

## The Roles of the Teacher in Distance Education in the Pandemic Era: Secondary Education Teachers' Perspectives

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### Abstract

*This paper studies the views of Greek teachers of Secondary Education with regard to the way that they coped with distance education during the quarantine imposed on account of the Sars Covid-2-induced health pandemic. By addressing ten teachers we aim to investigate their views regarding the roles that they were asked to undertake, the factors crucial to their work, as well as the skills that they developed in order to tackle with this new reality. Moreover, our research focuses on the assistance on behalf of school administration and government in their effort, but also on the extent of the contribution of the relative training program. The findings of this qualitative research show that Greek teachers tried to give their best on all levels required by this new educational reality, struggling against difficulties and developing skills, in cooperation mainly with their colleagues, as the relevant training took place post factum.*

**Keywords:** Distance learning, online education, teacher, role, planning, skills, training, pandemic

### 1. Introduction

The global community is being plagued for the past two years by the pandemic disease of Sars-Covid-19, and this situation reflects on the educational community. Schools and universities worldwide (UNESCO, 2021) have been forced to postpone their on-site operation due to the pandemic and to seek alternative methods of distance learning (Viner, et al., 2020), methods which very few members of this community – especially in Greece (Albiser, et al., 2020, p. 1) – were familiar with before March 2020. Greece, like other countries, immediately closed down its educational institutions and resorted to distance learning as a teaching tool. During the first phase of the pandemic (March-May 2020), teachers were obliged to use one of the two digital platforms of asynchronous distance education (eClass & e-me) that the Ministry of Education had at its disposal, and optionally the digital platform of synchronous distance education (Cisco WebEx Meetings) (Ministry of Education & Cisco Systems, 2020). During the second phase of the pandemic (November 2020 – April 2021) all teachers combined synchronous and asynchronous online education in order for the educational procedure to continue (Papazoglou & Koutouzis, 2020) (Toledo Figueroa & Rawkins, 2020).

This initially temporary state of distance learning that evolved over a long period of time to eventually almost a normality (UNESCO, 2021), particularly puzzled students (Hammerstein, König, Dreisörner, & Frey, 2021) (Conto, et al., 2020) (Lesser, Pell, & Cooke, 2021), parents (Garbe, Ogurlu, Logan, & Cook, 2020), and teachers (Kim, Oxley, & Asbury, 2021). Distance learning, which is run by its own set of rules, which has its own set of goals and is destined for particular learning environments (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020) (Munoz-Najar, Gilberto, Hasan, Cobo, & Azevedo, 2021, pp. 14-18) was “imposed” - given the circumstances – as “tele-education” abruptly, randomly, almost violently in the educational community, taking it by surprise, posing new challenges and bringing it face to face with many difficulties and -sometimes- insurmountable obstacles (Kim & Asbury, 2020).

Almost two years after the start of the covid-19-induced pandemic, synchronous and asynchronous distance learning is still practiced in Greece in certain cases (due to increase in infection cases, or weather conditions). Recent research of Bertelsmann Stiftung (Schiller, Hellmann, Schüle, Heller, & Gasster, 2021, pp. 71-75) in OECD countries shows that at the start of the pandemic, in 2019, Greece's readiness to face the pandemic in education was among the lowest in OECD countries, namely, it ranked in 22<sup>nd</sup> position. Subsequently, Greece managed to climb on 6<sup>th</sup> position in readiness of response of the educational system to the pandemic. This result is attributed, according to the Greek Minister of Education, (ToVimaTeam, 2022) to teachers, school students, university students and their families, to the educational community in general.

This statement has triggered us to investigate how Greek teachers dealt with distance education during the pandemic-induced quarantine, to listen to their views regarding the roles they were asked to undertake, the factors that affected their work, the skills they summoned to live up to this, as well as the role of the support on behalf of school administration on the one hand, and the relevant training they received on the other.

## 2. Methodology

Working in this direction, we interviewed 10 secondary education teachers, who - during the distance learning - taught in junior high schools of Alexandroupoli (Evros prefecture, Thraki geographical division). The method of semi-structured interview was chosen, in order for replies to emerge as spontaneously as possible, and to eliminate time restraints. Moreover, this particular method offers the possibility to add or remove questions in an already existing number of predetermined questions, change their order or even pose clarifying questions to the participants in this research. In this way, participants have, on the one hand the option of free expression and on the other “often provide the researchers with valuable information and insights, not to mention surprises, which they will wish to investigate further” (Verma & Mallick, 1999, pp. 123-124). In other words, this oral component in itself allows for the subsequent content analysis to delve deeper into the words of the research subjects and to extract sufficient study material. In this framework, seven (7) questions were posed during the interviews that were all open-ended, so that participants could reply in a pleasant atmosphere of communication between interviewer and interviewee.

The collection of research data took place in December 2021, while the research material consisted of ten transcribed interviews of secondary education teachers of Alexandroupoli.

To conduct this specific research, “content analysis” was considered to be the most appropriate method and was consequently used (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Krippendorff, 2004). This is a technique that was initially developed in the US in the beginning of the previous century (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948) and constitutes the most appropriate method for the objective and systematic description, processing and interpretation (qualitative and quantitative) of the denoted content of the communication whether in written or oral speech, as it allows for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use (Berelson, 1952) (Krippendorff, 2004).

This specific survey was conducted in the following stages:

**Decoding:** at this first stage, after careful and multiple readings of the teachers’ texts, we decoded all the references related to online education. For the decoding, the “topic” was chosen as an analysis and measurement unit. An “inference unit” (i.e., the text environment in which every subject is found) was defined to be a unit ranging from a word to an entire phrase.

**Choice of categories:** after compiling the material and after careful and successive readings, the choice of categories was made on grounds of fulfilling the rules of objectivity, universality, thoroughness and mutual exclusion (Vamvoukas, 1991). The general categories which have emerged through restructuring of data (Papadopoulou, 2000) were coded (Bücker, 2020) as follows in every question.

As far as demographics are concerned, 9 out of ten teachers taking part were women. Their service in secondary education schools ranges from 6 to 26 years. Seven of them teach language, two teach science and one ICT. Besides their bachelor degree, 7 have completed post-graduate studies, while all of them have attended various training courses for their professional development.

## 3. Analysis of interview material

The first question posed to the teachers, concerned the roles they were asked to undertake during distance learning (both synchronous and asynchronous) during the covid-19-induced quarantine. According to one of the teachers “... the teaching profession is manifold on its own, but with this new condition – that of distance learning – it became so beyond imagination” (T5) by imposing a multitude of roles. There was broad agreement to the fact that they maintained the role of *teacher*, the transmitter of knowledge, stressing emphatically, as one teacher points out “to constantly invent ways to make the session more appealing, so as to have participation” (T10). Simultaneously, the need arose to undertake a new and unprecedented to them role, that of *technical advisor*, the “digitally literate teacher” (T3), who was called on the one hand to help students connect to the synchronous and asynchronous platforms provided by the Ministry of Education, make proper use of them and fulfil their student duties through them, and on the other “support parents so that they can themselves support the students” (T5) as another teacher characteristically mentions. This role often proved particularly demanding, extremely crucial, however simultaneously incredibly stressful, especially for those who were not familiar with ICT.

Several teachers in our research also referred to the role of *coordinator-guide* that they had to undertake in order to support their students in their participation in the educational process, both individually and in groups, orally and in writing “to be able to cope with distance learning and fully respond, as well as how to utilize it and how to attend classes” (T8). Additionally, teachers, in their own words, evolved – voluntarily or not – to *producers of digital teaching material*, with which they tried to balance the lack of physical proximity, a process that “demanded knowledge on the subject” (T8). However, the role they put the most emphasis on and for which they were not necessarily prepared was *the role of motivator-encourager, the role of a psychologist* that was asked on the one hand to listen to students’ concerns, fears, difficulties, and on the other to encourage, motivate, push and inspire hope and optimism. All teachers’ answers converge to the fact that “we had to support children psychologically throughout this process” (T10). To sum up, most seem to agree the fact that they became “jack-of-all trades”; one teacher joking that - because most of the time students did not react – she felt a little like “a TV persona in an after-midnight show of national TV with little to zero ratings” (T3).

Following that, we posed to the ten teachers in our research the question: which factors – in their view –influenced either positively or negatively their effort to live up to the above-mentioned roles. Starting from the positive roles, what emerged is that these concern as much the teachers themselves as their students and colleagues. The most empowering factor they mention is their previous familiarity with ICT, and their consequent knowledge and ease to handle a computer, the internet and various software. If that did not exist, most teachers clarify, things would have been very difficult. What urged them most to support their manifold role was their love and concern for their students. As a matter of fact, when they (the students) responded with zeal and enthusiasm to the challenges of the educational process, their teachers were encouraged to continue their efforts and give their best self. “My wish to motivate as many students as possible, by creating new digital material, based on image and drawings... was a new challenge” (T3) stated one teacher. What also functioned positively was the relationship of respect and mutual esteem that they had developed – during onsite education – with their students. What played a crucial role in this new and unknown to them venture of distance learning and was generally acknowledged as “the most positive factor” (T1), was good cooperation with their colleagues. Proper organization on behalf of administration, good relations both with school administration and with the rest of the colleagues, the assistance of the school support team, unconditional reciprocal aid among them, empowered teachers and contributed to a great extent to enabling them to fulfil their educational work under these adverse circumstances. One teacher’s related comment: “Good cooperation with school administration and with the other colleagues affected me positively” (T2).

Speaking about the factors that affected negatively their effort to respond to their manifold role, teachers acknowledged that on a personal level they found particularly difficult the fact that – due to not being familiar with the synchronous and asynchronous education platforms at their disposal – they could not operate them – especially in the beginning – with ease, “I was negatively affected by non-sufficient knowledge of operation of WebEx and e-me” (T6). Moreover, they reported that they did not know how to organize an online session, which resulted in them despairing and losing precious time. The statement is characteristic: “Lack of experience definitely played a negative role. We proceeded by trial and error” (T4). The absence of similar past experience combined with their stress to live up to circumstances, but also the fact that “the whole process drained me emotionally” (T3) influenced negatively their effort. Moreover, encumbering factors were also related to students, such as the lack of substantial contact with them “the fact that I could not have eye contact with the students” (T9) (as it was a standard practice of students to keep their cameras off), their difficulty to attend the session undistracted, either due to poor connection or due to their home surrounding atmosphere, but also due to the accumulating exhaustion, “the students’ enthusiasm over the new, much-advertised online education soon faded away” (T3), one teacher reports. Difficulties in their efforts were also caused on the one hand by the many technical hardships (problematic internet connection, platform overload due to many users, outdated, less potent computers) and on the other by managing the limited teaching time, “that the teaching time is much shorter in distance learning” (T7).

Undoubtedly, the things that teachers had to do during distance learning - on the cause of the pandemic - were many, new, and demanding. In order to live up to these conditions, they had to rely on skills they had or that they developed. Asking about these, we learnt that the basic skill that helped them grapple with this demanding process was their ability to communicate effectively both with their students and with their colleagues for information exchange, support etc. Thus, one teacher states “I was definitely helped by my ability to communicate with people who had more knowledge and experience than myself” (T2), while another claims that “I am communicative enough and as a result teenagers can easily approach me in onsite education, I think this helped to have a relatively satisfying rhythm” (T8). Interwoven with communication skills seems to be, for one, the bonds that exist between a teacher and his/her students:

“I manage – a teacher states – to have quite good relationships with the students, not particularly warm, but there has been, I think, mutual esteem, which helped our communication so as not to get completely lost, perhaps for some of them what also worked was a sense of honor and duty” (T4). Also, an important skill mentioned is the virtue of “cooperativeness” (T7), as, the ones in which this skill was developed, confess to that having aided them find solutions to overcome obstacles. Thus, they report that “the exchange of viewpoints among colleagues” (T10) and “that I had many times the help of colleagues, experienced colleagues that in any case had better knowledge, technical, that is to say they helped me so many times with their opinion and their guidance” (T7). What played a crucial role was the gift of good organization skills, the meticulousness with which teachers faced the educational process from the preparation stage to its implementation. One teacher showcases this particularly vividly: “what contributed positively was my effort to write all my lessons, that is to say present via Word, via images, the effort I made to file in order the pages of digital books and to make many comments on these pages for almost every one of my sessions. I would download every page from the digital book and convert it so that the letters could enlarge and we could underline all the time, so that students can understand what it is that we are reading and where exactly it is found in their own book. Also, I think the slow pace that I have when delivering a phenomenon also helped, that is many questions if you have understood, if you have any question, I sense if they are attending or not” (T7). An important skill, catalytic to the success in their educational role, according to the teachers, is also their ease to handle Information and Communication Technology, which was acquired either during in-service training courses in ICT B1 level, either was a result of personal involvement. An indicative comment: “perhaps the fact that I had a relative ease made me more relaxed and not transmitting nervousness to the children” (T4) and “my knowledge of issues of text and presentation processing, which I have acquired from my studies and out of personal involvement, also appeared very useful because I was able to give guiding rules to help students in this online condition” (T8). Some of the teachers additionally mentioned that the inherent patience and politeness that they possess proved particularly useful in dealing with students, as well as knowledge of teenage psychology, as most of them had children at their students’ age. Thus, a teacher states that “another skill – if it is a skill – is that I am usually polite with students, that I show understanding” (T7), while another colleague jokes that – because of her own children – she was aware even of “the posture they (students) had when attending .... The right angle gradually became a straight line” (T3). As basic factors also feature: the long-time experience in education that helped them deal with the new condition keeping a cool head “what I could also have in a classic classroom, pedagogical tactics” (T9), but also their perseverance that did not allow them to get disappointed from the hardships and quit. Our teachers know that they owe a lot to “the perseverance with which I tried to learn to operate WebEx ” (T7) as well as “my personal work” (T10). Finally, life experience and common sense that are transformed in management skills, became regulatory factors in dealing with the new condition, as two of them reply “I was aided by common sense and the ability to perceive the conditions shaped by the pandemic and the confinement of students in the house, I think that in a contrary situation I would have made a great effort which would have a disproportionate result and small impact in promoting the educational process” (T2) and “the experiential knowledge that everything can be solved or other ways can be invented to overcome technical problems, this helped me keep a cool head in every technical mishap” (T3).

Almost all teachers maintained – answering the next question – that the absence of the above-mentioned skills could inhibit in various ways their educational work e.g. it would bring them to face more difficulties, it would lead to mistakes, it would create additional stress “there is no doubt that their lack would cause more stress than what I already had” (T1) and it would definitely translate into more workload and more timeload “I would have to spend much more time to discover the answers on my own in technical and other problems that I encountered, something that would cost me time and effort and possibly my endeavour would not yield a very good result” (T2). Inevitably, teachers point out, their teaching would become monotonous and ineffective “I would simply stare at a blank screen and talk to myself, with no interaction” (T3), the class atmosphere would be heavy “whoever did not have even elementary training could not teach with the same effectiveness because she/he would first have to overcome several difficulties that could come up at any moment and this would “show” in the class atmosphere” (T4), students losing interest in the teaching “it would lead me - I have to say that, it must be recorded – [...] to something tragic, to talk to myself and others simply to listen, others falling asleep” (T7).

The reactions of the teachers that took part in this research were intense in our next question that concerned the ways in which the official state contributed to their support in order to fulfil their educational role during online education. The reply was unanimous “the state was absent in all this!” (T1). They complain that there was no care on behalf of the state to equip teachers with the appropriate technology so as to operate as teachers: “they did not offer any technical means, that is both (students and teachers) with their own computers, the colleagues teaching mathematics probably with their own electronic pens”(T8).

Of course, teachers say, there was no effort to upgrade the internet connection, so that both themselves and their students could enjoy higher speed and less connectivity problems, because – as one teacher reports – “it was considered self-evident that everyone possessed their own personal connection, that they had at home, in order to do this work, which for many was not true, because, having a big family for example, it was very hard for them to support this process” (T2). There was no relevant training, yet teachers were asked to “dive straight in the deeps”, with no understanding for the difficulties and their needs from the officials of the Ministry of Education. “In essence, it (the Ministry) dropped the educational community in the ocean and expected them to swim” is a characteristic comment of one teacher (T8), while another mentions “everyone learned by themselves” (T4). In fact, some state in disappointment that “in no way did (the Ministry) contribute, in no way did it help, not in the least did it support teachers, neither logistically nor financially” (T7), and turn against it for the non-existence of “any financial support in terms of needs in infrastructure that we needed as teachers and may not have possessed” (T9).

On the other hand, teachers recognize that the official state ensured – in any way, “mutilated though it was”(T3), - the continuation of the educational process by providing platforms so much for synchronous (Cisco WebEx meetings) as for asynchronous education (e-me, eClass: asynchronous educational platform). Also, they refer to the digital material – elementary though it was, “there was a small help from these videos about their use” (T9) – “an informative brochure” (T5) that circulated, as well as to the teaching material and lesson plan databases (photodentro, aisopos etc.) at their disposal. Moreover, the outdated school computers, as a last resort, served in several cases the educational process.

In contrast to their dismissive statements regarding the contribution of the official state, the teachers spoke positively of the aid they received from the school administration and the distance learning support team formed promptly within the school unit for this purpose. The administration – with one exception only – provided the teachers in our research access to school equipment, if they needed. “computers/laptops were provided to the colleagues to use and many colleagues were hosted in the school to teach their lesson because they were not able to perform this from their homes” a teacher reveals (T7). Additionally, they took care to be in constant communication with them and share the educational material that reached the school from the state. “They helped in every way” another teacher reports “by forwarding material for further education and training of teachers, by everyday support in problems that emerged constantly. The support was essential. Confused and stressed, teachers would seek there the support they needed” (T4). Teachers spoke warmly of the school unit support team, claiming that they rushed to reply to their every query and that “whenever and for whatever was needed, there was prompt response” (T5), that they were guided with politeness and humor, and communicated with them on a daily basis in every available way. They characteristically state: “communication was daily and constant through messages for current school issues (encouraging and humorous most of the times) (T3) and “they were always, always supportive, all of them [...] and always guided us with the greatest politeness and the greatest love, the environment in our high school was particularly supportive” (T7). Also, the Administration and the Support Team took care to organize the electronic classrooms and the whole process: “they gave their best to set up and organize this whole feat” (T7) while “they communicated with the students’ legal guardians” (T5) in order to support them in technical issues (e.g., connectivity, access codes, hyperlinks to e-classrooms etc.), which were necessary for the students’ participation in the educational process of synchronous and asynchronous education.

Only two of the teachers who spoke to us had received any kind of training on programming and designing of an online session. For the one of them, this training was in theoretical level and out of purely personal interest “out of personal inclination” (T8). For the other, it proved useful because – as she claims – “it is true it has helped me to see all the tools and the platforms. I wouldn’t have dealt with all this” (T5). All the rest of the teachers were never trained on relevant topics, even though they subsequently admit that “a targeted training” (T6) would have been essential, as on the one hand “teaching conditions in online education are totally different from onsite and require different skills, as much technological as class management ones” (T4), and on the other hand a relevant training “would have helped us gain time and be more effective for one, and be able to use effectively all the options and the means we had at our disposal” (T2). Also, it would make them feel safe in their “teaching work” (T10) but would also contribute to their adding to their teaching the qualitative characteristics which would render it more “efficient” (T10) “in such a condition (as they found themselves) in such a violent way” (T4).

This is probably the reason why everyone participated in the T4E training program (Intensive Teacher Training in Distance Education) organized by the Ministry of Education in May-June 2021 (duration 20 hours in 8 weeks) regarding the planning of an online session. All the teachers in the research responded positively in this question.

However, their opinions on the usefulness of this “short-according to its organizers- and dynamic training based on self-regulatory learning” are divergent. Some claim that it helped them because it familiarized them with the use of digital educational tools they did not know of: thus, a teacher maintains that “it helped me both in the direction of using better the means I had at my disposal and in taking some ideas from others” (T2), while another claims that “it helped me see the potential the two platforms had” (T10). Some teachers were satisfied from the training because their polite, conscientious and patient trainer managed to initiate them into the secrets of online education “that is to say, they had the disposition and the manner to urge us to experiment with new tools, which they not only explained, but we also implemented in our electronic class” (T3). In their overall assessment, what counts positively is also “the experience of creating a plan adjusted to an online session” (T4), but also the “meta-knowledge” acquired, as it contributed to “my seeing more objectively and evaluate the educational process and realize why certain activities were successful while others not” (T3).

However, others claim that it did not help at all, because it took place “post factum” (T1), “not at a secondary stage, but in ‘tertiary’ stage (i.e. extremely delayed)” (T5), after they had returned to onsite education. Another reason why they evaluate this training negatively was because they already knew and were familiar with the educational material: characteristic comments say “I didn’t learn many new things since I already had the know-how” (T8) and: “I don’t think it offered me anything more than what I had already learnt by myself” (T4), “because it was confined to projecting material we already had” (T1). Moreover, the training course receives negative comments because “it did not live up to my expectations, it was too theoretical” (T5) and because their trainer was considered inadequate as to their learning demands, as one teacher reports: “I think that, some of the trainers at least, simply wasted time discussing queries without having any specific goal” (T4).

In the last interview question regarding what changes they would suggest so that the training in hand would be more fruitful and effective, the ones that replied that this training did not help them, offered a range of replies. Almost all supported that it should have been materialized timely, in the beginning of the school year 2020-21, right after the first quarantine “at a more appropriate time, that is to say obviously sooner” (T2). They also consider it would have been useful if it had had “longer duration” (T4), so that all aspects of online education were developed in detail, if emphasis had been placed to both platforms of asynchronous education, and perhaps a little more “to the e-me platform that offers more possibilities” (T8) and “project tools” (T3). Regarding its organization, most of them claim that it should have been better, more well-planned, “better designed, step by step and with specific goals each time” (T4). It is a common request – as far as planning goes – “for the thematic fields to be divided per educational unit” (T5) and “an investigation of needs to have taken place beforehand, in order for interventions to be more targeted instead of this generalization” (T2).

Additionally, they state that they would have preferred if this training had taken place onsite, as they consider that this approach is always “more fruitful and more effective” (T1) even as an in-service, possibly “within the school unit some colleagues with experience could train their colleagues” (T7). Homogeneous groups of teachers are regarded as an essential component “choice criterion being their knowledge and skills in this field, so that a more specialized approach can be applied” (T10). Finally, most agree that more qualified trainers with sounder goals should have been selected, and that it would have been extremely useful to offer the option and the time for practical application during this training enterprise. “That is to say, to be able not to just listen but also to apply things at the very time of listening to them” (T9), the seminar to be “more practical” (T8), with “specific activities per subject and not only on a theoretical level” (T5).

#### **4. Findings - Discussion**

In an overall assessment of the interviews of the ten Greek teachers who serve in schools of secondary education in an outermost border town in Greece, we discover that they were required during synchronous and asynchronous distance education in the midst of the Sars-Covid 19-induced pandemic, to undertake multiple roles (Vogiatzaki, 2019) (Isman, Altinay, & Altinay, 2004), some of which were new and for which they were not prepared (Polymili, 2021, p. 253), a particularly stressful fact to them (Nikolopoulou, 2022, p. 7) (Raikou, Konstantopoulou, & Lavidas, 2021, p. 11). They succeeded in responding to them thanks to certain factors (e.g., familiarization with technology and their communication skills) (Tzimopoulos, Provelengios, & Iosifidou, 2021), although there were other factors that were deterring (e.g., ignorance of platforms and of the rationale of online education in general, lack of communication etc.) (Diana, Suhendra, & Yohannes, 2020) (Truzoli, Pirola, & Conte, 2021, pp. 23-24)

In order to be able to respond in the best possible way to their complex role, teachers utilized and evolved skills they had developed earlier as part of their personality and their professional identity (Beardsley, Albó, Aragón, & Hernández-Leo, 2021) (Polymili, 2021, pp. 253-254), the lack of which would have undermined any attempt for

effective online education (Mikušková & Verešová, 2020, pp. 898-899) given the fact that they already felt abandoned in their fate by the official state.

There were many complaints of teachers towards the Ministry of Education (Nikiforos, Tzanavaris, & Kermanidi, 2020, p. 4) (Nikolopoulou, 2022, p. 8), on the contrary they spoke with gratitude about the assistance provided so much by the Administration as by the newly-founded - for the needs of online education - School Support Team (Jurs & Kulberga, 2021, p. 951) (Truzoli, Pirola, & Conte, 2021, p. 945) (Papazoglou & Koutouzis, 2020, p. 3).

What proved to be an obstacle to this whole enterprise of distance education – by the teachers’ words – was the complete lack of training on this specific thematic field and familiarization with platforms of synchronous and asynchronous education (Giannouli, Sarris, & Papadopoulou, 2021, p. 17) (Papazoglou & Koutouzis, 2020, p. 3) (Polymili, 2021, p. 253) and their relevant request (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020) (Phillips, et al., 2021) (Stachteas & Stachteas, 2020, p. 17). This is the reason why everyone rushed to take part – even post-factum – either in the intensive training organized by the Ministry of Education (T4E), or in the free open online courses they were offered (MOOC) (Lionarakis, et al., 2020), which, however, did not particularly live up to their expectations, was not assessed positively in general and should have been organized differently, were it to succeed.

To sum up, the teachers’ interviews reveal the paramount effort (Giasirani & Alivisos, 2021) that they made to overcome obstacles, difficulties, lacks (Nikolopoulou, 2022, pp. 7-8), even surpass themselves (Raikou, Konstantopoulou, & Lavidas, 2021), always bearing in mind the students’ best interest, not only on a cognitive level but primarily on a psychological level (Kim, Dundas, & Asbury, 2021), as the stake in hand was for the pandemic not to leave any trauma (Osgood, Sheldon-Dean, & Kimball, 2021) (Spiteri, 2021). The testimonies of the teachers that participated in the research show that they assess the implementation of online education – synchronous and asynchronous – as relatively successful on their behalf (Truzoli, Pirola, & Conte, 2021, pp. 945-946) (Tzimopoulos, Provelengios, & Iosifidou, 2021, p. 25). This interview, as a teacher told us, “finally ended up being a retrospection, and not very bitter, as I thought as first”.

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