

**Efrosyni-Alkisti Paraskevopoulou-Kollia****The social estimation of pre-school educators (in Greece)**

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This research focuses on the social estimation of teachers of preschool age. Taking into consideration as starting point the assumption that the teachers of preschool age enjoy low self-esteem, we attempted, at first place, to do research on how they see themselves and, at second place, on how the teachers at primary and secondary level see them.

The social estimation of a team is defined by the attitude of the social groups towards it. In the frame of social interaction the comments of the social groups influence the under examination team, which when it comes to react influences the social comments respectively.

The objective that was initially placed can be achieved via the study of social representations that has been incorporated by the cognitive field of teachers of preschool age. Our social representations notify the 'abstract', turning it to significant, making it substantial, so that we are able to conceive it in a more complete way.

For this purpose we followed the qualitative example. We selected the interviews, because they are a method that provides all the possibilities to the interviewees of expressing themselves about everything that occupies them, of deepening in points when they consider that it is needed, without feeling that they are limited or pressed. The interviews were preferred against the questionnaires, because the second ones do not include the element of interaction between the researcher

and the interviewee. The questionnaires do not allow the interviewees to express themselves freely and many times we are not in place to know whether the elements that are registered in their answers, are emanation of real reflection, or simply completion of the empty boxes, typically.

The interviews of this research were conducted in accordance with the social grounded theory. They are informal interviews, in depth, and so to that fact the questions that we wanted to place resulted from the interviewees' words, opinion. In our mind we had pre-schemed the main subjects on which we wanted our communication with the interviewees to be focused and thus the conclusions were exported without the interviewees to feel either offended or uncomfortably.

This research is an ethnographical one, because as we mentioned above it deals with how situations are presented and conceived from the subjects, as well as with how the persons try to describe, comprehend with and interpret the facts. The ethnographical research is characterized by the freedom that it provides to the individuals to express themselves without restrictions (revealing their cultural reality), on the attitudes, the places, their opinions, on many issues, which are included in the inquiring questions, but which are never submitted immediately, but via similar/relative questions, on which the interviewees are called to comment.

One of the most important elements that are revealed during the interviews are the significant others, as stressed by Cooley, who play a critical role in the on how we view ourselves. Our self is reflected on a mirror, which is composed by others' opinions and most of the times it functions accordingly to them. We need to offer a positive picture to society in total and through our effort of adapting the data that society gives to us, our self regulates and counterbalances the processes that are required so that we conceive reality and accept it after critical thought. Each deviation from the data deriving from society and its models may lead

to the creation of negative elements as regards our self-esteem. What happens is that the way we see our self is the former of our attitudes and our self-esteem is the critic and the observer of these attitudes.

Social-cognitive theory of Bandura and Mischel underlines the interaction between the environment and the person. We easily can, therefore, comprehend the low social estimation which accompanies the teachers of preschool age, despite what Sears has written, that the individual is not only influenced by society but simultaneously s/he influences it, does not suffice in order to improve the social estimation regarding the teachers of preschool age. It is, therefore, explicit that if the social estimation -on all activities- of teachers of preschool age is low, their self-assessment lowers, as well. The element of self-assessment is included in the way each one of us sees her/ himself (hence also teachers) and shapes our possibilities of reaction. We consequently comprehend that the decreased self-sentiment of the teachers (particularly of preschool age) is also determined by the low "price" that this particular profession is changed with (Weber) on the social level and the need for acquisition of force and social prestige that its members indicate.

As regards teachers and the educational profession in general, the opinion that it is a profession of relatively low social prestige could be prevailed through the fact that it has been connected with the presence of many women in its area and also with the low social origins of the persons who followed it (Pyrgiotakis). Particularly the great number of women on the educational profession is a subject that occupied this research. Reading diachronically on the professional development of women in the Greek area, we concluded that women accede less than men in the professional scale and when they "appear" on that scale they usually come from high social classes, fact which reveals that their families have the economic comfort to support them. The educational profession is downgraded to semi-profession, for which no

particular scientific knowledge is required, but it ensures permanence and a running, auxiliary wage on the economical "weight" of the "head" of the family. Connecting this perception to the secondary placement of women, to a great range even nowadays, we understand for which reasons the educational area consists of women, mostly.

A point that should be stressed out is the control groups we chose, within which we compared the teachers of preschool age. We selected persons active in the educational process, because they would know better the daily interaction with the children and how much this influences the teachers' self-esteem. Beyond this, only the educators from the other levels of education (in this instance the primary and secondary education) could only describe teachers' reality as it is. These two teams of control of our fundamental sample offered us the opportunity to focus on the social estimation, regarding the teachers in a wider level and simultaneously the teachers of preschool age, more specifically. It was not feasible we carried out the research by requesting the opinion of all the people consisting the institutions that are related with education in our country and we considered that our sample is representative enough.

We came up to the conclusion that inequalities exist even between the different rungs of education and their members, with the teachers of preschool age last ones in the level of estimation. We consider that this research will contribute in any inequalities to be blunted as regards wider society and the perception that it has for the teachers, and as regards the levels and the degrees of education, in which educators are classified. We believe that via our research the reflections of teachers' reality emerge and the omissions on governmental level are.