Original research paper

RESEARCHING TEACHERS' CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STYLE IN GREECE WITH TWO METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

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Alexandra Gkontzou, Dimitrios Zachos

Aristotle's University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract. *The aim of this paper is to examine the primary school teachers' most preferred Classroom Management style. Teachers' style is a characteristic, which is determined by their values, beliefs and pedagogical philosophy and characterizes their behavior in the classroom. We identified four such types: authoritarian, democratic, laissez – faire and warm demander. The research we present here on this issue was based on two online methodological tools: First, a conventional text – based questionnaire of 36 questions, using the Likert scale, and second a comic – style vignette – based questionnaire consisted of 10 episodes. We used a non – probabilistic sample of fifty-two (52) easily accessible primary school teachers from various areas of Greece, who volunteered to participate in our research. It was found that the democratic and the warm demander styles was the preference of the most teachers while the other two styles occurred less often. The use of those methodological tools gave us the opportunity to compare them to identify the advantages and disadvantages of each one... The comparison considered factors such as interest, time, clarity, effort, innovation and pleasure. Participants' responses indicated that they found the comic – style vignette – based questionnaire more interesting, innovative, and pleasant compared to the conventional questionnaire. In addition, no significant differences were found concerning the clarity, time and effort required to complete the two questionnaires.*

Key words: *Classroom Management styles, Greece, vignette, questionnaire*

1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom management is a fundamental issue concerning the function of social environment of the classroom. It is a preliminary stage for educational activities and a position for preparing people for living in a changing world (Khalkhali, 2010). Classroom is a place that some direct services are provided for students so that they are developed on a cognitive and socioemotional level and the requirement for healthy and holistic society

development (Esmaeili, Mohamadrezai & Mohamadrezai, 2015). In the classroom environment, students and teachers share their knowledge and experiences via various means of communication with the aim of reaching educational purposes with an appropriate configuration (Güleç & Durmuş, 2019).

The importance of teachers' role in the classroom cannot be underestimated (Bach, 1982). Classroom is the place where most of the educational activities are carried out. Classroom management is a part of educational activities and teachers' performance is an important factor for a creative environment (Esmaeili, Mohamadrezai, & Mohamadrezai, 2015). It's worth saying that teachers' judgments about correct behavior are based on their cultural assumptions (Bondy, Ross, et al., 2007), their political and philosophical approaches, as well as their scientific knowledge and training. The democratic management of the classroom is essential to establish a safe, secure, democratic, creative and inclusive environment for all children, regardless of their "race", national and ethnic origin, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation and abilities/disabilities (Zachos, 2020).

Classroom management is a skill which requires the decision making of teaching, materials, social relations, discipline etc. (Emmer & Gerwels, 2005). So, the ways displayed by teachers in their daily practices show their different classroom management styles (Ekici, 2004).

There are many different classifications about teachers' classroom management approaches, attitudes and profiles in the related literature. Dreikurs classified teachers as autocratic, democratic and permissive, Santrock described them as authoritarian, authoritative, laissez-faire and indifferent, Wolfgang classified them as interventionist, noninterventionist and internationalist and Deaton differentiated teacher-centered and student-centered (Sadik, 2016).

In this paper, we addressed four types of teacher behavior in the classroom: authoritarian (AUT), democratic (DEM), laissez – faire (LZF) and warm demander (WDM). In the following subchapter we present the main characteristics of these four styles, and in the one after that we present our research and analyze and discuss its results.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Authoritarian teacher

The concept of authoritarianism in education is linked to the concept of power (Esmaeili, Mohamadrezai, & Mohamadrezai, 2015). An authoritarian teacher is in control of the educational process (Yilmaz, 2009), displays intrusive behavior (Chaffee, Noels, & McEown, 2014) and often expresses doubts about his/her students (Sultan & Hussain, 2012). These teachers emphasize on controlling students' behavior and try through their power and prestige to make students comply with their rules and instructions (Bauch, 1982). Also, they tend to use external motivation as encouragement and reward for certain behavior and often resort to punitive practices (Sadik, 2016). Teachers with authoritarian characteristics do not include their students in the decision-making process (Aunga & Masare, 2017). They want to be the only person responsible for planning and running the lesson (Glaser, 1985) and force them to comply with their own wishes and desires (Güleç & Durmuş, 2019). They typically do not consider students' ideas, suggestions, interests and opinions (Sadik, 2016), while they rely on textbooks and commercial materials for planning their teaching (Bauch, 1982).

2.2. Democratic teacher

In order to define the concept of democratic education, we resort to Cunat's view (as cited in Rainer & Guyton, 1999) according to which it is the vital and democratic process of a learning community that recognizes and validates the individuality and responsibility of each participant (Rainer & Guyton, 1999). Democratic teachers hold the main role to establish a democratic environment and create a classroom atmosphere which is conducive to learning (Kesici, 2008). Adopting the principles of democracy themselves, they encourage students to freely express their thoughts, opinions, ideas and feelings (Almog & Shechtman, 2007) giving them the opportunity to actively participate in decision-making (Güleç & Durmuş, 2019) as well as in issues concerning the learning process (Dworkin, Saha, & Hill, 2003). Thus, teachers who adopt a more democratic approach emphasize on students' personal and all-round development as the general goal of education (Bauch, 1982) forming classes oriented to the awareness of their psychological, emotional and cognitive needs (Almog & Shechtman, 2007). A democratic teacher is friendly, encouraging (Vinterek, 2010), calm, diligent, compatible and has a comfortable access to students (Sultan & Hussain, 2012). He or she is not characterized by strictness and aggressiveness and rarely resorts to negative expressions of anger and dissatisfaction (Shechtman, 2002).

2.3. Laissez – faire teacher

Laissez – faire teachers can be characterized as neutrally-oriented regarding the value they place on teachers' control and students' participation (Bach, 1982) while they usually have as less as possible points of contact and communication with them (Sadik, 2016). They don't demand much from their students (Yilmaz, 2009) and the expectations towards them are not very clear (Sadik, 2016). They find it difficult to establish and apply rules in the classroom and teach their students how to behave in the school environment (Güleç & Durmuş, 2019). These teachers accept and watch pupils' behaviors and reactions, avoid hurting their feelings and emotions and hardly say "no" to their pupils (Yilmaz, 2009). As a result, students are usually uncontrolled and often resort to inappropriate behaviors (Yilmaz, 2009). Laissez-faire teachers tend to de-emphasize activities that stimulate greater student participation, particularly in the provision for individualized instruction and in the use of a variety of pedagogical methods (Bach, 1982). Instead, they tend to emphasize lecturing without the use of media or interactive - type activities while teaching a lesson (Bach, 1982).

2.4. Warm demander teacher

The warm demander theory emerges from a broader literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, which explores effective teaching through a deeper understanding of learning styles and interaction patterns of students from diverse backgrounds (racial, ethnic, economic, linguistic) (Sandilos, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cohen, 2017). Warm demander teachers take account of their students' needs, and their cultural environment (Flynt & Brozo, 2009) and they try to establish a caring relationship with their students. With all their actions and their behavior in the classroom, they convince their students that they believe in them (Zachos & Akouarore, 2020). Warm demanders balance high demands with the feeling of "warmth" they offer to students, this creating close relationships with them, inevitably promoting learning (Ford & Sassi, 2014) and providing a structured and disciplined classroom environment (Irvine & Fraser, 1998).

3. METHOD

3.1. Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of our research is to examine primary school teachers' most preferred Classroom Management style. Our study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do primary school teachers' classroom management styles match with the characteristics of the authoritarian, democratic, laissez – faire and warm demander teacher types?
2. What do participants believe about the text- and vignette-based questionnaires, which one do they prefer and what are the reasons for their preference?

To achieve this, we used two different methodological tools: Vignettes & questionnaire.

3.2. Participants

The participants of our research were fifty-two (52) primary school teachers (37 female) from various areas of Greece, who participated on a voluntary basis. Convenience sampling technique (non-probability approach) was used to select the sample. Participants' ages ranged from 23 to 69 with a mean of 37.46 years (SD = 12.92). In order to investigate teachers' classroom management behavior, we used a combination of two different methodology tools: a text – based questionnaire and a vignette – based questionnaire which are described next.

3.3. Vignettes: Theoretical background

A researcher can construct and use vignettes in a variety of different ways, depending on the data sought, the participants, and the purposes of a study (Skilling & Stylianides, 2020). They are widely used in educational research (Deslis, Stylianides, & Jamnik, 2021, 2022; Kuntze & Friesen, 2016) as they are versatile and flexible as a research tool in terms of the way they are used but also in their applicability in various contexts (Skilling & Stylianides, 2020). Although vignettes can be used as a stand-alone research technique (Hughes & Huby, 2002), they are usually used as a supplement to other data collection methods (Jeffries & Maeder, 2005).

Vignettes can be defined as descriptive episodes of specific situations that simulate real events that are used to elicit information about a respondent's beliefs or attitudes (Skilling & Stylianides, 2020). Episodes may consist of people, situations or events (Skilling & Stylianides, 2020). Through vignettes it is possible to encourage discussions with the aim of eliciting information about the feelings, beliefs, judgments, behaviors of the participants regarding the subject under investigation (Deslis et al., 2022). One important advantage of vignettes it is that they create the right conditions for the collection of data from the part of the participants on sensitive or ethical issues (Skilling & Stylianides, 2020) that are not always easy to ask the researchers or participants to answer (Stravakou & Lozgka, 2018). For example, in the context of our study some participants may be reluctant to admit openly that they use classroom management practices that are considered as controversial. The advantage of vignettes is that they can elicit teachers' views without asking them directly (Alexander & Becker, 1978). One important advantage of using vignettes in studies with teachers is that they can elicit their honest views about classroom situations without asking them directly (Deslis et al., 2021).

Vignettes foster distance between researcher and participant (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000) and help reveal issues that facilitate the investigation of potential disturbing or morally charged issues (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014), without respondents feeling uncomfortable, embarrassed or upset (Paddam, Barnes, & Langdon, 2010). Vignettes offer a way both to formulate questions or opinions concretely and to draw from their personal experiences (Prior, Chun, & Huat, 2000). Some studies have concluded that respondents answer to vignettes much in the same way as if they faced a similar real-life situation (Alexander & Becker, 1978).

3.4. Questionnaire: Theoretical background

Questionnaire is one of the most widely used tool of collecting data, and therefore many novice researchers in education and other social sciences conduct their research with it (Rowley, 2014). It is important to clarify that the terms "survey" and "questionnaire" are often used indiscriminately. Although there are significant variations in the related scientific debate, "survey" generally refers to the method, while "questionnaire" refers to the specific instrument being applied (Borgobello, Pierella, & Pozzo, 2019).

According to the procedure usually followed, a questionnaire with closed or open-ended questions is sent to the selected sample of respondents who is invited to provide answers (Jain, 2021). In the case of open-ended questions, the respondents are expected to express their own ideas and experiences (Jain, 2021). For this, an open text field is provided on the survey form (Jain, 2021). In the case of the closed-ended questions, the researcher lists the possible answers and the respondents are required to select all the relevant options (Jain, 2021). Research questionnaires may be distributed to the potential respondents by post, e-mail, as an online questionnaire or face-to-face by hand (Rowley, 2014). Respondents to a questionnaire may be asked to answer questions regarding demographic data, like their age, occupation etc. (e.g. their salary) or their attitudes, beliefs and motivations (Robson, 2007).

One of the main advantages of questionnaires is the ability to have contact and gather responses from a relatively large number of people in scattered and possibly remote locations (Rowley, 2014). Often it is the only – or the easiest- way to recall information about history of a large group of people (Robson, 2007). A questionnaire can be highly effective in order to gather information at relatively low cost and in a short time (Canales et al., 1994). Also, data is not only easy to be obtained but also to be quantified, analyzed and interpreted (Díaz, 2012). Last but not least it is the anonymity that can be maintained and certain interviewer biases are eliminated (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2008).

3.5. Our Questionnaire's Design

In the first part of the questionnaire our participants were asked to indicate the degree of agreement with each of the thirty – six (36) statements using a one to five (1-5) Likert-scale. Each teacher type was represented by nine of the statements. Based on their responses, we calculated a percentage of match with each teacher type. For example, for a specific statement about the democratic type, participants' percentage of match would be 0-0.25-0.50-0.75-1 if they had chosen 1-2-3-4-5, respectively. In this way, if theoretically a participant had chosen five (5) in all nine statements that represented the democratic type, and one (1) to all statements that represented the authoritarian, their percentages of match with these types would be 1 and 0, respectively. In practice, the percentages of

match with the different types were typically between these two extremes. This approach acknowledges that teachers' attitudes may partially match with different types and gives a more information and more accurate representation of their attitudes, which would have been missed if we merely assigned each participant to one type based on the mode.

In the second part of the questionnaire participants were asked to react to ten comic-style classroom episodes. After each episode they were given a set of options, each of which represented a different teacher type. Again, we used participants' responses to calculate percentages of match with the different types. For example, a participant's percentage of match with the warm demander type would be 0.7 if they had chosen the option that reflected this type 7 out of the 10 times that it was available. The matches of percentage for the other types were calculated in a similar way.

The final percentages of match which we use in the following analyses are the mean of the two previous percentages, and thus consider participants' responses to all questions.

After completing the two parts questionnaires, participants were asked to reflect on their experience and compare them by responding to twelve 1-5 Likert scale questions. Specifically, they were asked how interesting, clear, time-consuming, innovative, tiring, and pleasant they found each of the two questionnaires. Finally, there was an optional open-ended question which asked participants to indicate the reasons for their preference.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Responding to Research Question 1

As described in the previous section, we calculated participants' percentages of match with each teacher type based on their responses to the two questionnaires. Table 1 presents the minimum, the maximum and the mean percentage of match for each of the teacher types.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for the four teacher types

Teacher type	Mean (SD)	Min	Max
Laissez – faire (LZF)	.32 (.11)	.15	.64
Authoritarian (AUT)	.24 (.08)	.09	.41
Democratic (DEM)	.73 (.13)	.47	.96
Warm Demander (WDM)	.68 (.09)	.41	.83

We explored whether any of teachers' demographic characteristics were associated with increased or decreased percentages of match with the four teacher types, using t-tests and simple linear regressions, depending on the variable type. Some of the independent variables we examined were: gender, having a master's in education, having taught at 1st/2nd/3rd/4th/5th/6th grade, years of teaching experience, number of students in current classroom. The only statistically significant result that emerged was that older participants tended to have lower percentages of match with the AUT type ($F (1, 50) = 4.19$, $p < 0.05$), with an R squared of 0.08.

We used Pearson's correlations to examine whether any of the different teacher types were correlated. As shown in Table 2 below, many statistically significant correlations were discovered.

Table 2 Correlations between the teacher types

	LZF	AUT	DEM	WDM
LZF	1			
AUT	.46 ***	1		
DEM	-.70 ***	-.61 **	1	
WDM	-.70 ***	-.32 *	.48 ***	1

Legend: Level of statistical significance: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

4.2. Responding to Research Question 2

We used t-tests to examine whether there were statistically significant differences between teachers' views about the text-based and the vignette-based section of the questionnaire concerning various characteristics. Table 3 below presents the results.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and t-test results for participants' views about the text- and vignette-based sections of the questionnaire

	Text-based		Vignette-based		t-test results		
View	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t(51)	p	Sig
Interesting	4.13	.86	4.73	.66	-4.95	.000	***
Clear	4.60	.53	4.69	.58	-1.00	.322	
Time	2.85	.80	3.65	.81	-7.34	.000	***
Innovative	2.75	.12	4.77	.61	-11.85	.000	***
Tiring	1.83	.88	2.17	1.12	-2.02	.049	*
Pleasant	3.15	.98	4.44	.73	-9.14	.000	***

Legend: Level of statistical significance: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Participants' responses to the open-ended question validated the previous findings. Their responses are discussed in the next section, where also some quotes are presented.

5. DISCUSSION

This study attempted to explore Greek primary school teachers' classroom management styles. Five key findings emerged from this research.

First, it is important to note that, as indicated by the minimum percentages of match, all four management styles are to a certain degree relevant to the Greek classroom. However, the democratic and the warm demander styles stood out, as indicated by their mean percentages of match (.73 and .68, respectively). In contrast, the percentages for the authoritarian and laissez – faire styles were lower (.24 and .32, respectively). These findings suggest that the participants of our study are more likely to create a classroom environment that is consistent with the democratic style, which may include, for example, the development democratic values and self-awareness (Almog & Shechtman, 2007) or the warm demander style, which may include, for example, the creation of a special caring relationship between their students and themselves (Ware, 2006) and the development of a practical, structured, disciplined (Irvine & Fraser, 1998) but also supportive and positive school environment (Flynt & Brozo, 2009). In contrast, results demonstrated that few teachers choose practices that resemble the laissez – faire classroom management style or the authoritarian style. This suggests that they refrain from being neutrally oriented

regarding the importance they place on teachers' control, students' participation and rule application, as laissez – teachers do (Bach, 1982). Furthermore, their management style is not characterized by intensive behavior, full control of the educational process and punitive practices, as suggested by the particularly low percentages of match with the authoritarian type.

Second, as far as the ranges of the percentages of match are concerned, the percentages for the laissez – faire and authoritarian styles these spanned from very low to moderate. This means that there were teachers who were not authoritarian or laissez – faire at all, and even the teachers who were close to the maximum of the respective range cannot be considered as typical examples of laissez – faire or authoritarian teachers. In contrast, there were participants who perfectly matched with the democratic or the warm demander style, as indicated by the maximum percentages of match for these two styles. Therefore, these teachers can be considered as typical example of the respective style.

Third, findings indicate that the age was the only demographic characteristic that could predict teachers' classroom management style. Specifically, the older the teachers, the less authoritarian they were. What might explain this interesting finding is that older teachers are usually more mature and experienced and thus feel more confident to effectively deal with difficult situations without resorting to strictness, punitive or other authoritarian practices.

Fourth, we found a positive correlation between the percentages of match with the authoritarian and the laissez – faire style, namely teachers who were more authoritarian also tended to be more laissez – faire, and vice versa. Similarly, the democratic and the warm demander styles were also positively correlated. In contrast, negative correlations were discovered for the pair democratic – laissez – faire, warm demander – laissez – faire and democratic – authoritarian, warm demander – authoritarian. These findings are consistent with the literature, since the former pairs have some characteristics in common while the latter pairs have important differences in terms of their characteristics. For example, democratic teachers seek to form groups during their teaching while teachers with authoritarian characteristics prefer their students to work alone (Bach, 1982). In contrast, both warm demander and democratic teachers pay the necessary attention to the individual needs of their students and aim to create the appropriate opportunities for each one of them to succeed (Vinterek, 2010; Ware, 2006).

Fifth, the comparison of the text-based questionnaire and vignette-based questionnaires enabled us to explore the advantages and disadvantages of each according to participants' point of view. Although they found the vignette-based more tiring and time-consuming than the text-based, they found the former more innovative, pleasant and interesting than the latter. Furthermore, participants found the two questionnaires equally clear. Participants' responses to the open-ended question that asked them to compare the two questionnaires validated the previous findings. The teachers who preferred the text-based questionnaire over the vignette-based one were a minority. Most participants chose the vignette-based questionnaire. Lots of them mentioned that the vignette-based questionnaire was innovative, interesting, and quite entertaining. For example, one of the participants stated that "It was something interesting and innovative that captured your interest and made you want to complete it". Some of the responders found this questionnaire straightforward and realistic and pointed out that they were able to identify themselves with the role of the teacher. To support this, one mentioned that "I found it more understandable and experience-based as I was able to identify with the role of the teacher and gave answers

easily". Furthermore, it was found that the vignette-based questionnaire gave teachers the chance to reflect on their practices and evaluate themselves. More specifically, one of them said that "I preferred it because it offers an opportunity for self-evaluation and reflection". Other participants pointed out that vignettes were descriptive and enriched with examples from classrooms, and to a large extent represented situations that teachers often encounter in real classrooms. It was mentioned that "The comics gave me the opportunity to remember and use as reference many real situations that I have faced during the school year". Finally, some of the participants found that the vignettes in the form of comics stood out because of the visual stimulus they offer; as a teacher highlighted "A picture is a thousand words".

6. CONCLUSION

Classroom management is a fundamental issue concerning the function of social environment of the classroom. This paper offers some enlightening findings about teachers' classroom management styles and the research methods that can effectively explore them. Using a combination of vignette-based and text-based questionnaires we examined the degree to which the practices of Greek primary school teachers match with four styles of classroom management: authoritarian, democratic, laissez – faire and warm demander. Results indicate that the democratic and the warm demander styles were more dominant while the other two styles occurred less often. Interestingly, older participants tended to be less authoritarian. Furthermore, we found that the different styles are usually correlated with one another, either positively or negatively. Finally, when asked to compare the two questionnaires, most participants showed a preference for the vignette-based over the text-based questionnaire.

7. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

When interpreting these findings, some limitations should be taken into consideration. First, the sample used in the study is not large enough to represent the population of primary school teachers in Greece. Second, the study has utilized a convenience sampling technique to select the participants. Therefore, the findings of the present study lack the external validity and cannot be generalized. It is recommended that the study should be well replicated in other settings with a larger sample.

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ISTRAŽIVANJE NASTAVNIČKKOG STILA UPRAVLJANJA UČIONICOM U GRČKOJ SA DVA METODOLOŠKA ALATA

Cilj ovog rada je da ispita stil upravljanja razredom koji nastavnici osnovnih škola najviše preferiraju. Pritom, stil nastavnika određen je njihovim vrednostima, uverenjima i pedagoškom filozofijom i karakteriše njihovo ponašanje u učionici. Identifikovana su četiri tipa stila upravljanja: autoritaran, demokratski, laissez – faire i blago zahtevan. Kao instrument, u istraživanju su korišćena dva onlajn metodološka alata: konvencionalni upitnik od 36 pitanja zasnovan na Likertovoj skali, i upitnik zasnovan na stripu u stilu vinjete koji se sastojao od 10 epizoda. Istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 52 nastavnika osnovnih škola iz različitih oblasti Grčke koji su se dobrovoljno prijavili da učestvuju. Utvrđeno je da je većina nastavnika preferirala demokratski i blagi stil upravljanja, dok su se ređe opredeljivali za druga dva stila. Osim toga, ovi metodološki alati iskorišćeni su da bi se izvršilo njihovo poređenje u cilju identifikovanja prednosti i nedostataka svakog od njih na osnovu mišljenja nastavnika. Kao kriterijumi za uporedivanje korišćeni su faktori: interesovanje, vreme, jasnoća, trud, inovativnost i zadovoljstvo. Dobijeni rezultati ukazuju na to da je upitnik zasnovan na stripu – stilu vinjete zanimljiviji, inovativniji i prijatniji u poređenju sa konvencionalnim upitnikom. Pored toga, nisu nađene značajne razlike u pogledu jasnoće, vremena i truda potrebnih za popunjavanje dva upitnika.

Ključne reči: *stilovi upravljanja razredom, Grčka, vinjete, upitnik*