC. The "work - family reconciliation policy agenda" has offered further

recognition to the significance of ECEC and provided economic support for ECEC provision. At the same time, in Greece there were significant efforts to improve and further develop public ECEC (Karamessini, 2008 in Petrogiannis, 2013).

To be particular, in 1997 Greece had the lowest development of childcare provision among EU member states. However, since 1998 there has been progress in terms of the extension of public ECEC facilities and coverage rates (Karamessini, 2008 in Petrogiannis). The so - called 'new era' progressed until 2004, when the ECEC provision was transferred from the Ministry of Health and Welfare to local authorities (municipalities), in 'an attempt to decentralise the administrative system and engage local communities' (Petrogiannis, 2013: 3). More specifically, it has been argued (Papaprokopiou, 2013) that the decisive shift was the result of general public demand, children and families' growing needs and pressure exerted by the relevant European policies.

Furthermore, Petrogiannis (2013: 3) typifies the field of Greek ECEC as a 'divisional system' or a 'split model'. Kindergartens are part of early childhood education and belong to formal pre-primary provision for children between 4 and 6 years of age (Petrogiannis, 2013). These institutions run under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and follow a national curriculum designed and developed recently (ibid). On the other hand, early childhood care runs mainly by the Municipalities and thus falls under the Ministry of Interior. These institutions provide their services to children between 7 months and up to 5 years of age - at the age of 4 parents may choose to register their children at kindergartens (ibid).

The divided character of the Greek ECEC provision has also been identified by Rentzou (2015: 251), who notes that kindergartens and childcare centres 'differ in their aim, organization, structure, character, the age of children they enrol and the educational background of the staff'. Childcare centres just follow a 'daily program' - not a national curriculum like kindergartens do - and their focus is on 'meeting children's physical needs' (Rentzou, 2015: 252).

These institutions are basically considered as welfare centres that provide care and help working parents, while kindergartens are oriented towards an educational and pedagogical direction (Rentzou, 2015).

Childcare centres follow only general goals described in the rules of procedure. Additionally, the shift from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Interior led to 'large local differences in the organization, operation and quality of child care centres' (Rentzou, 2015: 252). These large differences are reflected in the qualifications required from the educational staff employed in each of the two types of the Greek ECEC (Rentzou, 2017). It seems that the lack of central regulation, brought about by changes in the supervision and running of childcare centres, has led to a flexible *modus operandi* of these organizations (Petrogiannis, 2010 in Rentzou, 2015). Hence, the mainstream approach of childcare institutions in Greece puts emphasis on care; and it is worth noting that it is only the Athens Municipal Crèche that seeks to combine education and care (Papaprokopiou and Kammenou, 2012).

To conclude, public early childhood education in Greece, the focus of this inquiry, is mainly offered in ECEC Centres, with the responsibility for organizing and running them being held by the Local Municipal Authorities, under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior. Traditionally their principal objective has been care (see also Nikolaidis, 2017) - in terms of today's dilemma: education or care? - and they are deemed to be autonomous to design curricula and to develop their own policies and practices. Their directors are elected councillors - usually not related to education - and their staff is characterized as heterogeneous, consisting of University, Technological and Vocational level educators. Such discrepancies, and especially the devolved character of authority defining their organisation, regulation and overall status, raise considerable issues of quality in education provision in the ECEC sector and justifies our interest to explore the ECEC provision that falls under the auspices of local municipal authorities.

The Research Design

Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, ECEC provision in Greece runs under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction - where Local Municipal Authorities belong administratively - and not under the Ministry of Education, which regulates primary, secondary and higher education. The fact that Municipal ECEC centres are not considered as educational structures reveals their regulatory philosophy, which according to Nikolaidis (2017) is vague and non-existent. This, in turn, influences related policies and practices (e.g. access, participation, curriculum design, decisions on workforce and their in-service training etc.), and thus leads to diversity in operational terms (Petrogiannis, 2010 in Rentzou, 2015) raising issues of potential inequalities in provision in the Greek municipal ECEC. This lack of regulation at the level of the local government was a significant reason why I chose to focus on the municipal childhood education and care centers. At the same time, I decided not to include in this study the ECEC private sector, as this has, to a great extent, the freedom to design and develop its own policies. Therefore, this study focuses on the uneven and diverse field of the Greek Municipal ECEC provision.

The Interviewing Process

Three main considerations were the impetus behind this doctoral study:

- The global policies on ECEC and particularly the OECD's focus on this field.
- The relevant research literature indicating the complexity of multi - scalar policymaking - how policy is re - contextualized in the different levels (down to the national, local and institutional) and how governance is being played out in the Greek municipal ECEC.

- The consideration that during times of European but also global economic crisis, notions such as quality and autonomy may be conceptualized in different ways with significant implications for the institutions and issues of equity and justice.

Basic research questions of this study are: Who defines quality in ECEC? Through what processes and which contexts? How the notions of autonomy and quality are being shaped and re - contextualized in the Greek ECEC in times of economic crisis? How governance and regulation are played out in the field of ECEC? How do those involved in the Greek context perceive the OECD's work/ involvement in ECEC? With what consequences?

The issue of quality has been less researched in Greece (Rentzou, 2012), especially when one considers the diversity of the sector and the previously mentioned regional disparities. An important aspect of this study is to produce accounts of quality and also to analyse the influences supranational/ European processes exert on this field, given also the potentially significant differences in material and cultural resources among different Municipalities. Therefore the first part of this study focuses on those who are responsible for municipal ECEC organizations and seeks to describe their perceptions, stances and agency as dimensions of governance and regulation. A hybrid of unstructured and semi structured interviews has been used to produce qualitative data, in order for the interviewees to have enough space to provide a response as fully as they choose. Also, because of lack of significant research we were not fully aware of what we do not know, and therefore we needed to rely on the participants to share with us their information. (Cohen et al, 2011).

Greece consists of 13 regions, with certain regions having similar populations and characteristics (e.g. GDP per capita, urban and rural population, unemployment statistics etc.). To be specific, Eastern and Western Macedonia in the northern part of the country are similar to Central Macedonia. Likewise, Thessalia and Western Greece have similar characteristics with Epirus, while Northern and Southern Aegean and the

Ionian Islands have similar figures with Crete. On the other hand, the concentration of economic activity in Attica (where half of the country's GDP is produced) and Central Macedonia and their superiority in terms of per capita GDP (Caraveli and Tsionas, 2012), could not be overlooked. Therefore 5 regions were finally selected: Attica (3.827.624 population), Central Macedonia (1.881.889), Epirus (336.856), Peloponnese (577.903) and Crete (623.065), which represent a total 67.01%¹ of the Greek resident population.

From each of the above five regions, three Municipalities were selected, so the research sample consists of 15 Municipalities (15 participants) from 5 Greek local regions. An important consideration in determining the sample and part of the preparatory work was to explore Municipalities that have the potential to provide us with rich data. After closely examining the profiles from their websites, the selected Municipalities vary from local and national trend/standard-setters that follow, explicitly or implicitly, several OECD's good practice recommendations regarding ECEC quality, to Municipalities that receive children mainly from underprivileged backgrounds.

Some of these Municipalities, located in the capital or other big cities, usually have the means to get higher funding, compared to municipalities in the periphery, because they are densely populated or have the human resources to claim and benefit from N.S.R.F. (National Strategic Reference Framework - ESPA) funding. At the same time, others have not remained immune from the pressures generated by the imposition of state austerity regimes and a major preoccupation regarding their ECEC provision involves the tackling of poverty and social exclusion. Our aim was not to generalize, yet the 15 selected Municipalities presented below (figure 1) achieve an appropriate balance between metropolitan center and peripheries and therefore provide a satisfactory representation of the Greek ECEC provision.

¹ Hellenic Statistical Authority: <http://www.statistics.gr/home> (accessed: 20 January 2016)

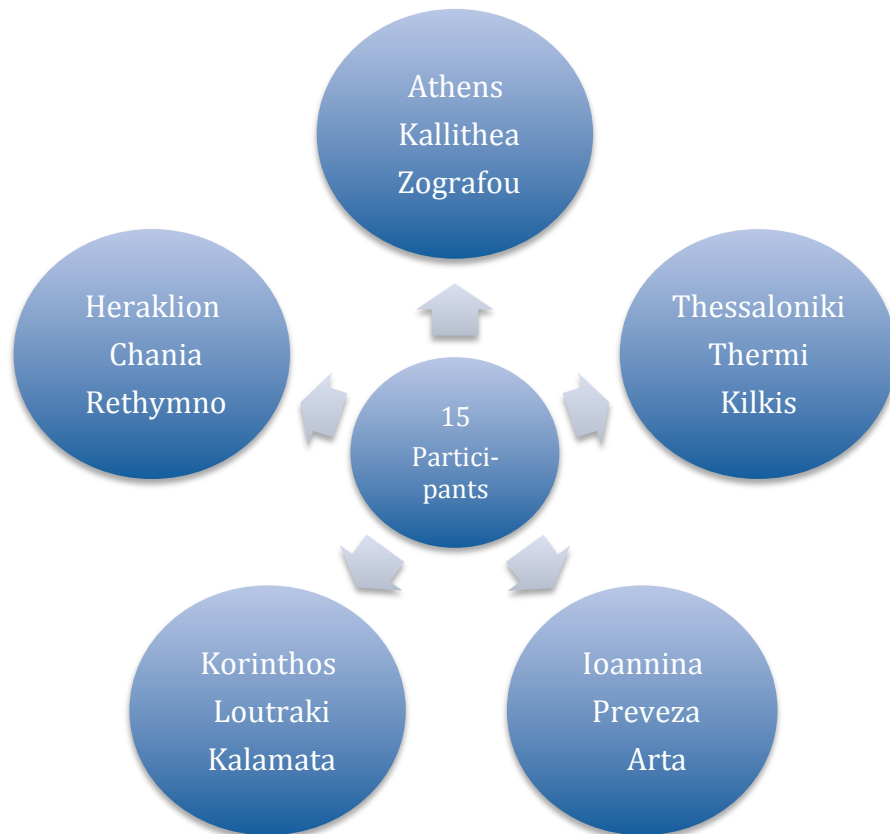


Figure 1: The sample of the study

In the next sections of the present chapter follow the concepts that have been utilized for the analysis of the data and the discussion of the issues that emerged out of the analysis. The interview data were coded by using key themes, based on a thorough reading of the data, the literature review and our theoretical perspective. To begin with, the issue of quality and the correlated notions of provision, participation and education or care is the first key theme. The second key idea that I am coding is autonomy and the way this notion is re-interpreted in the current context. Finally, I explore how governance is being played out via instances where the participants share information about their positions on different models of governing - and especially the emerging models of soft governance - and their views on the appropriate forms of regulating the field. These three themes are connected to a significant concern of this research, which is to identify the implications of the multidimensional crisis for the re - contextualization of the debate on quality in the Greek ECEC provision, which potentially produce in - e - quality. In the

appendix one can find the interview guide in two indicative versions - in Greek and in English.

Exploring the Educators' stances

The thesis continues with the second part of the empirical research. After exploring the participants' perceptions regarding the way educational policy is being conceived and developed in the diverse field of the Greek ECEC provision, we seek to investigate the way ECEC educators identify, perceive and visualize the educational policies on ECEC and the relevant local, national and international debates on ECEC practices. My aim was to construct a questionnaire that combined the dominant discourse on quality, as articulated in the texts of a key supranational organization, paired with debates/ discourses identified in the first part of the empirical research, where those responsible for the Greek municipal ECEC organizations offered their insights on policies and practices in the Greek municipal ECEC.

For this part of the exploration, I counted on the significance of the OECD's tool (Starting Strong 3) in establishing the dominant discourse regarding international policies in ECEC, and in promoting ideas and best practices which perceive education as 'human capital' (Robertson, 2016: 824) and potentially constraining policy makers and educators' autonomy (Jones, 2013: 1). Therefore, I utilized the "Starting Strong 3" "Action Area 5 - Reflection Tool on the Current State of Play", a self - reflection sheet - questionnaire for every policy lever that the OECD deems as important for ECEC quality (see Chapter two).

This OECD tool has been promoted through events of high visibility. Many OECD countries have agreed to use it and so reports have been published for almost 20 years - since the first "Starting Strong" (Moss et al, 2016) and accordingly the European Commission has used its ideas to provide guidelines to its member states, as we showed in the first three chapters. Our

aim was to use this questionnaire to produce discourse about the themes that concern our study - issues of governance, quality and autonomy of ECEC - in a similar approach as the one Sarakinioti (2012) implemented. To be particular, our purpose was not to explore whether the Greek sector complies with the OECD or the EU. On the contrary, we aimed to explore whether the international dominant discourse is dominant in Greece, or how this discourse is re - contextualized in the Greek ECEC.

Hence, our quantitative research tool consists of 6 sections. The first 5 educational policy sections derive from the OECD's Knowledge Based Regulation Tool "Starting Strong 3" - "Action Area 5" - adapted to the Greek context to facilitate the participants' understanding - where the OECD asks those involved in ECEC to 'reflect on the current situation and make efforts for system improvements' in order to prepare the justification of a policy decision (OECD, 2012: 17). The topics of the sections are the ones OECD identifies as significant for the quality ECEC provision: 'Quality Goals and Regulations', 'Curriculum and Standards', 'Qualifications Training and Working Conditions', 'Engaging Families and Communities' and 'Data Collection and Monitoring'. The last section is titled: 'ECEC Autonomy and Regulation' and was formed by key issues generated from the literature review and our findings in the first part of the research in order to shed more light on the research questions raised in this Thesis.

To be specific, the first section of the questionnaire explores quality goals and the extent of their specificity, relevance, explicitness and alignment with regulations and public funding. The second section consists of questions about curriculum design and development in ECEC and the application of minimum standards. It investigates the goals and objectives of the curriculum, its implementation and the assessment process. The next section of the tool seeks to uncover issues related to the Greek ECEC's workforce profile and matters of supply and professional development. The fourth part of the questionnaire is about family and community engagement in ECEC provision and includes questions concerning "parenting skills programs" and the "exploration and utilization of resources in a community". The fifth section

seeks to unveil issues related to the way data are being collected and monitored in the Greek ECEC. We should repeat that the questions of first five sections of the questionnaire were selected from "Starting Strong 3" "Action Area 5", and - where it was needed - they were modified to make sense in the Greek context. Finally, the last (sixth) part of the questionnaire asks questions - emanating from our empirical research - related to the autonomy of each Municipal ECEC institution, the need for regulation of the field, the involvement of international organizations like the European Commission and the OECD in the Greek ECEC and the way governance and regulation of the field could unfold in the future. One can consult a detailed version of the questionnaire in the appendix.

This thesis focuses on policy enactments and therefore, after interviewing those who make choices and are responsible for the educational policy design and development of ECEC provision, I put the emphasis on the educators of the ECEC centers. These were mainly experienced educators who act as links between the policy design and everyday practices. The questionnaire was mainly distributed to the same Municipalities, where the first part of the research took place via a snowball sampling process. We identified a number of individuals willing to answer our questionnaire, who then identified others qualified for our research and got in touch with them or informed us accordingly. This method offers the opportunity for sampling a population, where access is limited due to the nature of the topic (Cohen et al, 2011; Cresswell, 2013).

In the majority of the cases the participants from the first empirical part of the study facilitated the establishment of trust between the researcher and the educators of ECEC centers. However, the Greek Municipal ECEC sector is a complicated field, and in my experience it is partially governed by a mix of micro politics and prejudice towards potential "intruders". Therefore building trust was of major significance in order to succeed in my goal. In certain Municipalities I had to overcome enduring formal Municipality Board hearings and bureaucratic decisions.

In others, the policy maker/ director of the ECEC organization only had to pick up the phone and arrange a meeting with the "heads". One could expect the peripheral Municipalities to have been easier in establishing links between the respondents and the researcher, however there was no particular pattern between central and peripheral Municipalities. Some central Municipalities proved easier to approach in comparison to some peripheral ones and vice versa. Finally, 71 participants successfully concluded the provided questionnaire. The questionnaires were constructed and distributed via a "lime survey" platform, which automatically generated a link sent to the participants by email. After their response, the results were instantly uploaded to the web-platform. In certain cases, participants who did not feel confident using the virtual version requested printed questionnaires.

The first part of the questionnaire includes demographic questions concerning gender, age, Municipality, ECEC center, level of studies, post graduate studies, relevant training and work experience. The next part includes the six educational policy sections mentioned previously. All those parts use five item symmetric Likert scales, which are among the most frequently used instruments in questionnaire surveys. They consist of a statement and a range of 5 pre-defined responses measuring the intensity of one's stances/ attitudes towards the statement (Creswell, 2013). The analysis of the data was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 24 software.

To properly analyse Likert data, one should recognize the measurement scale represented by each (Boone & Boone, 2012). Numbers assigned to Likert-type/ scale items express a "greater than" relationship, and in this case the recommended descriptive statistics include the mean for central tendency and standard deviations for variability. Additional data analysis procedures appropriate for interval scale items would include the Pearson's r, Chi-square and T-test (Ibid). Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency - that is how closely related a set of items is as a group. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability. Technically speaking, Cronbach's alpha is not a statistical test, but a coefficient of reliability (Creswell, 2013; Katsis et al, 2011).

Therefore, in order to measure the responses' reliability I computed Cronbach's alpha for each of the 6 educational policy sections from the questionnaire. To be specific, the alpha coefficient for the eight items of the first policy section is .768, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The alpha coefficient for the seventeen variables of the second policy section is .893, which indicates a high level of internal consistency. Regarding the third educational policy section, the internal consistency is also high with Cronbach's alpha being .884 for the 12 items. The fourth and fifth policy sections indicate similarly high reliability because the alpha coefficient reaches .908 and .945 respectively. Finally, the alpha coefficient for the sixth policy section is fairly high (.564) suggesting a relatively high internal consistency for the 9 last items.

Ethics and Limitations

A key concern before beginning the data collection was to assure the participants about my intention to abide by the principle of confidentiality. Before each contact, following Gregory's (2003) recommendations, I guaranteed confidentiality through the anonymity of all data gathered in this study. The value of confidentiality is directly linked to individuals' right to privacy (Ibid). Therefore, it was essential for me to liberate the participants from any doubt, anxiety or fear of undesirable repercussions for their professional (or political) future. It should be stressed that it was made explicit to each one of them that from the moment confidentiality was guaranteed, I was prepared to stand under that obligation (see the relevant letter of intent - Appendix C).

In research, this is a duty, which Gregory (2003) considers as a: 'stringent – moral – obligation' to do anything necessary to 'make confidentiality prevail' (: 49). Furthermore, what Cohen *et al* (2011) recognize as the principle of

informed consent, was of fundamental value for this study. Following Silverman (2010), I provided the participants with thorough details and consultation about the study's purpose and their role in the process, and asked them if they were willing to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. Being clear about the agreements you have entered into with your research participants (Blaxter *et al*, 2010) and more importantly abiding by those arrangements are fundamental principles of the ethics of research.

As far as the limitations are concerned, I have attempted a quite ambitious project. I have attempted to capture the essence of the OECD's regulation tool for ECEC and at the same time I have engaged with elected agents and educators of the municipal ECEC in order to uncover issues of governance, quality and autonomy in the context of the multidimensional Greek crisis. All the issues raised from the literature and the data have been thoroughly addressed, however we need to highlight that each theme could have been the entire focus of our research on each own and thus a more in - depth approach could have been achieved. In retrospect there are many concepts and issues that would warrant further exploration.

Reflecting on the Process

Grappling with the local government administration was an on-going challenge for my PhD Thesis. Greek Municipalities design and implement diverse policies, addressing a wide gamut of social, environmental and economic issues. If you put in the mix the rather chaotic field of the Greek municipal ECEC, one realizes the significance and also the difficulty of the task. The empirical research began in 2015 just after the local administration elections and was concluded in 2017. The participants of this study frequently referred to the volatility of the ECEC field, due to the fact that elections could mean a total change of policies, priorities, perceptions and stances.

Moreover, the slow-footed Greek municipal authorities required additional time to 'settle in' and start running things. Being newly elected - in certain cases - is not really helpful, when someone approaches you in order to discuss notions such as quality, standards, OECD, or ECEC challenges. Actually, having an interview with a researcher on the issues of one's Municipality's ECEC provision, poses as a challenge even for those who were experienced in running ECEC. Evidently, there were only few interviews carried out with ease and without cancellations, negotiations and constant back and forths. I had to use a variety of networks in order to even initiate a "get to know each other process".

Furthermore, the Greek ECEC field is highly gendered, so suspicion and even doubt are to be expected when a male researcher is involved in a research about ECEC quality. Especially when one throws around terms such as 'OECD', 'toolbox', 'assessment' and 'autonomy' in times of economic crisis, then doubt could become mistrust and denial. As mentioned previously, the Greek Municipal ECEC sector is a complicated field, which is partially governed by a mix of micro politics and prejudice. Therefore building trust was of major significance in order to achieve my goal. Sometimes I was not able to overcome the difficulties and needed to be flexible in terms of selecting another participant, who could prove more willing to help this exploration. The participants' workload in a very demanding field made things tougher and some of them were kind enough to let me interview them during their free time.

As far as the second part of the research is concerned, the questionnaire was mainly distributed to the same Municipalities, where the first part of the research took place. In several cases the participants from the first empirical part of the study facilitated the establishment of trust between me and ECEC educators. That process was critical. However in others I had to overcome enduring formal Municipality Board hearings and even Board voting that could be affected by micro political issues and fine lines that had little to do with the research or me. In others via the intervention of an ECEC director, a meeting with the educators was easily arranged. One could expect the peripheral

Municipalities to have been easier in establishing links with the sample, however there was no particular pattern between central and peripheral Municipalities. Some central Municipalities proved easier to approach in comparison to some peripheral ones and vice versa.

Chapter Five: Interviewing those "With a Role to Play" in the Greek ECEC

Introduction

Like other public sectors, ECEC services in many countries are currently under variable and intensive government regulation (Osgood, 2004). Governments through rules, rewards and sanctions seek to foster and guarantee quality standards. Consequently, there has been an increase of regulation regarding ECEC services in countries both within and without Europe (Vincent and Braun, 2011). However, there are expressed concerns towards 'a narrowing and normalizing of what constitutes quality to a prescribed technical list of outcomes and practices'; 'a constraining of teachers' autonomy in their professional decision-making'; and 'a perception by teachers that administrative requirements are time consuming, unnecessary and of limited benefit to children or staff' (Fenech and Sumsion, 2007: 264).

As became apparent in previous chapters, since standardization has become prominent, the OECD has inevitably been established as a global 'benchmarker' of standards between nation-states and their education institutions (Rinne & Ozga, 2013: 98). The OECD - through its involvement in ECEC - seeks to become a 'reference guide', to 'present practical solutions' for 'anyone with a role to play' in encouraging quality (OECD, 2012: 3 & 15). Hence, those with a role to play - with an emphasis on those who make policy decisions - were the subjects of the first part of this study. This chapter engages with significant issues raised by the relevant literature and the participants themselves.

The comparative processes endorsed by the OECD have become an established reality in most educational fields - including ECEC - which structure and explain educational realities. The rise of this 'transnational policy

orthodoxy' (Jones, 2013: 1) expressed in regulation mechanisms of governance, calibrates the policies of member-states and leads to a constraining of policy makers and educators' autonomy. The way regulation, mechanisms of governance and autonomy unfold in the Greek municipal ECEC is of great importance for this Thesis. The previously highlighted lack of central regulation and the concomitant sense that childcare institutions are flexible in their operation (Petrogiannis, 2010 in Rentzou, 2015), significantly affect ECEC services.

Furthermore, the lack of quality mechanisms accompanied by a dichotomous thinking about education and care (see Rentzou, 2015 & 2017b) triggers an urge for quality assurance, contributing to the dominance of ideas that push towards a shift from bureaucratic to market mechanisms in the name of efficiency. However, by approaching notions such as education or welfare from an efficiency angle, their role declines to a financial transaction. The transaction's global currency is skills, which draws concepts of human capital and knowledge-based economies into an 'overarching policy narrative' that presents education as a 'primary site of policy intervention to improve both the well-being of individuals and the economic strength of nations' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013b: 191).

Moreover, by perceiving education as human capital, rather than seeing it as being a crucial social institution 'involved in both the production and social reproduction of capitalist societies', one fails to realize the fact that education also produces 'social relations including class, race and gender, which mediate ongoing income and wealth inequalities' (Robertson, 2016: 824). The dimension of inequality is significant when studying the changes in governance and regulation of the Greek ECEC field given also the ongoing economic crisis which re - contextualizes the whole ECEC policy debate and depicts ECEC as being at a 'critical crossroad' (Rentzou, 2017: 10).

Perceptions of Quality in the Greek ECEC

A basic aim of the study was to produce accounts of quality in the Greek ECEC sector. The 15 participants who were responsible for their respective Municipal ECEC centers expressed diverse views regarding quality in the domain of ECEC. During the interview process we asked the interviewees regarding their perception of ECEC quality and we followed up with probing questions concerning the explicitness of goal setting and their ideas about care and education for determining quality in the Greek municipal ECEC field. The findings indicate diverse accounts of quality ranging from pedagogical - dynamic, structural - technocratic, equity - care aspects. To begin with, the vast majority of the interviewees perceives quality in ECEC as a vague - elusive notion and approaches it as a combination of several significant - according to them - aspects, which however are not always tangible. They mostly refer to the provision of care and education - in general - as the key for quality ECEC services and highlight a balanced approach between the two notions. It should be stressed however, that certain responses suggest a more care - oriented approach, despite highlighting an emphasis on educational aims.

Participant 2 perceives quality as the "*...potential to achieve your goals...We set our goals at the beginning of the school year and we do not necessarily follow them up during the year... our aim is not to control our pupils too strictly... If we manage to achieve a high percentage of our goals, then I can say that we are successful... When it comes to choosing between care and education, we choose both... We are trying to abide by the new standards and the new opportunities provided... Our aim is not just to keep an eye on children, but we perceive ECEC as a field where the pedagogical process takes place... Our aim was always education and of course the supervision of the children, but not only a place where someone cares about children in order for their parents to be able to go to work*".

According to participant 6: "*Quality is about having a holistic approach to education, a psychosomatic and cognitive development for the child to*

become a citizen... Education and care are interconnected notions, although I believe we should lean more on the educational aspect... but it depends on the educator". Participant 10 stresses an approach that relates quality with *"the need to help children develop their characteristics and skills - especially regarding the socialization process... our aim is to serve parents, but also to offer the best possible ECEC provision, but we care more for education".* Moreover, participant 7 underscores: *When you achieve your goals then you have quality ECEC provision... its about education, socialization, emotional and psychological support... that is quality... You cannot separate care and education... our educational policy needs to be sustainable";*

Those initial views raise important aspects of ECEC quality, including dynamic - pedagogical characteristics, which however have been raised in an inexplicit and fuzzy way. The absence of evaluation/ follow-up processes and the emphasis on rather generic terms such as "socialization", "emotional support", "psychosomatic support", "new standards" reinforces the view of lack of clarity. Despite certain voices arguing for a balanced approach between care and education and even an educational emphasis of ECEC services, our data shows that - on the contrary - care tends to be the focal practice for many peripheral and central municipalities.

Participant 3 states: *"We are interested both in care and education... Of course one should take into consideration that working parents are our priority, which does not mean that we do not care for the educational aspect... there cannot be any distinction between the two notions";* Furthermore, participant 5 notes: *"Quality standards have not been implemented in the public sector... there are no relevant data/ indicators... If the curricula aim to psychological and emotional progress of children, then that is quality... if the food is good and we can be of assistance to parents, then that is good, but it is not quantifiable for us... we have not done anything in that direction... Our goals are care and education and safekeeping, and helping working parents... We are implementing the official rules of procedure for the municipal ECEC, which do not make any distinctions between education and care".*

Likewise: *"Quality? It is about the ECEC centers, care, children's diet, educational policy and ECEC curricula... our basic goal is to make things easier for parents, although I should mention that especially lately we are trying to set pedagogical goals as well... education and care are inseparable notions... we seek - through educators' training - to change mentalities focused on children safekeeping"* (Participant 11);

Such diverse, unclear and mostly narrowly conceived accounts of quality are also highlighted in the relevant literature, which refers to ECEC quality as an elusive and multidimensional notion (Rentzou, 2017b). Rentzou notes that ECEC quality is a multifaceted and constantly changing notion and points to the significance of the dynamic elements of ECEC quality, which are more challenging in terms of their regulation and include more pedagogical aspects such as 'adult-child interaction, peer interaction, inter-personal relationships, developmentally appropriate activities, and the emotional climate of care' (Rentzou, 2017b: 668; see also Melhuish, 2004 and Brownlee et al, 2009 in Rentzou, 2017b). Rentzou (2015) stresses also the inconsistency between the Greek quality regulations and the standards set by international organizations. Such an inconsistency is also observed in our findings.

In the responses of the interviewees there are also statements that suggest an emphasis on structural - more static (Williams, 1995) - characteristics of quality. Some participants to the study link quality to explicit goals, while others refer to the collection of information/ data about different operational aspects like the teacher/ child ratio. There are participants that seek more regulation through an explicit curriculum and evaluation processes and others that do not want an explicit curriculum. It is of interest to remark that during the interview there were participants who admitted that they found "our conversation" helpful in terms of thinking about ECEC quality. Participant 4 stated that this research was a stimulus for grasping ECEC quality and also exploring ways forward, as in the following illustration: *"This discussion acted as a stimulus for me... a stimulus to begin researching quality in ECEC... I should mention that I attended a conference on ECEC quality and learned about the importance of assessment and self-assessment and you should*

know that I studied back then regarding quality... I am interested in quality and maybe I will give you a call because I would like to make progress and be considered successful when I retire...

When it comes to quality there should be two sets of characteristics... first there should be an acceptable teacher/ children ratio, facilities, but also committed educators ready to cooperate with parents, high level of training and qualifications and an explicit curriculum... There needs to be an explicit curriculum for each month, I will ask them to implement an explicit curriculum... It is a prerequisite of ECEC quality... There should not be a distinction between education and care... they are 'communicating vessels', there cannot be a distinction... In terms of educational policy, we surely want to serve the citizen... our aim is Edu-Care" (Participant 4);

"Quality in ECEC means that from the moment a child enters our facilities, the ECEC center has to provide the best services and that has to do with everything... safekeeping, the way the educators behave, because we should not forget that the ECEC center is the place where socialization happens... the child learns new stuff and has to be prepared for the next steps... but it is also about children's diet... all the above are quality in ECEC... Education and care are inseparable... from the moment they enter our facilities there is care, but there is also the educational aspect... they learn a lot... " (Participant 8).

Participant 3 perceives quality as "high level facilities, suitable and clean ECEC centers and also highly qualified experts in order to take care of the children... Similarly, quality is about the facilities, but also the staff... When it comes to our staff we are in a high level, facilities are OK... We score 7 out of 10... Our goals - quality is about goals - are care, children's diet and education... primarily education, although I should mention that those two notions are interrelated" (Participant 13);

Moreover, in the response of participant 14, care equals education, and that is quality: "when it comes to quality, the teacher/ children ratio is vital... Quality is about having clean facilities... one cleaning lady is not enough... the kitchen

should be clean and that is quality... Of course there is also educational quality... the same goes for our facilities, some of them are below standard... there is no distinction between education and care... these two are inseparable, when you care you educate"; Participant 15 stresses structural characteristics of quality and invokes the value of equal rights to ECEC provision: *"Quality is about having qualified staff with a high level of training, quality facilities, no limitation to hiring staff, educational material and new facilities that will allow parents and children to enjoy equal rights to ECEC provision... Our ECEC centers are fundamentally educational centers and I believe education and care are inseparable notions".*

Participant 9 refers to the importance of skills in terms of children's preparation for compulsory education and appears to recognize the multifaceted nature of ECEC quality, as illustrated in the following extract: *"our objective is to integrate children as early as possible to ECEC, we also seek to provide our services to parents... I infer [that there is] quality from what parents tell me... When there are no complaints then it means you are good... But the ECEC center is no parking place... Quality ECEC is about providing children with skills for primary education... I visit the nursery stations, I am being informed daily for the children's attendance, the educators' attendance, I am responsible for their leaves of absence, their training... they want to go somewhere, they are eligible for something... What is the daily menu... about the leftovers. There is a briefing concerning simple and complex issues. We are fully informed. This place here is like "the headquarters"... I would say that quality is about 'providing different things'. One is to look after the children and another is to look after parents... I think that the objective of our administration is the combination: The parents should be able to leave their children in good hands so the children can learn, and the children instead of staying at home or going to playgrounds, can be in nursery stations" (Participant 9);*

Participant 12 combines a pedagogical perspective with an explicit approach on goal setting and teacher professionalism: *"This is a challenging question... Caring is one of our significant goals... After a lot of thought let's say that education and care are inseparable terms... during ECEC you are going*

through all the different phases of caring and educating a child... it is about a child's developmental stages... it should be individualized... it is about teachers' qualifications, the ratio... Unfortunately ECEC was primarily related to welfare... offering working mothers the opportunity to work... however education and pedagogy moved forward... there should be explicit goals... We do not have an explicit ECEC curriculum and we do not want one... we believe that it is wrong to have an explicit curriculum in ECEC...Quality is multidimensional".

From the presentation of participants' views regarding quality in ECEC, it becomes apparent that only a small number of participants referred to explicit characteristics constituting ECEC quality. Such features include - among others - the importance of a specified curriculum - or the opposite - and evaluation practices, the significance of family and community engagement, the staff/ child ratio and allocating funding to needs and quality goals/objectives. These features are elements of the discourse articulated in the OECD document "Starting Strong 3", as we have discussed in Chapter two of this Thesis, which proposes policy solutions for the field of ECEC. It appears therefore that certain participants, mainly from central municipalities, informed about the OECD and the EC's policies on ECEC reproduce (elements of) the globally promoted discourse acting as standard setters in the uneven Greek ECEC field (see also subsequent sections in this chapter). On the other hand, as indicated previously, the majority of participants, especially from peripheral Municipalities, have vague or limited quality goals. They do not view explicit frameworks and evaluation of the pedagogical process as solutions for improvement, while they fall short of proposals for dealing with problems identified in the childcare centers under their responsibility, by limiting themselves to official documentation.

This suggests an emerging differentiation in approach among those who are politically responsible for municipal child centers, which might lead to a further diversification of the Greek ECEC field. The differences in the discourses articulated in the interviewees' talk concern not only the nature of ECEC, but also understandings of quality in ECEC provision in the country. Indeed while

one of the shifts of the EU and the OECD's policies is to place ECEC in the portfolio of education, the interview data of this research point to an intensification of care concerns; concerns which, somehow, are accepted as legitimate, given that Greek Municipal ECEC is not under the Ministry of Education. This finding is consistent with discussions in the international literature, which point to the 'slippery position' and thus the 'complexity in the education/care issue that those working in the area [have to] grapple with' (Watson, 2006 in Gibson et al, 2015: 330).

The differing understandings of the nature and quality of ECEC provision among the participants in our study are also evident in their views about what the literature refers to as the 'schoolification of ECEC' as a growing 'trend' (Rentzou, 2017: 10); that is to say seeing ECEC as a first step for compulsory education. However, our findings from the interviews support Rentzou's (2015) description of the Greek ECEC provision as a "dichotomous" field. The fact that municipal ECEC centers are perceived as welfare centers that provide care and help working parents (Rentzou, 2015) - while kindergartens have a clearly defined educational and pedagogical mission - has been raised by several participants.

Furthermore, the lack of central regulation (Petrogiannis, 2010) and the concomitant 'large local differences in the organization, operation and quality of child care centres' (Rentzou, 2015: 252) were also pointed out by participants in this research, mainly participants from the periphery. The flexibility in the *modus operandi* of the municipal ECEC institutions, identified in other studies (Petrogiannis, 2010), could be linked with the elusiveness of the notion of ECEC quality for the majority of the participants. According to Papaprokopiou and Kammenou (2012) the mainstream approach of childcare institutions in Greece puts emphasis on care and it is only the Athens Municipal Crèche that seeks the combination of education and care (Papaprokopiou and Kammenou, 2012). However, this research showcases that the dilemma or the question of how to combine the two is emerging as an important issue in the ECEC field.

Similarly, the relevant literature views the lack of objectives, regulations and monitoring of quality as deeply concerning (see Rentzou and Sakellariou, 2011; Mantziou and Petrogiannis, 2009 in Rentzou, 2015). Such concerns are raised by participants in our study as well, though it is only a small number of them that acknowledge the importance of explicit goal setting. What appears to be common among the majority of the participants in the study is a widespread sense of ambiguity over the question of what constitutes quality in the Greek ECEC field. This is paired with a care - oriented perception of quality provision. The priority on care is also highlighted by Rentzou and Sakellariou (2011), who also raise concerns regarding the high educator/ child ratios and group sizes - observed in their research - that also affect/ limit overall Greek ECEC quality. The importance of such structural characteristics has been identified by a significant number of interviewees in this research as well. To conclude, quality may not be a 'fixed, objective standard' (Rentzou, 2017b: 678). However, the "dichotomous" thinking identified in the discourse of many participants in this study and in the literature provide evidence of the presence of diverse perceptions, which ultimately construct diverse - elusive accounts of quality and might affect deeply the provision of ECEC in the Greek municipalities.

Mixing Toolkits and Memoranda

Since 2010 the Greek state has undergone strict fiscal consolidation and a number of budgetary cuts is still taking place under the economic adjustment programs, also known as Memoranda of Understanding (M.O.U) (European Commission, 2015). The macroeconomic adjustment conditions - imposed for the provision of financial assistance right from the first M.O.U. - have impacted negatively the exercise of socio-economic rights of people in Greece (Schutter and Salomon, 2015). The human rights that have been, and continue to be, impacted include a range of labor rights, the right to social security, the right to health and healthcare, the right to an adequate standard

of living, the right to housing, and gender equality, among others (Zambeta, 2014). Findings also indicate that particular groups were disproportionately affected, including women, children, the young and pensioners (*Ibid*).

The impact of the crisis appears to be more significant in big cities, such as the capital - Athens, Piraeus and Thessaloniki, while peripheral regions like Peloponnese and Epirus have been less affected (Artelaris and Kandylis, 2014). The situation in Greece is not unique. Other countries, particularly the Southern European, are affected by such policies. In this respect, as Jones (2013: 7) remarks the responses that such policies have generated, range from 'combative, tumultuous and desperate' in Spain and Greece, to 'militancy and periods of relative quiescence' in Italy and France. Inevitably the Greek public education and training sectors have been strongly affected as well by the very low and constantly decreasing public spending, since from the beginning of the M.O.U.s implementation, the ratio of education expenditure to GDP has been reduced by 25% (European Commission, 2015: 3).

Hence, a significant part of the interviewing process concerned questions related to the impact of the economic crisis on the operation of ECEC structures, but also the potential repercussions of the economic crisis regarding children's participation in municipal ECEC. The participants were also asked concretely about the EU's key benchmark for 95% ECEC participation of 4 year olds by 2020. The vast majority of the participants voiced their deepest concerns regarding the problems created by the implementation of the Memoranda of Understanding between Greece and its creditors. A great concern for those involved in this study was hiring limitations in the public sector.

To begin with, participant 12 - a director of a central municipal ECEC organization servicing parents deeply affected by the severity of the austerity measures (see Artelaris and Kandylis, 2014) - stresses: "*The sky is falling on our heads... We are discussing about certain standards, about a desired level of operation for our institutions and we are pretty close to that level... On the other hand you should know that I have been informed from the Ministry of*

Interior that in September 200 fixed-term [11 month] staff contracts won't be renewed... There won't be any hiring... When I was desperate on the 17th of August and I said give me a break I won't be able to operate on the 1st of September, then the minister accused me of being obsessed... According to them my will to efficiently operate the ECEC centers was described as obsession... You do realize that the situation is chaotic from the part of the Ministry regarding ECEC.

According to Participant 8, *"there is a ban on recruitment due to the M.O.U.s ... that is a huge problem, which we are trying to address..."* Similarly, Participant 1 noted: *"when it comes to recruitment, there are limitations due to the Memoranda"*. Several other participants underscored: *"The MOUs have impacted significantly the Greek ECEC... if there weren't any MOUs, we would have been able to hire more people, to cover our vacancies by hiring permanent staff and finally be able to accept more children... things are really tight for everyone"* (Participant 3); *"As far as the financial aspect is concerned, the MOUs have a huge effect... Everyone is affected... there is harshness everywhere"* (Participant 7). *"We are on the verge of collapse regarding funding"* (Participant 10). *"There are huge difficulties because due to the MOUs there is no recruitment of staff... funding is limited... we can barely make it"* (Participant 15).

The deepest concerns of the participants are concentrated on the limitations that the MOUs - or SAPs - impose on ECEC provision. These limitations shape a field that imposes an approach based on market principles and particularly economic efficiency. The budgetary cuts they face reduce the provision of a public good to an operation aligned to economic rationalism. Despite claims for - just - temporary negative effects, which will be later balanced by the creation of new capital and its distribution to those who need it (Moutsios, 2009), it appears that Stiglitz's (2002) concerns regarding the deepening of austerity and social hardship come true as demonstrated in the findings of this study. The links between the SAPs and ECEC provision are evident from the analysis of the data. The effects of austerity measures discussed in the literature (Moutsios, 2009), such as the limitations on public

spending and the decentralization of financial responsibilities to educational institutions, are also apparent in ECEC provision as the discourse of our interviewees illustrates.

Those involved in this research underscored the significance of childcare participation. However, when prompted to share their thoughts on the overarching European Commission's aim of 95% for ECEC participation by 2020, they emphasized the minimal chances their municipal childcare centers have for reaching such a goal. Specifically, Participant 8 states: *"I wish we could make the EU 2020 goal... it is difficult... It cannot be done cause there is no place to put children... We are trying to build 2 new centers, but then comes staff recruitment and there is no hiring... We are not allowed... Without personnel there is nothing we can do"*.

Participant 9 declares: "I believe that childcare participation percentage is really low... I strongly believe that it could be higher... The first reason for such a low percentage is the fact that there are just a few centers, there are financial reasons as well... finally Greece is a traditional country, so grandfathers and grandmothers take action... But there is a lack of ECEC center provision... I am under the impression that if there were more centers which could accept for example 2000 applications, then there would be 2000 applications... the same goes if there were 10000 applications... In our Municipality tuition fees are really low".

Likewise, other participants note: *"There is no way we can make it... maybe if such a goal was aimed at older children" (Participant 3); "Such a goal is unattainable due to Greece's financial struggles... Maybe before the economic crisis such a goal could be achievable... There are many parents that simply cannot make it" (Participant 4); "This goal cannot be achieved... We have 400 students in our centers, but thousands of children could benefit from ECEC provision... There is no money and certainly there are no ECEC structures... We need to double the funding in times of economic crisis" (Participant 5); "It is hard to achieve the EU's goal due to the MOUs... This year things were tougher" (Participant 6); "This goal is unreachable, but we have to make it,*

there needs to be staff hiring, we need to reach the European standards... The financial difficulties that Greece faces are crucial" (Participant 7);

"When pigs fly... this target is a utopia... I can do it, will they allow me to do it [refers to the Ministry of Interior] There is no green light, they need to remove the walls" (Participant 10); "This is a difficult task... this year we barely managed half of the applications" (Participant 11); "It is impossible... its the lack of ECEC provision... we need ECEC structures" (Participant 13); "There were 110 applications but unfortunately we can only accept just 50... The situation could deteriorate if one realizes that in previous years we could accept 70 children in our facilities" (Participant 14); "It cannot be done... maybe in a different era... this has to do with funding... I believe that the Greek society needs ECEC provision, they now have a different mentality... They need ECEC structures" (Participant 15).

The findings suggest that the economic momentum hinders the operation of ECEC structures and directly impacts ECEC participation. The reduced funding of ECEC organizations leads to the reduction of ECEC structures, limited spaces for children and inefficient ECEC services operation, despite the efforts of ECEC organizations to keep the tuition fees on the low side. Likewise, as a number of interviewees reported, parents are not able to apply for ECEC services, because of their financial struggles. This finding is consistent with the international literature, which suggests that family poverty reduces the likelihood of children's participation in ECEC (Bennett, 2013) or impedes their access to quality provision (Gambaro et al, 2013).

Our data supports Loyd and Penn's (2014) position regarding the consequences of austerity. Clearly, austerity leads to the shrinking and also the low quality of provision within childcare markets. And this is especially so for deprived children (Vandenbroeck and Lazzari, 2014). In the latter sense, it is proper to acknowledge that the interest of the OECD and the EC to formulate appropriate policies for the ECEC field is not without foundations or justification. Indeed, it might be the case that children from lower socio economic backgrounds are 'less likely to participate in ECEC'; and this could

be an initial disadvantage that can become 'cumulative, whereby individuals or groups carry forward those early disadvantages through different stages of their lives' (European Commission, 2015: 18).

It should be stressed that Greece has never been a top performer regarding childcare participation. To be particular, back in 2000 only 53.9% of 4 year olds participated in ECEC (European Commission, 2009: 96). In 2005 there was a slight increase (56.1 %), but in 2013 Greece still remained among the bottom performer countries despite the stable increase of ECEC participation percentages (76.4% 4 year olds participated in ECEC in 2013 when the EU average was 93.1% and only 15.9% of 3 year olds) and well below the Education and Training 2020 benchmark of 95% (European Commission, 2015: 49). Greece showed a slight average improvement when the economic crisis erupted - between 2010 and 2013 - but there are significant differences among the regions regarding ECEC participation.

Specifically, Attiki, the region of the Greek capital, was the only region where less than half of all 4 year-olds were in pre-primary education, while in the Greek capital, 30.8% of 4 year-olds took part in ECEC, approximately one third of the EU average (European Commission, 2015b: 4). Such regional disparities in terms of ECEC participation reflect the significant socio-economic divides produced by austerity measures that Greece and other European countries face and also justify the rising participants' concerns regarding a decrease of the rate of participation due to the challenging Greek socio economic environment in Greece.

The European Commission (2015: 18) states that quality 'needs to start early' and therefore recognizes ECEC as a constitutive part of the education and training systems in Europe, on the argument that it not only adds to children's well-being now and in the long term, but also to the foundation of skills and competences that are vital to achieving high learning outcomes later in life. Furthermore, the EC's policies about ECEC assume that this stage could prove particularly beneficial to children from underprivileged backgrounds and also contribute to the reduction of educational poverty. On these premises,

the European Union streams significant funding via the European Structural and Investment Funds to the ECEC centers which apply to relevant calls (ESPA 'Harmonization of family and professional life'²). However the reality depicted in our interview data would put in doubt the feasibility of the Commission's aspirations, as the future that this reality projects for the Greek municipal ECEC is rather ominous.

Furthermore, as Robertson and Dale (2013) analyze, education could produce greater inequalities as a result of transformations regarding how the sector is governed. And if we follow Robertson's (2016), among many others, understanding of education as a social and political process, then the transformations of the Greek political, economic and social scenery, pointed to earlier, could prove detrimental for childcare as a public good. This multifaceted crisis that Greece faces for more than eight years now have generated what Lloyd and Penn (2014) have identified as 'market pressures', witnessed in many countries which cause a deregulation of the field evident in quality standards' relaxation proposals, due to the lack of ECEC structures and insufficient staffing. Such conditions directly affect quality and may reflect the natural tendency of ECEC providers - If seen as a market - to favor economically sound localities and maybe withdraw from disadvantaged areas. In the case of Greece, such phenomena appear to be on the ascent, as will be showed in the next chapter, drawing on the interview data of the present study.

From Quality to Inequality: The Impact of the Economic Crisis

Processes of increasing deregulation, evident in the lack of ECEC structures and insufficient staffing, driven by the economic crisis, collide with the urge for regulation of the rather chaotic field of the Greek ECEC provision and raise issues about the ways the economic crisis affects the governance of ECEC and eventually the whole field of ECEC. At the same time, the evidence and

² <https://www.espa.gr/el/Pages/ProclamationsFS.aspx?item=3912>

the analysis of this issue become relevant for other European countries facing similar economic crises. As we saw in the preceding section, viewing education - and particularly ECEC - as a market, creates risks exacerbated by the current economic austerity. And it is worth recalling at this point the literature, which suggests that the outcomes of marketization and market-efficient models, proposed by the OECD and the EU as a universal panacea to issues of funding and quality, range from social equity and state solidarity risks to lurking privatisation (Peters, 2012).

Related issues have emerged from the analysis of our interview data. To illustrate: *"Different areas call for different approaches in our municipality; there are active ECEC centers which really help parents and children in need... in certain areas during wintertime you can see poor children wearing flip flops... barefoot 2 year old children when outside is freezing... at the same time in another area there could be a whole different story, a different cultural and educational capital...economically sound areas make a difference, create different needs; it appears that we have lost our way - which should be ECEC provision - because we are obliged to take into account the financial aspect that affects our everyday practice and ECEC quality... The welfare part is of significance now and not ECEC provision anymore... it appears that caring for those who need us is the priority and not ECEC provision"* (Participant 12);

"We are not allowed to hire anyone due to the financial crisis and we are trying to address this issue via ESPA [European Structural and Investment Funds], which provides us with enough liquidity to operate our ECEC centers... Lately the funds are reduced but we still manage to survive... This year the majority of our children is funded through ESPA; we need 2 more ECEC centers for our municipality, but we can make it happen only through ESPA funding... what else? only through ESPA can we employ our staff" (Participant 8); *"I believe the ESPA percentage should be at least 50-50... everybody is happy... If next year's openings for ESPA get limited to 100/ 200 children, then parents - whose children won't be admitted to ECEC centers through ESPA - won't thank me since this year everything is already paid via ESPA... Next year maybe their child will be admitted, but they won't be happy*

because they will have to pay the tuition fees... Parents would like their child to participate in ECEC free of charge, but only ESPA funding can do that". (Participant 9);

"We are not allowed to hire anybody due to the economic crisis, but we are trying to surpass those limitations via ESPA... a potential reduction of ESPA funding will be unfortunate... to be specific in 2012 and 2013 ESPA funding was 1.5 million and now it is near 750.000... we are trying to be positive" (Participant 1); "Almost 70% of our children are funded via ESPA... if ESPA funding stops only few parents will be able to manage ECEC tuition fees... We might have to close ECEC centers" (Participant 4); "This year we are expecting 300.000 euro from ESPA funding... last year the funding was around 500.000 euro... if ESPA funding stops, I believe that the Ministry of Interior would cover our losses" (Participant 5);

"If the European Union chooses otherwise and shifts ESPA funding from ECEC to anything else we will 'freeze'... there is going to be a huge problem" (Participant 7); "ESPA funds 36 employees - from a total of 50 - in our ECEC centers... We are already surpassing huge difficulties and we can do that only via ESPA funding... This is tragic... If ESPA funding stops, then I will have to close my ECEC centers" (Participant 10); "When it comes to ESPA funding there is a reduction regarding the number of children admitted this year... If ESPA stops then there is going to be a huge problem concerning children and ECEC staff" (Participant 11);

Our data reveal significant disparities even between areas of the same municipality - this is the case particularly in central municipalities. The economic crisis has aggravated an already challenging environment and in certain cases has shifted the attention from ECEC provision to care for those with material needs. ESPA funding is seen as a half - baked program. It provides support for the operation of ECEC centers and for the creation of new ones, but in many cases it is deemed insufficient given the constantly increasing needs exacerbated by the economic crisis. In this respect, the concerns of many participants, depicted in the illustrations above, regarding

prospective changes of ESPA funding and their fear that these could lead to further budgetary cuts and ultimately the shutdown of certain ECEC structures, cannot remain unnoticed or underestimated.

Certain participants also consider the possibility of outsourcing/ contracting with the private sector in order to tackle the difficulties that impede the operation of ECEC centers and ECEC provision in general: Participant 12 - director of a central ECEC organization - states: *"We have not tried outsourcing yet, but I cannot see how we will avoid it... Actually in certain cases there is no need to avoid it... we could think about a collaboration with the private sector regarding certain aspects of an ECEC center's operation... for example cleaning... Now in terms of hiring limitations, we cannot have a ratio of 70 children to 1 educator... In September we will have to close certain ECEC centers... Why don't we think a business model that will perceive ECEC centers as businesses? Such a model would allow ECEC center operation even in the afternoon... but even referring to such thoughts could cause chaos... Then the Unions will protest and complain that we give ECEC over to the private sector... this is about resisting to change on behalf of the staff... The Ministry does not provide a transparent framework that could help us do our job..."*;

"There are issues regarding outsourcing, since we are under the public sector... those issues are generated by the employees... imagine, just before our meeting, I had another meeting with the employees' Union... when they hear the term privatization, they get sick... I try to do it privately or voluntarily... I will be specific, I have met the Union representing the speech therapists and they are aware that they will benefit from our collaboration, but there will be a benefit for us as well... We reached a mutual understanding and they are allowed to visit an ECEC center... I told them 'set a date and inform the parents'... it is not actually on a voluntary basis... The speech therapist will assess the child free of charge but through that process they evidently boost their clientele... that free assessment is definitely something... like a backdoor outsourcing because there is strong opposition... it would be ideal if I could do it openly" (Participant 9);

"Once, there was a collaboration with a freelance psychologist, but that was just that..". (Participant 11); "We occasionally employ a private company for cleaning purposes... There was also collaboration with a Social Cooperative Enterprise (KINSEP), an attempt that faced strong opposition from the Union... 'You are allowing the private sector to enter ECEC through the backdoor' they said... That collaboration gave us the opportunity to employ a psychologist and a doctor, now we only employ one doctor..." (Participant 10) "There is a fruitful collaboration with NGOs aiming at families that need us" (Participant 13).

The interview extracts above, highlight an important issue around Municipal ECEC provision, surfaced during the period of the economic crisis and austerity policies. To be specific, there appears to be a growing acceptance and even legitimation of collaborations between ECEC organizations and private players, in the form of schemes of outsourcing, in order to tackle the ban on hiring and the budgetary cuts imposed by the MOUs. Such instances of privatization, and discussions around it, appear to be more frequent in central municipalities, which are affected the most by austerity measures. It should be underlined though that there are different views on outsourcing, ranging from acceptance to hesitation and to a clearly expressed concern over its repercussions on ECEC provision as a public good. However, there is consensus within the educators' union, which resists policies favoring privatization.

Previously, we referred to the interviewees' statements about the primary impact of the economic crisis on ECEC quality provision, regarding in particular the restrictions on hiring staff and consequent effects on ECEC operation and children's participation. We also referred to their descriptions of and elaborations on quality in the field of ECEC. Evaluation and minimum standards, were referred by some of them as key characteristics of ECEC quality. However, as shown below, the majority of the participants describe ECEC provision as a deregulated field, making reference to core elements of its operation, such as the evaluation processes, the integrated services in

ECEC centers and also minimum standard policies (e.g. educators' qualifications, educator/ children ratio, standards of facilities etc.).

Participant 2 - from a peripheral ECEC organization - states: *"There is not an official assessment process... I believe that educational and relevant assessment processes are neglected when it comes to ECEC... I am just complaining... I believe that ECEC has been left to chance and to the sincere efforts of those who care... As far as educational aspects are concerned, the state simply does not care..."* Similarly Participant 5 highlights: *"As far as assessment is concerned, we are a public body so we are acting as expected from us... there is no assessment regarding the educational process and there is the expected evaluation of the personnel that takes place generally in the public sector..."*

Participant 10 remarks: *"There are assessment processes because we are expected to do so, they are mandatory, however our processes are not regarding the objectives and educational assessment, which are essential aspects of ECEC..."* Participant 15 responds by making reference to formal procedures: *"There is assessment as expected by the rules of procedure, it is what happens in other Municipalities as well... The assessment takes place once per year, as expected... of course in our everyday practices we do assess..."* Participant 3 puts it differently: *"We do follow the rules of procedure, but there is no assessment... we would like to assess but it is not possible... it is difficult to demand from the educators to exceed their daily time plan..."*. Participant 4 refers to his future plans: *"I should mention that there is no feedback and assessment... I am currently exploring my chances to create an assessment culture in collaboration with a TEI institution... Such a step demands a change of mentality"*.

Participant 6 - from a central ECEC organization - notes: *"There is no assessment..."*, while Participant 13 reports on current practices at the centers under his responsibility: *"There is no formal assessment, I would say it is more like an informal assessment... Once per month we join our forces with a psychologist and we discuss our progress..."* Participant 12 conveys her views

on the existing evaluation framework by saying: *"The ECEC centers operate under the rules of regulation... at least they are obliged to abide by those rules... These are outdated regulations and need to change... I Laughed when you asked me about assessment... the formal assessment process has been cancelled... When I first got in charge I asked to see the educators' assessments and all the assessments were like 10 and in rare occasions 9 (out of 10)... maybe in those cases the Head of the ECEC center was a bit irritated... We are trying to assess the educational process, always in collaboration with the Heads of ECEC centers, but there are no consequences... But assessment is crucial, in order for us to improve ourselves... but in ECEC there is a huge distance to cover... 'you cannot make omelets without breaking eggs'..."*. Participant 9 responds by describing what he means by supervision and accountability: *"As far as accountability is concerned, I visit the nursery centers, I am being informed daily about the children's attendance, the educator's attendance, I am responsible for their leaves of absence, their training... they want to go somewhere, they are eligible for something... What is the daily menu... about the leftovers... There is a briefing concerning simple and complex issues. We are fully informed. This place here is like "the headquarters"..."* (Participant 9).

As the interview extracts - just presented - show, the majority of the interviewees refers to the lack of assessment and highlights the fact that assessment in ECEC is only in the form of typical personnel assessment procedures like those that take place in the public sector more generally. Several of them perceive educational assessment as something that needs to be prescribed by law in order for them to implement it, thereby failing to view it as potentially a decentralized policy that can be decided by them for each ECEC organization, by deed of their authority at the level of local government. Other participants explicitly express their strong support and commitment to assessment, as an essential characteristic of the educational aspect of ECEC, despite the fact that it is not always achievable not only due to the economic circumstances, but also due to the mentality of those involved in ECEC; a mindset contributing to what has been previously identified as the chaotic nature of the Greek ECEC field.

Concerning minimum standards, Participant 2 elaborates: *"Obviously there are minimum standard policies... for example we own 13 out of 14 ECEC facilities and we lease just one... regarding teacher/ children ratio I would say we are OK due to ESPA funding... 2 professionals, 1 holds a higher education Degree, responsible for 25 children... Just a few months before, things were worse... In our centers we do provide services from a psychologist, who visits them on fixed dates, however I should mention that we do not have doctors or social workers and also I should state that the psychologist is employed by the legal entity of our municipality, so she/ he does not provide exclusive services to ECEC"*.

Similarly other participants respond to the related questions by stating: *"We want to assess primarily our infrastructures... and of course we want to assess our personnel... As far as the teacher/ children ratio is concerned we are trying to be adequate... We only employ a few University level educators, we usually employ TEI level educators and of course assistants... due to the circumstances, sometimes an assistant can be responsible for a whole classroom... Our facilities - certain centers are leased, we want to change that reality, especially if you consider that one of our facilities is not fit for purpose"* (Participant 11); *"There are minimum standard policies and in that direction we strictly follow the rules of procedure... we have modern facilities, all but one... we are trying to select and employ the best educators... we just hired 3 educators who hold a Degree, of course their assistants are also capable professionals... In each center we are trying to have one Degree holder (AEI or TEI) and one assistant responsible for 25 children"*. (Participant 5).

Other participants respond by referring to issues that concern them or areas in which they feel they are doing well: *"We also have minimum standard policies... we abide by the law... Of course I should mention that we always want better facilities... This year three new centers will be available, of course via ESPA funding... our state funding is rather limited"* (Participant 10); *"As far as minimum standard policies are concerned, I would say that we do fall a bit short... Certain ECEC centers are outdated, but as far as teacher/ children*

ratio is concerned, we are doing pretty OK... I think that achieving an above the standard ratio is vital... Many Municipalities fail to reach such a standard, but we - for the moment - manage to reach it... We employ a doctor, who visits our facilities twice a week" (Participant 13); "There are minimum standard policies... I would say that we are adequate... but the ideal proposals of the rules of procedure simply do not exist... to be specific, training is perceived by many educators like some kind of luxury..." (Participant 4).

"We only employ TEI level educators, no assistants, and when it comes to evaluation I would say that we assess informally, like once every 2 months... Last year we employed a psychologist, but this year there is neither psychologist nor doctor... Our funding was limited, so we could not hire them" (Participant 14); "I would also say that our facilities are inadequate, but we are better than those ECEC centers of the bigger cities in Greece" (Participant 15); "As far as the ratio is concerned, I would say that we are doing fine and most of our educators hold TEI level qualifications... we only employ one assistant... We do have minimum standard policies, we own our facilities and we are better than those big city ECEC organizations... We employ a doctor and a psychologist and we are in close collaboration with our hospital" (Participant 3).

Participants from central ECEC organizations expand on the question of minimum standards concerning educational staff qualifications and other requirements: *"As far as the educational staff is concerned, I am in favor of University level teachers, I am strongly in favor of Technological level educators because I perceive their expertise as a tool... If we want to abide by the rules concerning the professional qualifications - and since I am not only a President, but also a professional - you realize that assistants need to be overseen by educational professionals with a University or Technological level qualification. I am against assistants working as 'real' educators. Working as assistants yes, but working as real ones no... That is why - this is the policy - at the beginning of the new school year I will do some changes concerning the personnel, in terms of rearranging the placements. There are many things wrong, many things in our Municipality and for this reason I will try to fix them.*

I will not accept... a classroom with two assistants. There are many things wrong... many things..."

"When it comes to minimum standards policies, the worst problem we face concerns getting the fire regulation certificates, which is a well-known problem in Greece and the reason behind that is that the Greek landlords want to receive from you and give nothing... This is about the leased facilities - the facilities that belong to us work properly - where the landlords say 'if you want, go get the certificates or else you are free to go'. When it comes to children/staff ratio, we are very good... we abide by the standards. If I remember correctly, there are 25 children in each classroom with two educators. We never exceed that number" (Participant 9).

"As far as teacher child ratio is concerned, we abide by the rules of regulation, that is if they grant us the educators we ask for... so the ratio - in certain extraordinary conditions - is a goal that we cannot achieve... in rare occasions there are 2 assistants in a classroom, but they are always under pedagogic 'control', although I have to say that sometimes they are even better in their practices than other educators who are more qualified... When it comes to integrated services, I should mention that we do operate counseling services... At this moment there is psychological, social and medical support... However, I need to emphasize that for the last 2 years we were not allowed to hire any doctors... our previous doctor retired and due to the MOUs we were not allowed to hire a doctor..." (Participant 12); "Last year there was a social worker and a psychologist, but only for a few months... there is no doctor, but there is a speech and language therapy center in the Municipality, which is free of charge... There are minimum standards in our facilities... there are safety audits" (Participant 6).

Minimum standard policies are perceived as vital characteristics for ECEC quality provision. However, the majority of the participants describe several challenges that they need to overcome in order to follow or implement such policies. All the participants highlight the impact of the economic crisis, which impedes the proper operation of ECEC facilities, the educator - children ratio,

the qualifications of educators and the supplementary [integrated] ECEC services (e.g. doctors, psychologists, social workers etc.). Several of the participants from peripheral ECEC organizations claim that they manage to abide by the minimum standard policies - as stated in the official documents.

However the majority of all the interviewees highlight as significant the lack of doctors, psychologists etc. When medical - or additional - services do exist, these do not always serve exclusively the ECEC centers, but in many cases cover all kinds of different needs in the municipality (e.g. elderly care or other welfare structures). Furthermore, many facilities - especially in central ECEC organizations - fail to meet minimum standards, because of the limited space available. Similarly, due to the limited number of educators, participants from central municipalities referred to their difficulties to meet the proper educator - child ratio. Such a challenge is usually addressed via the allocation of assistant educators, who however - under the current law - are not permitted to act as educators, without supervision from educators with University or Technological level qualifications.

It appears that the austerity measures implemented from 2010 onwards have significantly affected the Greek ECEC domain. Due to the ban on staff hiring in the public sector and the limited funding allocated to the decentralized administration, the autonomy of the participants and therefore their capacity to make crucial decisions has been restricted. Because of the limited funding, they tend to relax the quality standards in order to deal with everyday problems caused by austerity measures and poverty, which is a common reality in many Municipalities. Hence, it appears that deregulation processes within an already deregulated field, are being advanced. These entail a shrinking of provision, limiting the participation of children in ECEC due to the limited availability of municipal ECEC centers or positions within them, and also inadequate operation of the ECEC centers that continue to operate.

Furthermore, the market pressures that the financial crisis triggers, as already argued, may reflect the natural tendency of ECEC providers to favor economically sound localities and - as our findings suggest - withdraw from, or

underperform in disadvantaged areas. Consequently, it is correct to say once again that the outcomes of market-efficient models, especially in times of severe economic turmoil, range from social equity and state solidarity risks to lurking privatisation effects (Peters, 2012). Hence, the findings and arguments of this research have the potential to generate a debate regarding the ways other European countries in crisis cope with these issues and how this affects Europeanization processes, as well as democracy in the Greek society and the entire Europe.

The main promoter of quality in ECEC related policies, the OECD, perceives equity from an economic stance and thus disorientates the discussion, moving it away from the language of equality (Lingard et al, 2014). As argued by Rizvi and Lingard (2010), the OECD's proposals of realistic solutions for quality enhancement and their equity illustrations overlook the rising inequalities within and among nations. The findings of this research raise concerns regarding the repercussions of the economic crisis on the field of ECEC. Hence, in the Greek context, it is of importance not to neglect the extent of inequalities that occur even within the same municipality. Drawing on Boyum (2014: 11 - 12), and the evidence presented thus far, we could argue for the need to shift the discussion from 'less inequality of opportunity', to equality of opportunity. This, both in terms of the macro - level, i.e. the adequate provision of ECEC and enhanced children participation, and in terms of the micro - level, which concerns the operation of individual ECEC centers.

Autonomy... it's all Greek to ECEC

Autonomy is about taking control of our undertakings, defining our goals and planning to achieve our needs through our own powers (Rose, 1996: 154).

The section title idiom is used with respect to the complex, contradictory and paradoxical nature of the notion of autonomy in the Greek public ECEC. The ECEC sector is at the surface level decentralized and autonomous, since -

officially - control lies in the hands of local authorities (Municipalities). At the same time it appears that the central government/ Ministry of Interior is very much an active part of governance as it approves or disapproves financial aspects figures and even has tightened control regarding hiring of staff. Therefore, as will be shown below, the Greek Municipalities do not really have autonomy or as Lundquist (1987 in Gewirtz et al, 2007: 198) defined it: the 'freedom and capacity to act'.

At the surface level, the majority of participants in this study agree that municipal ECEC organizations - formally - are autonomous to operate. First in terms of political interferences from the state and also regarding educational policies, the interviewees - mainly from peripheral ECEC organizations - claim that they are rather autonomous. They highlight that they design and implement their own agenda concerning ECEC operation policies (e.g. the tuition fees, diet plans, educational objectives etc.). Particularly, Participant 9 noted: *"Yes, Yes we are autonomous... there are no central political interferences... not just for us but for the municipal ECEC in general... The Municipality is 100% responsible..."; "We are fully autonomous... there are no interferences, since we are a legal entity that is fully responsible for ECEC provision... We have our own policies, which of course are altered according to the circumstances... (Participant 8). "We are autonomous, we are a legal entity... all the choices are made by us..." (Participant 1).*

Similarly, other participants state: *"My view is that there is autonomy, but in a sense we try to operate according to the circumstances... (Participant 2); "There is autonomy, there are no interferences from the state... The Ministry of education deals with the kindergartens, so I would say that we are fully autonomous when it comes to our educational policies, but one could say that our curriculum is pretty similar to the one that kindergartens have... We are a public legal entity so we deal with the same issues like the public sector". (Participant 3); "We operate like every other organization in our Municipality, so we are fully autonomous... no one interferes in our educational policies" (Participant 7); "We are autonomous, there are no interferences..." (Participant 10); "We are autonomous and always operate under the rules of*

regulation... Of course each Municipality designs and implements its own policies regarding the tuition fees, the timetable, the children's diet..." (Participant 13); I should mention that we are setting our own objectives... there is autonomy... we are free to make our planning". (Participant 14); "There is autonomy... there is no explicit curriculum, so I would say that we are autonomous..." (Participant 15).

However, the majority of the participants expressed their concerns and objections regarding the extent of their autonomy, or lack of any real autonomy, concerning issues important to the operation of the ECEC organizations, which depend on financial matters. Major issues deriving from our data are the control over the budget and the restrictions on staff recruitment, which according to the participants, in practice put limits on their factual autonomy. To illustrate, Participant 9 - from a central ECEC organization - elaborates: *"however as far as the selection of the personnel is concerned, we 'follow orders' depending on what the state provides... the Ministry could say 'you have 100 permanent employees and you are asking for 30 temporary in order to cover 10 ECEC stations, well I think that you are asking a lot'... so there is a probability of not getting what we ask for... So we ask for the best and they provide us with a middle ground solution... Let's compromise".*

Similar are the depictions of the situation given by other participants: *"From a financial point of view there are obviously Greece's limitations/ commitments, which currently are a lot tighter... there is a ban on any hiring in the public sector". (Participant 2); "We have our own policies, which of course are altered according to the circumstances... to what takes place at the national level in terms of limitations, lack of funding... Each year we ask the ministry for staff placements but due to the MOUs they are not approved (Participant 8); "As far as our needs are concerned, that strictly depends on what the Ministry of Interior will provide... There is only financial accountability". (Participant 13); "When it comes to our operation, there is autonomy... of course one has to abide by the rules of procedure... However there is no financial autonomy... Because of the economic crisis things are constantly aggravating...our*

autonomy is very limited" (Participant 4); "We are autonomous, but the MOUs have made things really difficult for us, since there is no hiring". (Participant 15); "No one interferes in our educational policies, however as far as the financial aspect is concerned we are in a difficult position" (Participant 7).

There are also participants (Participants 10 & 1) who referred to ESPA funding, as a way of overcoming the financial difficulties, yet these funds seem insufficient to boost their autonomous action since issues of proper operation and staff selection still remain. Additionally, Participant 14 suggests that the devolution of power and control to the local state and the increasing of control of municipalities over the conditions of childcare provision meant a shrinking of their budget even before the economic bubble had burst. Specifically: *"There are no interferences... yet there is a negative response from the Ministry of Interior due to the ban on staff hiring... Our only salvation is ESPA funding... Even if we have the budget we cannot allocate that budget to staff hiring... We always hit a wall and there is no helping hand..." (Participant 10); "... all the choices are made by us... however when it comes to hiring there are the restrictions of the MOUs... but we are trying hard to overcome these issues via ESPA funding (Participant 1); "Back in the days, when ECEC centers were under the authority of the central state and did not belong to the Municipality, we had money, we could do anything... Back then ECEC centers were autonomous... In our case 4 educators retired and after that ... came the MOUs and that was it..." (Participant 14);*

We shall finish with the presentation of this part of the analysis of the data by offering a long extract from our interview with Participant 12. She is a director of a central ECEC organization and reflecting on the constant negotiations over budget control she argues that they restrict her autonomy over the design and implementation of desired policies. This participant favors a more managerial approach that allows autonomous - and in certain cases meritocratic - choices on different aspects of ECEC provision. The quotations below illustrate the case: *"You asked me about autonomy... I am thinking about it... there is a certain extent of autonomy, which exists in the Greek state in general... I will let you decide... Can you be autonomous when your*

budget needs to be approved from the observatory of the Ministry? Which means that you cannot design and implement your policies... I might believe that our policy for ECEC is to be able to select and employ certain educators with certain CVs, I need from my educators to have top-level qualifications, but I cannot do that...

I might want to allocate my budget to improve my facilities, but there needs to take place a public procurement process... this means that the one with the lowest offer will prevail... I do not necessarily need the cheaper one, I need the best... Therefore, in economic terms we are not autonomous... Moreover in terms of personnel selection we are not autonomous and there is a lack of certain regulations, which should provide an explicit regulatory context... Even the ASEP (Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection) process lacks objectivity... imagine that there are social criteria in ASEP, where there should not be any... the selection of personnel is not about welfare it is about hiring the best for the job..."

It is of significance to underline that the majority of the participants, when asked if they are autonomous, they directly responded positively and they were explicit about municipal ECEC autonomy. However, throughout the discussion they recognized the tug - of - war over control and the limitations posed from existing policies related to ECEC, or national state policies in general. What actually seems to take place is a constant negotiation between local and central state agencies, precisely around the space, in which the former could act autonomously – an overlapping of state control and local autonomy as Gewirtz et al (2007) described it. Despite the devolution of powers and the anticipated devolution of financial control to the local state, the government still retains control over critical aspects of ECEC operation and constrains municipalities as to how to use their own resources - mainly due to the austerity measures. It appears that when it comes to the Greek ECEC provision, the notion of autonomy is systematically associated with Greece's economic struggles and therefore understood and re-interpreted by the actors in the field in a constrained way that inhibits the development of educational policies on ECEC.

Internationally, in an effort to achieve the enhancement of autonomy and educational improvement, the locus of effective powers is being devolved at the level of the local government and educational institutions, establishing new forms of regulation in education (Helgoy et al, 2007). As is expanded in the literature review Chapter, this deregulation of national education systems does not entail the absence of the central state, but it is more like decreasing of its activity; or as Lingard et al (2005: 762) put it: the state's 'reconstitution works in different ways'. However, while - internationally - the central state retains control via quality indicators, objectives and performance measurement, in Greece the central government attempts to reclaim control in conditions of (formal) devolution, by resorting to budget and personnel selection restrictions, arising from Greece's commitments to its creditors.

Hence, a different debate has been taking place in the Greek municipal ECEC, which seemingly follows a similar route to the one described in the relevant literature Chapter - from government, to governance and government. However, in terms of the government's reclaiming of control, there is no strategy or mechanisms of steering for improving ECEC, but only unsurpassed financial struggles and commitments. While we do agree with Cribbs and Gewirtz (2007: 211), who suggest that autonomy 'cannot exist in a vacuum but is always exercised within systems of constraints and conventions which at one and the same time both circumscribe action and make it possible', our study underlines the contextual challenges of the Greek ECEC provision, which problematize the way autonomy is being playing out, blurring the boundaries between power and control. Following Gewirtz et al (2007) and Ozga and Jones (2006), we agree that despite globalization the national context is of significance. Greece's priorities recontextualize international debates and policies and thus establish a new national space of ECEC provision, different from the space that had been formed by the devolution of ECEC provision from the Ministry of Health, to municipalities (Ministry of Interior); a space already characterized by local differentiations and disparities, and the lack of a central regulative frame (Rentzou, 2015 & Petrogiannis, 2010).

Such a space is a complex web of relations, which creates tensions, conflicts and paradoxes. As will be described in the next section, the international trend and the policies advanced are towards devolution of powers in an attempt to deepen democratic processes via better political representation and decision making and also to create conditions of flexibility necessary for responding appropriately to emerging or complex issues. Contrary to this trend, in Greece, those responsible for ECEC at the local level are willing to sacrifice part of their existing autonomy so that in practice a clear cut separation between autonomy and control (Helgoy et al, 2007) over ECEC provision can be achieved.

ECEC Governance: From Directing Bureaucracies to Best Practices and Policy Networks

As described in the previous sections of the present chapter, the participants unanimously recognize the constantly aggravating challenges they face in a context that has much changed. The way the Greek ECEC is being governed has significant implications concerning its present and future. Despite their efforts, struggles, optimism and aspirations, the participants of the study point to the need for a regulative frame as crucial for the viability and progress of the Greek ECEC. When asked about how effective and successful their organization is, they were quite positive but underscored the immense difficulties and the need for change. Indicatively: *"I believe that we are efficient to a great extent, but I am not objective... Despite the struggles we manage to achieve a quite high standard and there is common consent on this view, both from the parents and the operation of our centers in general... at least until now... Unfortunately I cannot guarantee our future success"* (Participant 12).

"You are asking me if the Greek ECEC needs regulation, of course it does" (Participant 5); *"I do believe that our organization scores 4 out of 5... we are at*

a good level... our facilities are adequate, the financial issues are huge but that is a common reality... however, the wrong strategy of the Greek ECEC is what hinders our operation (Participant 7); "We are doing good with the ratios etc. but first of all we need data... there are no data... there needs to be regulation in terms of ECEC facilities and educational staff... The educators need to find their way... (Participant 13); "I believe that we are successful to a great extent... We have made significant changes regarding our facilities, the way we operate... but there are good practices and we are trying to be informed about them" (Participant 8).

Our findings suggest that the participants, despite the challenges they face, are overall satisfied with the way municipal childcare centers under their responsibility operate. It should be stressed however that their judgments are relative to the struggles and problems they encounter, as is apparent in the constant references they make to the current unfortunate circumstances as factors inhibiting ECEC operation. Hence, according to the participants in the present study, ECEC provision could be characterized as relatively efficient. Yet their elaborations - apparent in the extracts used in the previous sections - point to a less optimistic - more reserved depiction of the reality, confirming Rentzou's (2012, 2013 and 2015) findings, according to which educators tend to overrate the quality provided in ECEC structures.

The quality issue at all levels of education and especially in the 'peculiar' (Ball and Vincent, 2006: 39) ECEC sector has become a policy priority for the European Commission and the OECD, emphasizing its role in eliminating social and cultural inequalities and underachievement (Leseman, 2009). As seen in previous chapters, the OECD has been actively involved through the publication of reference guides intending to promote quality in ECEC with a special emphasis on policy, making it a manageable problem for those involved in ECEC around the world (OECD, 2012). One of the significant aspects of this study is the connection between the OECD's work and the perceptions of the participants regarding the OECD's and EC's - involvement in ECEC, the OECD's key concepts on educational quality and particularly ECEC quality. During the interviewing process the interviewees were asked to

elaborate on whether they have information concerning the OECD's involvement in ECEC and their reflections on that involvement; and their views on the OECD's concepts regarding quality, particularly regarding quality in ECEC.

Participants 12 and 8 (Directors of central ECEC organizations) reveal: *"I have been profoundly moved by the European Commission's directive about breaking the cycle of disadvantage [EU, 2013]... That recommendation is explicit about the significance of ECEC and particularly the importance of ECEC provision in preventing future problems, for parents' unemployment, for children's growth and progress... And financially, a society that invests early will benefit from lower social aids and less healthcare expenses... that directive was really interesting... I am well aware of the OECD's Starting Strong... I just think that they are utopic, given the circumstances... When you cannot hire staff... If there is political will from the European Commission - and I should state that I am an Europeanist - to explore ways of supporting and focusing on ECEC in order for the recommendations to be implemented... And this is not only about Greece, it is about other countries as well..."*. Participant 8: *"We have made significant changes regarding our facilities, the way we operate... but there are good practices and we are trying to be informed about them"*.

Similarly Participants 10, 15, 7, 14 and 1 (all from peripheral ECEC organizations) state: *"The OECD's toolboxes are great, but there is no point in having toolboxes when my planning is not implemented due to resistance and denial from the Ministry... There is no point in working like a dog and always being denied of anything I ask for..."*(Participant 10); *"I am well aware of the role of the OECD... These are great directives... Although I should state it seems a bit utopic..."* (Participant 15); *"I know just a few things about the OECD's toolbox, but something needs to be done regarding ECEC regulation... We need a central implementation of a regulating framework based on data... that will be positive and needs to be universally applied..."* (Participant 7); *"Who listens to what the EU and the OECD declare? Someone has to begin the implementation of such policies..."* (Participant 14);

"... there is no distrust towards the OECD... we are no gods, so I wish they could show us the way, our faults... we would like to have their feedback and support..." (Participant 1).

The participants cited above are aware of the OECD's involvement in ECEC and acknowledge the contribution of its good practices, though two of the interviewees characterized them as "utopic". The utopia for them has to do with not acknowledging a key premise, namely that before adopting the OECD's good practices and recommendations, primarily there should be support for the basic needs of ECEC provision. However, the majority of the participants in the interviews have admitted their unfamiliarity, or said that they have a rough only understanding of the OECD's concepts and involvement in ECEC. However, they were explicit in their reluctance to engage with the OECD or EU proposals and in expressing their related concerns:

"The OECD's involvement in ECEC does not sound so good... It will cause more troubles... there is no trust due to all these previous experiences of the Greek crisis..." (Participant 2); "The OECD is like it is nonexistent for us..." (Participant 1); " I am unaware of the OECD's efforts to regulate the field of ECEC... I am not sure that the field needs such efforts... I am concerned about a potential instrumental - and not educational - rationality behind the OECD's involvement... It is evident in our everyday lives... Our Municipality is considerably poorer due to the MOUs..." (Participant 4).

"... Of course there are other significant issues as well... The OECD focuses more on education and less on care... This should not be the case... Education should not be perceived as investment" (Participant 15); "I am unaware of the OECD's concepts or involvement in ECEC..." (Participant 5); "I have no idea about the OECD's policies on ECEC..." (Participant 6); "To the best of my knowledge, I am unaware of the OECD's efforts... I do not know such actions" (Participant 11); "I have no clear knowledge about the OECD, or the EU's policies on ECEC... (Participant 14).

The participants' stances run the gamut from total lack of knowledge regarding the OECD's involvement in ECEC, to a clear view and precise knowledge and understanding of the OECD's "toolboxes" and their concepts. Several of them implicitly adopt ideas that have been promoted by the OECD or EC and others are not familiar with the OECD's concepts, but are deeply troubled about the rising involvement of the OECD or the EC and the implications of such toolboxes for the already suffering ECEC field. Finally a limited number of participants display explicit knowledge and understanding regarding the way the OECD and the EC are involved in ECEC.

The responses of the participants in the interviews to questions about the role of supranational and international organizations in the ECEC field were contextualized. The majority of the participants (regardless of the degree of familiarity, experience and knowledge of such involvement), when asked about the OECD, in particular, expressed their concerns and even fears emanating from its active role in the Greek financial crisis. Specifically, the OECD's toolboxes/ reports are known to the Greek public since 2012, when the OECD was asked by the Greek government to conduct an assessment of laws and regulations undermining competition in the sectors of tourism, retail trade, food processing and construction materials. Using the OECD Competition Assessment Toolkit the organization later published its Competition Assessment Reviews on Greece (OECD, 2014 and 2017) 'pathologizing' Greece (Tsatsaroni and Evans, 2014: 180), fact that raised notable controversies in the Greek public sphere.

Our findings suggest that there is a distrust concerning the OECD's involvement in education - and particularly ECEC - which is further increased by the participants' blurring of the lines between the OECD's role in education and its involvement in other aspects of the public domain - notably the economy. Furthermore, the OECD's methodology is characterized by the interviewees as "instrumental" and also as an approach that perceives education as investment. Such concerns are also raised by the critical literature, which characterizes the effects of OECD's interventions as 'the creation of homo economicus' (Sims and Waniganayake, 2015: 336).

The OECD's policies are grounded in and framed by the agenda for human capital investment (Moutsios, 2009) - an instrument of generating human resources and boosting efficiency (Papadopoulos 1994 in Moutsios, 2009). The discourse on investment is linked to the OECD's lifelong learning and key competences agenda wherein the investment in human intellect becomes a state's key economic strategy (Takayama, 2013). However, the perception of education as human capital fails to acknowledge that education is also a social institution involved in the re - production of inequality (Robertson, 2016). This dimension is deeply concerning for certain participants of this study.

An important governance issue that arises from this study is the possibility of integrating ECEC provision to compulsory education, under the Ministry of Education. Our findings indicate that governance leads to new forms of government because the vast majority of the study's Municipalities seek more regulation by the central state. Re-regulation processes seem to be already in place, but what is interesting and paradoxical here is that it is not the central government that seeks to increase its control over the affairs of the Municipalities, ECEC in particular. On the contrary, it is the Municipalities - in fact the vast majority of the study's Municipalities - that are asking from the central government to increase its authoritative control over this sector and are expressing the need for more structured frameworks. In particular, they say they want to see the sector being placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education on the argument that this will enhance quality and will help to tackle the multidimensional and constantly growing problems of ECEC provision in Greece. This is interesting, and one could argue that it contradicts - in some respects - their positions in other parts of the interviews as we saw earlier, which indicated that autonomy is an important value for them.

A significant number of participants suggest that such possible shifts could be a game changer. Hence, the shift from the Ministry of Interior to the more traditional, bureaucratic methods of regulation - which, according to the interviewees, would exclude supranational organizations - seems, to several

of them, as a "safer", "clearer" choice (Participant 7). For example, Participant 2 highlights: *"I strongly believe that ECEC should be uniform/ undivided... Kindergartens and ECEC structures should have been in the same uniform organization, under the auspices of one operational body... I believe placing them under the Ministry of Interior was a wrong move... It appears that they do not admit that what takes place in ECEC is education... When they admit it, I believe that the shift to the Ministry of Education will happen..."*.

Similarly the other participants who stand in favor of this shift emphasize: *"I am of the opinion that ECEC provision should be part of the Ministry of Education... I strongly believe that it needs to happen... The Ministry of Education cares more about the educational aspect... There could be more qualified staff and it would be better for the children's progress... There could be better guidance in terms of the curriculum and they could use our current facilities for the full-day kindergartens..."* (Participant 3); *"I say yes to a move under the Ministry of Education... Such a move would require different, higher standards... currently each Municipality seeks to forward its own agenda, but under the Ministry of Education there would be a 'national curriculum', now everything is optional..."* (Participant 4).

"Falling under the Ministry of Education would be great, because there is accountability, seminars and training for the educators..." (Participant 6); *"I do believe that the Ministry of Interior should stick to the administrative part of ECEC... Managing and organizing is different in comparison to the educational aspect of ECEC... ECEC provision should fall under the Ministry of Education... At such a central level things are clearer, the main role should belong to the Ministry and on the side there could also be a lot of other players"* (Participant 7); *"Falling under the Ministry of Education is our standing commitment... To have a unified curriculum... the educational aspect of ECEC needs regulation..."* (Participant 13); *"ECEC is a challenging field... in my opinion the governing body should be the Ministry of Education... My view is that this shift failed due to the interests of the unions... there is a denial [of the problem] in general on the part of the Ministry of Education... there is a*

distinction between ECEC and kindergartens, which is wrong... We should be unified under the auspices of the Ministry of Education..." (Participant 15).

"ECEC fell under the Ministry of Interior in an unorthodox way... because the municipalities fall under the Ministry of Interior and public ECEC in Greece falls under the municipal authorities... The Ministry of Interior has not ever put together a body/ a structure to regulate ECEC, a structure that would employ qualified people in order for them to actively engage with ECEC... There needs to be a certain Ministry involved... fall under the Ministry of Education and not the Ministry of Interior, the same goes for kindergartens... so what about ECEC?" (Participant 12).

The findings point to a demand for a shift from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Education, where ECEC provision would be regulated by one and the same structure. Certain interviewees noted that the devolution of powers to municipalities was wrong, since the Ministry of Interior lacked mechanisms of regulation that could promote ECEC quality provision. According to these participants, decentralization has reinforced long-standing views, which see ECEC primarily as care and not as education. Hence, the shift to the Ministry of Education signifies that ECEC is primarily education, which amounts to higher standards and regulation. Moreover, these participants suggest that the distinction between kindergartens and ECEC was also in the wrong direction. Finally, a participant representing a peripheral ECEC organization (Participant 7), proposed a hybrid form of ECEC management that would involve shared responsibilities between the two Ministries. According to this proposal, the administrative part should fall under the Ministry of Interior and the educational aspect under the Ministry of Education.

On the other hand, there were voices - all from peripheral ECEC organizations - against the change in the locus of control just mentioned. The main impetus behind such voices was that a shift to the Ministry of Education is expected to further diminish the autonomy they enjoy. According to these participants, ECEC is not only about education - this is the mission of kindergartens - but requires a holistic approach better promoted

by municipalities under the Ministry of Interior. Specifically, Participant 1 explained: *"falling under the Ministry of Education, would not help us at all, because they are full of clichés in terms of education and structures... we are free to act on our own, to improvise... those things do not happen in kindergartens... that is why I do not want any link to the Ministry of Education, because our role will be downgraded..."* (Participant 1).

Likewise with Participants 5 and 10: *"I think that falling under the Ministry of Education is not necessary, given that ECEC is not purely about education... this is why kindergartens exist and this is why it is not compulsory... ECEC is more like a social [welfare] structure... that is why there is a holistic approach to ECEC and not only an educational approach..."* (Participant 5); *"I believe that we should stay under the Ministry of Interior, what we do is not education, it is more like adapting to societal needs and expectations... I do not think that falling under the Ministry of Education would help at all..."* (Participant 10).

The unification of municipal ECEC organizations and kindergartens under the Ministry of Education has been proposed by Rentzou (2015), arguing that this would help the municipal ECEC to achieve the aim of edu - care and to address the rising challenges of the field. The dichotomy between municipal ECEC and kindergartens is of concern to Greek scholars in the field, who call for intervention (see Rentzou and Sakellariou, 2011; Mantziou and Petrogiannis, 2009 in Rentzou, 2015). As we saw, these concerns are also evident among several of the participants in our study.

The literature links the limited inspection mechanisms of the municipalities to the lack of quality regulation and also raises the problem of the confusion around responsibilities for those involved (see Rentzou, 2015 and Petrogiannis and Melhuish, 2001). Internationally - and at the national level as some participants in this research appear to propose - the 'schoolification of ECEC' is on the rise (Rentzou, 2017: 10), an agenda defined and pushed by the OECD (Rentzou, 2017). In terms of weakening the dichotomy between education and care, the Greek governmental policies go 'back and forth',

which puts the Greek ECEC provision in a 'critical crossroad' (2017: 10), identified also by those involved in our study.

The Greek central government has not shown signs of agility as a response to calls from below (Municipalities' seeking for the Ministry of Education specifically to assume control) or above (EC and OECD). Furthermore, the majority of those responsible for ECEC organizations explicitly demand faster implementation of more efficient alternatives, stress the importance of networking and actually are in the process of formulating policy networks in order to exchange best practices, fill the gaps of this chaotic field, foster quality ECEC provision criteria and finally achieve a re - regulation of the field. Through such hybrid forms of regulation - soft governance policy networks, they aim to close the gaps between different Municipalities and ECEC centers and tackle a wide range of issues. The participants were asked to respond to such potential development:

"I consider that a policy network structure would definitely be helpful... I communicate with other municipal organizations throughout Greece, from Thrace to Crete... They usually ask our advice, because they realize that we are pretty good regarding European funding... We meet and they always say: 'what are you guys doing? How do you manage to absorb such funding from the EU?' And I am responding that it is because our applications are always of a high standard..." (Participant 1); *"A policy network would be helpful, both in educational and also in technocratic terms, although I would prefer falling under the Ministry of Education..."* (Participant 2);

"A policy network between Municipalities would be helpful, only if there was explicit care about the financial aspect... What should I do with best practices, without any money?" (Participant 3); *"The possibility of a policy network would be great... I need to be in touch with the other Municipalities to see what is going on, their progress..."* (Participant 4); *"A policy network structure would be helpful... we already do something similar, unofficially... we exchange views... it would be better if it gets officially established... Everybody needs support..."* (Participant 5); *"A good practices policy network in order to spread*

ideas would be very useful... caring for the children is a prerequisite..." (Participant 6).

The participants identify significant advantages in a network structure of decision-making, their justifications for it ranging from communication purposes to the exchange of best practices. They perceive such networks as a way of sharing advices and recommendations in order to tackle the many challenges they face, educational as well as technocratic - administrative. Certain participants already exchange good practices, but they prefer an established, more structured network. On the other hand, we have noticed some more critical voices, coming from participants who express some legitimate concerns regarding such a structure:

"As far as a good practices policy network is concerned, I would say that I am a bit skeptical... from my experience I would prefer the supervision done by the Ministry of Interior... The Municipalities are not autonomous, we need money and they [refers to the Ministry] deny the funding... I am a freelancer [by occupation] and I run ECEC in a similar way..." (Participant 10); *"A policy network structure would be helpful, although I believe that in Greece such things are volatile... we rest on the educators' good will... there could be an explicit curriculum, a unified policy... we need a structure to coordinate us... ECEC is left to deteriorate by the political authorities... now ECEC depends on each Municipality's stance..."* (Participant 11); *"Such a structure would be helpful, so long as it operates properly... there needs to be a guidance... ECEC provision is chaotic due to the common perception on caring... ECEC is about building the fundamentals of children... In Greece the political authorities simply do not get it..."* (Participant 14).

The above participants expressed their skepticism regarding the hierarchy such a network would probably establish. They expressed the need for extended supervision and guidance in order for such a structure to operate properly. The volatility of the current situation deters them from being positive regarding such a development. This study suggests that the re-contextualizations of what in the literature refers to as the neo liberal "policy

solutions" (Exley et al, 2011: 216) do not necessarily follow a linear route, from the international, to the national and finally to the local level. In Greece, in particular, the advocates of the ideas of the OECD and the EU are located in certain - central and peripheral - Municipalities, who seek to enhance the quality of their ECEC services through the construction of policy networks/ structures, as well as their own power. So the policy flow seems to move from the international, to the local, aspiring to reach the national level, by creating extended policy networks.

Thus, and in accordance with some participants' views about governing through a network structure, we want to argue that potentially a new hierarchy is in the making, consisting of producers/ exporters of policies and innovative - best practices and those importing them. Our study raises the need for a critical approach, which would trace and map the flows of policy from dominant "exporting" Municipalities to those in the receiving end - those willing or obliged to "import" education policy or administrative/ technocratic solutions to the problems - real or constructed - that they encounter. Such research would be interesting, because it would provide us with insights regarding a possible '(re) ordering' (Robertson, 2012 in Sifakakis et al, 2016), involving the consolidation of already existing internal hierarchies among Municipalities and their agents: e.g. among those who are experts at gaining competitive funding from the EU and those who have to learn. According to Ball and Junemann (2012: 3), network governance is part of the evolution of the state, aiming to address complex problems through the 'informal authority of diverse and flexible networks'. However, as they go on to argue (2012: 12), there needs to be emphasis on the 'social relationships, flows and movement in and beyond the nation-state', since those networks 'constitute new kinds of policy communities, usually based upon shared conceptions of social problems and their solutions, although they sometimes contain strange bedfellows'.

This potential diversification of the ECEC sector through partnerships - coalitions between standard-setters and low-performer Municipalities, shall have major repercussions - as indicated by the study's interview findings - on

forms of political representation of the Municipalities, the processes of decision making and early childhood sector's practices. Furthermore, the new internal hierarchies might shape the field in an entirely different way and could also open the policy doors to new actors (e.g. N.G.O.s and public - private schemes), new ideas (e.g. the introduction of new types of ECEC provision - flexible structures) and new sensibilities (e.g. exchanging know-how and simultaneously imposing new legitimate forms of knowledge). Such bottom - up processes of public sector transformation could imply that in the future the central state's role could be transformed too, from directing bureaucracies to managing policy networks... a new reality in matters of education that is emerging in many European countries and beyond.

Chapter Six: Challenging the OECD's Agenda on ECEC: A Quantitative Approach of Quality

Introduction

The notion of quality of ECEC provision has become a policy priority for European countries and for the European Commission as well (Leseman, 2009). The European Commission emphasizes the role of quality in eliminating social and cultural inequalities and underachievement (*Ibid*). The European governments through rules, rewards and sanctions seek to promote and guarantee quality standards. Hence, regulation of ECEC services around Europe constantly increases (Vincent and Braun, 2011). Since standardization has become prominent, the OECD has inevitably been established as a global 'bench-maker' of standards between nation-states and their education institutions (Rinne & Ozga, 2013: 98).

In the previous chapter I explored and identified how those responsible for municipal ECEC, perceive the notion of quality. Furthermore, I studied the role of supranational institutions - and especially the role of the OECD - in establishing the international debate on quality of ECEC provision and pushing forward policies that due to the OECD's involvement in the Greek Memoranda of Understanding could trigger concern and maybe opposition.

Considering the complexity of different structures and rules currently governing ECEC internationally, the European Commission and the OECD's intention has been to mutually explore ways of identifying best policy practices from their members. Therefore, in 2012, as we have seen in Chapter two, the OECD published a reference guide intending to promote quality in ECEC with a special emphasis on policy. This 'Quality Toolbox' is assumed to provide realistic solutions via 'accessible language' (OECD, 2012: 15) making the enhancement of quality in the early childhood field a manageable problem for stakeholders and policy makers around the world. The debates regarding

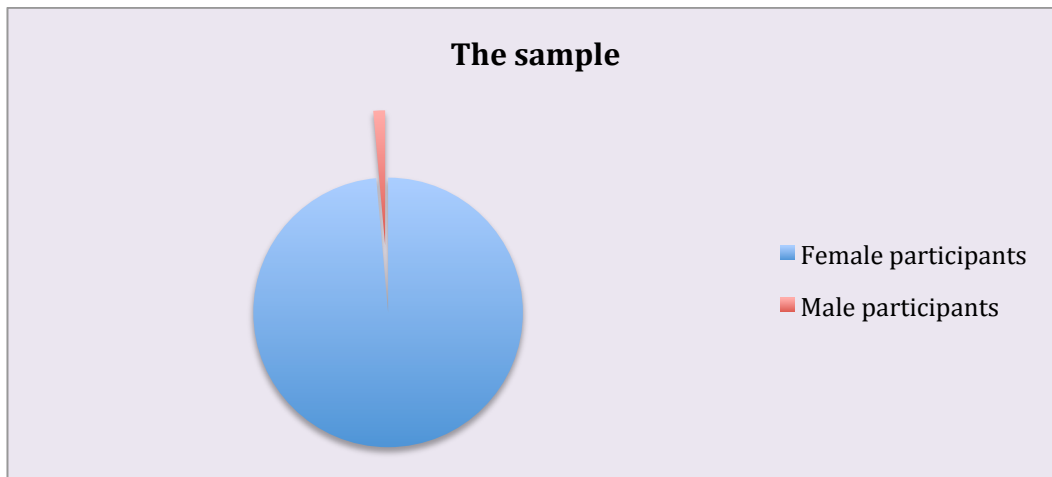
policies on quality are contextualized in processes of Europeanization of education, where the traditional command and control bureaucratic systems are being replaced by data systems. The latter construct policy problems and frame policy solutions by taking the European into the national level (Ozga, 2012).

According to the OECD, the five policy levers it has proposed (see Chapter two), have the potential to promote quality and the tool's supporting material can be used as background material for the debate with all those involved in ECEC. We have discussed the significance of this tool in establishing the dominant discourse regarding international policies in ECEC and in promoting ideas and best practices that could serve certain views. That is to say, views which perceive education as 'human capital' (Robertson, 2016: 824), shaping their ideas of appropriate action and, ultimately, constraining policy makers' and educators' autonomy (Jones, 2013: 1).

Therefore I drew upon and utilized the OECD's "Action Area 5 - Reflection Tool on the Current State of Play", from the document's five policy levers, that 'helps to prepare the justification of a policy decision' on ECEC (2012: 17). My aim was to use a questionnaire that combines the dominant discourse on quality - promoted by a supranational organization, paired with debates/discourse raised from the first part of the research process, where the participants offered their insights on policies and practices in the Greek municipal ECEC. Hence the questionnaire consists of 6 sections - axes linked to quality, curricula, minimum standards, evaluation, workforce, family engagement, data collection, autonomy and regulation. The breakdown of the questionnaire is located in the Appendix section (see also Chapter four).

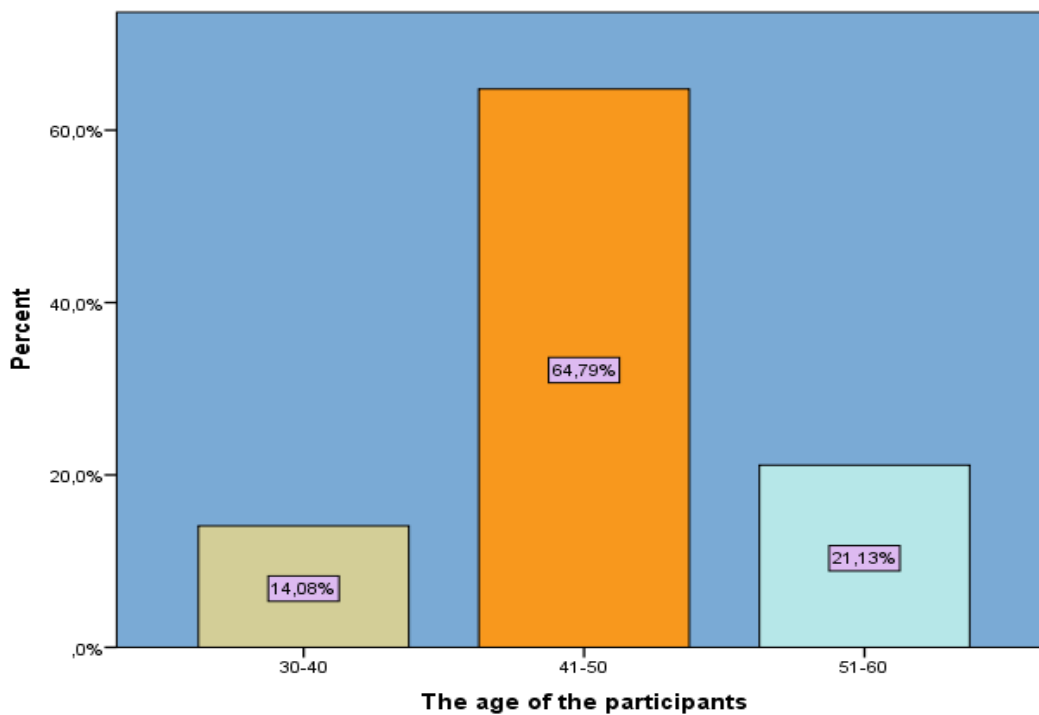
Analysing the data

We begin our analysis by presenting the demographic elements of the sample. 70 females and 1 male educator responded to the provided questionnaire (graph 1).



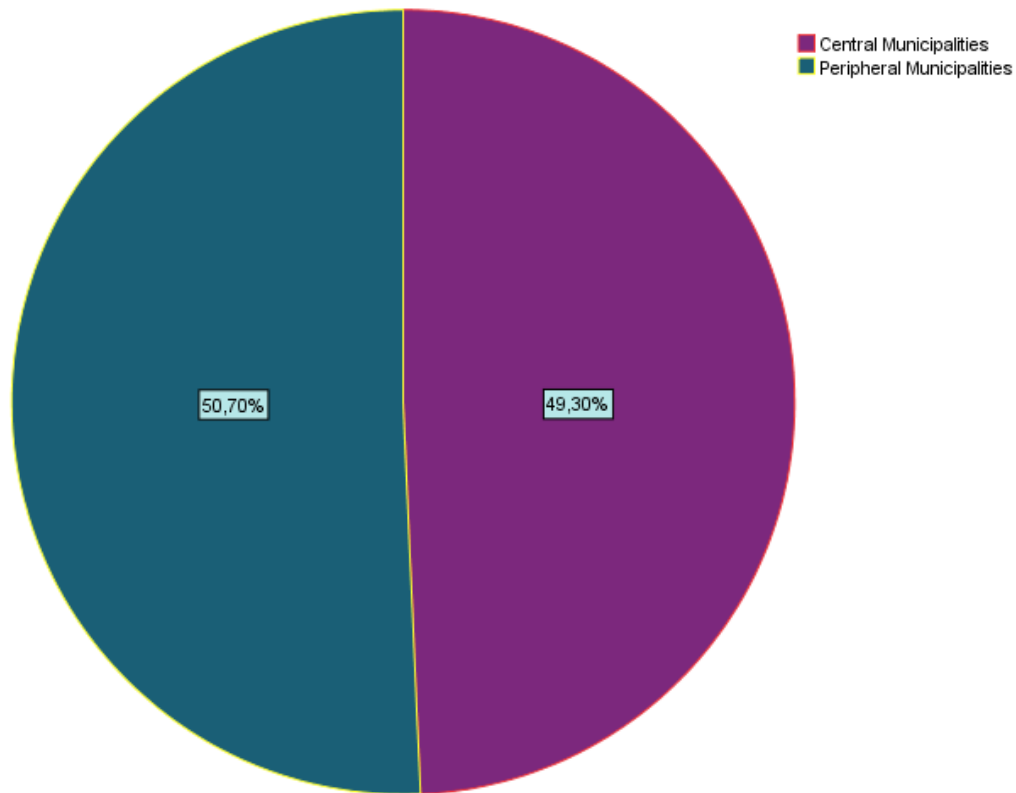
Graph 1: The sample of the research

As far as the age of the respondents is concerned, the majority of the participants were between 41 and 50 years of age (graph 2).



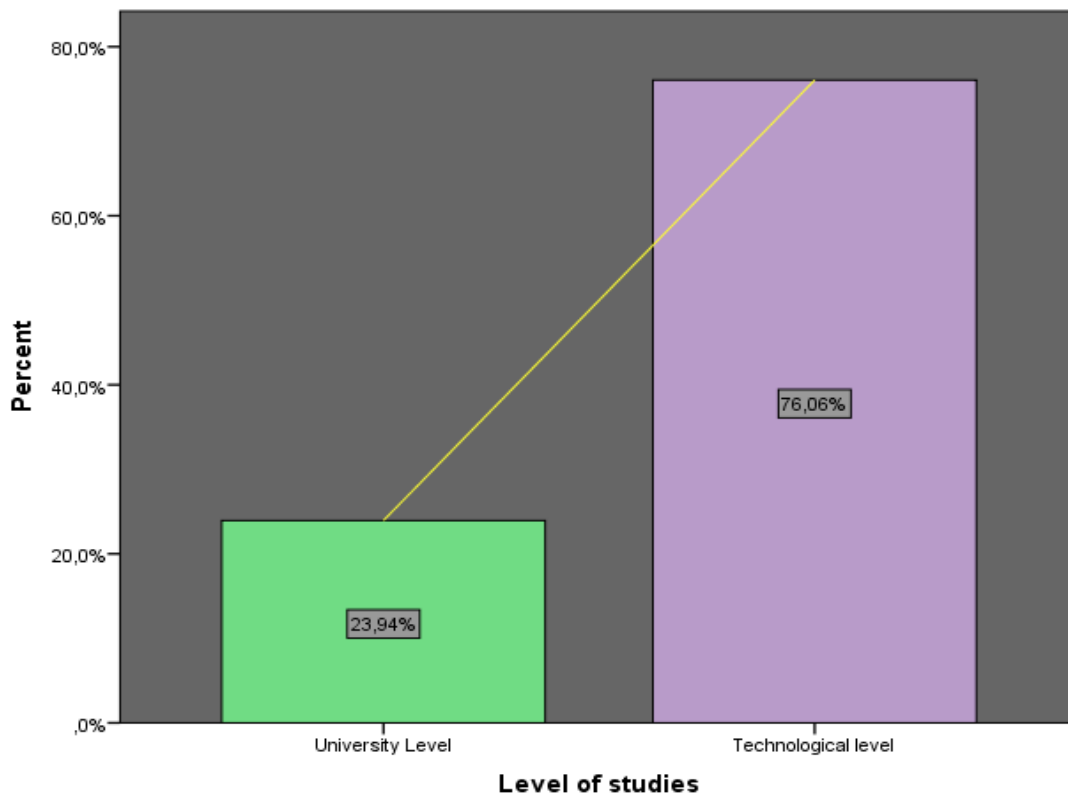
Graph 2: The age of the participants

Our aim - from the first part of the research - was to strike an appropriate balance between metropolitan center and peripheries and as indicated in the graph (3) below, there is an almost perfect (50/50) balance.

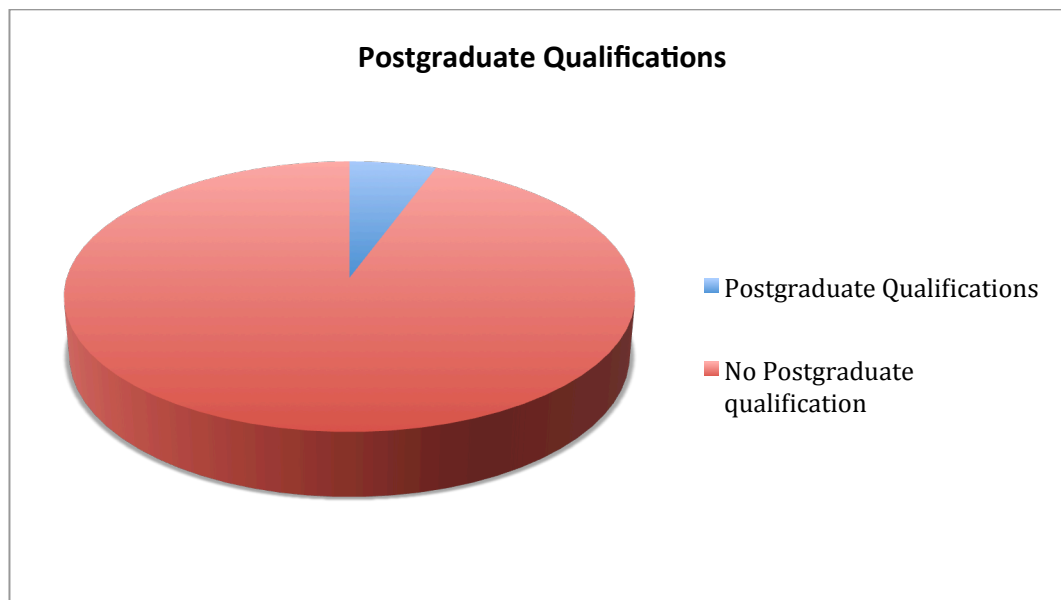


Graph 3: The origin of the sample

The demographic elements of this research continue with qualifications of the participants. The respondents were asked to provide us with information regarding their level of studies (graph 4), their postgraduate studies (graph 5) and the relevant training (graph 6) they have received, in order for us to get a clear depiction of the way these qualifications have equipped them with skills and have molded their stances towards policy and practice.



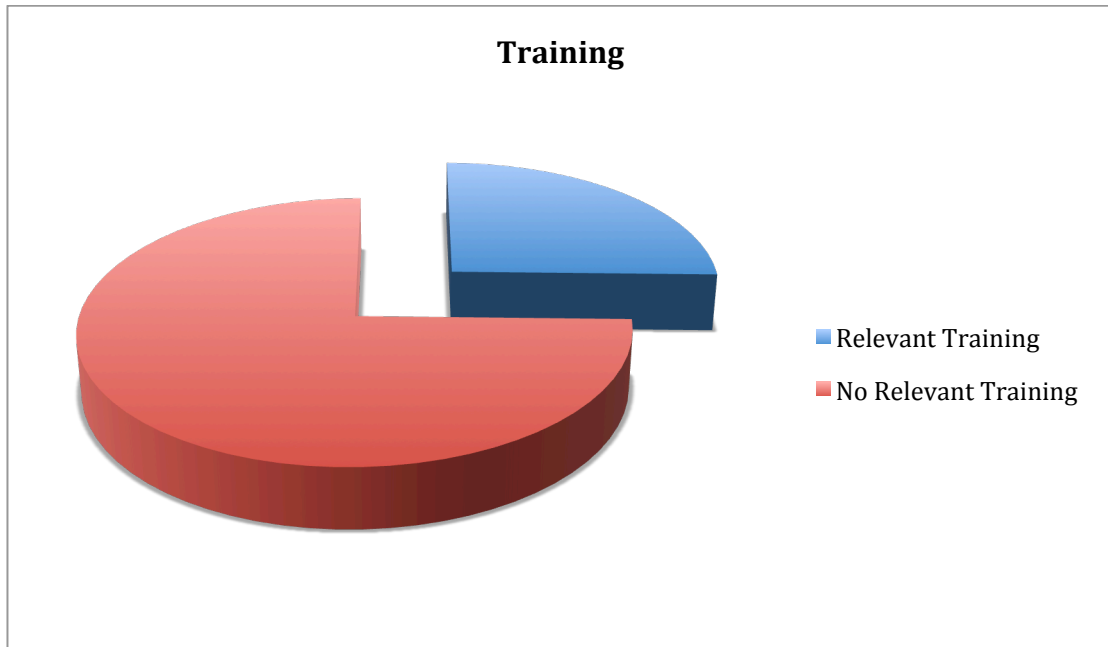
Graph 4: The participants' level of Qualification



Graph 5: The participants' postgraduate qualifications

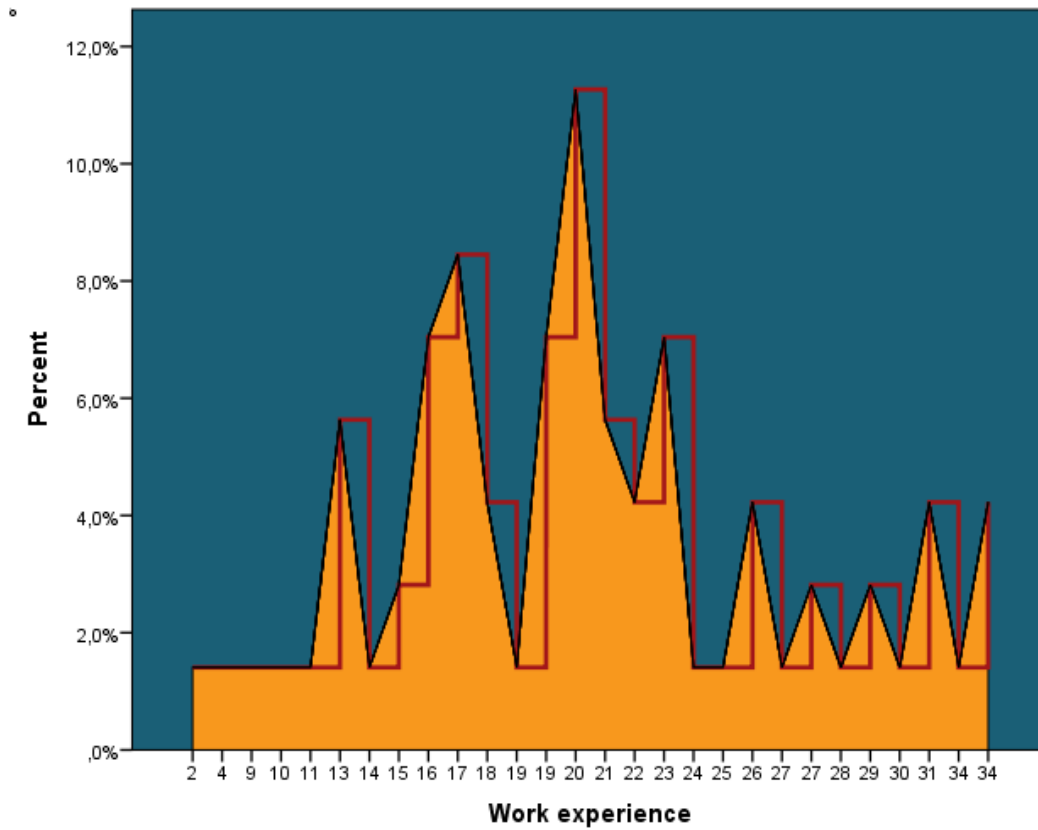
The graphs above confirm our previous claim about the heterogeneity of the Greek municipal ECEC field, since the majority of the respondents consists of Technological level educators and only 24% of the participants have

University level qualifications. The municipal ECEC's educational staff consists of Vocational level educators as well, but it appears that they did not take part in the study. Finally, only 1 from 4 participants responded positively when asked whether or not they had any relevant training.

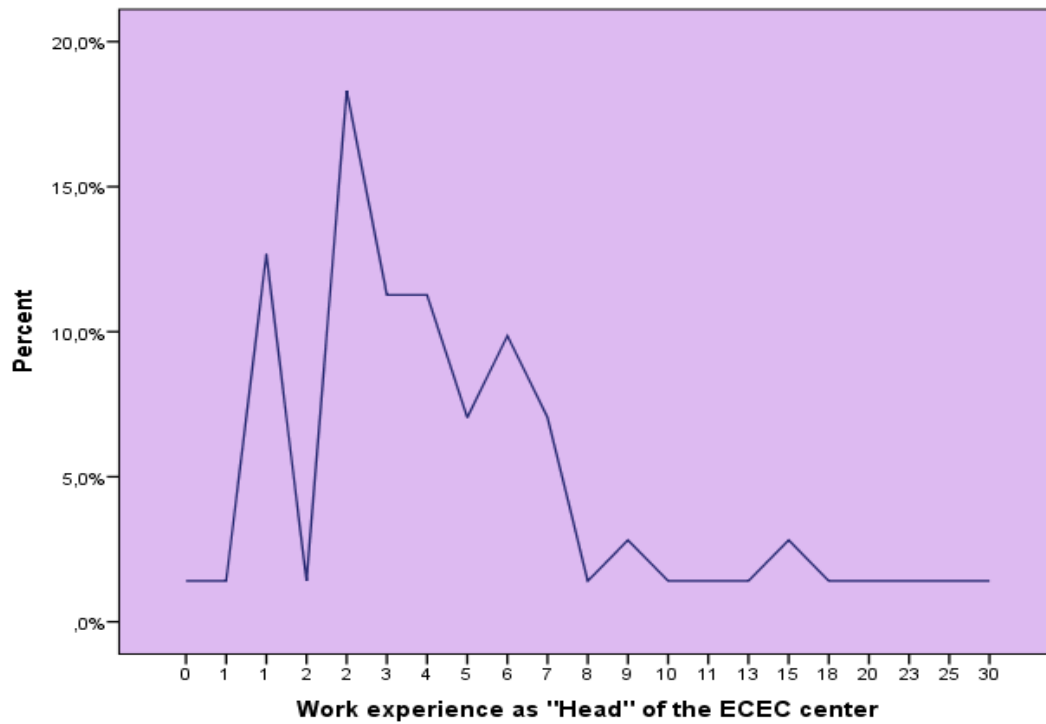


Graph 6: The participants' relevant training

Most educators of this research were experienced, working in ECEC centers for more than 16 years. As depicted in graph 7, the majority of the participants have 16-24 years of experience. However, their experience as "Heads" of ECEC centers is not so broad, having the post of director for no more than 1, 2 or maximum 5 years (graph 8).

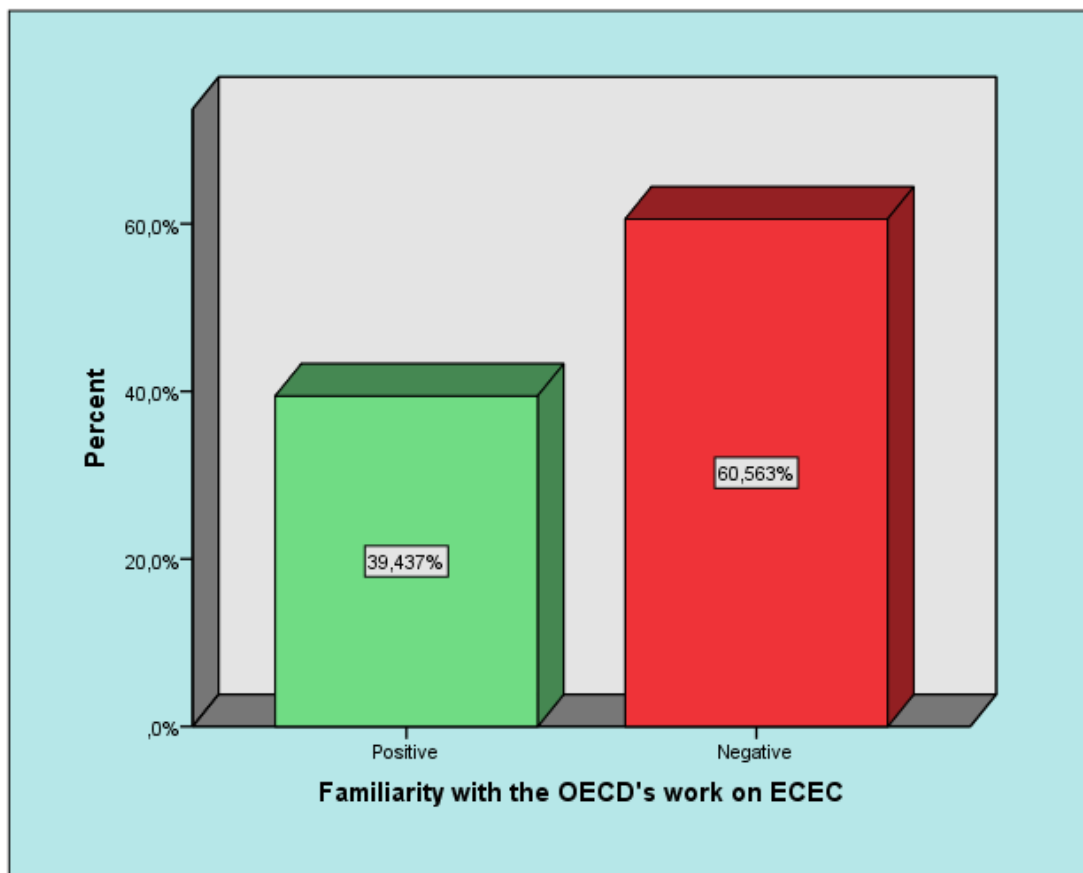


Graph 7: The respondents' work experience



Graph 8: The respondents' work experience as "Heads" of ECEC center

Finally, the question that concludes the demographic part of our data is related to the extent of familiarity with the OECD's work on ECEC. The OECD's perspective of ECEC's current and future direction is of great significance for this study. The OECD's discourse "sets the tone" internationally - as highlighted in different sections of this Thesis - nationally and even locally. Almost 61% of the participants answered that they were not familiar with the OECD's work on ECEC - a relatively high percentage.

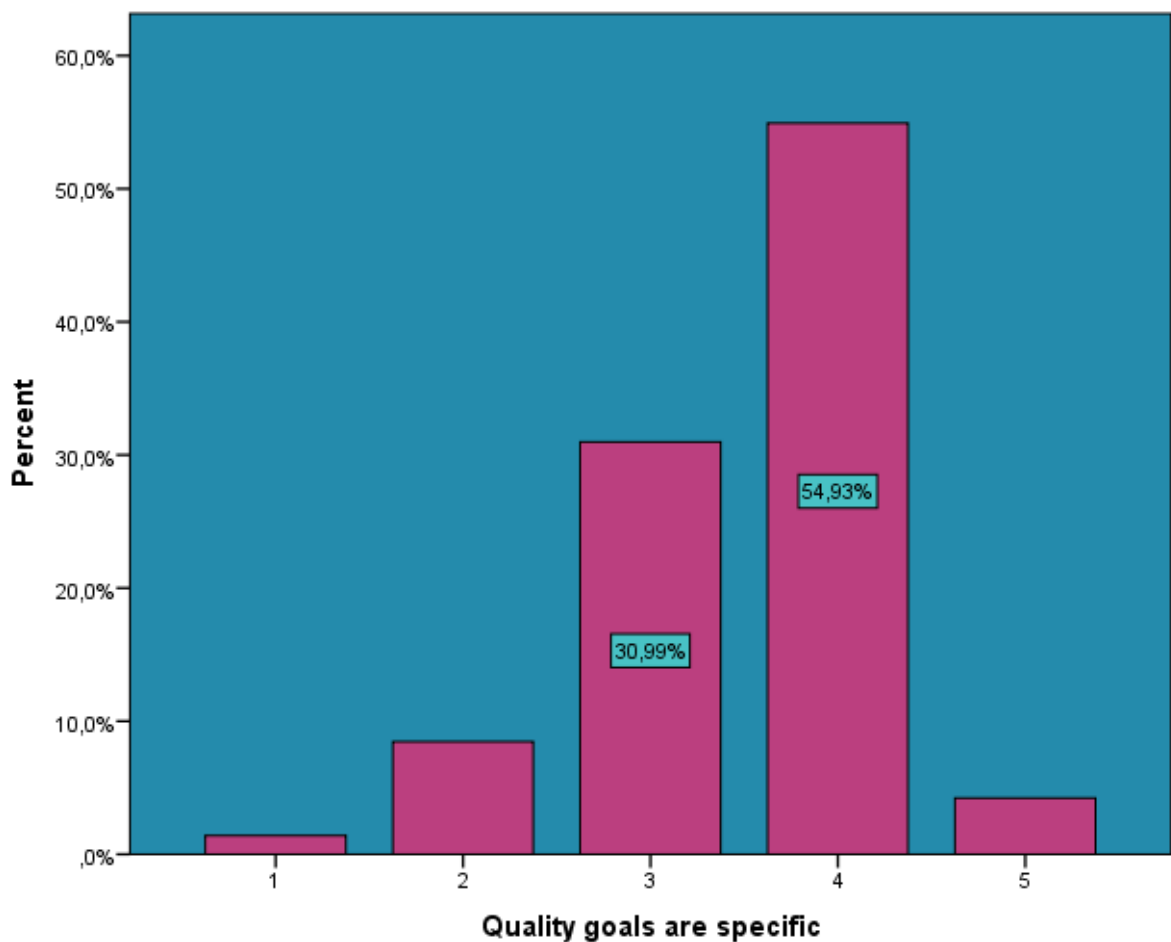


Graph 9: The participants' familiarity with the OECD's work on ECEC

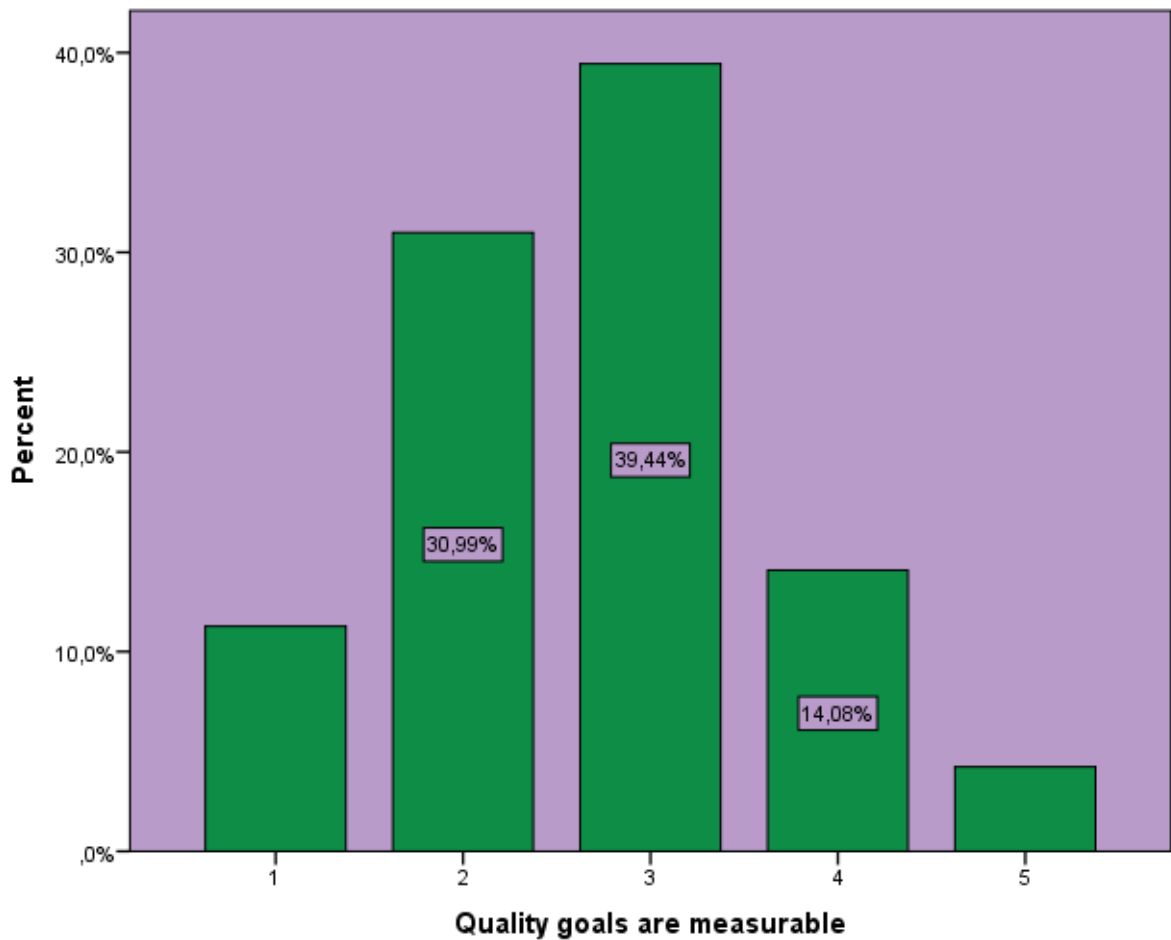
Policy Axis 1

The first policy axis of the data analysis includes eight questions/ items and is related to quality goals and minimum standards. To be particular, when the

educators were asked about the specificity of the quality goals (graph 10), almost 55% agreed that quality goals in municipal ECEC are specific. However, almost 82% of the respondents shared a neutral - negative attitude towards the measurability of the municipal ECEC quality goals (graph 11).

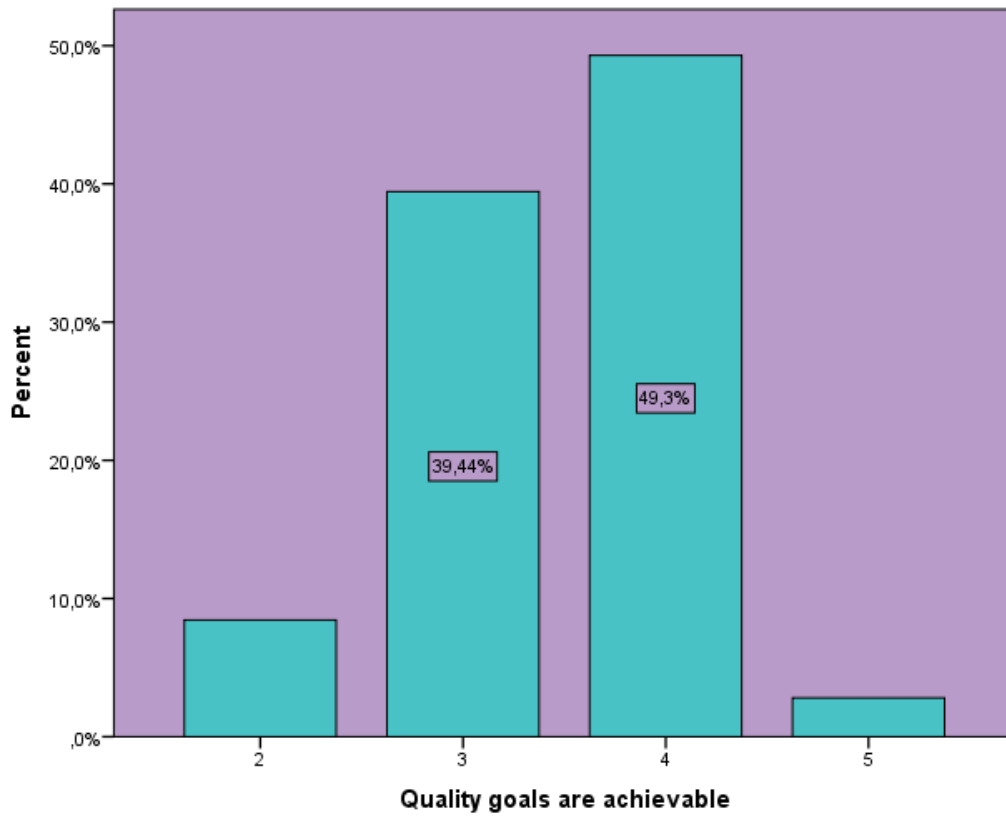


Graph 10: The specificity of Quality goals (V18)

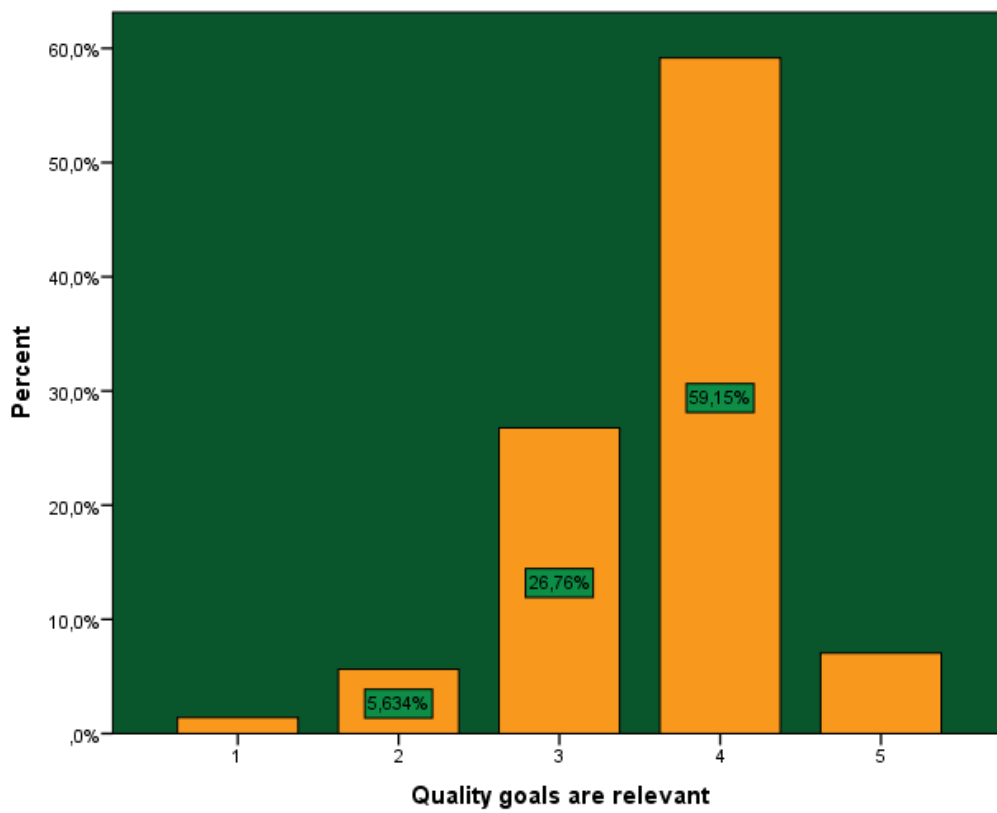


Graph 11: The measurability of Quality goals (V19)

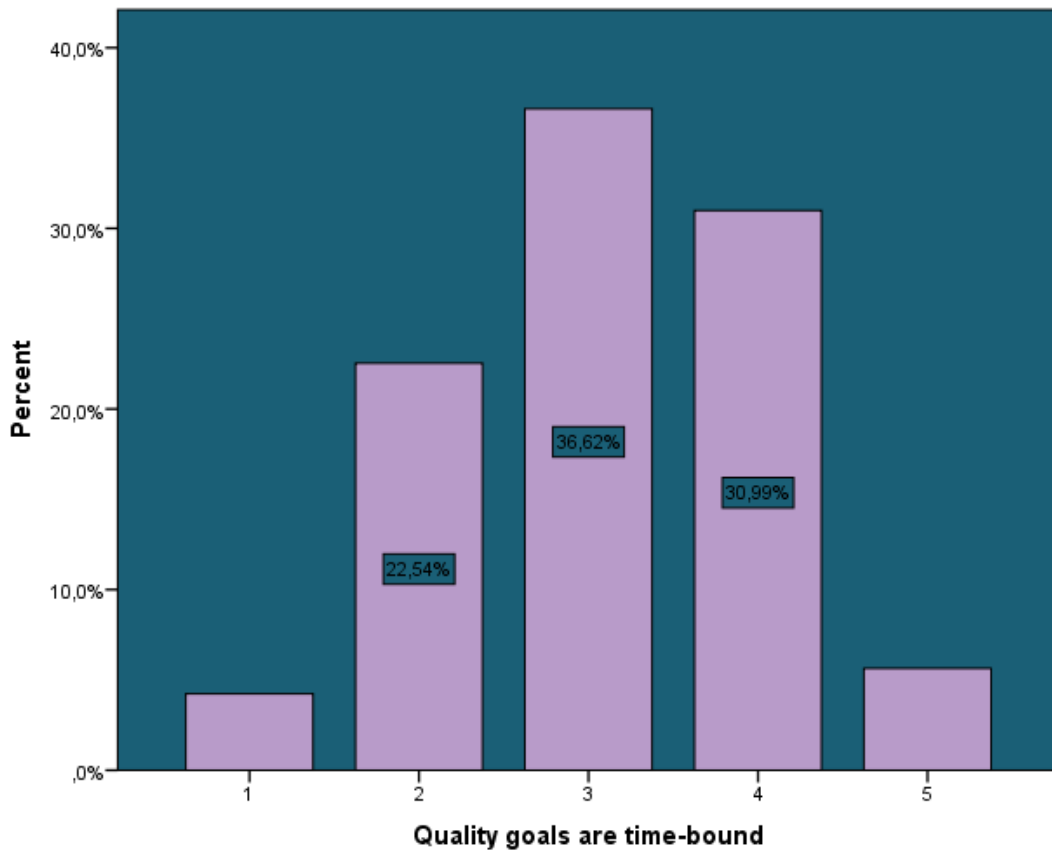
As far as the extent of achievability of quality goals is concerned, the majority of the educators agreed/ strongly agreed that quality goals are achievable. It should be mentioned though, that almost 40% of the sample neither agreed, nor disagreed (graph 12) regarding the above statement. On the contrary, almost 65% of the respondents shared their positive stances regarding the relevance of quality goals (graph 13) and when asked whether quality goals are time-bound, the majority of the participants (36.62%) neither agreed, nor disagreed (graph 14).



Graph 12: The achievability of Quality goals (V20)

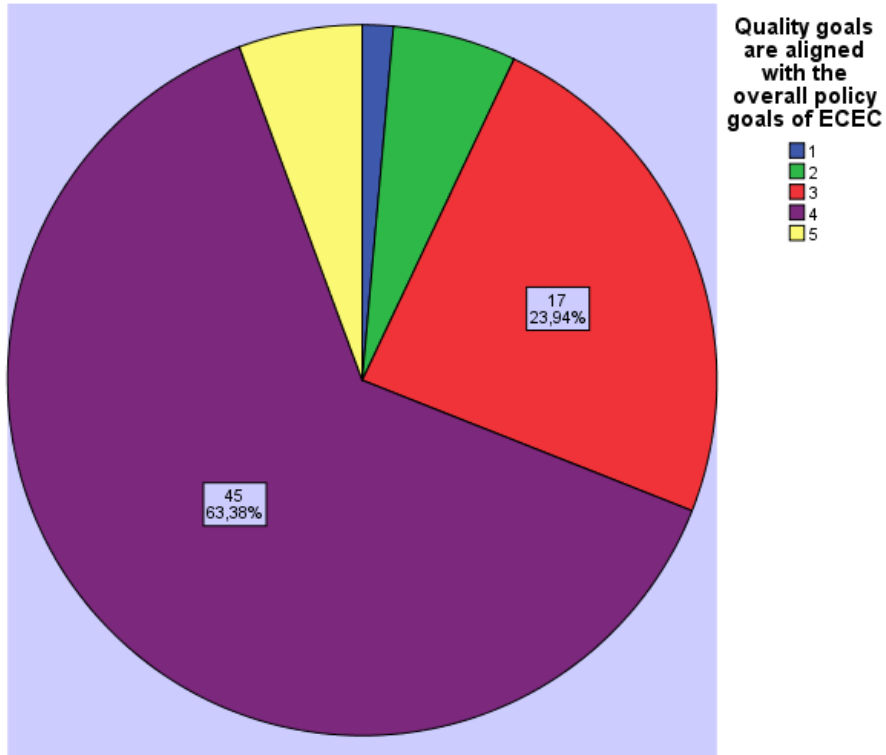


Graph 13: The relevance of Quality goals (V21)

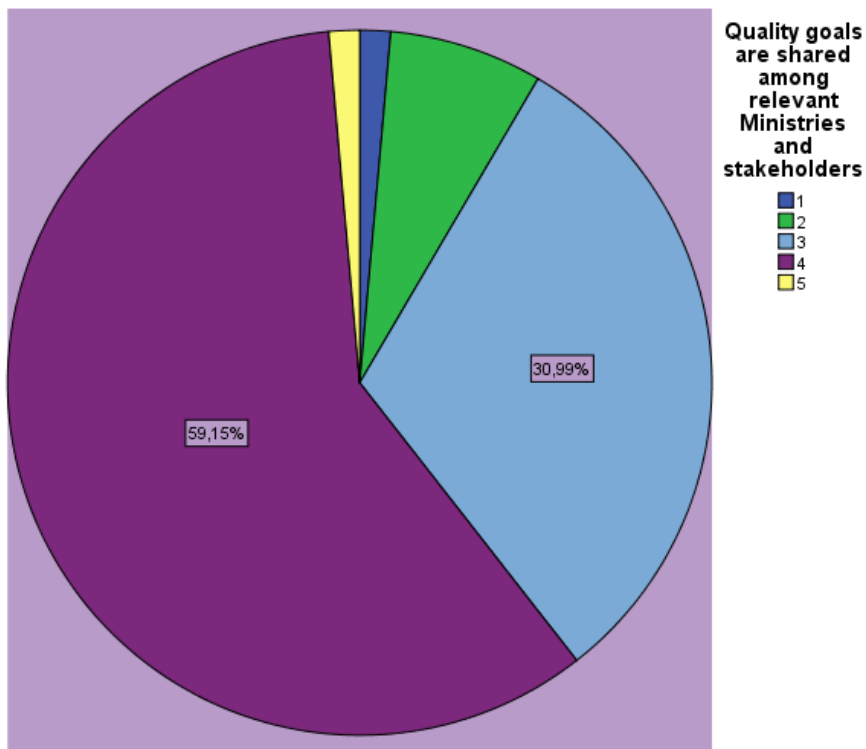


Graph 14: The Quality goals are time-bound (V22)

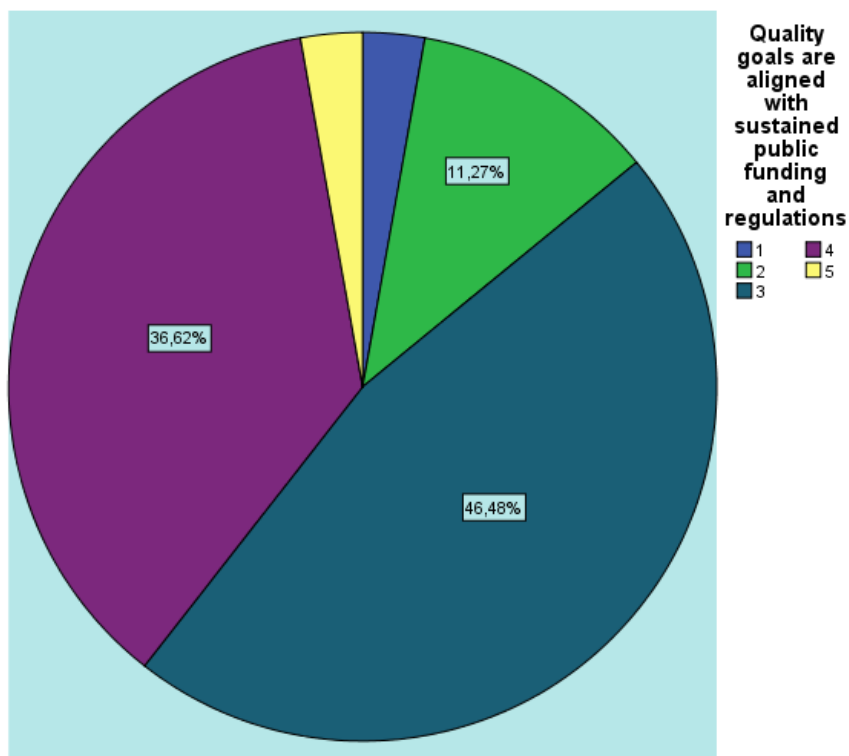
The following three questions conclude the first policy axis of our data analysis. The majority of the participants, when asked about the alignment of quality-specific goals with the overall policy goals of ECEC (graph 15), agreed (63.38%) that quality-specific goals are aligned. Furthermore, more than 62% agreed - strongly agreed that quality goals are shared among the Ministry of Interior and the relevant stakeholders (graph 16). Finally, almost 50% of the sample shared their neutral stance towards the alignment of quality goals with sustained public funding and regulations. However, it should be highlighted that more than 36% of the respondents agreed - strongly agreed on the previously described alignment (graph 17).



Graph 15: The alignment of Quality goals with the overall ECEC Policy goals (V23)



Graph 16: The involvement of the relevant Ministries and stakeholders in Quality goals (V24)



Graph 17: The alignment of the Quality goals with sustained public funding and regulations (V25)

As described in the table (1) below, we identify the relatively high average value of this first set of measurements, which reaches 3.5 in the majority of the questions (maximum 5), except from the variable related to the measurability of the quality goals. The standard deviation of this first set indicates that the typical observation deviates not far from the sample average, except from the cases of V19 and V22.

Policy Axis 1: Statistics

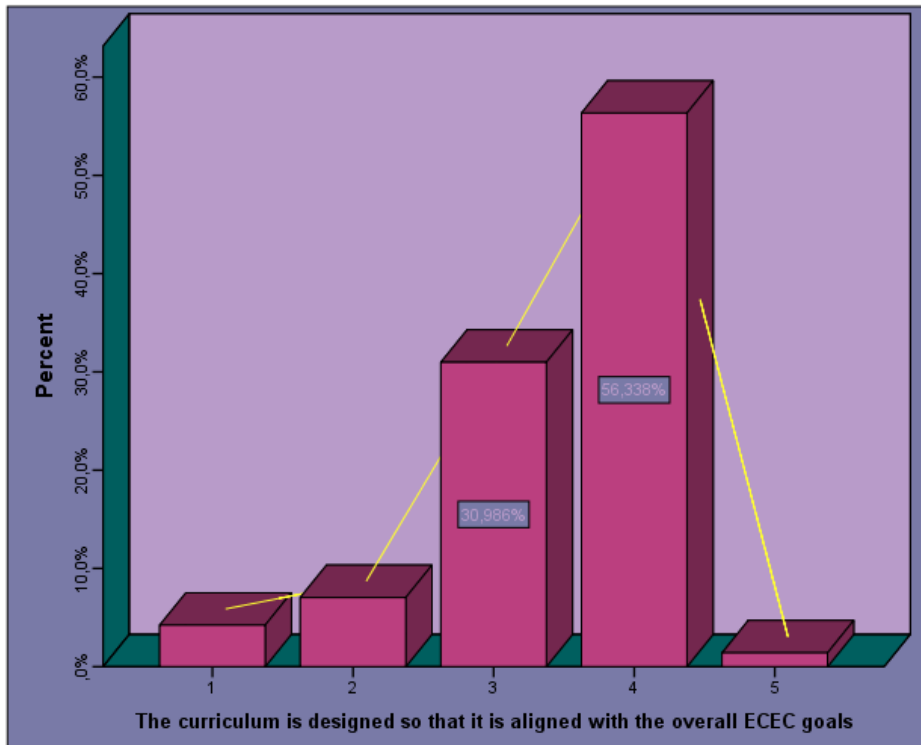
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V18	3,52	,772	71
V19	2,69	,994	71
V20	3,46	,693	71
V21	3,65	,758	71
V22	3,11	,964	71
V23	3,66	,736	71

V24	3,52	,714	71
V25	3,25	,806	71

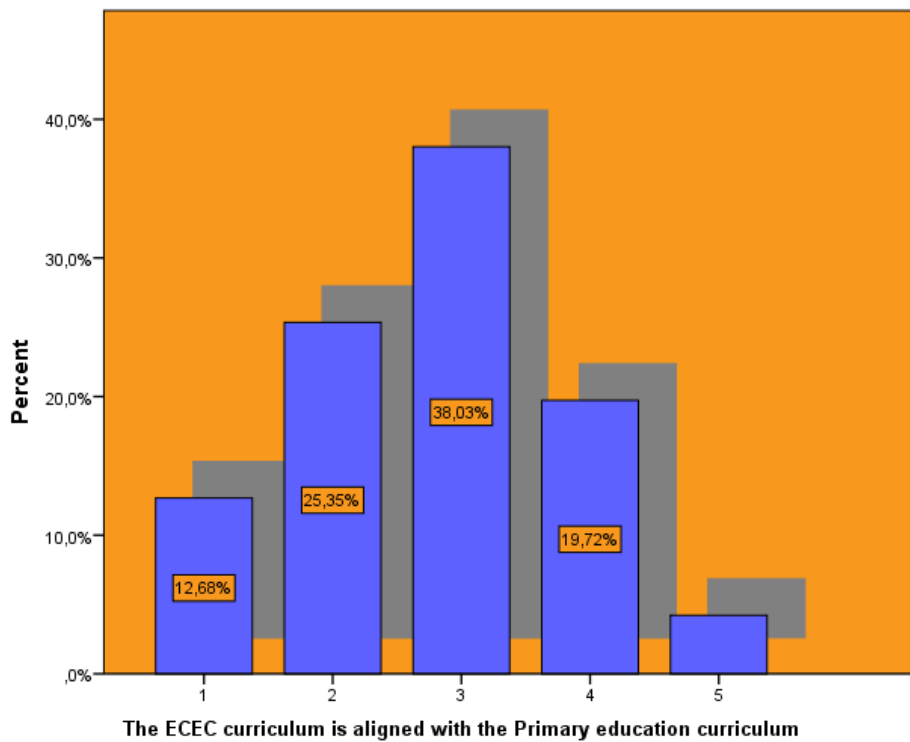
Table 1: Policy Axis 1 statistics

Policy axis 2

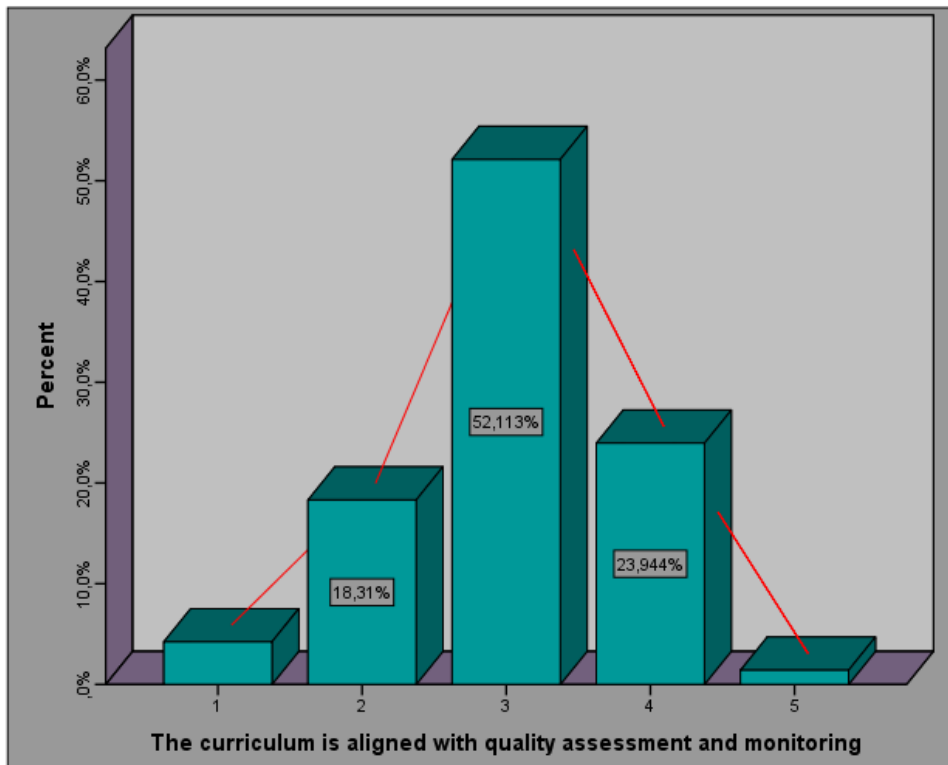
The second policy axis of the data analysis includes seventeen questions/ items and concerns curricula and standards that according to the OECD's agenda can affect and enhance ECEC quality. Specifically, almost 60% of the educators shared their positive attitudes towards the alignment of the curriculum with the overall municipal ECEC targets (graph 18). Furthermore, when the participants were asked whether the ECEC curriculum is aligned with primary education curriculum in order to manage smooth transition from ECEC to compulsory education, most of them (38.03%) neither agreed nor disagreed and almost 38% disagreed - strongly disagreed (graph 19). Similarly, a neutral stance is depicted by more than 52% of the respondents regarding the alignment of the designed curriculum with assessment and monitoring, such as for child outcomes or the quality of ECEC provision (graph 20).



Graph 18: The alignment of the curriculum with the overall ECEC goals (V26)

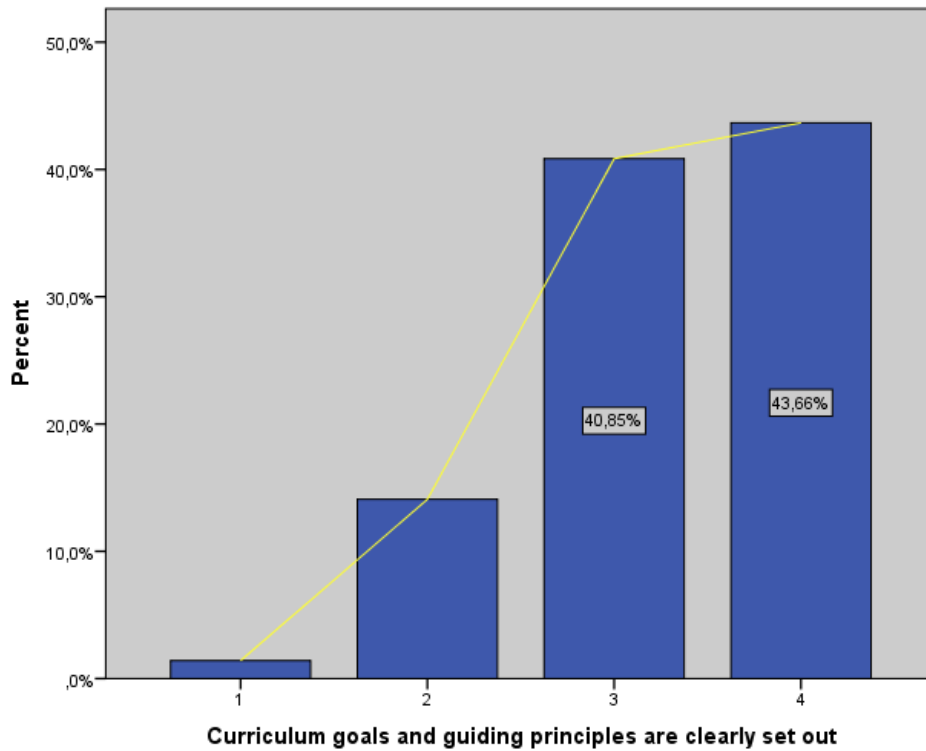


Graph 19: The alignment between ECEC and Primary education curriculum (V27)

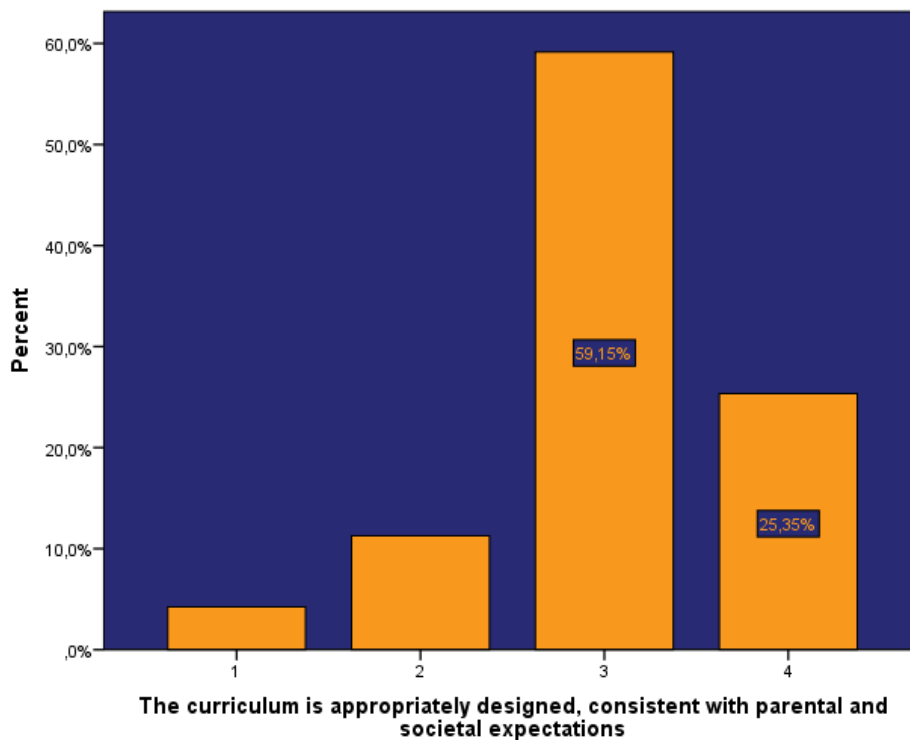


Graph 20: The alignment of ECEC curriculum with quality assessment (V28)

Moving on to the next question, data show a fairly high extent of clarity regarding curriculum goals and guiding principles (graph 21). Almost 44% of the participants agreed that curriculum goals and guiding principles are clearly set out. However, almost 60% of the respondents neither agreed, nor disagreed on whether the curriculum is appropriately designed consistent with parental expectations and societal future needs (graph 22).

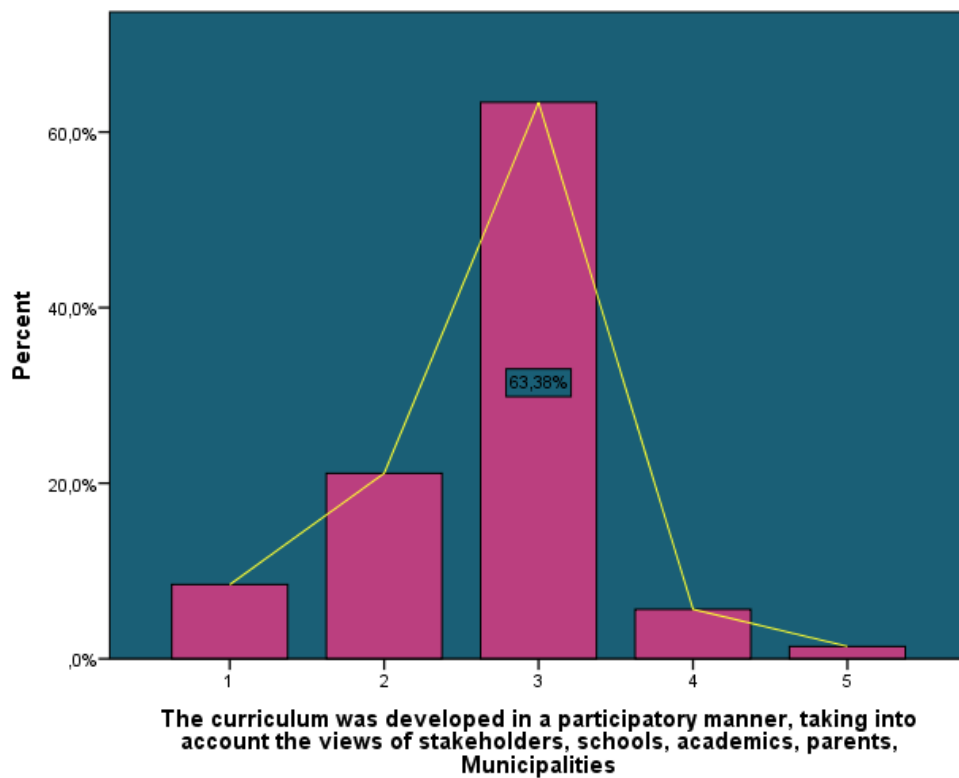


Graph 21: The extent of clarity of curriculum goals and guiding principles (V29)



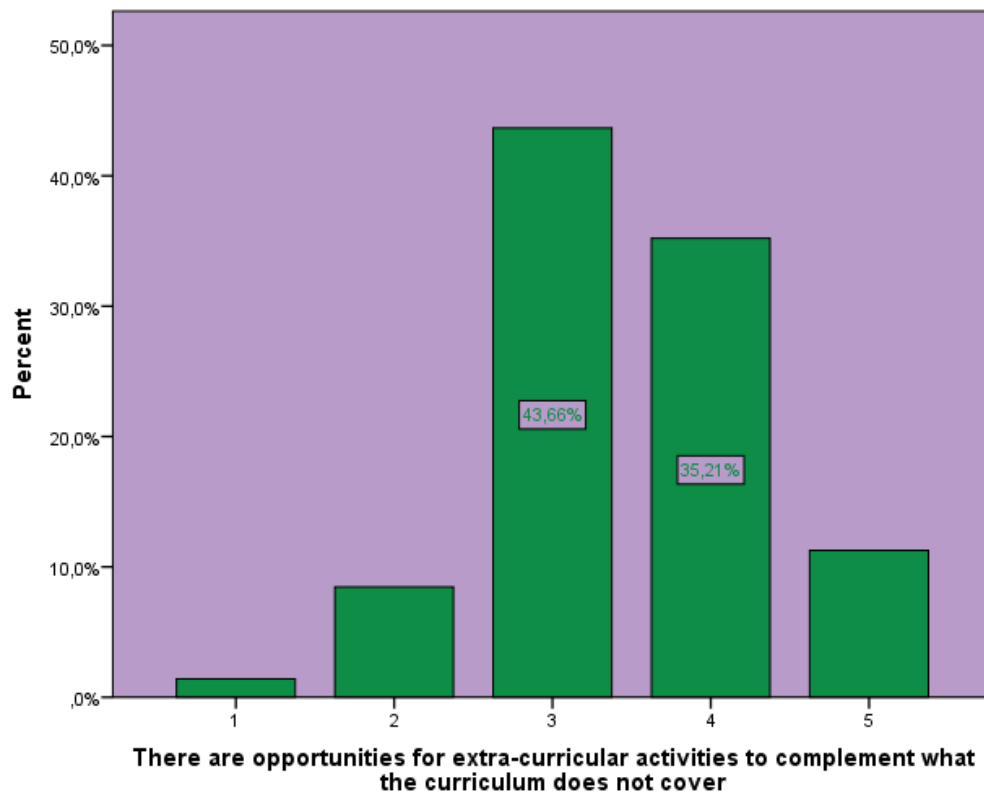
Graph 22: Curriculum consistency with parental and societal expectations (V30)

It needs to be stressed that according to the educators, who took part in this research, there is a neutral (almost 64%) and a negative (more than 25%) stance concerning the involvement of parents, academics, stakeholders etc. in municipal ECEC curriculum design and development (graph 23).



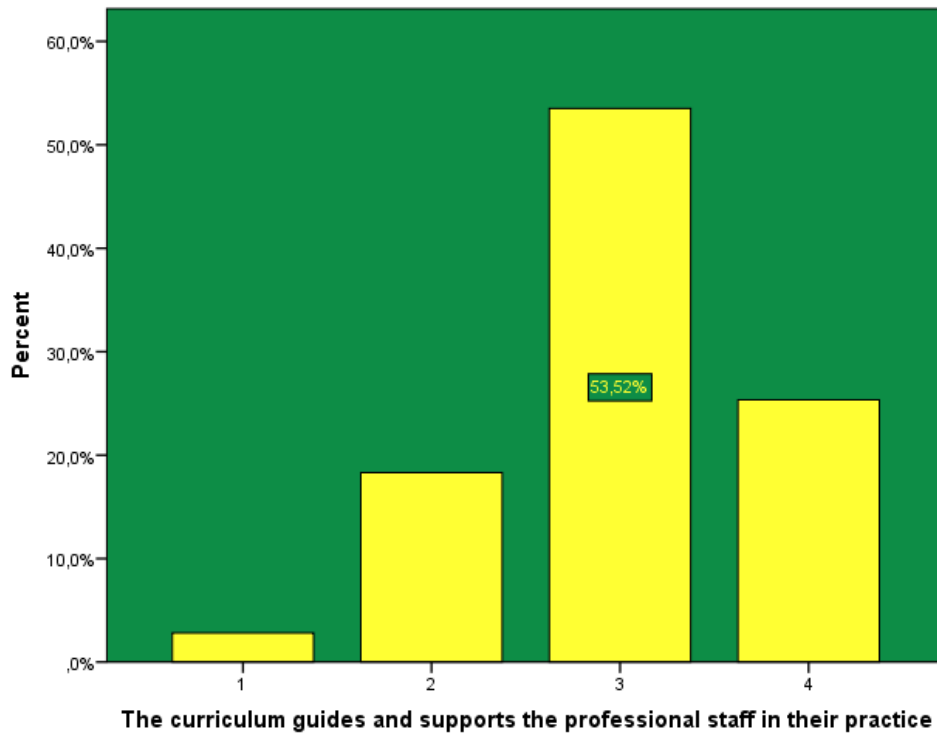
Graph 23: The extent of participation in curriculum design and development (V31)

Moreover, there appears to be a rather positive attitude, reaching more than 45% of the sample, towards extra-curricular activities that have the potential to complement what the curriculum does not already cover (graph 24).

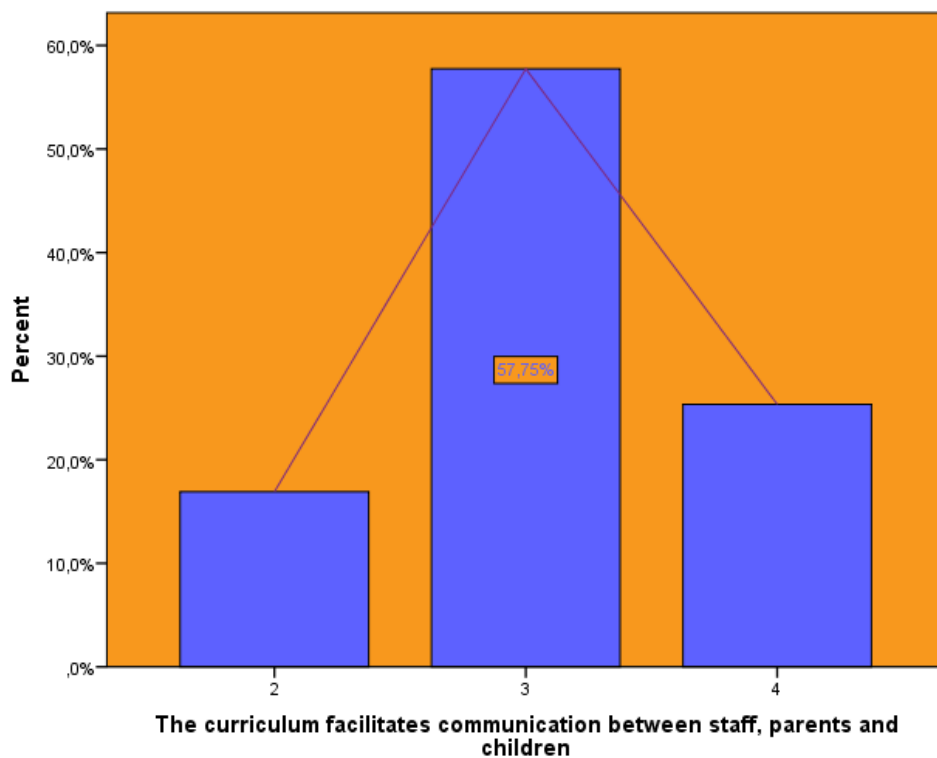


Graph 24: Opportunities for extra-curricular activities (V32)

The curriculum is a vital aspect of the educational process. Its design and development needs to be pointed towards the facilitation of the educational staff in order for it to be creative and productive. Still, the respondents showed their neutral - negative stance (a sum of more than 75%) when asked about the extent of guidance and support provided by the ECEC curriculum regarding their educational practice (graph 25). The participants responded in a similar manner regarding the extent of facilitation that the ECEC curriculum provides between staff, parents and children (graph 26).



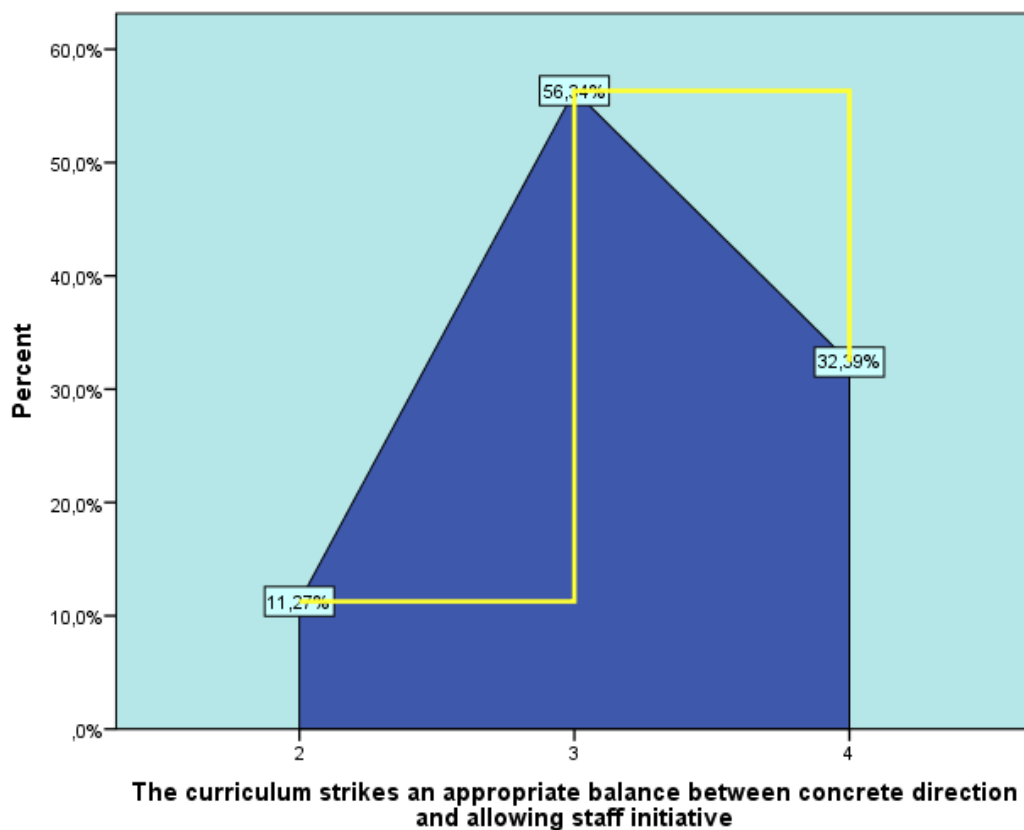
Graph 25: Guidance and support from the curriculum (V33)



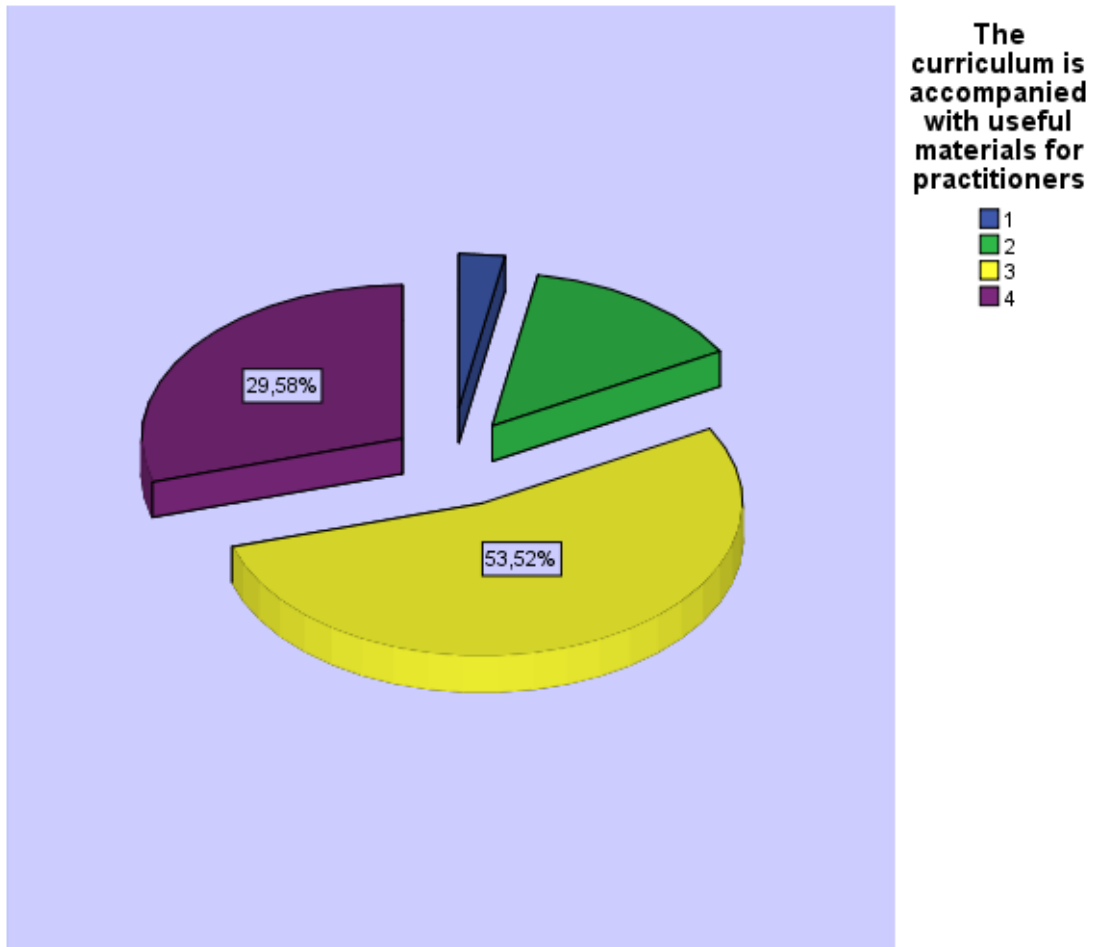
Graph 26: To what extent the curriculum facilitates communication (V34)

Furthermore, the participants (32.9%) agreed that the curriculum strikes an appropriate balance between giving concrete direction and specifics, versus

allowing space for staff initiative and local innovation (graph 27). The majority of the sample (53.52%) shared their neutral view when asked if the curriculum is accompanied with useful materials for the educators such as assessment toolkits, toys and books, or other classroom materials (graph 28). Almost 30% of the respondents were positive about the same statement.

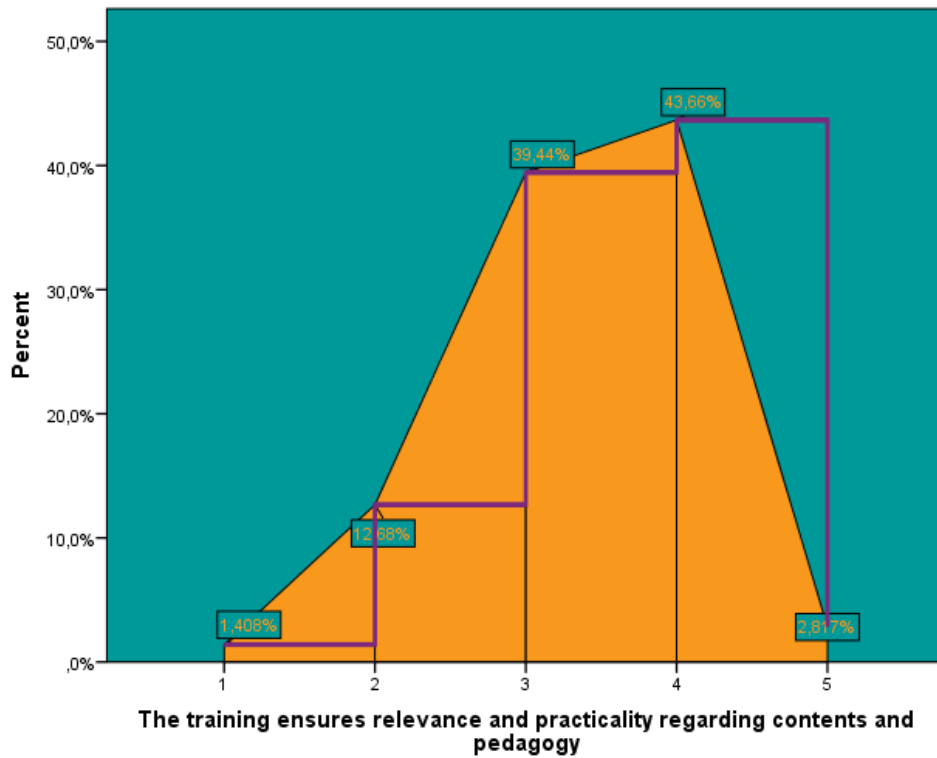


Graph 27: The curriculum's level of balance (V35)

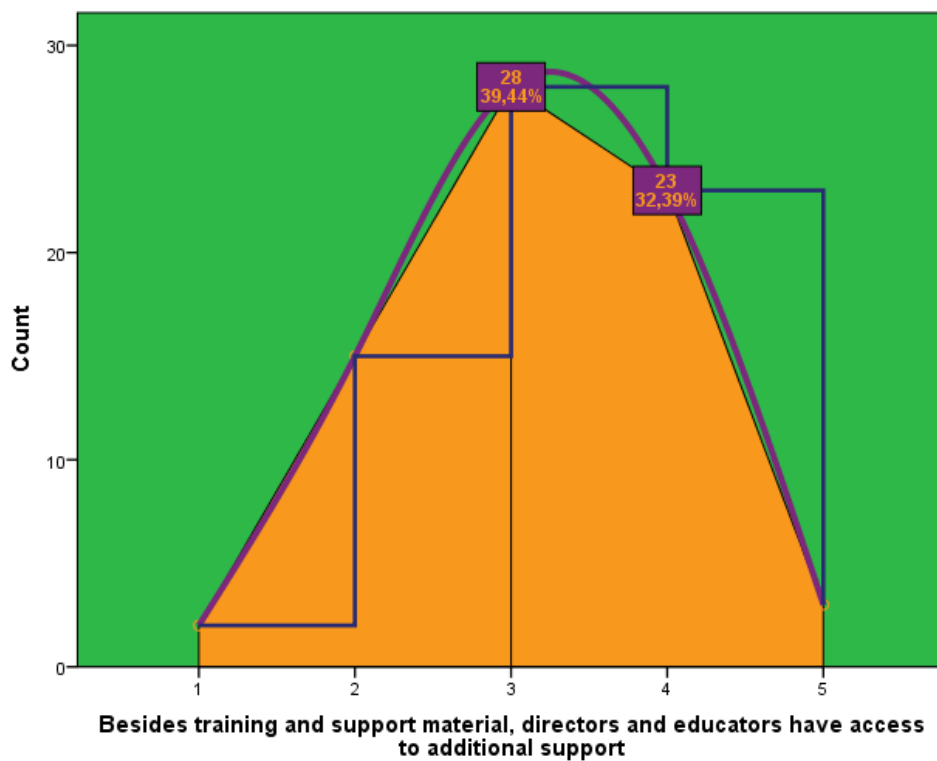


Graph 28: The inclusion of useful materials in the curriculum (V36)

As far as training is concerned, more than 45% of the participants agreed that the provided training provided ensures relevance and practicality regarding style and provision, such as seminars, workshops and on-site mentoring (graph 29). More than 35% of the sample agreed also on the fact that there is access to additional support (graph 30) like relevant webpages, or cooperation with trainers- mentors in order to address complicated issues. However, almost 40% of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed on the above statement.



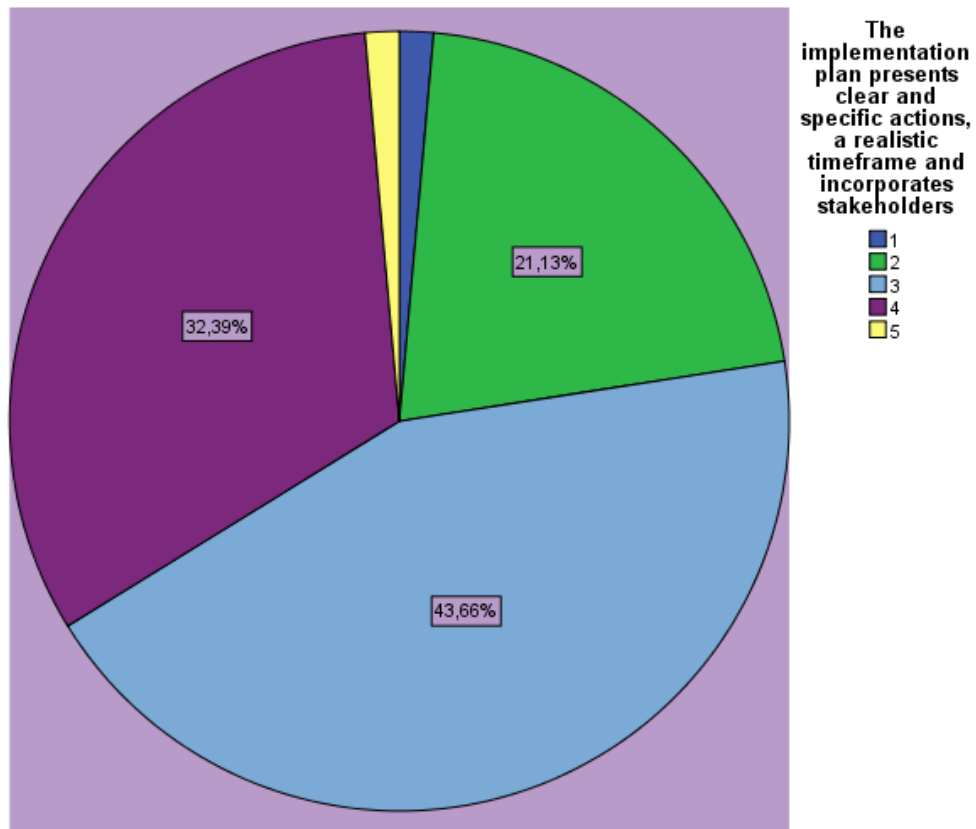
Graph 29: The training's extent of relevance and practicality (V37)



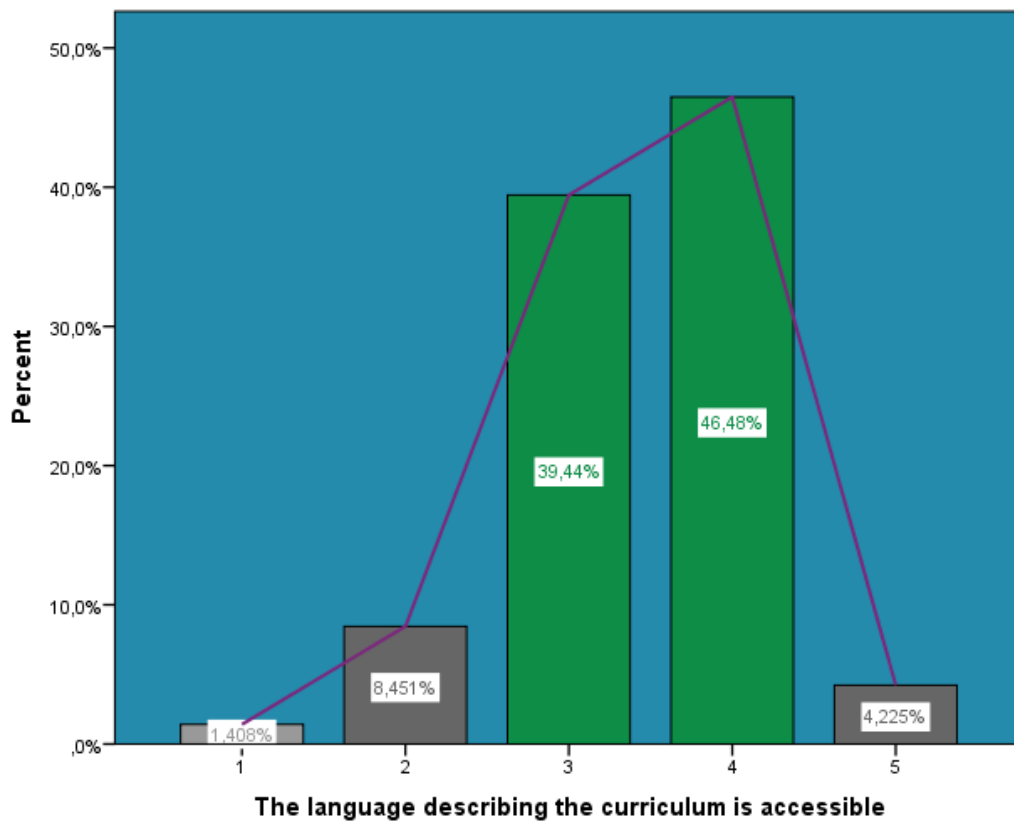
Graph 30: Access to additional support (V38)

The implementation plan, according to more than 33% of the participants, presents clear and specific actions, a realistic timeframe and incorporates the

views of key stakeholders (graph 31). Additionally, almost 50% of the participants agreed - strongly agreed that the language describing the curriculum is accessible to all those involved, including policy makers, practitioners, parents etc. (graph 32).

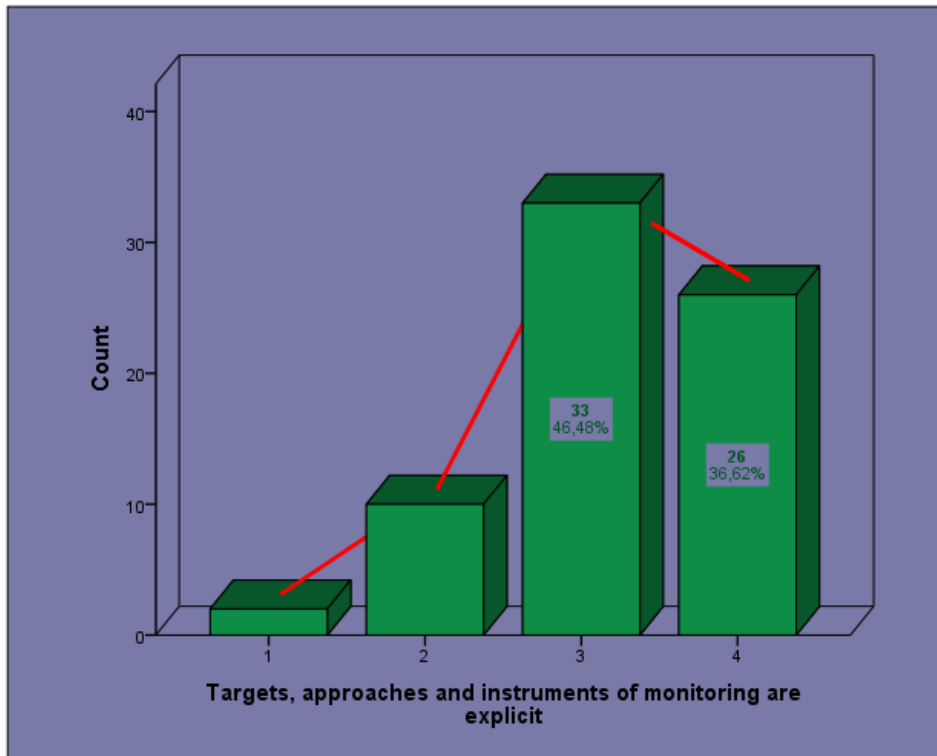


Graph 31: The implementation plan of the educational process (V39)

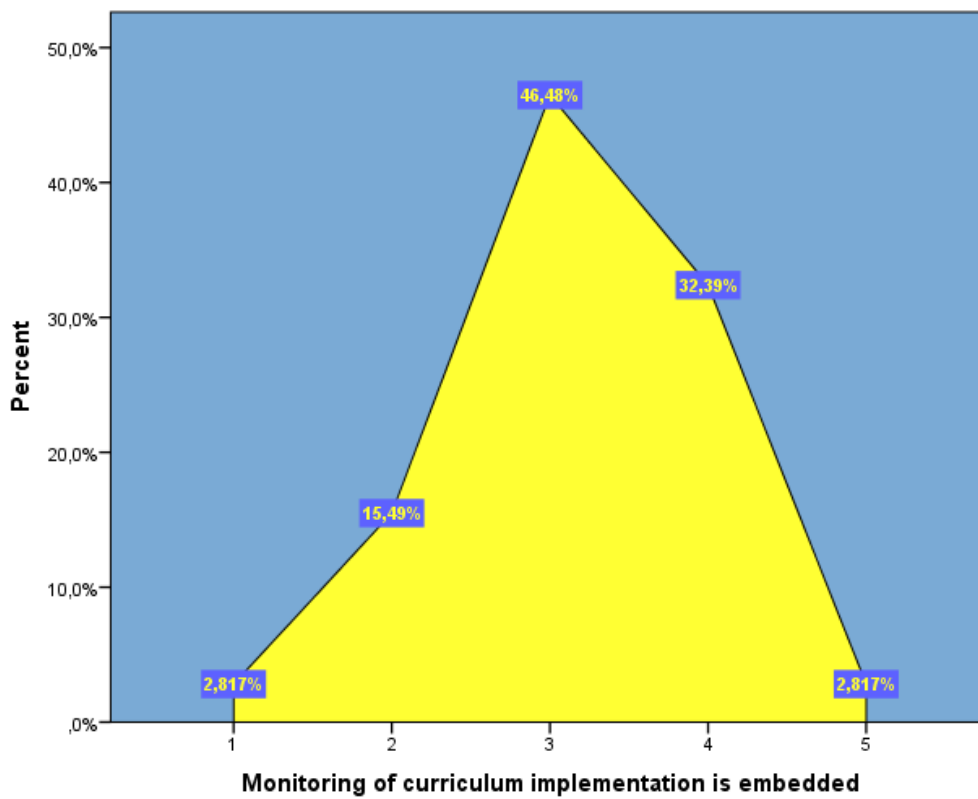


Graph 32: The accessibility of the curriculum language (V40)

Finally, the participants take a neutral stance (46.48%) regarding the extent of explicitness of targets, approaches and instruments of monitoring (graph 33). Almost 37% of them were positive on this statement. Equally neutral stances (46.48%) were shared when asked if targets, approaches and instruments have been carefully selected and if that monitoring process is embedded into the existing arrangements (graph 34).



Graph 33: The explicitness of targets and approaches (V41)



Graph 34: The monitoring process of curriculum implementation (V42)

As presented in table 2, the overall statistics of the second educational policy axis indicate a fairly lower average value of this set of measurements in comparison with the first policy axis. To be specific, we observe a relatively higher deviation from the sample average, which in certain variables exceeds 0.8 (V26, 27, 32, 38, 39, 42). Equally interesting is the fact that the average value of certain measurements is equal to or below 3 (V27, 28, 31), indicating a notable differentiation from the first policy axis, which was related to quality measures and minimum standards. It appears that - when asked about the ECEC curriculum, its standards and guidelines - the respondents' attitudes are not as positive or clear as their stances on ECEC quality provision.

Item Statistics

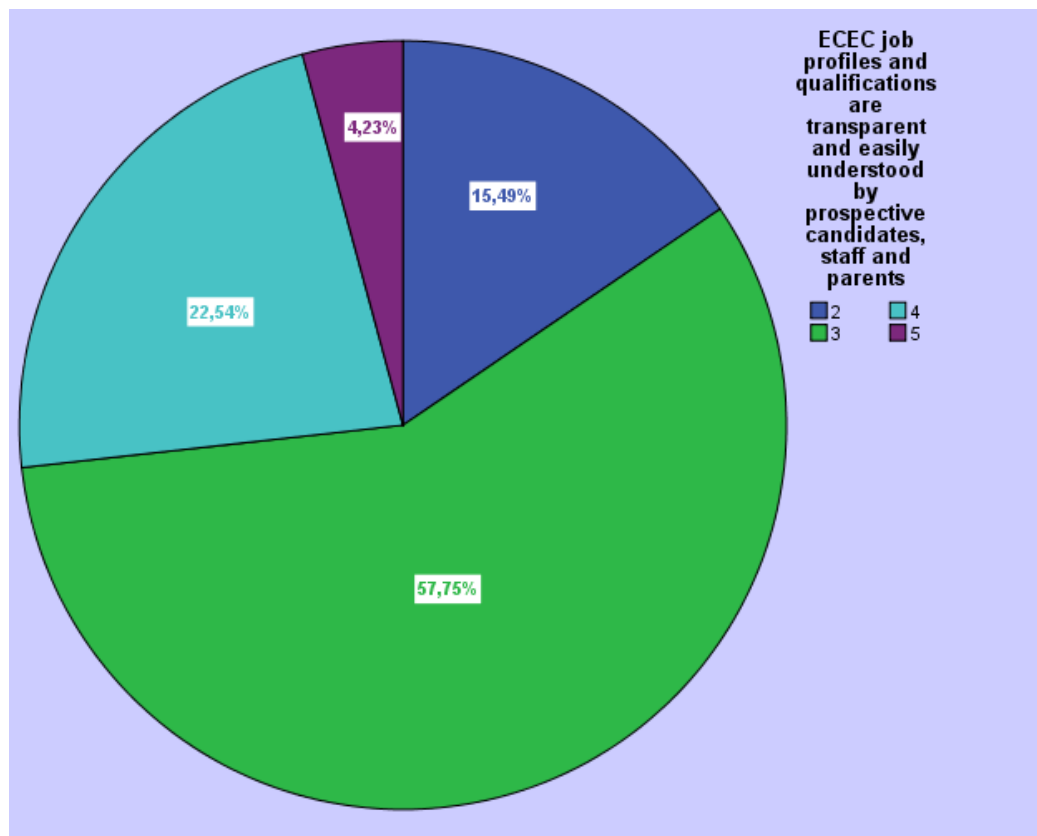
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V26	3,44	,823	71
V27	2,77	1,045	71
V28	3,00	,811	71
V29	3,27	,755	71
V30	3,06	,735	71
V31	2,70	,763	71
V32	3,46	,859	71
V33	3,01	,746	71
V34	3,08	,649	71
V35	3,21	,631	71
V36	3,10	,740	71
V37	3,34	,792	71
V38	3,14	,899	71
V39	3,11	,803	71
V40	3,44	,770	71
V41	3,17	,774	71
V42	3,17	,828	71

Table 2: Policy axis 2 statistics

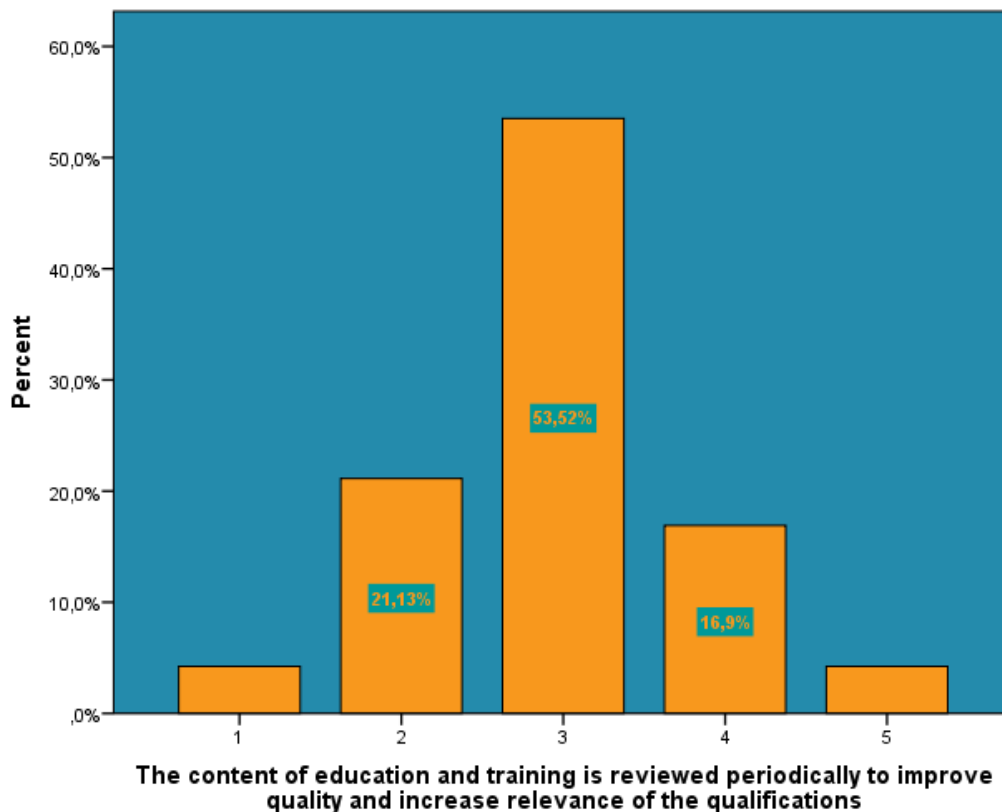
Policy axis 3

The third educational policy lever includes concepts that according to the OECD have the potential to enhance ECEC quality and is related to workforce qualifications. The vast majority (57.75%) of the participants - when asked

about the transparency of ECEC job profiles and qualifications in order for the prospective candidates, staff and parents to understand them easily - neither agreed nor disagreed (graph 35). Similarly high (53.52%) was the percentage of those who shared a neutral response for the reviewing process of the content of education and training in order to enhance quality and increase relevance of the qualifications (graph 36). In addition to the above, more than 26% of the respondents were negative regarding the above statement.



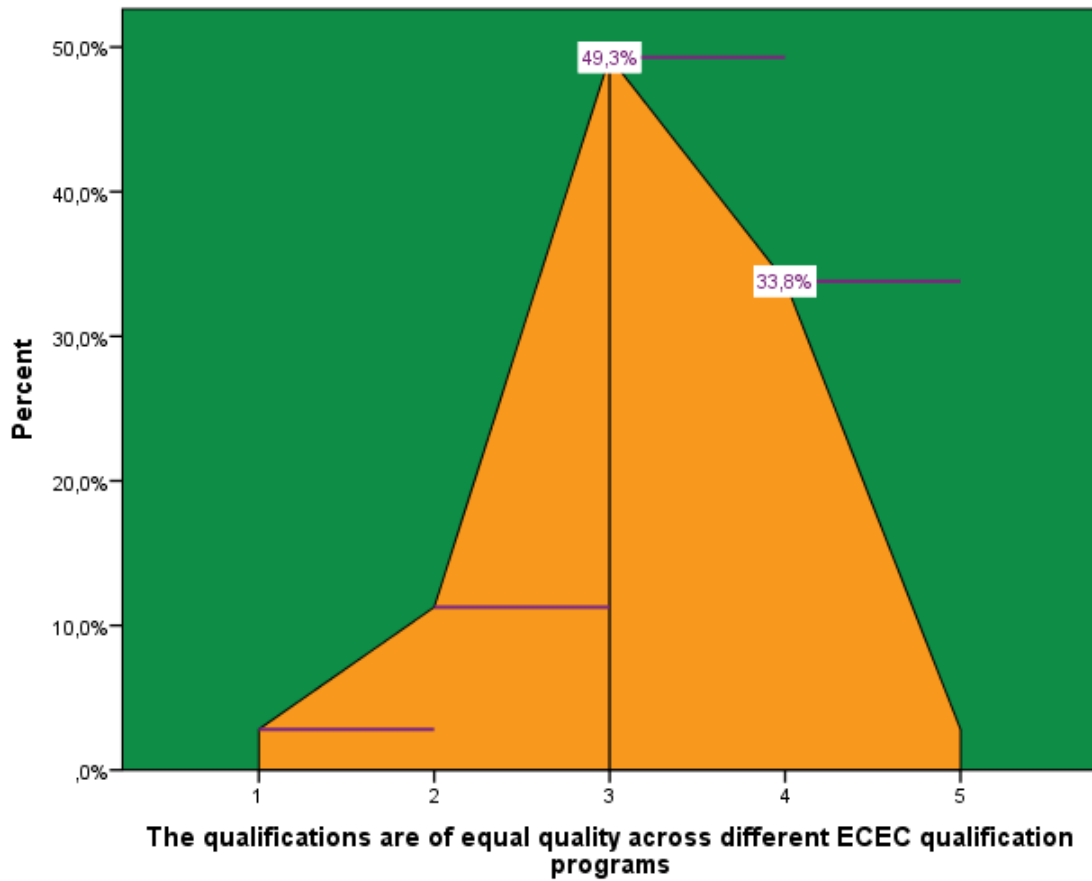
Graph 35: The transparency of ECEC job profiles (V43)



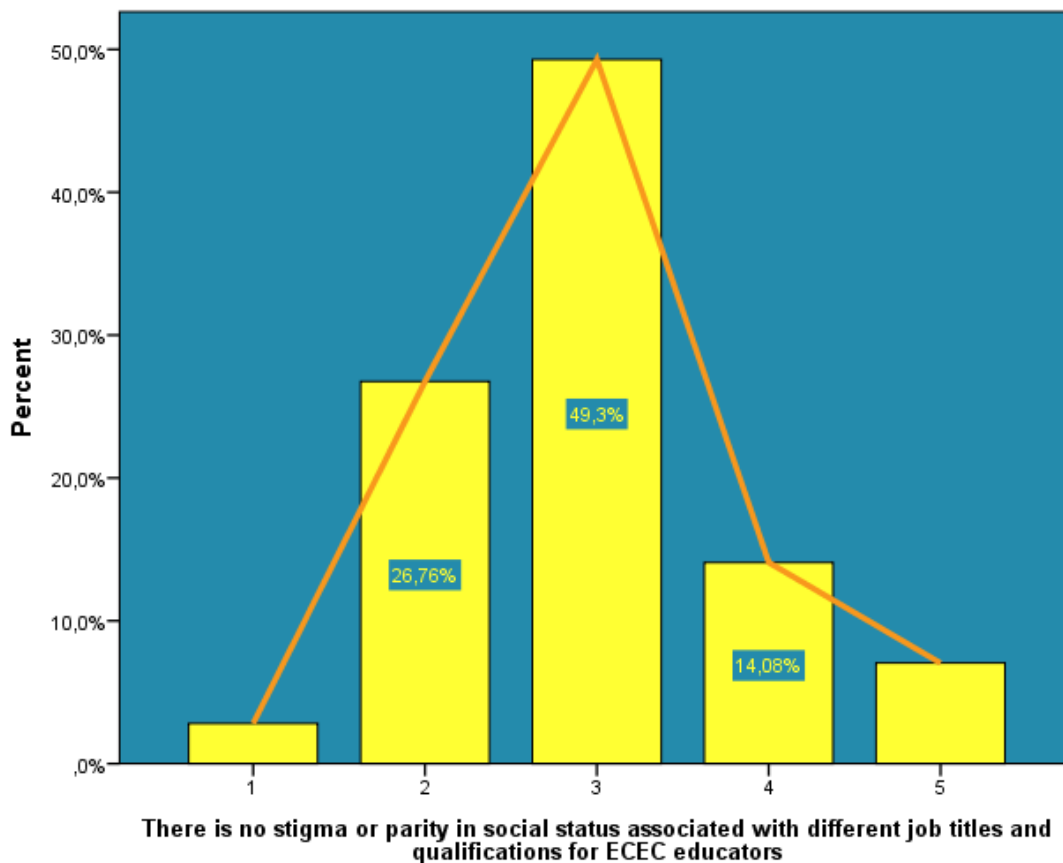
Graph 36: The reviewing process of education and training (V44)

Almost half of the educators, who took part in this research, shared their neutral stance towards the potentially equal standard of qualifications across different qualification programs (graph 37). More than 36% agreed/ strongly agreed that the different qualifications (University and Technological level) are of equal standards. In terms of the above-presented stances, one should bear in mind the demographics of the sample and particularly the fact that the majority of the sample holds a Technological level degree. In a similar direction, the data show neutral attitudes - shared by a significant percentage (49.3%) of the participants - regarding the potential of stigma or parity in social status, associated with different job titles and qualifications for ECEC educators (graph 38). It should be stressed that almost 30% of the respondents suggest that stigma or parity in social status do exist and only a percentage that barely reaches 20% thinks otherwise. We observe that as far as the third policy axis is concerned, the majority of the participants share their neutral stances by neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the presented

statements. However there appears to be a shift to more negative views in the following questions.

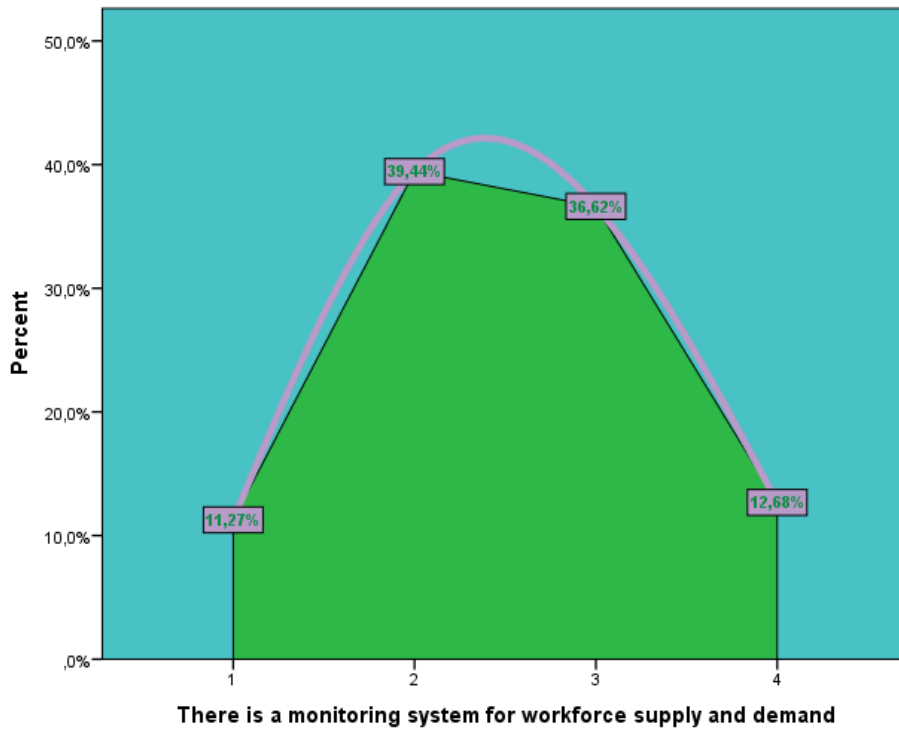


Graph 37: The equality of qualifications across different ECEC programs (V45)



Graph 38: Stigma or parity associated with qualifications of ECEC educators (V46)

Almost 51% of the participants disagree or strongly disagree on the existence of a monitoring system for workforce supply and demand and more than 36% neither agree nor disagree on this statement (graph 39). Furthermore, the vast majority of the sample shared their negative responses on whether there is sufficient diversity, such as male workers, immigrants and different ethnic groups, in the municipal ECEC workforce (graph 40). Almost 69% of the respondents disagreed/ strongly disagreed on the above statement, while less than 10% responded positively.



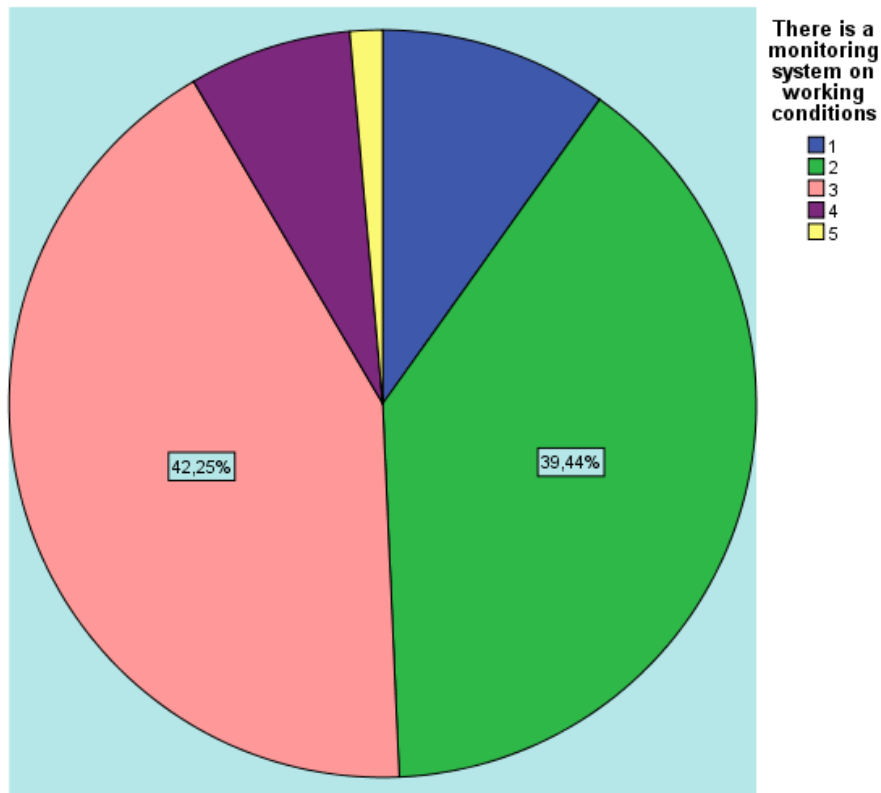
Graph 39: The existence of a monitoring system for workforce (V47)



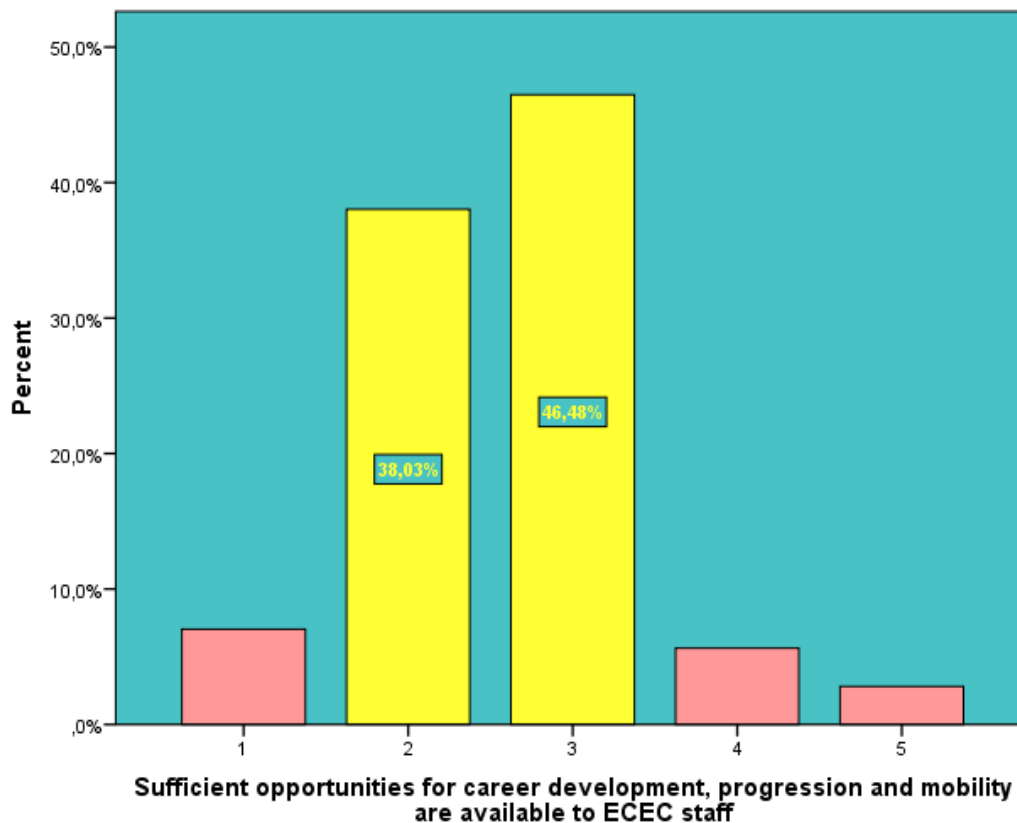
Graph 40: The extent of diversity in ECEC workforce (V48)

Previously we explored the existence of a monitoring system on workforce supply and demand. In graph 41 we present the respondents' stances on a monitoring system regarding working conditions (e.g. raising the salary level, providing non-financial benefits, increasing the staff-child ratio). Almost 50%

of the participants disagree/ strongly disagree on the existence of such a mechanism, while the percentage of the sample who shared positive views is below 9 units. Similarly, there are significant neutral/ negative percentages (almost 85%) on potential opportunities for career development, progression and mobility of ECEC staff (graph 42).

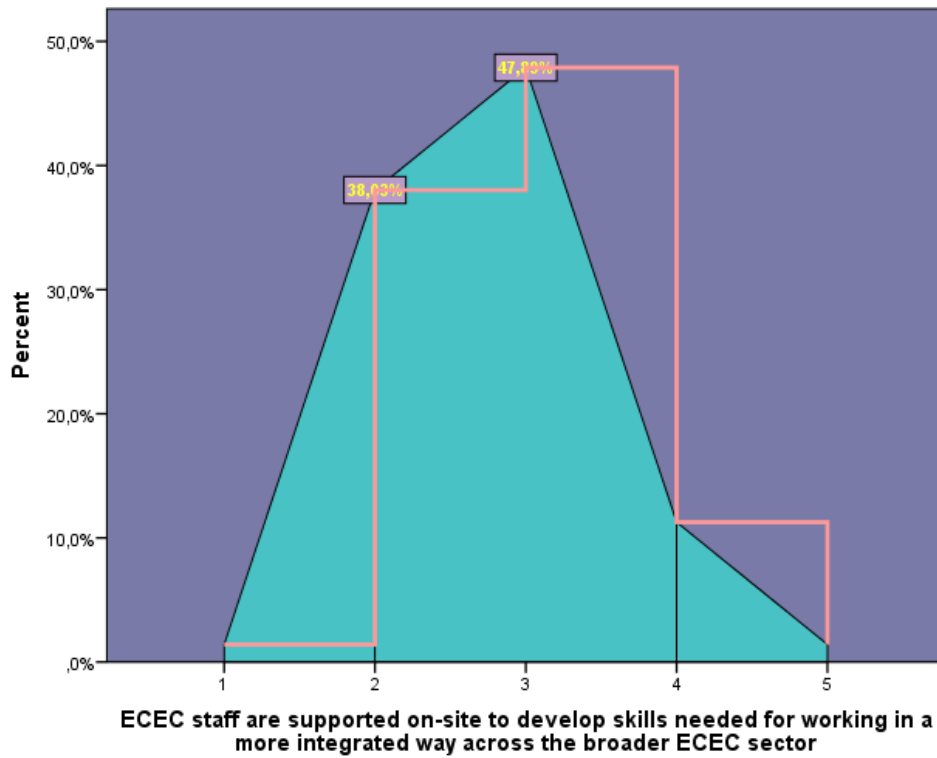


Graph 41: The existence of a monitoring system on working conditions (V49)

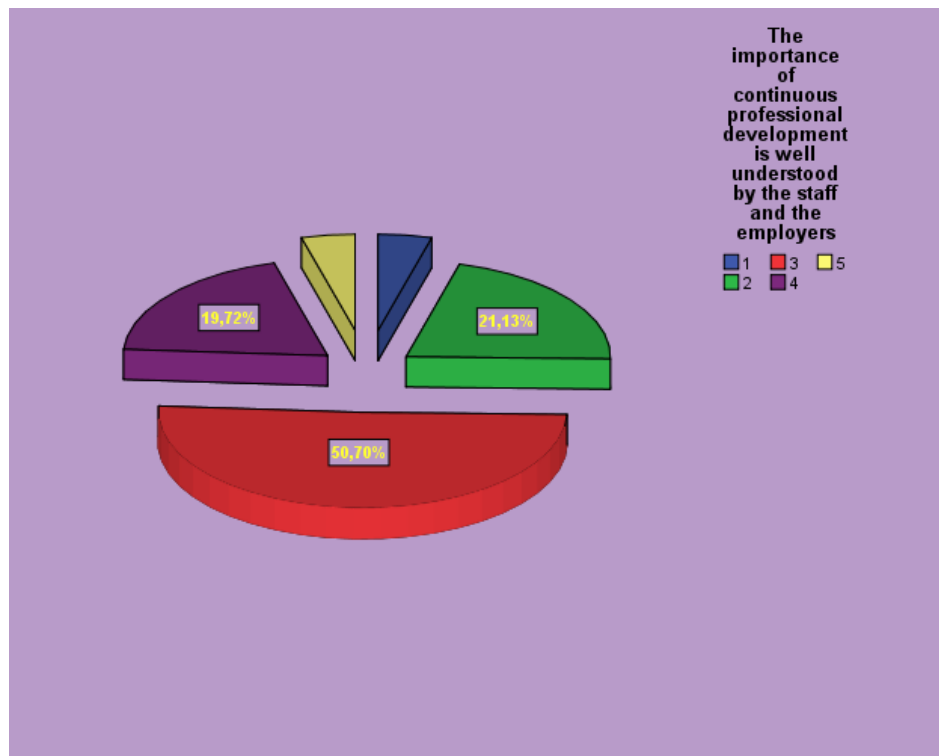


Graph 42: Potential opportunities for the ECEC staff (V50)

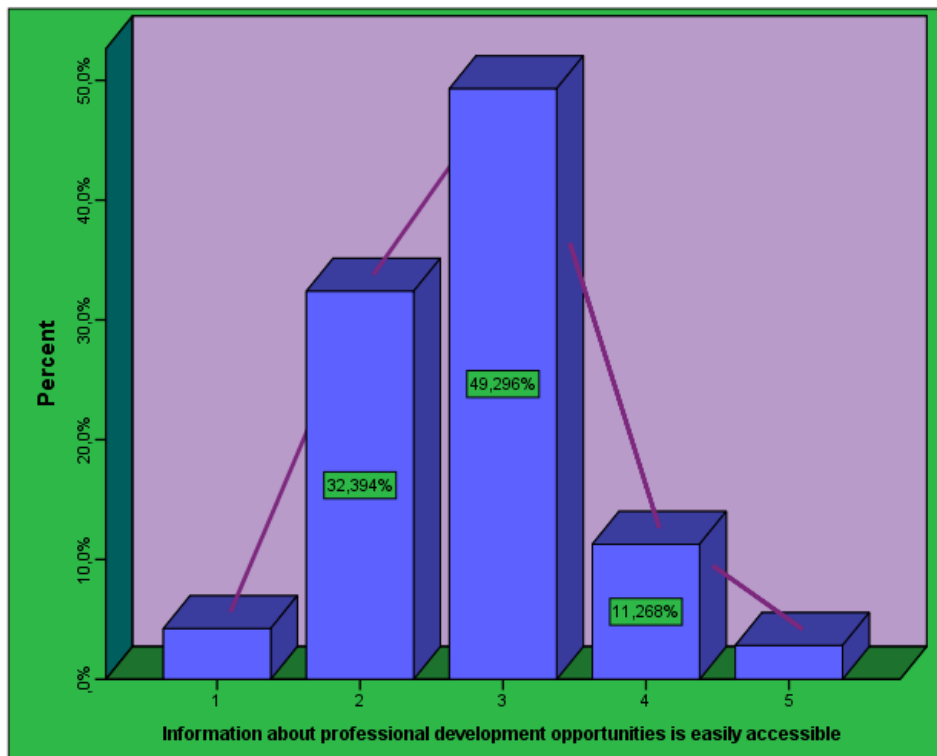
Of the participants to the survey, 40% claim that do not receive on-site support in order for them to develop the skills needed for working in a more integrated way across the broader early childhood education and care sector (graph 43). Almost 48% of the educators neither agreed nor disagreed and just one out of ten was positive on the above statement. Furthermore, more than 75% of the respondents shared their neutral and negative responses on whether the importance of continuous professional development is well understood by ECEC staff and their employers (graph 44) and more than 85% were neutral and negative about the user-friendliness and availability of information on professional development (graph 45).



Graph 43: ECEC staff receives on-site support (V51)

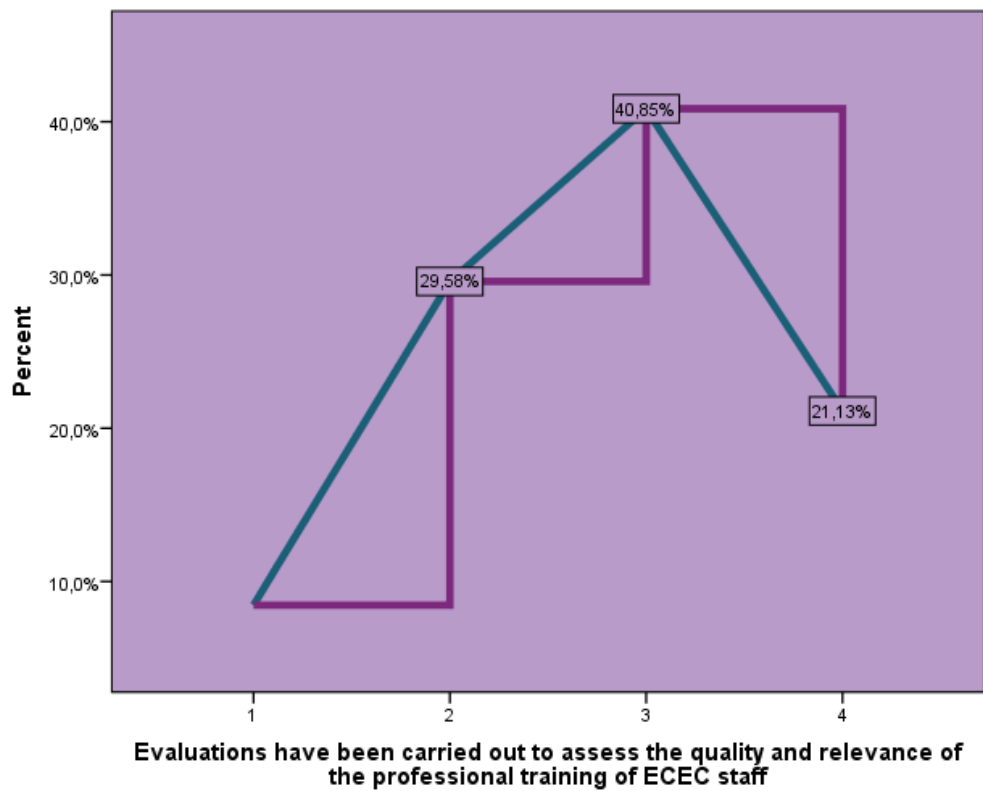


Graph 44: The importance of professional development for ECEC staff (V52)



Graph 45: The accessibility of information about professional development (V53)

To conclude the third policy axis, most of the participants (40.85%) neither agreed nor disagreed on whether evaluations have been carried out to assess the quality and relevance of the professional development courses being taken up by ECEC staff, while almost 40% disagreed/ strongly disagreed on the above statement (graph 46). The following table (3) depicts the overall statistics of this scale. To be particular, we observe a significantly lower average value of this third set of measurements in comparison with the policy axis related to quality (the first axis), which as presented previously, achieved high average value (mean). The majority of the variables mean is well below 3 (V44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54). As far as the standard deviation is concerned, we observe a relatively higher deviation from the sample average, which in certain variables exceeds 0.8 (V44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54). Hence, it appears that workforce qualifications are a debateable subject, which raises significant controversy.



Graph 46: Evaluations for the quality and relevance of training (V54)

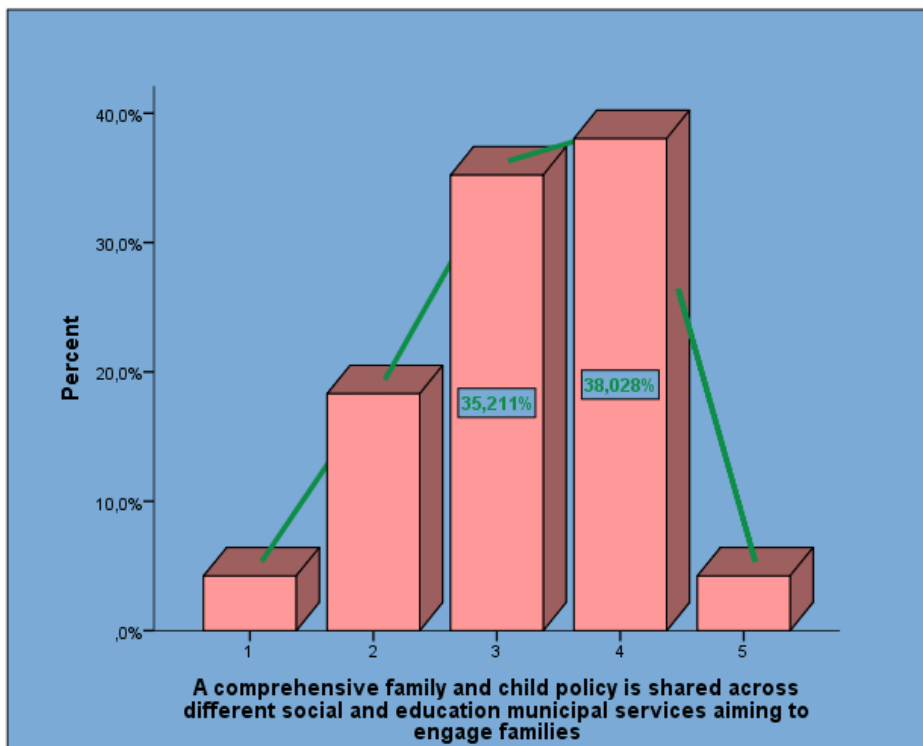
Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V43	3,15	,730	71
V44	2,96	,853	71
V45	3,23	,796	71
V46	2,96	,901	71
V47	2,51	,860	71
V48	2,18	,946	71
V49	2,51	,826	71
V50	2,59	,821	71
V51	2,73	,736	71
V52	2,99	,870	71
V53	2,76	,819	71
V54	2,75	,890	71

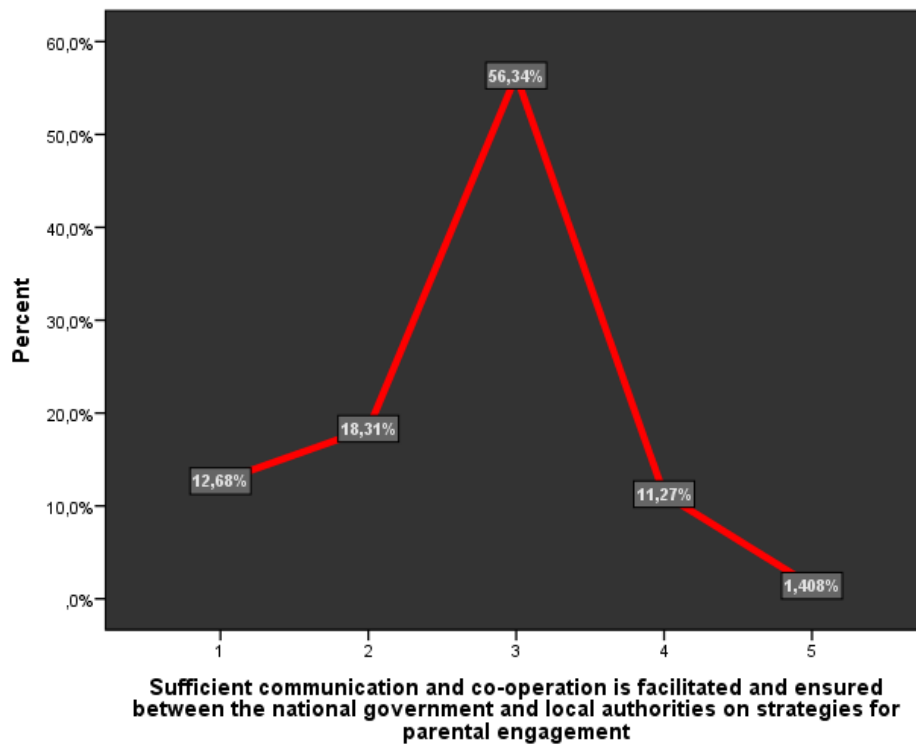
Table 3: Policy axis 3 statistics

Policy Axis 4

The fourth policy axis includes questions related to family and community engagement in municipal ECEC. To begin with, when asked about whether there is a comprehensive family and child policy, which shared across different social and education services with an aim to engage families in ECEC services, a significant percentage (almost 45%) of the participants were positive and almost 35% shared a neutral position (graph 47). Similarly neutral positions (56.34) were shared by the educators, when asked if sufficient communication and co-operation is facilitated and ensured between the national government and local authorities on strategies for parental engagement (graph 48).



Graph 47: A policy for family and child is shared across municipal services (V55)

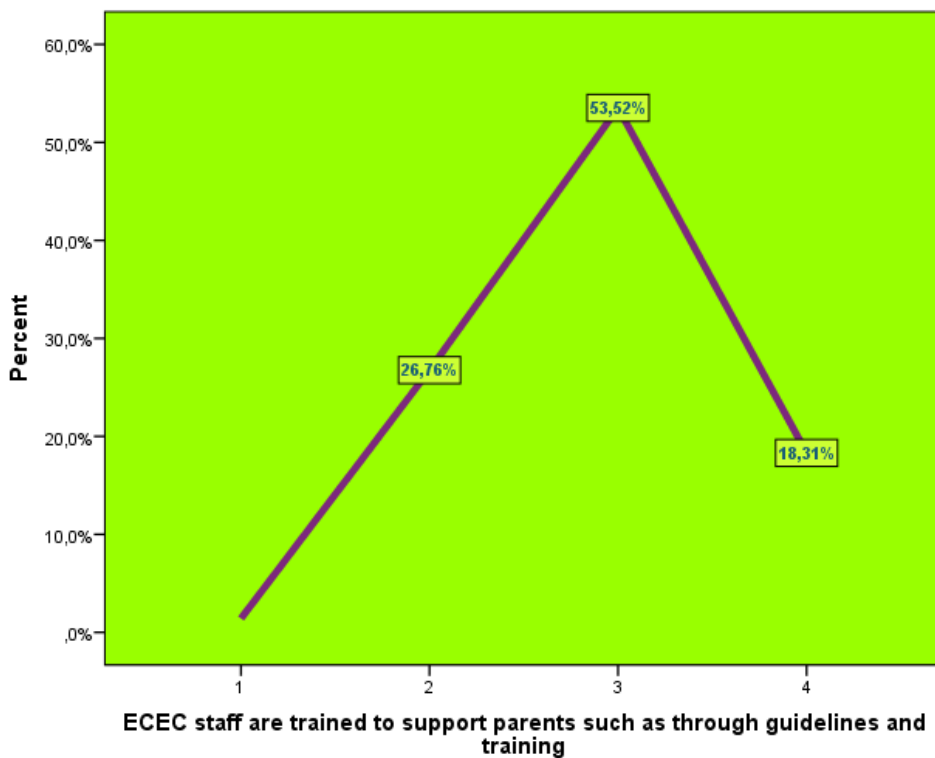


Graph 48: Communication and co-operation between the government and local authorities (V56)

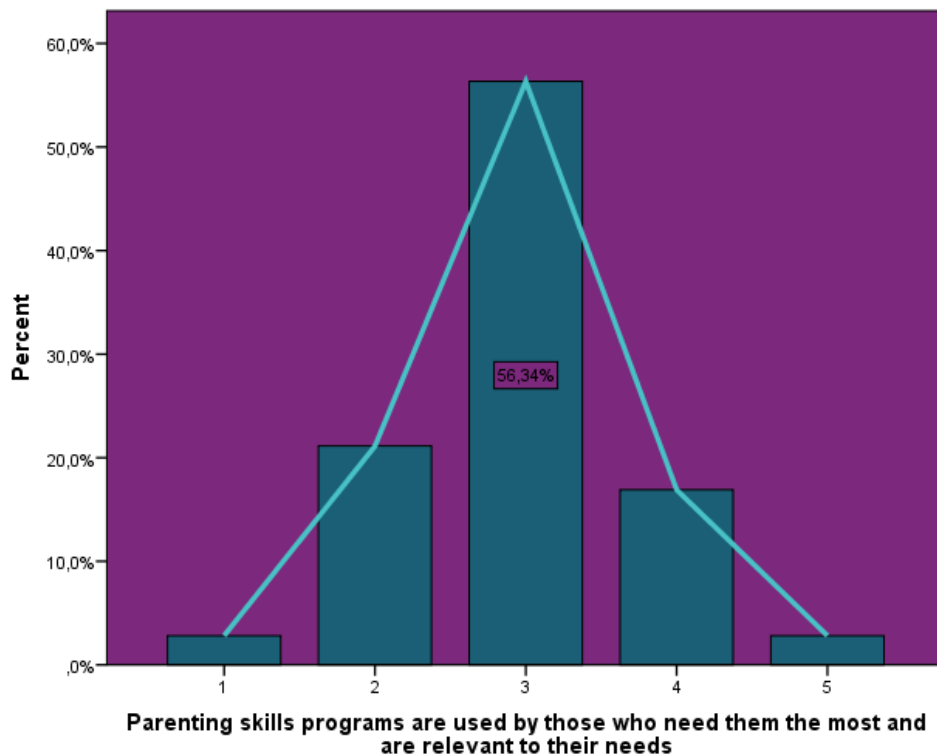
The majority of the participants (almost 82%) shared their neutral/ negative response on whether there have been efforts to help parents ensure good home learning environments for effective child development, such as through staff training, curriculum or relevant campaigns (graph 49). Similarly negative/ neutral answers (almost 80%) were given when the respondents were asked if ECEC staff are trained to support parents through guidelines and training (graph 50). Moreover, more than 25% of the sample gave negative answers when asked whether parenting skills programs or other municipal support programs are used by those who need them the most and are relevant to their needs (graph 51). In addition to the above, more than 56% of the educators neither agreed nor disagreed.



Graph 49: Efforts to help parents (V57)

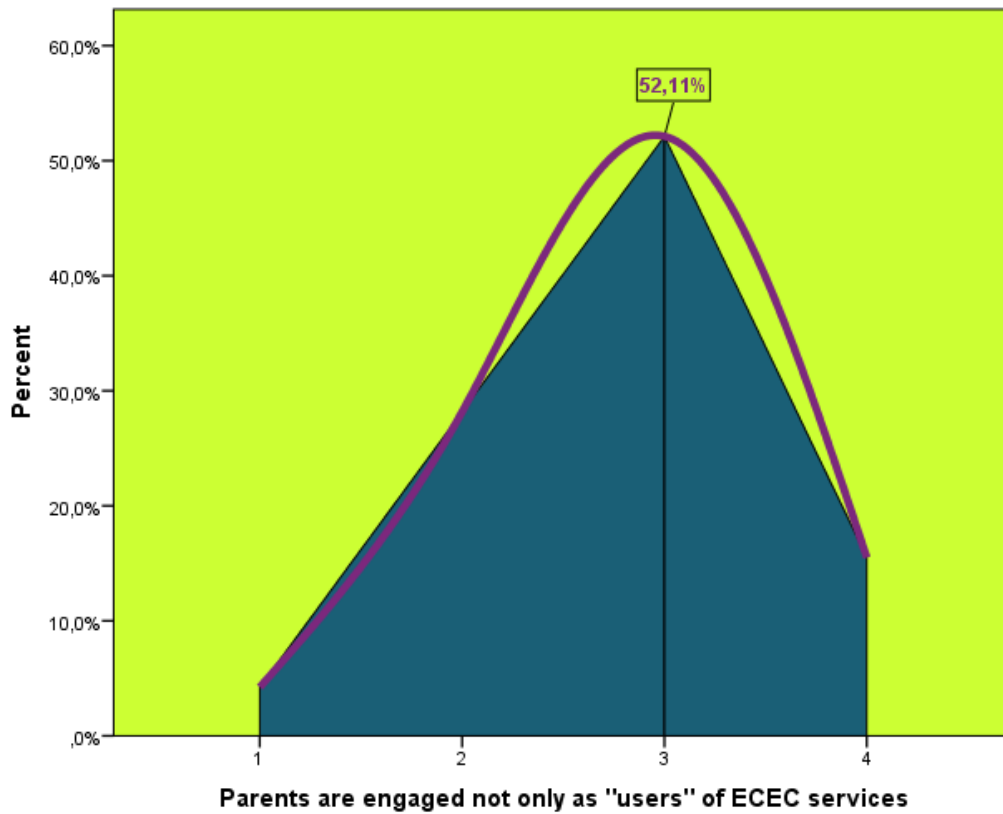


Graph 50: ECEC staff's training level on parental support (V58)

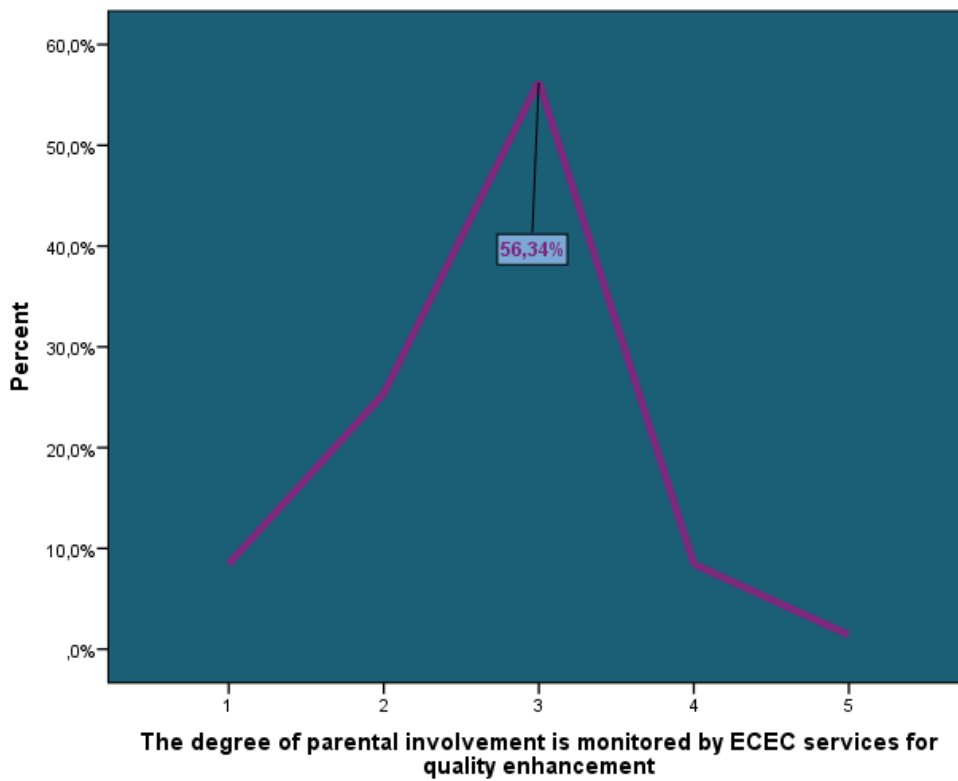


Graph 51: The relevance of ECEC parenting skills programs (V59)

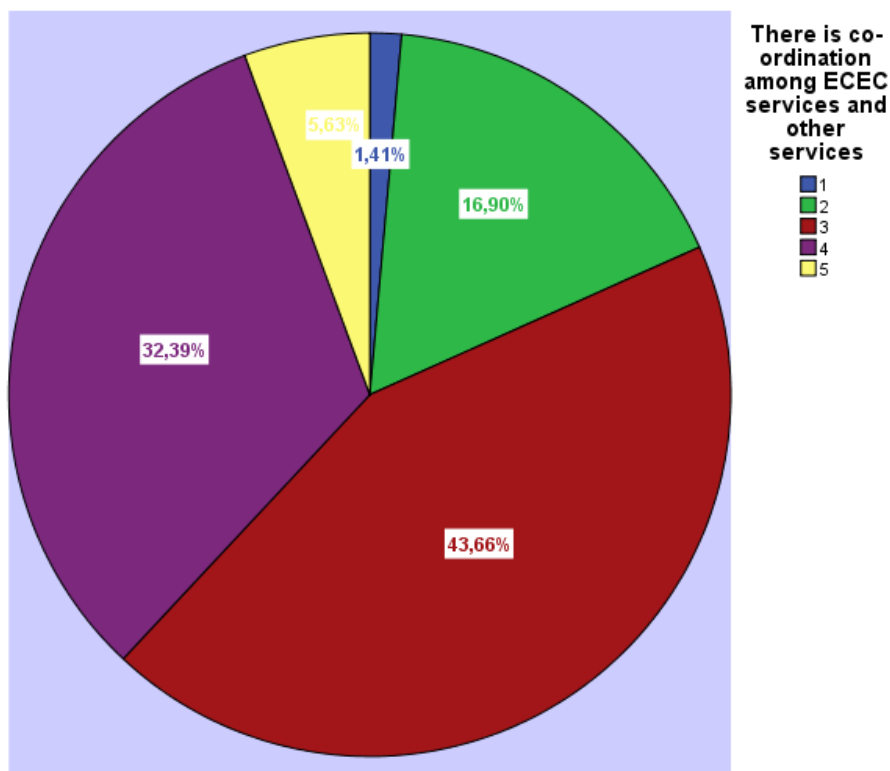
The majority of the participants (almost 85%) expressed neutral responses, or indicated that parents are engaged only as ECEC "users". Only two out of ten respondents agree that parents are engaged in a variety of ways, such as volunteers, decision makers on a board, partners etc. (graph 52). Similarly, as far as the monitoring process of the parental involvement is concerned, the majority of the educators (56.34%) neither agree nor disagree that ECEC services monitor parental involvement in order to improve the quality of ECEC provision (graph 53). Furthermore, almost 38% of the participants expressed were positive in their response on whether there is co-ordination among ECEC services and other services (e.g., health services, social workers) designed for families (graph 54).



Graph 52: The level of parental engagement (V60)

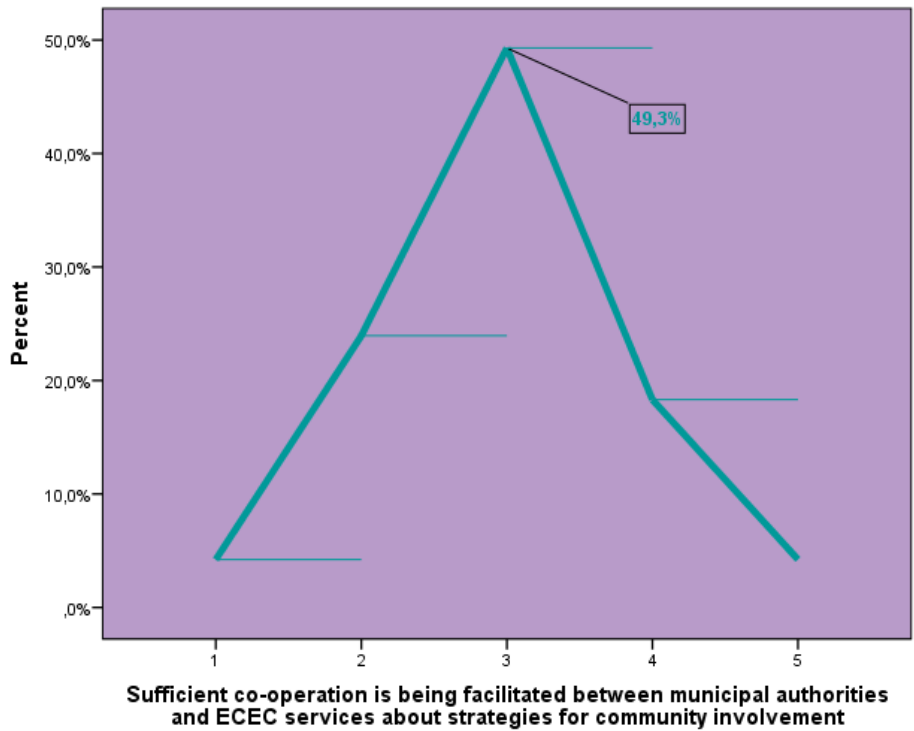


Graph 53: The monitoring of parental engagement for quality enhancement (V61)

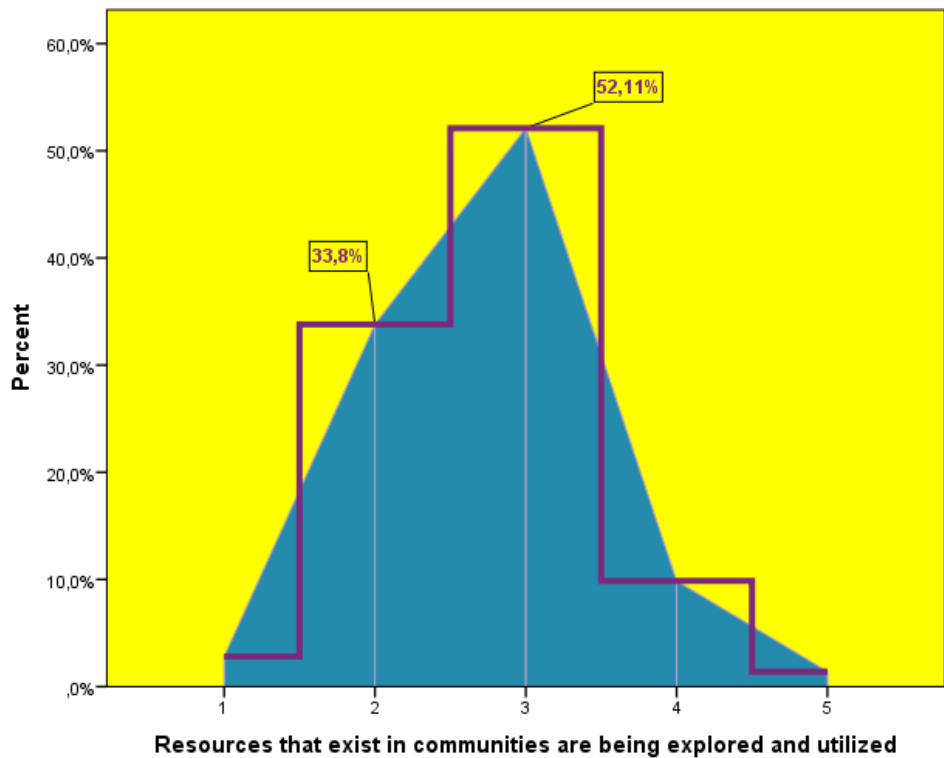


Graph 54: The co-ordination among ECEC services (V62)

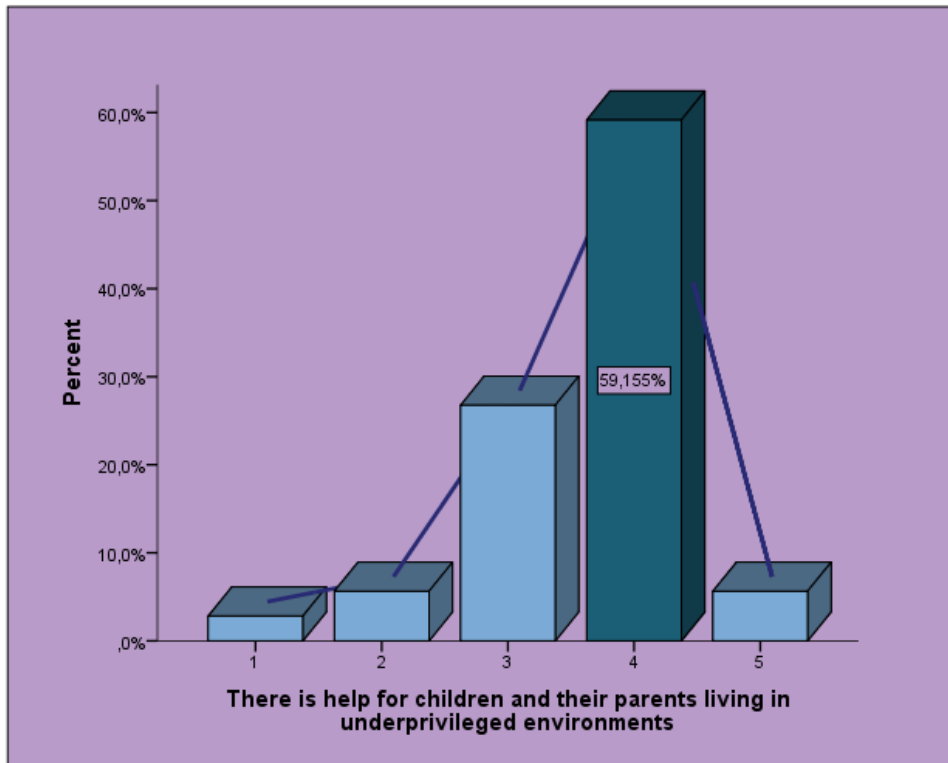
More than 30% of the respondents disagreed/ strongly disagreed when asked if sufficient communication and co-operation is facilitated and ensured between the national government and local municipal authorities on strategies for parental engagement (graph 55). In addition to that, almost half of the sample neither agreed nor disagreed. Similarly, quite low (around 10%) is the percentage of those who think that existing resources are being explored and utilized enough (graph 56). More than 35% of the participants expressed the view that resources that exist in communities, such as libraries, museums and NGOs are not being explored and utilized. On the contrary, when asked about the help provided for children and parents living in "difficult" communities in combination with other target measures for the communities, more than 65% of the participants shared their positive views (graph 57).



Graph 55: The facilitation of co-operation between municipal authorities and ECEC services (V63)



Graph 56: The exploration and utilization of existing resources (V64)



Graph 57: The provided help for families living in underprivileged environments (V65)

Table 4 concludes the analysis of the fourth educational policy axis, which is related to family and community engagement. Specifically, it depicts a higher average value of the fourth set of measurements, when compared to the 2 previous policy axes. We observe an average value that reaches - or even exceeds - 3 in several variables (V55, 57, 59, 62, 63, 65). As far as the standard deviation is concerned, we observe a relatively high deviation from the sample average, which in certain variables exceeds 0.8 (V55, 56, 61, 62, 63). Hence, it appears that "family engagement" is a policy concept that proves less controversial in comparison with the previous axes.

Item Statistics

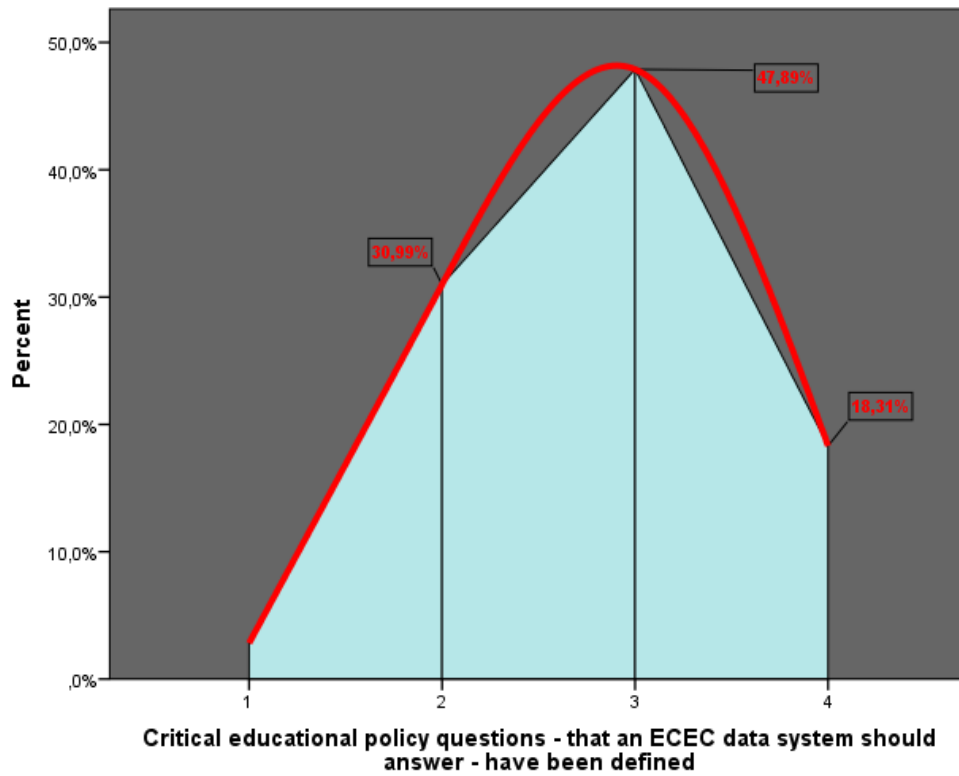
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V55	3,20	,935	71
V56	2,70	,885	71
V57	2,90	,740	71
V58	2,89	,708	71

V59	2,96	,783	71
V60	2,79	,754	71
V61	2,69	,803	71
V62	3,24	,853	71
V63	2,94	,876	71
V64	2,73	,736	71
V65	3,59	,803	71

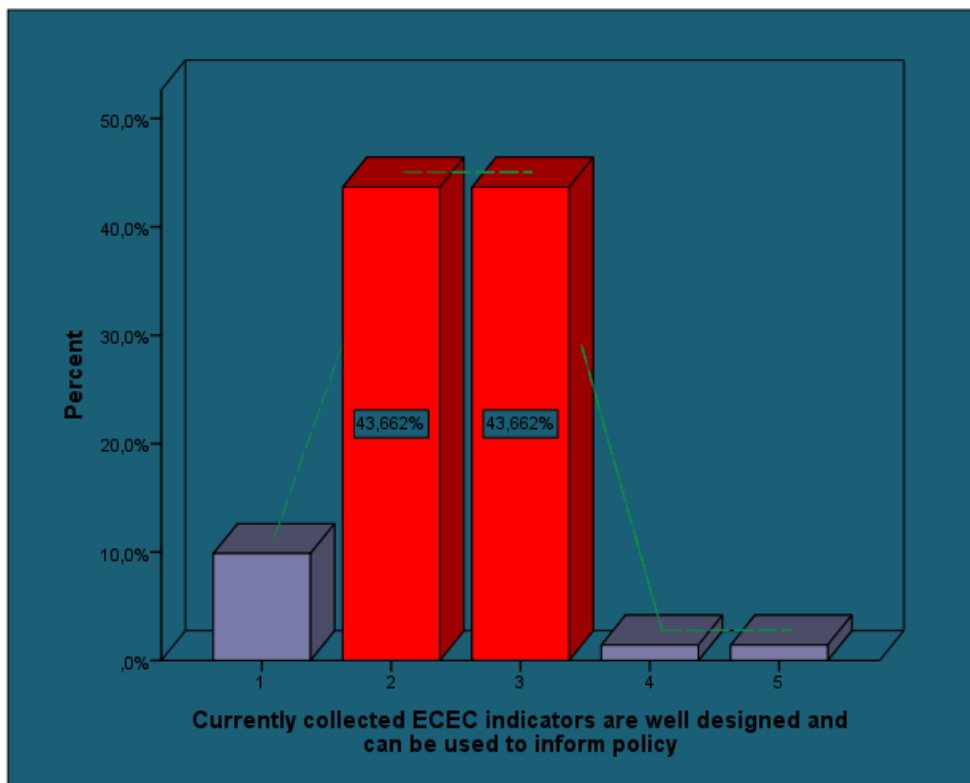
Table 4: Policy Axis 4 statistics

Policy axis 5

The fifth educational policy lever includes questions linked to relevant research, data collection and monitoring of data. Specifically, almost 35% of the respondents disagree/ strongly disagree that critical policy questions have been defined in a way that an ECEC data system should help answer. Additionally, those participants think that it is not clear where data gaps exist and what linkages among ECEC programs are needed to answer the policy questions (graph 58). It needs to be stressed though that when asked if currently collected ECEC indicators are well designed and can be used to inform policy and determine whether the overall ECEC goals are being met, a significantly high percentage of participants - which exceeds 98% - shared negative or neutral answers (graph 59).

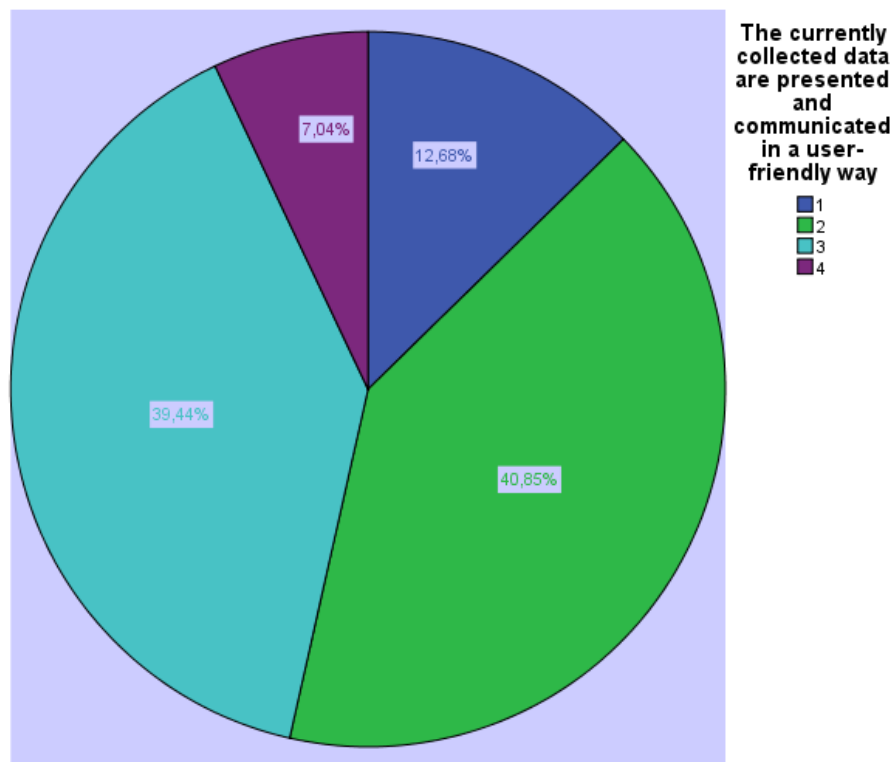


Graph 58: The definition of critical education policy questions (V66)

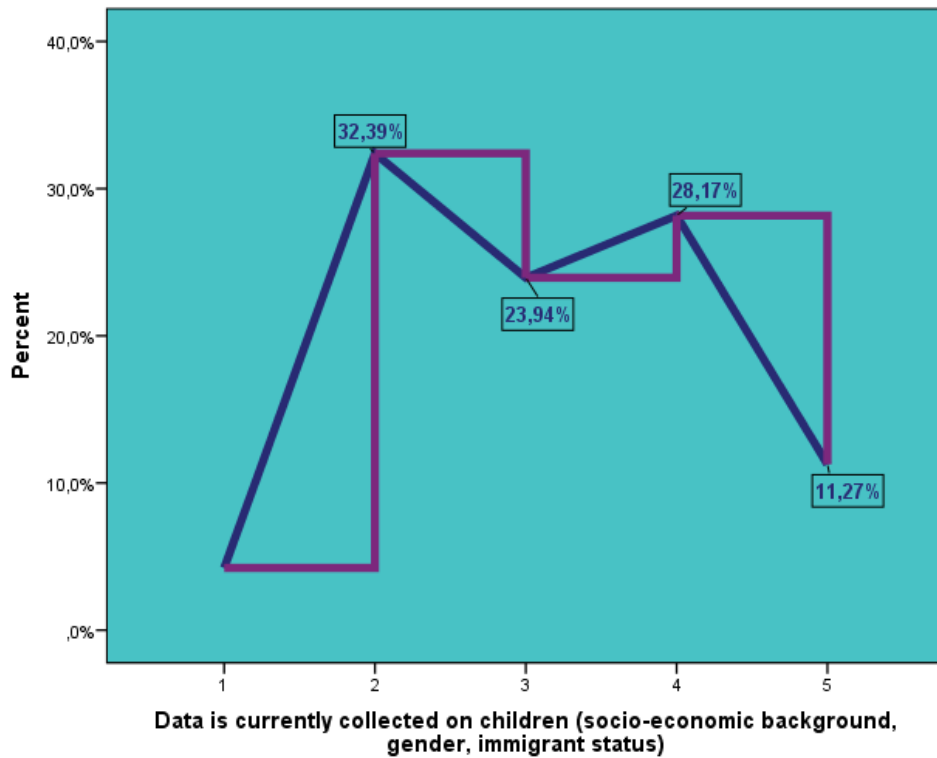


Graph 59: The design and usage of ECEC indicators (V67)

More than 53% of the participants disagree/ strongly disagree that the way the existing data are presented is user friendly (graph 60). Furthermore, respondents' answers are divided (graph 61) on the question of data currently collected on children (e.g., actual numbers of children enrolled in ECEC services in each age cohort, their socio-economic backgrounds, gender, immigrant status). More than 35% of the respondents shared negative responses, while almost 42% were positive.

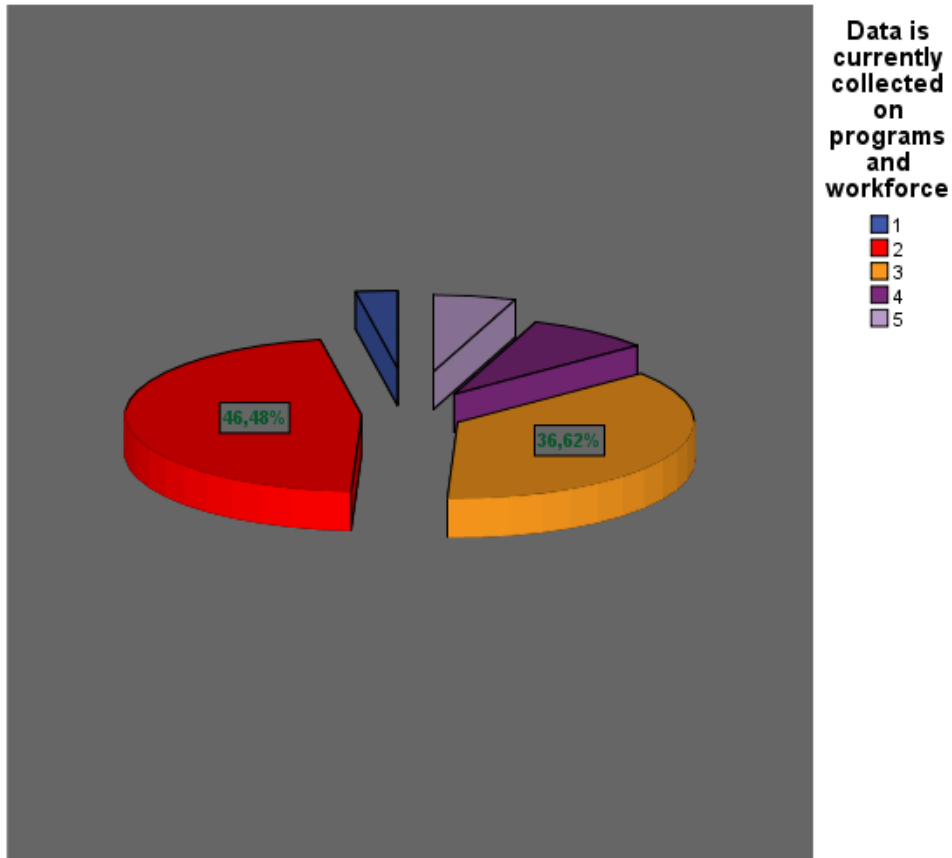


Graph 60: How data are being presented (V68)

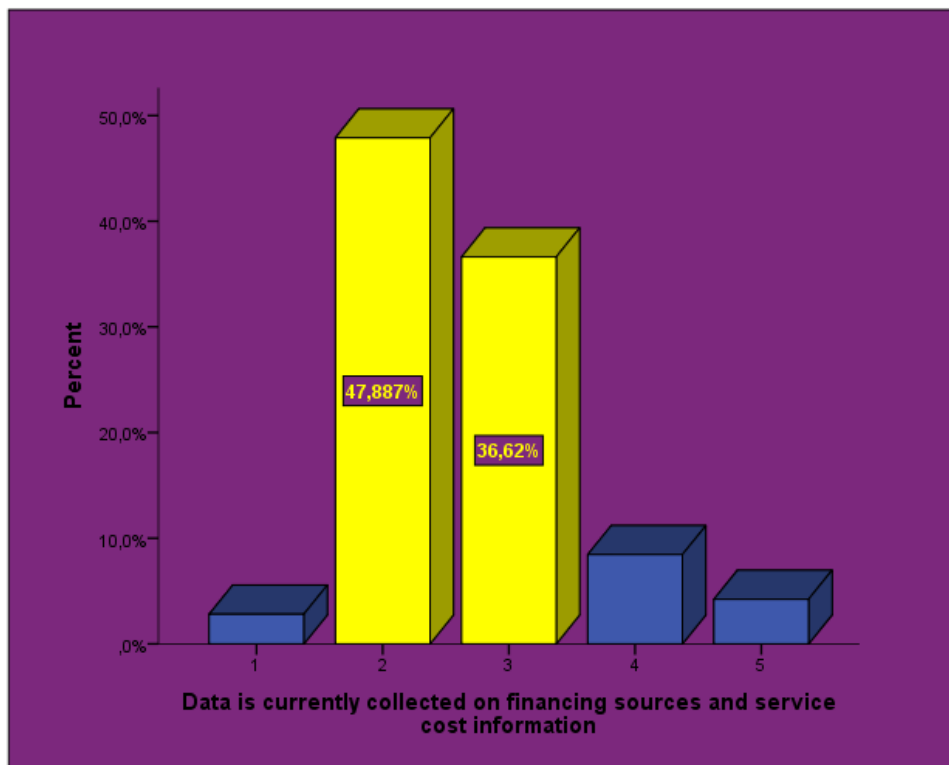


Graph 61: The categories of data (V69)

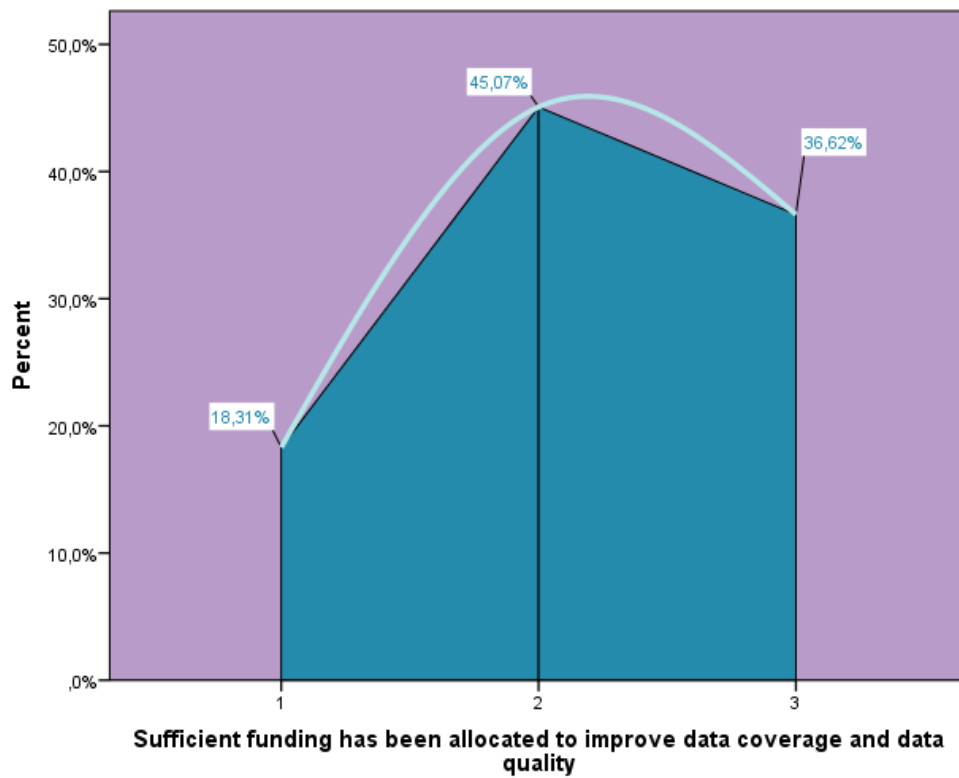
Almost 50% of the respondents disagreed on the question of whether there is any data collection on programs (e.g., different types and forms of services, including private and informal care arrangements) and workforce (e.g., numbers of staff and their qualification levels, age, gender, immigrant status (graph 62). Similarly negative were the responses of the participants (almost 50%) on whether data is currently collected on financing sources and cost information (graph 63). Also, almost 65% of the sample does not agree with the statement that there is sufficient funding allocated to improve data coverage and data quality to answer critical policy questions (graph 64).



Graph 62: Data on programs and workforce (V70)

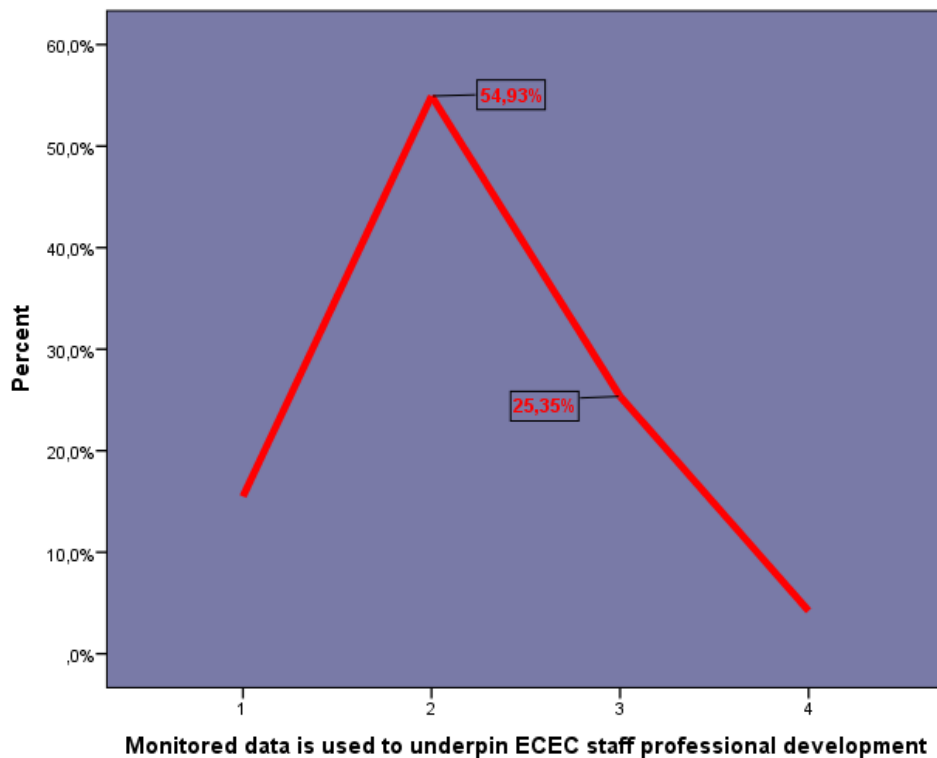


Graph 63: Data on financing sources and service cost information (V71)



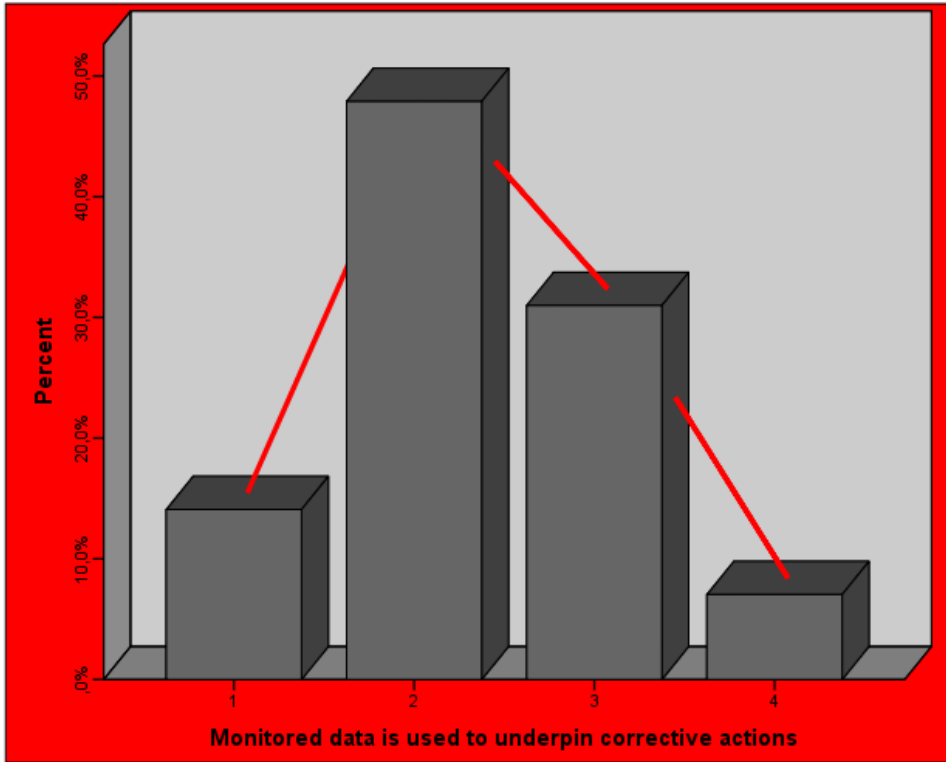
Graph 64: Funding of data coverage and data quality (V72)

Also, the vast majority of the participants (almost 70%) responded negatively on the question of whether monitored data are used to underpin staff professional development (graph 65).

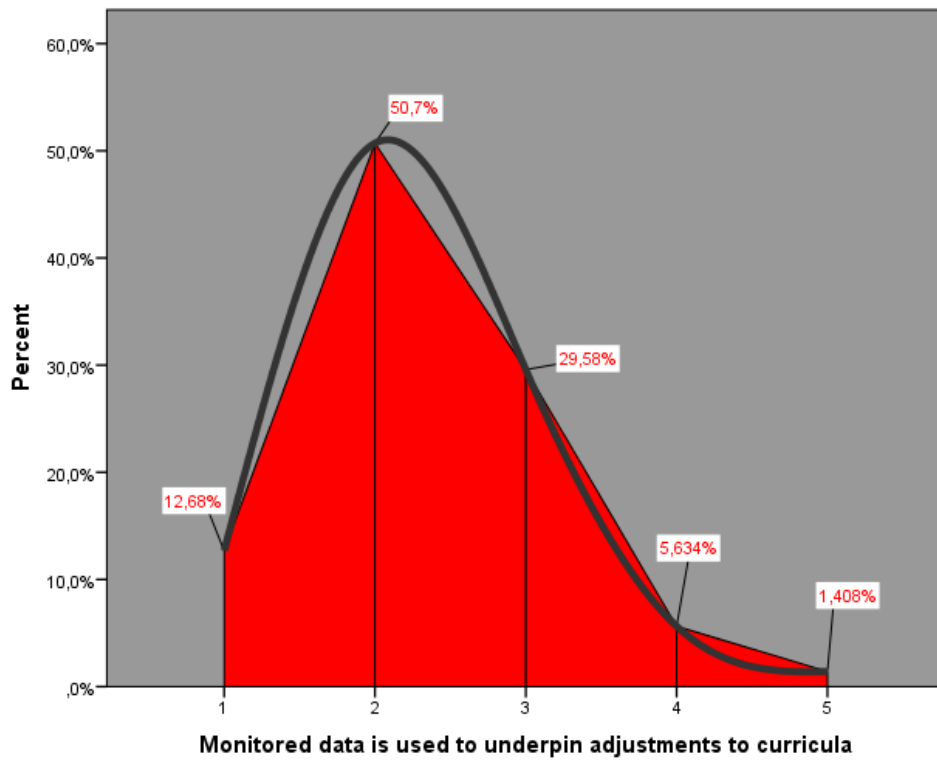


Graph 65: Data is used to underpin professional development (V73)

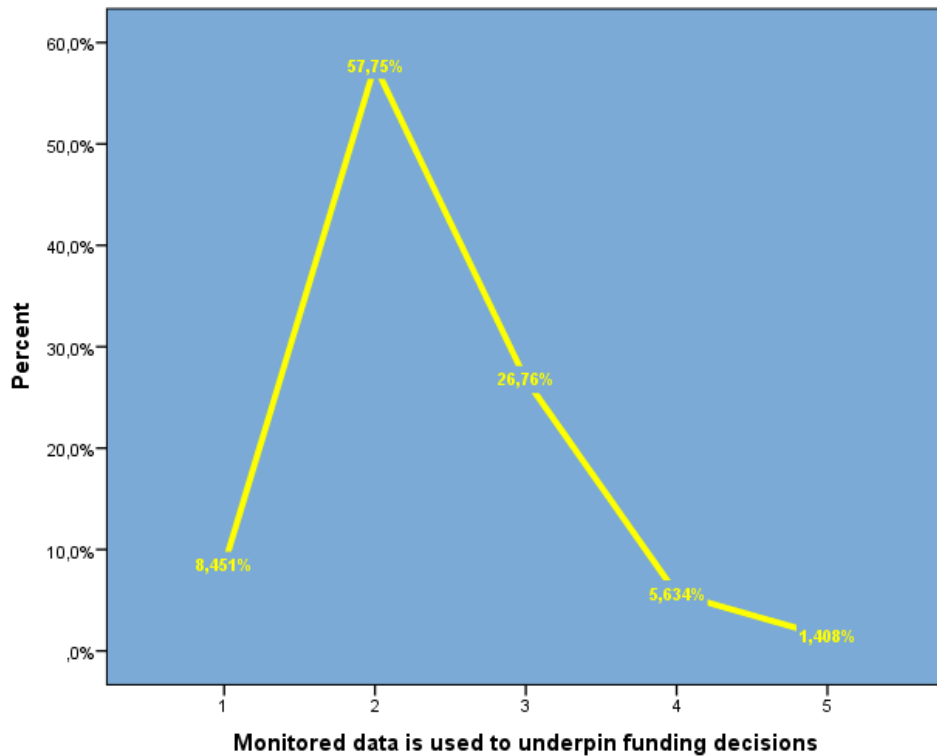
In a similar manner, the majority of the participants in the survey gave negative answers to the following three questions, which conclude the fifth policy axis. To be particular, almost 70% disagree/ strongly disagree that data is used to underpin corrective actions for ECEC provision (graph 66). Almost 65% of them suggested that monitoring of data is not used to underpin adjustments to ECEC curricula (graph 67), while more than 65% of the respondents stated that data is not used to underpin funding decisions (graph 68).



Graph 66: Data is used to underpin corrective actions (V74)



Graph 67: Data is used to underpin curricular adjustments (V75)



Graph 68: Data is used to underpin funding decisions (V76)

As depicted in the table below (5), this fifth set of measurements scored the lowest average values of all the policy axes. It appears that data collection and monitoring of data is a process that according to the respondents does not facilitate and underpin the provision of ECEC. As seen in the overall statistics of this policy lever, there are quite a few variables that reach low - mean figures (V72, 73, 74, 75, 76). As far as the standard deviation is concerned, we found a relatively high deviation from the sample average, which in certain variables exceeds 0.8 (V68, 69, 70, 71, 74, 75).

Item Statistics

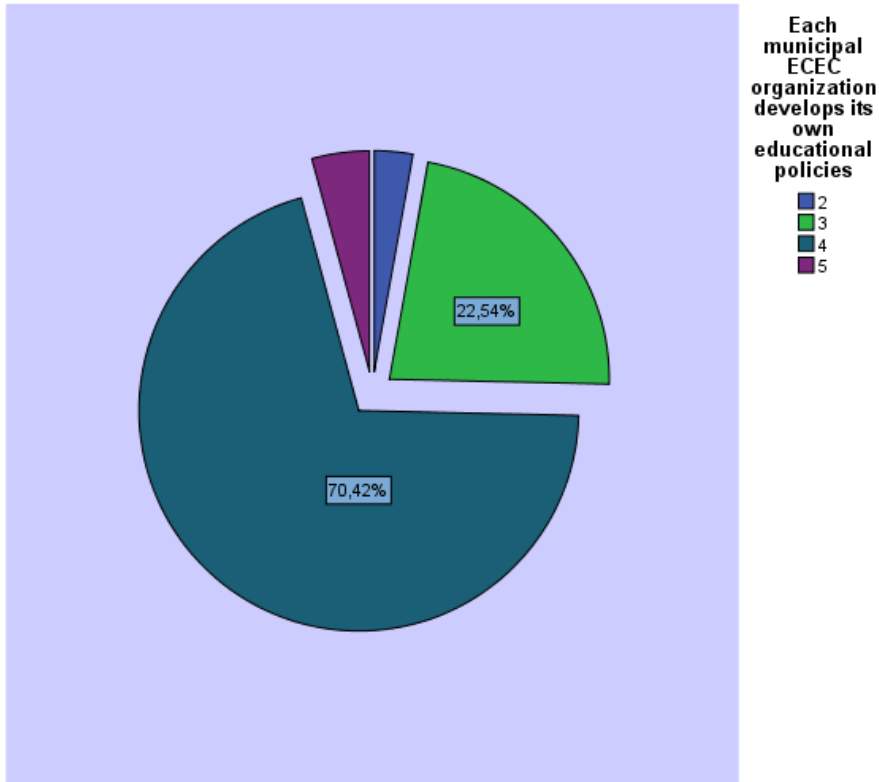
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V66	2,82	,762	71
V67	2,41	,748	71
V68	2,41	,803	71
V69	3,10	1,110	71
V70	2,68	,891	71
V71	2,63	,849	71
V72	2,18	,723	71
V73	2,18	,743	71

V74	2,31	,803	71
V75	2,32	,824	71
V76	2,34	,774	71

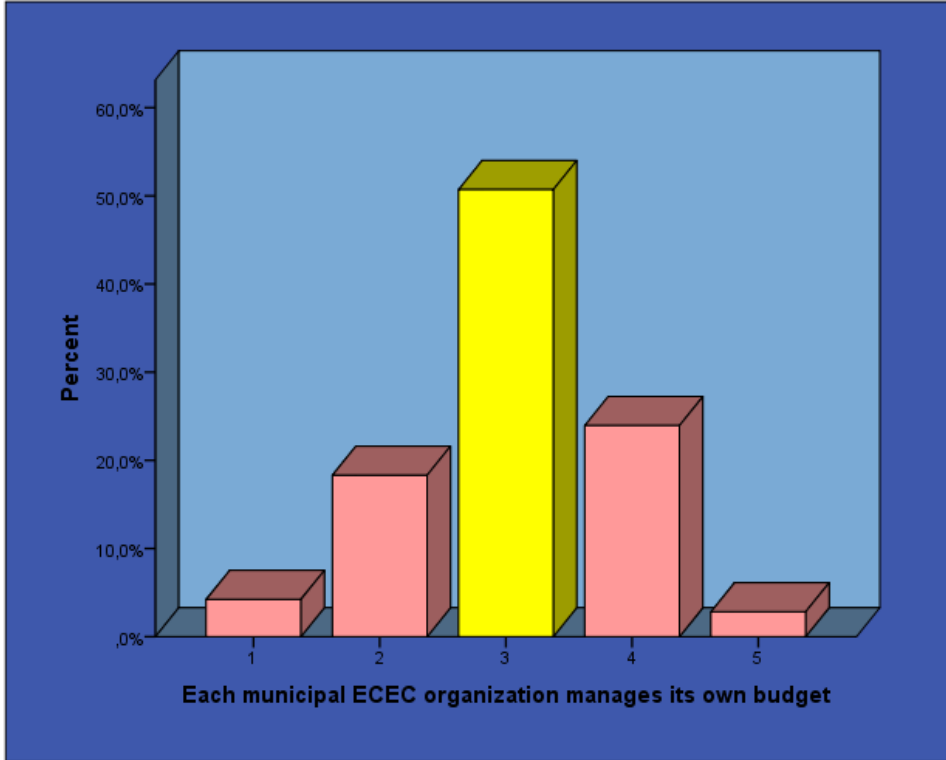
Table 5: Policy axis 5 statistics

Policy axis 6

The last part of the questionnaire is related to issues of governance - including regulation and networking of the Greek municipal ECEC. This part is titled "Policy axis 6" for consistency of data presentation and it is not part of the OECD's tool. This is an additional part, developed to map educators' views on governance (see Chapter four). The respondents were asked to share their views about the future steps that need to be taken, the way the ECEC field needs to be regulated and finally about the supervisory authority under which the ECEC sector would have the potential to grow and enhance its quality. The majority of the participants (more than 75%) agreed/ strongly agreed that each municipal ECEC institution is able to develop its own educational policies while 22.54% neither agreed nor disagreed (graph 69). However, when it comes to budget management views are diverse (graph 70). More than 50% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree on the related statement, while almost 25% are positive and almost 35% are negative in their answers.

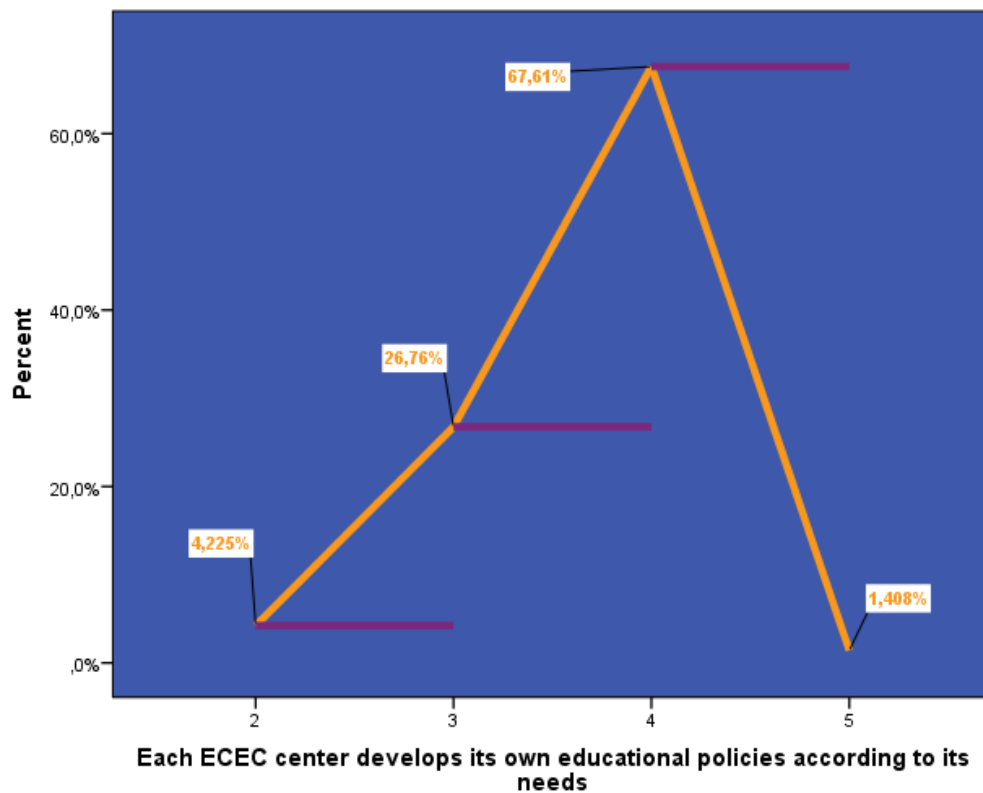


Graph 69: The development of educational policies for each ECEC organization

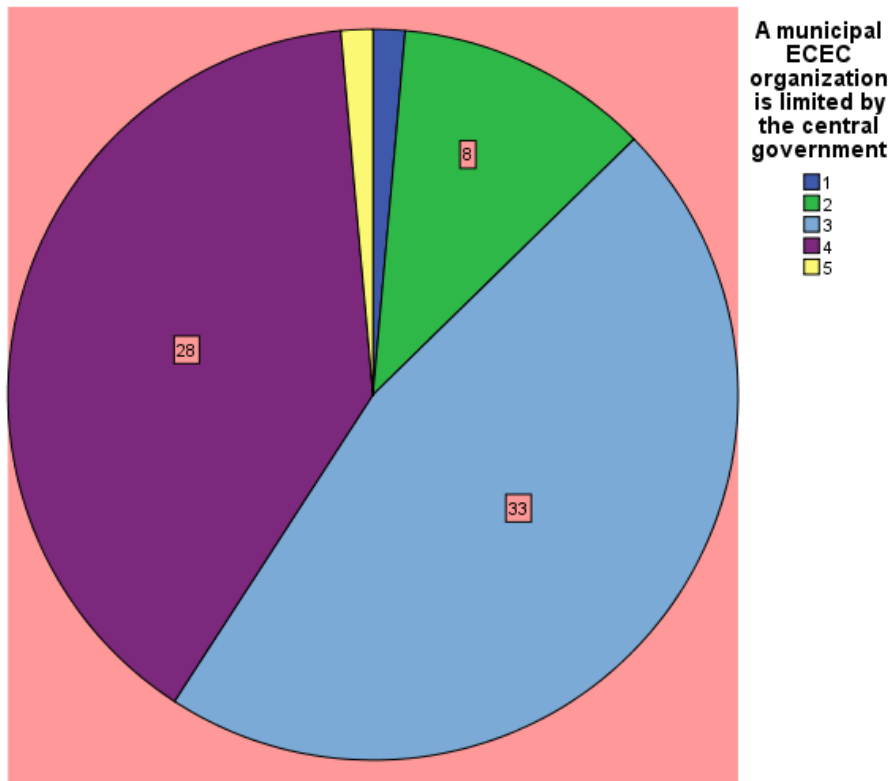


Graph 70: Each ECEC organization manages its own budget

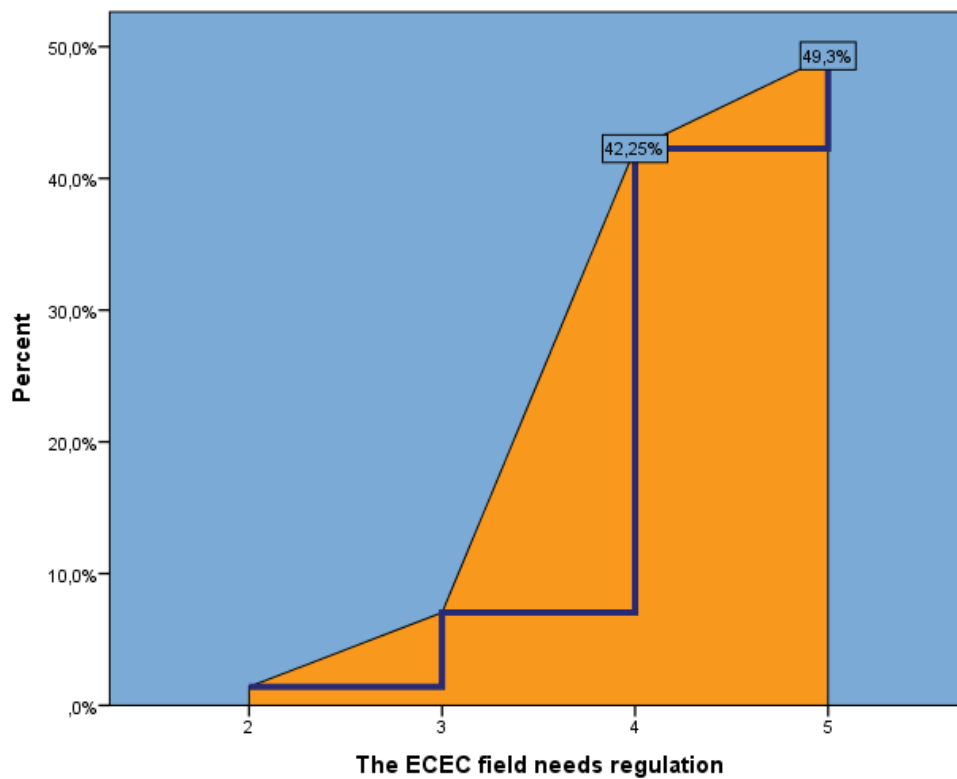
Furthermore, more than 68% of the participants agree that each ECEC centre has the autonomy to develop its own individualized policies according to its needs (graph 71). However when it comes to the extent of autonomy, namely the limitations posed by the central government, the views of the respondents are controversial (graph 72). Almost four out of ten participants agree/strongly agree with the above statement, as in the graph, while nearly one out of seven disagree/strongly disagree. Nearly half of the participants neither agree nor disagree. Very interesting results are depicted in graph 73, where the respondents are asked about the need for regulation of the municipal field of ECEC. More than 92% of the participants shared positive answers about the necessity for more ECEC regulation.



Graph 71: The development of educational policies for ECEC organizations

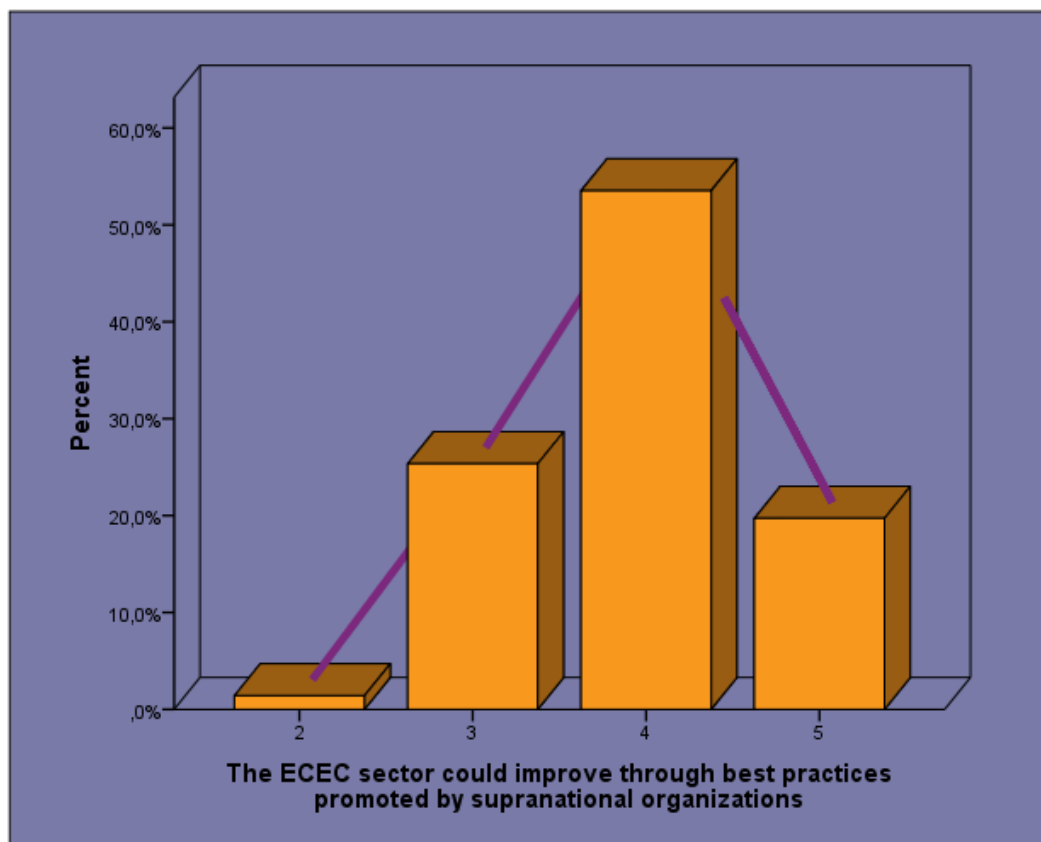


Graph 72: Limitations by the central government

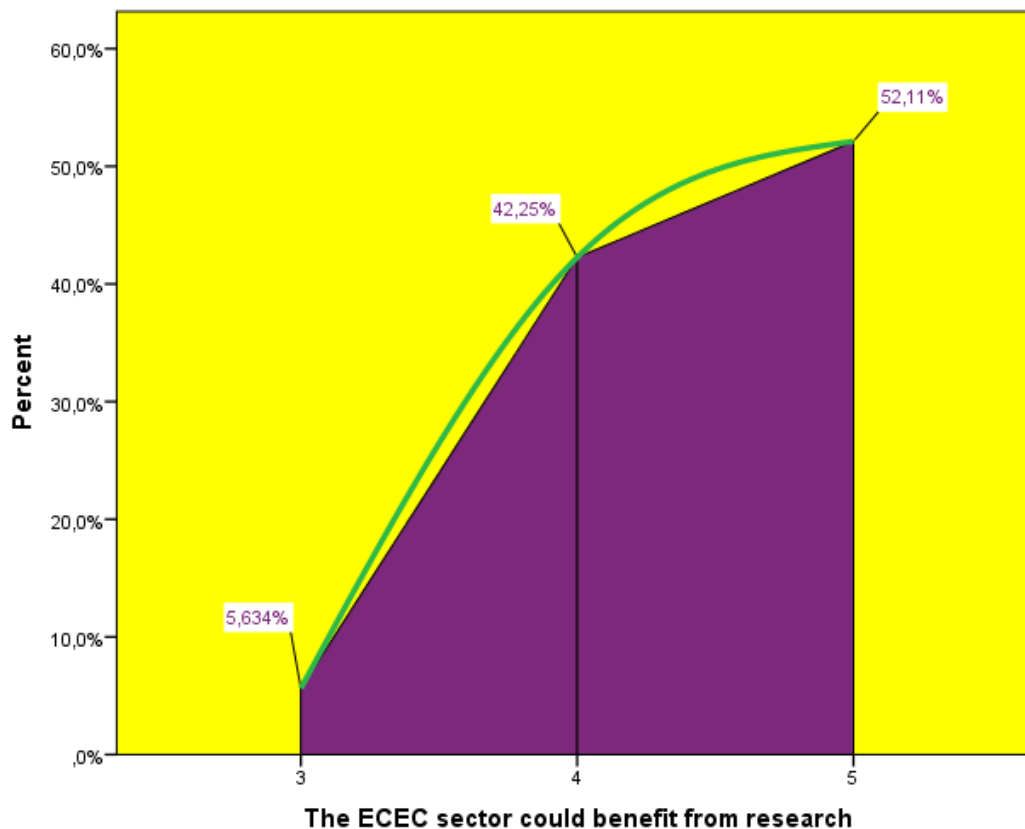


Graph 73: The need for ECEC regulation

Nearly 75% of the participants replied positively on the statement about the potential for improvement through best practices promoted by supranational organizations, such as the OECD and the European Commission (graph 74). A relatively high percentage (around 28%) of the participants chose the neutral reply on the same statement, which raises questions concerning the way these organizations and their actions are being perceived by those participating in the survey. Furthermore, almost unanimous is the view that the municipal ECEC sector could benefit from related research (graph 75).

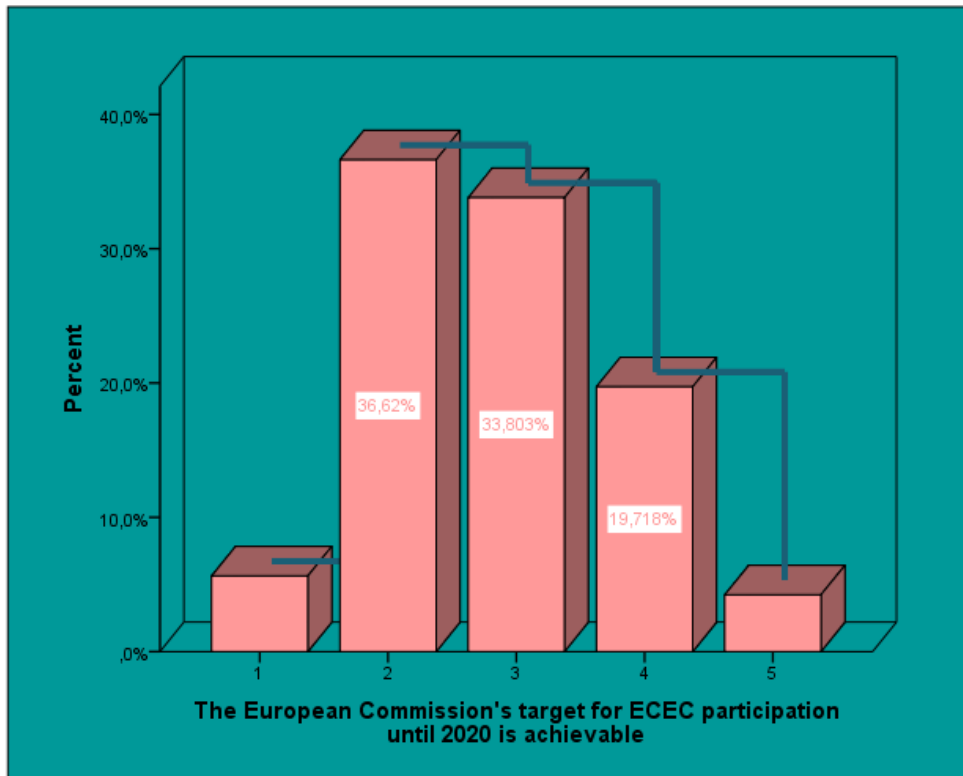


Graph 74: Ways forward for the ECEC field

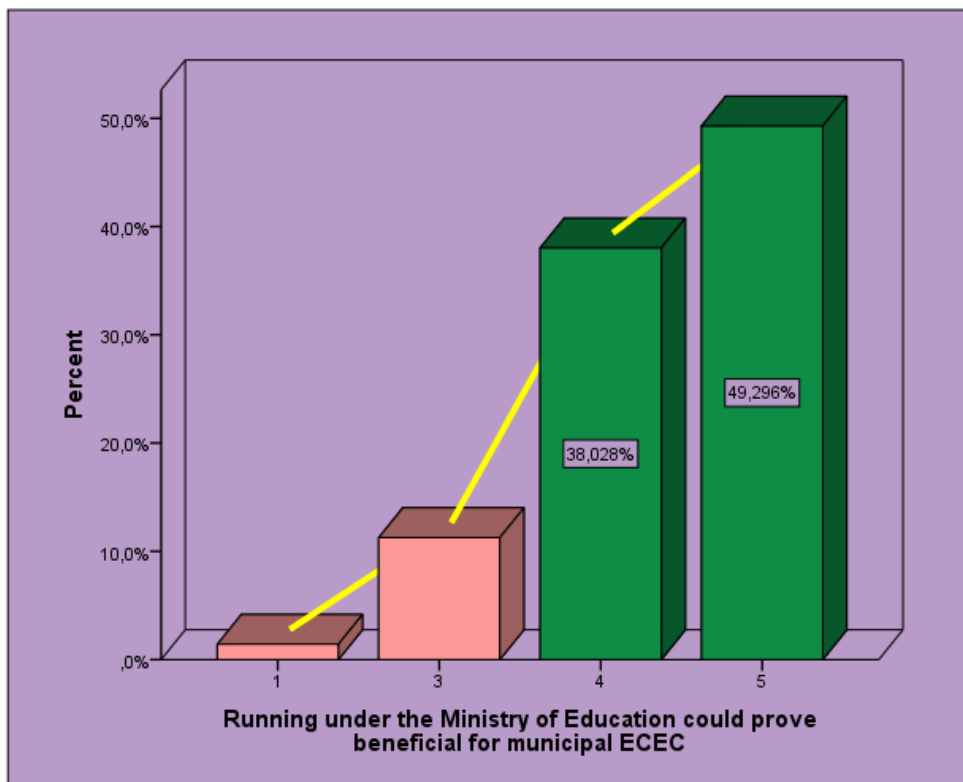


Graph 75: ECEC's benefits from research

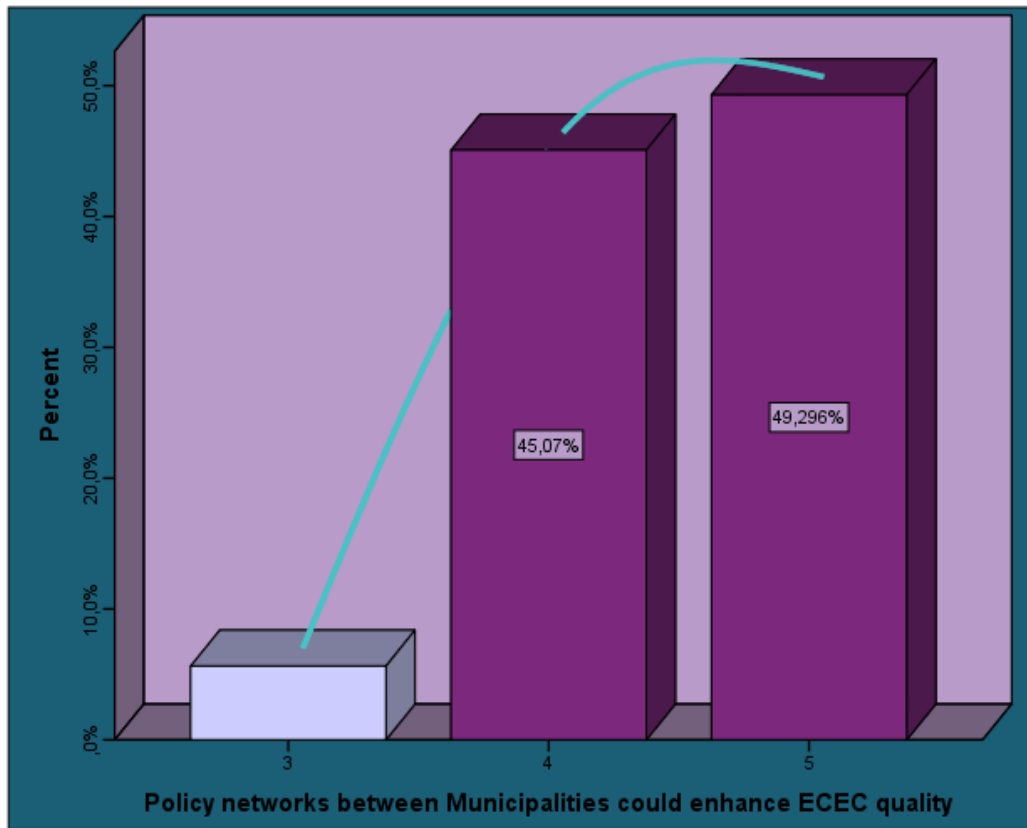
The participants came up with very interesting responses when asked about the 2020 European Commission's target for 95% ECEC participation of 4 - year olds (graph 76). As the graph shows there were diverse responses regarding the achievability of the above goal, ranging from negative (more than 40%) to positive (nearly 25%). Finally, the last two graphs show results on ways forward for the municipal ECEC field. Nearly 88% are in favour of a change of supervising authority that could prove beneficial for ECEC, from the Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Education (graph 77) and almost 95% of the respondents react positively towards the development of policy networks among Municipalities, in order to enhance ECEC quality (graph 78).



Graph 76: The Commission's target for 2020



Graph 77: Benefits from running under the Ministry of Education



Graph 78: The enhancement of ECEC quality through policy networks

The final table (6) portrays the urge for regulation for the Greek municipal ECEC sector. This sixth set of measurements scored the highest average values compared to all the policy levers, presented earlier. It appears that regulation and policy networking are perceived as vital for ECEC quality enhancement. As seen in the overall statistics of this policy lever, there are quite a few variables that score higher than 4 units (5 is the absolute maximum) (V82, 84, 86, 87). As far as the standard deviation is concerned, we found a relatively low deviation from the sample average, which in certain variables was below 0.8 (V78, 80, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87). This suggests that there is significantly less diversity when it comes to the participants' views about ways forward for the municipal ECEC sector.

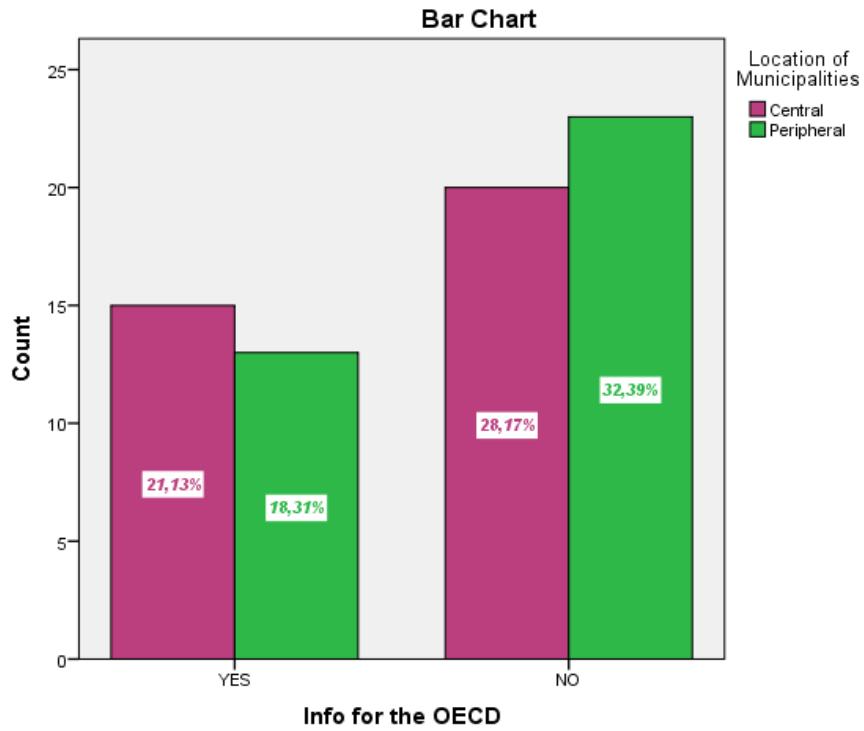
Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V78	3,76	,572	71
V79	3,03	,845	71

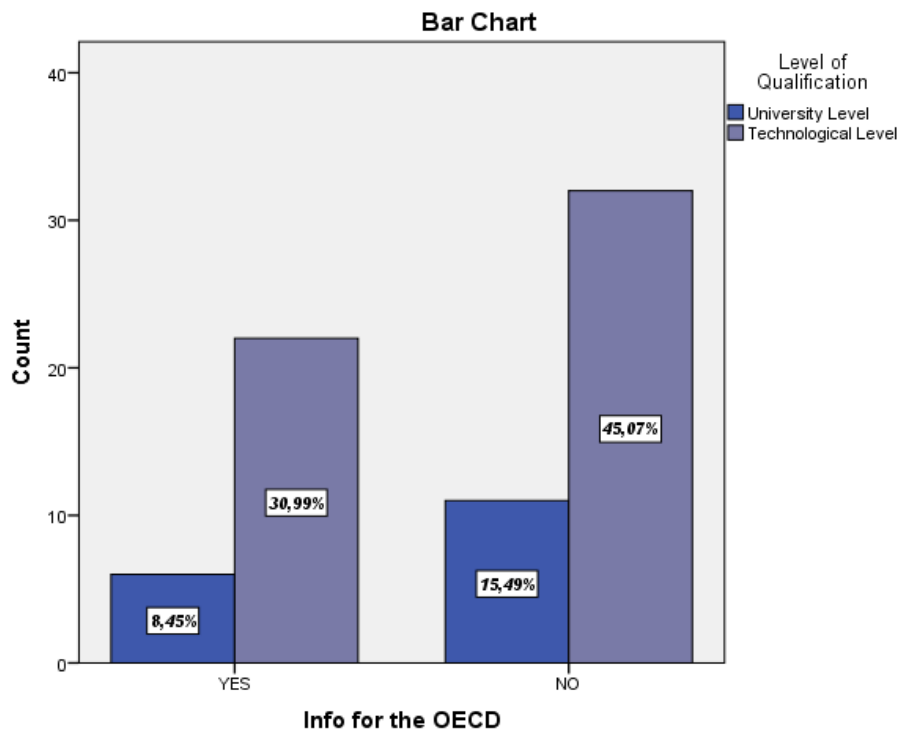
V80	3,66	,584	71
V82	4,39	,686	71
V83	3,92	,712	71
V84	4,46	,605	71
V85	2,80	,965	71
V86	4,34	,792	71
V87	4,44	,603	71

Table 6: Policy Axis 6 statistics

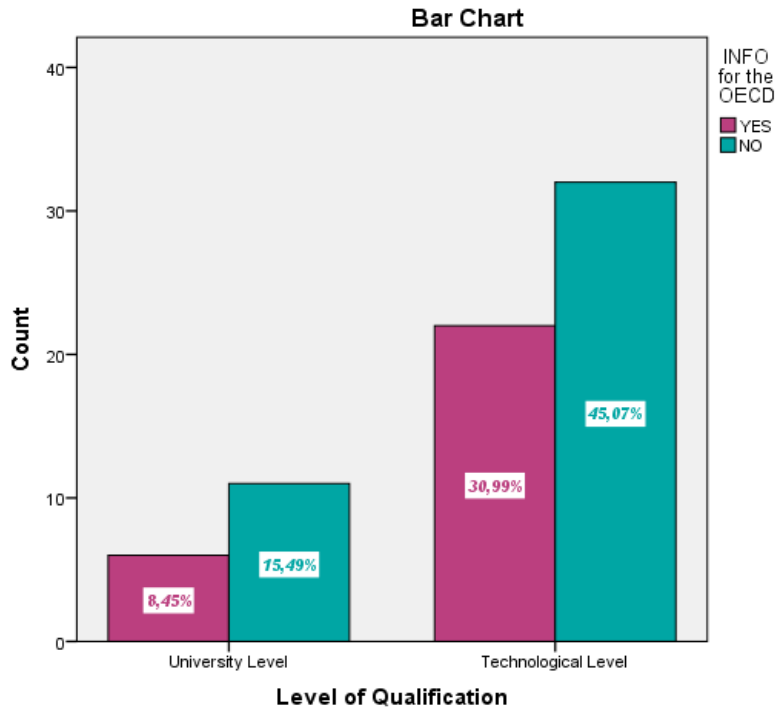
We conclude this analysis by presenting significant correlations - cross tabulations of certain variables (Graphs 79 - 82) in order to generate discussion concerning potential connection/ interaction between the participants' knowledge of the OECD's concepts and its role in ECEC; (a) the participants' level of qualification and (b) the location of the ECEC centres (peripheral or central).



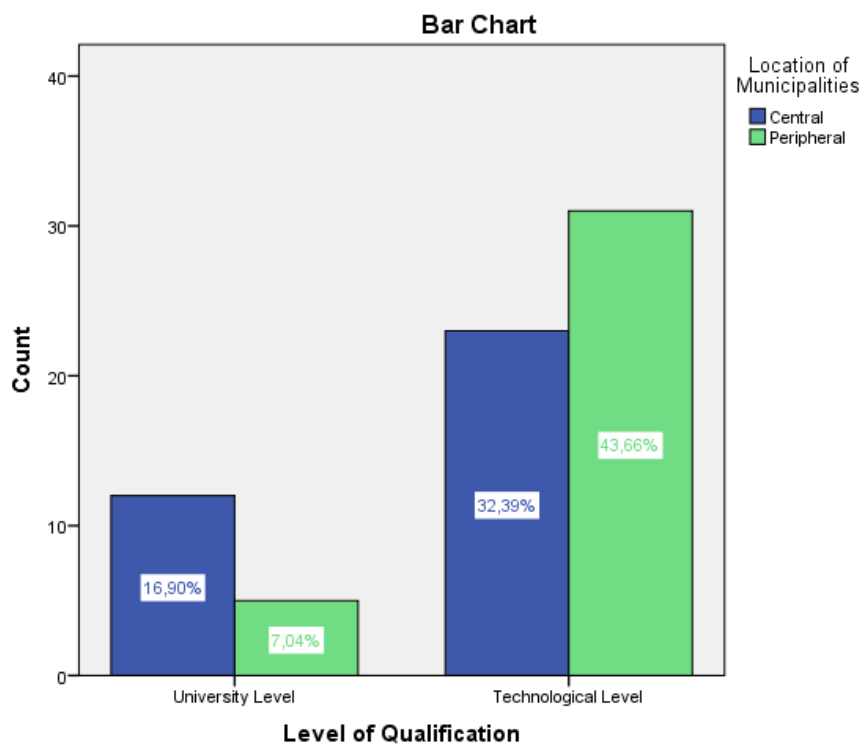
Graph 79: Correlation between knowledge of the OECD and location of municipalities



Graph 80: Correlation between knowledge of the OECD and level of qualification



Graph 81: Correlation between knowledge of the OECD and level of qualification (Alternative depiction)



Graph 82: Correlation between level of qualification and location of Municipalities

Concerning the correlation between the participants' knowledge of the OECD's concepts and the location of their centres, we notice that more respondents from central municipalities know the OECD's concepts and role in ECEC. It appears that those in central ECEC organizations are more informed concerning the OECD's work in ECEC and the OECD's concepts in comparison with participants from the periphery. Among those who responded negatively, 45% holds a Technological level Degree, while 15,5% holds a University level Degree. These results do not indicate a connection between the participants' knowledge of the OECD's concepts and their level of qualifications, since the majority of the sample holds a Technological level Degree (more than 75%). To conclude, we explored the potential correlation between the participants' level of qualification and the location of ECEC centres (whether those with a higher level of qualification are located in the centre or in the periphery). We observe that in central municipalities there are more University level than Technological level educators, when compared to peripheral municipalities. So there is a correlation between those two variables, which is statistically significant (p value: 0,04).

Discussion

This discussion seeks to identify and elaborate on the key themes emanating from the preceding analysis. Furthermore we aim to highlight the way the participants responded to these key themes/ policy axes and also critically approach notions - ideas that the OECD - and its regulation tool - promotes to foster quality in ECEC. As the data analysis shows, the participants in the survey assess highly the quality of municipal ECEC provision. Except from their "neutral" positions on the measurability of quality goals, they give positive responses on the statements about the specificity, the achievability and the relevance of quality goals. They agree with the statement that the quality goals are aligned with the overall ECEC policy goals and appear to think that they are shared among relevant Ministries and stakeholders. On the other hand, more than 50% of the participants shared had reserved - negative

responses on the statements regarding the alignment of quality goals with sustained public funding. This is consistent with the concerns raised by participants in the interviews as we saw in the previous chapter.

However, their responses are not so positive when it comes to the next four policy axes, which - according to the literature and particularly the OECD - are interrelated with ECEC quality. What seems to be paradoxical is that despite their being positive regarding the statements on the quality of the provided ECEC services, their responses to the statements on the curriculum frameworks, the relevant guidelines, the workforce qualifications, family and community engagement and data collection and monitoring show that they are not so positive. Such findings validate Rentzou's claims (2012 & 2013) that educators tend to overestimate the quality of ECEC provision, given their reserved - negative choices that they made on statements regarding several different aspects of ECEC provision.

According to the OECD, other significant ECEC policy domains that can enhance quality are the explicitness of relevant curricula and processes of monitoring and assessment. The participants found the curriculum goals and guiding principles clear enough, but they were not so positive about the curriculum's explicitness and consistency with parental and societal expectations and the percentages of those who picked the middle option in a five - choices item raised significantly. Such a pattern of choices is of concern to many researchers, who have been debating about how to interpret the "neither agree nor disagree" option. According to the literature people show a tendency to satisfy or escape the effort required to choose a satisfactory answer (Creswell, 2013 and Krosnick et al., 2002). The participants' responses tend to gravitate towards neutral options because they want to avoid the negative feelings associated with their conflicting feelings on an issue, hence as Krosnick et al. suggested the choice of a neutral option could be linked with reluctance to voice a socially undesirable opinion.

In our case - as mentioned previously - during the initial contacts there was a certain sense of uneasiness around, both on the part of the researched and

the researcher, perhaps related to the potential outcomes of this research. From my part, I knew that the ECEC field is a rather constrained sector and in order to be accepted by the professionals involved, familiarity needs to be established. To a certain point I was successful. At the same time, there were participants, among those who filled the questionnaire, who - as I noticed - expressed their anxiety to their peers about the results. Their main concern appeared to be that they were being assessed, despite my explicit declarations that stated otherwise. Therefore one may interpret the increase of the "neutral option" as a modest way to articulate a rather unenthusiastic response. Hence, the participants - when asked about the ECEC curriculum, its standards and monitoring/ assessment processes - chose not so positive or clear options in comparison with their responses on ECEC quality provision.

The global agenda, promoted primarily by the OECD, and encapsulated in the statements used in this survey, which link quality to regimes of accountability, standards and monitoring, can be made sense through the literature discussed in Chapter three. It is proper to recall here Pasiás and Rousakis's (2013: 25) position, which views quality of education as a 'panoptical discourse' related to 'market - driven' and 'managerialist' restructurings, and which 'advocates a minimalist and evaluative state, envisages an audit society and promotes accountability regimes in education'. This discourse fosters 'techno - preneurial', instrumentalist, evidence - based changes through quality 'indicators, standards and benchmarks' and through the 'deployment of accountability and performativity audits as policy devices' (ibid).

It is the logic - standardization, devolution, performance measurement and the evaluative state (Yokoyama, 2008) - that has been promoted under the umbrella of neoliberalism (Gerrard, 2015). The OECD has been operating as the spearhead of these ideas and practices and its tools establish a comparative - evaluative culture among its members (Morgan and Shahjahan, 2014). This kind of instrumentalism was a concern for many of the participants to the first phase of this study, and might well be the case that participants of

this second phase were also concerned. So, this could be one reason that would explain participants' choice to select the middle option of the Likert scale.

Another policy lever that has the potential - according to the OECD - to enhance ECEC quality is policy related to workforce qualifications. Similarly, Rentzou and Sakellariou (2011) suggest that educators' qualifications deeply impact the provision of ECEC and overall ECEC quality. Our findings suggest that workforce qualifications are a debateable subject, which raises significant controversy. To be particular, the majority of the respondents hold Technological level qualifications, hence that could be an explanation of the positive choices participants opted for on the statements on the equal quality of different ECEC qualifications (University vs. Technological level). Similarly, the rather high percentages of those who agreed with the statement that there could be stigma in social status associated with different job titles and qualifications for ECEC educators could also be linked to the demographics of our sample.

Furthermore, data collection and data monitoring lie at the top of the agenda for the OECD and thus were significant policy axes for our research. The participants, when asked about data collection and monitoring of data, tended to give negative responses. As documented with the data from the qualitative part of this research, there is an issue with the absence of mechanisms for collecting relevant data, and not only for ECEC, where data is really poor. As the analysis of the related survey data suggests, the data collection set of measurements scored the lowest average values of all the policy axes. It appears therefore, that data collection and monitoring of data is not a common practice in the field of ECEC. It is correct therefore to conclude that data coverage is rather poor in the Greek ECEC and - crucially - it is not used to underpin decisions concerning professional development, corrective actions or curricular adjustments.

The lack of monitoring and data has been an overdue problem of the Greek ECEC that could be linked to the absence of quality regulation (Petrogiannis

and Melhuish, 2001 in Rentzou, 2015). However, our study approaches critically the way data have been used by IOs and particularly by the OECD. In a rather complex fashion the OECD reconstitutes reference societies via learning and borrowing from other best practices based on data (Sellar and Lingard, 2013). Hence, a global policy field arises through a 'semantics of globalization and a policy imagination that considers the positioning of national schooling system performance within the global education policy field' (Sellar and Lingard, 2013: 468). Therefore, when the OECD blends dry research data with bold assumptions, not only raises criticism for potential bias, but also evidently steers - shapes the development of education (Robertson et al, 2007; Kamens and McNeely, 2010 in Murphy, 2014).

The responses of the participants in the survey were altered when they were asked about issues of governance and the regulation of the field of ECEC. It is paradoxical that the participants tended to agree with the statements about the regulation of the Greek municipal ECEC sector, despite their positive responses concerning the first policy axis on quality. As we saw, the majority of the participants claimed, through the choices they made on the relevant statements, that they are autonomous in terms of developing their own educational policies. But when asked about the budget management or the limitations posed by the central government, the percentages of the "middle option" rose significantly. Similarly, interpreting the related findings, we could argue that the majority of the respondents perceive initiatives, such as the ET2020 goal of the EC, as a utopia far away from the Greek reality that needs more realistic solutions. These findings are consistent with the findings from the analysis of the interviews in the first part of our study, where at the in ECEC policy level the challenges for the interviewees were quite similar. This suggests that there is a common reality among all those involved in the provision of ECEC in Greece.

Another issue, which is worth commenting on, relates to the participants' responses on the statements about potential ways forward for the municipal ECEC. Interpreting the relevant findings, we can argue that regulation and policy networking are elements in the discourse on ECEC quality and its

enhancement, as reproduced and re-contextualized in the Greek context. To be particular, the relevant findings suggest that the respondents would rather support a potential shift from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Education, a condition for the field to be regulated better, and also for creating linkages between municipal ECEC centers and primary education. Furthermore, based again on the related findings we can argue that the respondents would tend to support the introduction and the establishment of policy networks among the municipalities, thereby promoting solutions and best practices, and generally the quality in the field of Greek ECEC. Finally, it appears that participants see that ECEC quality could be enhanced through the contribution of research. However, when they were asked about the contribution of supranational organizations - such as the OECD - the neutral option reached almost 30%.

We could problematize OECD's contribution further. Despite the fact that the OECD buttresses its procedures and mechanisms in research data, it appears that the respondents tend to distinguish between the OECD's findings and recommendations and the findings of the academic scholars. However our analysis of the OECD's "Starting Strong 3" suggests that the OECD not only uses research - though selectively - and data to shed light on the 'success or failure' of ECEC programs and to inform 'ECEC practices through evidence'; but also sets the agenda for the scope of research that needs to be carried out concerning the field of ECEC (OECD, 2012: 285). This therefore points to a more complicated picture on the value of research, which of course was not possible to explore through the present survey. Still, looking at the Greek literature (e.g. Rentzou), we notice that the OECD's regulation tool and the best practices illustrating it, has been entering the field of Greek ECEC, becoming a reference point in endeavors to transform it.

Additionally we identify some similarities related to recommendations between Greek scholars and the OECD's regulation tools. Proposals of best policies and practices, such as a national curriculum under the auspices and the regulation of the Ministry of Education, monitoring and inspection mechanisms and the development of an assessment culture, appearing in several

publications (Petrogiannis, 2010; Rentzou and Sakellariou, 2011; Rentzou, 2015; Rentzou, 2017), are emanating from the OECD's regulation tools and its general agenda. Furthermore, we hypothesize that the lower percentages - and the possible bias against the involvement of the OECD in ECEC - relate to the role of supranational organizations in the on-going Greek crisis. As we have discussed in several parts of this Thesis, the OECD and the European Commission are usually linked - in the consciousness of the people - to neoliberal policies that have affected deeply the vast majority of the Greek people. This negative experience and even fear towards the supranational organizations might explain, up to a point, the educators' and policy makers' refusal to engage with - let alone to critically and scrutinize OECD's studies and policy initiatives.

As we saw in earlier chapters, several scholars also raise their concerns about the OECD's best practices - recommendations and its modus operandi, which involves, among other activities, the introduction of the "International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study", a 4 year study that has triggered concern (Moss et al, 2016 and Pence, 2016 in Rentzou 2017) and has been identified as 'baby PISA' (Pence, 2016: 54 in Rentzou, 2017: 10). This 'Baby PISA' is the latest attempt in a cycle that began almost 20 years ago, when the first "Starting Strong" was presented as a 'landmark in the comparative studies of ECEC' (Moss et al, 2016: 344). It is during all this period that the OECD has been gradually building and establishing its agenda; that is what should be perceived as "good quality" in ECEC globally.

Drawing on Tsatsaroni et al (2015) and Robertson and Sorensen (2017), we utilize Bernstein's notion of pedagogic device to reflect on issues raised by our analysis of "Starting Strong 3" and to challenge the concepts articulating the discourse reproduced by participants in both sets of data in our study. "Starting Strong 3" uses comparison that constructs hierarchy without elaborating on different national contexts, as also TALIS and other OECD tools do (Robertson and Sorensen, 2017). And as we discussed in the section on the theoretical grounding of the present doctoral study, by pedagogic device Bernstein means 'the relay itself, as well as what is relayed; the relay

itself has rules that regulate what can be relayed, and these rules are ideological' (Bernstein, 2000: 28 in Robertson and Sorensen, 2017: 5). That is to say they contain ideas about the way the world could, and should operate.

Robertson and Sorensen (2017: 7) suggest that the OECD is not only 'a nodal agent of symbolic control' that operates like a state globally, but also it uses its tools - such as "Starting Strong 3" - as pedagogic devices that alter educators' and policy makers' identities into 'a part of competitive knowledge economies'. This ideological aspect buttresses the OECD's aim to create an umbrella of regulation tools covering all levels of education (e.g. PISA and baby PISA). These tools will provide a considerable amount of power in the future to the OECD, to 'govern pedagogically' (Robertson and Sorensen, 2017: 13), and to become a 'principal producer of symbolic control and of social destinies' (Tyler, 2010: 149 in Singh, 2014: 5).

Moreover, as Robertson and Sorensen (2017) have argued, the OECD views education systems as national - leaving the local context aside - since it is the governments that usually fund the OECD's interference. But as they also remark, not all educational systems are structured and managed nationally, and so there is a number of layers that the relay needs to breach in order for it to work (ibid). Our concern is that the current status of the Greek ECEC field, which is in a 'critical crossroad' (Rentzou, 2017: 10), coupled with the economic crisis, could act as catalysts of change for the breaching process to take place, and uncritically allow the device to transmit its concepts and ideologies through a 'repair function offered by the OECD' (Robertson and Sorensen, 2015: 5). Then, the one who holds the 'evaluative rule' of the device - in Singh's (2014: 6) terms - will also hold its control. What Tsatsaroni et al (2015) identified as the introduction of innovative ways, generated from the state, that affect the expanding field of symbolic control, blurring the distinctions between the cultural field and the field of symbolic control, and the values associated with them.

We do agree with Tsatsaroni and Evans (2014), who argue that pedagogic devices exemplify a range of concepts that scholars have been using to

illustrate global transitions in the field of education. They note that these scholars share similar concerns regarding the potential monopoly of knowledge and skills by IOs and the OECD specifically, which might lead to the intensification of social reproduction of existing divisions and inequalities, rather than helping to change and progress towards a learning society. Finally, we endorse Tsatsaroni et al's (2015), and other scholars' emphasis on the possible consequences for democracy of the increasing influence the OECD's tools exert on the education systems around the world and national policy development.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Introduction

In this Thesis I unpacked the re - contextualizations of quality and autonomy in the Greek municipal ECEC. I explored how the times of economic crisis have affected the relevant debate and influenced the unfolding of governance and (de) - regulation processes with potential implications on ECEC's future direction. A significant aim of this Thesis was also to scrutinize the role of the OECD in the 'economization' of education policy and the 'educationalization' of economic policy (Sellar and Lingard, 2013b: 200) and the subsequent domination of its discourse - policies on ECEC quality provision. My research interest was to approach the field of ECEC as a field "under reconstruction". As a site of policy interventions by IOs and particularly the OECD, which acts as an arbiter and best - practices promoter within different educational systems in a race for efficiency, comparison and competition. ECEC is a field that was under the OECD's radar - in a same way as with its interventions in the other educational levels through the development of its knowledge regulation tools. Hence, the utilization but also the consequences of this new political regime for education being ushered in globally, posed as key issues, which shaped the problematic of our critical perspective. Significant in our approach to the study of the transformations in governance and regulation of the Greek ECEC field was the dimension of inequality.

Addressing the Research Problem

The research questions that this doctoral study answers were: Who defines quality in ECEC? Through what processes and which contexts? How the notions of autonomy and quality are being shaped and re - contextualized in the Greek ECEC in times of economic crisis? How governance and regulation are played out in the field of ECEC? How do those involved in the Greek

context perceive the OECD's work/ involvement in ECEC? With what consequences?

Our analysis of the OECD's "Starting Strong 3" supplemented by the analyses of the two different sets of qualitative and quantitative data provided us with insights that shed light to different aspects of the multifaceted debate of ECEC at national and international level. To begin with, the majority of the participants perceive quality as an elusive notion, a combination of not always tangible characteristics. Despite claims for a balanced approach between education and care, our data show an emphasis on care, which lies at the forefront of several peripheral and central ECEC centres' practices. We should also mention that we have identified only few explicit views on ECEC quality that link quality to specific goals and seek more regulation through the development of curriculum frameworks and evaluation processes. In these cases there seems to be a reproduction of the discourse articulated in the documents of the OECD.

Our findings document an increased diversity regarding not only the understanding of the nature of ECEC, but also the notions of quality in ECEC provision in the country. Indeed while one of the shifts of the EU and the OECD's policies is to place ECEC in the portfolio of education, we observe an intensification of care concerns - facilitated by the fact that the Greek Municipal ECEC is not under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Moreover, it should be stressed that the relevant literature highlights the 'schoolification of ECEC' as a growing 'trend' (Rentzou, 2017: 10), which was also identified in this study as a shift that could potentially enhance ECEC quality provision. Additionally, the lack of central regulation (Petrogiannis, 2010) and the concomitant 'large local differences in the organization, operation and quality of child care centres' (Rentzou, 2015: 252) are elements in the discourse of policy makers and practitioners - especially of those from the periphery.

The deepest quality concerns shared by the respondents to the questions posed in the interviews and the questionnaire are focused on the limitations

that the MOUs - or SAPs - impose on the public sector and particularly ECEC provision. Those limitations shape ECEC policies and link them directly with market principles and particularly economic efficiency. The budgetary cuts they face reduce a public good to an operation aligned to economic rationalism and raise concerns about the deepening of austerity and social hardship. Moreover, our findings suggest that the economic momentum hinders the operation of ECEC structures and impacts ECEC participation directly. The reduced funding of ECEC organizations leads to the reduction of ECEC structures, limited spaces for children and inefficient ECEC services operation.

Drawing on Loyd and Penn (2014) we stress the inequality consequences of austerity regimes for children from lower socio economic backgrounds who are less likely to participate in ECEC. Our analyses of the interview data indicate significant disparities even between areas of the same municipality - particularly in the case of central municipalities. The economic crisis has aggravated an already challenging environment and in certain cases has shifted the attention from ECEC provision to care for those in need. ESPA funding is seen as a *"half - measure"*. It provides support for the proper operation of ECEC structures and even for the establishment of new ones, but in many cases it is deemed as an inadequate measure because of the constantly increasing needs exacerbated by the economic crisis.

Furthermore, the participants to the study highlight the impact of the economic crisis, which impedes the efficient operation of vital aspects of the municipal ECEC provision; specifically the operation of ECEC facilities, the educator - children ratio, the qualifications of educators and the supplementary ECEC services. Several of the participants from peripheral ECEC organizations claim that they manage to abide by the minimum standards policies - as stated in the official documents. However, in central ECEC organizations many facilities fail to meet minimum standards given the limited space available. Similarly, due to the shortage of teaching staff, participants from central municipalities referred to their difficulties to meet the proper educator -

child ratio and also admit that they often resort to the employment of assistant educators where qualified educators are not enough.

The findings of this research raise concerns regarding the repercussions of the economic crisis on the field of ECEC. Hence, in the Greek context it is of importance not to neglect the significant inequalities - that occur even within the same municipality. Drawing on Boyum (2014: 11 - 12), this study raises the need to shift the discussion from 'less inequality of opportunity', to equality of opportunity. This includes, at the macro - level, the adequate provision of ECEC and enhanced children's participation and, at the micro - level the appropriate function of individual ECEC centers.

In terms of the autonomy of those involved in the design and implementation of education policies, our data suggests that the austerity measures implemented from 2010 had a significant negative impact, impeding their capacity to make crucial decisions for ECEC provision. The majority of the respondents to the interviews agreed that municipal ECEC organizations formally operate autonomously. First in terms of political interferences from the state and also regarding educational policies, the participants in our research - mainly from peripheral ECEC organizations - claimed that they are rather autonomous. However, their discourse describes a tug - of - war situation around issues of control and points to the limitations posed from policies related to ECEC and more generally, the national state policies. What actually seems to take place is a constant negotiation between local and central state agencies, precisely around the space, in which the former could act autonomously – vague combinations and an overlapping of state control and local autonomy as Gewirtz et al (2007) described it.

Despite the devolution of powers and the anticipated devolution of financial control to the local state, the locus of control still remains with the central government, which holds the reins over critical aspects of ECEC operation and restrains the authority of municipalities regarding the way they use their own resources. It appears that when it comes to the Greek ECEC provision, the notion of autonomy is systematically associated with Greece's economic

struggles and therefore understood and re - interpreted by the actors in the field in a constrained approach that inhibits the development of educational policies on ECEC.

An important governance issue that arises from this Thesis is the possibility of integrating ECEC provision to compulsory education, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Our findings indicate that governance leads to new forms of government because the vast majority of the participants seek more regulation by the central state. Re-regulation processes seem to be already in place, but what is interesting and paradoxical here is that it is not the central government that seeks to increase its control over the affairs of the municipalities, ECEC in particular. On the contrary, it is the Municipalities that are asking from the central government to increase its authoritative control over this sector and are expressing the need for more structured and regulated frameworks for ECEC provision. It is interesting - and one could argue contradicting to some of their previous claims for more autonomy - that they want to see the sector being placed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education on the argument that this will enhance quality and will help to tackle the multidimensional and constantly growing problems of ECEC provision in Greece.

Certain participants in this study noted that the devolution of powers to municipalities was wrong, since the Ministry of Interior lacks mechanisms of regulation that could promote ECEC quality provision. According to those participants, this kind of decentralization supports a conception of ECEC primarily as care and not as education. Hence, a shift to the Ministry of Education is expected to signify that ECEC is primarily an area of education, a perception that can lead to higher standards and regulation. The schoolification of ECEC - namely the unification of municipal ECEC organizations and kindergartens under the Ministry of Education - is proposed by many scholars (see Petrogiannis, 2009 and Rentzou 2015) and is part of the agenda ushered by the OECD. However, the restricted view of ECEC as the development of cognitive, social and emotional skills and as a period of transition towards formal education - prominent in the discourse of the OECD

- might raise a different set of issues; in that the distinct character of this early years education may be lost in the way.

The Greek central government has been inactive regarding calls from Municipalities or IOs. The more informed about international trends among those responsible for ECEC organizations explicitly seek faster implementation of more efficient alternatives, stress the importance of networking and actually are in the process of formulating policy networks in order to exchange best practices, fill the gaps of this chaotic field, foster quality ECEC provision criteria and finally achieve a re - regulation of the field. Through these hybrid forms of regulation - soft governance policy networks, they aim to close the gaps between different Municipalities and ECEC centers and tackle a wide range of everyday issues.

However, this research also provides evidence of the participants' concerns regarding the potential hierarchies that the forming of policy networks can lead to, and also illustrates an emerging non-linear route towards the transformation of the ECEC field. To be particular, in the Greek ECEC the advocates of the ideas of the OECD and the EU have their origins in different - central and peripheral - Municipalities, so the policy flow seems to move from the international, to the local, ending at - and aspiring to reach - the national level. This potential diversification of the ECEC sector through partnerships - coalitions between standard-setters and low-performer Municipalities, shall have major repercussions - as indicated by the study's findings - on forms of representation of the Municipalities, the processes of decision making and the practices within the early childhood sector. Furthermore, the potential internal hierarchies might shape the field in an entirely different way and could also open the policy doors to new actors, new ideas and new sensibilities. Such bottom - up processes of public sector transformation could imply that in the future the central state's role could be transformed too, from directing bureaucracies to managing policy networks, a new reality in matters of education that is emerging in many European countries and beyond.

One of the significant issues explored in this study is the connection between the OECD's work and the perceptions of the participants regarding the OECD's involvement in ECEC, and its key concepts on educational quality, particularly ECEC quality. The participants' perceptions vary, ranging from total unfamiliarity with the OECD's involvement in ECEC, to clear understanding and thorough knowledge of the OECD's Toolboxes and related concepts. Several participants implicitly adopt ideas that have been promoted by the OECD or EC and others are not familiar with the OECD's concepts, but are deeply troubled about the growing interest of the OECD in ECEC and the implications of its toolboxes for the already suffering ECEC field.

The international debate on ECEC is re-contextualized in distinctive ways in Greece. The majority of the participants (regardless of their familiarity, experience and knowledge about the OECD's involvement in the ECEC sector), when asked about the OECD, expressed their concerns and even fears emanating from the OECD's active role in the Greek financial crisis. Our findings suggest that there is a distrust concerning the OECD's involvement in education - and particularly ECEC - which has further increased by the participants' blurring of the lines between the OECD's role in education and its involvement in other aspects of the public domain - notably the economy. Furthermore, the OECD's methodology has been characterized by the interviewees as "instrumental" and also as an approach that perceives education as investment. Such concerns are also raised by the critical literature, which characterizes the OECD's positioning as leading to 'the creation of homo economicus' (Sims and Waniganayake, 2015: 336). The view of the OECD as an instrumental agent was common to the participants of both phases of this study, and could thus be seen as a potential reason for their reserved - negative stances towards the OECD's involvement in ECEC.

Despite the fact that the OECD buttresses its procedures and mechanisms in research data, it appears that the respondents separate the OECD's findings and recommendations from the findings of the academic scholars. However, our analysis of the OECD's "Starting Strong 3" suggests that the OECD not only uses research - though selectively - and data to shed light on the

'success or failure' of ECEC programs and to inform 'ECEC practices through evidence', but also sets the agenda for the scope of research that needs to be carried out concerning the field of ECEC (OECD, 2012: 285). Still, drawing on the Greek literature, we notice that the OECD's regulation tool and the practices illustrating it, has been entering the field of Greek ECEC, becoming a reference point in endeavors to transform it.

Moreover, our review of the OECD's "Starting Strong 3" indicates that there are explicit links between this document and other OECD reports - tools not linked with ECEC, fact that strengthens the representation of the OECD as a key agent of the marketization of education. Relatedly, the OECD's best practices - recommendations and its modus operandi should be of concern. As explained previously, the OECD's initiatives include the introduction of the "International Early Learning and Child Well-being Study", a 4 year study on ECEC, identified as 'baby PISA' (Pence, 2016: 54). This 'Baby PISA' is the last in a series of interventions that began almost 20 years ago, when the first "Starting Strong" program was marketed as a 'landmark in the comparative studies of ECEC' (Moss et al, 2016: 344). During all this period the OECD has been working methodically towards defining, promoting and establishing a discourse of "good quality", thereby becoming an arbiter of ECEC quality.

Robertson and Sorensen (2017) suggest that the OECD utilizes its tools - such as "Starting Strong 3" - as pedagogic devices that alter educators' and policy makers' identities and thus produce competitive knowledge economies. It is this ideology that buttresses the OECD's aim to create regulation tools covering all levels of education (e.g. the case of PISA and baby PISA). Such tools shall provide a considerable amount of power for the OECD to 'govern pedagogically' in the future (Robertson and Sorensen, 2017: 13), and to become a 'principal producer of symbolic control and of social destinies' (Tyler, 2010: 149 in Singh, 2014: 5).

We do agree with Tsatsaroni and Evans (2014), who argue that pedagogic devices exemplify a range of concepts that scholars have been using to illustrate global transitions in the field of education. We endorse their concerns

regarding the potential monopoly of knowledge and skills by IOs and the OECD specifically, which might lead to the intensification of social reproduction of existing divisions and inequalities, and to detrimental consequences for democracy. The Greek ECEC municipal sector was never in essence decentralized and granted its autonomy. Here we recall Hatcher's (2012) position that it is rather pointless to refer to democracy - meaning the educational choices made through democratic procedures at the local level - without granting to the local agents the power to translate that policy into action. Following Ranson (2010) and Fielding and Moss (2011) we strongly suggest that in order for the vital role of the local authorities in the layered system of school and community governance to be recognized, promoted and engaging for stakeholders, then its power and influence should be recognized and valorized.

A note in conclusion

This doctoral Thesis has approached the field of ECEC through a critical lens. The combination of empirical inquiry with critical and theoretical reflections helped to shed light on important dimensions of ECEC provision. First I provided arguments and evidence to support the view that the OECD has been established as the arbiter of quality in ECEC provision globally. Additionally, this study contributed to knowledge in the field through its analysis of the re - contextualization of quality and autonomy and the relevant governance implications in a context of an on-going economic crisis. Crucially, it has revealed the role of the Greek ECEC scholars in making the OECD a reference point for setting the research agenda in the field and for recommending solutions to its problems.

I did not take the OECD's ECEC agenda for granted - as a fixed reality. On the contrary, I scrutinized the way the OECD uses "Starting Strong 3" as a pedagogic device that shapes identities and defines what quality in ECEC is -

or should be. In doing so this doctoral study makes an original contribution to the field of education policy and sociology of education. I attempted to create new spaces for debate, to shift the discussion from magic bullets on quality, to a more critical approach to best practices and their implications in a context deeply affected by the economic crisis. It is my hope that the results of this approach will also contribute to a future discussion on the OECD's scope to create an armoury of regulation tools - including baby PISA - and thus to govern pedagogically all levels of education.

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Appendices

A. The participants of the qualitative research

Participant 1: Male - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 2: Female - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 3: Female - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 4: Female - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 5: Male - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 6: Female - central municipal organization

Participant 7: Female - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 8: Male - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 9: Male - central municipal organization

Participant 10: Male - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 11: Female - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 12: Female - central municipal organization

Participant 13: Female - central municipal organization

Participant 14: Female - peripheral municipal organization

Participant 15: Female - peripheral municipal organization

B. Empirical Material: The Interview

Interview Transcript in English; indicative questions - Participant 9 (parts from the interviews that could identify subjects, have been removed from the transcripts)

RE- Are there specific objectives for the provision of ECEC in your Municipality? Like, social policy goals, employment policy goals or educational policy goals? There are certain countries, for example, that place emphasis on helping parents' participation in their everyday lives - to get on with their jobs, so these Municipalities place emphasis on care. Other Municipalities in other countries place emphasis on education, because they want to prepare children for primary education. Where is the emphasis in your Municipality? Are there explicit objectives, or is there a more general approach?

IN- There are...There are... I wouldn't call them objectives, I would call it: "providing different things". The one is to look after children and the other is to look after parents. In terms of looking after children, our objective is to integrate them as early as possible to ECEC and to provide them with skills in order to continue to the primary and secondary grade of education. In terms of looking after parents, we seek to service them, mainly we firstly care about working parents - that's out of discussion - first regarding 2 working parents, next 1 working and 1 unemployed parent and both unemployed parents. You understand that is very important for working parents to be able to leave their children somewhere in "good hands" and to be able to deal with their *children* (probably meant jobs). I think that parents need to realize that the kindergarten is not a "parking place" to leave their children and say 'I do not care about what is done over there and I just go to my workplace and earn money

RE- Sorry to interrupt. Are you under the impression that parents do that?

IN- As a president I cannot really answer - because its only 2 months since I was appointed as president - as a parent though and being able to witness the parental meetings, as a parent and not as a president many parents do not really care, they wont come to the parental meetings, parental briefings, elections, you see them leaving their children in the morning and picking them up at the afternoon, they ask them 'have you eaten anything today...ok bye', they won't ask did the child learn to write, to read or to paint, they wont ask about educational stuff. Teachers, I believe, do their work properly, but there are parents that do not care... On the other hand I do not know what they do in their private lives, if they ask their children, but there are parents that do not ask the educators. Therefore, my objective is ...yes to ECEC 100%, the sooner the child enters the preschool education the better, but not those tragic things to take the child to the nursery station from 8 months or 10 months old. Despite the fact that I as a

president have to provide the parents with nursery stations but I believe it is too early in terms of the educational aspect. The child will eventually get bored, getting up early - despite being too young and not realizing what's going on, and that won't happen now it will happen in secondary grade, junior or senior high. It will be like 'I am finishing school... I am finishing' but it will never end. I think that the objective of our administration is the combination: The parents should be able to leave their children in good hands so the children can learn and the children instead of staying at home or going to playgrounds they can be in nursery stations.

RE- My research is specifically related to the 3-5 age group. It won't be related to the other age-group (8 months-3). Because regarding the 3-5 age group, there is a connection with the kindergartens that are under the official curriculum of primary education. That field is more regulated.

RE- As a municipality is there any cooperation between you and the government, is there autonomy? Is there anyone from the government who interferes in your work? Is there communication? what happens in that case? are you autonomous regarding the policies and the objectives that you set?

IN- Yes, Yes we are autonomous. There is no central political guidance. And by saying us, I do not mean just the Municipality of ... , in Greece this does not exist - to receive central political guidance - the only thing that depends on the government is to approve certain seasonal vacancies and secondly ESPA. The selection of children through ESPA and the selection of teachers exactly because we have high absorption of the funds of ESPA. That is the only field that we are being involved with the central government.

RE- You do not have anything like consultation, to discuss with someone who maybe assists the kindergartens, or a central level communication (government). You are totally autonomous

IN- First of all this thing does not exist in nursery stations and municipal kindergartens, we are not under the auspices of education, for example under the departments of primary education. We are public legal entities. This is the case in Greece. If there is no public legal entity in a Municipality, then a vice-mayor is responsible for that, which is the same. The Municipality is responsible 100%, As far as the personnel is concerned, we 'follow orders' depending on what they provide us with? We ask for vacancies and they provide.

RE- You ask for vacancies and they provide, does it have to do with the budget? How much money does the government allocate?

IN- No it is not a matter of budget, because I could have employed more, since I have the money to do so. I asked for 30 people and they approved of 18.

RE- *Despite the fact that you had the money...*

IN- Despite the fact that I had the money.

RE- *What is the reason for that?*

IN- I cannot understand. There is no...

RE- *We could perhaps say that it is of micro politic nature? They do not allow you to waste money? I cannot understand...*

IN- Neither Do I. There are personnel cuts decided by the minister; he could say that "you have 100 permanent employees and you are asking for 30 temporary in order to cover 10 ECEC stations, I think they are a lot". Of course we ask for personnel according to our standards, but there is a probability of not getting it.

RE- *You ask for the best possible and...*

IN- We ask for the best and they provide us with a 'middle ground' solution. "Let's compromise..." Despite our financial autonomy - we have not asked for any money - we only ask them (the government) to approve of vacancies; "approve of vacancies and we shall cover the expenses, you should not care". Despite all these, there are cuts. If you do not witness cuts concerning the number of vacancies - I want 30, ok have 30-, you may witness cuts like "I am asking for 10 University level educators, 5 Technological level educators and 10 cooks" and they could say "you cannot have cooks, you can have...or have something else instead... to tell me what category of personnel will I employ". And the third biggest problem we face is about when are these vacancies approved. In order for you to understand, it is already the beginning of November and we have not finished yet regarding the personnel selection. The vacancies have been approved; we are done with the personnel selection (ASEP), we are expecting the tables ASEP etc. If there was not any permanent personnel, then things would be tough.

RE- *Who is responsible for those cuts, from the Ministry, who is the one responsible for saying "I allow a certain number..."? Is it the higher level - the Minister - or the secretary?*

IN- It is the Decentralized Administration we are under, which belongs to the Ministry of Interior.

RE- Question 3, As far as the educators are concerned, are there specific qualifications or regulations, are there any policies related with their behavior for example, dress code? Are these explicit or is it a matter of common sense?

IN- This public legal entity exists for many years, so things flow along, I cannot - as a new President - change everything "change the way you dress, the way you behave". Their behavior should be excellent - that is out of the discussion - and the critique is welcome. Still there are no signs of disapproval concerning the personnel, but the guidelines are, what we care about is: the personnel's good behavior regarding children and parents, proper kitchen facilities in order to feed the children and good education. All the others...

RE- Are not explicit...

IN- They are part of everyday life. Problems may occur, but they are solved... he had a bad night sleep and he misbehaved...

RE- I am referring to the qualifications - what you said previously - you could ask for Technological level qualified educators and they approve of Vocational level...

IN- No no no, I am in favor generally... The staff that should be employed in a municipal nursery station... The educational staff - because there is also the assisting staff - As far as the educational staff is concerned, I am in favor of University level teachers, I am strongly in favor of the Technological level educators because I perceive their specialty as a "tool", because they can be employed both in infant and in nursery stations.

RE- Pass partout

IN- Pass partout; that is why I said it is a "tool". And they are Technological level educators and behind them... despite having a few of them there are Vocational level assisting staff, because we should not forget that when it comes to vocational level we refer to assistants. If we want to abide by the professional qualifications - and since I am not only a President, but also a professional - you realize that in order to be an assistant you have to fall under the appropriate professional, the University or the Technological level educator. I am against Vocational level educators working as "real" educators. Working as assistants yes, but working as real ones no. That is why - this is a policy - I do not know if this year - because the school year has already begun, the children are already comfortable with their teachers etc. - but surely, in the beginning of the new school year (In the summer when this school year will be over) I will do some changes concerning the personnel, in terms of rearranging the placements. There

are many things wrong, many things in our Municipality and as a result I will try to fix them. I will not accept... a classroom with two vocational educators. A classroom with one vocational and one technological is fine. There are many things... many things.

RE- Which means that until now this was the case, This could be a possible scenario, not only here but also in other municipalities.

IN- Not was the case... is the case. It happens because the placement is a political game. The placement is about I like you then I place you there. I do not like you then I place you elsewhere. I will follow meritocratic criteria, eventually - it is not about hierarchy - the University level educator has to be responsible, the technological level teacher has to be next, after that follows the vocational level educator. They cannot be the same and teach in classrooms. This is the worst case for children. This is a policy and I do not know if there is another question...As far as the pedagogical practices are concerned, my view is that the president should not interfere. I work as a Physiotherapist and I do not accept any interference concerning the way I conduct my therapies, similarly I cannot interfere concerning the pedagogy.

RE- You provide however a political direction...

IN- I provide directions, and I do not know if there is a question regarding my future inputs in ECEC...

4) RE- I will definitely ask you about that. Lets go to the fourth question. How do you perceive quality in ECEC provision regarding your Municipality? How do you perceive this notion, when you hear quality in education and in care as well - because it is also care as you mentioned.

IN- How I perceive quality ... You perceive quality from parents, when there are no complaints, then it means that you are good. That everything is fine in every field that we already mentioned...

RE- You said before, you referred to care but also to education, so I assume that you are thinking about a "golden ratio"?

IN- Yes, something like that... exactly. Now regarding the person responsible for the decision-making...

RE- I suppose it is you... that is why I did not ask you.

IN- Look, I have introduced something like a regulation, once a month - I have 10

ECEC stations and soon I will have 11. I have 9 nursery stations and 2 children centers.

RE- Children centers for older children?

IN- No children centers are for children 3-5 years old, but in these centers both unemployed parents may register their children, but these centers do not provide food. But parents in the morning provide their children with their own food, so all children eat, but do not eat something prepared from the cook

RE- So only nursery stations have cooks.

IN- Yes the infant and the nursery stations. The 2 children centers in ... I would not call them playgrounds and I would not call them nursery stations. They are nursery stations without kitchen facilities, simple as that. But children do not stay without food, parents provide them with food. Different children could for example have chicken, rice, fish at the same time. But children have lunch at the same time. They get familiar with the process of eating together and at the same time. It is a very good provision.

RE- So it is a sum of 11?

IN- 11. 8 (stations) and 2 (centers) and now they will be 9 + 2, my new station is under construction... So this regulation I have introduced is about: the 10 principals of the stations, me as a president and the principals' director, we have a meeting once per month, we share our thoughts and I have established 2 committees. The theatre- literature- play committee (everything that happens in a nursery station) and the educational committee. Both committees consist of the stations' principals. (5 or 6 principals each). These committees meet and I am aware of their discussions and we discuss altogether. I sign at the end, but all these...

RE- play a significant part regarding the educational aspect. I see...

IN- I provide them with directions... "I want the educational aspect to be like that...", a few minutes ago I signed the books. I am not sure, but we may be one of just few municipalities that provide books to that age group. Which we - as a Municipality - pay. We provide books... the educational committee has decided which are the proper books (depending on the children's age) and if the same classes in different nursery stations will have the same books.

RE- It is more standardized, which is very significant.

IN- Others do not provide books for these age groups. I have not heard anything like this in other Municipalities. This was the reality I found in ... , and I will continue that action. Whatever good one finds, must not become part of political opposition. You keep it and you support it.

RE- As far as the 5th question is concerned, Do you have specific and explicit ECEC curriculum? And if there is one ... When I say specific I mean subjects ... in specific nursery stations - if you read the sixth question - In Finland and in Germany as well, there are specific subjects: Language and interaction/ math/ Environmental and natural studies/ health/ art and culture. And if something like that exists, how do you communicate it to stakeholders? To the residents for example, to parents.

IN- I cannot communicate it to the residents. I communicate it to the principals and they post it on the nursery station's notice board for parents to see it, or in parental meetings.

RE- Do you share it on the internet?

IN- No. The curriculum for this year is not yet available, because the educational committee has just been established, but more or less these are the directions. Children have to learn "some Math, Environmental stuff, these are...

RE- So it is not so explicit... Previously you mentioned books... obviously they are related to these fields.

IN- I cannot be specific, I do not know these.

RE- Anyway, I am interested in policy... We will not research each book individually, but I understood what you said. The 7th question: Is there any type of cooperation among stakeholders? You are a stakeholder, a key player. Other key players are the ones who form... the committee you mentioned, parents...

IN- very good cooperation...

RE- parents... Do you encompass their views? Or others who may be important in the Municipality? Or maybe others... without knowing them for sure.

IN- Yes, I Understood... Generally, there is a cooperation between me as a President, the director, the principals, the parents association, the parents individually, the educators... there is a very good cooperation and nobody intrudes into another's field of specialty. Each one has his own specialty and distinct role. We have very good cooperation... no problem... There is cooperation.

RE- Do they visit you here? Do you visit them?

IN - Yes, Yes... I visit the nursery stations, I am being informed daily for the children's attendance, the educator's attendance, I am responsible for their leaves of absence, their training... they want to go somewhere, they are eligible for something... What is the daily menu, about the leftovers. There is a briefing concerning simple and complex issues. We are fully informed. This place here is like "the headquarters"...

RE- This is what happens in policy... Are there minimum standards? The EU calls them minimum standards that a Municipality should set in ECEC. Do you meet such standards? Do you interfere as you previously mentioned? For example, as a new President you have in mind certain amendments as you mentioned previously. When I say minimum standards you can read some; staff-child ratio, architecture (If certain criteria are met regarding the buildings), hygiene, safety, health, fire regulations etc.)?

IN- The worst problem we face concerns fire regulations, to get the certificates of fire regulations, that is generally an issue in Greece, and the reason behind that is that the Greek landlords want to receive from you and give nothing. There is a conflict between us. We say that the certificates are their obligation - as landlords - this is the case wherever we lease the buildings. The buildings that belong to us work properly... They say "If you want, get the certificates or else you are free to go". I cannot get the certificates and the reason is not financial, since in order for the public sector to pay any amount there has to be a justification... And I cannot justify that... And therefore I cannot get energy certificates in order to get fire-regulations certificates. All the Greek nursery stations face the issue of fire-regulations certificate. The buildings that belong to us work perfectly - this of course does not mean that wherever there is no fire regulation certificate we do not have fire extinguishers etc., but in case of a random fire brigade check, "I will not be legitimate". I do not have the certificate... When it comes to children/staff ratio, we are very good, we abide by the standards. If I remember correctly, there are 25 children in each classroom with two educators. We never exceed that number. The architecture of nursery stations is in most cases good, the courtyards... wherever they exist we immediately interfere (*probably means interfere to change whatever is wrong*). The hygiene is out of the question - and safety is in a very good level, we are so precautious that in our new nursery station, which will begin in about 1 month, because it's funded through ESPA, it has all the available facilities...it has everything... everything, it is probably the most up-to-date nursery station in Greece, not only in We had to fill the whole place with cameras in the interior and the exterior. We were granted a certificate from the Hellenic Data Protection

Authority that does not allow recordings during classes. In order for parents to realize that this is not a Big Brother [...] The only policy that I would like to do - and it has to do with the architecture - ... I would like to change some buildings that we lease in order to improve the provision of services, because there are old buildings as well. The only thing that makes me unsatisfied is that we do not have school buses. We do not have school buses at all. And I believe that this is a very important provision to parents... very important. The disadvantages that were passed on from the previous administration - disadvantages which I will try to tackle - is first the school bus (which is quiet simple) the hard thing is to hire the driver (because nowadays we cannot employ anyone) To buy one or two buses is the easy part; I have the money -, but to employ the drivers is the difficult part. There is no point in having a school-bus without the driver. This is the first disadvantage. And the second disadvantage -which I believe concerns what you are about to do - is about the fact that there are no infant stations so children have to change their school environment - there is no continuity and children have to change stations as they get older - which in pedagogical terms is not good at all. In 11 stations I have only 1 infant station, so I will try to make them 2 or 3. This is a vision of mine. It is not like I will solve issues of children participation. I wish I could make 2, 3 and even 10 new nursery stations... but since I care about providing parents and of course combining that provision with pedagogical outcomes, therefore: school buses and infant stations. That's why the technological level educators are valuable "tools". They can be employed in both types of stations. And there is a chance for children to begin but also end their "nursery days" with the same educator. It is very significant. This is my policy. [... ...]

RE- What about the minorities (Roman - refugees etc.), or children with special needs? Are there provisions for foreign students- minorities?

IN- In this Municipality there are many foreign people - I do not see them as a minority. There are many and as long as they meet the criteria... Do you have that as a question? how we select the criteria?

RE- I had in mind the social criteria, which are the exact criteria?

IN- We have an e-point system, a very good one, because you avoid parents saying "take mine and do not take the other one". Through this e-point system parents receive credits for being registered citizens, registered voters or they receive credits depending on their income etc. And finally there is a sum of these credits. Most of the parents usually collect 60 to 70 credits... there are credits for single parents, for children with special needs, for unemployed parents etc. After that you apply for certain stations... "I choose this one" It is something like the PanHellenic exams. It is quite meritocratic. This way you avoid "political

interferences". We exclude no one, we accept anyone. The one who deserves it, receives it. If there is a foreign person who collects enough credits, we accept him. There are no exclusions. There is no problem with that.

RE- What about the tuition fees? Are there social criteria?

IN- This has to do with one's income. One has to present the family income, in order to indicate the tuition fees. Imagine that in ... , the most expensive tuition fees are like 80 Euro per month (for parents who receive 60.000 per annum). The average amount of tuition fees reaches 500 euros per school year. Most parents usually pay no more than 30-35 euros per month. When they are not funded through ESPA, because this year we had the highest absorption of ESPA funds.

RE- ESPA family life? I will ask you about that as well.. 10) Considering the fact that parents are perceived as significant stakeholders, how do you encompass their views on the ECEC provision? Are there initiatives or certain policies that foster that relationship? Obviously people visit you here...

IN- Today is the day. Every Wednesday we have "Citizen's hour" - the Mayor and the vice Mayors as well. Every Wednesday 8:30 - 10:30. Everybody can visit us, and they can actually do that any day in case something happens.

12) Let us go to the 12th question. Is there explicit direction regarding the division between care and education? We talked about that before. Do you place a certain emphasis? Do you believe in a combination of the two notions?

IN- A combination...They should be parallel and sometimes they should overlap.

Are you aware of the European initiatives (Europe 2020) regarding children participation in ECEC? Do you think you can achieve these goals? According to data the Greek percentage is really low (74%), by 2020 it has to reach 97%. Do you think that you can raise that percentage, as far as your municipality is concerned?

RE- I believe that this percentage is really low. I strongly believe that it should be higher [...] The first reason for such a low percentage is the fact that there are just a few nursery stations. The second reason is financial, which is very significant. The third reason is because Greece is a traditional country.

RE- The grandfather and the grandmother...

IN- The grandfather and the grandmother... Which is very significant. As a parent I am fine with that. But the child will not develop socially. It is good to have

grandparents' care but children's socializing may be too late and this could affect children in the future. I believe that this percentage is so low because of the lack of the provision. For example in ... there are almost 900 children (currently 808 plus the new station, equals almost 890). The Municipality of ... cannot have only 900 children...

RE- Is it so densely populated?

IN- The third in ..., this is a huge Municipality... I am not sure about the number of applications, because I cannot be objective... There are people saying "why should I apply, when there are not any chances... I do not believe that in ... there are just 900 children...

RE- That is a small number...

IN- A very small number, I am under the impression that if there were more stations, which could accept 2000 children, then there would be 2000 applications... 10.000 children? Then 10.000 applications... I would have found a solution... Therefore I think that it is a matter of available infrastructures. 900 children is a really small number.

RE- And the financial aspect does not seem inhibiting.

IN- Tuition fees are really low...

RE- In which ways do you communicate the policies or the progress made in each ECEC center? For example you just had a meeting; or you meet with parents every Wednesday; do you inform the citizens through Internet? Most people use the Internet a lot. Do you think these ways are effective?

IN- We post them on Social networks, the Municipality's website... obviously not every meeting... If not every meeting, then we post the outcomes from the meetings. For example "the President met with someone and decided something"... The outcomes... the board... Generally the board meetings are related with children, parents, the function of the station and these topics are communicated...

RE- And when people visit you here, do they let you know that they are informed through these ways? Do they say that these ways are enough? Or maybe they mention that they would prefer something different?

IN- A lot of people use the Internet, but I believe that parents should not have complaints regarding the information from ECEC stations... I cannot think of

anything... Why complain about something? I am not saying that we are doing everything perfect, but I cannot find any reason... "What is the menu for tomorrow"? There is a timetable posted in each nursery station... "This week we shall eat" ... "On Wednesday the children will have lentils"... No there is no problem...

RE- Are there integrated services in your municipal ECEC centers? Which are they? For example the European ECEC centers have integrated services...

IN- I do not have integrated services... But there are certain services. For example they know that in a specific station on a specific day there will be a visit from the pediatrician, or the psychologist, or... Actually I do not have a psychologist, I will be honest with you... Social workers are available in case something happens... For example there is a child, whose father abuses his/ her mother and needs a social worker... To be honest I have not had similar situations (It is just one month since I am a President here), but I am afraid that due to the general lack of staff in the Municipality, and due to the fact that we are unable to hire staff, I do not have...

RE- Is there any network?

IN- I do not know if the Municipality's social care will be able to cover me... I do not know. I feel that they will help me. We have social workers, we have the vice mayor, I think that they will cover me... There has not been any situation yet. If you ask me, my political intention for the next year is to hire for a certain period a social worker, a psychologist, a pediatrician... I am thinking about it...

RE- And someone specialized in children is different than a psychologist for example who works in social care...

IN- My occupation is physiotherapist, which requires cooperation... it is not like "I arrive at my office, I work and at the end I leave the place". I am aware that I have to speak to the doctor regarding the case, the medic in case I visit the patient at his/her place... there is a rehabilitation team... So you realize that I can perceive the mechanism, the importance of the team. The team in ECEC - apart from policy - which is me - there is the chief, the headmistresses, the staff, the assisting staff. If one of them is missing, then we are nothing. If the cook is missing, then we have to close the station... If the educator is missing, then we have to close the station... if the waiter is missing then again we have to close the station... If the clean lady is missing then we have to close the station... If I am not here to sign for the food or the staff, then we have to close the station. We are a chain. And if someone fails to see the nursery station as a chain ("let us take our children to the station and we do not care about who feeds them" etc.), then the

game is over. The nursery station is a team. Period. The team cannot afford to lose anyone.

RE- So there is a strategic plan for you to make that more explicit...

IN- Exactly, this team - with some external players - that's how I want the nursery stations to work. The external players are the social workers, the psychologists, they are necessary but not for everyday... like external partners, but they have to be there... one phone call away.

RE- Exactly and this is related with the 16th question. Is there outsourcing regarding the ECEC provision in your municipality? For example a private company that could help...

IN- There are issues regarding outsourcing, since we are under the public sector... there are issues regarding outsourcing generated by the municipality's employees. And just before our meeting, I had a meeting with the employees' union, when they hear privatization they get sick... I try to do it privately or voluntarily. To be specific... I have found the speech therapists - they have a union - and they know that they will benefit from that and I will benefit from that as well... first of all our children benefit, it is not about my, or the therapists' benefit. We are under a mutual understanding and they are free to visit a nursery station, I told them "set a date and inform the parents" ... and they have set a whole week for parents to set appointments at their practices.

RE- Voluntarily...

IN- Voluntarily... It is not actually voluntarily... you will realize that it is kind of professional. So if parents realize that something is wrong with their child, then they will visit the speech therapists, who will assess the condition free of charge and after that the therapists aim to increase their clientele... But that free assessment is something, I cannot provide free speech therapies... they are too expensive. I can provide psychological support through an external... a social worker. I face issues regarding privatization, there are people here that do not want that... not only in the Municipality of

RE- So it is like an uncharacteristic outsourcing... backdoor...

IN- a backdoor outsourcing, because there are strong reactions against it... It would be ideal to be able to do it freely.

RE- Like the Ministries that use outsourcing for cleaning... This is part of the OECD's toolbox as well...

IN- This is exactly what we were saying in the previous meeting (the union meeting)... There is no hiring, the staff is not enough, there are extra vacancies from staff, who get their pensions... "where should I find the staff?" - I have the money to employ people, but there are reactions... It is ok... there are issues.

RE- We referred to that question before. How does the government interfere to policy enactment? Is there resistance to certain policies and why?

IN- We are under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, we are autonomous.

RE- Do you get extra funding for lifelong learning for example or ECEC - care programs and how is the budget for ECEC provision being allocated? For example ESPA, How did you achieve that high absorption? Do you have employees working for that?

IN- No nothing like that. We informed the parents and when it was time for the applications stage, and we told them to apply for ESPA, because it is convenient for us - since ESPA grants standard funding...

RE- So it is not up to the Municipality, it is up to EETAA...

IN - EETAA, the The Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government... EETAA launches the ESPA program and we just set a specific number of vacancies in our nursery stations. For example we indicated 40 (e.g.) vacancies in each station, so mothers applied - only mothers may apply for ESPA - they chose certain nursery stations in the Municipality of ... and EETAA allocated the vacancies we provided and assigned...

RE - So there is a specific number of vacancies only for ESPA selection... What about other Municipalities? How come they do not allocate specific openings for mothers to apply for?

IN- I believe that it is a matter of policy...Micro politics... Political games... For example If I were able to select whoever I wanted from ... - even through the current point system mechanism, then 800 families would be obliged to me. And that obligation would be translated to votes. However, I said that from 800 vacancies, I will provide to people from ... just 500 and 300 will be allocated to ESPA, which again concerns people from ..., it is not like people from ... will fill those openings. But as far as the 300 openings are concerned, there cannot be any type of control from me... I cannot "sell it" to someone: "I placed you there..." Consequently only 500 are obliged to me... Since all these things have nothing to do with me, I only care to have 800 children... I do not care about the percentage,

if it is like 500/300, 400/400, 600/200, I do not care... We allocated 324 openings for ESPA and we accepted 324 children, the rest of the 800 vacancies were selected from us.

RE- So different political games may take place in different Municipalities...

IN- Regarding the other Municipalities and considering the fact that this was an elections year, a totally different 'game' was played. We were straight from the beginning and we selected children from ESPA. Some people do not realize... It depends on whether you have a long term plan or not... It is obvious... when I averagely get 400 euros per annum from their tuition fees, this means 320.000 Euros... It is not enough... 320.000 euros are not enough for me to provide ECEC stations... Do you know how much will I get from ESPA? The Municipality of ... will get 1.000.000 euros... It is a whole different thing to get 320.000 euro instead of getting 1.000.000. However, 1.000.000 euros provide me the opportunity to be productive... Now 800 parents are grateful, they say: "The Municipality of ... is doing a good job"... We are doing a good job because we have money...

RE - Not only that, there is added value from their relatives and friends, so thousands of people are happy...

IN- So, the Municipality is winning - from every child we get 3.100 euros from ESPA - ESPA does not care about the funded Municipality, it could be ..., it could be ..., the price is the same 3.100 euros per child...3.100 euros per child... From the same child through the current point based e-system we get 400 euros, so this difference costs us 2.700 euros... That is why I prefer to allocate just 500 openings from ... next year I will try to allocate 400 openings for citizens and 400 for ESPA, because ESPA applications come from people of ... as well, we do not accept children from other places... It would be great if I could get through ESPA 1.000.000, 1.200.000 and even 1.500.000 and that budget will be appreciated from parents... This is the best policy... I am thinking in political terms here... This is the greatest "political advertisement" for me... 800 parents will be delighted from the work I have done and they will pay nothing, I will earn more and parents shall have the best of me...

RE- Everything positive...

IN- Everybody is happy...If you have a long-term view, then it is like that. But if your view is short-term, and you are looking to back-scratch 800 people, then you will lose... If you back-scratch 800 people, then 1000 or more will not be pleased with that, so you do not win anything.

RE- So it is up to you to allocate a specific number of openings from ESPA...

IN- It is up to me... ESPA sets the amount of money per child... This year's money was good, we advised parents to apply for that... and there were no political interferences...

RE- Why don't you differentiate the percentage in favor of ESPA openings? Do you want to achieve a balanced percentage?

IN- I did not do it, I found it like that...

RE- So what are your thoughts about it?

IN- At least 50/50... Everybody is happy... Some people do not understand that if my next year's openings for ESPA gets limited to 100 or 200 children, then parents (whose children wont be accepted in ECEC stations through ESPA) wont thank me for that since this year everything is already paid from ESPA. Next year I may accept their child but, they wont be happy because then they will have to pay the tuition fees... They wont say "thank you for accepting my child"... They want me to accept their child and pay nothing... Only ESPA can do that... It is obvious for me, but you have to think...

RE- To what extent do you think that this Municipality achieves the related goals for ECEC provision? Do you think that you could be compared to a similar (in terms of population and funding) European municipality?

IN- I cannot say anything about other local Municipalities... I do not know that... I can say that there is a nursery station in every neighborhood in ... or 2... All neighborhoods are covered from our network of ECEC stations... As I told you we have problems with the school buses ... the transportation... Regarding funding and children's participation I believe that we have reached our highest goals... This is the best year...

Do you find the municipal ECEC material resources adequate?

IN- The ones we own are adequate, those we lease are not. I am not pleased... Generally, ... is an old Municipality and many children have been in these buildings... things may be different in a Municipality of 5000 citizens... they just paint the classrooms... In our case "millions" have been in these buildings, so you realize that there is constant wear... But generally speaking we are ok...

RE - Is there any type of assessment - feedback - accountability in your ECEC municipal centers?

IN- No... there is no assessment yet... I will assess them my way ... not through "papers"...

RE- Do you think about something specific?

IN- Through the parents' union, through parental meetings, in celebrations I am asking parents if they are happy... I do not ask the staff... I am asking those who receive the benefits of ECEC provision...

RE- So there is no regulatory framework regarding the assessment of staff...

IN- No, nothing like a regulatory framework.

RE- Which are the distinguishing differences that separate your municipal ECEC centers from centers, which belong to Municipalities near you? We actually covered that before, but you acknowledge that you are doing a good job...

IN - We are doing a good job...

RE - Which are the changes that have taken place in the ECEC field in the last years? Are you - as a Municipality - in the right direction?

IN- Regarding ECEC, I believe that we are in a very good direction... I realize that from the number of applications... The citizens want us to accept their children in our ECEC centers... I cannot evaluate the reasons behind that - maybe they do not have help from their grandparents, they want to work etc. ... I evaluate the fact that there is a "mayhem" concerning the openings in our nursery stations... The population of ... is around ... people...

RE- Thank you very much for your time...

Indicative Interview Transcript in Greek - Participant 12 (parts from the interviews that could identify subjects, have been removed from the transcripts)

E- Ξεκινώντας... είστε και σε μια δύσκολη περίοδο, χτες έμαθα ότι λήγουν οι άδειες - βέβαια το είχαν αναφέρει το θέμα αυτό στην ημερίδα της

A- Για το θέμα των αδειών μπορώ πολύ σύντομα να πω 2 κουβέντες... Οι άδειες των παιδικών σταθμών μέχρι το 11 αποτελούσαν άδεια του παιδικού σταθμού, του δημοτικού παιδικού σταθμού, η συστατική του πράξη. Ήταν απόφαση διοικητικού συμβουλίου επικυρωμένη απο διοικητικό συμβούλιο... Αυτή ήταν η διαδικασία - η νόμιμη - δεν υπήρχε παρανομία σε αυτό. Κάποια στιγμή αποφάσισαν -ορθώς κατα την αποψη μου - ότι θα πρέπει οι δημοτικοί παιδικοί σταθμοί όπως και οι ιδιωτικοί να λαμβάνουν αδειοδότηση κανονική με έλεγχο απο μια επιτροπή που θα βλέπει τους χώρους - κατάλληλη επιτροπή που θα βλέπει του χώρους, όλα τα στοιχεία που χρειάζεται... Όμως ξέχασαν ότι προκειμένου να γίνει αυτό δεν αρκεί να περάσει η αρμοδιότητα στους Δήμους, το οποίο ήταν και ολίγο οξύμωρο γιατί ο Δήμος είναι λίγο "Γιαννης κερνάει Γιάννης πίνει" και αν θέλεις το αποτέλεσμα ήταν "έλα μωρέ εμείς τις βγάζουμε τις άδειες ας βγάλουμε μία άδεια να τελειώνουμε". Ο Δήμος ... δεν μπήκε σε αυτή τη λογική βεβαίως - ως όφειλε - βρέθηκε λοιπόν αντιμέτωπος μαζί με τους περισσότερους Δήμους της χώρας σένα τεράστιο αδιέξοδο γιατί ούτε οι προδιαγραφές ήταν σαφείς με ποιό νόμο θα πάνε γιατί ξέρεις εδώ είναι πολύ εύκολο... βγάζουμε ένα προεδρικό διάταγμα βγάζουμε ένα άλλο, μετά βγάζουμε ένα τρίτο που αναιρεί το προηγούμενο... Οι προδιαγραφές ετσι και αλλιώς απο μόνες τους είναι ότι πρέπει για να μην υπάρχει κανένας παιδικός σταθμός διότι δεν μπορεί μέσα στην πόλη να σου ζητάει ένα στρέμμα κήπο... ξέρω γω που να το βρείς; ή να μην είναι το κτίσμα πριν απο το 50... Όλες οι μονοκατοικίες που υπάρχουν στην..... Υπάρχουν πολλές εκεί αντιφάσεις και το βασικό όμως, το θεσμικό κομμάτι είναι ότι δεν υπάρχει ρητή πράξη που να κανονίζει πως γίνεται αυτό... Εκκρεμεί μια Κοινή Υπουργική Απόφαση των Υπουργείων Εσωτερικών, Εργασίας και νομίζω Διοικητικής Μεταρ., η οποία δεν έχει βγει ποτέ... Τι κάνουμε λοιπόν; Κάθε φορά που λήγει δίνουμε παράταση, υπογράφουμε εμείς οι πρόεδροι των φορέων, υπογράφουμε όταν μπαίνουμε σε ΕΣΠΑ ότι θα έχουμε τη νόμιμη άδεια... Νόμιμη είναι η συστατική πράξη όσο δίνεται παράταση. Αυτή τη στιγμή λήγει η παράταση 31 Δεκεμβρίου, δεν έχουν φροντίσει ούτε να βγάλουν την ΚΥΑ προκειμένου να προχωρήσει η αδειοδότηση κανονικά, ούτε να δώσουν παράταση και επιπλέον έτσι το "κερασάκι στην τούρτα" στέλνουν και την αστυνομία να κάνει ελέγχους... είναι το θέατρο του παραλόγου δεν υπάρχει περίπτωση να λυθεί αυτό εαν δεν υπάρξει η βούληση πολιτική ή πραγματική εαν δεν κάτσουν κάτω να δουν επι της ουσίας το πραγματικό πρόβλημα και να δώσουν λύσεις πολιτικές. Απο την άλλη μερια εμείς κάναμε με χρηματοδότηση μια μεγάλη έρευνα στους παιδικούς σταθμούς - ελέγχθηκαν όλοι - ακριβώς

επειδή είχαμε μπροστά μας την αδειοδότηση, προκειμένου να δούμε ποιού σταθμοί δεν μπορούν να πάρουν άδεια με βάση τα δεδομένα που έχουμε μέχρι τώρα, ώστε να βρούμε λύσεις, τι θα κάνουμε για να μην κλείσουμε σταθμούς.

E- Υπάρχει αυτονομία και σε τι βαθμό όσον αφορά τις εκπαιδευτικές πολιτικές, το σχεδιασμό και την ανάπτυξη για τη λήψη αποφάσεων γενικότερα;

A- ... Ναι... Σκέφτομαι αν υπάρχει αυτονομία... Υπάρχει η αυτονομία που υπάρχει στο ελληνικό κράτος που είναι συνήθως ανάμεσα από τα κενά της νομοθεσίας η αυτονομία. Δηλαδή οι παιδικοί σταθμοί ... όλοι οι δημοτικοί παιδικοί σταθμοί πλην των ιδιωτικών όλοι οι υπόλοιποι σταθμοί με εξαίρεση κάποιους φορείς που είναι ιδρύματα άλλου τύπου που είναι ελάχιστοι...

E- Εκκλησίας...

A- Φορείς αλλοδαπών που έχουν σταθμούς κτλπ. κατά κανόνα οι παιδικοί σταθμοί είναι των Δήμων, είτε στις δημοτικές τους επιχειρήσεις που εκεί είναι πιο ελαστική η σχέση με το Δήμο, είτε κάποιου οργανισμού του Δήμου, είτε διεύθυνσης του Δήμου... Ανήκει λοιπόν όλο αυτό το "πακέτο" "παιδικοί σταθμοί" εντέλει αναφέρεται στο Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών με ένα τρόπο ο οποίος είναι εντελώς ανορθόδοξος... δηλαδή επειδή οι Δήμοι ως τοπική αυτοδιοίκηση ανήκουν διοικητικά - ανώτερός τους τέλος πάντων είναι το Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών - άρα δια της εις άτοπον απαγωγής πάνε και οι παιδικοί σταθμοί. Πλην όμως το Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών δεν έχει φτιάξει ούτε καν ένα τμήμα, μια διεύθυνση έστω ένα τμήμα παιδικών σταθμών που να στελεχωθεί από ανθρώπους που γνωρίζουν το αντικείμενο και άρα μπορούν να ασχοληθούν... Είναι λοιπόν αν θέλεις μέσα στο μεγάλο κουβά του Υπουργείου Εσωτερικών και οι παιδικοί σταθμοί, οπότε δεν μπορεί να έχει άποψη το Υπ. Εσ. για το παιδαγωγικό πρόγραμμα, την πρακτική κτλπ. ... Εκκρεμεί και εδώ μια απόφαση υπουργική πάλι που να καθορίζει παιδαγωγικό πρόγραμμα στους παιδικούς...

E- Είναι και μια βασική ερώτηση μου αυτή...

A- Το οποίο απ'όσο γνωρίζω την ιστορία του, κάποια στιγμή γύρω στο 2009 κατατέθηκε και μάλιστα χρηματοδοτήθηκε και από κάποιο ΕΣΠΑ ή πρόγραμμα, μία πρόταση από το ΤΕΑΠΥ στο οποίο προκειμένου να υλοποιηθεί εκκρεμούσε μια πιλοτική φάση, μία διαβούλευση που έπρεπε να γίνει με φορείς που ορίζονται από το νόμο, προκειμένου να γίνει πρόγραμμα των παιδικών σταθμών. Αυτό δεν έγινε ποτέ, είναι και αυτό στο συρτάρι μαζί με την ΚΥΑ που λέγαμε...

E- Και αυτό είναι καθαρά θέμα επιλογής του Υπουργείου; γιατί δίνει μια εντύπωση ότι όχι μόνο δεν έχει κάνει κάτι για αυτό, αλλά σαν να μη θέλει να κάνει κάτι γιαυτό... Σαν να του φαίνεται πολυ δύσκολο να το προσεγγίσει...

A- Δεν ξέρω αν του φαίνεται δύσκολο ή επουσιώδες, αν δεν είναι στις προτεραιότητες του Υπουργείου Εσωτερικών ενδεχομένως... Για να μην το αδικούμε το συγκεκριμένο Υπουργείο, το γεγονός ότι πρέπει να εγγραφεί και μέσα σε διάφορα άλλα πλαίσια που είναι το προσωπικό, αρα και το Υπουργείο Διοικητικής Μεταρ... Τι κάνουμε απο προσωπικό, τι προσόντα κτλπ. είναι ένα πολύ μεγάλο πακέτο... Όντως... Κάποια στιγμή με κάλεσαν απο το Υπουργείο Εργασίας - κάτι πολύ ενδιαφέρον εδώ είναι ότι οι ιδιωτικοί παιδικοί σταθμοί ανήκουν στο Υπ. Εργασίας... και έχουν άλλους κανονισμούς... Παράδειγμα: Σε (εμάς) 25 παιδιά 2 παιδαγωγοί (ένας παιδαγωγός + ένας βοηθός), των ιδιωτικών σχολείων ισχύει κάθε 28 ένας...

E- Ενδιαφέρον... [...]

A- Οι δημοτικοί παιδικοί σταθμοί λειτουργούν - τουλάχιστον οφείλουν να λειτουργούν - με βάση τον πρότυπο κανονισμό λειτουργίας ο οποίος είναι αρκετά χρόνια που έχει βγει... Ο οποίος χρειάζεται κατά την άποψη μου αναθεώρηση σε πολλά επίπεδα, αλλά τέλος πάντων έχουμε ένα μπούσουλα... υπάρχει ένας πρότυπος κανονισμός και η παραίνεση είναι οι κανονισμοί λειτουργίας κάθε Δήμου για τους σταθμούς του ότι έχουν σαν πρότυπο αυτόν τον κανονισμό... Αλλά οι δημοτικοί παιδικοί σταθμοί άλλον κανονισμό. Θέλω να πω για να επανέλθω στο θέμα του Υπ. Εσ. ότι αν δεν γίνει μια κοινή εκπόνηση νόμου κοινή απο τους ενδιαφερόμενους - να μην πω αν δεν υπαχθούν όλα σε μια διεύθυνση προσχολικής ηλικίας σε κάποιο Υπουργείο συγκεκριμένο. Δηλαδή τα ιδιωτικά σχολεία δεν ανήκουν στο Υπ. Εργ. αλλά στο Υπ. Παιδείας, λοιπόν οι παιδικοί σταθμοί... τα νηπιαγωγεία ανήκουν στο Υπ. Παιδ. είτε ιδιωτικά, είτε δημόσια... Οι παιδικοί σταθμοί;

E- Μήπως θεωρείτε ότι έχουν την αντίληψη ότι οι παιδικοί σταθμοί δεν είναι ακριβώς εκπαίδευση και είναι αυτό που άκουσα και σε άλλους Δήμους, ένα παρκινγκ; Πρόνοια για τους γονείς, για τους ανέργους;

A- Σαφώς. Μα δεν είναι τυχαίο ότι ήταν στην πρόνοια οι παιδικοί σταθμοί... Γιατί στην Ελλάδα και σε άλλες χώρες απ'όσο γνωρίζω ξεκίνησαν ως προσφορά στη μητέρα προκειμένου να βγει στην εργασία. Θέλαμε ένα μέρος που να φροντίζεται καλά το παιδί ώστε να είναι ήσυχη η μητέρα για να πάει στη δουλειά της... Στο μεταξύ όμως οι παιδαγωγικές θεωρίες προχώρησαν και έδειξαν πόσο σημαντική είναι αυτή η ηλικία γιατί βάζει βάσεις για όλα τα γνωστικά πεδία και για όλη τη νοητική εξέλιξη του ατόμου και άρα άρχισε στους παιδικούς σταθμούς να προσφέρεται και αγωγή... Στην Ελλάδα έχουμε και ΤΕΙ

προσχολικής αγωγής και το ΤΕΑΠΥ και φυσικά δεν αφορά αυτό μόνο τα παιδιά πάνω από 4, αφορά και το μωρό γιατί το μωρό αν δεν του μιλάει κανείς, ο λόγος του θα είναι ελλιπής... αν δεν έχει κανένα ερέθισμα η νοημοσύνη του, ότι και να κάνεις στα 3 στα 4 και στα 5 είναι δύσκολο να ανακτήσεις... ο λόγος κατακτιέται ουσιαστικά... οι κρίσιμες περίοδοι είναι μέχρι τα 2... φυσικά και εξελίσσεται μετά, αλλά η βάση μπαίνει εκεί... Άρα δεν μπορούμε να λέμε ότι θέλουν μόνο φροντίδα τα μωρά... Θέλουν και αγωγή.

E- Έχω στο νου μου την χαρακτηριστική φωτογραφία ...

A- Είχε λίγους σταθμούς στην αρχή, σιγά σιγά συγχωνεύτηκαν όλοι οι κρατικοί σταθμοί του... Απέκτησε λοιπόν ένα μεγάλο "στόλο" και απόθεμα κτηριακό... Η πολιτική του από παιδαγωγικής απόψεως ήταν η πιο σύγχρονη θα έλεγα... Στελεχώθηκε από παιδαγωγούς ... που είναι από τις σχολές που έγινε ουσιαστική δουλειά - το ξέρω καλά από μέσα γιατί δίδασκα χρόνια εκεί - έγινε ουσιαστική δουλειά και πραγματικά ήρθαν οι πιο σύγχρονες θεωρίες - διδάσκαμε Πιαζέ στο ΤΕΙ το 1985 - και αν θέλεις αυτή τη στιγμή ο τρόπος που είναι οργανωμένο το όλο σύστημα με τμήμα παιδαγωγικού προγραμματισμού και διεύθυνση προγραμματισμού που σημαίνει ότι ο προγραμματισμός των δράσεων γίνεται κεντρικά, αναφέρονται... Μπορεί να μην υπάρχει πρόγραμμα με την σημασία του ωρολόγιου προγράμματος, γιατί δεν το θέλουμε κιόλας, θεωρούμε ότι είναι λάθος στα πολύ μικρά παιδιά να λειτουργείς με Θρησκευτικά, Γλώσσα, Μαθηματικά... Αλλά το ότι υπάρχουν στόχοι που πρέπει να επιτευχθούν ανάλογα με την ηλικία, με τις ανάγκες των παιδιών και με τον ατομικό ρυθμό του κάθε παιδιού αυτό είναι η κατεύθυνση... τώρα πώς υλοποιείται ξέρουμε πως υλοποιείται ανάλογα με το πρόσωπο...

E- Είναι συγκεκριμένοι αυτοί οι στόχοι, ρητοί;

A- Βεβαίως και μάλιστα εκεί θα σε παραπέμψω στην κυρία έχει και μεταπτυχιακά στην αγωγή μάλιστα... Γενικά είναι υψηλό και το επίπεδο των ανθρώπων...

E- Γιαυτό και ήταν ιδιαίτερα σημαντικό για μένα, όταν σας άκουσα κατάλαβα ότι εδώ θα δούμε αυτό που λέμε καλές πρακτικές... Αναμένω μια διαφοροποίηση στην επαρχία που θα συνεχιστεί αργότερα η έρευνα αυτή... [...] Δε σας κρύβω ότι έχω συναντήσει ήδη και αρκετή αντίσταση στις προσπάθειες μου...

A- Ε ναι... αν έχεις να κρύψεις κρύβεις... Βασικά δεν ξέρουν και φοβούνται... Πρέπει να πω ότι μας έχει πέσει ο ουρανός στο κεφάλι... Εμείς μιλάμε για ένα επίπεδο αν θέλεις το επιθυμητό και το έχουμε πλησιάσει σε μεγάλο βαθμό και από την άλλη μεριά ξέρω πολύ καλά ότι του χρόνου το Σεπτέμβρη μου έχει ειπωθεί ρητά από το Υπ. Εσ. ότι οι 200 περίπου εργαζόμενοι που έρχονται με

συμβάσεις ορισμένου χρόνου (11 μνηοι) δεν θα δοθούν... προσλήψεις άλλες τακτικού προσωπικού δεν προβλέπονται...

E- Που άργησαν και φέτος...

A- Μα δεν ήταν τακτικό προσωπικό, ήταν αυτοι οι περίφημοι 11μνηοι τους οποίους τους είχαμε ζητήσει απο το Μάρτη, είχαμε προβλέψει χρήματα στον προϋπολογισμό για την προσληψη τους και η έγκριση απο το Υπ. Εσ. ήρθε στις 30 Αυγούστου...

.....

E- Άρα είστε αυτόνομοι αλλά τελικά...

A- Δικό σου το συμπέρασμα... Δηλαδή αυτόνομος δεν μπορείς να είσαι όταν ο προϋπολογισμός σου ελέγχεται απο το παρατηρητήριο που θα πει ότι δεν μπορείς να ασκήσεις εσύ την πολιτική που θες... Εγώ μπορεί να θεωρώ ότι πολιτική για τους παιδικούς σταθμούς είναι να προσλάβω ανθρώπους με συγκεκριμένο βιογραφικό και συγκεκριμένα προσόντα και να κάνω και επιλογή να μην έρθουν οι παλαβοί, να μην έρθουν οι άνθρωποι που τα πτυχία τους δεν είναι του εγώ θέλω του... Αυτό δεν μπορώ να το κάνω... Να προϋπολογίσω ότι θα έχω τόσο προσωπικό όσο αναλογεί σύμφωνα με τον πρότυπο κανονισμό δεν μπορώ... Να προϋπολογίσω οικονομικά ότι θα φτιάξω τους εξωτερικούς μου χώρους με πολύ σύγχρονα δεδομένα και ως προς την εμφάνιση και ως προς την παιδαγωγική χρήση δεν μπορώ γιατί πρέπει να περάσω απο τις δημόσιες διαδικασίες που είναι θα ρθει ο πιο φτηνός... ο πιο φτηνός δεν μπορεί να είναι και ο πιο καλός... τέλος πάντων δεν εξυπακούεται... Άρα οικονομικά δεν έχεις αυτονομία... Σε επιλογή προσωπικού και αριθμό προσωπικού δεν έχεις αυτονομία, ε πού την έχεις την αυτονομία; τι να σου πω και εγώ; Κανόνες - κανονισμούς και νόμους που να βάζουν πλαίσιο μέσα στο οποίο να μπορείς να κινηθείς δεν έχεις σαφείς, διότι δεν ξέρεις ούτε καν αν έχεις άδεια...

E- Άρα ουσιαστικά υπάρχει παρέμβαση σε κεντρικό επίπεδο για τη εφαρμογή των πολιτικών... Το να επιλέξεις ποιους θες εσύ να έχεις στη δουλειά σου είναι μια πολιτική, όταν όμως οι ανώτεροι παρεμβαίνουν τότε αυτό είναι μια ξεκάθαρη παρέμβαση...

A- Έτσι... Και μπορεί να μην παρεμβαίνουν σε πρόσωπα αλλά παρεμβαίνουν στο επίπεδο του ορισμού των προσόντων και των διαδικασιών... Δεν σου λέει πάρε τον Κώστα και όχι την Μαρία φυσικά... Ακόμα και το ΑΣΕΠ που είναι ο πλέον αντικειμενικός τρόπος επιλογής προσωπικού...OK είναι, αλλά και εκεί όταν προτάσσονται τα κοινωνικά κριτήρια πάνω απο τα τυπικά προσόντα καταλαβαίνεις ότι αυτα τα 2 δε συνάδουν πάντα...

E - Ελληνική εφεύρεση...

A- Δηλαδή υποκαθιστά την κοινωνική πρόνοια - η οποία οφείλει να υπάρχει - η πρόσληψη στο δημόσιο; Δεν υπάρχει όρος να αποκλείονται άνθρωποι με ψυχικές διαταραχές... Όταν ζητήσαμε από το ΑΣΕΠ να συμπεριληφθεί στην προκήρυξη πιστοποιητικό ψυχικής υγείας, για οποιαδήποτε δουλειά και να κάνεις - εγώ είμαι ψυχολόγος - περνάς από ψυχίατρο και πήρα ένα χαρτί που λέει ότι είμαι υγιής ψυχικά -τουλάχιστον εκείνη τη στιγμή - λοιπόν που είναι η αυτονομία; λέει δεν προβλέπεται... Κάντε το λέει εσείς μόνοι σας... Αν το κάνεις εσύ μόνος σου και πετάξεις κόσμο που έχει έρθει με ΑΣΕΠ καταλαβαίνεις τι θα γίνει... οπότε δικά σου τα συμπεράσματα...

E- Πώς αντιλαμβάνεστε την έννοια ποιότητα παροχής υπηρεσιών στην προσχολική αγωγή;

A- Είναι τεράστια ερώτηση... είναι όλη μου η ομιλία... Επειδή μιλάμε για προσχολική ηλικία - μικρά παιδιά - θεωρώ ότι το κομμάτι φροντίδα θα πρέπει να είναι ψηλά στους στόχους μας, γιατί εν τέλει έτσι όπως το έχω σκεφτεί μέσα από τα χρόνια που το ζω από διάφορες οπτικές γωνίες και θέσεις... τελικά η φροντίδα και η αγωγή σε πολύ μεγάλο βαθμό συμπίπτουν... Δηλαδή ένα μικρό παράδειγμα ... ο τρόπος που αλλάζεις ένα μωρό και η ευκαιρία επικοινωνίας που έχεις εκείνη τη στιγμή, η ποιότητα αυτής της επικοινωνίας μπορώ να σου περιγράψω σε πόσους τομείς συναισθηματικής και γνωστικής ανάπτυξης αντιστοιχεί... Το αν κοιτάς το παιδί στα μάτια, το αν του εξηγείς ότι παρεμβαίνεις στο σώμα του με απλά λόγια λέγοντας του "τώρα θα βγάλουμε την πάνα, θα κρυώσεις λίγο" πρόσεχε λεκτικά τι θα πει αυτό για το μωρό που συνδέει τη λέξη με το συναίσθημα του κρύου... Το πως τρώει ένα μωρό, ότι το αφήνεις να φάει μόνο του και άρα αναπτύσσει λεπτή κινητικότητα, συντονισμό, έλεγχο της επιθυμίας του για φαγητό και άρα έλεγχο της πείνας του, άρα δε δημιουργείς παχύσαρκους ανθρώπους, δημιουργείς ανθρώπους που έχουν αίσθηση του σωματός τους... ποιότητα για την προσχολική ηλικία και μάλλον ευκαιρία αγωγής στην προσχολική ηλικία έχεις σε όλες τις φάσεις φροντίδας και η αγωγή σε αυτή την ηλικία οφείλει να συνδέεται με την ανάπτυξη του παιδιού, με τα αναπτυξιακά στάδια... οφείλει να απαντά στο εξελικτικό του στάδιο και στον ατομικό του ρυθμό... για μένα αυτά είναι τα χαρακτηριστικά της ποιοτικής προσχολικής αγωγής... Ότι ανταποκρίνεται σε αυτά είτε είναι πρόγραμμα, είτε είναι δράση, είτε είναι φροντίδα εκπληρώνει στόχους ανάπτυξης άρα και εκπαίδευσης...

E- Ποιους τρόπους επιλέγετε προκειμένου να επικοινωνήσετε τις πολιτικές που διαμορφώνετε στις εκπαιδευτικές δομές; Το διαδίκτυο είναι βασικό κομμάτι; γίνεται σημαντική δουλειά με τις έρευνες εκεί (στην ιστοσελίδα)... Θεωρείτε ότι

αυτοί οι τρόποι επικοινωνίας είναι επαρκείς ειδικά για το κομμάτι των γονιών που είναι στο Δήμο ; Το ετερογενές...

A- Για τους γονείς ή για τους παιδαγωγούς;

E- Για τους γονείς, τους δημότες γενικά...

A- Οι παιδαγωγοί έχουν τις παιδαγωγικές ομάδες οι οποίες συχνά λειτουργούν... Έχει δοθεί απο εμάς μέσα σε αυτό το 2ωρο και όχι κατ'ανάγκη στη συνέχεια της μέρας τους, δηλαδή έχουν 2 ώρες τη μέρα και άρα 10 ώρες τη βδομάδα δηλαδή 40 ώρες το μήνα για να κάνουν συναντήσεις με τους γονείς, συναντήσεις μεταξύ τους, να συμμετέχουν σε ημερίδες συνέδρια κτλπ. εγώ είχα πει ακόμα και αν δείτε μια ταινία στο σινεμά και έρθετε να παρουσιάσετε 2 πράγματα στους συναδέλφους σας, για μένα είναι μέσα σε αυτο το 2ωρο γιατί είναι επιμόρφωση, είναι δια βίου εκπαίδευση...

E- Άτυπη... που πολλές φορές είναι και σημαντικότερη...

A- Ακριβώς... Δεν είναι απαραίτητο να είναι με ένα χαρτί απο ημερίδα... που πίνεις καφέ το πρωί και μετά περνάς το μεσημέρι και σου βάζουν υπογραφή... Έχουν λοιπόν αυτή τη δυνατότητα οι παιδαγωγοί, έχουν πολλές ευκαιρίες να επικοινωνούν μεταξύ τους...

E- Και με τους γονείς;

A- Και με τους γονείς μέσα απο αυτό... Κατά την άποψη μου υπάρχει δουλειά ακόμα να γίνει στην επαφή με τους γονείς... Είναι ακόμα αρκετά λίγο θεσμοθετημένη, παρόλο που δεν είμαι απο αυτούς που θεωρούν ότι ό,τι θεσμοθετείται αυτό μόνο λειτουργεί... Οι άτυπες επαφές πολλές φορές είναι με πιο ενδιαφέρον και τραβάνε και πιο πολύ κόσμο... Υπάρχει γενικά στο μια ευελιξία σε σχέση με το τι κάνει ο κάθε σταθμός, γιατί ο κάθε σταθμός βρίσκεται σε μια συγκεκριμένη περιοχή, με συγκεκριμένους πληθυσμούς και έχει άλλες ανάγκες... Δηλαδή έχουμε σταθμό εδω στη ... που κάνει πολλά πράγματα για τους γονείς γιατί έχει γονείς που φέρνουν τα παιδιά ξυπόλυτα, δεν έχουν παπούτσια, μαζεύουμε ρουχαλάκια και τα δίνουμε στη και τα μοιράζουν εκεί που βλέπουν ότι το άλλο έρχεται όντως ξυπόλυτο στο καταχείμωνο και είναι 2 χρόνων... Αλλού, πχ. ... είναι ένας άλλος παιδικός σταθμός ο οποίος έχοντας ένα περιβάλλον μιας τάξης - άλλης τέλος πάντων - και πολιτισμικά και μορφωτικά... λοιπόν εκεί γίνονται πολλά πράγματα με τους γονείς, μέχρι έχουν λαχανόκηπο και τα πάνε Σάββατο οι παιδαγωγοί μαζί με τους γονείς τα παιδιά... Ή έβαψαν το σταθμό γονείς και παιδιά ένα Σ/Κ μαζί... κατάλαβες; Απο την άλλη μεριά βέβαια εξαρτάται και απο το πρόσωπο, υπάρχουν παιδαγωγοί που είναι πιο κλειστοί και φοβισμένοι σε σχέση με τη

δουλειά τους δεν τολμούν να κάνουν πράγματα... άλλοι που βαριούνται... Υπάρχει ένα ποσοστό που έχει ρατσιστικά στοιχεία και άρα δε βοηθά και η ατμόσφαιρα γιατί σε σταθμούς που είναι πάρα πολλά παιδιά, αφρόντιστα γιατί οι γονείς έχουν ανάγκες - δεν το κρίνω - καταλαβαίνεις δημιουργείται ένα κλίμα..... Εκεί αυτές λοιπόν επειδή είναι και κοντά αυτοί οι σταθμοί δημιουργούν και κάνουν συνδέσεις και φέρνουν σε επαφή καλές πρακτικές και ανοίγουν πράγματα που γίνονται για τους γονείς και είναι και λίγο κολλητικό - παίρνει και ο διπλανός σταθμός κάτι - ένας ανταγωνισμός υγιής... Απο την άλλη μεριά για να επανέλθω στους γονείς θεωρώ ότι οι γονείς πρέπει να είναι πιο ενεργά μέσα και για να είναι πιο ενεργά μέσα στο σταθμό πρέπει οι σταθμοί να έχουν τη δυνατότητα να παραμένουν αργότερα το απόγευμα ανοιχτοί... Αυτό δε γίνεται βέβαια με το προσωπικό που έχει το πρωί - για να μην παρεξηγηθούμε κιόλας - φυσικά οι άνθρωποι δεν μπορούν να δουλεύουν 15 ώρες, όμως πρέπει να βρούμε τρόπους ώστε να υπάρχει η δυνατότητα το απόγευμα ο σταθμός να είναι ένα κέντρο αναφοράς στη γειτονιά... Να μπορούν οι άνθρωποι που έχουν ανάγκη να είναι εκεί να είναι και όχι μόνο ως φύλαξη να αφήσουν το παιδί τους και να φύγουν...

E- Και να λειτουργήσει και αντίστροφα... Όχι μόνο οι γονείς να δώσουν τα δικά τους "πράγματα" στο σταθμό αλλά και ο σταθμός να εκπαιδεύσει τους γονείς...

A- Ακριβώς! Και εκπαιδεύεις καλύτερα όχι με μπλα μπλα απο καθέδρας αλλά μέσα στην καθημερινή λειτουργία...

E- Πριν αναφερθήκατε σε αρκετούς εκπαιδευτικούς που δε μοιράζονται τις ίδιες αξίες με τη διοίκηση... Υπάρχει αξιολόγηση;

A- [Γελάει]

E- Η ανατροφοδότηση τουλάχιστον το πιο ήπιο που τώρα "πάμε να περάσουμε" στην Ελλάδα γιατί η αξιολόγηση αντιλαμβάνομαι ότι μπορεί να είναι συνδεδεμένη με απολύσεις... Υπάρχει λοιπόν στις δομές σας, αν κάτι δεν λειτουργεί παρεμβαίνετε;

A- Θεσμικά, η αξιολόγηση που γίνεται με θεσμικό τρόπο είναι ακυρωμένη παντελώς σε όλο το δημόσιο. Όταν πρωτοανέλαβα στο και ζήτησα να δω τις εκθέσεις ήταν όλοι 9 και 10... 9 σπάνια που ήταν θυμωμένος ο διευθυντής... Η αξιολόγηση που γίνεται επι της ουσίας μπορώ να πω ότι γίνεται μόνο σε επίπεδο - όχι προσώπων αλλά έργου - παιδαγωγικών πράξεων ας πούμε, παιδαγωγικού προγράμματος του κάθε σταθμού... Δεν έχει επιπτώσεις, δηλαδή προσπαθούμε με τις 5 προισταμένες προσπαθούν να συζητούν τα κακώς κείμενα και να θεραπεύονται κατα κάποιο τρόπο... υπάρχει η προισταμένη του σταθμού που είναι υπεύθυνη για τη λειτουργία του... Οι μόνες περιπτώσεις για να είμαι

ειλικρινής που πραγματικά πρέπει να υπάρξει παρέμβαση στο σταθμό ή σε πρόσωπο είναι όταν έχει γίνει μια "χοντρή" παραβατική συμπεριφορά και εκτός μικροφώνου "στο δημόσιο αν δε βιάσεις παιδί μπροστά σε 15 άτομα και να πουν όλοι ότι το έκανες"...

E- Και πάλι βέβαια μπορείς να συνεχίσεις να πληρώνεσαι...

A- Βεβαίως... Οπότε αυτό είναι ένα κομμάτι που πάσχει φρικτά και δυστυχώς το τσακίσαμε κιόλας γιατί όπως το συνδέσαμε με απολύσεις και ...

E- Η αξιολόγηση δεν έχει σχέση με απολύσεις...

A- Όχι φυσικά... Είναι πρώτα απο όλα για να βελτιωθεί ο φορέας και σε ατομικό επίπεδο ο καθένας και να μάθει και τη δουλειά... Στο κάτω κάτω εξελίσσεται...

E- Όταν το φοβάσαι δείχνει ίσως και ανεπάρκεια... βέβαια δε "γεννηθήκαμε όλοι επαρκείς" γιατί υπάρχει και η αξιολόγηση για να σε βοηθήσει να γίνεις επαρκέστερος...

A- Έτσι... Είναι πολύ μακριά... [...] Αν δεν "σπάσεις αυγά" δε γίνεται...

E- Ελάχιστα πρότυπα όσον αφορά την παροχή υπηρεσιών υπάρχουν;

A- Σε όλα αυτά υπάρχουν στάνταρντς που ορίζονται απο τον πρότυπο κανονισμό και είναι όπως το λέει...

E- Τηρείται όμως κανονικά;

A- Εφόσον βέβαια... Δηλαδή η αναλογία προσωπικού τηρείται εφόσον έρχεται το προσωπικό... Αν προβλέπεις, παίρνεις τα παιδιά γίνονται οι εγγραφές με βάση το προσωπικό που εσύ έχεις προβλέψει ότι θα έχεις και το προσωπικό δεν έρχεται ... υπάρχουν περίοδοι λοιπόν που δεν τηρείται αλλά είναι πραγματικά λόγω ανωτέρας βίας... Δεν είναι επειδή δεν υπάρχει η πρόβλεψη - το στάνταρντ...

E- Περιπτώσεις έχετε που σε κάποιους παιδικούς σταθμούς να έχετε 2 βοηθούς μόνο και όχι απο ΤΕΙ;

A- Συμβαίνει καμια φορά ακριβώς επειδή δεν έχουν έρθει... Αναγκαστικά... Όμως επειδή τα τμήματα είναι πολλά στους σταθμούς και η προισταμένη έχει ευθύνη για το παιδαγωγικό έργο είναι πάντα απόφοιτος είτε ΤΕΙ, είτε ΑΕΙ μπορώ να πω ότι δεν υπερισχύει το γεγονός... Υπάρχει έλεγχος στο τι κάνουν ακόμα και όταν είναι βοηθοί... Χώρια που μερικές φορές μπορεί να είναι και καλύτεροι...

E- Απλά είναι ενδεικτικό ότι δε δίνουν τη δυνατότητα σε εσάς που κάνετε το σχεδιασμό να τον κάνετε όπως θέλετε...

A- Όχι... Εφόσον δε γνωρίζω τι προσλαμβάνω...

E- Είπαμε οι υλικοτεχνικές υποδομές... Εξωτερικές αναθέσεις σχετικά με τις εκπαιδευτικές παροχές στο Δήμο σας υπάρχουν;

A- Εμείς δεν το έχουμε κάνει μέχρι τώρα αλλά δε βλέπω πως μπορούμε να το αποφύγουμε... Δεν παίρνω θέση με αυτό που σου λέω, πιθανώς σε κάποιες περιπτώσεις δε χρειάζεται να το αποφύγουμε, θα μπορούσαμε και να το σκεφτούμε πχ. για τις καθαρίστριες. Οι καθαρίστριες είναι μια κατηγορία η οποία αποκλείεται απο τις προσλήψεις τώρα γιατί έχουν καταργηθεί όλες οι προσλήψεις Υ.Ε., ούτε παλιά ΑΣΕΠ τίποτα... τέλος... Δεν έχουμε τη δυνατότητα... Οι γυναίκες που είναι μέσα, μεγαλώνουν βγαίνουν στη σύνταξη ... Ξέρεις μια καθαρίστρια 60 χρ. δεν είναι το ίδιο πράγμα με μια 30 διότι η γυναίκα είναι κουρασμένη - ταλαιπωρημένη σωματικά... Αυτή τη στιγμή οι μόνιμες καθαρίστριες οριακά φτάνουν για να είναι 1 σε κάθε σταθμό... 1 για κάθε σταθμό όταν έχεις σταθμούς με 200 παιδιά είναι βασανιστήριο... Αυτό λοιπόν που έχουμε σκεφτεί δεν έχουμε ακόμα... τολμήσει να πω; θα το πω... γιατί καταλαβαίνεις αυτό φέρνει τεράστιες συγκρούσεις... Η σκέψη είναι ότι αν μπορούσε να ανατεθεί σε ένα συνεργείο καθαριότητας να περνάει απο όλους τους σταθμούς για τα "χοντρά", απο εκεί και πέρα η 1 γυναίκα που είναι σε καθημερινή βάση και που είναι να φροντίσει τις τουαλέτες, την κουζίνα μπορεί να τα βγάλει πέρα... Αυτό είναι μια λογική η οποία αν σου πω ότι κολλάει στον επίτροπο που λέει "έχετε καθαρίστριες γιατί θέλετε συνεργείο"; Μετά αυτή η αδυναμία πρόσληψης μπορεί το Σεπτέμβρη να μας πάει σε κλείσιμο σταθμών, γιατί φυσικά δεν πρόκειται να στοιβάξουμε 70 παιδιά με ένα παιδαγωγό... δε γίνεται... Άρα μήπως αυτή η ιστορία με τις Κοιν.Σ.Επ. μπορεί να έχει ένα νόημα αρκεί να πάει συντεταγμένα, συντονισμένα με νόμο να μη μπορεί ο καθένας να χώσει εκεί τον κάθε πικραμένο και να γίνει ένας άλλος τρόπος να βάζεις απο το παράθυρο κόσμο στο δημόσιο... Να λειτουργήσουν ως επιχειρήσεις πραγματικά με το σωστό έλεγχο απο πάνω, εγω το βρίσκω εξαιρετική λύση αυτή που δίνει και μια αξία στους ανθρώπους... Να πως θα ανοίγαν οι σταθμοί το απόγευμα... Αλλά βλέπεις ότι μόλις πας να σκεφτείς κάτι τέτοιο, αυτά που σου λέω τώρα είναι πολυ προχωρημένα σε σχέση με αυτά που μπορώ να πω προς τα έξω... Μόλις πας να το σκεφτείς αρχίζουν τα σωματεία να σου λένε "ξεπουλάς στον ιδιωτικό τομέα" και δε συμμαζεύεται, οι εργαζόμενοι "παθαίνουν" γιατί ξέρεις είναι και ένα θέμα αντίστασης στην όποια αλλαγή... πολύ έντονη... Το κράτος δε βοηθά με το να βάλει ένα πλαίσιο που να εξασφαλίζει διαφάνεια, σωστή λειτουργία... Τι να κάνει και αυτό ο έρμος που παίρνει αποφάσεις;

E- Ενσωματωμένες υπηρεσίες έχετε στο Δήμο;

A- Το λειτουργεί συμβουλευτικό σταθμό εδώ και πολλά χρόνια , αυτή τη στιγμή είναι το τμήμα ψυχολογικής υποστήριξης, το τμήμα κοινωνικής υποστήριξης και τμήμα ιατρικής προληπτικής... Βέβαια πρέπει να σου πω ότι μέχρι φέτος τα τελευταία 2 χρόνια δεν είχαμε κανένα γιατρό γιατί συνταξιοδοτήθηκε ο γιατρός και δε μας εγκρίνανε προσλήψεις με αποτέλεσμα να μην έχουμε σε 5500 παιδιά ούτε 1 γιατρό... φέτος ενέκριναν 5 συμβασιούχους που είναι ένα μινιμουμ... Έχουμε ψυχολόγους που είναι και πρόσωπα αναφοράς ανα παιδικό σταθμό γιατί κάνουμε και ένταξη παιδιών με ειδικές ανάγκες... έχουμε γύρω στα 60 τέτοια παιδιά... Αυτό ήταν κάτι που θέλαμε να επεκτείνουμε αλλά ...

E- Είναι σημαντικό γενικά για τις μη προνομιούχες ομάδες... Υπάρχει πρόβλεψη για Ρομά, πολιτικούς πρόσφυγες;

A- Πολιτικοί πρόσφυγες μπαίνουν κατά προτεραιότητα στους σταθμούς... Γίνονται δεκτοί εκτός μοριοδότησης όταν έρχονται απο κοινωνικές υπηρεσίες μπαίνουν κατευθείαν...

E- Ενώ κανονικά ισχύει η μοριοδότηση;

A- Μοριοδότηση αυστηρότατη... Υπάρχει στην ιστοσελίδα...

E- Με δεδομένο το στόχο της ΕΕ για αυξημένη συμμετοχή σε 95%...

A - Να μην ανοίξω το στόμα μου για την ΕΕ...

E- Ως το 2020... Η αλήθεια είναι ότι η Ελλάδα έχει πολύ χαμηλή θέση γύρω στο 74%... Είμαστε προτελευταίοι... Θεωρείτε ότι είναι επιτεύξιμος αυτός ο στόχος; Στο Δήμο σας έβλεπα ότι έχει λίγα παιδιά, θε περίμενε κάποιος αυτός ο Δήμος να έχει και 10.000 παιδιά...

A- Καταρχήν επειδή οι φορείς που απευθύνονται... Στην ίδια ηλικία (4 έτη) απευθύνονται και το νηπιαγωγείο και οι παιδικοί σταθμοί άρα πρέπει κανείς να το δει συνολικά... Γιατί πολλά παιδιά που θα ήταν στο Δήμο , είναι τελικά στο προνήπιο... Και εμείς έχουμε και πολλές διαγραφές έτσι... έρχονται σε εμάς επειδή είναι πρώτα οι δικές μας εγγραφές και το Σεπτέμβρη πάνε στο προνήπιο... οπότε εκεί πρέπει κανείς να τα συνδυάσει για να βγάλει το νούμερο... Αλλά παρόλα αυτά εγω θεωρώ ότι είναι πολυπαραγοντικοί οι λόγοι: το ένα είναι ότι λειτουργεί πολύ η οικογένεια... οι γονείς θεωρούν ότι καλύτερα το παιδί πριν απο την υποχρεωτική εκπαίδευση να είναι με τη γιαγιά του ή τη μαμά του στο σπίτι... Ή δεν ξέρω...

E- Εκτός απο την παραδοσιακή μορφή της ελληνικής οικογένειας τι άλλο θα λέγατε;

A- Δεν είναι οι δομές όπως πρέπει... Δεν βολεύουν οι χρόνοι που είναι ανοιχτοί οι σταθμοί τους εργαζόμενους γονείς... Μη λέμε βλακείες... Ποιος γονιός δουλεύει 7 - 4; Αν δουλεύεις στις 8 πάει και έρχεται αν δεν δουλεύεις και μακριά... Αν πηγαίνεις στις 8 τι ώρα σχολάς; στις 4! πώς θα το πάρεις το παιδί; Οπότε σου λέει προκειμένου να τρέχω να το πάρω και να το ξυπνάω απο τις 6, άστο καλύτερα με τη γιαγιά ή να πούμε σε μια γυναίκα... Ο παιδικός σταθμός είναι φτιαγμένος για να μπορούν οι γονείς να δουλεύουν ήσυχοι, άρα ο σταθμός κανονικά λειτουργεί απο τις 6 - 18:00, όχι για να είναι το ίδιο παιδί όλες τις ώρες μέσα αλλά γιατί αυτές είναι οι ώρες που χρειάζεται... Σε κάποιες περιπτώσεις - όπως στα νοσοκομεία που υπάρχουν παιδικοί σταθμοί, μένει ο παιδικός σταθμός ανοιχτός όλη τη μέρα...

E- Έχετε υπόψη σας προσπάθειες ρύθμισης του πεδίου διεθνώς; απο υπερεθνικούς οργανισμούς; αναφερθήκατε στην Ευριδίκη...

A- Τελευταία προσωπικά με σημάδεψε και στην πορεία μου στην Αντιδημαρχία, η οδηγία της Ε.Ε. Φεβ 2013 - "Σπάζοντας τον κύκλο της μειονεξίας"... Εκεί γίνεται ρητή αναφορά για τη σπουδαιότητα της προσχολικής ηλικίας και μάλιστα συγκεκριμένα για τις δομές και το πως έχει σαφώς ρόλο πρόληψης μια σωστή οργάνωση ... και για τους γονείς (ανεργία) και για τα παιδιά σε ότι αφορά την ανάπτυξη τους... Και οικονομικά μια κοινωνία που έχει επενδύσει τόσο νωρίς μπορεί να γλυτώσει μερικά φράγκα απο επιδόματα, θεραπείες και όλα αυτά... Για μένα αυτό το κείμενο ήταν πάρα πολύ ενδιαφέρον...

E- Τα αντίστοιχα starting strong του ΟΟΣΑ τα γνωρίζετε;

A- Ναι... Απλά θεωρώ ότι είναι λίγο ουτοπικά, όταν δεν λύνονται ζητήματα όπως οι προσλήψεις προσωπικού... ή τέλος πάντων ένας τρόπος να υπάρχει προσωπικό στους παιδικούς σταθμούς... Τη στιγμή που λες να είναι όλα τα παιδιά μέσα το 90 τόσο %, αλλά δεν σας επιτρέπω προσλήψεις... Γιαυτό είπα... Εδώ αν υπάρχει βούληση πολιτική απο την Ευρώπη και τους Εταίρους μας - και είμαι πολύ Ευρωπαϊστρια - είναι να σκύψει κανείς αλήθεια απο πάνω, να δει πως θα ενισχύσει και τι στη συγκεκριμένη κατάσταση προκειμένου να μπορούν να εφαρμοστούν οι οδηγίες... Και θεωρώ ότι αυτό δεν αφορά μόνο την Ελλάδα, είναι και άλλες χώρες γιατί δεν είναι και αλλού παράδεισος... Μη σου πω ότι το επίπεδο εκπαίδευσης των δικών μας παιδαγωγών είναι πολύ πιο ψηλό...

E- Το πρόβλημα είναι ότι στην πράξη, "αναγκάζονται "να τα ξεχνούν..."

A- Τα ξεχνούν γιατί όταν έχεις να αντιμετωπίσεις... να σου πω ένα τελευταίο που μου έκανε εντύπωση τις προάλλες... εγώ τις βλέπω τις παιδαγωγούς ως παιδαγωγός...και μου λέγανε την απελπισία τους όταν το Σεπτέμβρη χρειάστηκε εκτός απο την προσαρμογή των μωρών που είναι μεγάλη και σοβαρή υπόθεση, είχαν να προσαρμόσουν και τους παιδαγωγούς οι οποίοι αλλάζανε, δεν ήρθαν απο την αρχή, φέραν απο αλλού τους έδιωξαν πίσω... Τα παιδιά δηλαδή βρέθηκαν με 10 διαφορετικά πρόσωπα... και μετα συζητάμε;

E- Όσον αφορά το ΕΣΠΑ τι γίνεται στο Δήμο; Μου έκανε εντύπωση γιατί είδα ότι είναι λίγες οι θέσεις. Θα περίμενε κανείς - και με δεδομένες τις ανάγκες των γυναικών εδώ - να έβλεπε πολλές θέσεις, και μάλιστα με την υψηλή χρηματοδότηση που έδινε το ΕΣΠΑ τουλάχιστον φέτος...

A- Καταρχήν το ΕΣΠΑ καθορίζεται ανα περιφέρεια... Πρέπει να το ξέρεις αυτό, οπότε υπάρχει πλαφόν... Ένα δεύτερο σημείο που έχει σημασία είναι ότι ξεκινήσαμε απο τη δικη μου θητεία και μετά... Δεν είχε ασχοληθεί κανεις με το ΕΣΠΑ παρά το γεγονός ότι υπήρχε απο το 2008... Το 2011 που ήταν η πρώτη μου χρονιά δεν μπήκα συνειδητά γιατί έληγαν οι άδειες και δεν μπορούσα να υπογράψω με τη δική μου ποινική ευθύνη, ότι θα έχω άδειες μέχρι το τέλος του 11, δεν υπήρχε περίπτωση να το κάνω... Δόθηκε η παράταση 30 Σεπτ... Πέρα όμως απο αυτό απο το 2012 ξεκινήσαμε και βάζαμε ορισμένες θέσεις σε ορισμένες περιοχές. Αυτό για 2 λόγους: Μία υπηρεσία προκειμένου να πάρει ΕΣΠΑ για χιλιάδες παιδιά θέλει μια οργάνωση και μια τεγνογνωσία που όμως δεν διέθετε. Πήραμε λοιπόν λίγα παιδιά στην αρχή, βάλαμε 300 παιδιά μας έδωσαν 200 θέσεις, την επόμενη βάλαμε 400 μας έδωσαν 300, φέτος βάλαμε 600 παιδιά πήραμε ούτε 500 θέσεις. Επομένως ποια η αναγκαιότητα να βάλουμε 4000 θέσεις; Το άλλο κομμάτι που είναι η πολιτική επιλογή και το παίρνω επάνω μου ως ευθύνη ήταν απο μια μεριά ότι το ΕΣΠΑ αποκλείει δημοσίους υπαλ. και δημοτ. υπαλ. και ανθρώπους που έχουν εισόδημα πάνω απο 30.000... Συγγνώμη, αυτοί τι θα τα κάνουν τα παιδιά τους; Γιατί ξέρεις 30.000 ευρώ εισόδημα όταν έχεις και 2 παιδιά, δεν είναι και κανένα τρομερό εισόδημα για να μπορείς να πληρώνεις 8000 στη για να έχει το παιδί σου... Το ΕΣΠΑ έτσι όπως είναι διαρθρωμένο -κατά τη γνώμη μου κάκιστα -ενώ θα μπορούσε να έχει μια μοριοδότηση και να έχει συμμετοχή ανάλογα με τα εισοδήματα των ανθρώπων και άρα να παίρνει όλα τα παιδιά... αντί να κάνει αυτό διαλέγει μια μερίδα πληθυσμού, ακούς παντού να μιλάνε για αυτή τη μερίδα του πληθυσμού και δεν αναφέρεται πουθενά ότι οι δημοσ. και οι δημοτ. υπάλληλοι δεν έχουν τίποτα να κάμουν τα παιδιά τους... Ότι οι έχοντες λίγο μεγαλύτερο εισόδημα δεν έχουν τίποτα να κάνουν τα παιδιά τους... Οι παιδικοί σταθμοί δεν είναι μόνο για τους φτωχούς, για τους φτωχούς είναι το επίδομα πρόνοιας... Πούντο; είναι σαν τον ΑΣΕΠ και αυτό...

.....

E- Σε ποιο βαθμό θεωρείτε ότι ο Δήμος σας καλύπτει τους στόχους για την προσχολική αγωγή; σε σχέση και με αντίστοιχους Δήμους;

A- Θεωρώ σε πολύ μεγάλο βαθμό αλλά δεν είμαι αντικειμενική...

E - Έχετε όμως μια σκέψη που τη βασίζετε σε συγκεκριμένα κριτήρια...

A- Παρόλες τις αντιξοότητες που είναι αρκετά μεγάλες, κρατιέται ένα επίπεδο αρκετά καλό και αυτό είναι απο κοινή ομολογία... Και οι γονείς - χρήστες ας πούμε των υπηρεσιών φαίνεται να είναι σε μεγάλο βαθμο ευχαριστημένοι και η λειτουργία παρόλες τις αντιξοότητες φαίνεται να ισχύει, να παραμένει σε κάποια στανταρ, τουλάχιστον μέχρι τώρα... για τη συνέχεια δεν παίρνω και όρκο...

E- Τα τελευταία χρόνια έχουν συμβεί πολλές αλλαγές, τι νομίζετε για αυτές; είναι προς μια γενικότερη κατεύθυνση θετικότερες;

A- Δεν ξέρω αυτές οι αλλαγές που έχουν γίνει κατά πόσο εξυπηρετούν τον πραγματικό σκοπό της προσχολικής αγωγής, που είναι η αγωγή των μικρών παιδιών... Όσο συνδέονται με μια κοινωνική πραγματικότητα πολύ συγκεκριμένη και πολύ προβληματική αυτή τη στιγμή, δεν μπορούν να ταιριάξουν τα 2 πράγματα... δηλαδή έχουμε χάσει το στόχο που είναι η προσχολική αγωγή γιατί είμαστε υποχρεωμένοι να λάβουμε υπόψη μας πολλά άλλα πράγματα που συμβαίνουν γύρω και να καλύψουμε και άλλες ανάγκες... Όχι ότι δεν πρέπει... Πρέπει να τις καλύψουμε, αλλά εδώ νομίζω μπαίνει σε δεύτερη μοίρα ο στόχος προσχολική αγωγή... Περνάμε περισσότερο στην αναγκαιότητα φροντίδας και πολλές φορές ακόμα και ενός πιάτου φαγητού... Άρα έρχεται μπροστά το κοινωνικό κομμάτι το οποίο είναι σοβαρό, αλλά δεν θα έπρεπε να συνδέεται με την προσχολική αγωγή, είναι κομμάτι της πρόνοιας του Δήμου...

C. Empirical Material: The Questionnaire

Questionnaire for the second part of the research (indicative questions)

Policy lever 1) - QUALITY GOALS AND MINIMUM STANDARDS

Quality goals

[Str. Disagree(1) Str. Agree (5)]

1. Quality goals are set as SMART:

a) Specific	1	2	3	4	5
b) Measurable	1	2	3	4	5
c) Achievable	1	2	3	4	5
d) Relevant	1	2	3	4	5
e) Time-bound	1	2	3	4	5

2.

Quality-specific goals are aligned with the overall policy goals of ECEC.	1	2	3	4	5
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3.

Quality-target goals are shared among relevant ministries and key stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
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4.

Quality goals are aligned with sustained public funding and regulations	1	2	3	4	5
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Policy Lever 2) - CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Alignment

1.

The curriculum is designed so that it is aligned with the overall ECEC goals.	1	2	3	4	5
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2.

The curriculum is aligned with school curriculum to manage smooth transition from ECEC to compulsory school.	1	2	3	4	5
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3.

The curriculum is aligned with assessment and monitoring, such as for child outcomes or the quality of services.	1	2	3	4	5
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4.

Curriculum goals and guiding principles are clearly	1	2	3	4	5
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set out.					
5.					
The content coverage of the curriculum is appropriately designed, consistent with parental expectations and societal future needs.	1	2	3	4	5
6.					
The new/revised curriculum was developed in a participatory manner, taking into account the views of stakeholders (e.g., practitioners, schools, private, voluntary and independent providers, academics, parents, local levels of government).	1	2	3	4	5
7.					
There are opportunities for extra-curricular activities to complement what the curriculum does not cover.	1	2	3	4	5
8.					
The curriculum is being used to guide and support professional staff in their practice.	1	2	3	4	5
9.					
The curriculum is being used to facilitate communication between staff, parents and children.	1	2	3	4	5

Training and staff support

10.					
The curriculum strikes an appropriate balance between giving concrete direction and specifics <i>versus</i> allowing space for staff initiative and local innovation.	1	2	3	4	5
11.					
The curriculum is accompanied with useful materials for practitioners (e.g., assessment toolkits, toys and books, other classroom materials).	1	2	3	4	5
12.					
Specific training and support needs of practitioners (including managers and leaders) have been clearly identified.	1	2	3	4	5
13.					
The training is designed to ensure relevance and practicality regarding contents and pedagogy	1	2	3	4	5
14.					
The training is designed to ensure relevance and practicality regarding style and provision (e.g., seminars, workshops, on-site coaching)	1	2	3	4	5
15.					
Besides training and support materials, managers and practitioners have access to additional support	1	2	3	4	5

(e.g., telephone hotline/website, on-demand training).					
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Implementation

16.

The implementation plan presents clear and specific actions, a realistic timeframe and incorporates the key stakeholders.	1	2	3	4	5
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17.

The language describing the curriculum is accessible to policy makers, practitioners, parents, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
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Monitoring evaluation and quality assurance

18.

The purpose of monitoring curriculum implementation is clearly defined, and the results of monitoring have been used to meet the purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
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19.

Targets, approaches and instruments of monitoring have been carefully selected. Monitoring of curriculum implementation is embedded into the existing arrangements, if applicable.	1	2	3	4	5
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Policy level 3: WORKFORCE QUALIFICATIONS

1.

ECEC job profiles and qualifications are transparent and easily understood by prospective candidates, staff and parents.	1	2	3	4	5
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2.

The contents of initial education are reviewed periodically to improve quality and increase relevance of the qualifications.	1	2	3	4	5
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3.

The qualifications are of equal quality across different ECEC qualification programs while allowing institution-specific approaches.	1	2	3	4	5
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4.

There is no stigma or parity in social status associated with different job titles and qualifications for preschool teachers, child care workers and other workers in ECEC.	1	2	3	4	5
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Workforce supply and retention

5.

There is a monitoring system for workforce supply and demand.	1	2	3	4	5
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6.

There is sufficient diversity in the workforce (e.g., male workers, immigrants, different ethnic groups).	1	2	3	4	5
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7.

There is a monitoring system on working conditions (e.g., raising the salary level, providing non-financial benefits, increasing the staff-child ratio).	1	2	3	4	5
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8.

Sufficient opportunities for career development, progression and mobility are available to ECEC staff.	1	2	3	4	5
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9.

ECEC staff are supported on-site to develop the skills needed for working in a more integrated way across the broader early childhood development sector.	1	2	3	4	5
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Policy lever 4) FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement

1.

A comprehensive family and child policy is shared across different social and education services with an aim to engage families in ECEC services.	1	2	3	4	5
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2.

Sufficient communication and co-operation is facilitated and ensured between the national government and local authorities on strategies for parental engagement.	1	2	3	4	5
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3.

There have been efforts to help parents ensure good home learning environments for effective child development, such as through staff training, curriculum and a public relations campaign.	1	2	3	4	5
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4.

ECEC staff are trained to support parents, such as through guidelines and training.	1	2	3	4	5
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5.

Parenting skills programs or other support programs are used by those who need them the most and are relevant to their needs.	1	2	3	4	5
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6.

Parents are engaged not only as “users” of ECEC services but in a variety of ways (e.g., ECEC providers, volunteers, decision makers on a board, partners).	1	2	3	4	5
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7.

The degree of parental involvement is monitored by ECEC services for quality enhancement.	1	2	3	4	5
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Community engagement

8..

There is co-ordination among ECEC services and other services (e.g., health services, social workers) designed for families.	1	2	3	4	5
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9.

Sufficient communication and co-operation is being facilitated and ensured between local authorities and ECEC services about strategies for community involvement	1	2	3	4	5
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Policy Lever 5 - DATA COLLECTION, RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Data collection

1.

Critical policy questions have been defined that an ECEC data system should help answer. Furthermore, it is clear where data gaps exist and what linkages among ECEC programs are needed to answer the policy questions.	1	2	3	4	5
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2.

Currently collected ECEC indicators are well designed and can be used to inform policy and determine whether the overall ECEC goals are being	1	2	3	4	5
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met.					
3.					
The currently collected data are presented and communicated in a user-friendly way.	1	2	3	4	5
4a.					
Data is currently collected on: children (e.g., actual numbers of children enrolled in ECEC services in each age cohort, their socio-economic backgrounds, gender, immigrant status).	1	2	3	4	5
4b.					
Data is currently collected on: programs (e.g., different types and forms of services, including private and informal care arrangements) and workforce (e.g., numbers of staff and their qualification levels, age, gender, immigrant status).	1	2	3	4	5
4c.					
Data is currently collected on financing sources and cost information.	1	2	3	4	5
5.					
Sufficient funding has been allocated to improve data coverage and data quality to answer critical policy questions.	1	2	3	4	5

Research

6.					
The main gaps in research on ECEC have been identified.	1	2	3	4	5
7.					
Research is being used to shape initial education and professional development for ECEC staff.	1	2	3	4	5

Monitoring

8a.					
Monitored data is used to underpin staff professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
8b.					
Monitored data is used to underpin corrective actions.	1	2	3	4	5
8c.					
Monitored data is used to underpin adjustments to curricula.	1	2	3	4	5

D: Letter of intent/ ethics

Part 2 of the Empirical research

Κυρίες και Κύριοι,

Σας αποστέλλω τον ηλεκτρονικό σύνδεσμο για τη συμπλήρωση του ερωτηματολογίου της έρευνάς μου στα πλαίσια της διδακτορικής μου διατριβής.

Η συμπλήρωση αυτού του ερωτηματολογίου αναμένεται να παράσχει σημαντικό υλικό ανάλυσης και ερμηνείας της εφαρμογής των εκπαιδευτικών πολιτικών. Η στόχευση αυτής της έρευνας και κατ' επέκταση του συνόλου της διατριβής, εντοπίζεται στην ερμηνεία των ζητημάτων εκπαιδευτικής πολιτικής της δημοτικής προσχολικής αγωγής και εκπαίδευσης και παράλληλα στην ανάδειξη των προσπαθειών των στελεχών σε ένα διαρκώς μεταβαλλόμενο περιβάλλον οικονομικής αβεβαιότητας και κοινωνικών ανισοτήτων.

Κλείνοντας, θα ήθελα να τονίσω τη ρητή διαβεβαίωσή μου περί ανωνυμίας καθώς τα δεδομένα θα είναι απολύτως εμπιστευτικά και θα χρησιμοποιηθούν μόνο ως υλικό για ποιοτική επεξεργασία και στατιστική ανάλυση και όχι μεμονωμένα. Κανένα φυσικό πρόσωπο ή οργανισμός δε θα αναγνωρισθεί ή αναφερθεί στο τελικό κείμενο.

Σας ευχαριστώ εκ των προτέρων για το χρόνο σας και την όσο το δυνατόν γρηγορότερη συμπλήρωση του ερωτηματολογίου, προκειμένου να αναλύσω τα δεδομένα και να ολοκληρώσω τη διατριβή μου.

Με εκτίμηση,