Practices and Conditions of Teacher Collaboration: Case study of a Greek primary school

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ABSTRACT

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In this study, teacher collaboration is examined in the context of a Greek primary school, using various prisms and angles, providing insight regarding the teachers' perceptions, practices and inner expectations. The study consists of views and perceptions stemming from ten Greek teachers and the principal of a primary school located in the island of Rodos, Greece. All the research subjects are teachers from different backgrounds, both professional and personal, with various years of teaching experience. The data for this study were collected through individual interviews and observation notes over a period of ten school days. The main goal is to report the teachers' insights regarding their collaboration, as well as address the underlying issues and prerequisites that would implement it further into their practices. A qualitative, content analysis method was then used upon the extracted data according to the demands of the research questions. The findings indicate a causal relationship between teacher collaboration and well-established collegial relationships, which sets the foundations for the creation of collaborative cultures among teachers. Connecting to the above is the direct involvement of the administration which acts as balancing, motivating and leading factor that provides guidance and stability. Finally, the results highlight the need for structured training, curriculum reforms and proper infrastructure which act as prerequisites and ultimately set the base for collaboration to flourish among Greek teachers. Existing literature is examined in contrast to the findings, a process which provides a clear image of validation, contradiction or supplementation between them. The study's insights provide information on curriculum reforms, collegial relationships, tools and infrastructure, the principal's role and specialized

training, as far as substantial teacher collaboration is concerned in the Greek school context.

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CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

The evolving demands of our modern society, both social and professional, have led to a constant search for the development of innovative, practical and sustainable skills among its members. The combination of strengths and weaknesses among people with various backgrounds, has been noted to result in general advancement of all those involved, provided that there is a fertile and fruitful ground that will cultivate effective communication, leading in collaborative practices (Main & Bryer, 2005; Slavit et al., 2011; Vangrieken et al., 2015). Education plays a key role in cultivating these skills and a collaborative mentality that will develop and flourish in every person. Teachers, the heart of any education system, are now called to take over a new task, in supporting and building a collaboration culture amongst themselves first and subsequently setting an example for their students (Carroll & Foster, 2008; Main & Bryer, 2005).

Teacher collaboration is not a new issue, it has been and still is, under a lot of scrutiny and examination as to what it can fully offer and act catalytically upon (Vangrieken et al., 2015). Teachers are not meant to be working separately from their colleagues; notwithstanding, in their profession they can easily become isolated and individualistic in their educational practices, an outcome that is not in agreement with the very nature of education (Collie et al., 2012; Forte and Flores, 2014; Johnson et al., 2012; Reeves et al., 2017). However, it has been observed that educational systems investing in building collaborative cultures in their schools, tend to have the strongest, most effective influence in their students' outcomes (Goddard et al., 2007; Reeves et al., 2017; Ronfeldt et al., 2015; Vangrieken et al., 2015).

In the Greek school context, however, collaboration is a relatively new and unexplored term and practice. It seems that the phenomenon is a general one, spreading among mainstream, subject and special educators. Venianaki and Zervakis (2015) have

specifically noted that collaboration among mainstream and subject or special education teachers is rather limited, with the teachers resolving to interact solely on practical issues in a hasty and unproductive manner. More specifically, researchers have noted that interaction and meaningful collaboration are one of the main factors that affect teacher efficacy, satisfaction, professional performance and students' academic results (Polymeropoulou & Sorkos, 2015; Venianaki & Zervakis, 2015). Studies referring to the Greek school climate, depict it as one that remains closed and limited, while it maintains a rather cold professional relationship among colleagues (Kavouri, 1998; Saitis, 2002). Moreover, Kavouri's (1998) research reported a sense of enduring confusion among Greek teachers as to what their individual and collective role should be, due to lack of direction and feedback from the administration's side. The curriculum and its demands do not allow the space and the timeframe for teachers to consider collaborating as they are preoccupied with the burden of the material that needs to be completed (Polymeropoulou & Sorkos, 2015, Venianaki and Zervakis, 2015). It seems that now more than ever, reforms need to be considered regarding the manner through which Greek teachers interact and engage in the planning and teaching of the curriculum, if they are expected to collaborate and share their expertise (Matsaggouras, 2002).

The hindering factors that create severe obstacles in Greek teachers' collaboration are yet not completely identified due to the complex nature of collaboration in general. With the Greek economic and ethical crisis affecting all fields, dividing the Greek people rather than uniting them, it inevitably falls into the hands of education to bring the necessary reform in the Greek society. The Greek educators should, now more than ever, come together and combine their expertise, for the benefit of their students' future and subsequently the country's development. Collaboration may be a rather unexplored term among Greek teachers, nevertheless, the circumstances call for a deep awakening and shift from the traditional educational practices. In hope of initiating a discussion that could potentially act as a stepping stone towards constructive change, the teachers' voices regarding their mutual work, are given room to be heard and considered in this study. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the concept and theories around teacher

collaboration in general and to focus on the perceptions of teachers in a Greek primary school, regarding their collaborative reality.

2 CONTEXTUAL SPECIFICATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 School Culture and School Climate

The definition of culture has always been of a somewhat controversial nature, as it stems from various agents that create its deeper meaning. When we begin to understand the essence of a culture, we mostly tend to observe the behavioral characteristics, habits, values, norms and beliefs that construct the manner of how people act in a specific environment or a type of organization. Essential to the forming of a school culture, is the term school climate. Even though school climate and school culture can be considered as two very similar aspects of the school life, they remain different. School climate has to do mainly with the behavioral aspect and the reacting role of the school in various situations.

According to research, culture can be considered the sum of meanings that provides a common understanding among a group, forming a shared direction towards a certain goal that renders a group different than others (Hopkins, 1994; Hoy, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1987; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002). The nature of culture is based on a developmental process, as the group or the organization, shifts and reforms while facing new challenges and situations that demand flexibility and adaptation skills in various settings, while new members are being added or removed (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Bower & Parsons, 2016). Schools have always been a form of community within any community, as teachers, students, administrators and parents interact and develop their own understanding and goal setting. Therefore, it is assumed that all schools eventually create their own form of culture. When school culture is examined, it is considered to be a

combination of the dynamics that come to play an influential role to the school as a whole; the teachers, students, parents, administration and others (Hongboontri & Keawkhong, 2014). The combination of these forces, come to shape each school's individual culture, with its distinctive characteristics that include the processes and the reactions, of all those involved, to various occasions, crises and achievements (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 4).

Teachers remain a vital part in this equation, as they form interactions of their own, building a separate culture in their workplace. Their culture as communities within the school, can be understood as the combination of their beliefs and values along with their interactions and the establishment of a reaction system to face their everyday challenges and demands that have all formulated over the passing of time. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, p. 217). Teacher culture however, as any type of culture that is formed inside a school environment, is largely affected by its reciprocal interactions with anything that comes along with the teaching profession. A notion supported by Rosenholtz (1991), who recognizes the causal relationship among the teachers' belief/action systems and the matrix of policies, traditions and structures in their work environment (p. 2-3). The importance of teacher culture lies in the need of each school to develop and move forward, according to societal changes and demands. According to Saphier and King (1985), a positive school culture is essential to school improvement. When an aspect or element of a school culture is ailing or weak, change cannot occur smoothly and timely. Hence, when teacher culture is underdeveloped in any school, it can be assumed that school improvement will tend to be inadequate and inefficient.

Previous studies seem to have failed to reach a consensus on what qualifies as school climate; however, they have provided us with a general idea of what school climate consists of or rather, what it represents. Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) place school climate as the result of feelings, beliefs and attitudes of everyone involved in the school life. In a more specific definition, school climate embodies the "quality and character of school life" that is shaped by the relationships, structures, practices and various experiences of the school life (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 182). Each individual school, tends to form their very own climate, based on multiple variables that can shift over time. School

climate can be either positive or negative, with both of these aspects acting as catalysts on how school life and performance is developed and eventually formed. The importance of a positive school climate lies in the expectations, goals and a shared vision of what the school represents and aims at. In a positive and sustainable school climate all individuals involved in the school life can work in unison, respect and understanding to feel emotionally and developmentally safe. More specifically, students are allowed by the circumstances to flourish both academically and personally, as they feel valued and heard. Teachers on the other hand, are able to grow, take fruitful risks in the developmental process of their teaching and feel supported by their colleagues and administration. Finally, it should be noted here that school climate and how it is perceived and felt, remains a collective experience, not an individual one that is able to stem by a single individual (Cohen et al., 2009).

When it comes to comparing the aspect school culture and climate, the deeper sense of what the school stands for, what it represents, comes to mind. The values, belief systems and goals, the core of the school itself, lies in the school culture. School climate on the other hand, is more related to the manner through which these values and beliefs are expressed and portrayed. This is so, due to the multiple ways that the stakeholders shaping the school interact and form decisions based on those interactions, which may or may not have to be in correspondence to their initial approaches and initiatives. Adding to that, the variables that retrospectively underline the friction between school climate and culture, can be spotted in the internal and external factors affecting the school life. Parents, societal demands and changes, educational structures, official guidelines and even personal relationships can have an effect on how the school climate is ultimately formed. It can be understood here, that even though the school climate can stem from the school culture, it may be the case that it could be completely reshaped by various outside factors. Nevertheless, school culture can possibly remain unaffected by, what can be called, a superficial manifestation of the school climate, that is interchangeable and unstable through time (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002).

2.1.1   Forms of Teacher Culture

In this section of the theoretical framework, the forms of teacher culture as described by Andy Hargreaves, (1994; 1995) will be analyzed, through the four categories presented below. The focus on this section, is shifted towards the aspect of the teacher culture and how it is categorized with the notion of Hargreaves' criteria running through it. Mainly, Hargreaves describes teacher culture to correspond in four different categories, depending on how the culture is developed and perceived in the school setting: Individualism, Balkanization, Contrived collegiality and Collaboration (Hargreaves, 1994; 1995). Hargreaves' various studies and multiannual research on the subject of teacher collaboration has provided the foundation for future research on the topic, with multiple researchers basing their work on his theoretical framework regarding the reciprocal teacher interactions that shape their working relationships. Therefore, this study closely follows his approaches and categorization on teacher cultures and their manifestations.

2.1.2   Individualism

Traditionally, the teaching profession has always been susceptible to becoming a lonely one. Inside the school walls, teachers have a tendency to withdraw inside the quarters of their classroom, where they function and mainly work alone. It is a reality that has been recognized to exist for the past decades, as a typical situation in most schools, as the educational system is specifically revolving around the seclusion of the teachers in it (Feiman- Nemser & Floden, 1986). According to Fullan "cracking the walls of privatism" (Fullan, 1982) is one of the biggest challenges that the educational sector has to face, but an essential step that has to be taken, in order to bring enduring change.

For a school to function properly, a certain simplex of ideas, values and goals are to be set and followed. A "common mission" as Hargreaves (1995) puts it. If that mission is established, teachers and staff can start moving and working towards a certain direction. Such a focused direction can act as a catalyst to the effectiveness and the

performance of a school and its individuals, fostering the establishment of a common front, gathering the people around a very specific purpose and ultimately uniting the ones who truly believe in it. However, it can be a double-edged sword, as a "common mission" could possibly act as a "heresy, among those who question, doubt and differ" (p. 163) causing them to withdraw and seclude themselves from the rest, endangering the whole endeavor. This exact controversial notion is where Hargreaves spots the potential development of individualism.

However, Hargreaves's (1994) opinions on the reasons behind teacher individualism are somehow different and a fair amount of sceptical, adding another perspective on individualism. According to his distinction, individualism in a teacher's life can be a natural and logical byproduct of the "physical parts of isolation" that are "embedded in the traditional architecture of schools", forcing the organization and departmentalization of teaching into single and individual classrooms (p. 170). Furthermore, Hargreaves, (1994) underlines the impending danger of using the teacher as a "scapegoat" for everything that is faulty in the system and the lack of substantial change, if we merely focus on the emotional characteristics of the teaching profession. He ends identifying the underline cause as a combination of the emotional reasons along with the enforced physical isolation of the traditional school structure, linking them with the original faulty organization in the school system, that fails to provide time, training, proper infrastructure, support and a flexible curriculum (Hargreaves, 1994).

Finally, it should be mentioned here that individualism as a phenomenon in the teaching culture is not considered to be completely negative. Flinders (1988), Hargreaves (1994) and Lortie (1975) do not fail to mention the positive side of teacher individualism; professional autonomy and individual creativity, room for personal and professional growth, building meaningful and personal relationships with one's students and finally, time and space to have honest discussions with one self in order to evaluate and reshape their teaching without the peer pressure, allows teachers to try and experiment with new ways of teaching and thinking.

2.1.3   Balkanization

The term Balkanization was constructed by Hargreaves, (1994) in an attempt to fully express the phenomenon of teacher fragmentation into smaller, collaborative groups within the school community. The term is inspired by the historical circumstances in Eastern Europe which resulted in the fall of the Soviet Union and the creation of multiple independent republics, with strong rivalries among them. Hargreaves saw the parallel between history and his own quest to define the form of teacher culture in which teachers due to various social, educational, ideological and other reasons, consciously or unconsciously divide themselves into separate groups.

The interesting fact with the phenomenon of Balkanization is that there are collaborative practices occurring, but only inside the border of the group. In other words, teachers work collectively while being secluded into smaller groups, inside the school community (Hargreaves, 1994). This phenomenon is described by Hargreaves, as "collaboration that divides" creating a norm that "separates teachers into insulated and often competing sub-groups within the school" (p. 213). The distinctive characteristics of this culture, that express mainly the dynamic relationships among those groups, are as follows:

1. Low Permeability: The groups are strongly insulated from each other. Their boundaries and limits are clear, and the members of the group move and function solely inside them. Teachers within these groups develop professionally and learn within their sub-groups and they form their learning, thinking and decision process within the group, causing the group members of various groups to obtain a completely different and diverse way of thinking.

2. High Permanence: Once the groups are formed, they tend to present strong resistance to the passing of time. The groups' members retain their membership throughout the years to come, showing little or non-existent tendency to move from one group to another. They continue to further perceive, categorize and

divide themselves not as teachers in general, but as subject teachers, special educators and others, depending on the nature of their group.

3. Personal Identification: In balkanized cultures, teachers have the tendency to feel especially attached to their group, throughout their career. This stems mostly from the background of each teacher, whether that is social, educational and others. The very structure of teacher preparation allows the division between primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, high school teachers and so on. Especially in secondary education, teachers seem to be divided according to their specialization, their subject, causing them to completely identify with the nature of their subject and proceed to look at the world through their subjects' lenses.

4. Political Complexion: The groups serve its members' self-interests, however, there seems to be a certain structure within the group, that allows the further division of the members into ones that are central and the ones that are more in the background. This develops an antagonistic tendency among the group members for power and position, causing friction and disturbances among them. (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 213-215)

Balkanization as a phenomenon can, therefore, be observed in any educational level, with a tendency to be more frequent in secondary education. As the division among subject teachers is clearer and more palpable in those levels, it can be expected that the forming of separate groups will be, eventually, a reality that every school will have to face. The issues however, that spring from balkanization according to Hargreaves' (1994) research, can greatly affect the schools' academic performance, goal-setting and achieve its mission. Firstly, balkanization among teachers in subject related issues, causes the educating staff to fail in their attempt to include and treat the whole of the student population equally. As subjects tend to categorize themselves in *academic* and *practical* (p. 218), the students that attend either of these subjects, consequently, fall into certain categories, as their teachers remain divided causing imbalances in the school program itself and the smooth function of the school life in general subjects, where students are supposed to interact and work with each other harmoniously. Finally, and perhaps most

importantly, balkanization among teachers poses as a serious hazard to teacher professional development. As teachers remain "safely" behind their groups and their well-established comfort zones, they develop a sense of stagnation in their work. As a general observation has it for teachers, if allowed and encouraged to work and interact with the whole of the school's educating community, they develop a better sense of awareness in their profession, school environment and have a chance to experiment and learn from each other (Hargreaves, 1994; 1995).

2.1.4 Contrived Collegiality

When contrived collegiality is developed in a school, the administrative influence and control are rather apparent in its attempt to develop a collaborative culture among the school teachers (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990, p. 227). This form of teacher culture can be considered as an "ugly relative" of collaboration, or what collaboration could truly be (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). In contrived collegiality, collaborative initiatives are forced or stem completely from the administration's side, as it aims to control the way teachers collaborate. In various research, Hargreaves condemns the use and accuses contrived collegiality to be merely a way of "enhancing administrative control" (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990, p.227), in a forceful manner, which has nothing to do with the culture of openness, trust and mutual respect that collaboration consists of (Datnow,2011;Hargreaves, 1994;Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

As administrative control over the nature of collaborative relationships tightens, teachers are obligated to interact in a forced and rigid manner that creates gaps in the development of trust and sincerity. Building on that, Hargreaves provided a list of features that express the relationships among teachers who engage in contrive collegiality practices (Hargreaves, 1995):

1. The relationships developed are stemming fully from an administrative attempt to forcefully impose them to interact with each other. These relationships are not a by-product of sincere collegial intention.

2. As a natural result, the relationships that are developed are done so in a manner of compulsion, which has direct and indirect hazards to how individuality or discretion is perceived and respected among teachers

3. Implementation-oriented. Teachers are eventually forced to work in combination, in order to support and implement the requirements of the curriculum, the principal, the district, the Ministry and others.

4. Fixed in time and space. The administration has complete control over the initiatives and the practices, teachers work must happen in specified times and places, most commonly arranged by the administration.

5. Predictability. When practices are developed within the framework of contrived collegiality, they tend to have a specific design as to the ultimate results and product they will eventually provide. Thus, lack of spontaneity and initiative are almost always highlighted throughout the whole endeavor, which serves the administrative goal of containing any kind of unpredicted situation that comes along with collaboration.

However, research conducted by Datnow (2011) has shown that contrived collegiality may act as a touchstone from where true collaborative culture can be developed. Her research argues that, even though contrived collegiality is purely intertwined with administrative initiative and control, it could potentially serve as a medium for teachers in making a turn towards the establishment of a collaborative culture. According to her findings, practices and initiatives originating from the administration, laid the groundwork for the establishment of a genuine collaborative activity, during which the teachers involved found the space to interact and challenge each other while sharing ideas and expertise (Datnow, 2011). In response to these findings, Hargreaves A. and Fullan (2012), provide an explanation by further arguing the pre-existence of a stable and trusting culture among teachers that acted as foundation for contrived collegiality practices to produce positive collaborative results.

In any case, it can be inferred from the above that contrived collegiality is a form of teacher culture that poses as the exact opposite of the notion that Hargreaves has

expressed collaboration to be. However, the experimentation with designed and mandatory collaborative actions among teachers could potentially create the space and the right circumstances for collaboration to flourish where it could not before. Datnow's (2011) research proves that in some occasions, all teachers need a little push towards the right direction. Nevertheless, the manner through which educational change can be established, is the gradual and consistent development of a collaborative culture among teachers, in both the professional and educational context (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

2.1.5   Collaboration

In bright contrast to what contrived collegiality represents, stands collaboration and the development of true and consistent collaborative culture among teachers (Hargreaves, 1994; 1995). Collaboration in its most pure form, is described by Hargreaves as a means of fostering teacher development in a manner that allows true sharing and growth of both teachers and their expertise. More importantly, collaboration is perceived as pivotal in fundamental school improvement, acting as a way to truly establish enduring and sustainable educational change, allowing to "restructure schools from within" (Hargreaves, 1994, p.186-187). Essential to understanding the meaning of collaboration is the controlling and intervening nature of the school's administration. As collaboration is based on naturality and spontaneity that stems effortlessly from teacher relationships, any kind of administrative intervention acts as a limiting factor to the relationship traits that are developed in collaborative cultures. Hargreaves recognizes these traits as such:

1. Spontaneous. This trait mainly stems from the teachers' social tendencies. It may be supported or enhanced administratively through scheduling (e.g. offering to cover for classes) and leading by example. However, the teachers as a social unit, possess the power of sustaining such a working relationship, based on mutual understanding and respect.

2. Voluntary. Teachers' mutual understanding and agreement are combined, and collaborative work is crucial to their educational development and professional effectiveness. This creates the foundation for selfless acts of collegial support.

3. Development-oriented. It is most common in collaborative cultures to observe teachers working collectively to further implement development. They create goals of their own and strive to bring constant and enduring change. They are in fact, the ones that stand right in the center of change initiation, collectively and combining their professional expertise to sustain it, while further responding to external and internal demands.

4. Pervasive across time and space. As collaborative cultures develop among teachers, their encounters tend to develop outside pre-scheduled and mandates meetings by the administration. Nevertheless, teachers interact and arrange meetings to collaborate in a casual manner, that is not time or space-specific. It is their manner of working together harmoniously and rather informally. Collaboration forms in rather spontaneous ways, that may involve even fleeting glances, gestures, words of appreciation and support. The unique social design and working life of each individual school, is the catalyst of such collaborative relationships and interactions.

5. Unpredictable. The outcomes of such collaborative cultures and initiatives are, subsequently, designed and controlled by the teachers involved in them. Therefore, unpredictable and often uncontrollable situations and issues may arise, as far as the administration point of view is concerned. Collaborative cultures could possibly clash with a rather centralized educational system or administration. It can be easily inferred from this, that administration may have to deal with the relinquishment of power and political control, especially when it comes to issues related to decisions formed and supported by teachers as a united front. More often than not, in cases where the administration is struggling with the formation and establishment of a collaborative culture in their school, they are faced with the realization that their inability to do so may not lie in their teachers

themselves, but in their persistence to maintain control and political power. (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 192-193)

Collaboration as described by Hargreaves' research, can ultimately be considered as the healthiest and most productive teacher culture, that promotes stable, respectful relationships that evolve into professional engagement and equal improvement. Building in teachers the confidence and strength they need in their profession, as well as the sense of security to grow and experiment in their workplace. However, it must be noted here that collaboration can be proven problematic and prone to issues and limitations. A study by Berlin and White (2012) highlighted the difficulties lying in the effectiveness and management of common work, with teachers relying too much on each other to produce satisfactory results. The danger remains the same, as teachers may find too much comfort in their collaborative cultures and therefore, resolve to engage into tested and previously successful techniques and practices and defer from challenging and testing each other in a positive and evolving manner. Possibly, in fear of causing tension and endangering their relationships, teachers may fall into a continuous loop, in which they can no longer develop and experiment in a positive manner (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 194-195).

2.2   Interpersonal relationships

2.2.1   The Concept of Collegiality and its importance

As mentioned above, the teaching profession has traditionally been prone to isolative and individualistic practices (Hargreaves, 2001; 1995; 1994). However, the formation of an innovative school norm that involves interactive and collaborative practice, is a process that involves the existence of certain prerequisites. Allowing the educators to design and develop their collaborative skills (DuFour, 2011) as well as the space to form interpersonal relationships which in turn, lays the groundwork for possible and effective collaboration (Graves, 2001). Therefore, examining the framework in which teacher relationships are developed, remains crucial in understanding the foundation on which collaboration is ultimately built. Research has indicated several distinctive points

among the two concepts of collaboration and collegiality (Hargreaves, 2001; Harris & Anthony, 2001; Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016). According to Löfgren and Karlsson (2016, p. 217) collaboration refers to "teachers' cooperative actions" while, collegiality is "a concept with normative and relational dimensions". The collegial relationships that develop in a teacher community extend beyond the concept of collaboration, as it is a means of interdepended development among the educators that form the community itself, while its members act as students/learners themselves (Barth, 1990; Middleton, 2000). Moreover, collaboration is possible to occur in any given timeframe, with no specific institutional foundation, simply established in the sense of executing mutual work (Hargreaves D., 1994), while collegiality requires a certain structure that involves the participation of multiple individuals in mutual goals and functions (Hargreaves D., 1995).

Collegial relations and their forms are analyzed extensively in the research by Little (1990). According to the study findings, collegial relationships maintain both positive and negative sides, depending on the perspective of dependency and interdependency. Little (1990) recognizes at least four main forms of collegial relationships, that focus mainly on the content rather than the manifestation of said relationships. *Storytelling and scanning*, being one of the main forms, is reported to be the tendency of teachers to narrate and share classroom related stories, in their attempt to seek support and validation. *Aid and assistance* revolve around the "just ask" initiative that can be found among educators; Teachers asking questions from other teachers on teaching matters, practices or advice on everyday issues. *Sharing,* concerns the exchange of ideas, practices and material. It promotes a culture of openness among teachers and their work and expands their professional toolbox while possibly enhancing their teaching. Educators have the opportunity to show their work, their perception of teaching, reveal traits of their personality, acknowledge and understand their colleagues better, through mutual interconnectedness. Finally, Little presents the fourth form of collegial relationships, which is *Joint work.* The principle behind joint work involves the concept of interdependency among teachers, which means the equal support,

involvement and respect of all teachers, regarding a common task or goal. The researcher sets this final form apart from the other three, based on the fact that *joint work* involves a greater degree of interdependence and highlights the factor of trust, much more so than the other three. Through joint work, educators are able to take on more joint responsibility and truly alter their opinions, perceptions and practices in comparison to the other three forms that reserve a space for superficial relationships that do not truly affect teachers' work.

The importance behind the concept of collegiality lies in its relation to the establishment of an effective collaborative culture, which is the main examination of this study. This type of teacher culture is heavily dependent on various characteristics of interpersonal relationships that form among teachers, such as honest communication, capability to work together, mutual support and understanding each other's role (Main & Bryer, 2005; Slavit et al., 2011; Vangrieken et al.,2015). Collegiality, in its very essence, poses as a means of support and an excellent source of energy in the teaching profession (Graves, 2001). More often than not, educators are likely to experience feelings of exhaustion, also known as burnout. Normally, the main cause behind burnouts are the feelings of isolation and the lack of a supportive system that would act as a preventing agent, in cases where the demands of the teaching profession become overbearing. Sustaining open communication, engaging in supportive collegial relationships and ultimately resorting in collaborative practices, can very well be the path that leads to increased job satisfaction and the alternative to experiencing a burnout incident (Collie et al., 2012; Forte and Flores, 2014; Johnson et al., 2012; Reeves et al., 2017). Interestingly, according to research by Collie et al. (2012), educators engaging in collaboration can be greatly benefited by reducing teaching stress levels and fostering feelings of contempt in their work environment. Ultimately, job satisfaction stems from the manner in which employees perceive and interact with their surroundings, which in a great part includes their colleagues (Evans, 2012).

To summarize, it is evident by research that collegiality is a rather loose concept and a concept that involves controversy, as it is still under examination due to the

affecting variables and its role in understanding teacher culture, collaboration and interactions. More often than not, the above terms are intertwined and without specific distinction throughout literature mainly due to the commonalities they share (Hargreaves 1994; 2001; Hopkins, 1994; Lima, 2001; Little, 1990, Sachs, 2000). Due to the significance collegiality presents in teacher culture and subsequently collaboration, the next section of this study shall further focus on the various internal and external factors affecting collegial relationships.

2.2.2   Collegiality Affecting Factors

Collegiality is consistent of various balances and it is rather dependent on support. The support provided by colleagues can of course, take many forms, through which all teachers feel secure and safe to express themselves. In his research, Hargreaves (2001) sets the basic prerequisites for collegiality: *appreciation and acknowledgement, personal support and social acceptance, cooperation, collaboration and conflict.* If these aspects are studied and considered respectively, it is their lack thereof, that poses as stumbling rock to healthy collegial relationships. Support, however, remains an issue that deserves special attention, as it demands cooperation among the two most important parts of the equation. The growth of collegiality falls, inevitably, in the hands of administration and the teachers involved.

Even though the role of the administrator can be influential in constructing and encouraging collaborative initiatives, it is ultimately under the teachers' jurisdiction whether collaboration will flourish via the development of collegial relationships. Naturally, certain prerequisites and affecting factors are largely responsible when collegiality is considered, both by internal and external sources. One of the affecting factors, that recent research identifies as rather influential, is the teachers' emotional state. More specifically, it was found that positive emotions contribute greatly in the manner teachers interact and engage in collegial relationships, ultimately affecting their ability to improve and stay determined in their working life. Nonetheless, emotional responses can also be responsible for causing tensions and issues among colleagues, if these emotions

stem from negative interactions (Cowie, 2011; Graves, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001; 2002, Harris & Anthony, 2001; Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016; Uitto et al., 2015).

Moreover, issues related to the curriculum, the structure of the school timetable, and most importantly time management, are also considered as obstacles when it comes to teacher collegiality. Leonard and Leonard (2003),Hargreaves (1995) and Inger (1993)'s studies refer to the strict and inflexible character of the curriculum's structure that does not allow teachers the access to material, space and time in order to develop collegial relationships; collegiality of course, requires sufficient time, structure and proper organization throughout the school day, if educators are expected to meet and secure a specific timeframe in which they can allow collegial relationships and subsequently collaboration, to grow.

2.3   Teacher collaboration

2.3.1   Definition of Collaboration in school contexts

Schrange's definition of collaboration follows as such: "…Collaboration is the process of shared creation: two or more individuals with complementary skills interacting to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own. Collaboration creates a shared meaning about a process, a product, or an event…Something is there that wasn't there before." (Schrange, 1990, p.40-41).

In a more specific context, schools have now more than ever participated in the discussion concerning collaboration. Collective responsibility or accountability in education, is the issue in many educational agendas regarding the development and sustainability in the field. As schools and teachers are held holistically accountable for the state of modern education, they are called upon to present solutions in pressing matters, in a collective and harmonious way. Working in unison, and especially in groups, creates certain expectations among its members, even more so when those members are teachers, concerned about their students' development and well-being. Peer

pressure, therefore, concludes in mutual accountability and consensus about ways for improvement among teachers, resulting in better teaching practices, learning outcomes and professional efficiency (Datnow, 2011).

On the subject of collaboration being related to teachers' benefit, numerous researchers highlight its positive effects on teacher development and increased job performance. Naturally, the above-mentioned aspects can certainly correlate to the improved emotional state that job satisfaction provides. In any case, collaborating is regarded to offer a safe outlet for self-expression and reflection, leading to a deeper understanding of one's teaching (Farrell, 2001). According to Graham (2007), the exchange of thoughts, practices and experiences, extends the number of information and tools that teachers have in their disposal when it comes to conducting their teaching. Moreover, the feeling of being supported, heard and understood vastly contributes to building teacher confidence and the ability to receive and provide constructive feedback (Carroll & Foster, 2008; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). It seems that literature supports the fact that teachers have the tendency to improve in collaborative settings as they have the chance to question their perceptions and practices in a safe and supportive environment that promotes collective teacher development (Ronfeldt et al., 2015).

Collaboration has been shown to improve student achievement and academic results (Carroll & Foster, 2008; Main & Bryer, 2005; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). Farrell (2001) rather stresses the impact of an instructional team that centers around students and their specific needs, setting constructive collaboration among the teachers as a strong catalyst when it comes to success. Research strongly suggests that as far as student achievement is concerned, teachers working in a combined manner set the foundation for a more student-centered approach that allows the interdisciplinary aspect to enter effectively in their education. (Goddard et al., 2007; Reeves et al., 2017; Ronfeldt et al., 2015; Vangrieken et al., 2015). As teachers from various subjects and backgrounds come together and join their expertise, the produced educational result would be enhanced, allowing students to obtain a more comprehensive standpoint on any subject.

Finally, it is clear that all the educational aspects influenced by teachers collaborating form a chain reaction, that ultimately leads to innovation and educational change (Vangrieken et al., 2015). A chained reaction is activated, as increased job satisfaction leads to increased performance, resulting in innovative teaching practices and improved student performance. As teachers feel more comfortable in their teaching, they build up the confidence to take risks, experiment and question the norms of their work and the systems in place. Most importantly though, they act as bright examples to their students, encouraging them to work collectively in achieving the best versions of themselves

Given the fact that educational challenges are complicated in nature they demand the use of different expertise, in order to increase the chance for identifying the viable solutions needed (Mostert, 1996; Truijen et al., 2013). Therefore, collaboration is the inevitable path all schools walk on at some point (Vangrieken et al., 2015). On a more cautious note though, school collaboration practices present those involved with unique challenges and barriers, such as resistance to collaborative efforts and a certain sense of intrusive evaluation from colleagues, leading to reluctance and unwillingness to participate in these practices (Mostert,1996). In the delicate school environment with plenty of balances to maintain and the stakes being too high, achieving a collaborative culture among its staff can be challenging and risky. Nevertheless, if managed and supported properly, collaboration in schools can create a brand-new educational change that will flourish and live up to modern societal and educational expectations (Datnow, 2011; Fullan, 1982; Hargreaves, 2001;1994;1995; Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016; Vangrieken et al., 2015).

2.3.2   Collaboration Affecting Factors

Literature has indicated so far, the complex nature of collaboration and the demanding prerequisites it requires to fully unfold its merits. At this point, the factors that pose as influential to either facilitating or hindering collaboration will be presented and analyzed, in attempt to understand how collaboration can ultimately be sustained

in the teaching community. To begin with, Vangrieken et al. (2015), provide a clear depiction of both positively and negatively affecting factors. In fact, the prerequisites for sustainable collaboration reported in their study vary from structural, personal and group to process characteristics. More specifically, the preconditions are based on building an understanding of the merits in collective work that mainly involves the combination of skills and expertise. Using that as a starting point, they move on to facilitating factors that include proper structure of the timetable and the school life, school architecture, and a reasonable size for the forming groups. On matters that revolve around personal and group characteristics, the sustainment of supportive relationships, the establishment of shared responsibilities, shared leadership and a willingness to adapt and be flexible, can be found among effective conflict resolve, sufficient training and the ability to provide and receive self-reflective feedback.

Hargreaves, (1994) along with Huxham and Vangen (2013) and Vangrieken et al. (2015)'s research studies agree in the elements that ultimately hinder collaboration. Again, there is an array of characteristics that involve structure, personal and group dynamics along with the administrative role. Some of these characteristics deal with the unwillingness of teachers to collaborate due to the lack of specific organization, unclear goal setting, unbridged differences in perspectives and teaching philosophies among teachers. Moreover, the pressure of responding to the curriculum demands creates a rather small timeframe provided for teacher collaboration. Therefore, time and resources seem to be among the top issues that obstruct collaborative practices and initiatives. In fact, teachers report that even if the curriculum foresees the need for collective work and provides a certain amount of time, constructive collaboration cannot simply be adjusted in narrow timeframes.

More importantly, it seems that the roots of the problem lie deeper, in the very structure of teacher training and development. Since there is no content provided in relation to collaboration in the professional context, teachers tend to take matters into their own hands creating loops of mistakes, due to lack of knowledge and experience (Patton & Parker, 2017). Leonard and Leonard (2001) also found that the lack of skills

and specific training, set the basis for collective practices to fail by often supporting and nurturing a culture of competition and individualism.

Finally, the role of the administration should not be left unnoticed when both hindering and facilitating factors of collaboration are considered. As administrators are responsible for the smooth and operational function of each school, it is only logical that their participation in building and sustaining collaborative cultures without leading teachers in the trap of contrived collegiality, is crucial and a rather demanding task (Hargreaves, 1994;1995; Vangrieken et al., 2015). The principal as a figure has always been considered to have an integral part in maintaining the balances in a school environment. Their role consists of many responsibilities that require vigilance and attention to detail as they are called to keep almost all aspects of the school life balanced and settled. Administrators' choices and actions may ultimately be the ones that form the environment in which teachers can begin to work collectively or alternatively, retreat into individualistic practices (Hargreaves, 1994; Ketterlin-Geller et al., 2015; Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014; Vangrieken et al., 2015).

School principals' interventions remain crucial in supporting and maintaining teacher motivation regarding collaborative practices. By examining and understanding the intricacies behind the practices that are proven to be effective, they come to appreciate the dynamics of their staff and ultimately what bonds them as a functioning team (Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). In a previous part of the literature review, the meaning of the school culture was thoroughly examined and described, as one of the main elements that is associated with the establishment of a collaborative culture. Building on that and keeping the aspect of the principal in mind, Giles (2007) states that the principal's manner in developing an effective school culture, ultimately decides whether collaboration will flourish in a school. If the principal pictures himself/herself outside the framework in which teacher collaboration is established, they are likely to fail in assisting their teachers to work together efficiently, as teachers strongly search for guidance and support when it comes to collaborating with constant follow-ups and administrative feedback (Little, 1990, Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). However, both Hargreaves (1994) with his concept of

contrived collegiality and Szczesiul and Huizenga (2014) agree on the fact that when teachers are merely provided with rigid rules and mandates as to when, how and in what ways they should collaborate, feelings of dissatisfaction, unwillingness and lack of motivation arise. Therefore, if collaboration is completely forced, the opposite expected results are most likely to occur, as teachers retreat in the safety of their classroom. The principal is advised to establish a more informal leadership that approaches the social and cultural aspect among the teachers. Moreover, literature suggests that teachers' collaborative motivation is greatly affected by the principal's establishment of a common vision, a process of goal setting that agrees with everyone's aspirations on professional, school and personal development. Change in the educational settings often, happens from within the school context, working "from inside out, which involves the radical shift in organization and traditional structure, a responsibility that lies under the principal's jurisdiction (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

According to Anderson-Butcher et al., (2004), it is essential to examine where does the principal exactly fit in the picture of teacher collaboration. They express a radical change that needs to be made if principals are to keep up the pace with modern educational demands, while they highlight the establishment of a "team approach" rather than a "single person approach". In a rather extensive attempt to fully explain the extent of the principal's involvement in building a sustainable collaborative culture, they present a list of elements that every principal should consider, in order to ensure the right foundations for proactive collaboration and team-building among their staff. The seven points include: environment, structure, process, membership, communication, purpose and resources. As far as environment is concerned, the principal must strive to maintain successful relationships and a social climate that inspires trust, reliability and credibility to its members, otherwise the foundations shall remain unstable. The leadership must work in a way that the team's formation is based on deliberate evaluations of strengths, weaknesses and on an appropriate role distribution that determines the dynamics of the group, in terms of leaderships and other aspects. When the long-term process is planned, the principal guides the collaborating teachers in developing flexibility and adaptation

skills that create a steady, unbiased pace while maintaining balance through correct navigation in various conditions and circumstances. Nonetheless, mutual respect and interdependence are elements that all colleagues must maintain if they wish to retain their membership in the teams. More importantly, communication has to be conducted in an open and free manner, based on the creation of informal relationships among team members. If open and free communication is to be preserved, the principal as a leader needs to establish a functioning conflict resolve system, in which all team members are treated, heard and understood equally. Maintaining this kind of communication allows the principal to ensure the viability of the purpose under which the teachers have come together to work towards. The purpose is found within the vision and common goal setting, the establishment of shared meanings and desirable results, that all stakeholders agree in, with the guidance and support of the leadership. Finally, every principal needs to consider that the resources that are provided, are shared and sufficient, to ensure the smooth operation of all collaborative members and teams under their initiative (Anderson-Butcher et. al., 2004, p. 6-10).

All in all, principals and their contribution in building collaborative cultures among teachers lies in their ability to listen, comprehend and be willing to take a leap of faith and trust towards their colleagues. Teachers need their ideas to be heard and respected but most importantly they wish to feel appreciated by their peers and superiors. By utilizing these needs, principals can begin to lead by serving their teachers and their wishes first, while relinquishing their hold on power by learning to share and distribute responsibility. Leading by example is, at the end of the day, the only efficient way to lead.

3   RESEARCH TASK

In this study, the aim is to examine the Greek teachers' perspectives on the concept of collaboration. The Greek school has been facing multiple challenges in accommodating innovation and educational change, maintaining a rather traditional character that

preserves the individualistic teaching practices of the past. Collective work and the establishment of a collaborative culture could potentially be one of the main missing pieces in this intricate puzzle of educational change in the Greek school context.

Greek educators present a certain level of discomfort and awkwardness, when it comes to reevaluating the practices (such as collaboration) that would lead to a potential improvement of their school climate and ultimately their teaching efficacy and student outcomes (Polymeropoulou, 2015). Since teacher collaboration presents such particular importance in school development and teacher performance, it is rather important to understand the Greek teachers' standpoints regarding the concept of collaboration, their current practices and how they would ultimately implement it into their work further. I am mainly interested in recording these standpoints, focusing on the examination and comprehension of the intricate reasons behind the lack of genuine collaboration among Greek educators that literature suggests. The ultimate goal of this study is to answer the following research questions, as they have emerged from the literature:

1. What are the perceptions of Greek teachers regarding collaboration?
2. What are the current conditions and practices, regarding collaboration, in their school?
3. According to teachers, how could conditions for collaboration be improved?

4   IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

4.1   Research methods

This study utilizes qualitative research methods, as the main intent was to immerse in a deeper understanding of the practices, actions and the affecting surroundings of the study's subjects, a qualitative approach generally provides the researcher with the ability to do so (Creswell, 2012). In addition, the selection of this approach for the current study, lies in the characteristics of qualitative research that allow several different approaches (e.g. case study, ethnography) towards a study object and a number of methods to provide results. Moreover, the researcher has the opportunity to experience and engage in the research from a close distance, while interacting directly with the object under examination. The flexibility of the research design and the holistic perspective provided, create the foundation for examining the study subject through a wider array of perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Tracy, 2010; 2012). Qualitative research creates the room in the research for new and different patterns to emerge and be observed; patterns that may have not been originally noticed or intended to be examined (Creswell, 2007, Tracy, 2012).

The school and the teachers under examination, are perceived as a whole unit that involves close interaction and development of dynamics that affect each other. Collegiality and the establishment of positive teacher relationships is a matter that is rather personal and varies from every school and every teacher culture. In addition, the number of multiple affecting variables, in the ways that collegiality is ultimately formed or fragmented, create a "minefield" of possible missteps that require careful navigation, if teachers are to function smoothly in their work environment. It is the focus on these dynamics and school culture developed in the specific school unit that led to my perception of this research to be a case study.

According to Taylor and Martindale (2014), a case study provides the researcher with the necessary context for a deeper examination and analysis of the study object or

phenomenon that is of interest. Indeed, the unit of analysis in the research conducted is the case itself as an undivided whole that allows to be explored from numerous perspectives (Thomas, 2011). By isolating the teacher's viewpoints, beliefs and behaviors within the particular school and digging deeper into the internal and external affecting factors of their professional interactions, while consistently keeping in mind the aspect of effective collaboration, this research attempts to extract results that could possibly be further applied in the general Greek school context.

4.2   The participants and the research process

The participants of this study are teachers from a Greek primary school in the main town of Rodos. In total, the participants were eleven; four classroom teachers, six subject teachers, the special educator and the principal. The participants were selected randomly, mainly based on their own voluntary wish to participate in the research, except for the principal who was approached intentionally by the researcher, in order to obtain specific information. I ensured variation among the teacher participants by not focusing solely on the classroom teachers, rather attempting to include various subject teachers in the research, in order to preserve a more holistic approach on the results produced. Most of the participants were women, with the exception of two men, one of whom was the principal. All of the participants were trained professionals with several years of teaching experience.

The basis for selection of the particular school lies in its size and academic reputation. The primary school is one of the largest primary schools, in student and teacher numbers in the main town of the island. It accommodates twenty-six teachers in total; fifteen mainstream classroom teachers, nine subject teachers, the special educator and the principal. The student population at the time of the research was three hundred and eighty. Regarding academic performance, the school is rather known for its highly effective and professional staff, with parents preferring this particular school, instead of others, in close proximity for their children. In the beginning of each academic year the

school receives multiple requests for student transfers in their grounds, due to its well-established reputation of increasing student outcomes and academic performance. In addition, the school is also the very own primary school I attended as a young student, which already establishes a deep connection between myself and its teachers.

I originally contacted the school's principal via telephone, during which I made the request to conduct the research. I informed the principal of my intentions to conduct open-ended interviews and observations on the school's teachers. A specific timeframe and the duration of the data collection was established for 10 school days. Permission to interview and observe the teachers was provided by the principal, as well as the freedom to roam the school grounds freely, observe, make notes and participate in any kind of activity the school organized. Upon my arrival, the appropriate introductions where made to the school staff and the intents of the research were introduced to the teachers. I informed them about the design of the data collection, which would consist of interviews and free observations, for which the teachers were requested to interact and function as naturally as possible and proceed with their everyday tasks. A number of volunteers offered to participate in the interview process by approaching me after the introduction.

The interviews were semi-structured, with the interview questions specifically designed to answer the research questions of the study (See Annex 2). The questions addressed issues such as teacher relationships, collaborative initiatives, resources and others. I tried to focus on my research questions and form the interview questions in ways that would directly respond to them. I also, tried to avoid the use of leading questions, or questions that would have a single-word or yes/no response. After presenting them to my supervisor, I decided to follow her advice on shifting them into thematic questions, based again on my research questions. It helped me to focus on the nature of each question and avoid unnecessary and obvious repetitions during the interviews, which proved quite effective, in the end. Lastly, I sent a final confirmation e-mail to the school principal regarding my imminent arrival and moved on to the construction of a consent form. I used both English and Greek language, so it wouldn't cause any problems or misunderstandings (See Annex 1).

The intent behind the open-ended, semi-structured interviews and the observation, was to acquire as much valid information possible regarding the research questions and the goals of the study, in a manner that provided a way to triangulate the data produced by each method. The justification for the selection of semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting the data, lies in the fact that semi-structured interviews provide the research participants with the ground to reflect personally on their own experiences (Seidman,2013). Moreover, the characteristic of this interview style allows a certain flexibility for the researcher to create a form of discussion with the participants and gain further insight on the topic by asking clarifications on certain answers (Gray, 2014). Given the fact that the aim of the research is to obtain the teachers' perceptions and narratives on the subject of collaboration from various aspects, the interview method seemed as the most appropriate one. On a similar note, I selected to use observation as another manner of supplementing my data, mainly due to the fact that observations allow the researcher to observe the subjects' behaviors from a close proximity while taking notes based on the research's objectives. Since my goal was to establish the accuracy of the data, by observing and reporting the teachers' behaviors, practices and interactions in correlation to collaboration, the selection to include observation as a means of triangulation was justified based on the general intentions and literature (Gray,2014).

All participants were asked the same questions and the interviews were audio recorded, with the exception of the principal, whose interview was conducted based on leadership related questions (See Annex 3). The main problem was, of course, time. Teachers in Greece are generally quite busy even during break time, so the only way to conduct the interviews was during their free-periods, which took a bit of coordination and persuasion. We did not have any proper place to conduct the interviews in peace and quiet, but we managed by using empty classrooms or so. Sometimes, there were no classrooms available, and we had to talk in rooms with a couple other people present. This was rather challenging, since I was worried about the validity and authenticity of my interviewee's words. The purpose of the interviews was to create a safe space in

which the interviewee would feel comfortable and able to develop their answers in the form of a dialogue. The interviews' duration varied from 15 minutes to 40, with most of them lasting about 20 to 25 minutes. To ensure anonymity and protection of their identities, all participants signed a data protection form and selected a pseudonym of their choosing to replace their original names. The principal wished to keep his identity known. Finally, the interviews were conducted during free periods, during which the teachers were available. Each interview was initially transcribed and immediately translated from Greek to English by me, within a week of the time it was originally conducted.

During the 10 school days I remained in the school grounds from the beginning (8:15 a.m.), until the end (13:15 p.m.) of the school day, in order to conduct simultaneous observations of the teachers' daily interactions. The observations' notes were handwritten and later typed in a continuous text that described the general interactions and observations made throughout the school days. The notes made were specifically focused on the manner the teachers interacted and potentially collaborated throughout their day. Taking notes was quite challenging, since most of the teachers were rather curious and wished to check what I was writing in my notebook. There were even instances where they would try and read my notes over my shoulder or even attempted to grab my notebook. I quickly, moved past these instances in order not to cause any friction with the teachers, and decided to make mental notes when I was among large groups of teachers (such as teacher meetings, announcements etc.) and write them down as quickly as possible afterwards. Other than that, I realized in a timely manner that most of the collaboration practices happened among the younger classes' teachers and decided to focus on them and their ways. Fortunately, everything moved on smoothly during my time in their classrooms. As a big thank you for their time, I volunteered to help them out with their everyday chores/tasks and even had the chance to teach right beside them, when they asked me to. That assisted me in checking how they collaborated with me, in their teaching and what their overall attitude towards collaboration was in practice.

4.3   Teachers' profiles

The participants' profiles are presented in this section, to provide a clear structure and understanding of each participant's background. The 10 teachers in total that took part in research were mainly women, both mainstream and subject teachers, with the exception of the principal. In the table that follows, the exact participants' numbers, the roles and the years of service are demonstrated in detail.

Table 1 Teachers' Profiles

Participant	Gender	Role	Years of Service
Participant 1 (P1)	Male	Subject Teacher	21-30
Participant 2 (P2)	Female	Classroom Teacher	31-40
Participant 3 (P3)	Female	Subject Teacher	11-20
Participant 4 (P4)	Female	Subject Teacher	11-20
Participant 5 (P5)	Female	Classroom Teacher	11-20
Participant 6 (P6)	Female	Classroom Teacher	31-40
Participant 7 (P7)	Female	Subject Teacher	21-30
Participant 8 (P8)	Female	Subject Teacher	21-30
Participant 9 (P9)	Female	Classroom Teacher	21-30
Participant 10 (P10)	Female	Subject Teacher	11-20
The Principal	Male	Administrative	25

4.4   Ethical considerations

Regarding the ethical aspect of this research, the main considerations revolve around the participants and their profiles. Given the fact that this is a case study of one of the largest schools in the area, its identification would not be of particular difficulty, which created the issue of ensuring identity protection and anonymity among for the participants. Moreover, since the sample is not rather large, I was also concerned by the

fact that the teachers would be easily identifiable among their colleagues. Therefore, I took a number of measures to ensure anonymity and to protect my interviewees from being targeted due to their views and beliefs.

First of all, I made clear from the initial part of the data collection and during my general introduction to the school, what were the aims and the contents of the research and for what purposes it was conducted. Prior to each individual interview, I ensured that the subjects understood the above by repeating myself and presenting them with the consent forms translated in Greek. Verbal and written reassurance as to their identity and data protection was therefore, provided several times. The interviews were then transcribed word by word and were immediately translated from Greek to English. As I was translating the interviews, language barriers such as expressions, lingo and others were naturally, present throughout the process. Nevertheless, I have, to the best of my knowledge, remained as close as possible to the original text during the translations, to ensure that the teachers' views remained unaltered.

During the actual data analysis, I drafted a table with the teachers' profiles (See sub-chapter 4.3), which provided a clearer view of the teachers' backgrounds. To ensure that his kind of information would not allow room for exposing the research subjects' identities, I provided limits between their years of service and I concealed the subjects they teach, a strategy that was also followed during the reporting of the findings.

4.5   Data Analysis

The data collected underwent a qualitative content analysis due to the open character of the answers provided by the interviews and the observation notes (Elo et al., 2014). The data were initially categorized based on the research questions aims' and in a manner that would provide direct approach to the questions. Due to the large amount of information extracted from the data, content analysis was selected as a "method of analyzing written, verbal and visual communication messages" and a "systemic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena", which

provided deeper insight to what the data provided the research with (Elo and Kyngäs, 2007, p.107- 108). Teachers' references on interesting aspects of the objectives were also noted and included as potential affecting factors to the results provided. The procedure through which the data were analyzed, was not strictly inductive nor deductive but a combination of both, due to the nature of the research questions that require open and discussable answers. Based on the literature review and especially the model of Hargreaves' regarding teacher cultures, I directed my analysis towards identifying elements in the data that would confirm, supplement or disagree with the approaches of the existing literature.

Initially, the data were collected gradually and transcribed in Greek to be later translated in English. The transcription was conducted structurally with attention to detail in order to provide accurate parts of the answers and discussions that followed. Transcription of body language such as gestures, frowns and others were not possible due to the fact that the data were recorded and not videotaped. In any case, what interested me the most was the content of the teachers' thoughts and the way they chose to express themselves in regard to the topic. Once the procedure was complete, open coding took place as an initial approach towards the comprehension and examination of the data, where the main points of interest were initially identified. The part of the data based on the interviews was read in detail and immediately the first patterns based on context started to emerge, repeatedly in all the interviews. I then proceeded with the second part of the analysis, that involved the examination of the interviews closely in order to extract direct meaning, with the ultimate goal of creating narratives in a summarized form through paraphrasing. The summaries were based on the research questions' objectives and they were supported with direct quotations from the interviews. This process allowed me to encapsulate the results and provide them with certain organization for final phase of coding. It should be mentioned here that, the principal's interview was approached differently than the teachers', due to the different interview questions he received and the fact that the data collected from his interview

were treated as complementary, that would allow a direct comparison between his and the teachers' perceptions on the matter of collaboration.

During the final coding procedure, the specific codes were selected strictly based on the research questions, in order to remain focused on the research's objectives. At this point of the analysis, I utilized the data from the observations' notes and distributed them according to the existing codes, in order to supplement and triangulate the data from the interviews. The coded data were read carefully multiple times to fully understand the emerging patterns and underlying issues that would provide the ground for transitioning into the next stage, where the results produced through the content analysis provided sufficient ground and information regarding the research questions, allowing for the extraction of further conclusions matching the demands of the research's aims.

5   FINDINGS

In this part, the results present the analysis of the teachers' interviews. The content analysis of the transcribed interviews and observation notes is supported by direct interview quotes, to ensure clarity. Numbers are assigned for all participants, except for the principal, for the purposes of the analysis, result reporting and to ensure anonymity and identity protection. The findings from the interviews will be reported in a manner that are reinforced by the field notes and observations to ensure data triangulation and to finally, extract final conclusions in the discussion section. The findings are reported based on the research questions' objectives and are divided into sections accordingly. First, the teacher's perceptions will be reported. Following that, the findings focus on the current collaborative practices of the school, to finally end with the suggested improved conditions.

5.1   Teachers' Perceptions on Collaboration

The manner in which collaboration is perceived by the school's teachers lies in two main aspects which involve their relationships and their professional, both individual and collective, growth. These two aspects and everything they include is in direct connection to what the teachers tend to identify collaboration to be.

In the sphere of general relationships and daily interactions, the participants identified several elements in direct relation to collaboration, according to their viewpoint. Almost all of the participants mentioned the aspects of openness and the lack of judgment, as well as the importance of communication. According to P1, his main idea of collaboration involves efficient communication and understanding among colleagues without passing judgement to the extent of their capabilities, a notion that is also supported by P2 who also highlights the lack of judgement and placing blame among teachers.

> Everything is relative. If they (colleagues) do not follow my advice or my guidelines or if they do not do what I instruct them to do, then it simply doesn't work. With my colleagues I wouldn't say that there are any issues, I don't expect a lot from them, I only expect what they can give, in whatever extent that is (P1).

> When we look into the professional context, then I guess it means not to "poke each other's eye out" and feeling that you can talk to each other and to say something that won't be held against you (P2).

Furthermore, the participants particularly stressed the point of effective communication, more specifically, regarding positive attitude and good behavior. P3 claims that collaboration must do mainly with behavior, attitude, respect and communication; being aware and considerate of one's colleagues' presence and needs creates the foundation for well-established professional relationships that lead to collaboration no matter the personal preferences of character. Adding to that, discreetness and the sensitive nature of collaboration are of particular importance, as P2 and P4 perceive them to be crucial characteristics of effective communication and ultimately the development of good relationships and friendships. More specifically, P2 feels that "collaboration can be very easily destroyed by the feeling of intervening into someone's work" and P4 states that teachers should "learn how to respect what we do and how to truly understand each

other" if they are to engage in collaboration. Approachable behaviors and positive attitudes seem to be mentioned quite often by most participants as basic elements of their perception on collaboration. Most of the participants also mentioned their willingness to collaborate with all of their colleagues, as long as the right attitude and mutual communication is present.

> I wouldn't collaborate with a colleague if that colleague was ironic and insulting. They would have to be a very edgy character for me not to work with them, though (P6).

> When we talk about teacher collaboration, the first thing I think about is communication (P9).

> It's the behavior among the teachers that does that. If our behavior isn't the appropriate one, it does not allow us to work together (P10).

Feeling supported through sharing daily struggles and positive/negative feelings, were reported by almost all participants as to what consists the core of collaboration. P9 for example believes collaboration to provide her with the stability and support needed to feel secure in her teaching. As an aspect of general effective communication, teachers report that consistent sharing of their difficulties and feelings in the profession allows them to share opinions and practical advice on how to handle situations, whether they concern the interdisciplinary educational progress of a child or educational approaches in general. P8 finds that collaboration is a natural proceeding of sharing "the everyday needs that push you towards collaboration", while P2 sees it as an "interaction concerning issues about what each of them know and how each of them has worked on different subjects and issues" (P2).

> Collaboration means something else; it's about sharing. It's about sharing feelings and sharing time. Teacher collaboration is about being close to your colleague sharing information and sharing feelings on matters that have to do with your students. And of course, sharing your personal problems; let's say problems with administration or the school people, teachers, parents, everybody (P7).

> If you're facing the same issue a colleague is facing in their own classroom as well, it makes you realize that there's nothing wrong with you, it is more of a general problem or general difficulty. Collaboration…it doesn't just help you, it gives you some sort of guidance and at some point, it allows you to stand by yourself and work on your own with a certain ease (P9).

All the above-mentioned elements contribute to the formation of a positive climate, that is built first by individual and then by collective effort, according to the participants. According to P3 "the school climate is something that we create on our own as individuals, depending on our expectations and demands. The things we say and think about ourselves and the way we display ourselves". The participants generally appreciate collaboration in the sense of teachers providing each other with support and a comfortable school environment.

Moving to the professional aspect, the setting of common goals by contributing to each other's work with sharing materials, ideas, strategies and taking new initiatives are all important factors of collaboration among them. P1 perceives teacher collaboration as an interdependent system that provides his profession with common goal setting. Individualism in teaching, according to him is rather selfish and unnecessary especially when it comes to students' outcomes. This is also supported by P5, who views collaboration as a much more meaningful procedure of designing and setting common goals. By sharing a common philosophy or mentality on teaching, as well as the willingness to try new things, participants find that collaboration is easier to exist under these circumstances.

> Collaboration in my opinion is a very personal issue. I would say that collaboration is like friendship. Just like friendship you fit better with other people and you do not fit with others(P2).

> Collaboration… it must have certain goals, a certain organizing in order to fully exist (P5)

> I believe that it stems mainly from the way of thinking that each of us has and how they want to work, how open they are to do new and different things much they want to swerve from their close quarters (P5).

> It doesn't have to do with how well we know each other, but if our teaching styles work together. This is a fail, right there, if collaboration only comes from teachers who are friends. Of course, when you are friends with someone, you share the same beliefs and philosophy. But it doesn't work always that in the educational part (P5).

On a similar aspect, teachers found that collective work and initiative boosts their security and confidence in their profession, providing them with the right motivation and the feeling of being satisfied in their jobs. P9 claims that "collaboration makes me feel more secure in my teaching. After all these years, it's not that I don't know what I'm doing, it's

just that it makes you feel more secure and more stable in your work". Motivation-wise, P6 feels that through mutual work she could "…receive an extra push from your colleagues, so that you do not become stationary in your work".

> I need it in order to grow, to learn new things, to try new things, let's say to get satisfaction from my work. To get satisfaction as a scientist, as a professional and make me feel fulfilled in my in my work. It's not that I'm unhappy; I'm happy, but I would feel happier if I was able to do more things (P7).

> Working together and collaborating in unison It makes me feel quite happy. I feel happy during my work and I feel happy when I finish my work and go back home, because I do not carry any negativity with me from my school environment. That of course assist us in growing as teachers (P10).

Lastly, teachers also suggest that mutual work along with their colleagues should provide them with the ability to work collectively and professionally without focusing on personal preferences. Basic collaboration is a vital part of the teaching life; more specifically, as P3 states "…we must remain professionals, for the sake of the school, and put aside certain differences" and "some basic politeness and some basic collaboration are completely necessary". On that note, P5 feels that teachers collaborating has a direct influence on the students and their ability to work together, as the teachers have to lead by example, in order for their students to follow.

It should also be mentioned here that some participants identified the role of the administration as a rather important one when it comes to understanding teacher collaboration. Whether the administration selects a neutral or guiding stance, it directly affects the concept of collaboration manifesting in the school. There are teachers that reported to connect the concept of collaboration strongly with the role of the administration, as they are keener on following instructions and guidelines.

> I just work here and complete any tasks that are asked of me (P8).

5.2   Current Collaborative Practices and Conditions

When asked to report the current collaborative practices and initiatives taking place at the school, most teachers identified mutual work occurring among colleagues that share good relationships and friendships inside and outside the school environment. According to P2, collaboration in the school is quite efficient and it is based on the friendships and relationships that have evolved among the teachers, inside and outside the school's settings, where they meet for coffee dates to bond, discuss experiences and share advice in a more relaxed setting. Moreover, P6 seems to recognize the practical help and support that revolves around the human part of the job, describing it as such: "…when we take field trips, my colleagues from other classes offer to help me with my most problematic cases of my students. They even know and remember, that I have health issues and offer any kind of support" (P6). The human part of the work can also be confirmed through this example, coming directly from the observational notes: "Teacher A had to travel immediately due to severe health issues. The rest of the teaching staff responded to her prolonged absence in various ways: First, they covered the periods that included her classes, by dividing the students into smaller numbers and assigning them to other teachers' classes. Each day, this division of the students would happen with small adjustments to their numbers, in order to keep up with the school's schedule while covering their colleague's absence. Secondly, one after the other, all the teachers phoned their absent colleague to check on them and inform them about how the school was doing. Lastly, a "one of a kind" form of collegiality and solidarity took place in that school. After hearing about their colleague's struggles all the teachers acted as a united front, raising money anonymously and sending it to their colleague's aid, as an attempt to support and assist in any possible way" (Observation notes-Day 6).

However, there has been some critique of teachers collaborating solely based on their relationships and not attempting to collaborate despite personal preferences. In general, these relationships that have formed through years of working in the same school, have contributed to the creation of a positive climate, according to most of the

participants. P8 for example, believes the collaborative practices in the school to be based on the friendly relationships that have formed over the years, and the polite attitude they maintain. Nevertheless, it should also be mentioned here that there was a comment made on the relationships between men and women teachers of the school in terms of collaboration. According to P2 collaboration between male and female teachers in the school is quite scarce, with the observational notes confirming the above statement: "Women seem to be keener to collaborating and sharing their classroom experiences in comparison to men who are mostly absent at the teacher lounge, during recess hours. After some observation, I realized that men also collaborate, but in a hastier manner and mostly they avoid collaborating with the women (that are also traditionally assigned to younger classes)" (Observation notes-Day 8). The school climate, communication and the current collaboration based on relationships are better expressed through the following quotes:

> The school climate is one of the most important factors and has been quite important to me the fact that I feel calm and uncomfortable in my school and among my colleagues (P2).

> This is a fail, right there, if collaboration only comes from teachers who are friends. Of course, when you are friends with someone, you share the same beliefs and philosophy. But it doesn't work always that in the educational part (P5).

> I communicate efficiently with all of the colleagues and we collaborate nicely as well, we never had any issues. And that means inside and outside the school. Since I could see that I worked well with my colleagues inside the school, we were able to get to the next level, the social one (P10).

These particular excerpts from the interviews based on the relationships, climate and the human aspect of profession, are also supported by my field notes: "As most of the teachers have worked together throughout many years and at the exact same school environment, they deal with issues and situations more like a family would. In most cases discussions happen openly and loudly, without any hesitation. All of them have different ideas, beliefs and approaches on how things should be done, but mostly they seem to have established some type of system on how things should work around their school.

Tension, aggressiveness and exasperation are all part of their daily interactions" (Observation notes-Day 3).

Moreover, the most common collaborative practices are identified to be the sharing of material, guidelines and ideas as well as keeping up with the curriculum in a combined way. This type of collaboration happens mainly among the teachers that share the same grade level and it usually occurs while discussing on the sport during recess time or their free period, as it is also observed on the field notes: "The most collective form of collaboration though, can be observed during the meetings (not official ones) that happen when there is recess. Hurriedly, due to lack of time, the teachers propose notions about handling different issues that may present during the days, such as student behavior, parent influence/interventions, practical administrative issues etc."(Observation notes-Day 4) For example, P1 states that collaboration with his colleagues is based on discussing briefly the educational objectives that he should cover in the special education class, sharing the official guidelines on special needs and providing consultation on how to assess the special needs students academically. This sharing of material happens voluntarily and without structure or inner organization from the school's part, it is merely based on each teacher's good will that entitles "a helping hand offered to each other" (P2). Based on my observations, teachers exchange photocopied material and share problems of their classrooms, especially when it comes to students with learning difficulties or special needs. As mentioned before, since the time frame that allows collaboration is quite limited, teachers have to accommodate by using the little time they have left, in order to cover the basic teaching needs that are fulfilled through combined work. For example, due to the agreement on joint timetables, most teachers try to exchange material during the breaks, or they take turns in photocopying it. The look at their schedules and check which one has free time the most that day, in order to contribute in the scheduled plan, they drafted together. That means also that, the next day the same expectations exist for the other teacher in return.

> When I have worked through the first grade, I have gathered everything into a file. This particular file can be passed down to the younger or the next colleague if the teacher wishes to do so. That means everything that we've done, copies, materials everything that is passed down to the next

one. Then, if there are questions from the new colleague concerning how to teach or how to work, then we share knowledge, we share ideas and of course experiences. It is a helping hand offered to each other. It is not something organized. I would say that is more on the spontaneous side of things. Each and every one of us has a file and they pass it down to each other only if they ask about it (P2).

The teacher that I have been together with for the last 4 years, since it always happens that we pick up the same grade level, we have collaborated on a high level. In field trips, in educational visits, in actions that take place in our classrooms and that happens because we have the same philosophy. We proceed together on how we want the students to work" and "we do things together especially in national celebrations or Memorial days…Having joined classes watching a DVD (P5).

In contrast to the above, the majority of the teachers reported the fact that true and collective collaboration is rather rare in the school and when it does happen it is of mandatory nature. More specifically, there is generally a lack of initiative and motivation from most teachers to collaborate. P3 specifically, points out that there is no collaboration happening in an interdisciplinary context nor does she have the chance to collaborate with the teachers of the same subject in the school. P7's interview also suggests the same: "I do try to collaborate, I've done it with a couple of teachers and in very specific subjects, like projects... things we had to do, and we are obliged in a way to do. So, we collaborate only when we have something very specific to do". The teachers seem to focus on the unwillingness of their colleagues to initiate collaboration and that they prefer to remain on their traditional individualistic practices, without seeking a solution to the practical problems. They blame the lack of motivation on the absence of specific context around collaboration, such as P7 puts it: "but the problem is that I don't have the context to support me: the space and the time". Observational notes based on that aspect are as follows: "Discussions on receiving support through co-teaching, have been most relevant than ever in the school. The teachers seem to be very open to the idea of another teacher stepping into their classroom. Another teacher, has been in contact with the local university and their exchange had been fruitful, as young university students aspiring to become teachers, have volunteered to offer co-teaching sessions Other teachers have not been very appreciative of her initiative or remained neutral all together. They seem skeptical to engage in such collaborative practices or they just feel that it requires extra work, which will result in disrupting their already over-burdened schedules" (Observation notes- Day 5).

More teachers add the lack of support and funding when it comes to motivating them to collaborate (P8, P7, P3). There are reports however, claiming that engaging in collaboration mostly happens on one teacher's personal initiative that involved interdisciplinary collaboration on Art and Music or National correspondence projects. "I have worked closely with the arts teacher who did a project on Renaissance painters and whatever I asked of her, she would provide, and we did a lot of wonderful actions together and we combined our teaching" (P5) , " Last year I collaborated with the teacher on a project based on pen pals and exchanging emails with a class abroad. But it only happened because that teacher initiated it" (P7).

> We take initiatives and we want to do things but sometimes our routine and the everyday life are very strong, and you get consumed by the things that must be done (P3).
>
> I would say that the one time we collaborate is when we have projects and the whole school has to participate in them; like sports day. That's when we collaborate with the other teachers. Other than that, I collaborate solely with the other same-subject teacher. We combine our classes and we work together this way. We work together brilliantly (P4).
>
> There is this general attitude that we cannot collaborate; we do not have the space! And we are not looking for a solution to the problem. We just put an end to it. And even the 10 of the 30 people that we have here, that they would like to try things, that they would like to collaborate, after seeing all this they just decide to withdraw into their own classrooms (P5).

Several participants, especially subject teachers, mentioned the lack of ability to participate in each other's teaching due to lack of flexibility in the system. More accurately, the teachers described no (or very rare) combined teaching taking place in the school and a sense of distinction between classroom and subject teachers. These distinctions, despite the friendly atmosphere, have mainly to do with the importance of their educational role, the distribution of responsibilities and the notion that subject teachers "should not be exactly interfering with the work of the main teacher of the classroom" (P4). As P1 also states, the special educator cannot intervene in the classroom, which excludes the opportunity to collaborate with his colleagues that provide co-teaching.

> I cannot exactly tell them do this or do that, since they will straight up challenge me to see how it is to teach a full class. I feel calm because I have said what I had to say, but other than that, I cannot

exactly do anything else or control any other situation in the classroom, and I do not have the demand for that to happen (P1).

That gets me quite exhausted and really annoyed and of course, that creates tension between the subject teachers and the mainstream teachers…I don't exactly like working alone, but it is an alternative that I have to face every day, since I am a subject teacher and subject teachers are more or less dealt as independent and that they should not be exactly interfering with the work of the main teacher of the class (P4).

Not because of the character or the people but because the school itself doesn't give us the subject teachers responsibilities to do anything else but be subjects teachers (P7).

On the subject of current practices, the participants also included the general attitude of the administration. Depending on their view of the administration's stance, they either believe it to support or hinder their initiatives on collaborative practices. By general admission, the administration of the school plays no participatory role in the collaborative practices, with the principal either remaining neutral or passive altogether. Even though most teachers report positive experiences from their administration, they do highlight the neutral/passive stance the principal assumes when there are issues such as initiating collaboration, teacher relationships, organizing common activities and others. According to P1, P2, P4, P6 and P10 the principal maintained "a positive environment/ they are good in that if they are doing, and their job is done correctly and fairly, then they are above all the little things that may disrupt the school unity, because they will not put any of us above others". However, the passive nature of the administration has led to comments related to lack of support such as "Administration is not supporting me to collaborate I'd say that they are stopping me. Because when I asked him about something, they will reply that we do not have the means or the budget". Moreover, two participants also mentioned the fact that perhaps the administration's neutrality serves teacher collaboration for the best, as could potentially disturb the process and force teachers to work combining. Nevertheless, all the participants without exceptions have never received any kind of education, training, guidance or seminar on collaboration specifically.

The administration's role is that they would leave us alone in our educating task that would not intervene too forcefully (P2).

5.3   Improved Conditions

In this section, the results reveal the teachers' views on how collaboration could be enhanced in their profession according to their suggestions. The main element mentioned by almost all the participants was the provision of a timeframe during which they could discuss, plan, organize and take initiatives to collaborate further: "…it would be different if we had each month some type of meeting to get together and discuss" (P1). Being linked to their perceptions on what collaboration consists of, all of the participants expressed the need for more scheduled time to interact with each other, as part of a general reform the system needs to undergo in order to diminish isolative tendencies in teachers.

Ideally, the situations would involve the including of certain free time inside our work hours that allow me to collaborate and discuss along with my colleagues. We cannot just assume that in within the 10 minutes of recess that there will be creative collaboration happening! It will be done hastily and stressfully. There is a prerequisite of time...(P8).

Time that is very limited for us teachers; we are always limited on the front of time (…) However, there hasn't been some type of organized period of time where we teachers could gather and meet and talk (…) And this is what we lack the most; time. (P9).

Moreover, most participants, especially subject teachers, highlighted the provision of proper infrastructure in the school as one of the main points that would encourage them to collaborate and attempt new practices. More specifically, P3 and P7 both add to the need for infrastructure the provision of material that would ultimately reinforce them to collaborate : "It would also be great if I had some kind of material support like a subject class, and if we had a computer with Internet connection" (P3) and "I'm a subject teacher and I don't have my own room, the room for my subject. So now you can understand the extent of the things that I can do (…) for example, a collaboration computer or a collaboration room and the time that we can get together and do things" (P7).

If you do not have the proper infrastructure and the basic needs of your subject provided for, then collaboration becomes some type of luxury (P4).

I think that is a preventing factor; the fact that you're always stressed whether you are making the right choices, whether you're using the right words in front of your colleagues and if you are saying the right things, stressing that they will think that you're not doing your job well. The system itself is forcing us to work and think of solutions, all alone. They say that you are the teacher and you have to find the solution (P6).

The only thing that is missing, condition-wise in order to collaborate more, would be if the art teacher or the subject teachers had their own room to work in. It exhausts me when I have to go through each different classroom and move all of my material from one room to another. If I had a bigger classroom that could work entirely interactively, I think our job would be done in a better way and I would be able to do or try brand new things (P10).

However, despite the general agreement on the lack of material and infrastructure, P9 underlines the fact that with the right attitude and determination, collaboration can overcome the deficits of the system and its failure to provide its teachers with what they practically need: "If there is this sort of initiative and excitement about it, then you can find the silver lining between the struggles such as limitation of time, lack of space". Building on the comments based on the right attitude and motivation, the teachers also agreed on the factor of flexibility and openness when it comes to sharing their practices. They connected this aspect with the establishment of good relationships, behavior management and willingness to collaborate. For example, P1 talks about how he would prefer being able to enter his colleagues' classrooms and observe or even participate in their teaching by assisting the children in any way possible. Additionally, he presents as an improving step towards collaboration, the establishment of communication and mutual understanding in order to create better relationships. Regarding the further implementation and support of teacher collaboration in schools, P6 highlights the issue of behavior management: "I think that one of the factors that hinder collaboration would be the fact that teachers sometimes …we act like children. It is because we spend a lot of time with the children that we start acting like them. We have a way of reacting to things that can remind you of a child's stubborn reaction" (P6).

I would say that's what supports collaboration is to truly step into each other shoes and try to help each other in any way possible as professionals and as teachers because relationships are hard to develop in the school" and "I think that we do have to sit down and discuss and bring even the awkwardness out in the air and make each other feel comfortable, in order to work better together. There is no other way (P4).

> This can only happen in schools, through knowing the people that you work with. This is the good thing of staying in one school for a long time, you know with which people you can work, you can collaborate with and exchange ideas. I think it has more to do with the people; the conditions are not that important; you can work around them. It is all about the attitude of our colleagues and the philosophy that they have (P5).

Finally, the teachers report to require the provision of motivation and support to experiment and the right incentives to leave the comfort zone of the individualistic practices. As P6 puts it, being motivated into collaborating with her colleagues brings "… new and different ideas and the whole attempt to apply them, creates a sense of suspense, a sense of readiness" (P6). With a common initiative and clear motivation, according to the teachers, could help them move past the barriers of time and space and collaborate effectively, while maintaining a positive attitude and behavior.

> For collaboration to exist, there have to be common actions and common initiatives/ The elements that undermine collaboration would be mainly fear. There is a fear of exposure that everyone has, a fear that they might seem as a bad teacher, that they might escape the same old situations and work extra. Collaboration... we could even share our teaching our classes. We could even co-teach (P5).

> (…) when the teacher, any teacher approaches me with a positive mindset with a certain respect towards my work (P10).

This support that the teachers require, is also linked to receiving proper training and education on how to collaborate from the school's administration. More importantly, they identify the role of the principal as one that would allow them to be guided into collaborating or learning how to collaborate efficiently.

> I think that we have to be educated on collaboration further; we need seminars we need training and information and we have to start talking about it (P6).

> Let's say a set of rules that we all have to follow, if we are willing to collaborate. There has to be some set of rules or some sort of guide, like a tool box, to guide us through collaboration. More like a collaboration protocol, that guides us (P7).

5.4   The Principal's views

In this separate section, I would like to present the principal's narratives, based on his perception of the role he plays in the school as a leader, the manner through which he

believes to foster collaboration among his colleagues and finally, how collaboration could improve in his school.

The principal of the school believes his role to be a supportive one that fosters good relationships among teachers and enables them to feel secure under his fair leadership. He also states that any principal should remain encouraging and vigilant in order to intervene and handle any situation. Therefore, he strives to maintain a positive climate that creates the right atmosphere for his colleagues to work in unison without any issues. Finally, among his duties is the supervision of his colleagues to ensure a good result based on their practices, as well as to provide further training and guidance on skills and matters that need to be improved:

> You have to be a co-worker to them but also an advisor. Someone who stands by them throughout all their problems. And when there is good collaboration among colleagues, then there are good results in the school environment. With that being said, collaboration has to be honest and respectful. Respectful towards each colleague, towards their character their problems (Principal)

When asked as to how he fosters collaboration among the teachers in the school, he reported to rely on providing information that involves seminars, training programs and various initiatives: "when there is a certain training program or seminar, I inform immediately my colleagues about it. It is for their own good and the good of the school" (Principal). Furthermore, he also provides individual and collective support for his teachers in an attempt to maintain a healthy, happy working environment: "…smoothing out of their differences and if they have any personal issues (…)because these problems may seem personal, but in the end the end up being the whole schools' problems. When the person is happy, then that's the way they will also work" (Principal). Finally, he recognizes the fact that most collaborative practices occurring in the school are of mandatory nature, apart from the ones that involve the shared material among teachers of the same grade levels and the discussions occurring during recess:

> …the good thing that most of the colleagues have worked together with each other for many years, so they really know each other and how each of them works. The way that they collaborated is within their grades' level: so the first grade works together, the second works together etc. (…)exchanging photocopies or notes or ideas on the curriculum and they have their own timetable regarding the subjects that need to be taught (…) It was an action that all of the school had to participate in and all of the grades, no matter the level. These of course, cannot be done by just one

class they have to be done by everyone and this is obligatory by law. And so, in this framework it's not just the class teachers that have to work together, but also the subject teachers (Principal).

Lastly, based on how could collaboration be implemented further among teachers, the principal focused on the reduction of individualistic tendencies and feelings of resentment among teachers that stem from personal comparisons of their practices and performances: "And if some teachers do extra work than others, then the rest of them will be judged negatively, because this extra work is very appreciated by the parents (...) That's exactly where the issue lies and that's where I think you can find the cause of why some teachers do not collaborate." (Principal). It seems from this last comment, that teachers may be developing a stronger sense of professional ego that stands in the way of them collaborating with higher performing colleagues. Finally, he suggests the establishment of good relationships among teachers in order to support the teambuilding of the school's dynamic and the potential creation of collaborative teams among educators that share the same grade level.

> A way to support collaboration would be to have the teachers work into collaborative teams. We have seen these teams work harmoniously abroad and if they are something that we can do here as well. The smaller grades should have their own collaborative team and the bigger grades should also have their own collaborative team. There they would have to talk about their problems, discuss, sit down and organize; collaborate (Principal).

> Another great example to support collaboration would be for the colleagues to meet outside the school for a regular cup of coffee, to sit down and discuss in a more relaxed environment about their work, about their problems and issues or even go to an event together, because that would be something that really fortifies the sense that we are not individual people we are an organized group, we are a team (Principal).

5.5   Reliability

The term "reliability" is approached in research by various other forms such as *trustworthiness*, *vigor* and *validity* (Koch & Harrington, 1998). No previous consensus has been reached on the issue of trustworthiness in a research's findings, especially in Qualitative field. However, Lincoln and Guba in Elo et al.'s (2014) study, describe the process of trustworthiness regarding a research, as one that supports the importance and the validity of the results. They provide the terms of Credibility, Dependability, Conformability and Transferability as general guidelines that should be followed during

the whole research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The use of several criteria has been proposed by multiple researchers, which mainly focus on the issue of the findings' validity by taking into account the detailed description of the data collection, analysis and clarity of the results report (Elo, et al., 2014). I, therefore, decided to proceed with this research based on the same study's criteria of trustworthiness during the three phases, which act as a checklist: Preparation Phase, Organization Phase and Reporting Phase (Elo et al., 2014). The three phases are closely interlinked with Lincoln and Guba's approaches on Credibility, Dependability, Conformability and Transferability of the data and results produced. It must be noted here that throughout all of the phases, there was constant and recurring reflection demanded, as to whether the focus and aims of the research remained visible and accurate.

During the Preparation phase, I examined the study's sample as to whether it was representative and would be able to produce ample results regarding the research questions. As Creswell's (2013) study suggests, I took into consideration the size and nature of the sample, as well as the background of the selected participants. The specific school would provide me with a sample of well-experienced and highly trained teachers, with several years of practice, which would allow me as a researcher to have a direct and purposeful sample regarding my data. The research methods I selected for the data collection would also be able to allow me enough room for data triangulation, through interviews and observations. I ensured that the principal was fully informed of my intentions and aims of my research prior to the data collection and that there was no conflict of interest at hand, providing him with complete clarity regarding the process.

Moving to the Organization phase, the data were carefully transcribed and immediately translated from Greek to English. I took under consideration the language barriers, intricacies and differences by persisting on the correct and as close as possible translation of the text. I proceeded with the coding and further analysis of the data and extracted the results based on free interpretation. As Elo et al., (2014) suggest, it is an issue in qualitative research the fact that the data and results produced will always be subject to a degree of interpretation due to the researcher's biases, beliefs and perceptions.

Finally, during the Reporting phase, the results were presented accompanied by direct quotations that would ensure credibility and clarity to the reader. Moreover, I also provided a detailed approach and table on the teachers' backgrounds and profiles that allows room for the aspect of dependability and transferability of the data and subsequently, the results produced.

6   DISCUSSION

In this part of the study I shall present the reliability issues concerning this study and research process and discuss the results further, keeping in tune with the research questions' objectives. Throughout the data collection and the analysis, the path of both processes remained the same and clearly in tune with the thematic present in the research questions. The key findings regarding the perceptions, the current practices and the future improvement of collaboration are discussed thoroughly against the main points of the literature and especially in correlation to Hargreaves' (1994) theoretical model. The final aim is to extract conclusions that would assist in providing the field with further insight on the matter of teacher collaboration and potentially lay the ground for future research in the Greek context.

6.1   Discussion on Key Findings

6.1.1   Greek teachers' perceptions on collaboration

It seems that, as literature also suggests, the issue of collaboration is of a very sensitive nature among Greek educators and it relies heavily on their daily interactions, attitudes and behaviors that ultimately establish the scope under which their relationships are formed. Depending on whether these relationships are going to be positive or negative, genuine or contrived, they have a direct contact with the

collaborative perceptions and practices that teachers form and engage into. If these relationships are consistent of elements such as effective communication, openness, respect and trust, teachers are more prone to take a step towards mutual work without the fear of rejection. Their perception of collaboration brings teambuilding and the human factor in the teaching profession under the microscope, mainly since they have a direct influence as to whether teachers will formulate their teaching practices around common initiatives.

Moreover, the findings indicate the importance of collegial support around collaborative practices. Teachers identified as a main element of collaboration the aspect of feeling supported by sharing feelings and daily struggles. It can be inferred here, that teachers perceive mutual work as an outlet for expression and receiving/providing support to each other in their daily practices, a notion also supported by Farrell's (2001) input on the manner through which teachers tend to seek the supportive benefits that collaboration has to offer. The teachers, therefore, clearly do not find any kind of association between collaboration and individualistic tendencies, rather, according to the findings, they perceive it as a collective process with no room for isolation. According to Graves (2001) true collegiality is deeply intertwined with the aspect of support, the feeling of belonging and the sense of collectiveness that subsequently lead to openness when it comes to collaborating, which is also supported by this study's findings.

Another important identifier of collaboration according to the teachers is the professional aspect, whether that is expressed as individual or collective growth. As mentioned above, teachers value collegial support as an integral part of collaboration. Building on that, the findings suggest that this kind of support allows teachers to further experiment with their practices, due to the fact that they experience feelings of security and confidence in their work. Sharing ideas, materials and advice, allows them to set common goals and objectives that in turn create a common philosophy and mentality that fully reflects in their teaching. Graham (2007) study, on the importance of sharing and goal setting is therefore, in accordance with the teachers' perceptions. Collie et. al. (2012), reflected on the levels of job satisfaction that accompany collaborative practices among

teachers, which was also one of the parameters set by this study's participants. It can be concluded by the teachers' interviews that their job satisfaction could be potentially increased due to the support and security provided by their colleagues, leading to better professional performances that subsequently set the right example for their students. Indeed, teachers linked collaboration to their students' social and academic outcomes, based on the principal of "leading by example" and improving their practices into more student-based ones. Literature provided by Vangrieken at.al, (2015), Forte and Flores (2014), Collie et al. (2012) and Johnson et al. (2012) based on the teachers' job satisfaction, student outcomes and collegial relationships' results, is also supported by the findings of this study.

The conclusions above based on the collegial relationships, are ultimately in direct relation with the establishment of the school climate and culture. As Sergiovanni and Starratt (2002) argued, it is the collection of the elements above that determine the environment and culture of each school. In this school's case, the teachers support the idea of building and enhancing their relationships as a prerequisite needed to improve their attempts on collaboration, making a direct comment on how they ultimately perceive collaboration to be predominantly based on a positive and supportive school climate and culture that allows them to experiment and work in unison, by building their confidence to do so.

The principal, based on the positive relations and fostering a good climate, also perceives his general role to be as such, combined with a fair leadership and maintaining the balance among his colleagues. He believes this element to be of importance for any administrator that would like to reflect the concept of teacher collaboration in his practices. It seems that, ultimately, both the teachers and the principal ultimately focus on the human and relation aspect when they think or talk about collaboration in the school environment.

6.1.2   The current collaborative conditions and practices in the school

The current conditions and practices regarding collaboration in the school consists of various forms and types that revolve around the climate and the good relationships among the teachers concerned. It seems that the positive climate formulated by the human part and the good relationships is the one responsible for the spontaneous and willing collaborative practices, as the teachers of the school pay particular attention as to how they take care of each other, especially in times of need. It is, therefore, a natural consequence in this school, the fact that the teachers who form closer relationships or friendships inside and outside the school are the ones most likely to engage in mutual work. The importance of good interpersonal relationships in correlation to increased collaboration, as expressed by research (Main & Bryer,2005; Slavit et al.,2011; Vangrieken et al.,2015) is therefore confirmed by the school's tendencies on the matter. Barth's (1990) and Middleton's (2000) approach on teachers shaping their communities based on their beliefs, values and daily occurrences is also supported by this study's results, with the teachers of the school communicating their needs and positions based on their separate characteristics, but all the while remaining close to their community's boundaries and unspoken rules to ensure stability.

Focusing more on the practices, collaboration in the school mainly occurs between teachers of the same grade level and of the same subject, which is in direct relation to Hargreaves' model of Balkanization (1994), where teachers isolate themselves inside collaborative teams that serve their smaller objectives. In these balkanized groups the teachers collaborate by sharing materials, ideas, daily struggles and guidelines as to how they would keep up with the curriculum by drafting common lesson plans. Venianaki and Zervakis (2015) research regarding the collaborative gaps among mainstream and subject teachers in the Greek context, is also confirmed by this study's results. Nevertheless, an addition to the existing literature would be the women's tendency to collaborate more with each other, while men are unwilling to do so. Men interact with

their male colleagues on matters such as the curriculum distribution, however they seem to avoid engaging into further mutual work.

As far as the administration is concerned in the current practices regarding the issue of collaboration, the results indicate the neutral or passive stance of the principal with a certain hesitation to encourage or support initiatives that are based on additional time or budget. The principal's general stance seems to be in accordance to the reserach provided by Szczesiul and Huizenga (2014), Little (1990) and Kavouri (1998) who highlight the principal's involvement as a major contribution to whether collaboration shall flourish in a school. Building on that, as most teachers of the school report no kind of training, guidance or education on the matter of collaboration, their initiatives to collaborate face obstacles that have to do with hesitation, doubt and fear of leaving the comfort zone. It is this rigid and inflexible system described by Hargreaves' research (1994) that does not allow the teachers of this school as well to escape their individualistic practices and dare to experiment, participate and intervene in each other teaching processes, without feeling intrusive and unwanted. However, the principal of the school reports his current practices on building collaboration among his colleagues to be based on providing information on professional development as well as individual and collective support. It may be so that these results do not contradict each other, rather the lack of communication from both sides as to how their needs and perceptions are, causes a direct gap on practices between the principal and his teachers.

Finally, one of the ways based on which teachers tend to engage into collaboration seems to be the personal initiative. In most teacher cases, the collaborative practices they recalled the most were the ones involving an initiative taken by another teacher that would involve them in their colleague's teaching process and plan. Looking deeper into the characteristics of these instances, were collaboration is occurring rather clearly based on individual initiatives, there is a clear connection to Hargreaves' (1994) list of characteristics concerning the nature of collaboration. *Spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, pervasive across time and space and unpredictable* are the main traits identified by Hargreaves (1994, p. 192-193), which match the personal initiatives taken by teachers.

However, the interesting part of the results seems to be the fact that almost all of the participants did not recognize or identify the existing collaborative practices and initiatives as valid ones. On the contrary, the results indicated a general unwillingness when it comes to collaboration, whether that unwillingness concerns the current practices or the current perceptions on these practices. As it seems, there happens to be gap between the perception of collaboration and the actual practices of the school, with the teachers failing to validate their collaborative efforts as true collaboration.

6.1.3   Improved conditions for collaboration according to the teachers

As far as future improvements are concerned, the two main points stressed by all the teachers were directly related to the structure of the Greek curriculum and the technical provisions as well as the infrastructure of the school. The teachers felt that if they were provided with sufficient material, internet connections, classrooms for the subject teachers and more manageable classroom space, they would be able to use this new infrastructure in order to incline from their individualistic practices. Hargreaves' (1994) research comes to agree with the above views, since individualism in a teacher's life can be a natural and logical byproduct of the "physical parts of isolation" that are "embedded in the traditional architecture of schools", forcing the organization and departmentalization of teaching into single and individual classrooms (p. 170). In addition to proper infrastructure, the matter of the curriculum's demands and structures that allow little to no time for meaningful professional interactions are named as issues that would have to be addressed, if collaboration is to be enhanced among teachers. In the framework of a general reform concerning the inflexibility of the educational system, teachers highlight the urgent need for a scheduled timeframe, within their working hours, during which they would be able to interact, plan, organize and eventually collaborate. It seems that there should be a discussion among the competent authorities as to how the educational system and the curriculum should be reformed to facilitate

these needs present among the Greek educators, a notion originally supported by Matsaggouras's (2002) approach.

Moreover, the need to establish good communication in order to build a culture of openness, experimentation and flexibility among colleagues, lies in the emotional aspect of security among teachers. By providing teachers with incentives to collaborate and produce mutual work, the right ground for the right attitude and motivation to exist is established. Teachers express the need to be supported by their colleagues in order to feel secure to step outside their comfort zone without feeling criticized and attempt new things that would improve their work performance. This is a notion supported by the relevant research, since sustaining open communication, engaging in supportive collegial relationships will very likely resort in collaborative practices (Collie et al., 2012; Forte and Flores, 2014; Johnson et al., 2012; Reeves et al., 2017).

Finally, the administration's role and specifically the role of the principal came under the microscope as well. Receiving direct support, guidance and training from their principal was one of the main aspects highlighted by the teachers. As the principal's stance was reported to be a passive or neutral one and despite the fact that most of the teachers expressed positive feelings towards their administration, the need for guidance was apparent. It seems that in order for fragile balances to be maintained, the principal should step in actively and engage with his colleagues, all the while encouraging and providing them with constructive feedback. Regarding motivation and common goal setting, Hallinger and Heck (2010) study also sheds light on the importance of the principal's role, while Anderson-Butcher et. al. (2004) underline the importance of team building and focusing on the teacher's needs, to enhance open communication and provide direct guidance. At this point, it would be interesting to add the principal's view on the matter of building collaboration in the school, which consists of establishing good relationships inside and outside the school, as well as the creation of collaborative teams among the teachers. However, the principal makes no direct comments or suggestions on how collaboration regarding all teachers and not necessarily separate teams, could be implemented in the school context, which depicts the inability of the system and the

curriculum to provide room for experimentation and creativity inside the school unit, not just by the teachers but by the administration as well.

6.2   Conclusion

At this point, it would be fitting to briefly point out the main conclusions drawn from the key findings on the issue of collaboration among the teachers of this school. The study of this public-school produced results that could possibly apply to a number of schools around Greece, which face the same issues and daily struggles on the matter of collaboration. The teachers' perceptions and ideas for future implementation on collaboration were intertwined, due to the fact that they are rooted into their deeper expectations and visualizations of how collaboration among them should look like. On that note, it is a popular belief among the teachers that the establishment of good relationships based on mutual understanding and lack of negative criticism, form the foundation of a good school climate in which collaboration could ultimately flourish. In the event that the right attitude and behavior is not present, they could act as a negative catalyst on whether teachers would engage into mutual work. These kind of relationships and climate are closely tied not only to the teachers' initiatives and attitudes but also to the administration's initiative and leading example, whose involvement should be active and discreet at the same time, in order to allow room for his teachers to set their boundaries in their community.

Moreover, an important outcome from this research was the need for a general system and curriculum reform that would provide teachers with the necessary timeframe, during which they would be able to confer and eventually collaborate further, a notion proposed by almost all the teachers in this research due to the severe lack of time and curriculum demands they are faced with. The rigidity of the curriculum encourages teacher isolation and individualism, while it prevents them from flexible teaching strategies and plans. Finally, the proper infrastructure, such as the assignment of specific subject classrooms and available material are also one of the main issues to be addressed,

as they are basic needs that if they were met, they could potentially allow room for experimentation and further collaboration.

The specific teacher roles also need to be addressed, as the results have indicated a gap between subject and mainstream classroom teachers which leads to isolation and collaboration solely within groups, based on the subject being taught. It is a phenomenon recognized among gender-roles as well, due to the fact that the collaborative practices are mostly visible among women, with men generally avoiding working with them. It may be due to the general "unspoken rule" that men in the school are to take over the higher-level classes (5th-6th grade), while women are traditionally assigned with the younger students (1st-4th grade). This distinction between class levels may potentially be responsible for a wider gap being created among male and female teachers.

Finally, I would also like to draw the attention on the fact that most teachers fail to fully identify their practices as collaborative, even though they might very well be. It seems that their perceptions on what consists as collaboration are far from the actual collaborative practices they are engaging into. The underlying reason could potentially be their lack of further education, training and guidance on the matter of collaboration, which would allow them to pinpoint and recognize certain collaborative elements in their practices, on top of which they could build and expand their mutual work. Hence, the guidance, training and constructive feedback provided by the administration, as well as the element of support between all colleagues is crucial and necessary. As teachers seem to need further incentives to collaborate, the administration needs to be fully aware of their needs and strive towards providing motivation and an extra push, whenever needed.

Teacher collaboration is of a delicate and fragile nature and most of the times it seems impossibly frustrating to be fully comprehended and adapted in the school unit. Especially in the Greek school context, teacher collaboration remains rather unexplored and unstable as it is fully dependent on multiple variables, such as time, mood, personal relationships and issues, timing, the right material and infrastructure, character, values, beliefs and most importantly trust. However, more often than not, signs of deep

collaborative roots within the school culture, can and will be observed, as teachers naturally and subconsciously seek support and motivation in each other. Communication here, is key. Despite the complications, technicalities and hardships Greek teachers face in their professional life, the human aspect that craves collectiveness always resurfaces and points them towards collaborative paths, whether they realize it or not.

6.3   Future research

To conclude this study, I would like to propose a number of guidelines that would potentially assist in future research regarding the topic of collaboration specifically in the Greek context. As this is a case study of a public school in a large but remote island, it would be interesting to approach the issue from the angle of schools belonging in the mainland and specifically in bigger cities where the population is larger. In this case, a large sample of teachers in a quantitative research approach, would provide greater and clearer variation regarding the results produced. Moreover, as the specific public school lacked the proper infrastructure, which was used as a main staggering factor regarding teacher collaboration, research targeted towards private Greek schools or public schools with improved infrastructure, would allow a better understanding as to importance of these specific factors regarding collaboration.

Moreover, I personally found the gap between subject/mainstream teachers and male/female teachers regarding collaboration rather interesting and in need of further examination as to whether this was a result produced specifically in this school or it is a reality in most Greek school environments. If this is the case, research should dive deeper in search of the underlying reasons behind this phenomenon of teacher roles.

Finally, it is important to revisit the official guidelines and regulations provided by the Ministry and conduct further research regarding the inability of the system to implement teacher collaboration in the Greek schools. Questions regarding structural reforms based on the curriculum demands need to be addressed by the appropriate

officials, which would allow further research to advance on possible guidelines towards this direction.

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8   ANNEX

Annex 1: Consent Form in English and Greek

Consent to participate in research: Practices and conditions of teacher collaboration: Case Study of a Greek primary school.

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate in it, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The organization and conduct of the ways in which the research and the reporting of its findings will be done so that your identity is treated as confidential information. No personal information that is collected during the research will be disclosed to anyone else besides you and the researcher. When the results of the

research will be published, you will have the right to receive further information about the research from the researcher.

I have been informed of the purpose and content of the research, the use of its research materials and the potential risks and problems it may cause myself as a research subject. I hereby agree to participate in the study in accordance with the instructions given by the researcher. I can withdraw from the research or refuse to participate in a test any time. I give my consent to the use of my test results and the data collected on my in such a way that it is impossible to identify me as a person.

Συγκατάθεση συμμετοχής στην έρευενα: Πρακτικές και συνθήκες της συνεργατικότητας μεταξύ εκπαιδευτικών: Μελέτη περίπτωσης ενός Ελληνικού δημοτικού σχολείου.

Η συμμετοχή σας στην έρευνα αυτή είναι απολύτως εθελοντική. Εάν αποφασίσετε να συμμετάσχετε, έχετε το δικαίωμα να αποσυρθείτε απο αυτή σε οποιαδήποτε χρονική στιγμή, χωρίς συνέπειες.

Η οργάνωση και διεξαγωγή των τρόπων και αναφορών των ευρημάτων θα διεξαχθεί έτσι ώστε η διαχείριση της ταυτότητάς σας να παραμείνει ως εμπιστευτικό δεδομένο. Κανένα κομμάτι προσωπικής πληροφορίας το οποίο συλλέχθηκε κατα τη διεξαγωγή της έρευνας δε θα μοιραστεί με οποιοδήποτε τρίτο πρόσωπο, εκτός απο εσάς και την ερευνήτρια. Με την έκδοση των αποτελεσμάτων, καμία συμπεριλαμβανομένη πληροφορία δεν θα αποκαλύπτει την ταυτότητά σας. Σε οποιαδήποτε χρονική στιγμή, έχετε το δικαίωμα να λάβετε πραιτέρω πληροφορίες απο την ερευνήτρια, που αφορούν στη συγκεκριμένη έρευνα.

Έχω ενημερωθεί για τους σκοπούς και το περιεχόμενο της έρευνας, τη χρήση των ερευνητικών μεθόδων και τα πιθανά ρίσκα και προβλήματα που ενδέχεται να προκαλέσει σε εμένα ως ερευνητικό συμμετέχοντα. Δηλώνω τη σύμφωνη συμμετοχή μου στην έρευνα, ακολουθώντας τις παρεχόμενες οδηγίες απο την ερευνήτρια.

Διατηρώ το δικαίωμα να αποσυρθώ απο την έρευενα ή να αρνηθώ να συμμετάσχω σε κάποια εξέταση, οποιαδήποτε χρονική στιγμή. Συγκατατίθεμαι ώστε η χρήση των αποτελεσμάτων και η συλλογή δεδομένων που προκύποτουν απο εμένα, να πραγματοποιηθεί με τέτοιο τρόπο ώστε να καθίσταται αδύνατη η ταυτοποίησή μου ως άτομο.

Participant's pseudonym (Selected by himself/herself) /Ψευδώνυμο συμμετέχοντος (Ορισμένο απο τον ίδιο/ίδια): ……………………………………………………

Date/ Ημερομηνία   Signature of the research subject/Υπογραφή Συμμετέχοντος

Date/Ημερομηνία   Signature of the researcher/Υπογραφή Ερευνήτριας.

Annex 2: Interview guide (Teachers)

1. How many years have you worked as an educator?
2. What kind of subject(s) do you teach?
3. What do you think about/ comes to mind when we talk about teacher collaboration?
4. How common is to observe teachers working with each other in Greece?
5. What kind of training/ instruction have you received as an educator throughout your career, regarding collaboration with your colleagues?
6. How are collaboration levels in your school?
7. How do you collaborate?
8. In your opinion, what encourages collaboration?
9. What do you think undermines it?
10. Why would you avoid collaboration with a colleague?
11. Name one of your best collaborative experiences. What made it great?

12. How does collaboration make you feel in your educating task?

13. In what ways do you think is lack of collaboration affecting you and your work?

14. What do you feel is the role of your administrator when it comes to collaboration among you? (Supportive/Guiding/Discouraging?)

15. How is your administrator encouraging collaboration? When and where?

16. Ideally, how would you like to work with your colleagues?

17. In what way could teacher collaboration be fostered in schools?

18. What can be improved in teachers' relationships?

19. How would you do things differently, given the right circumstances?

20. What would motivate you to seek alternative ways of collaboration with your colleagues.

21. In what ways/when do you prefer working alone?

22. When do you seek the support of your colleagues?

Annex 3: Interview guide (Principal)

1. What comes to your mind, when we talk about collaboration among teachers?

2. As principal, in what ways do you attempt to reinforce collaboration?

3. Which are the negatively affecting factors regarding teacher collaboration?

4. What could be improved?

5. In this specific school, how do teachers collaborate with each other?

6. What kind of actions have you taken to support collaboration among your colleagues?