



SUPPORTING EARLY TRANSITIONS. HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP IN GREEK EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

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Abstract:

Transition has always been considered to be a critical period for every person, especially in early childhood, which is characterized by a multitude of transitions. One of such is the transition from the home to the school environment. In this kind of transition, the practices followed by early educators play an important role aiming to integrate infants and toddlers into the structures of preschool education and supporting them as much as possible. The purpose of this study is to approach the issue of infants' and toddlers' transition from the home to the preschool environment, through the prism of investigating collaborative relationships with the families, as well as the search for and utilization of appropriate practices in this direction. The research involved preschool educators (N=78) from public and private preschool education settings in the prefecture of Thessaloniki. The early educators were invited to answer questions regarding home-school partnership and communication. The aim was also to identify appropriate practices with the idea of utilizing them in the context of the transition. The results of the survey reveal frequent communication between parents and early educators, and highlight the importance of cooperation between them during the transitional period.

Keywords: transition, home-school partnership, early childhood education and care, practices

1. Introduction

Despite the increased interest of the international educational and scientific community regarding the issue of transition from home to preschool, in Greece there is a limited number of studies on the subject (Sakellariou, Anagnostopoulou & Strati, 2020; Sakellariou *et al.*, 2018; Sakellariou, *et al.*, 2019). Most studies concerning transition focus mostly on the child's transition from kindergarten to primary school, where children are called upon to move from a child-oriented to a more teacher-centred, formal program (Vecchiotti, 2003). Additionally, studies that have explored the child's transition experiences from the family's perspective appear to be particularly limited (Pianta, Kraft-Sayre, Rimm-Kaufman, Gercke, & Higgins, 2001). Despite the fact that the contribution of parents to the educational process is considered particularly beneficial, both for early educators and for the infants and toddlers themselves, cooperation between the two environments seems to be missing from the processes of infants and toddlers' transition to the early years setting environment. Therefore, the design and implementation of educational practices that encourage collaborative relationships between home and preschool settings is considered particularly important, as the effectiveness of transition practices can be attributed in part to the tendency of early educators to strengthen parental participation (Schulting, Malone & Dodge, 2005). In this way, infants and toddlers are better prepared for a successful entry into preschool education centers, smoothing the transition process (McIntyre, Eckert *et al.*, 2007).

Recent literature highlights that the transition from home to preschool is a significant developmental process involving emotional, social, and relational adjustments for both children and families. Contemporary research increasingly conceptualizes this transition not as a single event but as a process occurring across multiple ecological contexts, shaped by interactions between children, families, educators, and institutional practices. Studies emphasize that the quality of relationships between families and preschool educators plays a crucial role in children's socio-emotional adjustment and sense of security in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. For example, research examining the organization of preschool entry found that supportive transition practices—such as gradual entry, communication with families, and opportunities for relationship-building between teachers and parents—can strengthen attachment relationships and facilitate smoother adaptation to preschool environments (Anderson Sør *et al.*, 2023).

More recent reviews and empirical studies also underline the importance of collaborative transition practices and structured routines that help children become familiar with new environments before formal enrolment. A systematic scoping review of research on children under three transitioning from home to early childhood education found that pre-enrolment visits, gradual orientation periods, and close collaboration between parents and educators are consistently associated with better adjustment and emotional well-being. These studies highlight the concept of a “caring triangle” among children, parents, and educators, which ensures continuity of emotional support between

home and preschool contexts (Drugli *et al.*, 2023; Nystad *et al.*, 2021; Revilla *et al.*, 2024). The literature also suggests that the transition experience is influenced by broader ecological factors—including family stress, policy contexts, and social conditions—reinforcing the need to view early educational transitions as complex, multi-layered processes rather than isolated institutional events.

Infants' and toddlers' upcoming entry into daycare, and subsequently into day care centers, constitutes a complex process of change that requires their smooth integration into a different reality. A reality in which they must respond to new expectations and demands (Margetts, 2004; Ramey & Ramey, 2010). Adaptation to these new circumstances occurs through the child's movement from a familiar aspect of their life to an unfamiliar one, thus defining the concept of transition (McIntyre, Blacher & Baker, 2006). Although it is a broad concept, which accepts a multitude of theoretical interpretations, it is found that, according to the way it is approached, from the perspective of the epistemological or ideological sphere, it can take on psychological, cultural, social, mental, emotional and, of course, educational dimensions (Sakelariou & Besi, 2014),

1.1 Transition Models

In order to investigate the issue of school transition, various theoretical models have been developed, which are utilized by a large portion of school systems, with regard to facilitating the process of transition and adaptation of the child to the school context (Sakellariou, Strati & Anagnostopoulou, 2015). The ecological-developmental model treats the school and the family as organic parts of the same system that interact and are interdependent. More specifically, this specific model considers transition as a continuous and uninterrupted process that is influenced by a set of factors concerning the child, which are interdependent and cause changes, especially during the first years of the child's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). On the other hand, the skills/competences model argues that in the process of adaptation to a new school level, factors related to the child's individual traits and skills (e.g. the child's temperament, ethnicity, readiness, level of maturity, etc.) as well as his academic and cognitive skills are taken into account (Pianta & Rimm-Kauffman, 2000). For this specific model, the child's adaptation to the new educational context is identified with school readiness, with the claim that the latter constitutes a personal characteristic that a child possesses or does not possess upon entering primary school, as family stress model focuses on the smooth adaptation and regulation of the child (DeMarco, Ford-Gilboe, Friedmann, *et al.*, 2000) and attempts to examine in detail how well a family can initially adapt to a change, and then to explore how it will recover its strength after a crisis (Connelly, 2007). The stress of adaptation during the transition is reduced due to the supportive role that the educator is called upon to take on, who seeks to help the family cope with the stress in the transition process, through the implementation of supportive interventions in order to facilitate the child, during the transition from the family to the preschool environment, to be exposed

to the new reality that he is called upon to experience (Byrne-MacNamee, 2020; Sakellariou, *et al.*, 2016).

1.2 The Role of the Educator in Toddlers' Transition from Home to Early Education

The primary contact with preschool education and training constitutes one of the first transitions experienced by the vast majority of infants and toddlers (Leblond *et al.*, 2022). Entering into this new reality is related to the gradual development of their independence, which occurs while moving from the protective family context to a broader social environment consisting of a set of data and expectations, different from their personal experience (Prino *et al.*, 2022; Vorkapić, 2021). During this period, there is a “*continuous process of mutual adaptation of children, families and schools*” (Petriwskyj *et al.*, 2005, p. 56), therefore it is important for both parents and early educators to prepare for the changes that are expected to occur and to support infants and toddlers, in order to experience this early transition as smoothly as possible (Brooker, 2016). However, for many infants and toddlers, this transition is not experienced in a gentle way. As they enter the new environment, they face new demands, positively or negatively affecting their adaptation (Leblond *et al.*, 2022). The formation of positive experiences creates positive feelings about school and is associated with higher academic achievements, while also influencing the school course and the way in which the infants and toddlers will experience the beginning of their future school experience (Azizah, 2023). It is therefore supported that the initial experience of transition is crucial for the future development of infants and toddlers, while at the same time, creating a high-quality early education setting promotes infants and toddlers' learning and well-being (Britto, Yoshikawa & Boller, 2011).

In this effort, the role of the educator is considered of paramount importance in supporting infants and toddlers in the adaptation stage (Sakellariou & Anagnostopoulou, 2020; Sakellariou *et al.*, 2021). Infants and toddlers need a companion in the unprecedented situation they are experiencing, a safe base, which they will seek in order to explore the new environment and build relationships, both with educators and with their peers (Ereky-Stevens *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, the family continues to be an important bond for infants and toddlers and at the same time a primary field of learning (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2019). These two institutions are directly connected to the child, sharing responsibility for children's learning, ensuring a substantial continuity, from home to school and vice versa, that is, the two most important environments of young children (Penteri & Petrogiannis, 2013). Therefore, parents and early educators are called upon to develop relationships of communication, cooperation and mutual understanding, in order to provide a caring and educational environment, adapted to the needs of each child (Busch *et al.*, 2018; Lazzari *et al.*, 2020). The formation of conditions of substantial communication between school and family intensifies the degree of parental involvement in the educational programs that are designed (Bagakis, *et al.*, 2006), highlighting the decisive role played by the family. Therefore, approaches that aim to improve adaptation follow the ecological model and emphasize the promotion of positive

relationships between parents, educators, and children (Kang, Horn & Palmer, 2016; DeCaro & Worthman, 2011). Parents, through their interaction with educators, better understand school policies and practices, while at the same time acquiring knowledge and skills to understand the learning needs of their children, shaping a supportive learning environment in which children feel parental support (Mashburn *et al.*, 2018; Torres-Rendón & Zinsser, 2022).

1.2 Practices that Support Transition and Adaptation to the Educational Setting

Infants' and toddlers' upcoming entry into day care settings constitutes a significant change for them, as from the first years of their lives, they are called upon to experience the transition from family, jumping from one social group to another (Brooker, 2016; Zehbe, 2021). Such a process is expected to disrupt their readiness for school, as the way in which each baby and toddler manages the transitional phase and their subsequent adaptation to the new environment varies, due to the early experiences they have acquired up to this point in their life, but also due to the particular individual characteristics that distinguish them (Petrogiannis, 2012). For this reason, experts and researchers have made efforts to discover practices that will make the transition smoother, turning it into a positive experience for each child (Purtell *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, practices for transitioning to the preschool setting can be divided into three main groups: informational practices, where the setting informs parents about what is happening before and during the transition, educational practices that aim to promote necessary skills for infants' and toddlers' readiness in the new educational environment, and practices focused on creating positive relationships between the parties involved (Mashburn, *et al.*, 2018).

The majority of settings seem to utilize more than one practice for the smooth transition of infants and toddlers to the setting (Cook & Coley, 2017; Sotiropoulou, Katsiada & Bercovits, 2022). Some practices are simple, such as sending an information leaflet home or an email, while others are time-consuming and more complex. For example, early educators in some settings visit children who are about to start at their homes (Vorkapić, 2023; Puccioni, Froiland & Moeyaert, 2020). In this way, they get to know the parents, collect important information about the child, understand the dynamics between parent and child in a familiar environment, such as their home, and better prepare the child through a first acquaintance in their place. In turn, parents and children visit the school during the summer to get to know the place, further preparing the child for the upcoming start of the school year (Mashburn *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, in a study conducted by Mihic (2016), in kindergartens in Novi Sad, Serbia, it was observed that one of the most common practices is home visits by kindergarten teachers to children who will soon start kindergarten. The main purpose of this practice is for children to feel that they are transitioning to an environment that is familiar, thus reducing the level of uncertainty and anxiety among children and parents when enrolling in kindergarten (Vorkapić, 2023).

In our country, the most common practice that seems to be followed at the beginning of the school year in day care centers, and for a period not exceeding two weeks, concerns the possibility given to the early educator to implement a more flexible schedule for the toddlers to stay in the preschool center, which proves to be particularly helpful for children who are starting to attend this level for the first time (Vlachou, 2019). However, some research supports that the toddler's usual adaptation to preschool causes problems in the children's school career, such as their absence from the school environment for a longer period than with the adaptation, in which a practice of "active" acquaintance of parents, children and educators is applied (Markström & Simonsson, 2017). Based on this specific practice, toddlers stay at the day care centre for a short time, together with their parents, for the first days of the start of the school year. In this way, toddlers feel more secure to start and get to know the setting's environment, while parents and early educators gradually get to know each other better. Parents feel active in the process and are not overwhelmed by anxiety. They know the environment and the pedagogical staff, and feel confident in supporting their toddlers' important transition. At the same time, educators observe the interactions of the parent and child, collecting more information about the character, temperament and interests of the child (Markström & Simonsson, 2017). Something similar seems to be embraced by the Croatian educational system, in which preschool educators encourage parents to remain in the classroom with their child. Although this practice seems to be particularly effective (according to the testimonies of educators), it is rarely applied for more than a week, because there is not the luxury of time for them to dedicate themselves individually to each child and their parents (Grozde, Zorec & Vorkapić, 2021).

Research on school transitions highlights the importance of supportive relationships and communication between parents and educators at all times, but especially during the transition, in order to provide the best possible adjustment outcome for the child (DeMeo-Cook & Levine-Coley, 2017). Approaches that aim to improve transition follow the ecological model and emphasize the promotion of positive relationships between parents, educators and children (Correia & Marque-Pinto, 2016; Mashburn *et al.*, 2018). In this way, they feel that their opinion counts in the process of their child's transition to the school context and maintain an active role in it. A study examining the beliefs and practices of Chinese immigrant parents' involvement during their children's transition to kindergarten in the United States revealed that, although the immigrant background limited the participation of Chinese immigrant parents, they themselves were very aware of the importance of parental involvement in supporting their children's transition to kindergarten, and therefore, actively adapted their beliefs and practices for their educational involvement (Kong, Zhang, *et al.*, 2023).

2. Research Methodology

This research aimed at gathering and analyzing the required information in order for the researcher to understand more deeply the issue of utilizing good practices in the context

of transition. Based on the nature of the research problem and the questions raised, data collection through questionnaires and their quantitative and qualitative analysis was chosen (Creswell, 2016).

2.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to approach the issue of infants and toddlers' transition from the family to the preschool environment. At the same time, it seeks to investigate collaborative relationships with the infants and toddlers' families and, above all, to utilize good practices in the context of the transition within the early years' settings.

For the selection of the research method, it was imperative to first determine the appropriate research tool, which in this research process is the questionnaire, as the most appropriate way of collecting and analyzing data was considered a questionnaire that consisted of open and closed questions. Therefore, a mixed-method approach for the analysis of the data was chosen. This choice is recognized for its objectivity, as the measurement and analysis of the data does not involve the subjective interpretation of the researcher (Galani, 2017; Creswell, 2016). In this direction, an attempt was made to investigate the degree of occurrence of the phenomenon through the characteristics of the population studied, by applying statistical analyses.

2.2 Research Design

In this study, the correlational research design was used, as the aim was to correlate some variables and to check the degree of their mutual influence. More specifically, in this case, we wanted to see if the issue of infants and toddlers' transition from the family to the preschool environment affects the cooperation between these environments, as well as the practices followed within the framework of the transitional process. More specifically, we utilized an explanatory correlational design in order to investigate the relationships between independent and dependent variables.

2.3 Sample

The participants of the survey (N=78) were female early childhood and kindergarten teachers working in daycare centers and kindergartens in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki. Regarding the age of the sample, most participants were between 20 and 30 (N=24, 30.8%) and 41-50 years old (N=24, 30.8%). Also, the majority of the sample were graduates of Technological Educational Institute (TEI) (N=26, 33.3%) and worked in a Public Daycare Center (N=30, 39%). The majority of the sample stated that the preschool centers in which they work are based in the Western Thessaloniki area (N=44, 56.4%), and they work as permanent or permanent contract teachers (N=47, 60.3%) with experience between 11-20 years (N=39, 50%). Finally, most educators reported that the age of the children they host in their classroom is between 3-4 years old (N=30, 38.5%).

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Demographic variables	N	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Women	78	100%
Men	0	0 %
Age		
20-30	24	30.8%
31-40	21	26.9%
41-50	24	30.8%
51-60	9	11.5%
Educational level		
Vocational Secondary School Diploma	12	15.4%
University degree (BSc)	21	26.9%
TEI degree	26	33.3%
Postgraduate	19	24.4%
Doctorate	0	0%
Work structure		
Public Daycare Center	30	39.0%
Private Daycare Center	26	33.8%
Public Kindergarten	14	18.2%
Private Kindergarten	7	9.1%
Area of activity		
Eastern Thessaloniki	22	28.2%
Western Thessaloniki	44	56.4%
Thessaloniki Center	12	15.4%
Age of children in the classroom		
2-3	28	35.9%
3-4	30	38.5%
4-6	20	25.6%
Years of Service		
1-10	1	1.3%
11-20	39	50.0%
21-30	27	34.6%
30 +	8	10.3%
Employment relationship		
Permanent or permanent contract	47	60.3%
Substitute or fixed-term contract employee	31	39.7%

2.4 Research Tools

For the purpose of the research, the use of a structured questionnaire was chosen, which was compiled by the researcher herself. In order to investigate its suitability, a pilot application was carried out, and its psychometric characteristics were measured. It includes a specific series of questions, which are directly related to the topic under study. The questionnaire questions were on a Likert scale (Creswell, 2016). The response options

were 1 (Not at all), 2 (A little), 3 (Moderately), 4 (A lot), 5 (Very much). The duration of completing the questionnaires did not exceed 15 to 20 minutes.

2.5 Data Collection Process

The questionnaire was created in a digital format with the aim of immediate, easy and mass sending and completion. It was distributed electronically to all public and private preschool and education units of the Prefecture of Thessaloniki, with the aim of being answered voluntarily and anonymously by the early educators. Its completion by all participants lasted one month. This was followed by the collection of research data and subsequently the coding and application of their statistical processing (Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 2016).

2.6 Research Findings

Table 2 shows that most participants stated that they communicate very often with parents in the context of the infant and toddler transition from the family to the school environment (N=35, 44.9%) and consider parent-teacher cooperation to be very important during the child's adaptation process to the new preschool environment (N=64, 82.1%).

Also, the majority of the sample stated that they strongly agree with the view that parents need to be actively involved in the process of their child's transition to daycare/kindergarten (N=33, 42.3%), but also with the view that it is important to encourage communication with parents during the transition period (N=40, 51.3%) (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of closed questionnaire responses

	Never	Rarely	Often	Fairly Often	Always
Q1. How often do you communicate with parents in the context of the child's transition from the family to the school environment?	1 1.3%	6 7.7%	14 17.9%	22 28.2%	35 44.9%
Q2. To what extent do you consider parent-teacher cooperation important during the child's adaptation process to the new preschool environment?	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	4 5.1%	10 12.8%	64 82.1%
Q3. How often do you seek school-family collaboration during the transition period?	0 0.0%	4 5.1%	11 14.1%	27 34.6%	36 46.2%
Q4. To what extent do you believe that parents cooperate with the school with the aim of a smooth transition for their children?	2 2.6%	9 11.5%	37 47.4%	23 29.5%	7 9.0%
Q5. To what extent do you encourage communication with parents during the transition period?	0 0.0%	1 1.3%	9 11.5%	28 35.9%	40 51.3%
Q6. To what extent do you believe that parents need to be actively involved in the process of their child's transition to kindergarten/preschool?	0 0.0%	4 5.1%	19 24.4%	33 42.3%	22 28.2%
Q7. To what extent do you involve parents in the daily program during the transition period?	8 10.3%	13 16.7%	30 38.5%	21 26.9%	6 7.7%
Q8. How often do you think children face difficulties adapting to the preschool environment?	0 0.0%	6 7.7%	29 37.2%	34 43.6%	9 11.5%

Regarding the practices used during the transition period, it was observed that the practices that were found to be utilized to a greater extent by the majority of participants were the completion of an information leaflet by the parents with important information about the child before the child starts school (N=28, 35.9%), the introduction of the child and the family to the educator at the preschool center before the child starts school (N=28, 36.4%), the sending of instructions/clarifications regarding the process of adaptation to the school environment (N=28, 36.4%), the visit of the child/parents to the school before the child starts school (N=29, 37.7%) and the flexibility in the child's stay in the school environment during the first period (N=47, 61%) (Table 3).

Furthermore, collaboration with parents, discussion of their concerns/concerns regarding the transition process (N=33, 42.9%) and personal or telephone communication between the educator and the child's family (N=31, 40.3%) are practices that are used to a significant extent by the educators, while they seem to use school-family connection activities to a moderate degree/frequency (N=22, 28.6%). More specifically, the parents' stay in the classroom with the child during the first period of schooling (N=45, 58.4%) and the sending of audiovisual material to the family from the child's first days in the school environment with the aim of providing feedback and encouraging child-family discussion (N=27, 35.1%) are included in the practices that are almost not utilized at all during the transition period by the majority of the sample.

Finally, most educators stated that their communication with parents was limited to a moderate degree/frequency due to the COVID-19 pandemic (N=23, 29.5%) and they consider that the training or educational seminars they have attended regarding the transition from the family to the school environment are important auxiliary tools (N=33, 42.3%).

Table 3: Distribution responses

	Never	Rarely	Often	Fairly Often	Always
E9.1. Completion of an information leaflet by parents with important information about the child before the start of his/her studies	9 11.5%	13 16.7%	10 12.8%	18 23.1%	28 35.9%
E9.2. Familiarization of the child and the family with the educator at the preschool center before the start of their studies	7 9.1%	6 7.8%	13 16.9%	23 29.9%	28 36.4%
E9.3. Child/parent visit to the school premises before the child starts school	3 3.9%	14 18.2%	9 11.7%	22 28.6%	29 37.7%
E9.4. Collaborating with parents and discussing their concerns/concerns regarding the transition process	1 1.3%	4 5.2%	8 10.4%	33 42.9%	31 40.3%
E9.5. Personal or telephone communication between the educator and the child's family	1 1.3%	9 11.7%	14 18.2%	31 40.3%	22 28.6%
E9.6. Sending a welcome letter	22 28.6%	12 15.6%	12 15.6%	15 19.5%	16 20.8%

E9.7. Sending instructions/clarifications regarding the process of adaptation to the school environment	9 11.7%	14 18.2%	11 14.3%	15 19.5%	28 36.4%
E9.8. Flexibility in the child's stay in the school environment during the first period	1 1.3%	6 7.8%	4 5.2%	19 24.7%	47 61.0%
E9.9. Parents staying in the classroom with the child during the first period of study	45 58.4%	19 24.7%	5 6.5%	4 5.2%	4 5.2%
E9.10. School-family connection activities	12 15.6%	18 23.4%	22 28.6%	13 16.9%	12 15.6%
E9.11. Sending audiovisual material from the child's first days in the school environment to the family with the aim of providing feedback and encouraging child-family discussion	27 35.1%	13 16.9%	15 19.5%	11 14.3%	11 14.3%

Table 4: Cross-tabulation table of educational level and degree of importance of parent-teacher collaboration during the child's adaptation process to the new preschool environment

			Often	Fairly Often	Always	Total
Educational level	Teaching School	Count	0	1	11	12
		% within Educational Level	0.0%	8.3%	91.7%	100.0%
		% within E2	0.0%	10.0%	17.2%	15.4%
		% of Total	0.0%	1.3%	14.1%	15.4%
	University Degree	Count	3	3	15	21
		% within Educational Level	14.3%	14.3%	71.4%	100.0%
		% within E2	75.0%	30.0%	23.4%	26.9%
		% of Total	3.8%	3.8%	19.2%	26.9%
	TEI degree	Count	1	6	19	26
		% within Educational Level	3.8%	23.1%	73.1%	100.0%
		% within E2	25.0%	60.0%	29.7%	33.3%
		% of Total	1.3%	7.7%	24.4%	33.3%
	Postgraduate Diploma	Count	0	0	19	19
% within Educational Level		0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
% within E2		0.0%	0.0%	29.7%	24.4%	
% of Total		0.0%	0.0%	24.4%	24.4%	
Total	Count	4	10	64	78	
	% within Educational Level	5.1%	12.8%	82.1%	100.0%	
	% within E2	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	5.1%	12.8%	82.1%	100.0%	

Parental flexibility in staying that the child's preschool during the first days was also found significant ($F=5,804$, $Sig.=0,000$) and so was parental presence in the classroom alongside their child during the start of schooling ($F=2,964$, $Sig.=0,025$).

In particular, most early educators who had 11-20 or 21-30 years of experience seem to make very often used parental presence in the classroom during the initial period ($N=19$, 70,4% και $N=6$, 75% respectively). However, educators with working experience of more than 30 years stated that they rarely or never use such practices (Table 5).

Table 5: Cross-reference table of previous experience and frequency of application of the practice "Flexibility in the child's stay in the school environment during the first period"

			Flexibility in the child's stay in the school environment during the first period					Total
			Never	Rarely	Often	Fairly often	Always	
Previous experience	0	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
		% within Experience A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	1.3%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	1.3%
	1-10	Count	0	2	2	13	21	38
		% within Experience	0.0%	5.3%	5.3%	34.2%	55.3%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	0.0%	33.3%	50.0%	68.4%	44.7%	49.4%
		% of Total	0.0%	2.6%	2.6%	16.9%	27.3%	49.4%
	11-20	Count	0	2	1	5	19	27
		% within Experience	0.0%	7.4%	3.7%	18.5%	70.4%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	0.0%	33.3%	25.0%	26.3%	40.4%	35.1%
		% of Total	0.0%	2.6%	1.3%	6.5%	24.7%	35.1%
	21-30	Count	0	1	0	1	6	8
		% within Experience	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	75.0%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	5.3%	12.8%	10.4%
		% of Total	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%	7.8%	10.4%
	>30	Count	1	1	1	0	0	3
		% within Experience	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	100.0%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%
		% of Total	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%
Total	Count	1	6	4	19	47	77	
	% within Pre-service	1.3%	7.8%	5.2%	24.7%	61.0%	100.0%	
	% within E9_8	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	1.3%	7.8%	5.2%	24.7%	61.0%	100.0%	

With regards to parental practice of parental presence in the classroom with the child during the initial period of schooling and the period of transition, it seems that most participants with 1-10 and 11-20 years of experience do not choose to use it (N=20, 52.6% and N=19, 70.4% respectively). However, among the groups of educators, participants with 21-30 years of experience seem to use it very often (N=1, 12.5%) (Table 6).

Table 6: Table of cross-reference between previous experience and frequency of application of the practice " Parents presence in the classroom with the child during the first period of study"

			Never	Rarely	Often	Fairly Often	Always	Total
Previous experience	0	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
		% within Experience A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	,0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	,0%	25.0%	1.3%
		% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	,0%	1.3%	1.3%
	1-10	Count	20	10	4	3	1	38
		% within Experience	52.6%	26.3%	10.5%	7.9%	2.6%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	44.4%	52.6%	80.0%	75.0%	25.0%	49.4%
		% of Total	26.0%	13.0%	5.2%	3.9%	1.3%	49.4%
	11-20	Count	19	6	0	1	1	27
		% within Experience	70.4%	22.2%	,0%	3.7%	3.7%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	42.2%	31.6%	,0%	25.0%	25.0%	35.1%
		% of Total	24.7%	7.8%	,0%	1.3%	1.3%	35.1%
	21-30	Count	4	2	1	0	1	8
		% within Experience	50.0%	25.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
		% within E9_9	8.9%	10.5%	20.0%	0.0%	25.0%	10.4%
		% of Total	5.2%	2.6%	1.3%	0.0%	1.3%	10.4%
30+	Count	2	1	0	0	0	3	
	% within Experience	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
	% within E9_9	4.4%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%	
	% of Total	2.6%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%	
Total	Count	45	19	5	4	4	77	
	% within Experience	58.4%	24.7%	6.5%	5.2%	5.2%	100.0%	
	% within E9_9	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	58.4%	24.7%	6.5%	5.2%	5.2%	100.0%	

Finally, a statistically significant difference was found between the working relationship of the Educators and the frequency of communication with the parents in the context of the child's transition from the family to the school environment ($F=11.948$, $Sig.=0.001$) and the degree of importance of parent-educator cooperation during the child's adaptation process to the new preschool environment ($F=4.641$, $Sig.=0.034$). Also, a statistically significant difference was observed between the working relationship of the participants and the frequency of school-family collaboration during the transition period ($F=5.652$, $Sig.=0.020$), the degree of cooperation between parents and the school with the aim of a smooth transition for their children ($F=4.016$, $Sig.=0.049$) and the degree of encouragement of communication with parents during the transition period ($F=4.338$, $Sig.=0.041$).

Subsequently, a statistically significant difference was found between the area in which the school where the participants work is located and the degree to which communication with parents was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic ($F=4.146$, $Sig.=0.020$).

In particular, it was found that most tutors working in Eastern Thessaloniki reported that communication with parents was not limited at all due to the COVID-19 pandemic ($N=7$, 31.8%), while most participants in Western Thessaloniki ($N=15$, 34.1%)

and in the center of Thessaloniki (N=4, 33.3%) stated that this communication was limited in moderation (Table 7).

Table 7: Cross-tabulation table of school district and the degree to which communication with parents was limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic (E10)

			Never	Rarely	Often	Very Often	Always	Total
School district	Eastern Thessaloniki	Count	7	3	4	5	3	22
		% within School Area	31.8%	13.6%	18.2%	22.7%	13.6%	100.0%
		% within E10	70.0%	42.9%	17.4%	23.8%	17.6%	28.2%
		% of Total	9.0%	3.8%	5.1%	6.4%	3.8%	28.2%
	Western Thessaloniki	Count	2	4	15	13	10	44
		% within School Area	4.5%	9.1%	34.1%	29.5%	22.7%	100.0%
		% within E10	20.0%	57.1%	65.2%	61.9%	58.8%	56.4%
		% of Total	2.6%	5.1%	19.2%	16.7%	12.8%	56.4%
	Thessaloniki Center	Count	1	0	4	3	4	12
		% within School Area	8.3%	0.0%	33.3%	25.0%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within E10	10.0%	0.0%	17.4%	14.3%	23.5%	15.4%
		% of Total	1.3%	0.0%	5.1%	3.8%	5.1%	15.4%
Total	Count	10	7	23	21	17	78	
	% within School Area	12.8%	9.0%	29.5%	26.9%	21.8%	100.0%	
	% within E10	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	12.8%	9.0%	29.5%	26.9%	21.8%	100.0%	

3. Discussion – Conclusions

In Greece, research has been conducted on the process of facilitating the transition in the field of preschool education as well as the widespread actions from primary education levels (Bagakis *et al.*, 2006; Mexi & Vlassi, 2010; Vagi-Spyrou & Georgiadou-Kampouridi, 2010; Sidiropoulou, Dimitriadou, & Ralli, 2011). Despite the difficulties that seem to accompany the transition period, 86.4% of the educators surveyed in the study by Sidiropoulou, Dimitriadis & Ralli (2011) seem to recognize the advantages of transition strategies, but at the same time, there is a relative lack of interest in their implementation, mainly on the part of teachers. For example, the majority of educators usually wait until the first day of the school year to meet their students, even though they could, through organizing joint meetings at the school, get in touch with the children's parents and learn about their future students.

Furthermore, in a study by Sakellariou, Anagnostopoulou, and Strati (2018), which attempted to investigate and evaluate practices that are beneficial to implement before the child starts attending a preschool center, it was found that educators positively evaluate practices that aim to approach the transition smoothly. In fact, through their research, it was revealed that teachers working in public and private kindergartens, in

their majority, consider it very important to discuss family concerns about the smooth transition of their children during their schooling.

Regarding the results of this research, it was found that the participants very often seek communication with parents in the context of the child's transition, and highlight the importance of parent-teacher collaboration during this period. At the same time, they frequently seek school-family collaboration and significantly encourage communication with parents during the transition period, a particularly encouraging finding that is consistent with the results of Vogiatzi's research (2019). Despite the fact that the importance of the relationship between family and preschool environment has been highlighted through scientific bibliographic sources, highlighting theoretical concepts and models that describe its importance (Michelakaki & Fonia, 2015; Penteri & Petrogiannis, 2013; Şad, Konca, Özer & Acar, 2016), it is generally found that parents do not often cooperate with the school. Similar conclusions were reached by Rentzou & Ekine (2017), who found that in Greece, the family and the school do not follow a common line regarding children, with their relationships being far from becoming collaborative, although smooth cooperation between school and family is considered of great importance for the development of children, in Greece, this specific sector presents significant deficits, which over time are expected to be bridged.

Regarding this specific research, an important finding was the fact that educators who held a postgraduate degree highlighted to a greater extent the importance of parent-teacher cooperation during the process of the child's adaptation to the new preschool environment and parent-school cooperation, with the ultimate goal of a smooth transition for their children, in relation to educators who were graduates of tertiary education. At the same time, educators who completed postgraduate studies were observed to often urge the children's parents to remain in the classroom with the child during the first period of study, compared to the other educators. In a study by Sidiropoulou, Dimitriadis, and Ralli (2011), it was found that teachers agree that these specific practices respond positively; however, they report obstacles regarding their implementation. The causes of these difficulties are stated to be due primarily to personal positions, but also to weaknesses due to the unpreparedness of the educators. It is therefore found that while they understand the value of the respective practices, they do not apply them to a degree that they can be consolidated, similarly, in Anagnostopoulou's (2017) research, it was found that transition practices such as visits to the child's home, the provision of materials and information leaflets and the welcome letter, are not implemented by educators. Also important were the findings of Vogiatzi (2019), in which it was revealed that although educators recognize the contribution of implementing transition practices, the majority of them do not utilize them, due to a lack of time and the large number of children in the classroom.

Furthermore, our research observed a statistically significant difference between the work structure and the frequency of implementation of certain practices during the transition period. The results showed that educators working in Private Daycare Centers or Private Kindergartens more frequently utilize practices related to collaboration with

parents and encouragement for discussion regarding their concerns and concerns regarding the transition process, visiting children and parents at the school site before the start of school, flexibility regarding the child's stay in the school environment during the first period and sending audiovisual material to the family from the child's first days in the school environment with the aim of providing feedback and encouraging child-family discussion, compared to the other participants.

Next, an important observation is that the practice of flexibility in the children's stay in the classroom seems to be followed more often in younger children (2-4). This is a reasonable finding, as according to Anagnostopoulou (2017), the younger the child, the more likely he is to face difficulties during his stay in school, thus suggesting the need for flexibility in his stay there.

Finally, the results showed that educators working in Eastern Thessaloniki did not limit their communication with parents, compared to those in Western Thessaloniki and the city center, who noted that due to the emergency conditions brought about by COVID-19 measures, their communication with parents was significantly limited. The formation of communication relations between the school and the family is naturally not an easy task, especially when it comes to developing such communication in the context of implementing distance learning (Tzilou & Papadimitriou, 2021). In view of the pandemic, the data changed, and in-person communication was transformed, taking on a significant part in electronic form, highlighting its importance, which functioned as a bridge of interconnection and support between the school and the family (Kessopoulou & Tsimbidaki, 2021). This resulted in directing families to the need to learn and assimilate technological skills, in order to have access to an e-learning implementation process (Carrión-Martínez, Pinel-Martínez *et al.*, 2021) through "parental e-involvement" (Şad, Konca, Özer & Acar, 2016: 165) and to continue to support collaboration and communication with children and their families.

To conclude, infant and toddler transition in preschool care and education constitutes a sensitive period in a person's life, where infants and toddlers are called to become independent emotionally and to expand their learning environment and develop social skills. Similarly, early educators are expected to support practices that aim for a smooth transition through home-school partnership and the gradual preparation and acquaintance of infants and toddlers with the new educational environment. The day care setting is no longer an unattractive and distant setting but rather an attractive and flexible setting that recognizes parents as an important pillar of the educational process by providing opportunities for home-school communication and cooperation. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with each child's family, the local community, and the children's previous and subsequent levels of education with the aim of creating a network of cooperation aimed at the smooth transition of children from one environment to another.

3.1 Implementations

There are several suggestions that derive from this study. As studies emphasize the importance of home-school partnership, especially at the multicultural level (Konstantinidou & Gkloumpou, 2026), further studies are needed on the transition of children from special and vulnerable social groups. Given that the transition from the family to the school context is a challenging experience for every family, when children belong to a vulnerable or special population group, then the challenge for a smooth transition is even greater (Welchons & McIntyre, 2015). However, the practices that are applied differ and require flexibility, given the differences that each child presents, especially when the needs of children are increased, prevention and care are needed so that no child is excluded from a smooth transition to school (Welchons & McIntyre, 2015) and parental cooperation with specialists. It would also be interesting to study the obstacles faced by both parents and educators when implementing transition practices, which focus primarily on home-school communication and cooperation, as their connection constitutes a point of intersection, placing children at the center, as their all-around development and growth concerns both parties. Finally, another suggestion could be to study the perceptions of parents and educators regarding the issue of continuity or discontinuity in different learning environments and educational levels, attempting to answer questions regarding the way in which the participants in the educational process and the family perceive the role of day care centers and kindergartens.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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