

## **KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' AND STUDENT TEACHERS' SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY**

***Maria Geka & Athanasios Gregoriadis***  
*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece*

**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to examine the social representations of Greek kindergarten teachers and student teachers about their professional identity. One hundred fifty participants took part in this study, namely, 50 kindergarten teachers from Greek public kindergarten schools and 100 student teachers, half in their first year of studies and half in their final year. Data were collected through an open-ended question and free association methodology. The Alceste (Analysis Lexemes Co-occurents in Texts Segments Set) software was used for the analysis. Findings showed that teaching experience and years of studies affected the representation of professional identity. Social and cultural backgrounds, academic knowledge and teaching experience had an impact on the teachers' representations of the studied group. These factors underline the concept of professional identity as a dynamic, evolving and active process.

**Key words:** Early childhood education, Kindergarten teachers, Professional identity, Social representations, Student teachers

## INTRODUCTION

### *Social representations in education*

Education is a privileged domain for the application of the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1961/1976, 1984; Jodelet, 1984, 1989). This theory can address different levels of analysis of the educational system and study the dialectical relations existing between the different elements of this complex system (Jodelet, 2011). These relationships can be seen in three different levels: a) political, where the aims and modalities in organizing educational training are defined, b) the institutional hierarchy whose agents are responsible for the implementation of these policies, and c) the users of the school system – students and parents (Jodelet, 2011).

Initial studies in social representations in education dealt with the issue of the role of organized sets of meanings within the educational system and the educational process. These studies highlighted the relationship between social representations and the discourse in institutions depending on the social positions that different actors in the education system held (administrators, users and parents) (Jodelet, 2011). Also, they underlined the concept of pedagogical relationship considering the role attributed to teacher and students (Gilly, 1984, 1989). In recent years, a new development in the study of psychosocial processes in education took place in several countries and especially in South America (Seidman & Sousa, 2008; Sousa & Villas Bôas, 2008; Sousa, Novaes, & Villas Bôas, 2012). Particular attention has been paid to teachers' representations, when describing their role and thinking about their profession. Another important characteristic that was examined, was the contribution of social representations in education (Γκέγκα, 2015; Jodelet, 2015) and the processes regarding transformation of educational practices (Chaïb, Danemark, & Selander 2011; Pardal, Martins, de Sousa, Del Dujo, & Placco, 2007).

According to a classical definition, social representation “is a form of knowledge, socially developed and shared, with a practical aim and contributing to the construction of a common reality for a social group” (Jodelet, 1989, p. 36). The same author points out that the specificities of professional groups are reflected in the relationship between agents and their activities and how they relate to norms and functions in the workspace (Jodelet, 2011).

Another feature of social representations, as Jodelet emphasizes, concerns their dependence onto social communication: “actually, be in inter-subjective or located in public space, it will help [...] to produce and maintain a common vision of a social group, whether a social class, a cultural group or simply a professional group. This view is considered as evidence and used to read the world in which we live, to act on

it, to decode people who constitute the social environment, to classify and interpret their behaviour” (Jodelet, 2011, p. 135).

Social representations are markers of social identity (Breakwell, 1993; Coen-Scali & Moliner, 2008). Sharing of common social representation by a group is a determinant in the construction and maintenance of its identity. This process indicates the identity function of social representations, which brings us back to the significance of the object of representation for social groups. Thus, when the group adheres to the same representations, it strengthens social ties and asserts a social identity aiming to keep a positive image (Jodelet, 1984, 1989).

Heterogeneous experiences and the cultural background of each subgroup can influence the construction and training of social representations of the teaching profession. Moscovici, in his study of psychoanalysis (1976), has shown that representations vary among groups: they are related to the subjects' inscriptions in the social, cultural and political context. The same author points out: “the analysis of social representations must be, by definition, comparative: it involves the comparison between groups, the comparison between cultures, and the comparison between attitudes and ideologies” (Moscovici, 1976, p. 76).

### *Teachers' professional identity*

Kindergarten teachers' professional well-being and professional identity are being given increasing attention in countries throughout the world as key dimensions for their continuing professional development (Gregoriadis, Grammatikopoulos, & Zachopoulou, 2018; Oberhuemer, Schreyer, & Neuman, 2010). Teachers' professional identity is considered as an important factor in the understanding of their professional lives and effectiveness (Hong, 2010). For example, Bullough and Gitlin (2001) showed that identity is crucial to the practice of teacher education, while Sammons et al. (2007) reported a relationship between aspects of teachers' professional identity and young children's academic achievement.

However, it is only in the last years that teachers' professional identity has emerged as a separate research area (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Till today, researchers maintained a relatively limited understanding of teachers' knowledge and representations of their professional identity, how they perceive themselves as teachers and which factors contribute to their professional identity (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000).

In an influential review of studies on teachers' professional identity, Beijaard et al. (2004) found that they can be divided into three categories: a) studies in which the focus was on teachers' professional identity formation, b) studies in which the focus was

on the identification of characteristics of teachers' professional identity, and c) studies in which professional identity was (re)presented by teachers' stories. The same authors described the formation of teachers' identity as "a process of practical knowledge-building characterized by an on-going integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 123).

Teacher professional identity is a concept that in several studies remains ambiguous without a universally accepted definition (Lamote & Engels, 2010). In earlier literature (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Mead, 1934), researchers described the concept of identity in terms of "the self" and as a singular, fixed and stable attribute that was not influenced by the external environment. In the years that followed, these initial views were challenged, because they were not offering adequate explanations about the behavioral changes that were context dependent (Hong, 2010). Consequently, researchers started viewing the concept of professional identity as a dynamic, evolving and active process, which develops over time through interactions with others (Watson, 2006). Geijsel and Meijers (2005) described the formation of teacher identity as a continuous learning process, where every professional experience is re-interpreted against a background of reciprocal interactions of emotions and knowledge. Similarly, Beijaard et al. (2000) viewed professional identity as something established and maintained through interactions in social situations and negotiation of roles within a particular context. Hence, professional identity presupposes both person and context. Teachers who share their experience in the field and student teachers who are trained and exposed to teaching practices shape their professional representations in relation to these interactions.

However, despite the increasing interest in the professional identity of teachers, there is still not enough research available to allow for indisputable agreement on the definition, the formation mechanism and the basic characteristics of teachers' professional identity (Hong, 2010). This gap can be considered even wider, when it comes to the professional identity of early childhood educators, where there is almost no available study, to the best of the authors' knowledge. This lack of an empirical and theoretical foundation has motivated researchers to examine which major dimensions constitute teachers' professional identity. For instance, Bilgrami (2001) analysed conceptions of professional identity that include identity as focus on a single object (e.g., person, item, event) or as focus on morals or another social category (e.g., origin, occupation). Also, Kelchterman (1993) attempted to investigate teachers' lives and professional well-being and described five interrelated components of professional identity: self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspective.

Overall, the concept of professional identity seems to include various dimensions

of the professional role. It may refer not only to the effects of external factors like the perceptions of other people, social stereotypes about the role etc., but also to the personal theories and experiences of teachers (Beijaard et al., 2004). For example, what teachers consider important about their work, their background and their social representations of their role are equally important, when trying to examine the professional identity of early childhood educators.

### *Aim of the study*

The present study examined the social representations of kindergarten teachers and of student teachers about their profession. More specifically, this study attempted to investigate the social representations of Greek preschool teachers and student teachers regarding early childhood teacher's professional identity. It was assumed that the meanings attributed to the object of the representation –kindergarten teacher's professional identity– by each of these groups can contribute to our understanding about the way they build their professional identity.

An additional goal of this study was to examine whether freshmen and senior students have differences in their representations about their role. The latter aim was set based on the widely accepted assumption that there is a distance between theory and practice, between the perceptions a student teacher has for their professional role and the perceptions a teacher forms after acquiring field experience. Student teachers' representations of their role were found to be formulated through interactions among research-based knowledge, preconceptions about teaching and limited personal practical knowledge acquired mostly from indirect experiences (e.g., activities like problem solving, their trainers' narratives) (Lamote & Engels, 2010). On the other hand, actual teaching experience challenges a teacher's professional identity in various ways. Becoming member of a professional group and gaining the overall classroom experience often results in a redefinition of one's position and one's representations of their professional identity (Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, Eteläpelto, Rasku-Puttonen, & Littleton, 2008). From a theoretical point of view, Jodelet (2006) pinpointed the central place of experience within the social representation formation process.

In sum, the main purpose of this study was to examine the social representations of Greek in-service and prospective kindergarten educators about their professional identity. Moreover, the study investigated the possible effect the teaching experience and the year of educational studies might have on the teachers' and student teachers' professional identity. That is why apart from the kindergarten teachers, two groups of student teachers, namely, freshmen and senior, participated in the study to map their representations at different times during the teacher preparation program.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Overall, 150 participants took part in this study, deriving from two different groups. Specifically, 50 participants were early educators from Greek public kindergarten schools and 100 participants were student teachers studying at the Department of Early Childhood Education of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The 50 preschool teachers attended an in-service training program in the “Didaskaleio” in Thessaloniki in 2012. The “Didaskaleio” was organized by the School of Education of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and offered a tuition-free two-year training program. Only in-service early educators or primary teachers with a minimum experience of five years of teaching could apply to the course.

The kindergarten teachers were all female. Their mean age was 40.6 ( $SD = 6.09$ ) years and their mean teaching experience was 9.4 ( $SD = 4.02$ ) years. From the early childhood education student teachers participating in the study, 50 were freshmen (in their first year of study) and the other 50 were seniors (in their fourth and last year of studies). Most of the student teachers were females (94 females, 6 males) and their mean age was 19.95 ( $SD = 2.08$ ) years. The freshmen students’ mean age was 18.4 ( $SD = 0.6$ ) years and the mean age of senior students was 21.5 ( $SD = 1.06$ ) years.

### *Measures*

#### *Free associations*

The free association method was used for the extraction of the participants’ representations (Hollway & Jeferson, 2008). Free association is a technique usually applied to solve inner conflicts and contradictions in the context of psychoanalytic therapy to help patients learn more about what they are thinking and feeling. However, it is often used in social studies when the researchers want to record their participants’ representations. The application of free associations is relatively simple and is based on the free and spontaneous production (oral or written) of words, expressions, adjectives, etc.

For the needs of this study, one open-ended question was used to which participants had to respond in a free-associations manner. The question was: *Write the first six words that come to your mind when you think of the words “early childhood teacher”*. Participants were asked to write up to six words. Then, they were asked to explain every word they wrote.

At the end of the procedure they were asked to fill in various demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, years of teaching experience, what year of study they were in).

### ***Procedure***

The data was collected in November of 2011, after the early educators had completed their two-year training in “Didaskaleio” and after freshmen had finished their first year of studies and seniors were about to graduate. The participation in the study was voluntary. Furthermore, participants were also informed about the confidentiality and the anonymity of the respondents and they signed an informed consent form.

### ***Data analysis***

Two data files were created. The first included all the free associations to the stimulus “early childhood teacher” and the second included all the explanations of each free association. Each data file was analysed through the Alceste software (Analysis Lexemes Co-occurents in Texts Segments Set, Reinert, 1986). Since its creation, the methodology employed by Alceste is oriented to the analysis of textual data. It analyses several divisions of the corpus into “context units” to make comparisons and groupings of the corpus segmented by lexemes content. Then, it seeks for content matching, that is independent of the arbitrary cutting to lexemes content. This allows for an analysis solely based on the meaning of the context units and not their size (Reinert, 1998). Finally, the categorization in context units follows a top-down hierarchical classification (Geka & Dargentas, 2010).

## **RESULTS**

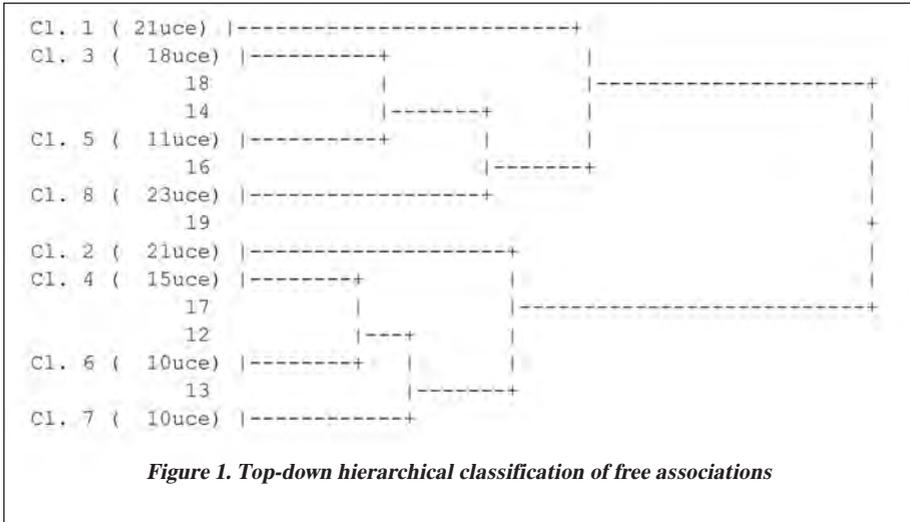
### ***Analysis of free associations***

The first Alceste analysis provided all the words<sup>1</sup> associated with the stimulus “early childhood teacher”. The categorisation in “elementary context units” with top-down hierarchical classification analysis resulted into eight stable classes including 129 elementary context units (e.c.u.)<sup>2</sup> out of the total 140 (92.14%) (Figure 1).

---

<sup>1</sup> To submit the material collected to the Alceste analysis, Greek words were translated into French; the software does not allow the processing of data in Greek.

<sup>2</sup> Elementary context units: defined by Alceste from a compromise between the syntactic form (punctuation in corpus-text) and statistics constraints (number of ECU previously established).



The classes are presented in Table 1 along with the lexemes for each one of them and the theme they refer to.

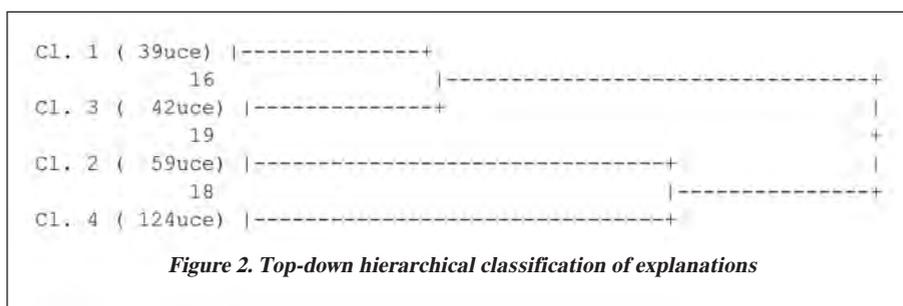
**Table 1. The eight lexical classes of free associations**

Class	Specific lexemes of each class	Class theme
Class 1 (16.28 %)	Songs, color, joy, tales, play, handicraft, puppet show, innocence, spontaneity, <b>Freshmen students</b>	Children's arts & crafts activities
Class 3 (13.95 %)	Painting, kindergarten, music, hug, noise, puppet show, little children, laughing, handicraft, <b>Freshmen students</b>	Children's arts & crafts activities
Class 5 (8.53 %)	Play, activities, tales, theatre, painting, noise, songs, children, <b>Senior students</b>	Children's arts & crafts activities
Class 8 (17.83 %)	Activities, teacher, children, amusement, school, learning, instruction, observation, classroom, education, friendship, <b>Senior Students</b>	Educational process
Class 2 (16.28 %)	Patience, flexibility, cooperation, group, vocation, knowledge, pedagogue, understanding, <b>Teachers</b>	Characteristics of the teacher
Class 4 (11.63 %)	Responsibility, acceptance, love, tenderness, joy, education, security, amusement, learning, <b>Teachers</b>	Emotional aspects
Class 6 (7.75 %)	Training, care, knowledge, love, education, <b>Teachers</b>	Training teacher
Class 7 (7.75 %)	Imagination, creativity, security, communication, understanding, love	Characteristics of the teacher

More specifically, Classes 1, 3, 5, 8 (56.59% of e.c.u.) had conceptual links between them while they were opposed conceptually to Classes 2, 4, 6, 7 (43.41% of e.c.u.). The top-down hierarchical classification analysis distinguished two representational lines. The vocabulary of the first line [Class 1 (16.28% of e.c.u.), 3 (13.95% of e.c.u.), 5 (8.53% of e.c.u.), 8 (17.83% of e.c.u.)] revealed the student teachers' responses that included representations of the content of teacher activities related to children's arts and crafts (songs, tales, puppet show, handicraft, painting), young children's features (joy, play, innocence, spontaneity, hug, noise, little children, laughing), the space of kindergarten (kindergarten) and the educational process (activities, teacher, children, school, learning, education, observations, classroom). It is interesting to point out that Class 8, regarding the educational process, was composed only by senior students. On the other hand, the second line, involving early educators' representations and Classes 2 (16.28% of e.c.u.), 4 (11.63% of e.c.u.), 6 (7.75% of e.c.u.), 7 (7.75% of e.c.u.) focused mainly on the characteristics of the teacher (patience, flexibility, cooperation, education, understanding, vocation, imagination, creativity, communication), the emotional aspects of their role (acceptance, love, tenderness, joy, security) and the training of teacher (studies, knowledge, education). It is important to notice that the concept of love held a central position in the representations of early childhood teachers since it appeared in the conceptual content of three classes (4, 6, 7) and was associated with both the pedagogical features and the teachers' training, on the one hand, and the educational process on the other.

### *Analysis of explanations*

The second analysis involved all the explanations given by the study participants for each word associated with the stimulus of early childhood teacher. The categorisation in "context units" with top-down hierarchical classification analysis divided the statements into four stable classes including 264 e.c.u. out of 344 (76.74%) (Figure 2).



The classes are presented in Table 2 along with the lexemes for each of them and the theme they referred to.

*Table 2. The four lexical classes of explanations*

Class	Specifics lexemes of each class	Class theme of each
Class 1 14.77 %	Guide, behaviour, understanding, knowledge, creativity, teach, desire, news, observation, pedagogue, sensitive professional, flexibility, tenderness, feel, transmit, adapt, conditions, teach, pupil, evaluation, organize, psychologist, teaching, education, action, face, act, learn, needs, capacity, create, give, effort, children, evolution, form, method, means, personality, programme, scientific, will, <b>Teachers , Senior students</b>	Characteristics of the teacher
Class 3 22.35 %	Love, attention, mother, patience, responsibility, acceptance, love, base, difficult, teacher, parents, profession, security, sense, care, liberty, metier, pedagogue, difficult, teach, preschool, cooperation, create, fundament, psychology, responsible, role, time, vocation, <b>Teachers</b>	Emotional aspects
Class 2 15.91 %	Development, communication, help, cognitive, cooperation, important, instruction, interaction, sense, socialization, creativity, educational, emotional, experience, expression, group, objective, organize, first social, age, play, material, relation, learn, character, communicate, contact, voice creation, fundamental, training, play, give, processes, s spontaneity, activity, learning, song, conflict, give teacher family, function, future, imagination, importance, indispensable, insouciance, world, realise, situation, lively, <b>Senior students</b>	Educational procedure
Class 4 46.97 %	School, kindergarten, pleasant, crafts, puppets, music, life, song, color, game, play, place, occupy, painting, everyday, give, express, tie, occupation, laugh, amusement, happiness, construction, gaming, principal, job, central, teach, free, me, my, take, theatre, art, friends, friendship amusement, characteristic, courtyard, embrace, environment, day, time, children, placer because, laughed often am, work, <b>Freshmen students, Students</b>	Children's arts & crafts activities

More precisely, Classes 1 and 3 (37.12% of e.c.u.) were conceptually opposed to Classes 2 and 4 (62.88% of e.c.u.). The analysis of top-down hierarchical classification confirmed the two lines of representational content of the early childhood teachers. Furthermore, there was a differentiation between kindergarten teachers, on one hand, and student teachers, on the other. Kindergarten teachers adopt a more emotional standpoint of their role while student teachers emphasize the educational process

and the happiness side of childhood. However, this analysis provided additional elements for the groups studied.

Senior students were the most flexible group compared to the other two. This group was the one closer to the representations of both teachers and freshmen students since it appeared in both representational lines. More specifically, Classes 1 (14.77% of e.c.u) and 3 (22.35% of e.c.u) referred mainly to the characteristics of the teacher and their pedagogical role. In Class 1, several verbs were common in all groups of participants (teachers, freshmen, senior students). They described the active role of preschool teacher (guide, teach, transmit, adapt, educate, organize, face, act, learn, create, provide, form). Class 1 also included several adjectives and nouns describing educational and professional characteristics (behaviour, understanding, knowledge, creativity, desire, observation, teacher, sensitive professional, flexibility, tenderness, evaluation, psychologist, teaching, education, action, etc.). In Class 3 only teachers' representations were included, describing a more emotional side of their role that emphasized the importance of love, attention, care and safety, thus reflecting a more "maternal" or "parental" interpretation of their role.

The representational line of Classes 2 (15.91% of e.c.u) and 4 (46.97% of e.c.u) included representations of student teachers. In Class 2, senior students' representations described educational processes in terms of contemporary pedagogy. More attention was paid to the social, emotional and cognitive development of the child, as well as the value of interaction, communication, socialization, and learning activities.

Class 4 of the representation line, contained all student teachers, freshmen and senior. Class 4 accumulated the largest number of e.c.u. (46.97%). The vocabulary of this class referred mainly to the school space, and creative activities such as handcraft, puppetry, music, songs, colors, and painting. All these activities were perceived as the ideal "vehicle" for joy, fun and happiness, which seems to be in tune with student teachers' representation of children's innocence, joy, and carefree mood (e.g., words like joy, laughter, fun, happiness, celebration, smile, happy, friends, friendship, fun). The words of this class revealed the importance of student teachers' representations of "what a child is and what a child needs" for the construction of the early childhood teacher professional identity

## **DISCUSSION**

The aim of the present study was to examine kindergarten teachers' and student teachers' representations of their professional identity. To examine this research question, we employed the social representation theoretical model, which in turn

enabled studying group identity processes. Moreover, the study investigated the possible effect that the teaching experience and the years of studies might have on the representation of professional identity.

The present findings indicated that the representations of the participants about their professional identity were structured around two representational pillars. The first pillar revealed the student teachers' representations of their kindergarten experiences, the stereotypes about their role, experiences from the actual classroom, the educational process and the teaching of arts and crafts activities. The second pillar involved practitioners' representations that focused mainly on the characteristics of the teacher and the emotional aspects of their role.

The different meanings that were attributed to the preschool teacher profession revealed the existence of several professional identities among kindergarten teachers and student teachers. One factor that seems to spark the differentiated representations of the two groups is the teaching experience. Beijaard et al. (2004) argued that identity formation is a process of practical knowledge building, that is characterized by a constant integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching. The development of teacher identity, even for practitioners, is a continuous learning process, in which not only the actual experiences, but also the creation of related meanings enhances the overall representations of an individual (Rodger & Scott, 2008).

On the other hand, student teachers and, especially freshmen, are "carrying" a pre-existing representation about the teaching profession, already acquired from their social experiences and their cultural background. Early childhood experiences, teacher role models, family and significant others are biographical elements that also contribute to the process of professional identity formation (Knowles, 1992; Surgue, 1997). In addition, students have already developed a cognitive map during their own school years with many stereotypes and representations for all types of occupations, offered by families and media (Cohen-Scali, 2003). Thus, it could be assumed that freshmen's representations are in a way equivalent with the overall representation a society has for the preschool teacher role. The representations freshmen student teachers hold seem to evolve as they progress in their studies. Senior students in their fourth and last year of bachelor studies had significantly shifted their representations closer to those of the preschool teachers, while still maintaining some elements of their initial perspectives as well. Senior students' perceptions visualized their profession through a more "scientific lens", after having acquired knowledge and teaching skills. In sum, freshmen students' representations resembled more the "pre-academic", "naïve" knowledge", while the senior student teachers' a more "academic knowledge" that can be attributed to their training. Specifically, students developed

representations of teaching and the kind of teacher they would like to be through apprenticeship and observation (Lortie, 1975). In teacher education, interactions between research-based knowledge, preconceptions about teaching and personal practical knowledge take place through activities such as reflection, story writing, exchange of personal practical knowledge and problem solving.

It should be noted that the group of senior students was the most flexible one. This group showed a conceptual proximity to both early childhood educators and freshmen students, revealing the influence of their acquired knowledge due to their training. Their professional identity was in a dynamic formation process, placing emphasis on the knowledge obtained through the university years. It seems that freshmen had a more “amateur” knowledge about the early childhood teacher profession, while the group of senior students had a more expert knowledge, a possible sign of their gradual transformation into professionals. This transformation process requires a special interest in representation theory. The issue of knowledge transmission, particularly relevant for education, has been a central concern from the beginning to Moscovici (Jodelet, 2011).

Our study brought to the fore three important points. First, our findings point out that a social representation of early childhood educator has an intrinsic relationship with the social representations of childhood (Avgitidou, Pnevmatikos, & Likomitrou, 2013; Geka & Kosteridou, 2013). The importance of childhood in the representational process has already been pointed out in previous studies (Vouzan, 1975; Gilly, 1984) and explains the finding that pre-service teachers tend to hold naïve and idealistic perceptions of teaching. The pedagogical relation seems to be in the core of the representational meaning system for the early educator profession. Teachers adopted an active, emotional and personalised attitude in the teacher-child relationship. First-year students had an abstract conception of the teacher-child relationship and described a carefree atmosphere likely as a means to get closer to their own childhood. Senior students were those who showed a genuine desire to build a pedagogical relationship based on the achievements of their training, demonstrating thereby their professional efficiency. Finally, this study described the concept of professional identity as a dynamic, evolving and active process, which develops over time through interactions with cultural, social and institutional context (Watson, 2006; Jodelet, 2011).

The interest of this study lies in the pointing out of the institutional context of the representations about the early childhood teacher profession, because representations appeared to vary depending on the category of social group. The professional identity of teachers seems to be defined more by factors such as implicit theories than the scientific knowledge of their profession. On the other side, the professional identity

of senior students is developed under the influence of their university studies, underlining the importance of scientific knowledge as a form of self-construction as a future teacher. At this point, it may be worth wondering if this professional identity of students has a permanent character or if the actual in-service experience transforms it again. If this were the case, it can be suggested that the prescribed roles, social experiences and social contexts have more impact than the academic training in the formation of a teacher's professional identity. Of course, to draw firm conclusions, more in depth research is required.

In the future, studies like this is necessary to continue pursuing an in-depth understanding of teachers' professional identity and how this self-image comes into being (Knowles, 1992). The effort to empower and support the formation of a more "academic" and effective professional identity should be placed in the center of attention of researchers. A proposal could be to focus on the importance of the initial training holds for the formation of the representations about a profession. It is possible that many future student teachers will change their view about education and themselves as early educators. A question that arises here is whether initial teacher training succeeds in providing the stimuli that allows student teachers to redefine their professional identity. Future studies should continue seeking such questions along with the factors that are the most important in shaping a preschool teachers' professional identity.

## REFERENCES

- Avgitidou, S., Pnevmatikos, D., & Likomitrou, S. (2013). Preservice teachers' beliefs about childhood: Challenges for a participatory early childhood education? *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 34(4), 390-404.
- Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: An exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16, 749-764.
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 107-128.
- Bilgrami, A. (2001). Identity and identification: philosophical aspects. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioural sciences* (pp. 7149-7154). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Elsevier.
- Breakwell, G. M. (1993). Social representations and social identity. *Papers on Social Representations*, 2(3), 1-20.
- Bullough, R., & Gitlin, A. (2001). *Becoming a student of teaching: Linking knowledge production and practice*. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

- Γκέκα, Μ. (2015). Η συμβολή των κοινωνικών αναπαραστάσεων στη μελέτη του χώρου: Το παράδειγμα του δασκάλου ως χωρική διάσταση [The contribution of Social Representations in the study of space: The case of Teacher as a spatial dimension]. Στο Δ. Γερμανός & Μ. Λιάπη (Επιμ. Έκδ.), *Ηλεκτρονικός τόμος πρακτικών του Συμποσίου με Διεθνή Συμμετοχή: Τόποι για Εμπειρίες Μάθησης - Έρευνα, Δημιουργία, Αλλαγή* [Digital proceedings of the symposium with international participation: Places for learning experiences. Think, Make, Change] (σσ. 270-279). Αθήνα: Εθνικό Κέντρο Τεκμηρίωσης.
- Chaib, M., Danemark, B., & Selander, S. (Eds.). (2011). *Education, professionalization and social representations*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Cohen-Scali, V., & Moliner, P. (2008). Représentations sociales et identité: Des relations multiples et complexes [Social representations and identity: Multiple and complex relations]. *L'Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle*, 37(4), 465-482.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Geijsel, F., & Meijers, F. (2005). Identity learning: The core process of educational change. *Educational Studies*, 31(4), 419-430.
- Geka, M., & Dargentas, M. (2010). L'apport du logiciel Alceste à l'étude des représentations sociales: L'exemple de deux études diachroniques [The contribution of the Alceste Software in the study of social representations: The example of two diachronic studies]. *Cahiers Internationaux de Psychologie Sociale*, 85, 111-135.
- Geka, M., & Kosteridou, I. (2013, June). Kindergarten teachers' childhood social representation and its impact on everyday teacher-child relationship in the Greek kindergarten. Conference presentation at the *1st International Conference on Reimagining Schooling*. Thessaloniki, Greece: University of Macedonia.
- Gilly, M. (1984). *Maîtres-élèves. Roles institutionnels et représentations* [Teachers-pupils. Representations and institutional roles]. Paris, France: PUF.
- Gilly, M. (1989). Les représentations sociales dans le champ éducatif [Social representations in the educational field]. In D. Jodelet (Ed.), *Les représentations sociales* [Social representations] (pp. 363-386). Paris, France: PUF.
- Gregoriadis, A., Grammatikopoulos, V., & Zachopoulou, E. (Eds.). (2018). *Professional development and quality in early childhood education: Comparative European perspectives*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2008). The free association narrative interview method. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 296-315). Sevenoaks, CA: Sage.
- Hong, Ji. Y. (2010). Pre-service and beginning teachers' professional identity and its relation to dropping out of the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1530-1543.
- Jodelet, D. (1984). Représentation sociale: Phénomènes, concept et théorie [Social representation: Phenomena, concept and theory]. In S. Moscovici (Ed.), *Psychologie sociale* [Social psychology] (pp. 357-378). Paris, France: PUF.

- Jodelet, D. (1989). Représentations sociales: Un domaine en expansion [Social representations: An expanding field]. In D. Jodelet (Ed.), *Les représentations sociales* [Social representations], (pp. 31-61). Paris, France: PUF.
- Jodelet, D. (2006). Place de l'expérience vécu dans les processus de formation des représentations sociales [The place of living experience in the formation processes of social representations]. In V. Haas (Ed.), *Les savoirs du quotidien: Transmissions, appropriations, représentations* [Everyday knowledge: Transmissions, appropriations, representations]. Rennes, France: PUR.
- Jodelet, D. (2011, June). Aportes del enfoque de las representaciones sociales al campo del educación [The contribution of social representations approach in the educational field]. *Espacio en Blanco – Serie Indagaciones*, 21, 133-154.
- Jodelet, D. (2015). Processus de mise en sens de l' espace et pratiques sociales [Social practices and the providing of meaning process of space]. In D. Germanos & M. Liapi (Eds.), *Digital proceedings of the symposium with international participation: Places for learning experiences. Think, Make, Change* (pp. 66-77). Athens, Greece: Greek National Documentation Centre.
- Kelchterman, G. (1993). Getting the story, understanding the lives: From career stories to teachers' professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 9(5-6), 443-456.
- Knowles, J. G. (1992). Models for understanding preservice and beginning teachers' biographies: Illustrations from case studies. In I. F. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers' lives* (pp. 99-152). London, UK, & New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lamote, C., & Engels, N. (2010). The development of student teachers' professional identity. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(1), 3-18.
- Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Moscovici, S. (1961/1976). *La psychanalyse, son image et son public* [The psychoanalysis, its image and public]. Paris, France: PUF.
- Moscovici, S. (Ed.). (1984). *Psychologie sociale* [Social psychology]. Paris, France: PUF
- Oberhuemer, P., Schreyer, I., & Neuman, M. (2015). *Professionals in early childhood education and care systems: European profiles and perspectives*. Opladen, Germany and Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich Publishers.
- Pardal, F., Martins, A., de Souza, C., Del Dujo, & Placco, V. (Eds.). (2007). *Educação e trabalho. Representações, competências e trajetórias* [Education and work. Representations, skills and trajectories]. Aveiro, Portugal: Universidade de Aveiro.
- Reinert, M. (1986). Un logiciel à analyse lexicale [A software of lexical analysis] [ALCESTE]. *Les Cahiers de l'Analyse des Données*, 4, 471-484.
- Reinert, M. (1998). Mondes lexicaux et *Topoi* dans l'approche Alceste [Lexical worlds and Topoi in Alceste approach]. In E. Mellet & M. Vuillaume (Eds.), *Mots chiffrés et déchiffrés: Mélanges offert à E. Brunet* [Encrypted and decrypted Worlds: Papers in honour of E. Brunet] (pp. 289-303). Paris, France: Honoré Champion.
- Rodgers, C., & Scott, K. (2008). The development of the personal self and professional identity in learning to teach. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, D. J. McIntyre, & K. E. Demers (Eds.). *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions and changing contexts* (pp. 732-755). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Sammons, P., Day, C., Kington, A., Gu, Q., Stobart, G., & Smees, R. (2007). Exploring variations in teachers' work, lives and their effects on pupils: Key findings and implications from a longitudinal mixed-method study. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(5), 681-702.
- Seidman, S., & de Sousa, C. (Eds.). (2008). *Hacia una psicología social de la educación* [Towards a social psychology of education]. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Teseo.
- Sousa, C., & Villas Bôas, L. (2008). Los estudios de representaciones sociales y los desafíos para la investigación en educación [Social representation studies and the challenges for the research in education]. In S. Seidman & C. P. de Sousa (Eds.), *Hacia una psicología social de la educación* (pp. 23-48). Buenos Aires, Argentina: Teseo.
- Sousa, C., Novaes, M., & Villas Bôas, L. (2012). Representações sociais e educação: panorama dos estudos desenvolvidos pela Cadeira Unesco sobre profissionalização docente [Social representations and education: An overview of the studies carried out by Unesco Chair on Professional Skills for Teachers]. *Educação & Linguagem*, 15(25), 19-39.
- Surgue, C. (1997). Student teachers' lay theories and teaching identities: their implications for professional development. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 20(3), 213-225.
- Timostuk, I., & Ugaste, A. (2010). Student teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26, 1563-1570.
- Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P., Eteläpelto, A., Rasku-Puttonen, H., & Littleton, K. (2008). Teachers' professional identity negotiations in two different work organisations. *Vocations and Learning*, 1(2), 131-148.
- Vouzan, J. (1975). *L'école primaire jugée* [Elementary school evaluated]. Paris, France: Larousse.
- Watson, C. (2006). Narratives of practice and the construction of identity in teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 12(5), 509-526.