



Evaluation of awareness and preparedness of school Principals and teachers on earthquake reduction effects issues – State's actions

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It is generally accepted that the effects of the disasters can be mainly reduced if people are aware, well informed and motivated towards a culture of disaster prevention and resilience. Particularly, in earthquake prone countries, a continuous update and education of the public, on earthquake risk management issues, is essential. Schools can play a crucial role concerning training and building a disaster prevention culture, among various community groups. Principals and teachers have a key role to play in any school-wide initiative through developing and reviewing awareness policy, developing and revising emergency response plans, holding emergency drills and training the students.

During the last decade, the Greek State have done a lot of efforts in order to better educate teachers and students in disaster preparedness and management, such as:

- a. implementation of the E.P.P.O.'s educational project "Earthquake Protection at Schools" which is addressed mainly to school Principals. The project started right after the 1999 earthquake in Athens.
- b. publication of educational material for students, teachers and people with disabilities and publication of guidelines concerning the development of emergency plans.
- c. implementation of projects and elaboration of innovative and mobile experiential educational material connected with school curricula.

The aim of the present study is to assess levels of awareness and preparedness concerning earthquake protection issues, as well as risk mitigation behaviours, undertaken by teachers at individual, family and workplace level. Furthermore, the assessment of teachers' current levels of earthquake awareness and preparedness, could lead to conclusions about the effectiveness of State's current Policy.

In this framework, specific questionnaires were developed and were addressed to Principals and teachers who were responsible for the preparation of their School Emergency Preparedness Plans. The sample of the survey comprises of primary and secondary schools of 9 different prefectures of Greece. Approximately 1.100 responses have been gathered. The analysis of the results indicated that approximately 60% of the surveyed teachers have experienced at least one earthquake at school, which is expected due to Greece's high seismicity (50% of the released seismic energy in Europe). Additionally, the level of knowledge of surveyed teachers on earthquake protection measures is very high.

A significant majority of the teachers, were reported being familiar with the identification and reduction of non structural hazards at their home, and the development of School's Emergency Plans. On the other hand, approximately the 25% of the responders were not aware of their school emergency plan or they claimed that such a plan does not exist at their schools. These teachers have not participated in any earthquake school drill.

Thus, even though a lot of State's initiatives have been implemented till now to build awareness towards earthquakes and establish a preparedness status for prospective earthquakes in school community, there are still proposed actions to be taken in order to improve the teachers' ability to plan or implement activities concerning earthquake management issues.