

The Preschool Children Control Ideology Scale: Greek Prospective Kindergarten Teachers' Beliefs about Classroom Management

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Abstract

The educational literature provides a consensus over two basic ideological systems about student behavior control. The *custodial* orientation is related to the traditional scope of education delivering to the teacher the responsibility of students' control. The *humanistic* orientation emphasizes on children's self-regulation and participation in classroom management processes. Accordingly, Willower and his associates (1967) developed a rating system, Pupils Control Ideology (PCI). With reference to preschool education, there is a gap in the literature concerning teachers' personal ideologies about classroom management and behavior control. Of great importance is future teachers' idea concerning discipline, as they seem to determine the practices during their teaching carriers. The purpose of the study is to examine the psychometric properties of the Preschool Children Control Ideology (PCCI), developed by modifying the 20 items of the original scale and adding six more concerning rules setting. It was tested with a sample of 294 future kindergarten students. The scale had high internal consistency. Student teachers had more or less balanced ideas over the continuum of custodial and humanistic control ideologies, with a shift to a more humanistic orientation. Senior students to have more humanistic believes than juniors. Teaching efficacy beliefs were positively related with the humanistic beliefs.

Keywords: pupils control ideology, kindergarten, prospective teachers, teaching efficacy, Greece

Introduction

According to Wolfgang and Glickman (1986), classroom discipline refers to structures and rules that shape students' behavior and to teachers' efforts to control students so that they comply to these rules. In a recent study, Gursmsek (2014) provided a very comprehensive description of discipline scope. "*The main aim of discipline is to socialize children and help them to construct their own values, to teach students to cooperate with others and to develop integrity to make ethical choices and the confidence to act on their values*" (p. 437). A discipline model consists of a set of concrete processes that function in multiple ways, focusing on setting rules and maintaining discipline or/and restoring classroom harmonious relationships and functioning. It represents a certain philosophical orientation towards classroom management delivered through a number of practices that may reflect a range of either custodial or humanistic beliefs. These practices are influential in forming social and pedagogical relationships and affect students' social development and school success. As McCaslin and Good (1992) argue, there should be continuity between learning goals and classroom management aims. When, for example the curriculum mandates the development of skills through children's self-regulation, this principle should be followed not only in the academic domain but also when it comes to behavior and relationships management in the classroom.

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It is noted, however, that although modern curricula lay emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving and students' active participation in activities, in educational reality discipline methods may function in an opposite direction when they demand uncritical obedience. Discipline methods and practices is a complex issue that may be determined by many factors, with teacher ideologies playing a critical role (Fries & Cochran-Smith, 2006). Since 1960, there is an extensive work on the connection between teachers' personal ideologies and practices, especially with reference to classroom management (eg. Barratt, 1994. Ikejaiku, 2000. Solomon, Battistich, & Hom, 1996). There is a widely accepted classification of their beliefs that reflect two distinct orientations (Hoy, 1967):

- a. The *custodial* ideology is related to the traditional perspective of education that views the child as deviant by nature and unable to come to logic decisions. Consequently, teachers are responsible to decide and enforce rules, control students and impose penalties to establish harmony and stability.
- b. The humanistic ideology focuses on collaboration and supportive relationships between students and the teacher. Rules are decided jointly through democratic processes that promote children's responsibility, self-regulation and internal motivation. It refers to a constructivist view of the teacher as having "open attitudes" (Hoy & Jalovick, 1979) and being respectful to the individuality of each child as a member of the classroom group (Gordon, Dembo & Hovecar, 2007).

There is a great number of studies that examine how teachers' control ideologies relate to various aspects of teachers beliefs and practices as well as other personal and professional characteristics. It was found that practicing teachers with custodial orientation feel less competent in their teaching ability and perceive that not all students are malleable to teaching (Woolfolk, Rosoff and Hoy, 1990). Teachers with mastery orientation had more humanistic views about control in the classroom (Gordon, Dembo and Hocevar, 2007). Moreover, there is a number of studies connecting beginner teachers' ideologies with burn out (Austin, Shah & Muncer, 2005; Griffith, Steptoe & Cropley, 1999; Lewis, Roache & Romi, 2011) satisfaction with their profession (Liu & Meyer, 2005) as well as with students' self-regulation and learning goals orientation (Gordon, Dembo & Hocevar, 2007). Kindergarten teachers' classroom management beliefs relationships with the children in the kindergarten for their socioemotional development, academic achievement and later school success is well documented in the literature (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Brock et al., 2008; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Roorda et al., 2011). However, there is a gap concerning the connection between kindergarten teachers' classroom management beliefs and practices, although the issue of children behavior management in the preschool years is still of great concern (Beazidou, Botsoglou & Andreou, 2013; Conroy, et al., 2013; Conroy et al., 2014). It is argued that in-service teachers are not well prepared to cope with students' behavior problems (Campbell, 1995; Stormont, Reinke & Herman, 2011). Moreover, it seems that teachers avoid interaction with deviant children in the classroom (Chazan, 1994). It was also found, in earlier studies (Barnett & Bokook, 1998; Scott-Little & Holloway, 1992), that teachers use more often traditional/authoritarian practices (such as increasing restrictions, punitive techniques) while teacher-children interaction have been documented as selectively positive or negative (Raver & Knitzer, 2002) with implications in equal opportunities to learning and their future school careers (Raver & Knitzer, 2002; Sutherland, Conroy, Abrams, & Vo, 2010). With reference to kindergarten teachers' control ideologies, it has been found that they are related to certain personality characteristics, their leadership style and choice of intervention strategies (Rydell & Henricsson, 2004; Woolfolk, et al., 1990).

Prospective Teachers' Ideologies

Using the term future/prospective/student teachers in this study we refer to the students that have systematic education in theoretical, scientific and application level in formal educational institutions such as university departments to become professional teachers after the bachelor degree. Their beliefs are considered a basic parameter for understanding and shaping the educational processes in the classroom. These beliefs are systems that include internalized ideas, knowledge and experiences along with teaching models that concern the teaching profession and students bring with them when they enter their professional education, which are supposed to be reconsidered, developed further or rejected on a scientific basis (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). File and Gullo (2002), found that preschool future student teachers had a more traditional belief orientation at the beginning of their studies. Rideout and Morton (2007) examined the impact of their preservice training in shaping their ideologies and concluded that when future teachers attended classes with a traditional classroom management model became more custodial. A number of studies provided evidence that prospective teachers are in favour of discipline practices that focus on rule enforcement and consequences of disobedience, while they seem to have difficulty to apply management techniques that are in line with their theoretical underpinnings, attributing children's problem behavior to their families (Bibou-Nakou, 2000; Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, & Stogiannidou, 2000; Ho, 2004; Mavropoulou & Padelidu, 2002).

The last decade there has been a growing interest in examining future teachers' ideologies. This interest in teachers' beliefs is consistent with the pivotal role of the teacher in the contemporary curricula (see for example The Kindergarten Curriculum, Pedagogical Institute: 2011) in organising challenging learning contexts and shaping children's behavioral and academic profiles in the classroom. However, it is documented that prospective teachers are more oriented to authoritarian management styles that use a lot of extrinsic motivation practices especially penalties and restrictions (Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Kaya, et al., 2010; Witcher, et al., 2008) reporting that traditional methods are more efficient not only in the academic domain but also with regard to discipline issues (Witcher, et al., 2008). These studies are in line with earlier findings showing that prospective teachers become more custodial and bureaucratic by the end of their student teaching experience (Hoy, 1967; Hoy & Rees, 1977; Roberts & Blankenship, 1970). Often there are implications about the effectiveness of the educational programs to prepare competent professionals that are able to apply educational reforms in their classrooms (Gursimsek, 2014; Rideout & Koot, 2009). File and Gullo (2002) seem to question the dynamic of the university departments as educational settings to instill democratic ideals in students' ideologies and support them in the process of transforming these ideologies into effective practices with respect to both teaching and classroom management issues during their practicum. Pajares (1992, p. 328) asserted, however, that "understanding the beliefs of pre-service teachers is essential to teacher education." An examination of the beliefs of students provides a window to questions about how programs prepare students to make decisions about what and how to teach.

Purpose of the Present Study

The vast majority of the aforementioned studies focus on elementary student teachers. Little is known about kindergarten teachers and prospective teachers' classroom control ideologies. Moreover, with reference to the Greek educational reality, there is a gap in the literature concerning teachers', in general, philosophical orientations with reference to classroom management issues. Within this line of thought, the present study examines future kindergarten teachers' control ideologies using PCI-K, an adaptation of the Pupils Control Ideology (PCI) which was developed by Willower, Eidell and Hoy (1967). Reliability of the new instrument is estimated. Validity is examined through the relation between PCI-K scores and the following variables: prospective teachers' years of study and their self-efficacy beliefs.

Method

Participants and Process

Data were collected from 294 student teachers, 41% were junior students (in the first and second year of their studies) and 59% senior students (in the last two years of their studies). Most of the students (66%) reported that studying to be kindergarten teachers was their first choice, while for the rest of them (34%) it was a consequence of failing to enter some other university department. Questionnaire were distributed and completed during one of their lessons at the end of the academic year, in June. The purposes of the study were described to the students and issues of anonymity and confidentiality were explained.

Instrumentation

PCCI: To assess future teachers' beliefs about discipline in the classroom, a modified version of the Pupils Control Ideology (Willower, Eidell & Hoy, 1967) questionnaire was used. PCI was developed to locate teachers' classroom management styles on a continuum of humanistic-custodial continuum. It is a 5 point likert scale (from 1: strongly disagree, to 5 strongly agree) with 20 items describing a highly teacher controlled classroom management (custodial) on one end and a democratic (humanistic) classroom management on the other end. Scores range from 20 to 100, with lower scores (<50) indicating a more humanistic orientation. The reliability of the PCI has been reported between 0.65 and 0.85 (Hoy, 2000; Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990) and the construct validity of the scale has been supported in a number of studies (for example, see Gaffney & Byrd-Gaffney, 1996; Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Jalovick, 1979; Morrison, Wilcox & Madrigal, 1999). The Preschool Children Control Ideology (PCCI) is a modified version of the original PCI in a way that corresponds to preschool/kindergarten educational reality. 6 items were added to capture the full spectrum of control issues in the kindergarten with an emphasis on rule setting and compliance. Moreover, the extend of agreement was reverse coded so as the higher the cumulative score on the scale, the more humanistic the perspective is judged to be. Items 5, 13, 24, 25 and 26 were reverse coded.

TES: The Teacher Efficacy Scale was developed by Gibson and Dembo (1984). It was designed to measure the two dimensions of personal teaching efficacy (PE) and general teaching efficacy (TE). The first (PE) reflected the confidence they have in their ability to carry out actions which promote students' academic success efficacy, while the second (TE) represented the perception that the teacher's skill in carrying out actions which improve students' learning is not limited or inhibited by variables which are outside the school environment, fundamentally the students' family context. The TES-short form (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993) was used. It comprised of 10 items in a 6-point response scale (from 1=strongly agree to 6=strongly disagree). Internal consistency was satisfactory for both subscales (0.77 and 0.72 respectively) (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). The items were translated in Greek by two kindergarten teachers with Msc and proficient knowledge of English and it was back translated by an English speaking Greek psychologist. The research team decided upon the final version of the Greek scale. Factor analysis was conducted to estimate the structure of the Greek version of the scale using principal components method and varimax rotation. Two factors were extracted with the expected structure which explained 46% of variance. The first factor, personal efficacy had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .79$) while the second, general teaching efficacy, had low consistency ($\alpha = .45$). Consequently, only the first factor was used in the study.

Background variables: Prospective teachers' year of studies (junior students=1st and 2nd year, senior students=3rd and 4th year) was also recorded. to measure the two dimensions of personal teaching efficacy (PE) and general teaching

Analysis-Results

Descriptive

The mean score of student teachers' reports in the PCCI was 89.36 (SD=12.38) reflecting a more humanistic orientation towards classroom control. As seen in the Table 1., the items with the highest mean score (>4) representing the more humanistic beliefs were 3, 26 and 5, which referred to children's active participation in classroom management processes and respect by the teacher. On the other end of the continuum, the more custodial students' beliefs (mean score <3) focused on rule compliance and effectiveness as well as discipline, as evidenced in their reports concerning items 21, 6, 23 and 19.

Table 1: PCCI Item Mean Scores (N=294)

Item description	M	SD
1. It is preferable to ask children to sit in specific places during circle time or an activity.	3,5	1,1
2. Children usually can't solve problems through logical reasoning	3,19	1,1
3. Directing sarcastic or offending remarks toward a defiant child is a good disciplinary technique.	4,7	0,87
4. Beginning teachers are not strict enough with children	3,22	0,99
5. kindergarten teachers should consider revision of their teaching methods if these are criticized by children.	4,02	0,91
6. Colleagues (other kindergarten teachers and school advisors) should give unquestioning support to teachers in disciplining children.	2,55	1
7. Children should not be permitted to question the teacher in the classroom.	3,4	1,16
8. It is better to provide children with as many learning opportunities as I can, even if they are not directly interested in them.	3,11	1,199
9. I believe that in the kindergarten, too much time is spent on activities that are not related to children's cognitive development and preparation for primary school.	3,33	1,115
10. Being friendly with children often leads them to become too familiar.	3,45	1,036
11. It is more important for pupils to learn to obey rules than that they make their own decisions.	3,35	1,302
12. Children should be respected for their views and ideas but they should not guide practices in the kindergarten.	3,08	1,182
13. Children can be trusted to work together without supervision.	3,67	1,043
14. If children use obscene or profane language in the classroom they should be reprimanded.	3,71	1,105
15. In case children use the bathroom without taking permission, they should be punished.	3,71	1,061
16. Those children who do not show respect to the teacher should be treated accordingly.	3,48	1,156
17. It is often necessary to remind children who is in charge in the classroom.	3,52	1,117
18. A child who destroys school material or property should be severely punished.	3,7	1,059
19. Children cannot perceive up to which point they can do and say whatever they want in the classroom.	2,97	1,005
20. Pupils often misbehave in order to embarrass the teacher.	3,4	1,053
21. To be effective, the rules should be determined by the teacher, from the very first days of the year.	2,5	1,422
22. The kindergarten teacher has a duty to impose sanctions as children by their nature are not able to comply with all rules.	3,15	1,141
23. Children should obey the rules set by the kindergarten to become obedient and disciplined future citizens.	2,73	1,101
24. The child systematically shows impressions of himself in the classroom. Penalties may contribute to the failure of displaying a positive image of themselves in the classroom.	3,54	0,936
25. Failure to comply with the rules is likely to be a form of protest and attempt to meet with unacceptable ways, the needs of the child.	3,89	0,891
26. The adoption of the rules, the evaluation of their functions and the agreement on the consequences of non-compliance is part of the collective processes in the classroom.	4,14	0,924

Reliability

The internal consistency of the scale with the 20 modified items of the original form was high ($\alpha=.82$). However the 6 additional items seemed to add to the consistency of the scale ($\alpha=.84$) providing support for the reliability of the new instrument targeting to the kindergarten teachers' control beliefs. Guttman split half coefficient for the 26-item scale was also satisfactory, .76.

Validity

Independent samples t-test showed that there was a statistically very important difference between senior and junior students' control ideologies ($t=5.69$, $df=258$, $p<0.001$), with senior students ($M=92.60$, $SD=12.56$) having a more humanistic orientation towards classroom management compared to juniors ($M=84.10$, $SD=10.14$). A weak but statistically significant correlation between prospective kindergarten teachers' control ideologies and their perception of personal efficacy was also identified ($r=0.13$, $p<0.05$).

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to provide evidence for the reliability and validity of the PCCI, an instrument developed by modifying the original PCI 20-item scale to address kindergarten classroom management beliefs and adding 6 more items focusing specifically on rule compliance and effectiveness in the preschool classroom. Data provided evidence for the high internal consistency of the scale, valuing the contribution of the additional 6 items. It is well documented that rules constitute a cornerstone in classroom management as they provide structure and consistency (Anderson & Spaulding, 2007). Especially for the young children, classroom rules may enhance their adaptation and learning in the school context as they help children familiarize with the limits and expectations met in a formal educational setting (Allen, Cowdery & Johnson, 2011). Burden (2003) describes rules as a powerful control mechanisms that regulate students' behaviors by communicating expectations for appropriate behavior. Prospective kindergarten teachers' mean score in the PCCI revealed a humanistic orientation towards classroom management. The items that had the higher means were referring to the fact that the child should be respected even in cases of misbehavior and have an active participation in rule formation and evaluation of classroom management practices. These beliefs are actually in accordance to the modern pedagogical theories that focus on the children's agency, worth and importance in the educational processes. On the other hand, the most custodial references were those focusing on discipline, rule compliance and effectiveness, showing that although prospective kindergarten teachers endorse a democratic view that values children's role in classroom management, when it comes to rules setting and compliance, they hold more traditional beliefs that focus on teachers' authority. This finding is in line with evidence provided by Rekalidou and Penderi (2010) showing that control and punishment were the most frequent category of in-service kindergarten teachers' management practices observed in the classroom. Moreover, this ambiguity in teachers' control ideologies may explain the "mixed methods" kindergarten teachers seem to apply when confronted with children's misbehavior and their demand for further education and training regarding classroom management issues (Beazidou et al., 2013; Reinke, Herman & Sprick, 2011; Rekalidou & Karadimitriou, 2014).

The positive relation between humanistic control beliefs and personal teaching efficacy supports the validity of the PCCI, as it has been documented in other studies using the original PCI form (Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990). Consequently, the more prospective kindergarten teachers are optimistic about their own educational competence the more trusting appear to be of children and ready to share responsibility in solving discipline problems with them in the classroom. Prospective teachers' years of studies seemed to influence their control ideologies. In fact, senior students, those in the third and fourth year of studies, were more humanistic than junior students, in the first and second year. This finding was in line with evidence provided by Zeichner and Grant (1981) that supported the fact that pre-service teachers' practicum experience do not relate to a more custodial orientation as argued by a number of other researchers (eg. Hoy, 1968; 1969). With respect to kindergarten future teachers, the increase of humanistic beliefs during their studies may stem from their exposure to a variety of modern approaches to pedagogy and teaching that favour whole child development, children agency, democratic processes and shared responsibility in the classroom (e.g. Samuelsson, Sheridan & Williams, 2006). Moreover, their practicum is organised using collaborative and reflective methods, such as lesson study and project work, with experienced and qualified mentor teachers (Giannakidou, Gioftali & Tzioras, 2013). As a result, their teaching experience is constructed through interactions with their collaborating student teachers, the children in the classroom and their mentor teacher and not with in-service teachers that may hold custodial views concerning classroom management.

Although research concerning pre-service and in-service teachers belief systems is important in understanding their actual practices (McCarty, Abbott-Shim, & Lambert, 2001; Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004), there is a gap in the literature concerning the relation between teachers' control ideologies and management practices in the classroom. The Preschool Children Control Ideology (PCCI) is an instrument that could be used in that direction, providing some insight to the teachers' observed or recorded classroom management practices.

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