International Journal of Literacy and Education

E-ISSN: 2789-1615
P-ISSN: 2789-1607
www.educationjournal.info
Impact Factor: RJIF 5.7
IJLE 2024; 4(1): 206-210
Received: 04-05-2024
Accepted: 06-05-2024

Pappa Alexandra
Ph.D., University of Ioannina, Ioannina, Greece

Sakellariou Maria
Professor, University of Ioannina, Ioannina, Greece

Correspondence Author;
Pappa Alexandra
Ph.D., University of Ioannina, Ioannina, Greece

The quality of furniture in Greek Kindergartens of general and special education

Pappa Alexandra and Sakellariou Maria

DOI: https://doi.org/10.22271/27891607.2024.v4.i1c.189

Abstract
The curriculum is a separate tool for the teacher's work, as it is the central axis of the Kindergarten's operation and learning. Quality in education is achieved through actions and actions aimed at improving teaching and learning in the entire student population. The purpose of this research was to investigate the opinions of teachers working in General and Special education schools on the quality of furniture in the Kindergarten. The results of the survey showed that teachers consider it very important that the furniture is in good condition and meets the needs of children of toddler age, while the participants stated that there is no adaptable furniture available for children with some kind of disability, which would facilitate integration them in the classroom and their inclusion in the peer group. In addition, it emerged that the number of children studying in the department and the geographical area where the school unit is located influence teachers' opinions about Kindergarten furniture.

Keywords: Curriculum, Kindergarten teachers, quality, furniture

1. Introduction
The concept of quality first appeared at the beginning of the 20th century and its conceptual root is attributed to the Latin word "Qualis", which means "of what kind", depending on the word that follows (Musta' In, 2022) [9]. Quality as a concept was constructed within social and cultural contexts and is a constant and evolving process (Pavlović Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2018) [11]. Quality in education is a multidimensional concept, including institutionalization, teaching methods and learning outcomes (Poernamawijayai *et al*., 2018) [14]. The goals of educational quality are considered systemic and are not realized only through the work of the teacher (Mourshed, Chijoke & Barbar, 2010) [7]. On the contrary, it includes strategic planning, the systematic preparation of students, the satisfaction of the needs of modern society and the provision of all the necessary supplies for the successful integration of the individual into the labor market (Ochoa Tataje *et al*., 2021) [10].
One of the most important components of the quality of education is the curriculum. According to Mclachlan *et al*. (2017) [6] the curriculum includes the aims and objectives, the knowledge objects divided into learning areas, the methods and the evaluation about a teaching and learning program, which is addressed to a group of students. In Preschool Education, the child is approached in a holistic way, as the basic purpose of the curriculum is the physical, mental and socio-emotional development of infants. The development of the above areas is achieved through the application of appropriately structured activities (Allen & Kelly, 2015) [2].
A particular procedural characteristic of quality in the field of education is the school environment (Ramos & Vicera, 2019) [15]. The space in the Kindergarten should be organized based on the developmental characteristics and individual needs of preschool children, in an organized effort to strengthen their degree of autonomy (Penteri *et al*., 2022a; Penteri *et al*., 2022b) [12-13]. The classroom space is organized by the teacher with special attention and care, while it is restructured and enriched at regular intervals, in order to improve the quality of education (Pavlović Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2018) [11]. During the procedures for organizing the classroom space, particular emphasis should be placed on the areas of hygiene and safety and at the same time on its pedagogical-teaching dimension. More specifically, among other things, the equipment and materials used should be appropriately made for the age level of the children who will use them (Madani, 2019) [5].

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Purpose of the exploratory study

The purpose of this research was to investigate the views of Kindergarten teachers working in General Education Kindergartens and in Special Education structures, that is, in Special Kindergartens, Integration Departments and the institution of Parallel Support, about the quality of the furniture available in Greek Kindergartens.

2.2 Exploratory sample: The research was conducted nationwide and involved 1204 General and Special Education teachers (Special Kindergartens, Integration Departments and Parallel Support), who work within General Kindergartens. The distinction between the two types of training is shown in Figure 1 below. The teachers were invited to evaluate proposals related to the furniture in the Kindergarten classrooms.

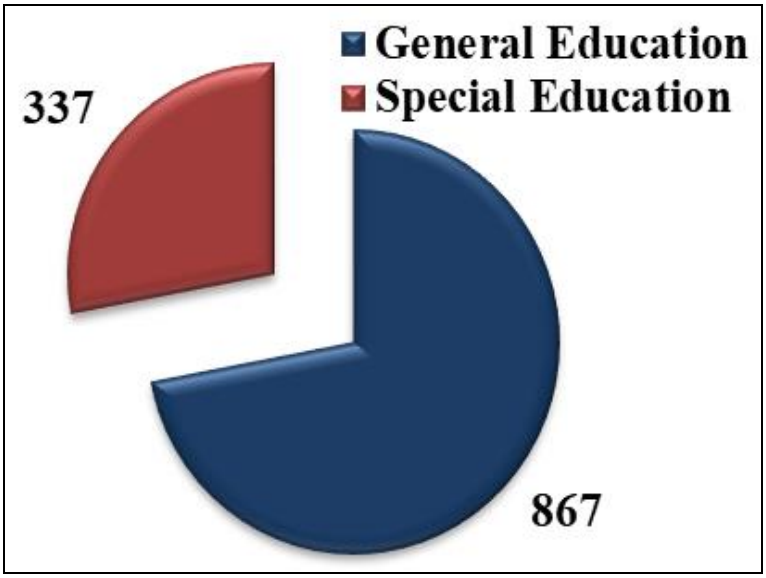


Fig 1: Sample of educationalists on a national level

Regarding the number of children attending the department in Kindergarten, as shown in Figure 2 below, 7.7% of the participants stated that their department has 1 to 5 students, 12.2% has 6 to 10 students, 26.5% has 11 to 15 students, 25.8% of the sample teaches in a department of 16-20 students and finally 27.7% has taken over a department where more than 21 students study.

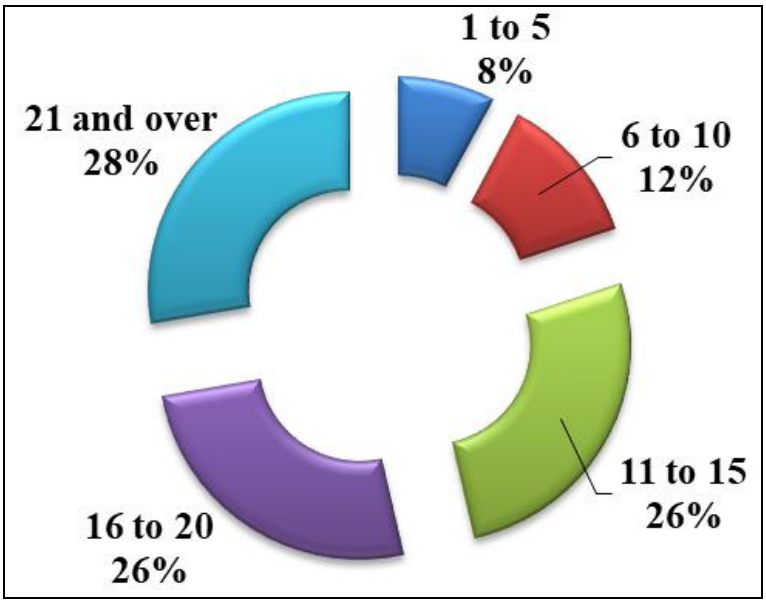


Fig 2: Attending pupils per class

Then, from the statistical processing of the data on the geographical location of the participants' school unit, as shown in Figure 3, it emerged that the largest percentage of teachers (52.9%, N: 637) stated that their school is located in an urban area, while 24.2% (N: 291) are located in a semi-urban area and 22.9% (N: 276) are located in a rural area.

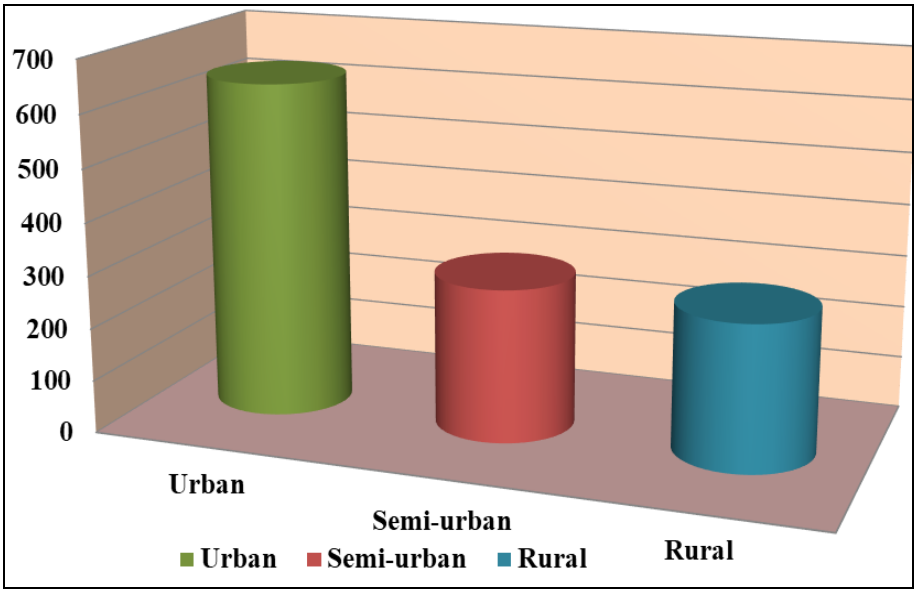


Fig 3: Geographical origin of educationalists

2.3 Exploratory tool

After an in-depth study of three (3) scales concerning the assessment of quality in preschool education and in particular, firstly the "ACEI Global Guidelines Assessment" (Association for Childhood Education International, 2006) (Rentzou, 2011) [16], secondly the "Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised" (2014) (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2014a) [3] and thirdly the "Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised" (2014) (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2014b) [4], a questionnaire was formed, consisting of "open" as well as "closed" type questions. In this questionnaire the participants were due to report whether they agreed or not with the content of each hypothesis on a 5-degree, Likert-type scale.

3. Results

When evaluating the quality of the furniture in the Kindergarten, 46.5% of the teachers rated it as very important that the furniture is well maintained and safe for the students. 50.1% of the participants considered it very important that the majority of the furniture matches the size of the children. 40.8% of the sample stated that in their Kindergarten there is no furniture adapted to the needs of children with disabilities, in order to promote their inclusion in the group of homeschoolers. The percentages of the responses are presented in detail in Table 1 below.

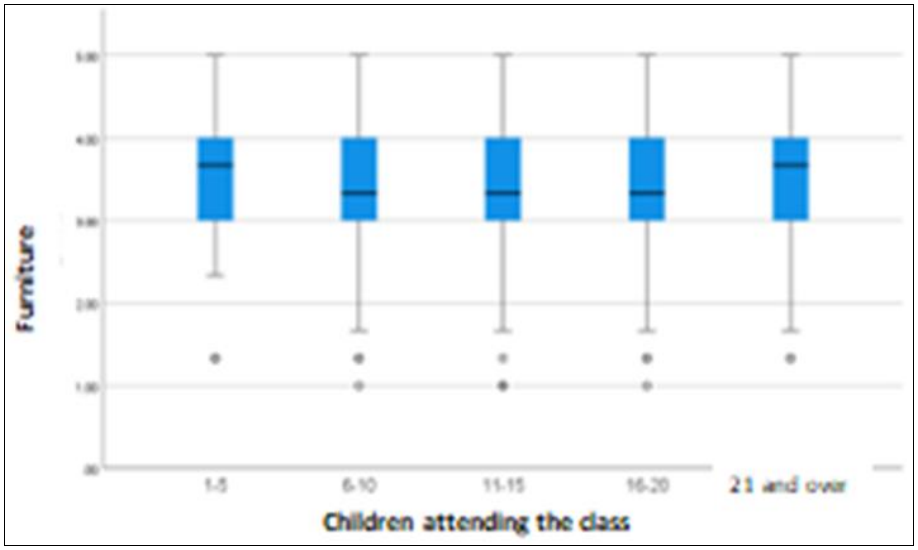
Table 1: Αξιολόγηση των επίπλων του Νηπιαγωγείου

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
The furniture is well maintained and safe for children.	27 (2.2%)	91 (7.6%)	230 (19.1%)	560 (46.5%)	296 (24.6%)
Most of the furniture is child-sized.	14 (1.2%)	37 (3.1%)	115 (9.6%)	603 (50.1%)	435 (36.1%)
Adaptable furniture is available for children with disabilities, with the aim of including them in the peer group.	491 (40.8%)	166 (13.8%)	175 (14.5%)	226 (18.8%)	146 (12.1%)

The analysis of variance carried out revealed a statistically significant correlation between the dimension "Furniture" and the number of children attending the department with p=0.003. More specifically, it is observed that F(4)=4.047 and in the category "21 and over" students (3.62) there were statistically significantly higher values compared to the category "11-15" students (3.37), which means that the teachers who have undertaken section with 21 and over students appear more satisfied with the quality of the furniture than their colleagues who have between 11 and 15 students. the estimates are shown in Table 2 below, while the statistically significant differences are presented in the following Boxplot 1.

Table 2: Teachers' opinions about the furniture in relation to the number of students in each department

	N	Mean value	Standard variation	Standard error	95% C.I.		p
					Lower limit	Upper limit	
1-5	93	3.55	.76	.08	3.40	3.71	.003
6-10	147	3.46	.91	.07	3.31	3.60	
11-15	319	3.37	.75	.04	3.29	3.45	
16-20	311	3.49	.82	.05	3.40	3.58	
21 and over	334	3.62	.86	.05	3.53	3.71	
Total	1204	3.49	.82	.02	3.45	3.54	

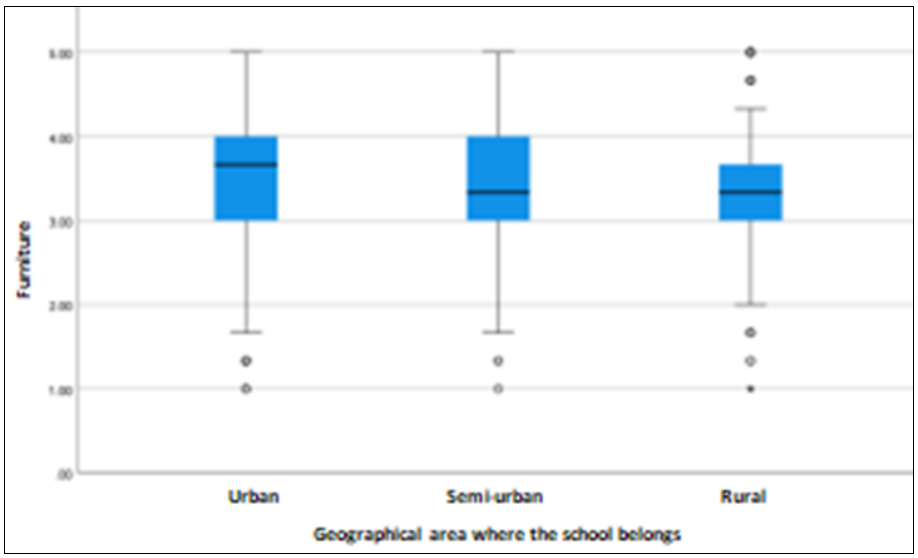


Boxplot 1: "Furniture" dimension in relation to the number of children attending the class

In addition, the analysis of variance revealed a statistically significant difference between the dimension "Furniture" and the geographical area where the school unit of the participants belongs. In more detail we see that F(2)=5.240 and in the "Urban" category (3.36) statistically significantly higher values prevailed compared to the "Rural" category (3.36), i.e. the participating teachers whose Kindergarten is located in an urban area declared a higher level of satisfaction with school furnishings compared to those in rural areas. Values are shown in the following Table 3 and statistically significant differences are shown in the subsequent comparative Boxplot 2.

Table 3: Teachers' views on furniture in relation to the geographical area of the school

	N	Mean value	Standard variation	Standard error	95% C.I.		
					Lower limit	Upper limit	p
Urban	637	3.56	.82	.03	3.49	3.62	.005
Semi-urban	291	3.48	.82	.05	3.39	3.58	
Rural	276	3.36	.83	.05	3.27	3.46	
Total	1204	3.49	.82	.02	3.45	3.54	



Boxplot 2: "Furniture" dimension in relation to the geographical area where the school belongs

4. Discussion of the Conclusion

The teachers in the majority of them considered that it is very important that the furniture in the Kindergarten area is designed for the size of the children, well maintained and safe for the students, a finding that also emerged in other researches (Agarwal, 2017; Shahli, Wanab & Akasah, 2021; Stankovic *et al*., 2015) [1, 18, 19]. Then, the teachers, similarly to other researches (Muscovitz, 2013; Rentzou & Sakellariou, 2014) [8, 17], expressed the opinion that furniture should be available that can be adapted to the needs of students with disabilities. However, half of the participating teachers stated that this type of furniture is not available in the Kindergarten where they work, an element that makes it difficult for students with some kind of disability to smoothly integrate into the general classroom. This specific finding could be attributed to the general lack of logistical

equipment that has plagued Greek schools for decades. In the present research, teachers who have taken on crowded classes, with more than 21 students, as well as those who work in school units within urban areas, expressed more positive views and higher levels of satisfaction with the quality of furniture available in their classroom. These findings could be attributed to the fact that the most crowded sections of Kindergartens are mainly located in large urban centers, due to a greater concentration of the population. Therefore, the chances of getting better quality furniture are more increased compared to schools located in semi-urban and rural areas, where the population is smaller and the available financial resources of the Municipalities are clearly more limited.

References

1. Agarwal S. Re-envisioning Kindergarten Learning Spaces in the US Education System. Rochester Institute of Technology; c2017.
2. Allen L, Kelly BB, editors. Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation. Committee on the Science of Children Birth to Age 8: Deepening and Broadening the Foundation for Success; Board on Children, Youth, and Families; Institute of Medicine; National Research Council; c2015.
3. Harms T, Clifford R, Cryer D. Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition. New York: Teachers College Press; c2014a.
4. Harms T, Clifford R, Cryer D. Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale - Revised Edition. New York: Teachers College Press; c2014b.
5. Madani RA. Analysis of Educational Quality, a Goal of Education for All Policy. Higher Education Studies. 2019;9(1):100-109. DOI: 10.5539/hes.v9n1p100.
6. McLachlan C, Smith J, McLaughlin T, Ali A, Conlon C, Mugridge O, *et al*. Development of Teachers' Knowledge and Skills in Implementing a Physical Education Curriculum: A New Zealand Early Childhood Intervention Study. International Journal of Early Childhood. 2017;49:211-228. DOI: 10.1007/s13158-017-0190-8.
7. Mourshed M, Chijoke C, Barbar M. How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. In: Mourshed M, Chijioke C, Barber M, editors. How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. London: McKinsey and Company; c2010. p. 135-158. Available from: https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/industries/public%20and%20social%20sector/our%20insights/how%20the%20worlds%20most%20improved%20school%20systems%20keep%20getting%20better/how_the_worlds_most_improved_school_systems_keep_getting_better.pdf.
8. Muscovitz J. The Third Teacher: From classrooms to learning ecologies. Education Today. 2013;(1):4-9. Available from: http://www.educationtoday.com.au/_images/articles/pdf/article-pdf-0683.pdf.
9. Musta'In M. Nurul Hakim's Management in Improving the Education Quality for the Youth of Kediri. Jurnal Mahasantri. 2022;2(2):479-492.
10. Ochoa Tataje FA, Panduro-Ramirez J, Alanya-Beltran J, Quispe Yapu LB. Quality education: Perspective of the South American countries about Educational Quality. Journal of Business and Entrepreneurial Studies. c2021. DOI: https://doi.org/10.37956/jbes.v0i0.221.
11. Pavlović Breneselović D, Krnjaja Ž. Potentials of the model of collaborative evaluation in developing the quality of the kindergarten practice in Serbia. Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies. 2018;69(135):242-259.
12. Penteri E, Hlapana E, Melliou K, Filippidi A, Marinatou T. Kindergarten teacher's guide - Support material. Compass: Theoretical and Methodological Framework-Practical Applications and Teaching Designs. In the context of the Action Upgrading the Study Programs and Creating Educational Materials for Primary and Secondary Education of the IEP with MIS 5035542; c2022a.
13. Penteri E, Hlapana E, Melliou K, Filippidi A, Marinatou T. Curriculum for Preschool Education - Expanded Version (2nd Edition, 2022 IEP). In the context of the Action Upgrading the Study Programs and Creating Educational Materials for Primary and Secondary Education of the IEP with MIS 5035542; c2022b.
14. Poernamawijayai LW, Sulaiman, Suriansyah A, Dalle J. Contribution on supervision of supervisor, principals motivation, Kindergarten teacher performance to improving the Kindergarten quality in West Banjarmasin, Indonesia. European Journal of Alternative Education Studies. 2018;3(2):129-146. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2261031.
15. Ramos R, Vicera C. Achievements of the Kindergarten Vis-à-vis Classroom Quality in Leyte District I. International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research. 2019;45(2):21-30. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354775513_Achievements_of_the_Kindergarten_Vis-a-vis_Classroom_Quality_in_Leyte_District_I.
16. Rentzou K. Evaluating the quality of education and care provided in pre-school centers: a researcher, educator and parent approach [dissertation]. University of Ioannina; c2011. Available from: https://thesis.ekt.gr/thesisBookReader/id/25197#page/620/mode/1up.
17. Rentzou K, Sakellariou M. Space as a pedagogical field in preschool learning environments. Planning and Organization. Athens: Pedio Publications; c2014.
18. Shahli FM, Wanab IA, Akasah ZA. Space planning of classroom kindergarten: A case study of KEMAS kindergartens in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. IOP Conference Series Materials Science and Engineering. 2021;1144(1):012015, 1-7. DOI: 10.1088/1757-899X/1144/1/012015.
19. Stankovic D, Tanic M, Kostic A, Vrecic S, Kekovic A, Cekic N, *et al*. Resurgence of indoor environment of preschool building. Procedia Engineering. 2015;117:737-750.