



# Needs-assessment and action-planning report

## Cyprus

**Project Title: SWPBS**

**Project Number: 606687-EPP-2018-CY-EPPKA3-PI-POLICY**

**Programme: Erasmus+**

<b>Activity Code:</b>	<b>D1.3</b>
<b>Title:</b>	Needs-assessment and action-planning report per partner country
<b>Estimated Start Date:</b>	01/06/2019
<b>Draft due to WP leader on:</b>	30/06/2019
<b>Estimated End Date of WP1:</b>	31/07/2019
<b>Activity Leading Organisation:</b>	CARDET

### Task Description

This task is a follow-up activity to the literature review (see D1.3) and its focus is to prepare a research report per country that

1. Identifies the current local needs on schoolwide discipline prevention and student socio-emotional supports based on survey and focus group interview data
2. Develops an action plan around schoolwide discipline prevention and student socio-emotional supports

Below, you will find a structure and template with guidelines for report development. As soon as you compile the research report, please email it to us.

Thank you!

# Needs-assessment analysis- Cyprus

## Questionnaire- Methodology

The questionnaire was administered on-line, using the SurveyMonkey platform. The questionnaire was uploaded on the platform and disseminated to all school principals and school inspectors of primary schools by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI). An invitation for participation was sent through a CPI's circular. Participant consent was obtained were informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of the study and confidentiality of the data. On this page, they gave consent again in order to proceed with the questionnaire.

## Survey Results

### Short description of response rate and sample demographics

Participants were 162 key stakeholders (66% female), in which 155 of them were school principals and seven were school inspectors. The questionnaire was sent to 313 school principals of public primary schools in Cyprus, and 51 Primary Education Inspectors. Response rate was 49,9% for school principals and 13.7% for Primary Education Inspectors.

Table 1.

Variable	n (%)
<i>N</i>	162
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	107 (66)
Male	55 (34)
<i>Age (years)</i>	
Median	52 (range 23-61)
<i>Professional background</i>	
School principal of primary school	155 (95.7)
Inspector of primary school	7 (4.3)
Other	- (%)
<i>Years of experience in this current job</i>	
<1 Year	8 (4.9)
1-2 Years	2 (1.2)
2-5 Years	25 (15.4)
5-10 Years	115 (71)
>10 Years	12 (7.4)

*Work experience in Education*

Median 31 (7-52)

*Level of formal education*

Bachelor degree 32 (19.8)

Master's degree 111 (68.5)

Doctoral degree 18 (11.1)

Other 1 (.6)

*School community*

Village, or rural area (fewer than 3 000 people) 55 (34)

Small town (3 000 to about 15 000 people) 34 (21)

Town (15 000 to about 100 000 people) 20 (12.3)

City (100 000 to about 1 000 000 people) 48 (29.6)

Large city with over 1 000 000 people - (%)

## Current views on schoolwide discipline prevention

### Behavioral incidences

Participants were asked to rate the frequency of problem behaviors taking place in primary schools. A list of ten behaviors was provided. Finally, a total behavioral Incidents score (frequency of behavioral incidents) for each respondent was obtained by calculating the average of the total sum of individual items. Results of the descriptive analysis are to be found in **Table 2**. Overall, participants rated with low score these behavioral incidences: *student substance use* (M=1.10) and *physical abuse of teachers* (M=1.21). Conversely, minor problem behaviors received the highest scores: *disruption during instruction (playing with objects, talking with others, not waiting his turn)* (M=3.68), *physical conflicts between students (e.g., hitting, pushing, fights)* (M=3.29) and *verbal conflicts between students (e.g., swearing, calling names, comments related to racism/sexual orientation)* (M=3.26).

**Table 2.**

Subscales	N	Mean (SD)
Physical conflicts between students (e.g., hitting, pushing, fights)	162	3.15 (1.23)
Verbal conflicts between students (e.g., swearing, calling names, comments related to racism/sexual orientation)	162	3.12 (1.05)
Psychological conflicts between children (e.g., exclusion of a student from the team, spreading negative rumors)	162	2.58 (1.11)
Cyber bullying by using technological means (e.g., mobile phones, computers, social media, etc.)	162	1.90 (1.06)
Student tardiness (arriving late in school, coming late from break)	162	2.85 (1.25)
Student absenteeism (being absent from school)	162	2.12 (1.24)
Student substance use	155	1.06

		(.42)
Showing disrespect to teachers and peers (e.g., talking back, refusing to work, making negative comments)	155	2.62 (1.24)
Physical abuse of teachers	155	1.15 (.54)
Disruption during instruction (playing with objects, talking with others, not waiting his turn)	155	3.52 (1.37)
Frequency of Behavioral Incidents	155	2.41 (.81)

### Written school discipline

A written school discipline, is the schools' established rules and regulations in written form, in order to ensure a safe and secure school environment. A total quality of written school discipline policy score for each respondent was obtained by calculating an average score of items 2-5. Further details of the scores can be found in **Table 3**. The frequency of having a written school discipline was initially assessed. For the cases who reported to have a written school discipline (72.2%), an overall mean score was calculated for each of the additional items. Further details of the scores can be found in Table 3 below. Overall, participants indicated that the school discipline policy was clear (M= 2.90), was consistently applied (M=3.83). Finally, for the total quality of written school discipline policy score, out of a possible score of 5, indicating a higher perceived level of school discipline policy's quality and usability, the mean  $\pm$  SD score was  $2.89 \pm 2.10$ .

Table 3.

Cyprus		
	Yes	No
	N (%)	N (%)
<i>Having a written school discipline policy</i>	117	37

(72.2) (22.8)

Subscales	N	Mean (SD)
<i>Is it comprehensive?</i>	162	2.73 (.2)
<i>Is it clear?</i>	162	2.90 (2.09)
<i>Is it consistently applied?</i>	162	3.83 (.98)
<i>Is it widely publicized among administration team, staff and families?</i>	162	2.62 (1.96)
School discipline policy's quality and usability	162	2.89 (2.10)

#### Effectiveness of existing discipline practices and policies

This section examined key stakeholders' opinion on the effectiveness of existing practices and policies. An overall mean score was calculated for each of the items. Further details of the scores can be found in **Table 4**. A total Effectiveness of existing school discipline practices score (items 1, 3, 4) and school discipline policies (item 2) score for each respondent was obtained by averaging each participants' responses. Overall, the trend in scores demonstrated that participants scored lower on school policies' effectiveness to guide schools to reduce problem behaviors in schools (M=1.86). Participants rated higher the effectiveness of school practices in reducing problem behaviors (M=2.19), and supporting

students with socio-emotional and behavioral needs (M=2.06). Finally, the total scores for both policies' and practices' effectiveness were generally low (>2.50).

Table 4.

Subscales	N	Mean (SD)
<i>School discipline programs have been in reducing problem behaviors in your school?</i>	162	2.02 (1.05)
<i>Policy discipline guidelines have been in guiding schools to reduce problem behaviors in schools?</i>	162	1.86 (1.08)
<i>School practices have been in reducing problem behaviors in your school?</i>	162	2.19 (1.03)
<i>School practices have been in supporting students with socio-emotional and behavioral needs?</i>	162	2.06 (1.05)
Effectiveness of existing school discipline practices	162	2.09 (.96)
Effectiveness of existing school discipline policies	162	1.86 (1.08)

### Professional development training

The frequency of receiving training on school discipline programs was initially assessed. For the cases who reported to receive training on school discipline programs, an estimate the number of in-service training hours was assessed. Further details of the scores can be found in **Table 5**.

Table 5

	Yes	No
		

	N (%)	N (%)
<i>Receiving training on school discipline programs</i>	103 (63.6)	59 (36.4)
	N	Range
<i>Estimated number of hours</i>	103	1-1000

### Current limitations on promoting positive learning environments

The last section of the questionnaire, assessed participants' perceived risk factors for promoting positive learning environments. An overall mean score was calculated for each of the items. A general-limitations score on promoting positive learning environments score for each respondent was obtained by averaging each participants' five responses. Further details of the scores can be found in **Table 6**. Overall, the trend in scores demonstrated that the subscale items with the highest score was the lack of or inadequate supports within the school to help specific students with socio-emotional and behavioral needs  $M=2.81$ ). The general limitations score was close to 2.50 ( $M=2.64$ ).

Table 6

Subscales	N	Mean (SD)	N
<i>Lack of or inadequate number of personnel with expertise in schoolwide prevention (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists)</i>	162	2.51 (1.48)	161
<i>Lack of or inadequate teacher training in preventative positive-based classroom practices</i>	162	2.59 (1.49)	161
<i>Lack of or inadequate supports within the school to help specific students with socio-emotional and behavioral needs?</i>		2.81 (1.55)	161

	162		
<i>Likelihood of complaints from families</i>	162	2.52 (1.40)	161
<i>Lack of or inadequate time for collaboration among staff</i>		2.77 (1.48)	161
	162		
<i>Limitations total score</i>	162	2.64 (1.35)	161

### Focus Group Interview Results

In this section, the research findings from the focus group discussion are presented. During the focus group interview, seven educational stakeholders from various sections of the Ministry of Education (MOEC) shared their views and experiences on the main priority school needs for promoting positive and preventative learning environments, the existing practices for supporting schoolwide discipline prevention and positive learning environments, as well as the important teacher training topics for promoting schoolwide prevention and stronger socio-emotional supports. The group consisted of one primary school principal, two school inspectors, two school psychologists, an officer from the “Observatory on School Violence” and a representative from the “Direct Intervention Team”. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. There were three (3) categories identified with ten (12) codes, which you can see at the table below.

Table 7: Categories and codes of Focus group interview

Category	Code
	Prevention
<b>Main priority school needs for promoting positive and preventative learning environments</b>	Schoolwide framework in schools
	Socio-emotional needs of students

**Existing practices for supporting schoolwide discipline prevention and positive learning environments**

Teachers feeling alone and disempowered

Role of the school's social worker and/or the school psychologist

Health Education

Other initiatives (eg. DAPHNE programme)

Implementation of primary prevention

Direct Intervention Team

**Important teacher training topics for promoting schoolwide prevention and stronger socio-emotional supports**

Managing problematic behaviours and working on prevention

Basic Education

Leadership skills

**Main priority school needs for promoting positive and preventative learning environments**

A main priority school need in order to promote positive and preventative learning environments was mentioned to be prevention. Interestingly, prevention was considered to be a vital element by all participants in order to make a meaningful contribution to promoting positive and preventative learning environments. Prevention was elaborated by many participants, providing specific examples of how they have implemented relevant projects or their thoughts on the importance of it based on their experience with other initiatives. Additionally, special emphasis was paid to the schoolwide preventative approaches, engaging all possible stakeholders (parents, school staff etc.) to eventually create “a community of schools”. Discussions also raised the issue of “starting early” with implementing preventative approaches in order to make the implementations of such initiatives to be as effective as

possible. “Starting early” with prevention was discussed to be of a major importance due to the fact that participants thought that a culture should be established among students of pre-school first in order to have a good basis to move on with further actions while students move on to higher education levels. Participants when asked about explaining the need of prevention, they shared these views:

*There has to be a common effort and everyone should be engaged in this attempt (prevention). The children are not in school only to learn, but also to have fun and learn how to lead a healthy life.*

(School Principal)

*As an Observatory on School Violence, what we offered were two main projects for prevention... Our target was to mainly support the children through several issues and help them develop their skills more... Empathy, communication skills... It is important for the prevention programmes to operate properly to follow a schoolwide approach, not only target a certain group, however work with teachers and include the family in order to be as effective as possible and offer a systemic process followed by all the school's stakeholders.*

(Officer from the Observatory on School Violence)

*The issue of prevention does not only concern projects/programmes, it covers a wide range of subjects and it is not only us as a service that had programmes that either worked or did not work, either they were evaluated or not, but prevention has to be born out of many aspects... I feel that prevention has a lot to do with educators and the school climate and help them prevent some issues before the reach us – the services to support them.*

(School Psychologist 1)

*I would like to add that I agree on what was mentioned that it is very important for prevention to start while the children are in pre-school and identify the social and emotional difficulties first and then their learning difficulties... It is very important to support children and the newly established families to learn how to manage their behaviour, because we have children coming to school without being aware of the boundaries...*

(School Psychologist 2)

Moreover, the issue of working towards implementing schoolwide prevention (aka Tier 1) was emphasised in order to pay attention to the need of establishing a framework in schools. A framework consists of all the actions and principles that a school (all stakeholders included) will agree to implement

in order to address all situations that may arise according to the principles and actions set in the framework. In addition, it became evident that establishing a common framework (with discipline rules etc.) is a pre-requisite in order to handle discipline issues, giving clear guidelines and support to schools. Specifically, the value of establishing a common vision and a common way of handling all cases and incidents among school teachers is of a high importance, as well as setting tangible targets to coordinate all teachers' attempts towards one direction and goal. The goal would ultimately be the successful handling of discipline incidents within the school unit by every school staff.

*In the end, we see that prevention can work without even considering that we targeted prevention, but only focusing on a healthy school life, can make it work.*

(School Psychologist 1)

*I would like to add something on the discipline rules of schools, social behaviours have to be taught, we lack the existence of a schoolwide preventative framework in schools. The way that our teachers will be trained, the way they will implement, the revised school discipline rules and the pedagogical means offered to the teacher.*

(School Principal)

*It is for this reason that I will once again bring in the "Positive Behaviour Support System", which I strongly believe in, as each student comes from a different background and we can take nothing for granted, so if we expect a behavior from a student, we need to show clearly what is expected.*

(School Principal)

*I, as an educator, always missed having a common framework, language, terminology and not only within the school unit, but on a pan-Cyprian level. When I studied the 'Positive Behaviour Support System' (another initiative implemented in Cyprus), I liked it.*

(School Inspector 2)

*The Positive Behaviour Support project, if we can mention that, was something that had the exact specifications that are needed in order to work effectively on a project that has been evaluated widely and I think the results were positive, the main difficulty is that we do not have a lot of people that are willing to participate. A difficulty that we mentioned before was that they (the teachers) can hardly find a motivation.*

(School psychologist 2)

While discussing on the necessity of having a common framework in order to establish common rules to handle discipline issues and address all cases using a protocol, the socio-emotional needs of students arose. Specifically, the socio-emotional needs of students were brought up by many participants. In general, all participants agreed that the emphasis in schools is mostly put on the learning goals, rather than targeting the holistic development of students, which results in taking into account other aspects of students, such as their personal development and the management of their emotions. The participants stressed that no sufficient support is offered to teachers in order to handle all the cases they come in contact with every day. Among those, the participants mentioned there is a lack of structure, protocols and support for handling those cases.

*I just want to add something on what was already mentioned. Despite the fact that our curriculum goals concern the emotional needs, I consider that there is too much emphasis on the learning goals, resulting to not helping kids address the problems there are. We take it for granted that kids coming from primary school can obey to rules and have social and emotional skills. To adjust smoothly to the social framework. But because we have shortages coming from the family, that society and officials do not cater for. We come as a school to “cover” those socio-emotional shortages that there are, by paying emphasis on the learning sector and leaving those “gaps.*

(Officer from the “Observatory on School Violence)

*Clearer guidelines should be provided to teachers on how to teach, how to implement prevention, how to encourage positive behaviours. When we have that many shortages (related to managing social behaviours), how can we embrace the students as a school in order to cover the shortages and their needs and not just impose some discipline measures? This is something that is still pending (to be provided to them)*

(Officer from Direct Intervention Team)

*... Teachers feel that there is a lack of structure and support offered to them, they consider that the cases of students coming from dysfunctional backgrounds are increasing, as well as cases of students experiencing emotional and behavioural problems.... However, they don't have the means to handle them...*

(School Psychologist 1)

*...On the socio-emotional aspect, I will elaborate on the issues that we lately see to affect us more and I can understand that teachers and parents have an opposition or a hesitation when we have to deal with (students') grief, in schools that we have implemented some interventions on grief, we realised that we were benefited a lot, as well as parents and educators, because it is one of the things that has impact on all of and we have to more ready, but sometimes teachers panic. When they hear about grief, it is like they have never lived something similar before themselves. Up to a point, there are sectors we need to cover preventatively.*

(School Psychologist 2)

Going a step further, participants expanded on the level of support that teachers might receive when they are called to handle challenging cases of problem behaviors at school. All the participants supported that teachers feel disempowered and alone, as there is no certain policy established to provide them with concrete guidelines on actions they should undertake when addressing behavioural issues and they also felt that they do not have something systematic to implement.

*I think that it is very important from the beginning of a school year for every school to develop its own policies, which are communicated with the families and the rules of the school become clear, by asking for “punishments” in order for teachers to feel that they are equipped with something... From what I understand, many teachers feel alone and disempowered... There is no clear policy and something that is being implemented systematically... They feel that every difficulty they encounter is their problem... So, that’s a basic part, the policy... In order to have clear consequences, clear ways of managing students’ behavior and those to be communicated and agreed with parents.*

(Officer from the “Observatory on School Violence)

*That is the reason why I insist on education and training, some services might take this for granted, but for ours this might not be the case. We need to clarify to each individual’s mind that there is a structure, there is help, we follow this process, because the clear structure within a school unit, it is what makes teachers and students feel safe, to know that there are boundaries within which they can move. Going out of those boundaries, people get scared.*

(School Principal)

*While the conversation evolved, the participants mentioned that the role of the school’s social worker and/or the school psychologist is essential for a school to run smoothly. Both the school psychologists that work with teachers closely mentioned that there is a need for a person to be present in the schools on a full-time basis for the teachers to consult or even get assigned with the cases that teachers should not cope with.*

*It would be ideal if there was a school counsellor based in each primary school... If a school counseling professional is part of the schools staff, it would be possible for teachers to go and consult on more “challenging” situations.*

(School Principal)

*I would like to focus again on the matter of school social worker that is a very serious part, the problems that arose from the Direct Intervention Team's actions... they were problems of secondary and primary level of prevention... problems of getting into the family (meaning to reach the family) to intervene to change the situation...*

(School Inspector 2)

*Another provision might contribute, such as the school social worker, who can have an active role in filling in the gap between the school and the family, because within the framework of our programmes, we do multiple meetings, we invite parents at school, we can see who is truly interested etc. There are parents that are harder to reach, they are those who need it more... Or we can have another issue, whether school psychology or the School Psychology Service can reach a child and provide support...*

(Officer from the Observatory on School Violence)

*We as a service, despite the fact that we serve around 20 schools, unfortunately there are many times that we cannot intervene in many cases...*

(School Psychologist 2)

## Existing practices for supporting schoolwide discipline prevention and positive learning environments

The discussion also included the relevance of existing practices in schools, either implemented by MOEC, NGOs or other relevant organizations, to support schoolwide discipline prevention and positive learning environments. The participants stated that despite the fact that there are a lot of initiatives being implemented, they can only see minimum impact in schools, due to the fact that the initiatives are not implemented schoolwide and systematically. Health Education was brought up two times in the conversation, as an existing practice in order to promote discipline prevention. The participants consider that Health Education provides the necessary material that teachers need in order to manage social behaviours in the school.

*I consider that there is some material in the Health Education Curriculum, however I believe that educators do not give the needed emphasis on developing social skills and move further... When there are no biological issues, the school can cope with pretty much everything... I think there is still a lot to do, not only with preventing cases, but setting targets that arise through the Health Education Curriculum... This process should take 5-6 years and take into consideration the developmental stages of students and to strive for progress*

(Direct Intervention Team Officer)

Some other practices that are present in the educational system of Cyprus are the ones of the European Commission (eg. DAPHNE Funding Programme). The participants sustained that such programmes, if implemented properly and the necessary support is offered, they can have a higher level of impact and be more effective within the framework of the school unit. While elaborating on the support provided, all the participants agreed that the implementation of such programmes is very short, sometimes not very well connected to the aims of the schools and does not have a continuity.

*...Some of the programmes we (as a service) implement for example, such as DAPHNE, when implemented properly by teachers and we also support them, I consider that they have even better results... Better results due to the fact that they collaborate with an external collaborator... if the programmes have a longer duration, then you can observe a difference on students' behavior...*

(School Psychologist 1)

*From my experience, all of us, myself included, we take ourselves out of this, it is what concerns me, that we all have the need to change and improve. If we manage to do this in a systematic way, to organise a programme in a school for 5 days or any other programme, e.g. DAPHNE, Observatory on School Violence. But then we leave and it's over, nothing happens after that. We have to do something to change the whole philosophy, the culture of the school, the school unit.*

(School Inspector 1)

Going a step further with discussing about the existing practices, one practice that made a great impression on the participants, especially those who held or are still holding an active teaching position, was the Implementation of the 'ProTheSi' project (Greek definition of SWPBS) that concerned the implementation of primary prevention within the framework of another funded initiative. Interestingly, the comments of all participants were directed towards describing the main principles of the universal level of prevention, targeting the development of a common vision and knowledge within a school, handling discipline issues employing a central approach and aiming at promoting the spirit of collaboration among teachers. In addition, participants were very clear about the fact that everything needs to be placed in a common framework, together with supporting the socio-emotional and behavioral needs of all students in the school.

*...For this reason, I will come back to the Positive Behavior Support system (Greek ProTheSi), what I liked was that (I strongly believe this as well) every child comes from a difference background and nothing is taken for granted... so if we request to see a behavior, the children need to know exactly what is expected from them.*

(School Principal)

*...The PBS system has the exact same “principles”, which need to be employed in order for a programme to be effective...*

(School Psychologist 1)

*I, as an educator, always missed having a common framework, language, terminology and not only within the school unit, but on a pan-Cyprian level. When I studied the ‘Positive Behaviour Support System’ (another initiative implemented in Cyprus), I liked it.*

(School Inspector 2)

The other initiatives that were mentioned were all directed by the Ministry of Education and Culture Cyprus. Specifically, the work of the ‘Direct Intervention Team’ was analysed, which is a department of the Ministry of Education, as well as the ‘DRASE’ initiative, which mainly supports schools with high level of vulnerable student groups that may be in risk of marginalisation. The experience of participants with these services is expressed as positive, however it was stressed that on a long term basis, they would need something more effective and systematic, as they cannot cover the whole range of schools in Cyprus.

*It’s a system where everyone has a place, we all had an excellent experience with the people that we sought help from the Direct Intervention Group... The schools (meaning the school population) are desperate and the Direct Intervention Group always comes for help and changes a lot of things... It surely depends on how one perceives management of behavior and prevention... School psychology is important, however it is a system that cannot provide all the solutions on its own...*

(School Inspector 2)

*... The initiative of ‘DRASE’ was evaluated and the results were not so positive I think, based on the resources used...*

(School Psychologist 1)

*I was a School Principal for 9 years and on my 7th year of service, I felt the need to contact the Direct Intervention Team and the Observatory on School Violence, when I truly felt that I had problems and did not know how to address them.*

(School Inspector 1)

Overall, the participants sustained that the ‘Positive Behaviour Support’ system’s practices support school teachers in managing social behaviours and enable them to prevent cases of problematic behaviours. Specifically, there were clear statements on the need of establishing a common school framework, with a mutual attempt in providing feedback to behaviors systematically, using a common way of providing support, while collaborating with teachers. In general, it was stressed that schools should implement the primary level of prevention and then call the experts for support, as the level of targeted support they could offer would be beneficial only to a certain number of students.

### **Important teacher training topics for promoting schoolwide prevention and stronger socio-emotional supports**

The focus group discussion also revealed the need to provide training topics in order to promote schoolwide prevention and stronger socio-emotional support to students. Specifically, the participants expressed their strong need in providing opportunities of education and training to teachers in order to make them feel safe and supported. Moreover, they added that in this way, students will also feel safe by having a framework with clear expectations and boundaries. Among the training needs mentioned, the issue of managing problematic behaviours and working on prevention were brought up quite often.

*...Teachers lack the skills of managing problematic behaviours and working towards prevention... To diagnose whether a student will demonstrate some weaknesses in the future... I personally consider this as a great issue that should change our philosophy... But if you ask them (the teachers), they will tell you they know how to manage different situations*

(School Inspector 1)

*My personal opinion, and I think that is supported by teachers, is that most teachers are conscientious in this part... Probably teachers are not informed (meaning trained) and do not have the ability to handle socioemotional / social problems of students and need support. So, they need training on leadership...*

(School Inspector 2)

*The participants also elaborated on the need of providing “basic education” to teachers in order to learn how to set up some routines in the classroom, managing different situations, gain the ability to set measurable targets in order to be capable of responding to the socio-emotional needs of students.*

*... They (the teachers) should have training on the subjects of psychology, classroom management...*

(Officer from the Observatory on School Violence)

*... Basic education, because that is the one that will give all the necessary qualifications for the early identification of problems. In this way, the teachers will be able to state whether something severe goes on or not and it is something that can be dealt within the framework of the school unit...*

(School Psychologist 1)

Participants also added that teachers have a difficulty in performing self-reflection. Specifically, it was reported that teachers have a low motivation on getting involved in initiatives at school and in general, they have an opposition towards changing. The participants also posed the argument that the teachers feel that they know the majority of information available by the relevant authorities (eg. Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, MOEC), however that is not the case according to the participants of the focus group discussion, as they sustained there is just no will to change things, as they are today.

*...They (the teachers) do not possess self-awareness and they face a difficulty in reflection in order to create an action plan and then re-design it to improve a situation... When attending a conference teachers do not accept new things because they consider they know them already, so there is no will to change, for me that is the greatest problem.*

(School Inspector 1)

*...If I see this as a problem of the system, the system's harmony, then I will be able (to support the teachers) with different actions on training (and staff professional development) on issues of parental involvement, leadership issues for the school units to make decisions, to train the staff in an appropriate manner on a systematic basis... to be able to address the existing problems through a multiple-leveled approach...*

(School Inspector 2)

The issue of leadership skills was also a significant issue to be discussed, as participants claimed that managing parents is also a situation that needs to be addressed every day and teachers must know how to approach them. In addition, the participants expressed the view that leadership might be a misunderstood term among teachers and developing such skills would be vital for the effective management of problematic behaviours.

*...Training teachers specifically on how to communicate with parents, the way of approaching them could be pivotal... The school cannot cover all students' needs on its own and when parents are not close, it can be challenging for students... Teachers need to be trained on how to collaborate, communicate, bring parents on their side for the greater good...*

*...Maybe the schools should ask for this training through the Professional Learning Programme in various ways and implement (elements) while being supervised... I would recommend to invest on training teachers on leadership, to change the perceptions around these issues, that is on how a Head Teacher would organise teachers by changing his/her perception on some things first... The basic things on how to manage discipline issues in schools in order for future projects to start on a good basis...*

(School Psychologist 2)

## Main Conclusions

Overall, the main existing needs of Cyprus were brought up during the field research (focus group discussion) and were mentioned to be the school needs for promoting positive and preventative learning environments and particularly on issues of prevention, the socio-emotional needs of students, teacher support and the need of a school social worker or a school psychologist to be present in a school on a full-time basis. Specifically, prevention is considered to be a vital element in order to make a meaningful contribution towards promoting positive and preventative learning environments. In addition, it was argued that too much emphasis is paid on the learning goals, rather than helping students cope with their other needs, such as their socio-emotional needs. The view of teachers feeling disempowered and alone was also expressed, as there is no certain policy established for them to cope with behavioural incidents and they feel that they have nothing systematic to implement. The existing practices to support teachers in schoolwide discipline prevention and positive learning environments focused on the Health Education curriculum, which provides teachers with 4 units on social skills and in general, that subject is mainly employed to cover this kind of students' needs. DAPHNE and other related projects were also sustained to contribute in yielding a change, however that change was considered to be minimal, as the projects did not have a continuity. Other initiatives of the MOEC were also brought up, such as 'DRASE' and the 'Direct Intervention Team's' actions. Interestingly, the participants were aware of the 'Positive Behaviour Support' system and were very fond of it, as they stated that it incorporates all the necessary elements for a meaningful, effective and long lasting intervention that will result in handling discipline under a pre-established framework, making all stakeholders feel safe. With regards to the teacher training topics for

promoting schoolwide prevention and stronger socio-emotional support, the lack of ‘basic education’ was stressed among participants, as they felt that teachers are not aware of setting up routines in the classroom, managing various situations and do not possess the ability of setting measurable targets. In addition, the need of training teachers on managing problematic behaviours and preventing future problematic behaviours arose, emphasizing on classroom management and knowledge on psychology issues. Lastly, the need of providing training on leadership skills was supported by the participants in order to handle discipline issues centrally and effectively, resulting in a positive school climate.

Drawing from the conclusions of the desk research (D1.1 Literature Review), some large scale research studies from the United States suggest a profound positive impact of SWPBIS on student outcomes and particularly, that SWPBIS can provide positive outcomes related to students’ behavior and academic achievement (Pas, et al., 2019). In addition, a SWPBIS implementation with high fidelity was linked to a reduction of disciplinary incidents and school suspensions (Gage, et al., 2018a, 2018b). Significant impact on the school suspensions was also evident in studies for Students with Disabilities (Gage, et al. 2019). In general, it was confirmed that a SWPBIS Implementation in Tier 1 with high fidelity was associated with the reduction of out-of-school suspensions (Noltemeyer, et al., 2019). Additionally, school administrator support, effective teaming, and use of data for decision making were found as the most important factors for implementation and sustainability (McIntosh, et al., 2014). For a sustainable implementation to take place, the demographic factors played a key role, such as the school grade level (elementary schools) and the speed of implementation reduced by 1 year, whereas the ideal duration should be between 3 – 5 years.