

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and Cross-Thematic Curriculum-Related Skills of Greek Students: A Multifactorial and Triangulation Analysis

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The cross-thematic curriculum (CTC) for school education has recently been implemented so that the quality of the Greek educational system is improved. This study aimed at assessing social and emotional learning competencies and CTC-related skills of 541 Greek students aged 11–13. Data triangulation was also used for validating these findings, having 145 school teachers reporting their perceptions on students' skills. Both students and teachers reported moderate scores of all students' skills. Multivariate analysis revealed that gender remained a significant predictor for high scores of all students' skills, and that the higher the grade level of the students, the lower the mean emotional support, social, and CTC-related skills scores. The mean score of CTC-related skills was very low according to both students and teachers.

Keywords: *cross-thematic curriculum, multivariate analysis, Greece, social and emotional learning, triangulation*

Introduction

Nowadays, it is widely accepted that contemporary educational systems should enable students to master core academic subjects and be able to collaborate with other individuals from different backgrounds—in socially and emotionally skilled ways—in order to adopt healthy, responsible, and respectful behaviors (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007; Greenberg et al., 2003). There is an extensive body of research supporting the fact that students who develop social and emotional competencies lead a healthier life and have better school performance (Greenberg et al., 2003). Therefore, educators, policymakers, and governments worldwide make significant efforts to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) skills for enhancing students' success in school and life (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

Acknowledging the new pedagogical trends, the Greek educational system had to adapt and find alternative teaching approaches that would cater to those demands. The relatively recently implemented cross-thematic curriculum (CTC) for nursery, primary, and secondary school education (Hellenic Ministry of National Education – Pedagogical Institute [HMNE–PI], 2004) is the result of the Greek Pedagogic Institute's effort to address these needs. It has taken into account all the recommendations of the Council of Europe and the general prevailing philosophy on education in Europe, which focus on the necessity of planning and implementing a program of stud that would respond to current social dynamics and challenges, while at the same time respecting peoples' cultural and linguistic characteristics (Maastricht Treaty, 1992).

Thus, “maintaining democracy, religious freedom, collective spirit, internationalism, social justice and solidarity, cultural awareness, [and] social cohesion and providing employment and intellectual development opportunities for all in open pluralistic societies” (HMNE-PI, 2004) are addressed in the revised curriculum, which was first introduced and implemented in 2001, in an effort to improve the quality of the Greek educational system.

The CTC for Greek education is based on three axons: literacy, multilingualism, and multiculturalism (HMNE-PI, 2004). Students are expected not only to get general education but also to develop cognitively and emotionally and learn how to socialize in different linguistic and cultural environments. The learning process is thus expected to support figuring out how-to-learn strategies and metacognitive awareness, that is, the kind of knowledge that “includes all facts learners acquire about their own cognitive processes as they are applied and used to gain knowledge and acquire skills in varied situations” (Wenden, 1998, p. 34). The long-term aims include the linguistic edification and the development of students’ sociolinguistic competence. An opportunity for the internal horizontal linking of discrete subjects is also provided, which promotes a holistic view of learning. Such an exploratory learning process is further promoted through project work (Matsaggouras, 2003). Cooperative participation in small-scale research is encouraged, helping learners to actively participate in learning and create strong bonds with their group members. In this way, learners’ personal development as well as their smooth social accession are supported (Matsaggouras, 2003).

Thus, SEL becomes of pivotal importance in the curriculum under scrutiny and the individual’s social and emotional development becomes a constituent part of the teaching/learning process, so that morally mature and responsible future citizens are developed. SEL is a relatively new development, its roots lying in the 1990s when Goleman’s book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) was first published. SEL is defined as the process of development and cultivation of fundamental social and emotional skills in children (Elias et al., 1997; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). It constitutes a process through which children are called upon to recognize and manage their emotions, show their interest in others, act in a responsible manner, and make appropriate decisions when needed and develop positive relationships (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004).

A framework to accurately describe SEL and its basic characteristics was developed bringing forward five core dimensions (Cohen et al., 2003; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). These dimensions coincide with what Goleman (1995) had defined as the main aspects of emotional literacy: self-awareness, the ability to manage emotions, self-motivation, the ability to emotionally support and sympathize with others, and social skills. Later on, these aspects were enriched and further analyzed by a different group of researchers (Zins, Weissberg, et al., 2004), adding the following characteristics: responsible decision-making, self-management, and relationship management.

To sum up, SEL is often referred to as “the missing piece” (Elias & Arnold, 2006), as it represents that part of the teaching/learning process that relates academic knowledge to a particular group of skills that are of paramount importance for the children’s success in school, family, and future working life. The combination of academic and SEL is thus considered to be essential for the implementation of an effective educational system reflecting the reality of our times. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, no study so far has ever focused on simultaneously investigating students’ and teachers’ perceptions and understandings on the SEL competencies of the students (triangulation), as these competencies are possibly enhanced by the implementation of CTC. Further, in Greece, there are limited studies aimed at evaluating teachers’ and students’ opinions on either

students' SEL competencies (Giavrimis & Papanis, 2009; Triliva & Poulou, 2006) or the results of the implementation of CTC in Greek educational reality (Antonopoulou, 2009; Tsifles & Paroussi, 2008).

Study Aims

The primary purpose of the present study was to assess Greek students' SEL competencies in relation to several sociodemographic parameters within the framework of the implementation of CTC. Data validation through cross verification of findings was achieved as school teachers were also asked to report their perceptions on the students' SEL- and CTC-related competencies (data triangulation). By meeting these goals, this study will hopefully fill the current literature gap in having both teachers and students respond to several challenging issues that have been raised with the implementation of CTC and the effort to establish an emotionally rich school environment in Greece.

Methods

Participants

In this cross-sectional study, a random sample of 541 students (271 boys and 270 girls) aged 11–13 (mean = 11.84; $SD = 0.8$) was selected from Greek schools during the spring months of 2011. In addition, 145 teachers from the same schools participated in the study so that data triangulation could be achieved. The response rate was 90.2 % for the students and 85.3% for the teachers.

The sample was defined through a representative multistage sampling of students from all Greek municipalities (the smallest Greek administrative division). In the municipalities considered, 11 schools were randomly selected from a list provided by the Greek Ministry of Education, within strata of sex and socioeconomic group (high, medium, and low), to be representative of the demographic structure of the population. A random replacement was used for students who did not agree to participate in the study. The Ministry of Education gave its approval prior to the onset of the study. A parental consent was also required for the children's participation.

Study Questionnaires

To serve the purposes of the study, two anonymous questionnaires—one for the students and one for the teachers—were constructed in Greek. The construction of the questionnaires was based on five axons, common for both questionnaires, which were drawn up from the relevant literature on SEL and the principles advocated in CTC. The questionnaires were also influenced by other relevant questionnaires proposed by different researchers (Bar-On, 2002; Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 1999; Goleman, 1998; Goleman, 2001; Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2003) and, in particular, the Emotional Intelligence Test-Youth Version (MSCEIT-YV; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002) and Classroom Life Measure (Johnson & Johnson, 1983; Johnson, Johnson, Buckman, & Richards., 1985).

More specifically, the first axon of self-awareness refers to the students' ability to read their emotions and recognize their impact, while using gut feelings to guide their decisions (Goleman, 1998). It refers to their ability to recognize not only their strong points and weaknesses, but their needs and values as well. Their efforts to achieve self-realization and self-assessment and to reflect on different alternatives (Cohen, 1999; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Zins, Bloodworth, et al., 2004) are also considered in this axon. A representative question that was

presented in the administered questionnaire was, "When you are upset, are you aware of the reason for this feeling?"

As far as the second axon of self-management is concerned, the focus is on the students' ability to manage and control their emotions in such a way so as to be able to solve any problems that may arise, regulate their behavior accordingly and consequently, and adapt to changing circumstances (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2000). Stress management and personal discipline are also addressed in the construct of self-management, as well as the students' ability to set the right goals and proceed with any necessary actions so that these goals are successfully accomplished. A characteristic question of that axon was, "You avoid fighting with your schoolmates; however, in the case of a fight, do you get upset?"

The third axon entails the students' ability to emotionally support and sympathize with others, thus responding to their and others' emotional needs. A question supporting these principles was "When your friends come to you for support or advice, can you easily come up with ways to help them?"

In the fourth axon of social skills, the students' ability to develop effective relations with others is studied. It addresses their ability to sense, understand, and react to others' views and stances, and to show respect to and socially accept people who might be different from them (Goleman, 1995). Their aptitude for social bonding, teamwork, and collaboration is also emphasized. A corresponding question was, "Do you think that working in groups brings about a positive learning outcome?"

Finally, the fifth axon refers to the principles of CTC and stresses communication and negotiation skills, critical thinking, and experiential learning. Education is considered as an active learning experience, laying emphasis on problem-solving through which the individual should gain self-realization. A sample question of this specific axon was, "Through your schoolbooks, are you given the chance to seek and come up with solutions to problems, thus becoming a more responsible and mature person?"

Validity of the Measurements of the Study

Cronbach's alpha was calculated in order to investigate the internal consistency of the questionnaires of the study. The alphas obtained were 0.73 for the student questionnaire and 0.91 for the teacher questionnaire, representing an acceptable reliability of the factors extracted from both questionnaires. In order to establish the best possible validity of the students' answers, data triangulation was applied, considering the students' school teachers as a different source of data and information. This type of triangulation is perhaps the most popular and easiest to implement, while at the same time, it is probably the most suitable for the purpose of evaluating the opinions of different stakeholders (e.g., students and teachers) who are interested in the educational programs (Guion, 2002).

Data Analysis

The outcome variables were the students' scores in self-awareness, self-management, emotional support, social skills and CTC-related skills, according to the responses of both students and teachers. The values of all five axons were approximately normally distributed. The initial data analysis was based on descriptive statistics; a univariate examination of statistical associations was conducted with the use of *t*-test and ANOVA. As far as the students were concerned, a multivariate linear logistic regression analysis was also performed to identify the socioeconomic risk factors that

influence the five axons. All reported probability values (*p*-values) were compared to a significant level of 0.05. The analyses of coded data were carried out using IBM SPSS software version 20.0.

Results

SEL- and CTC-Related Competencies of the Students

The mean scores of SEL- and CTC-related skills in 11- to 13-year-old Greek students by socioeconomic parameters are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Scores of SEL- and CTC-Related Skills in 11- to 13-Year-Old Greek Students by Socioeconomic Parameters

Risk Factor	N	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Emotional Support	Social Skills	CTC-Related Skills
Sex						
Male	271	3*	2.6*	3.1*	3.1*	2.7*
Female	270	2.9*	2.7*	3.3*	3.3*	2.8*
Grade						
5th primary	222	3	2.6	3.2	3.2*	2.9*
6th primary	190	2.9	2.6	3.2	3.2*	2.7*
1st junior high	129	3.1	2.6	3.2	3.1*	2.5*
School area						
Attica prefecture (Athens included)	311	3	2.6	3.2*	3.2	2.7
Province	230	3	2.6	3.1*	3.2	2.8
School socioeconomic level						
Low	135	3*	2.6	3.1*	3.2*	2.8*
Medium	329	2.9*	2.7	3.3*	3.2*	2.8*
High	77	3.2*	2.6	3.2*	3*	2.4*
Father's educational level						
≤ 6 years	179	2.9*	2.6	3.2	3.2	2.8*
6–12 years	261	3*	2.7	3.2	3.2	2.6*
> 12 years	101	3.1*	2.7	3.2	3.2	2.7*
Mother's educational level						
≤ 6 years	99	2.9	2.6	3.2	3.2	2.8*
6–12 years	205	3	2.7	3.2	3.2	2.7*
> 12 years	109	3.1	2.6	3.2	3.2	2.6*
Housewives	128	3	2.6	3.2	3.2	2.9*
Total means and standard deviations	541	3 (0.5)	2.6 (0.4)	3.2 (0.4)	(0.4)	2.7 (0.6)

Note: *Statistical significant differences (*p* < 0.05)

As it is shown, the students had the highest score in the axons of emotional support and social skills (3.2) and the lowest scores in the axon of self-management (2.6). The univariate analysis of the data showed that the mean self-awareness score was significantly higher in boys than in girls (*t*-test, *p* < 0.030). On the other hand, females had significantly higher scores regarding the rest of the axons, as compared to males (*t*-test, *p* < 0.0001–0.013). Also, the mean self-awareness score increased as the schools' socioeconomic backgrounds and the fathers' educational levels increased (ANOVA, *p* <

0.0001 and $p < 0.009$, respectively). On the contrary, the mean CTC-related skills score decreased as the schools' socioeconomic backgrounds and the mothers' educational levels increased (ANOVA, $p < 0.0001$ and $p < 0.018$, respectively). When a multivariate linear regression analysis was undertaken (Table 2), only gender remained as a significant predictor for a high score in all SEL and CTC skills. The regression analysis revealed that the higher the grade of the students, the lower the mean emotional support and SEL- and CTC-related skills scores.

Table 2: Multivariate Linear Regression Analysis for SEL- and CTC-Related Skills in 11- to 13-Year-Old Greek Students by Gender, School Socioeconomic Level, Grade, and Parents' Educational Levels

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i> -test	<i>P</i>	95% Confidence Interval for <i>b</i>	
					Lower	Upper
Self-awareness	Sex					
	Male	Baseline				
	Female	-0.097	-2.202	0.028	-0.184	-0.010
	School socioeconomic level	0.042	-0.407	0.684	-0.106	0.070
	Grade	-0.018	1.245	0.214	-0.024	0.109
	Father's education	0.072	2.193	0.029	0.008	0.137
Self-management	Mother's education	0.026	1.253	0.211	-0.015	0.068
	Sex					
	Male	Baseline				
	Female	0.122	3.521	0.000	0.054	0.190
	School socioeconomic level	0.009	-0.259	0.796	-0.060	0.078
	Grade	-0.014	-0.516	0.606	-0.066	0.039
Emotional support	Father's education	0.046	1.794	0.073	-0.004	0.097
	Mother's education	-0.028	-1.713	0.087	-0.061	0.004
	Sex					
	Male	Baseline				
	Female	0.278	7.925	0.000	0.209	0.347
	School socioeconomic level	0.113	3.178	0.002	0.043	0.183
SEL-related skills	Grade	-0.069	-2.566	0.011	-0.122	-0.016
	Father's education	0.027	1.051	0.294	-0.024	0.079
	Mother's education	-0.008	-0.496	0.620	-0.041	0.025
	Sex					
	Male	Baseline				
	Female	0.171	5.300	0.000	0.108	0.235
CTC-related skills	School socioeconomic level	-0.13	-0.392	0.695	-0.077	0.051
	Grade	-0.082	-3.304	0.001	-0.131	-0.033
	Father's education	0.021	0.884	0.377	-0.026	0.068
	Mother's education	0.006	0.369	0.712	-0.025	0.036
	Sex					
	Male	Baseline				
	Female	0.155	2.982	0.003	0.053	0.257
	School socioeconomic level	0.032	0.604	0.546	-0.702	0.135
	Grade	-0.216	-5.408	0.000	-0.295	-0.138
	Father's education	-0.045	-1.161	0.246	-0.121	0.031
	Mother's education	-0.030	-1.213	0.226	-0.079	0.019

Data Triangulation

Comparing the students' and teachers' responses (Figure 1), both groups had similar scores regarding the axons of emotional support, self-awareness, and SEL- and CTC-related skills. At this point, it must be noted that the answers of both students and teachers revealed a very low mean score of CTC-related skills (2.7 and 2.5, respectively); however, an interesting finding was the divergence between the students' and teachers' responses concerning the axon of self-management, in which the students had very low scores (mean score 2.6), while the teachers believed that their students had a relatively high mean score (3.5).

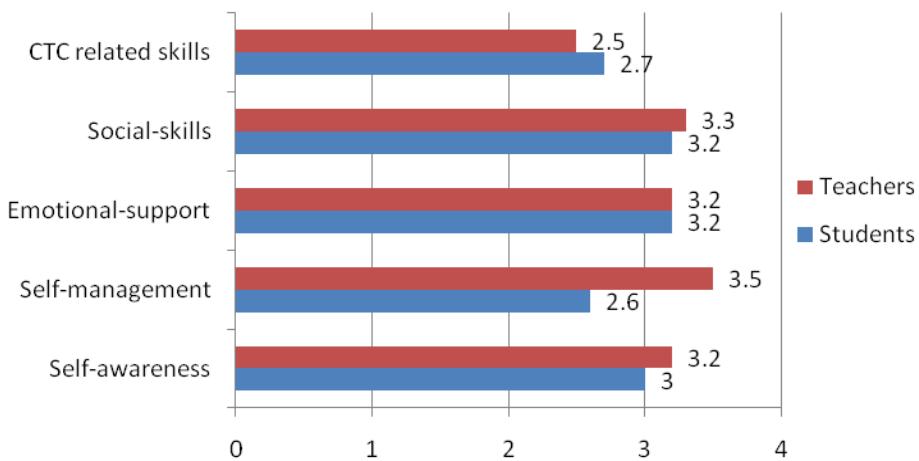


Figure 1: Mean Scores of SEL- and CTC-Related Skills in Greek Students, According to the Responses of Both Students and Teachers

Discussion

Students' Responses

According to the findings, students seem to be of the opinion that SEL is not adequately promoted in their schools and, in particular, through CTC, as it is currently implemented.

In all five axons, students' responses were of a moderate level, with the axons of emotional support and social skills gaining higher scores, while those of self-management and CTC-related skills the lowest ones (Table 1). These findings indicate that SEL is not satisfactorily promoted in the schools where the research was carried out. These students are not adequately encouraged to develop their personalities and their ability to enhance interpersonal relationships with their schoolmates, offer and be offered emotional support, successfully recognize different emotions, or seek motivation and social support in order to cope with the demands raised in their school environment.

Studying the differentiations between the two sexes, it seems that girls feel that they are capable of not only satisfactorily recognizing their own and their classmates' emotions but also of successfully

managing them accordingly. This finding could be attributed to the psychosocial traits that characterize the particular age groups, at a period when all their differentiations can be clearly traced. Such a finding is compatible with those of other studies (Beaudoin, 2008; Hargreaves & Galton, 2002; Nickolls & Gardner, 1999). Due to different temperament and mentality, girls are more gifted at providing their classmates with emotional support, thus being more capable of acknowledging and ultimately responding to their emotional needs. These findings are in agreement with those of similar studies carried out internationally (Fawcett & Garton, 2005; Mayer et al., 2003; Merrell & Gueldner, 2010; Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Lopes, 2003). The girls also claim that the new teaching methods along with the books currently taught at schools, based on CTC criteria, successfully pave the way towards the promotion of SEL and lay emphasis on student autonomy and critical thinking (Alahiotis, 2002; Karatzia-Stavlioti, 2002; Matsaggouras, 2003). Also, they consider to a greater extent that a positive teacher-student relationship (which is closely related with the axon of CTC-related skills) constitutes a factor of utmost significance for the development of a positive school environment. According to relevant studies, the perceived social support from the teacher and the classmates is positively linked to the motivation and school adaptation of children aged 10–13 (Vedder, Boekaerts, & Seegers, 2005; Wentzel, 1994). Accordingly, the perceived school and social-personal support from the teacher positively predicts the 6th-grade primary school students' interest in school as well as the pursuit of goals related to social responsibility (Wentzel, 1998). In several studies conducted by Harter (1996) and Ireson and Hallam (2005), the support, deriving from the classmates and the teacher, is positively related to the self-esteem of students attending the 6th grade of primary school and the first two grades of junior high school (7th and 8th grades).

Meticulous examination of the research findings illustrates that classroom cooperation is enhanced through both teacher and classmates support (Johnson & Johnson, 1983; Johnson et al., 1983; Johnson et al., 1985; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). It is claimed, however, that this sense of cooperation is differently perceived by boys and girls. Teachers should acknowledge this finding, as it is also documented in several other studies (Fawcett & Garton, 2005; Garton & Pratt, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Analyzing the responses of both primary and junior high school students, the former had significantly higher values in the emotional support and SEL- and CTC-related skills axons when compared to those attending the 1st grade of junior high school (Table 2). This finding may be attributed to the closer relationship developed between students and their teacher in primary schools, as the majority of school subjects are delivered by the same teacher. This gives ground to the development of a more personal relationship. On the contrary, in secondary education, school subjects are taught by more than one teacher—a fact that is not conducive to the development of a closer relationship between students and teachers, as not only the interaction time is limited, but also every teacher has a different perception of the social framework prevailing in every classroom. The fact that the students seem to feel that they do not receive adequate academic support reveals that they probably have a different perception of the school climate prevalent in primary and junior high school. Such a differentiation is emphasized by the fact that the primary school students of our sample feel less alienated and experience feelings of extrinsic motivation, social support and academic self-esteem compared to the junior high school students of our study, in congruence with previous reports (Druyan, 2001; Samaha & DeLisi, 2000; Underwood, Underwood, & Wood, 2000).

Judging from all these findings, it is more than evident that students' transition from primary to secondary education needs further researching, as such a transfer is associated with significant

changes in school climate, which apparently affect students' emotional characteristics as well as their school performance and behavior (Hargreaves & Galton, 2002; Nicholls & Gardner, 1999).

In relation to the places where the schools of our study were located, almost similar values were recorded in the majority of axons with some differentiations observed in the axons of CTC-related skills and emotional support. The students coming from provincial schools revealed higher values in the axon of CTC-related skills, which is probably explained by the fact that younger teachers are appointed in these areas in comparison to those appointed in Athens. These teachers are possibly better informed about CTC and the new teaching methods in general, as compared to the older teachers who usually show greater resistance to change (Lamb, 1995; Lawrence, 1990; Mitchell, 1988; Nunan, 1987).

Turning to the socioeconomic status of the schools' location, the students who came from schools in areas of high socioeconomic status showed significantly lower values regarding SEL- and CTC-related skills in comparison with those coming from schools of low and medium socioeconomic status. This is actually contradictory to the findings of previous studies (Goleman, 1995; Lempers & Clark, 1998; Lester & Miller, 1990; Singh & Sinha, 2002), according to which children's SEL competencies flourish in family environments of high socioeconomic status, with supportive and emotionally mature parents. Other relevant studies (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Ari, 1996; Epstein, 2001; Tomlinson, 1991) reveal that children whose parents are indifferent and unconcerned end up being impulsive, with less emotional self-control and unable to form any kind of relationship, whereas students whose parents are caring and devote a lot of their time to them seem to be generally more sociable, adaptable, and self-conscious. Therefore, it is supported that these social and emotional skills are acquired, cultivated, and perfected in a well-functioning family environment (Fraser & Walberg, 1991; Matsaggouras & Voulgaris, 2006; Pianta, 1999). In an effort to interpret and comment on these findings, it can be claimed that the parents of the students who are of a high social and economic status, in an attempt to provide them with as much as they could possibly offer, got so carried away by this endeavor that they probably neglected issues of paramount importance to their children's upbringing.

Comparison of the Students' and Teachers' Responses

Analyzing the teachers' responses (Figure 1), moderate scores appeared in all the axons of the questionnaire, which had been constructed in such a way so as to give us the chance to cross tabulate the teachers' findings with those of the students.

It has been revealed that the teachers of our sample believe that SEL is not satisfactorily promoted in their schools, while their training on the curriculum and the relative teaching methods appears to be rather inadequate. Both students and teachers had similar mean values in most axons (Figure 1). It is worth mentioning that regarding the axon of CTC-related skills, both groups showed relatively low mean values. To conclude with, it seems that both students and teachers believe that SEL is not fully integrated in their schools where, despite the undisputable efforts on the part of both groups, the curriculum and its principles are not put into practice.

The findings of the data triangulation carried out are really impressive, however, as there was intense differentiation in the mean values between the two groups, concerning the axon of self-management. On the one hand, the students of our study claim that they are not fully capable of successfully managing their own emotions and that they cannot adequately be helped in such an effort by their teachers, while teachers are actually of the opinion that they can be of immense help

in their students' effort to satisfactorily manage their emotions. It seems that family (along with school contribution) plays an important role in children's social and emotional development and constitutes the vaulting bar for the development of healthy personalities. Therefore, the students presumably receive inadequate support in their social-emotional development, while their teachers believe the opposite, revealing a possible lack of good communication between teachers, parents, and children—a fact that is in accordance with the results of similar studies (Durlak & Wells, 1997; Elias et al., 1997; Pasi, 2001; Wilson, Gottfredson, & Najaka, 2001; Zins, Bloodworth, et al., 2004).

Limitations

Because the participants of the study were students aged 11–13, the results should not be generalized to the whole student population of the country; however, the specific age groups were chosen as the researchers would have the chance to study students at a sensitive time period of their life—that is, when they have to experience an important transition from primary to junior high school, which can be the stimulus for further research. Certain information was also retrieved from students' and teachers' reports, and thus they are subjects to recall bias.

Implications for Teachers and Other Stakeholders

The results of the present study can provide teachers and other stakeholders with information on how to contribute to the organization of teaching/learning process, so that it has a positive impact on students' social and emotional growth.

Teachers should be more informed about and trained on CTC to familiarize themselves with the innovation brought about by the curriculum, as “no fundamental change can happen in practice without a corresponding modification of pedagogical values on part of the teacher” (Markee, 2001). Also, they should put emphasis on the social and emotional development of their students. For such a process to be effective, however, support from educational psychologists, colleagues, headmasters, school officials, and initiators of change and good communication among all stakeholders are absolutely essential (Karavas, 2004). Assessing teachers' pedagogical competencies should be part of this support; however, this is a difficult and complex task, as competencies are ensured through the acquisition of many qualifications in terms of aptitude and content (Liakopoulou, 2011).

Teachers should encourage parental involvement in school life, so that the parents are given the chance to develop a better relationship with all those involved in their children's well-being (Epstein, Sanders, & Simon, 2002; Koutrouba, Antonopoulou, Tsitsas, & Zenakou, 2009; Vryonides & Gouvias, 2012). Finally, this study may eventually lead to further research, especially focusing on the important transition from primary to junior high school.

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