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## School Management and Climate to Enhance Parental Involvement

**Eleftheria Koutsouveli**   
Primary School of Stavroupoli, Greece

**Akrivoula Geraki**   
Hellenic Open University, Greece

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## School Management and Climate to Enhance Parental Involvement

Eleftheria Koutsouveli, Akrivoula Geraki

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### Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the views of parents and teachers on school principal's role in shaping a school climate that favors parental involvement. The research is based on the theory of bio-ecological systems. Data was collected from 236 parents/guardians and teachers of Primary Education in Western Thessaloniki (North Greece) using a structured questionnaire. The identification of the principal's contribution to the school climate indicated that the general school climate are formed positively at high values in its four dimensions. The role of administration in shaping all dimensions of the school climate is estimated more positively by teachers than the students' parents. The identification of the principal's contribution to parental involvement revealed particularly positive views of teachers and parents on the active involvement of parents in the educational process on all five dimensions. Differentiations of teachers and parents/guardians emerged regarding three dimensions of parental involvement such as school-family communication, parents' volunteering and school cooperation with the wider community. The important finding is the strong positive correlations that emerge between the variables that assess the principal's contribution to climate change and the variables regarding parental involvement.

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### Introduction

Within the framework of the theory of ecosystems, the family and the school - as they are at the center of these systems- emerge as key interacting forces in the development of the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Penderi & Petrogiannis, 2017). For many researchers (Cohen et al., 2009; Pourrajab et al., 2015; Berkowitz et al., 2017), school's climate, in other words the 'personality' or 'atmosphere' of the school, is the key to its effective and successful interaction with the students' families, while the role of the executives is highlighted by international studies (Griffith, 2001; Lazaridou & Gravani, 2015; Povey et al., 2016) as crucial in establishing a strong and beneficial school-family relationship. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory offers, even today, a conceptual framework of the school climate phenomenon as a prerequisite for beneficial school-family interaction, in the sense that the process takes place at the level of the 'intersystem'.

### Parental Involvement

The family-school relation is often met in the international literature, not only as 'family-parental involvement' (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Seginer, 2006) but, also, as 'parental engagement' (Harris & Goodall, 2008;

Hands, 2013), 'parental/guardian participation' (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016) and 'family-school partnership' (Epstein, 1995; Christenson, 2003). Regardless of the verbal description given to it, it is a multidimensional phenomenon (Penderi & Petrogiannis, 2013), which includes the broader behaviour and actions of parents related to school education (McCormick et al., 2013), the common school and family actions/practices aiming to promote the knowledge and the abilities of the students (Hands, 2013) and the views and the expectations of the parents (Seginer, 2006).

For the first time, a clear definition of parental involvement (Patrikakou, 2008; Tran, 2014) is introduced into the educational law of the United States of America (USA), during the educational reform. This legislative text passage defines parental involvement as: "the involvement of parents in frequent, reciprocal and effective communication with the school, which concerns the academic performance of students and participation in various school activities" (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

According to Epstein and her colleagues the purpose of the family-school community alliance is to organise activities that activate, engage, guide, and motivate students towards personal improvement and progress (Epstein et al., 2002, p.21). The emphasis placed on capturing the above relationships as 'collaborative', characterizes the contribution the researcher's model - which has ecosystem effects - in the management of family and school cooperation. In addition, she contributed to the formulation of six types of parental involvement in the educational process which are structured as follows: a) parenting, b) communicating, c) volunteering d) learning at home, e) decision making and f) collaborating with community (Epstein, 1995, p.705).

Research directly links parental involvement in Primary Education with better school performance of students in a variety of subjects (Topor et al., 2010) and mostly, mathematics (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). Parental involvement is indirectly linked to the academic performance of students in primary schools, having a positive influence to the variables regarding their self-esteem (Rogers et al., 2009). Still, at a young age, it has a positive long-term effect on children's school performance in Secondary Education (Barnard, 2004).

The study of the literature also indicates that it contributes positively to the improvement of students' behavior at school. (Harris & Goudall, 2008). Parents' involvement in education contributes to the professional satisfaction of teachers (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; Sotiriou & Iordanidis, 2015). It has a positive effect on their morale (Eboka, 2017), on their commitment to school goals (Brault et al., 2014), on their sense of self-sufficiency (Petrogiannis & Penderi, 2014) and boosting their confidence in managing family relationships (Thompson et al., 2017). It is also an important means of personal development and self-improvement of parents (Povey et al., 2016).

## **School Climate**

According to the USA National School Climate Council (2007, 5), the school climate:

"is based on the patterns of experiences that people experience in the school environment and reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices , as well as the organizational structure of the school".

Nowadays the above definition is adopted by pioneers in school climate research (Cohen, 2013; Thapa et al., 2013) while most researchers (Cohen et al., 2009; Cohen, 2013; Thapa et al., 2013; Schueler et al., 2014) agree on the following four dimensions: a) physical and emotional safety, b) teaching and learning, c) social relations and d) physical/natural school environment. Other research distinguishes between school climate and school culture (norms, values, beliefs) which in the above definition, are not separated (Geraki, 2013).

The positive climate is strongly related to the school performance of the students (Macneil et al., 2009; Etxeberria et al., 2017) and is indirectly identified as a factor in strengthening students' commitment to school goals (Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2017; Manaf & Omar, 2017). Research links the positive climate, mainly in the areas of school-family communication and safety, with increased levels of parental involvement (Pourrajab et al., 2015).

The literature supports the important contribution of leadership in shaping a positive climate and therefore contribute in the productivity and efficiency of the organization (Macneil et al., 2009; Lezha, 2017). There are many dimensions and types of climate that are evaluated (Geraki, 2013). Greek and Cypriot teachers consider important the contribution of the Principals in shaping a favourable climate for learning and therefore as a factor of effectiveness of the School Management (Athanasoula-Reppa & Lazaridou, 2008; Geraki, 2013). However, the organizational climate of Greek schools in some dimensions is moderate, due to the increased bureaucratic work of principals (Lazaridou & Tsolakidis, 2011).

In Australia, parents describe the principal as the 'founder' of human relationships within the school, while focusing on his communication skills and his daily presence on the school premises (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014), creating the feeling that parents are welcome in the school unit environment. The staff of Greek schools maintain a positive attitude towards parental involvement and express the need for more school-family cooperation, giving parents the opportunity to participate actively in the educational process (Lazaridou & Gravani, 2015). The importance of the climate and the contribution of the school administration mainly in the areas of communication, information, encouraging participation in volunteer activities and active involvement with issues that concern the families of students (Povey et al., 2016), are listed as the most important strategies for enhancing school and family collaboration.

## **Method**

The study aimed to investigate the contribution of the principal in shaping a school climate that enhances parental involvement in Greek school, as there are few studies on the issue. The contemporary Greek educational reality, where parents and teachers often come into conflict, especially in primary education, is highlighted. The principal's contribution in shaping the school climate was assessed in terms of four dimensions of the school climate (Cohen et al., 2009; Cohen, 2013; Thapa et al., 2013; Schueler et al., 2014). Levels of parental involvement were assessed for five of Epstein's six dimensions (1995). The dimension of home learning guidance was excluded, as it was estimated that the respective proposals of the research tool are addressed exclusively to parents and guardians and not to teachers. Figure 1 shows a representation of the model on which the study was based.

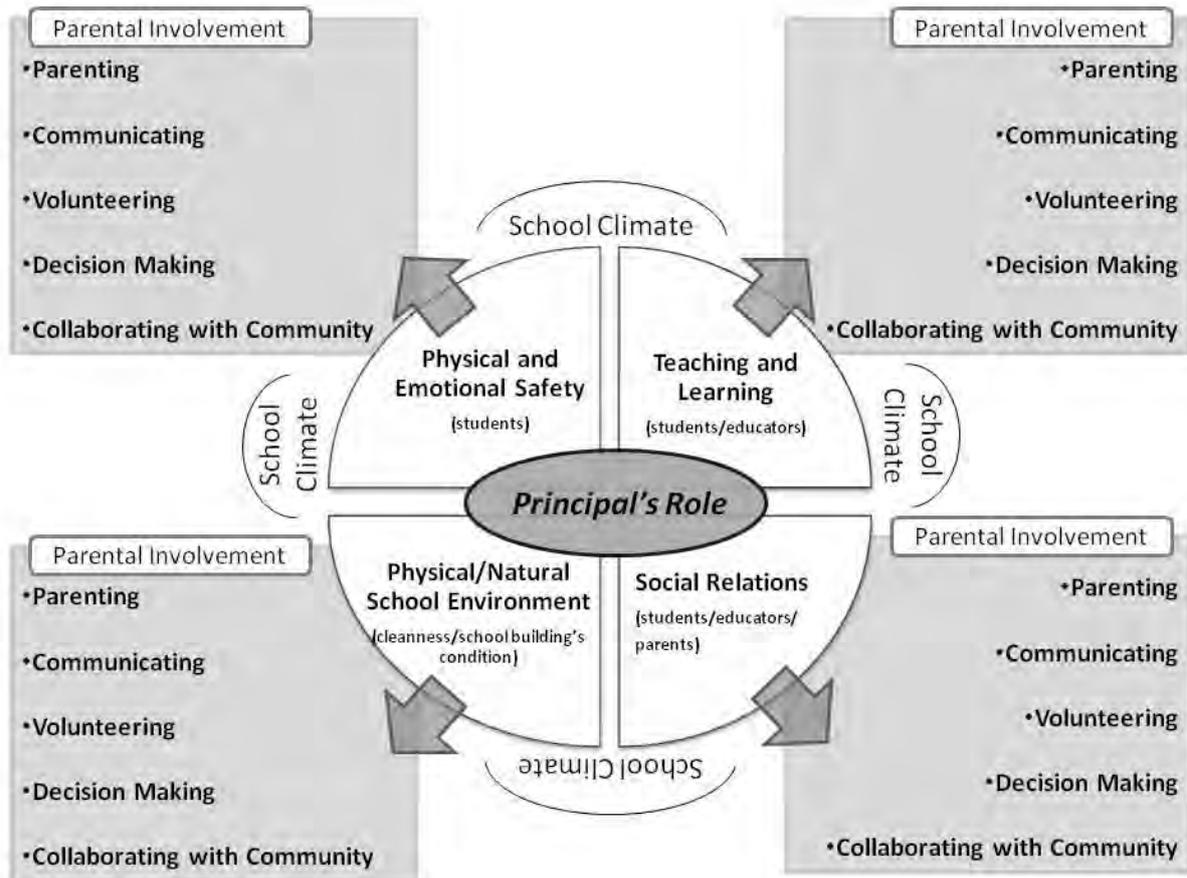


Figure 1. Model of the Study

Drawing upon a sample of 236 parents and teachers of the Primary Education of Western Thessaloniki in Greece, a structured questionnaire was developed to measure the principal's contribution in shaping the school climate and the levels of parental involvement. Mann-Whitney U statistical analyzes were performed to identify statistically significant differences in the views of the two groups, regarding the role played by the school principal in the school climate. Differences in the students' class were tested, as well as differences between the two groups in terms of parental involvement. Finally, through the Pearson correlation coefficient, the correlations concerning the contribution of the educational administration to the shaping of the axes of the school climate, in terms of five dimensions of parental involvement were investigated. Data processing and analysis was undertaken with SPSS (IBM Statistics version 24).

The research sample consisted of 236 participants of which 107 were teachers (45.3%) and 129 were parents/guardians of Primary Education students (54.7%). 300 questionnaires were sent, of which 236 were returned completed. Thus, the response rate was 78.6%. The individual characteristics of the teachers and the parents of the sample are presented in Table 1.

A questionnaire was used as a research tool which had 3 parts and a sum of 55 questions. To achieve content validity (Ouzouni & Nakakis, 2011), 15 teachers were asked for their views on the content and order of the questions, as these were published by Epstein et al. (2002). The tool's reliability was tested using Cronbach's

alpha. Questions that threatened the internal coherence of the subscales were excluded from the statistical analysis.

The first part of the questionnaire includes 7 closed-ended questions related to the demographics of the participants. For the construction of Part B, the relevant literature was studied, as well as questionnaires used in the research on the climate of the Whately Elementary School in Massachusetts, USA (National School Climate Center [NSCC], 2015).

Table 1. Sample's Demographic Characteristics

	Characteristics	N Teachers		N Parents/ Guardians	
		N	%	N	%
Participants	Teachers	107	100%	129	100%
	Parents/Guardians				
Gender	Female	76	71%	104	80.6%
	Male	31	29%	25	19.4%
Age	20-29 years	7	6.5%	1	0.8%
	30-39 years	11	10.3%	38	29.5%
	40-49 years	27	25.2%	79	61.2%
	50-59 years	62	57.9%	10	7.8%
	60-69 years	0	0%	1	0.8%
Marital Status	Single	17	15.9%	6	4.7%
	Married	82	76.6%	116	89.9%
	Divorced	8	7.5%	7	5.4%
Education	Gymnasium graduates	0	0%	4	3.1%
	Lyceum graduates	0	0%	37	28.7%
	Bachelor's degree	82	76.6%	61	47.3%
	Master's degree	23	21.5%	7	5.4%
	PhD degree	2	1.9%	1	0.8%
Primary school classes	First, second, third, grade			53	41.1%
	Fourth, fifth, sixth grade			76	58.9%
Teachers' teaching classes	Lower classes teachers	35	32.7%		
	Higher classes teachers	38	35.5%		
	Teachers of special subjects (foreign languages or music)	26	24.3%		
	Teachers of students with special needs and the all-day school	8	7.5%		
Total		107		129	

Part B was re-created with questions that explore the contribution of the educational administration in shaping the school climate axes. It originally included 26 questions one of which was excluded from the statistical analysis due to Cronbach's low value. Overall, the scale showed Cronbach's internal coherence coefficient  $\alpha = 0.944$  with internal coherence indices of the subscales (see Table 2). The answers were on a five-point Likert scale.

Part C of the research tool initially included 22 questions translated from the questionnaire Measure of School,

Family and Community Partnership of Epstein et al. (2002); it evaluated parental involvement in five of its six dimensions. 3 proposals were excluded from the statistical analysis due to low Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value. Overall, the five-axis scale of parental involvement showed a Cronbach's internal coherence factor of  $\alpha = 0.939$  with internal coherence indices of the subscales as shown in Table 2. Responses were on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 2. Questionnaire's Sub-Scales and Internal Consistency Indicators for Sub-Scales

Questionnaire sub-scales	Questions Number	Cronbach's $\alpha$
General Climate Valuation	5	0.81
<i>School Climate</i>		
Principal's role on emotional safety	6	0.85
Principal's role on teaching/learning	5	0.84
Principal's role on natural environment	1	
Principal's role on social relations	8	0.90
<i>Parental Involvement</i>		
Parenting	4	0.90
School-family communication	5	0.82
Parental volunteering	3	0.84
Parental participation in decision making	4	0.76
School-Community collaboration	3	0.86

## Results

The averages of the answers of the teachers ( $M = 4.27$ ) and the parents ( $M = 3.88$ ) for the general school climate, showed that the opinions of both groups are formed at satisfactory positive levels. From the Man-Whitney U statistical test, for two independent samples a higher valuation of the general school climate was found to be given by the teachers ( $M = 4.27$ ) than the parents of Primary School students ( $M = 3.88$ ),  $U = 4244$ ,  $p = 0.001$ .

The means ( $M$ ) and standard deviations ( $SD$ ) of teachers' and parents' responses to the role of the Directorate in shaping the four climate axes, as well as the results of the Mann-Whitney U test are presented in Table 3. The most positive views of teachers, as well as parents emerge regarding the contribution of the Principal in the field of safety and the natural environment. The lower test value for students' parents concerns principal's role in shaping social relations. There were statistically significant differences between the two groups of participants, regarding the role of the Principal in shaping all four axes of the school climate.

Regarding the teachers' classroom, the results of the Mann-Whitney U statistical tests did not show statistically significant differences between the two teacher control groups (one of the 3 lower classes and one of the 3 higher classes' teachers). Regarding the class the students were in, the parents of students of last three classes presented more positive views on the role of the Directorate in the areas of physical/emotional security, teaching/learning and social relations. The lowest values of both groups emerged in the axis of social relations. The results of the Mann-Whitney U statistical tests did not show statistically significant differences between the two control groups.

Table 3. Means -Standard Deviations and Mann-Whitney U test

	Principal's role on School Climate				Mann Whitney	Z	p
	Teacher		Parent/Guardian				
	M	SD	M	SD			
Principal's role on emotional safety	4.39	0.547	4.09	0.756	5409	-2.874	0.004*
Principal's role on teaching and learning	4.33	0.568	3.98	0.762	5008	-3.645	0.000*
Principal's role on natural environment	4.65	0.600	4.28	0.857	5181	-3.762	0.000*
Principal's role on social relations	4.04	0.619	3.74	0.867	5476	-2.735	0.006*

\* Statistical Significance at the level of  $p < 0.05$ ; Source: Koutsouveli

The views of both control groups on parental involvement are high in all five axes of parental involvement evaluated in the research. The means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of teachers' and parents' responses to parental involvement, as well as the results of the Mann-Whitney U test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Means - Standard Deviations and Mann-Whitney U test

	Principal's role in Parental Involvement				Mann Whitney	Z	p
	Teacher		Parent/Guardian				
	M	SD	M	SD			
Parenting	3.51	0.866	3.50	0.955	6774	-0.245	0.806
School-Family communication	4.27	0.669	3.87	0.835	4853	-3.944	0.000*
Parental volunteering	3.36	0.912	3.30	1.083	6822	-0.153	0.878
Parental participation in decision making	3.70	0.709	3.69	0.74	6899	-0.005	0.996
School-Community collaboration	3.90	0.826	3.47	0.94	5006	-3.663	0.000*

\*Statistical Significance at the level of  $p < 0.05$ ; Source: Koutsouveli

The highest evaluation for the group of teachers' results is in the school-family communication axis. Then there are the dimensions of the school unit's cooperation with the wider community and the involvement of parents in decision making. The evaluation indicator concerning the support of parental care is lower. The lowest average for the teacher team came from the parent volunteering axis. Respectively, for the group of parents the highest average was also presented in the school-family communication axis. Then there are the axes of parental involvement in decision making and support for parental care. The lowest scores are presented in the dimensions of the school unit's cooperation with the wider community and parent volunteering. There were, as observed,

statistically significant differences between the two groups investigated regarding the dimensions of the school's communication with the students' families and the cooperation of the school unit with the wider school community.

To investigate the correlations of the research variables, the linearity of the relationships was first checked through scatter plots. Only positive linear correlations were found - some weaker ones, however - which allowed us to proceed with the calculation of the degree of correlation of the variables, using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The correlation of the role of the educational administration in shaping the axis of the natural environment with the five axes of parental involvement was checked through the correlation coefficient Spearman's rho, as the axis of the natural environment was a categorical and not a continuous variable. In addition, the Spearman correlation coefficient is widely used in non-parametric distributions.

High correlations were found regarding the role of educational directorate in the axis of teaching/learning with all dimensions of parental involvement. The strongest correlations of the study are found in the relationship between the contribution of school administration in shaping social relationships in the school environment, with the five dimensions of parental involvement. Table 5 presents the results of these correlations

Table 5. Principal's role on School Climate and Parental Involvement

		Parenting	School-Family Communication	Parental Volunteering	Parental Participation in Decision Making	School-Community Collaboration
Principal's role on emotional safety	Pearson Correlation	0.587**	0.589**	0.546**	0.475**	0.598**
Principal's role on teaching/learning	Pearson Correlation	0.659**	0.633**	0.626**	0.517**	0.669**
Principal's role on natural environment	Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient	0.391**	0.439**	0.333**	0.326**	0.464**
Principal's role on social relations	Pearson Correlation	0.751**	0.702**	0.698**	0.524**	0.660**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); Source: Koutsouveli

## Discussion

### Identification of the Principal's Contribution on School Climate

The present empirical study indicated that the views of teachers and parents of students in schools of Western Thessaloniki go hand in hand and are formed positively at high values. This is a particularly encouraging finding as the positive school climate is linked to the effectiveness of the school unit (Murphy, 2013) and to the students'

school performance (MacNeil et al., 2009; Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2017). Other studies link the positive climate with students' commitment to the goals of the school unit and the development of a sense of 'belonging' to the school community (Battistich et al., 2003; Manaf & Omar, 2017). The findings regarding the general school climate of the school units are related to previous findings of Pashiardis (2000) in Cyprus and strengthen the belief that in the school units of the Greek and Cypriot territory, the school climate presents satisfactory positive levels shaping the prospects for the efficient operation of schools.

The teachers and the parents of the students seem satisfied with the actions of the school executives of West Thessaloniki in the development of physical and emotional security, teaching and learning, the natural environment and the social relations of the school ecosystem (community). The conclusion is that in Primary Education, principals have more room to better coordinate areas related to the school climate, while, because of the younger age of students, they are in a more direct contact with both children and teachers and, also, with parents and the wider school unit. On the contrary Lazaridou and Tsolakidis (2011), found moderate level of organizational climate in secondary school teachers.

The more positive views of teachers arise in terms of the contribution of management to the consolidation of physical and emotional security and the development of an attractive physical environment of educational units. Previous findings on the natural environment of schools in Cyprus, by Pashiardis (2000, p.233) -in a sample of teachers and principals of Primary and Secondary Education- but also by Pashiardis (2005, p.11) -in a sample of primary school students- showed dissatisfaction of the researched in terms of building infrastructure, cleanliness, condition and shaping of the natural environment of schools. Also, the cleanliness, maintenance and aesthetics of school buildings are the first axes that research focused on the atmosphere of the school environment (Perry, 1908). It is worth noting the difficulty that is presented on the management of the school's natural environment by the school executives, due to lack of resources, as Greece is going through a prolonged (by the pandemic) period of economic recession. Despite the difficulties, it seems that priority was given by the principals of the surveyed schools to the formation of a better natural environment, in collaboration with the Municipalities of Western Thessaloniki that are responsible for the school buildings.

Parents highly value the contribution of managers as well, in the dimensions of physical/emotional security and the physical environment of schools. Principals' interest in the physical and emotional security of the human resources of educational organizations, in addition to the efficiency of the organizations and the high performance of students (Etxeberria et al., 2017), are also associated with reduced incidents of violence and harassment (Thapa et al., 2013).

Indicators concerning the role of principals in shaping social relationships in the school environment are lower for parents. As research shows the importance of the role of educational administration in cultivating and supporting healthy, positive relationships among all those involved in school life (Griffith, 2001; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014), it is particularly important to consider at the urging of Lazaridou and Tsolakidis (2011), regarding the need for the training of executives focusing mainly on human relations management and less on bureaucratic procedures. In addition, social relations are not easily manageable in a time of economic (and social/health) crisis, such as the one our country is going through.

### **Differentiations on School Climate between Teachers and Parents/guardians**

The present research shows statistically significant differences in the views of the two groups. Teachers present more positive views on the role of administration in shaping all dimensions of the school climate than the students' parents. We can assume that the teachers of the schools perceive more directly the efforts and actions of the principals, in terms of improving the indicators of the school climate. In addition, they are the first recipients of changes and reforms promoted by the central administration and have an impact on the internal policy of each school unit, experiencing more intensely the interventions of the administration in various aspects of school life. At the same time, the interventions of the parents at the level of Primary Education in Greece are frequent and the principals try to keep a delicate balance among all the stakeholders. The finding indicates the need for more intensive efforts, on the part of the administration and management, in approaching parents, creating a welcoming environment, improving the quality of the relationships with families, effective cooperation, parental involvement in decision-making (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Lazaridou & Gravani, 2015; Povey et al., 2016; Dove et al., 2018), but also the need for parents, especially in Primary school, to intervene discreetly or, at least, mainly in pedagogical matters, which concern, mostly and exclusively, the teachers. At the same time, there is a need for frequent evaluation of school climate indicators - taking into account the views of parents - as a means of feedback on the role of the school executives in improving the school climate (Cohen, 2013; Berkowitz et al., 2017).

### **Differentiations on the Axes of School Climate between Parents of Students of Lower and Higher School Classes**

The results of the present study show that the views of the parents of students of higher classes regarding the role of the principal in the areas of physical/emotional security, teaching and learning and social relations are more positive than the views of parents/guardians of students of lower classes. This may be interpreted as follows: the parents of older students have overcome their first fears about the role of the school in the development of their children and have developed confidence in the abilities of the headteacher in everything related to the respective axes. However, according to Berkowitz et al. (2017) the most positive views on the overall atmosphere of schools are presented by the parents of Preschool students. It is possible that the lack of evaluation of the performance of students in Preschool education in relation to the other school levels affects the formation of quality relationships.

### **Identification of the Principal's Contribution to Parental Involvement**

#### *Differentiations in Parental Involvement between Teachers and Parents / Guardians*

Teachers and parents of primary school students in Western Thessaloniki present particularly positive views on the active involvement of parents in the educational process on all five dimensions that were evaluated in the research. This finding is a fundamental issue for educational practice and school improvement.

#### *School-family Communication*

Teachers seem to value the school-family communication axis very positively. Similar findings appear in the

study of Koutrouba et al. (2009), which argues that Greek teachers generally have a positive attitude towards parental involvement. However, in terms of the school-family communication axis, there are statistically significant differences between the two groups of respondents, with teachers presenting more positive views than students' parents. It is argued that parents, although maintaining positive attitudes about school-family interaction, find it difficult to be activated in this direction (Antonopoulou et al., 2010). This may be due to many reasons. It could be that interventions may be sought in the work of teachers that are not accepted by them or that their daily work does not allow them to communicate frequently and effectively, although the role of the principal in establishing positive climate is considered important (Griffith, 2001; Patrikakou, 2008).

#### *Parents' Volunteering*

The views of both teachers and parents regarding the axis of parental volunteering are lower than in all other indicators. Therefore, in the units of Western Thessaloniki, more opportunities should be created for families to participate in the activities and the daily life of the school and to strengthen parental volunteering as an important dimension of parental involvement (Epstein, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Berkowitz et al., 2017). The research of Pnevmatikos et al. (2008) points out that Greek parents often confuse participation in school activities with the concept of volunteering or participation in decision-making, which results in parents volunteering to assist in the schools to be mainly the members of the Association of Parents and Guardians. Epstein (1986) argues that the presence of volunteering parents in schools encourages teachers to seek the cooperation and involvement of even more parents. The personal experience of the researchers shows that a small number of volunteering parents are utilized by the schools in the recent years in the distribution of school meals to students. In general, the culture of volunteering does not characterise the Greek school but also the society and the results of this lack are obvious.

#### *School Cooperation with the Wider Community*

Statistically significant differences between the two groups of respondents arise, in addition, in the axis of the school's cooperation with the wider community, as teachers present more positive views. Teachers may consider the contribution of the wider community to their work to be important, as the wider community of the school unit is the 'source' of families and, therefore, of the students attending school (Bartell, 2010). At the same time, it can be assumed that the teachers, in the context of their work, collaborate with the Municipalities, local businesses, management services of local monuments of historical or cultural interest, resulting in a more positive view of the school's cooperation with the local community.

### **Correlation of School Climate Dimensions and Parental Involvement**

#### *The Contribution of School Administration to the Axis of Physical/emotional Safety*

The present study shows strong positive correlations between the contribution of the educational administration and management in shaping the dimensions of the climate with the axes of parental involvement. The contribution of the school administration to the axis of physical/emotional security is satisfactorily linked to the support of

parental care, school-family cooperation and communication and parental volunteering. The correlation with the axis of parents' participation in decision-making is lower, while the highest correlation is with the axis of the school's cooperation with the wider community. Similar findings emerge from other studies (Mapp, 2003; Povey et al., 2016), supporting the essential role of school management and administration in creating a safe, healthy, welcoming and supportive environment, in which the mutual respect and beneficial interaction with the children's families and the wider community of the school unit take place. Also, the axis of safety is directly related to parental involvement (Goldkind & Farmer, 2013).

#### *The Contribution of School Administration to the Axis of Teaching and Learning*

The contribution of administration to the axis of teaching and learning presents equally satisfactory correlations with all axes of parental involvement. The findings show that the role of the principal in the organization and management of an effective school with appropriate logistical infrastructure, expectations for the progress of children, continuous support of teachers' work, recognition of the contribution of all members of the school community in the implementation vision of the unit, is important and influences the point of view of parents, positively affecting their involvement in the educational process and the cultivation of a climate that favors interaction with students' families. The results are related to the findings of Pourrajab et al. (2015). The importance of the findings may mainly come from the fact that in the Greek educational system principals are not directly involved in the teaching and learning of students, but only creating the conditions for a favorable educational process. At the same time they teach a few hours. The number of teaching hours is determined by the number of students in the school. However, in the present study, when correlating the contribution of the educational administration to the climate with the involvement of parents, the correlations were found to be much stronger. It seems that the efforts of the principals in cultivating a climate that favors the interaction with the students' families, are perceived positively by the teachers and parents who participated in the study and are associated with their active participation in the education of the children.

#### *The Contribution of School Administration to the Axis of Physical/natural Environment*

The role of the principal in shaping the physical environment of the school units shows positive correlations, however weaker (than the other dimensions of the climate), with the axes of parental involvement. Therefore, teachers and parents consider the role of the principal more important in shaping other factors and not so much the natural environment in the improvement of which they are not directly involved. In Greece the financing of the schools is done by the School Committees of the Municipalities and concerns all the school units, the principals of which do not have many possibilities to shape the natural environment that they would like and this has started to be more widely understood and accepted. Other research reduces the physical environment of the school unit as an important axis of the school atmosphere, both for teachers (Pashiardis, 2000) and students (Pashiardis, 2005).

#### *The Contribution of School Administration to the Axis of School Cooperation with the Wider Community*

Moderate correlations were found in the axis of the school's cooperation with the wider community. The

cooperation of the Directorate with the Municipalities and the School Committee that undertakes the cleaning, maintenance and aesthetics of the school buildings will probably project to the society a better image of the school that may have a positive effect on the attitudes of the wider neighborhood, the families of the new students or visitors. But it does not seem to have a significant effect on school-family collaboration. On the contrary, better preparation is suggested to prospective educators and future principals- leaders to conduct effective family and community involvement programs and practices (Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

### *Social Relations Development*

Particularly important is the fact that the role of the principal in the axis of social relations, as a factor of parental involvement, is recognized by both parents and teachers who participated in the research. The highest correlations arise between the principal's contribution to the dimension of social relations and the axes of parental care support, school-family communication and parent volunteering. Balanced social relationships obviously pave the way for successful school-family communication and further contribute to the parents' intention to attend school as a volunteer or to accept the school unit's efforts to support parental care. The dimension of school-family communication is considered by Greek parents as the strongest axis of their involvement that is found to affect the school performance of children (Pnevmatikos et al., 2008).

Similarly, the findings of previous studies highlight the role of administration and management in successful communication, in creating positive interpersonal relationships and in cultivating trust (Griffith, 2001; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Povey et al., 2016; Lezha, 2017). At the same time, its coordinating role is emphasized, in 'learning' to cooperate all participants in the learning process (Cohen et al., 2009). In conclusion, the fact that the overall results of the study concern Western Thessaloniki, an area with a lower standard of living compared to other areas of Thessaloniki, proves to be very important and promising.

## **Conclusion**

It is positive that the research found satisfactory levels of school climate in the Primary schools of Western Thessaloniki, despite the existence of statistically significant differences between teachers and parents. Thus, the principal emerges as the main shaper of the conditions and atmosphere of the educational organization, in order to have a systematic collaboration of the school with the families of the students. In addition, the study shows statistically significant differences between teachers and parents/guardians regarding the levels of parental involvement.

The need to train teachers and prospective principals on the subject must be emphasized (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Patrikakou, 2008; MacNeil et al., 2009; Cohen et al., 2009; Berkowitz et al., 2017). Cultivating and maintaining a good school climate must be a priority for all. The principal is responsible together with the teachers to establish a personal form of communication with the parents, to encourage and motivate them, to participate actively in the school. Epstein's exhortation is clear: "The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families" (1995, 701).

## Notes

1. The use of the words management, administration, executives as well as principal, director, headteacher are used alternatively in the text as in the Greek language there are no differences between the concepts.
2. It is noted that the term parent/parental includes that of a guardian as well.

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### Author Information

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Eleftheria Koutsouveli

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1463-1025>

Primary School Teacher, MSc

3rd Primary School of Stavroupoli

Navarinou 1, 56430, Stavroupoli, Thessaloniki  
Greece

Akrivoula Geraki

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1763-9516>

Secondary School Teacher, PhD

Consultant Professor

Hellenic Open University

School of Humanities

Par. Aristotle 18, 263 35, Patras

Greece

Contact e-mail: [ageraki@sch.gr](mailto:ageraki@sch.gr)

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