

DYSTRANS-SUPPORTING DYSLEXIC INDIVIDUAL IN TRANSITION FROM PRIMARY TO LOWER
SECONDARY SCHOOL

NATIONAL ANALYSIS

Portugal

30.04.2018

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE SITUATION IN PORTUGAL

On the website of DISLEX- Associação Portuguesa de Dislexia we can read *'Dyslexia is a neurological dysfunction, which manifests itself in the level of reading difficulty in people with normal or above average intelligence. This chronic difficulty is not related to teaching quality, intellectual level, socio-cultural opportunities, or sensory changes. It has a neurobiological basis, with alterations in the structure and neurological functioning, and may present a genetic influence.*

Those who suffer from dyslexia present an increased effort to distinguish letters, form words and understand their meaning. Students who have these difficulties are not lazy, unintelligent immature, nor do they necessarily have visual or posture problems. They require intensive therapeutic treatment and support in the teaching-learning process, so that they succeed.

Although it is related to reading learning, dyslexia can have consequences in other academic areas and at the emotional and behavioral level. Comorbidity with other disorders is common: specific language impairment, dyscalculia, dysortography, motor incoordination, attention deficit with or without hyperactivity, behavioral changes, mood disturbance, opposition disturbance and devaluation of self-esteem.

According to the International Dyslexia Association, Dyslexia is a specific learning disability, with neurological origin, characterized by difficulties in the adequate recognition of words, poor speech and difficulties of decoding, resulting from a deficit in the phonological component of the language, often surprising, when compared to cognitive abilities and learning in other areas.

The World Federation of Neurology defines it as "the difficulty in learning to read, regardless of conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and sociocultural opportunity. It depends, therefore, fundamentally on cognitive difficulties, which are often of constitutional origin "(1968, cit. In Fonseca, 1999, p.290).

In this perspective, Dyslexia is considered a language disorder that manifests itself in the difficulty of learning to read and write, as a consequence of maturation delays that affect the establishment of spatio-temporal relations, the motor area, the capacity of prescriptive-visual, symbolic processes, attention and numerical capacity and / or social and personal competence, in subjects who present an adequate development for the age and normal intellectual aptitudes (Torres and Fernández, 2001).

According to the same authors, this concept of Dyslexia as a specific delay of maturation allows it to be understood as an evolutionary and non-pathological disorder, which presents considerable advantages in the field of evaluation and intervention, namely allowing the identification of different types of Dyslexia. (free translation from: <http://www.dislex.co.pt/>).



However in Portugal this information is not yet clear to all people, even those who work with people with Dyslexia. Dyslexia in Portugal has been increasingly studied and students with Dyslexia begin to be better understood and to have benefits, which until a few years ago did not happen.

The history of dyslexia in Portugal is summarized on the website:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/102927877/Breve-historia-do-conceito-de-dislexia>

There we can read, after free translation:

- *1990s - Vitor da Fonseca, specialist in learning difficulties, makes a dissection of the concept of dyslexia in Portugal and presents psychoneurological and psychomotor fundamentals of dyslexia in the book "Insucesso Escolar" (School failure). Evidence adapted to the Portuguese population begins to emerge to evaluate the speed, accuracy and comprehension of reading (most of them are not yet validated).*
- *Years 2000 - In Portugal the Distema method, Método Fonomímico, idealized, elaborated and applied by Paula Teles, educational psychologist start in Portugal.*
- *2000 APDIS, the Portuguese Dyslexia Association, is formed in Portugal.*
- *2003 Sally Shaywitz (neuroscientist) presented data from her team's studies on "Overcoming Dyslexia" which are corroborated by other scientists who deal with this problem.*
- *2003 The International Dyslexia Association has adopted the most commonly agreed definition in the Scientific Community: "Dyslexia is a specific learning disability, of neurobiological origin. It is characterized by difficulties in the correction and / or fluency in reading of words and by low reading and spelling competence. These difficulties result from an unexpected Phonological Deficit in relation to other cognitive abilities and educational conditions. Secondarily, there may be difficulties in reading comprehension, reading experience that may impede the development of vocabulary and general knowledge "(Lyon, R .; Shaywitz, S. & B. (2003).*
- *2004 Vítor da Fonseca presents the DILE, Informal Diagnosis of Written Language.*
- *2008 Sucena and Castro adapt the Lobrot L3 test: Reading Age Test (TIL). There are many tests in Portugal to evaluate various aspects of reading. However, none of them is measured to the Portuguese population.*
- *From 1980 at (...) Named Contemporary Phase - The diagnosis and intervention was extended beyond school age, concepts were defined more precisely, new technologies were used.*



In Portugal, most schools have special support classes for children with dyslexia, although there is often difficulty in identifying the disorder. A formal diagnosis can only be made after two years of schooling, by speech therapist, psychologists and physicians. However, and in the face of indicators suggesting that Dyslexia may occur, the child should be monitored (even without diagnosis) in order to prevent these difficulties from worsening. What happens is that, in order to benefit from a specialized intervention in school, the student will have to integrate de Special Education, based on the law DL n° 3/2008, of 7th January. This law, after evaluating the International Classification of Functioning (CIF), allows specific answers to the special needs of education. Until a few years ago, students with dyslexia were considered as having learning difficulties without the specificity of dyslexia and could not always benefit from specialized support. The expression "learning difficulties" groups all learning problems, whether intrinsic to the individual or related to external factors, for example an inadequate teaching methodology. However, the term specific learning difficulty means a disorder in one or more of the psychological processes involved in the understanding or use of spoken or written language that may manifest an imperfect ability to hear, speak, read, write, spell or make maths calculations. It excludes the sensorial, perceptive and mental problems. –

Luís de Miranda Correia (2008), in Portugal, respects this distinction between learning difficulties and specific learning difficulty and presents a proposal. According to the author, "*specific learning difficulties relate to the way an individual processes information - receives, integrates, retains and expresses it - taking into account their abilities and their achievements as a whole. Specific learning difficulties can thus manifest in the areas of speech, reading, writing, mathematics and / or problem solving, involving deficits involving memory, perceptual, motor, language, and thinking problems and / or metacognitive. These difficulties that do not result from sensory deprivation, mental deficiency, motor problems, attention deficit, emotional or social disturbances, although they may occur in concomitance with these, may also alter the way the individual interacts with the environment surrounding.*"

Correia (2008) also adds two fundamental points: the existence of an academic discrepancy between the estimated intelligence potential and the school achievement; and the fact that learning difficulties are a lifelong condition, that is, if they have a neurological origin, do not disappear with age - although adequate intervention can alleviate the difficulties observed.

The same author also affirms that the area of learning difficulties, perhaps because it is still quite young, is one that has experienced more growth, more controversy and is perhaps the most confusing of all those that fit the spectrum of special educational needs ".



In fact, when analyzing the large group of SEN, we find that the learning difficulties have a higher prevalence rate (48%). Despite these data, the most recent legislation on specialized support for children and young people with special educational needs, specifically Article 4 of Decree-Law 3/2008, of 7th January, covers only a small part of the population with SEN.

Now the things have changed and after the assessment confirming the existence of permanent functional changes inherent to dyslexia (the assessment of Special Needs must have a formal diagnosis, in order to integrate the law referred.), if students present significant limitations in terms of activity and participation, namely in communication and learning, they fall within the target group of SEN people (Dec. Lei nº 3/2008, de 7 de Janeiro). The School, through the Special Education Teacher and the School Psychologist, will have to carry out the diagnostic evaluation of this student internally, so that, officially, this condition is certified and can be covered by such legislation.

There are schools that already have projects whose target are students with indicators of possible future difficulties in reading and writing and they also support them as far as socio-educational or learning difficulties are concerned.

1.2. THE AIM AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Dyslexia is a widely known but still not very well understood specific learning disability.

However, dyslexia is a real problem, which affects the acquisition of reading and writing of many individuals and whose effects may be exacerbated by an inadequate education.

If not recognised in time and not provided with adequate support at all stages of education, students with dyslexia will end up with academic underachievement, low self-esteem, anxiety, lack of motivation, and disengagement with learning and school. That's why it is extremely important for teachers and trainers, as well as for parents, to understand the nature of dyslexia, its manifestations and consequences and to be aware of the ways they could help and support their students/children overcome their difficulties.

This survey is part of the Erasmus +, Key Activity 2: Strategic Partnerships project "DysTrans: Supporting Dyslexic Individual In Transition from Primary to Lower Secondary School" (2017-1-TR01-KA201-046274).



The aim of this project is to provide support to teachers and professionals working with students with dyslexia during the mentioned transition period, to the parents of these children and to children themselves.

The purpose of the survey is to find out the main difficulties students with dyslexia face both in academic and in social aspects during the transition period from primary to lower secondary school; the support they receive at school from teachers, specialists and classmates; and at home – from parents and other family members. The survey aims also at finding out what needs to be done to ensure that these students are well-prepared for this transition.

This Need Analysis is based on the feedback collected from the participants from all three target groups (teachers, students with dyslexia and learning difficulties on reading or writing and their parents) in Portugal. The results (along with the results got by other partners) will be used as a base for development of the Transition Support Kit components later on in the project.

1.3. LIMITATIONS

As each study of this kind, this one also has certain limitations.

Some of them might be considered as related to the specific national situation, others – to the Survey itself.

For many reasons some children who experience learning difficulties in Portugal are not diagnosed, which means that officially they don't have the right to receive the accommodations or remediation that those with diagnosis are entitled to. Therefore, their support and well-being at school is left to the understanding of teachers and their knowledge and skills to deal with the problem.

Participants in this study were restricted to the students in the first years of lower secondary school, who experience specific learning difficulties that are or might be due to dyslexia (in most cases based on official assessment, but in some cases based on teachers' opinion), to their parents, and the teachers of primary or lower secondary school who have had or have now such students.

2. METHOD

2.1. THE STUDY GROUP

The study group was composed by 12 students, 8 certified with dyslexia and the other 4 with specific learning difficulties in reading and writing, all attending the first grade of Lower Secondary school (5th grade), 12 parents and 31 teachers, 8 teaching at the last grade of primary



school and 23 teaching the 5th grade of lower secondary school, teaching all curricula subjects. Most of the parents who took part in the Survey are those whose children were in the study group as well.

2.2. SURVEY

The questionnaires were developed in order to address the three target groups:

- A Questionnaire for Teachers;
- A Questionnaire for Students who are in the first years of Lower Secondary School and have learning difficulties that are (or might be) due to dyslexia;
- A Questionnaire for Parents of students who are in the first years of Lower Secondary School and have learning difficulties that are (or might be) due to dyslexia.

The questionnaires were translated into Portuguese and then applied by the project team.

2.3. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The students were interviewed in small groups of 2 elements by the school psychologist and SEN teachers; the questionnaires were read and explained in detail, so that there was no doubt as to its content. All parents gave permission for their children's to be interviewed.

Parents were invited to come to school and after the project objectives were explained, the surveys were delivered; most parents filled out the survey during the interview, however some preferred to fill the same at home. The doubts and questions posed by the parents were clarified during the application of the questionnaires.

The teachers were given the questionnaires during the weekly meeting, having all been filled at that time.

Data analysis was carried out by the project team, after collecting the questionnaires, led by the coordinator.

2.4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from all target groups during the Survey have been analysed through quantitative methods (frequency analysis in multiple choice questions, presented in charts/diagrams) and qualitative methods, based on the additional information collected from the participants and on the observation during survey.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY AMONG STUDENTS

3.1.1. Age And Grade

Students of the target group are aged between 10 and 12 attending 5th grade.

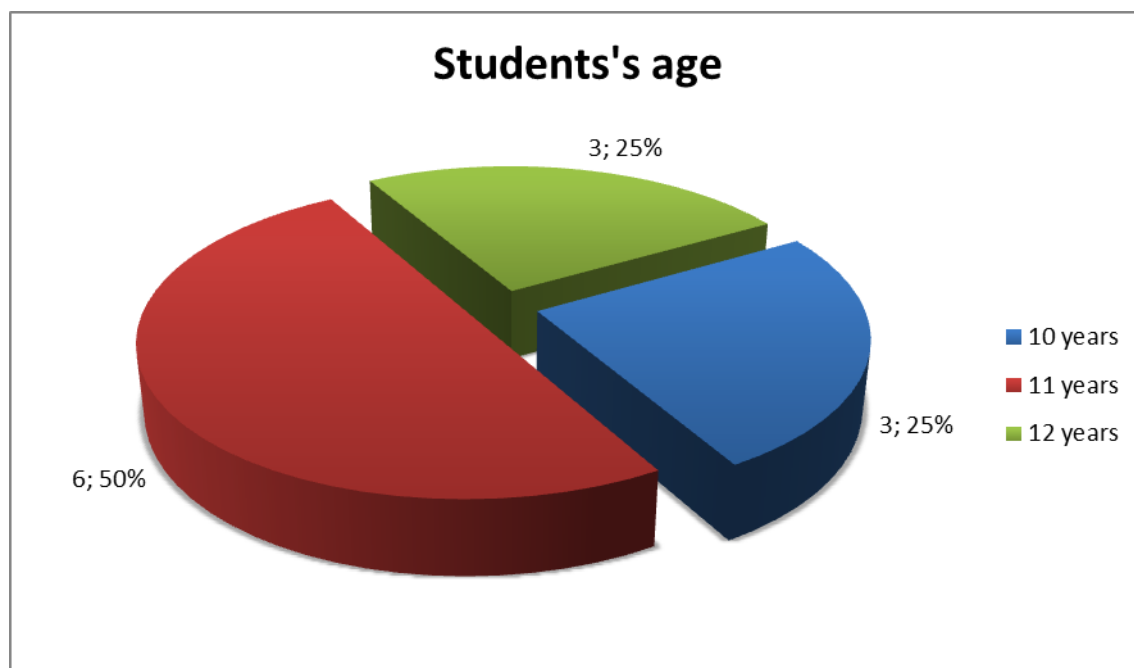


Chart 1: Student's age

3.1.2. The Perception of Secondary School Difficulties

Half of the 12 students to whom the questionnaire was applied believe that the degree of difficulty is the same in both primary and lower secondary school, 25% consider that Primary is easier than Lower Secondary and 25% think the opposite.

Students who consider Lower Secondary more difficult than Primary mentioned that this situation exists because the content of subjects is more difficult (one student), there is more content to study (1 student) and the lack of study (1 student).

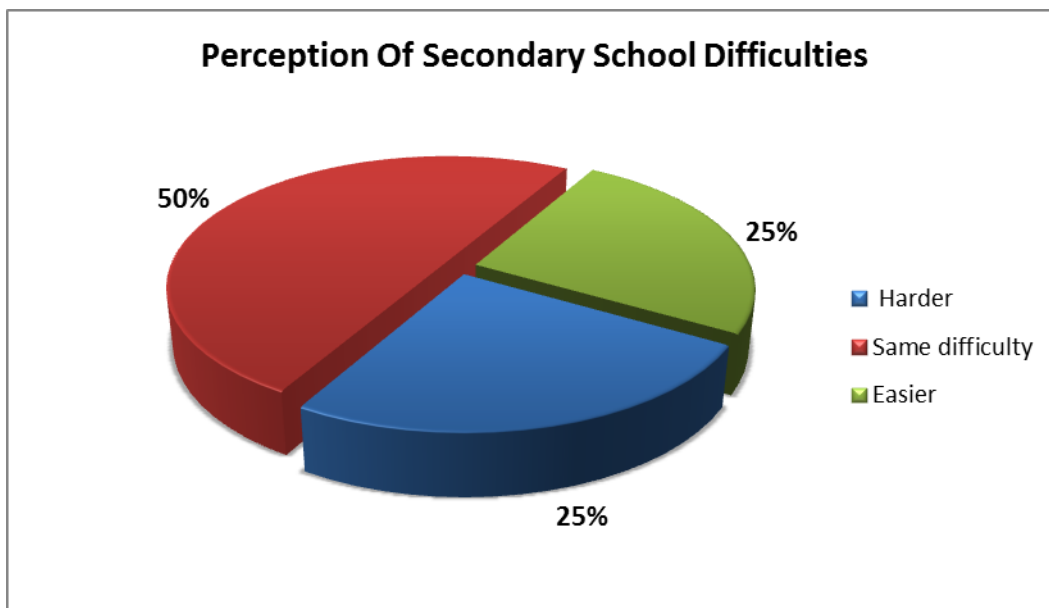


Chart 2: Perception Of Secondary School Difficulties

3.1.3. Study Skills

In the survey the students considered the range from 1 (very poor) to 6 (excellent) to rate their skills related to studying, which are represented in the graph below.

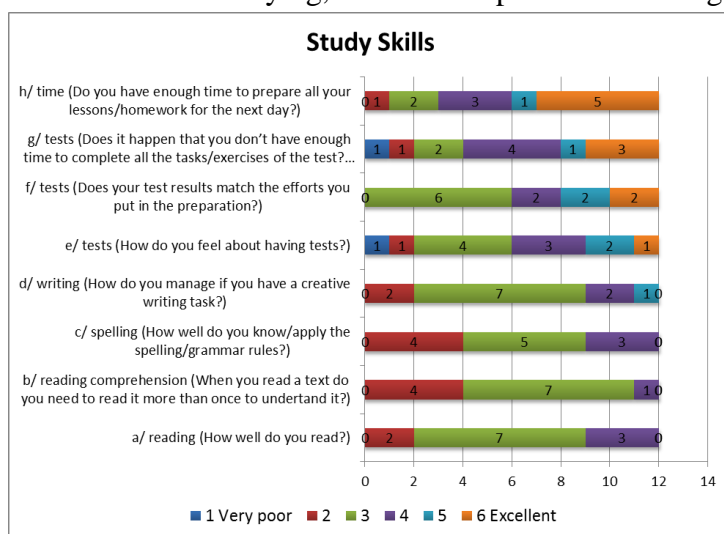


Chart 3: Study Skills

- When asked about their reading, 58% of students think that they read reasonably well, 17% think their reading is poor and 25% did not answer the question.
- 58% rate their reading comprehension skills as reasonable, 33% as weak and 8% as good.
- With regard to spelling and if they apply and understand well the rules of spelling/grammar, 33% consider that they have difficulties in this item, 42% consider they can apply the rules fairly well and three students, that is, 25% think that they can apply spelling rules well.



- Most students, that is, 75% consider they are capable of, in a reasonable way, organizing themselves when they have a creative writing task, 17% consider that they have difficulties in this type of activity and the same percentage of students think that they do it well. 8% think that the fact that they have dyslexia does not affect them in the organization of the task because they do it very well.
- The way they feel before the tests is very different among the inquired students. 8% feel very badly when they have a test, 8% do not feel good, 33% feel more or less okay, 25% feels good, 17% feels very good and 8% feel great before the tests.
- No respondent student feels dissatisfied towards the results obtained, taking into account the efforts made in the preparation. 50% says they feel normal, 17% feels good, 17% feels well and the same percentage corresponds to students who feel excellent.
- Time given by the teacher for students to complete their test within the regular time is not understood in the same way by all students. 25% consider that the time is excellent, 8% time say it is very good, 33% say that the time is good, 17% think it is enough. Two students feel that the time is short to complete what is required within the time limit.
- With regard to having enough time to study/do their homework for the next day, 42% consider that they have time to do so, even considering it as excellent. 8% consider it very good, 25% that it is quite reasonable, 17% think it is reasonable and 8% say there is not enough time to do so.

3.1.4. Kind Of Supports In School And Home

When the students were questioned about the support they received at school at primary and lower secondary schools, the answers were as follows:

- To the question “Position in the class close to the teacher”: 25% of the students said that in the lower secondary they sat close to the teacher in the classroom, 75% answered that this concern existed also in the primary school and 25% did not answer;
- As for the question “Task instructions were read aloud by the teacher”: 100% of the students stated that in primary school the instructions were read aloud by the teacher and 67% said that this situation happens in lower secondary too. The subjects in which there is a greater concern in reading the questions are Portuguese and English.
- About the question on whether it is possible to answer questions orally and have the teacher writing down the answer, 58% of the respondents did not answer the question, 33% said that it happened in Primary and 8% that it happens in lower secondary.
- Concerning the extra time during the tests, 100% said they benefited from it in primary school and 33% say that it happens in the lower secondary school;



- About the question “additional individual lessons with the teacher/s on the subjects I had/have difficulties with”, 92%, of the lower secondary school students said that they do benefit from those individual classes. 25% said that support was given in primary school and 8% of students did not answer this question.
- As for the use of schemes, rules and formulas during classes, 58% answered that they were allowed to use them in primary school and the same percentage indicated that they use them in lower secondary school; 8% did not answer the question.
- About the question “reduced amount of homework”: 67% of the students did not answer the question, 33% said that it happens in lower secondary and 25% that it happened in the primary.
- To the question “Not asked to read aloud in front of the class”: 67% of the students did not answer the question. 33% answered that this situation happens in primary and in lower secondary;
- When asked if they are understood by teachers, 33% did not answer the question; 58% answered that they felt understood in primary and 42% that they are understood by lower secondary teachers;
- Students reported that the tolerance and support from the classmates before the problem of dyslexia is quite high in both schools, being 92% in primary school and 75% in lower secondary school;
- Regarding “additional help/support from a SEN teacher, psychologist, etc.”, 58% of students reported receiving support in primary school and 100% that they are receiving it in lower secondary school.



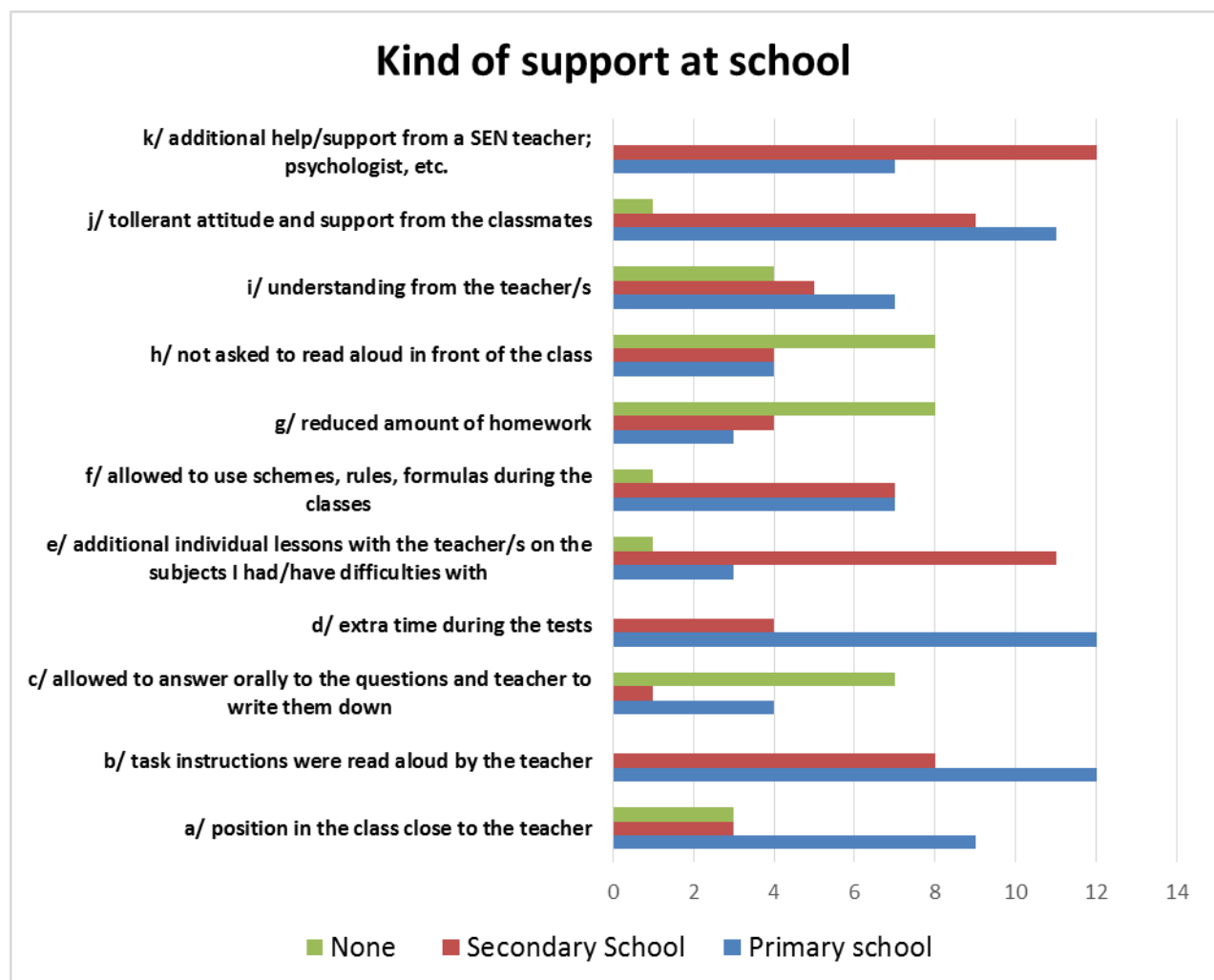


Chart 4: Kind of support at school

Then the students were asked about the support they received in primary school and are receiving in lower secondary school regarding work at home.

- It is clear the support that students receive at home by parents in the reading aloud of texts and materials. 67% of students said they always received that kind of support, but there are 33% who said that parents did it only in Primary.

-In early years parents have a greater concern about reading out aloud what is important for students to learn, as 50% said that only in primary school did the parents have this attitude. 42% of students say that this has always been a concern of the parents.

- The reading of instructions and explanation thereof as well as the explanation of the concepts that the students have difficulty understanding, is certainly a major concern for parents, for 9 in 12 students, or 75% answered that this situation occurs frequently in both schools.

- It is important to note that as the level of education rises, students begin to benefit from support from tutors.

- As for the use of educational games or use of educational sites, 68% of students did not answer the question, 17% reported that they only used it in lower secondary school and 8% reported that they only used them in primary.

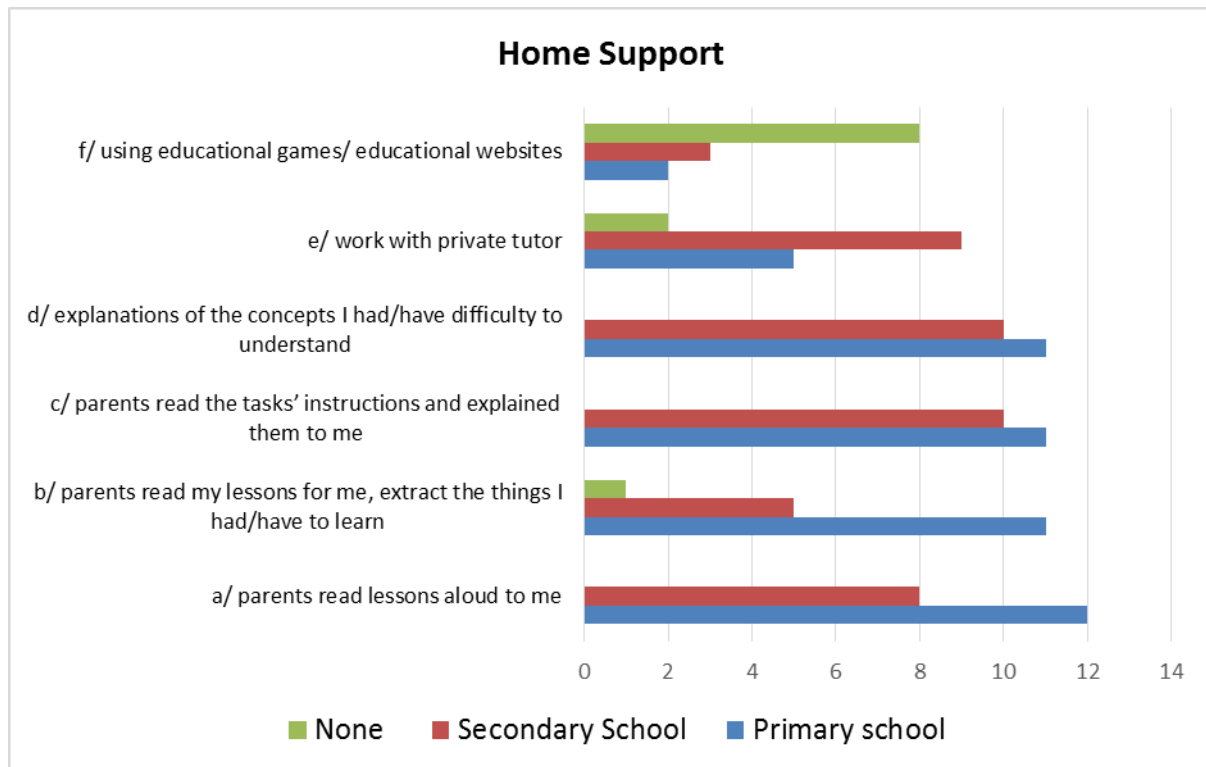


Chart 4a: Home Support

3.1.5. Life In School (Feelings And Relationships)

Of the twelve students surveyed, the majority, ie 75%, say they feel good at school.

Of the three students who gave negative responses (25%), two said they did not like school and the other student replied that going to school is boring.

On the question about what makes the students feel good at school, the answer was unanimous, for all respondents reported being with friends. In addition to this response 17% of students also added the meals served in the canteen and 25% reported also being helped by teachers.

With regard to the relationship with teachers and peers, 67% of respondents replied that they have good relationships and 33% responded that the relationship is “so-so”.

The reasons why students said they did not have a good relationship within the school environment are as follows:

- "In Primary my peers did not play with me, but in lower secondary school, they do";
- "I get along with all the teachers";
- "In Primary I refused to work, but in lower secondary I do everything that teachers ask";
- "In Primary I got along well with few people."

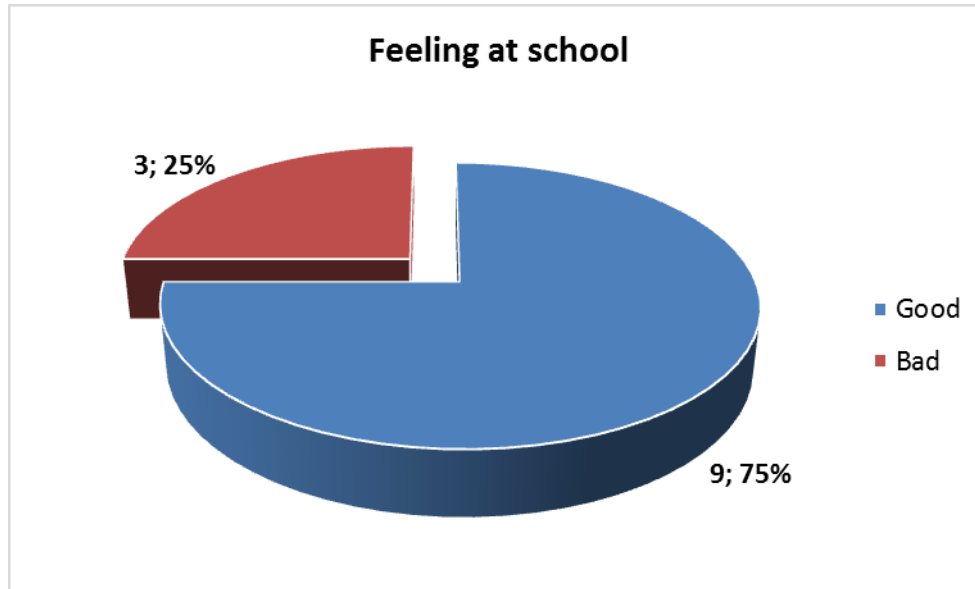


Chart 5: Feeling at school

3.1.6. Out of School Activities

Of the twelve students who were questioned, 58% mentioned having an out of school activity and 42% responded that they have no activity.

All students have a different reason for not having activities. The answers were "I like being at home", "they are very expensive," "I quit gym, but I want to go to dance and skating" and "because I no longer practice roller hockey."

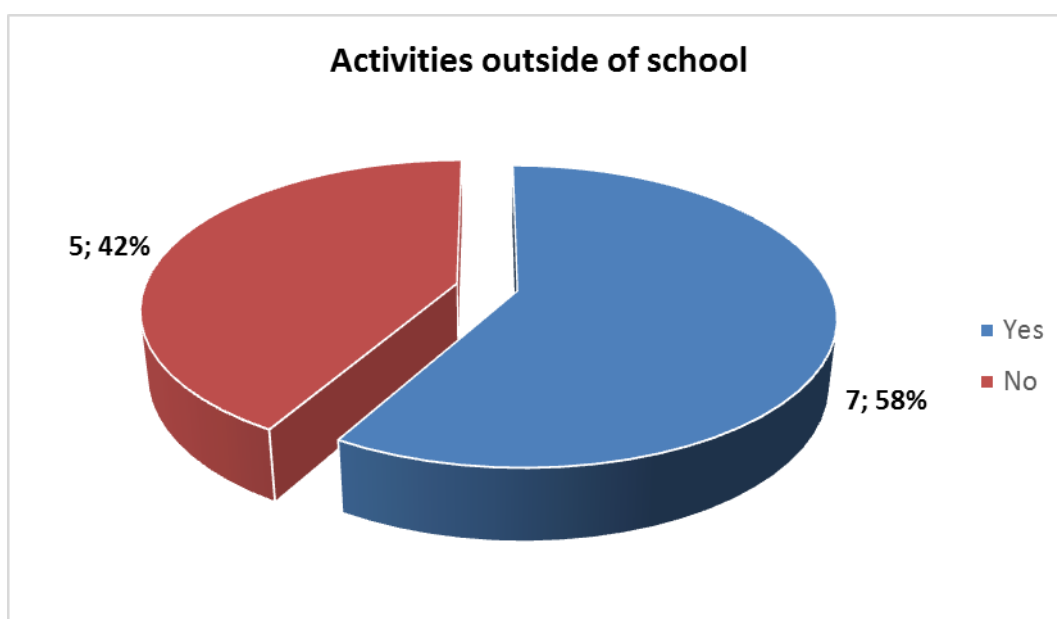


Chart 6: Activities outside of school

3.2. FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY AMONG PARENTS

The questionnaire was answered by twelve parents of children attending the 5th grade with dyslexia or may due, and aged between 10 and 12 years old: 25% of them (10 years old), 33% (11 years old) and 45% (12 years old).

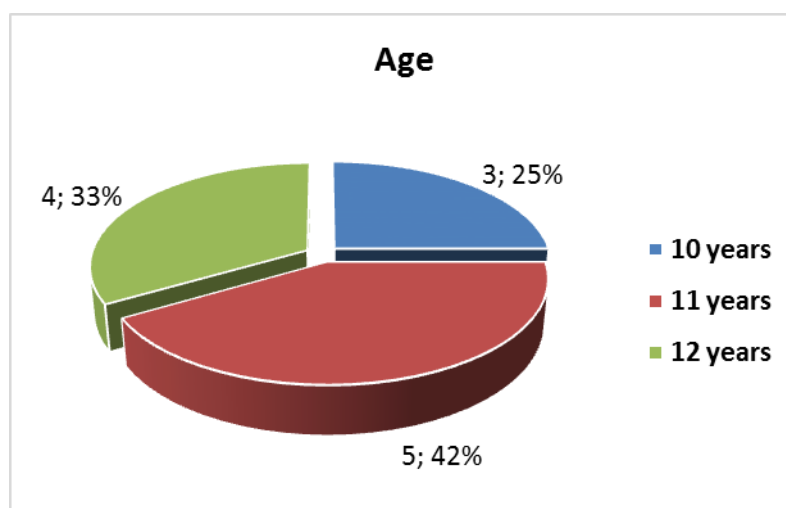


Chart 7: Age of students

3.2.1. Changes in Attitudes Toward Schools

Concerning the question "Has your child's attitude towards school changed when he moved from Primary to Secondary school?", half of the parents said "yes". However, there are no significant variations in the frequency of responses given.

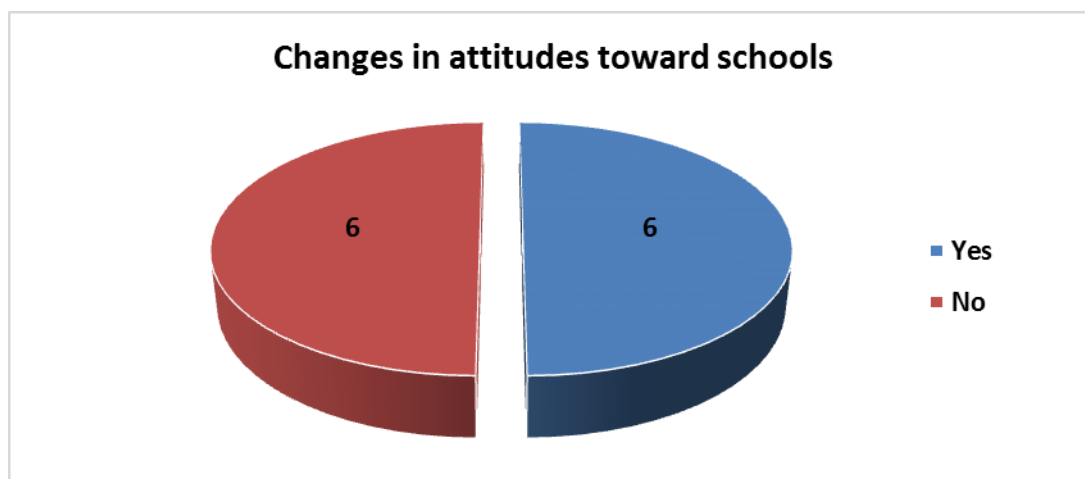


Chart 8: Changes in attitudes toward schools

6 parents have answered the question *Which of the following behaviours or reactions does/did your child show relating to school*, in the list of possibilities referred in 100% that *He/she does not like school tasks that involve reading,, writing,..* occur on Primary school and in 83,3% at Lower Secondary; in 33.3% *My child is very unconcerned with the lessons*, occur on both level; 16.6%, one parent said that *He/She usually does not want to go to school* in Primary school only. None of them refers the other possibilities: *The time to go to school is a crisis at home/Unhappy on the way to school, but returning to school is happy/Usually he/she does not share school-related activities/Usually he/she is absent from the school.*

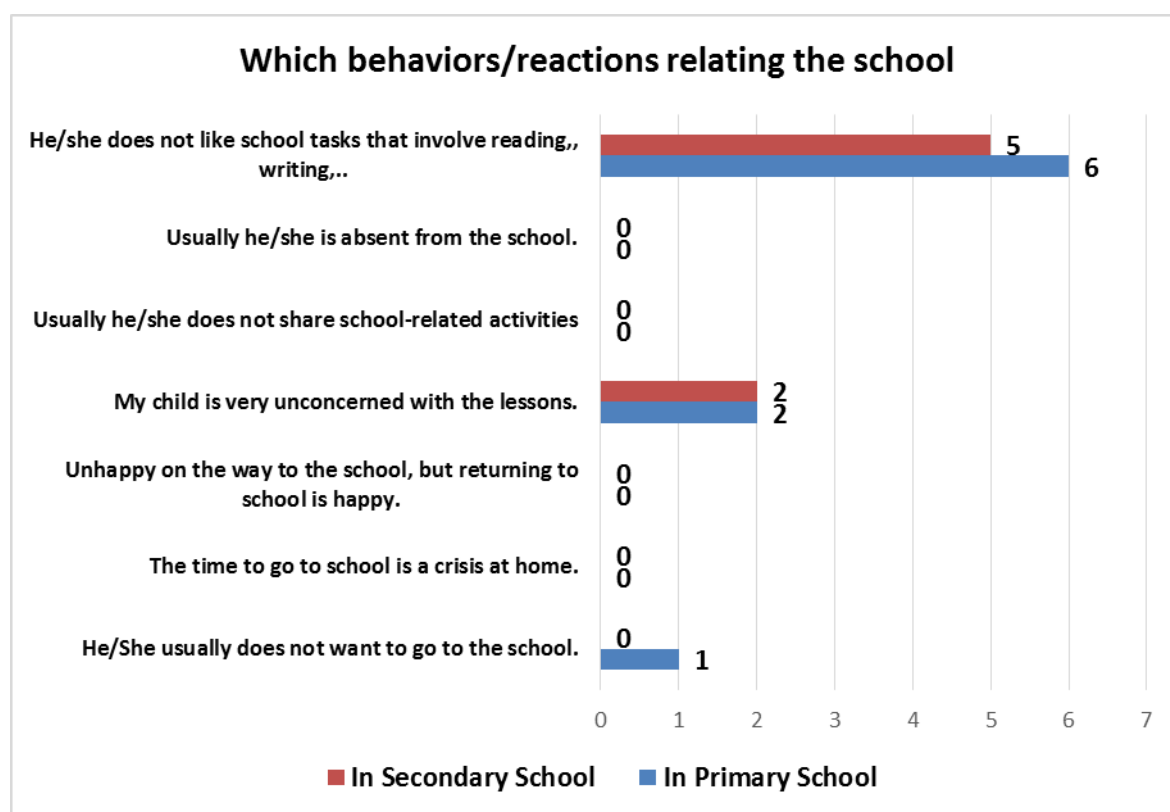


Chart 9: Behaviour or reactions

Additionally Parents report that students dislike homework assignments involving reading and writing (fear of exposing themselves) and do not care much about lessons/classes (lack of attention, takes no notes). These behaviors occur with the same frequency in both Primary and Lower Secondary. There was a father who said that, in Primary School, his child didn't want to go to school, which no longer happens at the moment. Some parents also point out that their children now show greater involvement at school and feel safer. There are residual complaints of conflict and over-agitation with peers (conversation)

3.2.2. Parental Perceptions of Their Child's Success

Regarding question, “*How do you assess your child's success at school in relation to their peers?*” 58% of parents report that their children are on par with their peers. The rest, 42% say that they are at a lower level than expected. None of parents says they are in higher level.

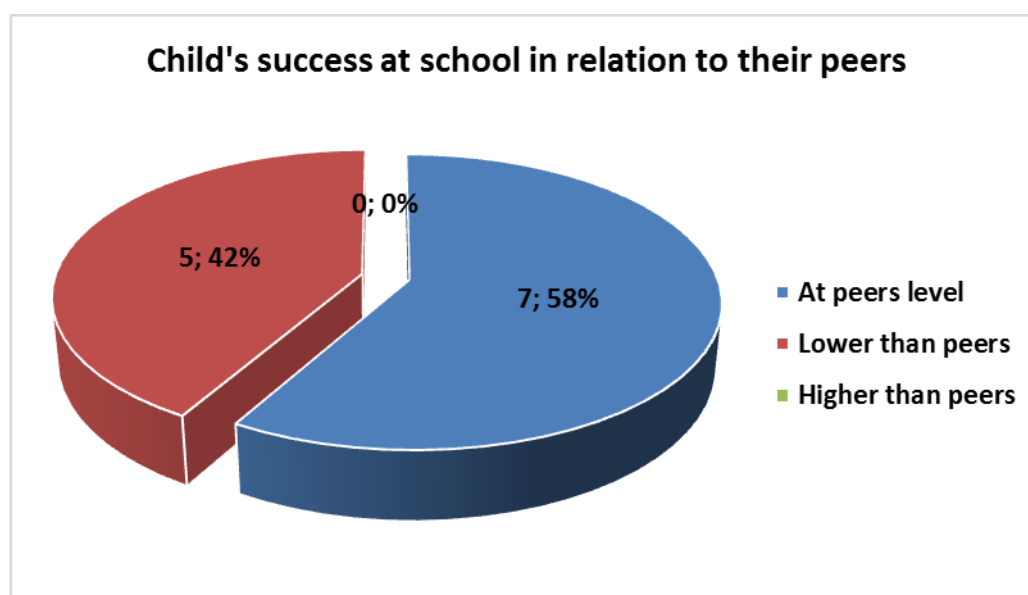


Chart 10: Child's success at school in relation to their peers

3.2.3. Kind of Supports in School and Home

Regarding the type of support students receive at school, parents mention as most common support measures in **Primary School**, "position in the class close to the teacher"(75%), "task instructions were read aloud by the teacher"(58%), "extra time during the tests"(58%), "additional help/support from a SEN teacher; psychologist, etc."(58%), "additional individual lessons by the teacher/s on the subjects I had/have difficulties with"(42%), self-correcting time (33%) and "tolerant attitude and support of classmates"(33%). In **Lower Secondary School**, parents reported the following support measures: "extra time during the tests" (58%), "additional help/support from a SEN teacher; psychologist, etc." (50%), "additional individual lessons by the teacher/s on the subjects I had/have difficulties with" (42%), "position in the class close to the teacher" (75%) and "tolerant attitude and support of classmates" (33%). 5 of the 12 measures presented are common to both Primary and Lower Secondary, but there is a scattering across almost all measures. There is a support measure that is not used in any of the levels, namely "Preparation and distribution of abstracts related to the subject at the end of the courses".

Although residual, some parents considered also that a greater support in the preparation for the tests would be more appropriate and that homework assignment for students with this disorder should be rethought, which is associated with the student's cognitive difficulties but also with the discomfort caused by the lack of specific knowledge of the parents.

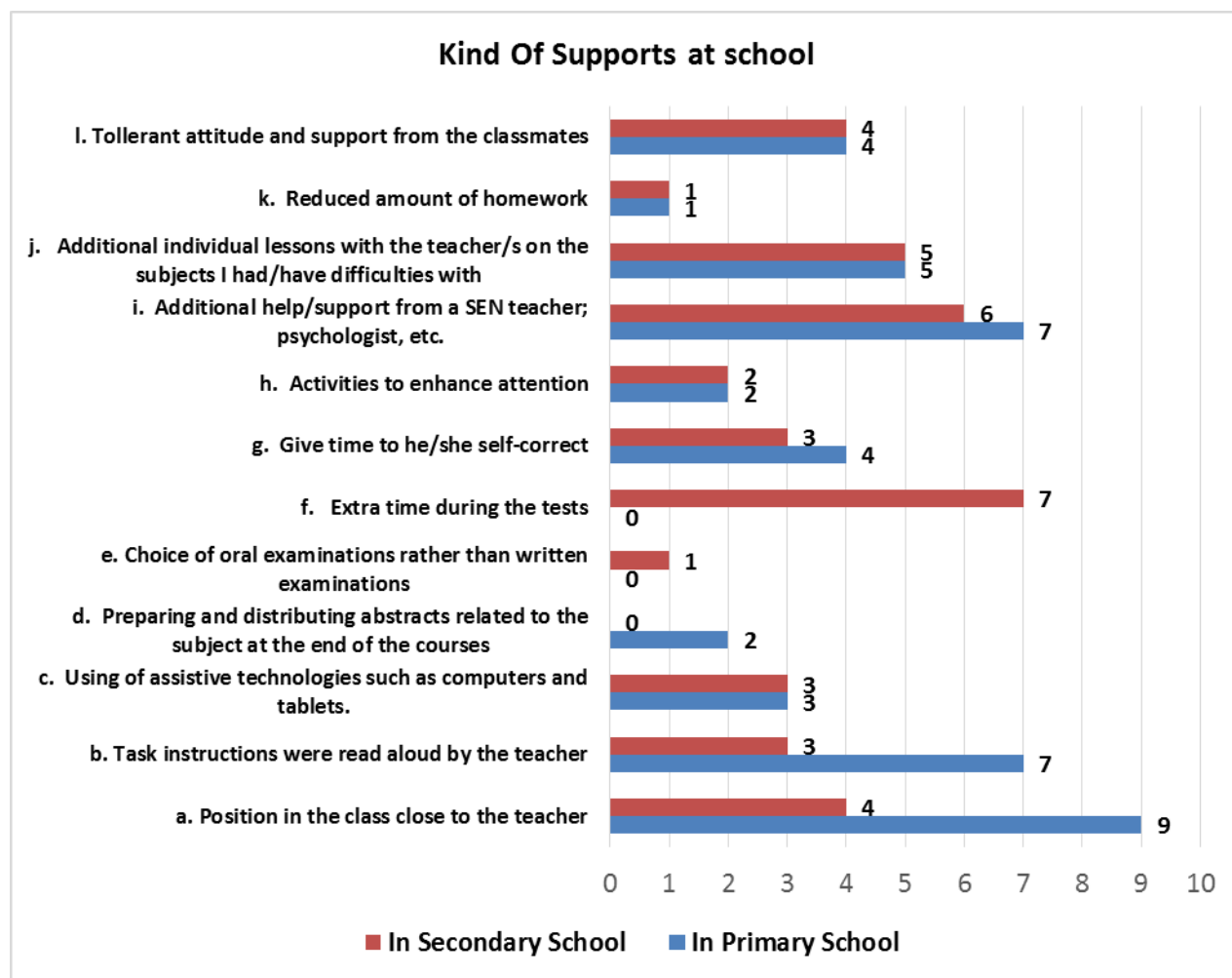


Chart 11: Kind Of Supports at school

At home, parents report that, despite slight frequency fluctuations, they provide the same kind of support since Primary School, namely, " we read the tasks' instructions and explained them to him" (100%), "we explain the concepts he had/has difficulty to understand"(100%),"I am trying to understand her/him"(92%),"we got/get a private tutor for him"(50%),"We use educational games/educational websites"(50%), and "We provide new learning experiences (sporting, artistic, practical)" (50%).

Some parents also point out that they support the development of their ability to focus and concentrate, and that they acquire reading books that are more appropriate for their children.



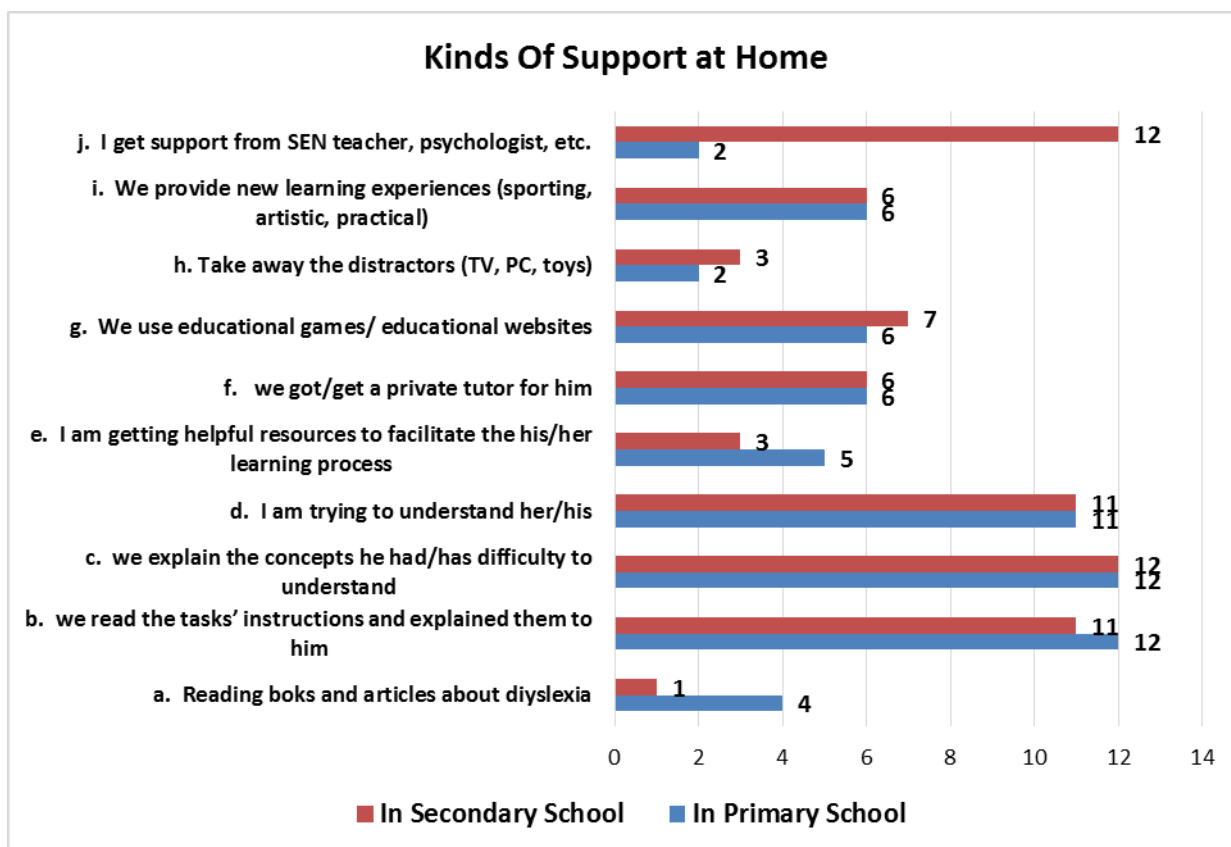


Chart 11a: Kinds Of Support at Home

3.2.4. Knowledge About Child’s Educational Rights

In question, "Are you aware of your child’s legal rights?", 92% of the parents surveyed answered in the affirmative, and there was one parent who didn’t answer the question.

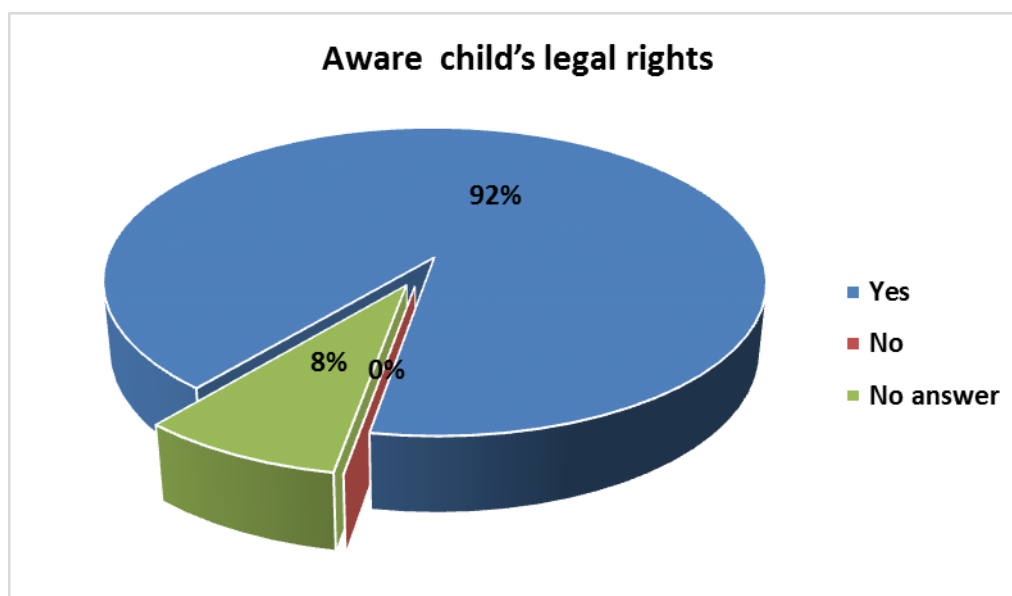


Chart 12: Aware of child’s legal rights



3.2.5. Knowledge about Help Centres for Dyslexia

In question, "Do you know where to look for help for your child (out of school)?" 75% of parents surveyed answered affirmatively.

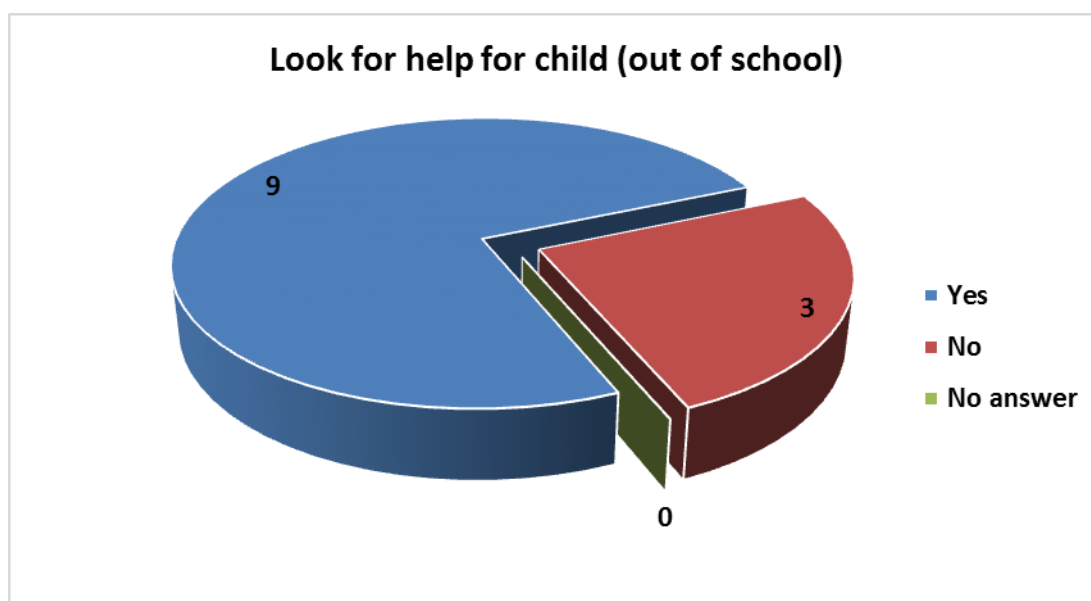


Chart 13: Look for help for child (out of school)

3.2.6. Out of School Activities

Concerning question, "Does your child have any out-of-school activities (sport, art, etc.)?" 42% of the parents answered affirmatively, referring to sports activities such as handball, swimming, jiu-jitsu and music school attendance. Parents who answered in a negative way indicate the incompatibility of schedules and problems of behavior and health.

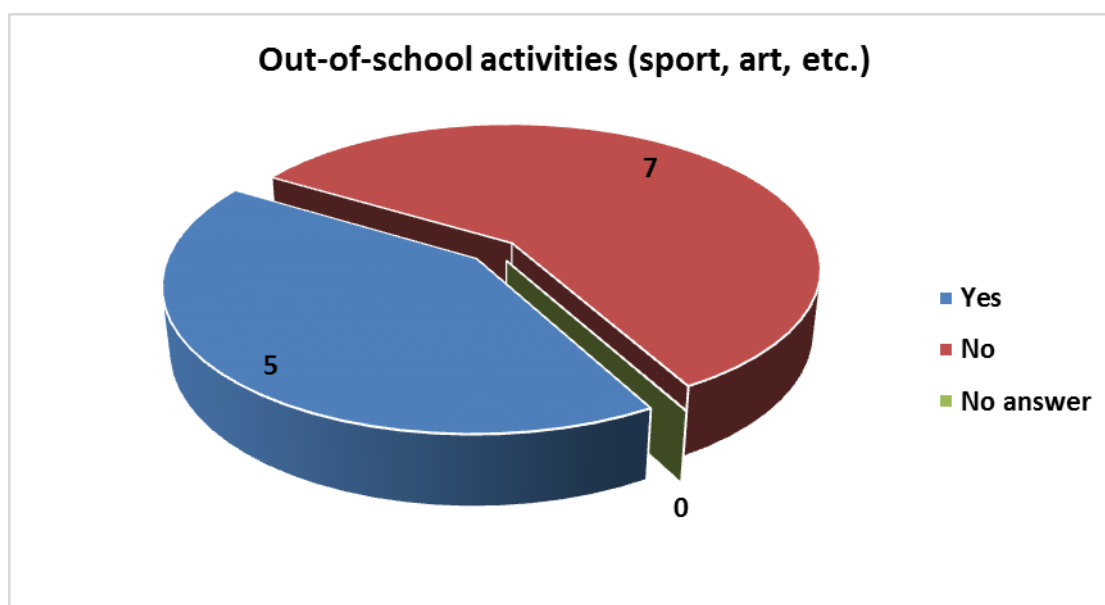


Chart 14: Out-of-school activities (sport, art, etc.)

3.2.7. Need for Special Training Regarding Dyslexia

In question, "Do you think you need a special training in order to better understand your child's difficulties and to be able to better support him?" 58% of parents report being available to receive this training.



Chart 15: Need of a special training

3.3. FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY AMONG TEACHERS

As we can see on chart 16, at this Survey 31 teachers were inquired: 7 of them, 26%, are class teachers in the primary school (4th grade); 74% (23) are teachers of different subjects in the 5th grade of lower secondary school.

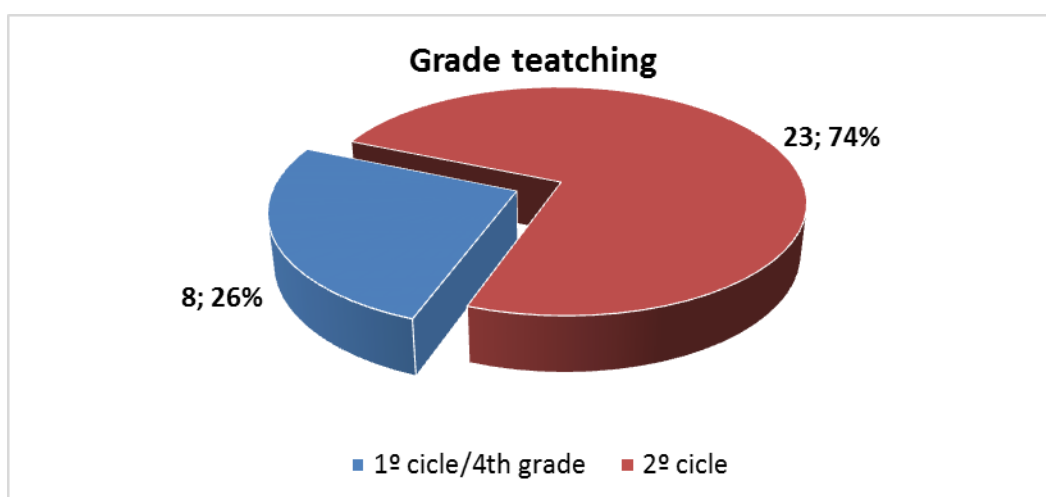


Chart 16: Grade teaching

3.3.1. Pedagogical Experience and Training of Dyslexia

On Chart 17, about pedagogical experience of the teachers participating in the Survey, we see that 10% (3) have until 5 years of experience and 3% (1) between 6-10years. Because none teacher is between 11 to 15 years we can conclude that only 13% (4) teachers have less of 15 years of experience. Between 16 and 20 years, we have 19% (6) teachers and the main group, with 29% (9) have between 21 to 25 years of experience. Well experienced we have 13%, 4 teachers between 26 to 30 years and with more than 30 years of pedagogical experience we have 16% (5). Therefore, very experienced, we have the majority of teachers with 58% with more than 21 years of pedagogical experience.

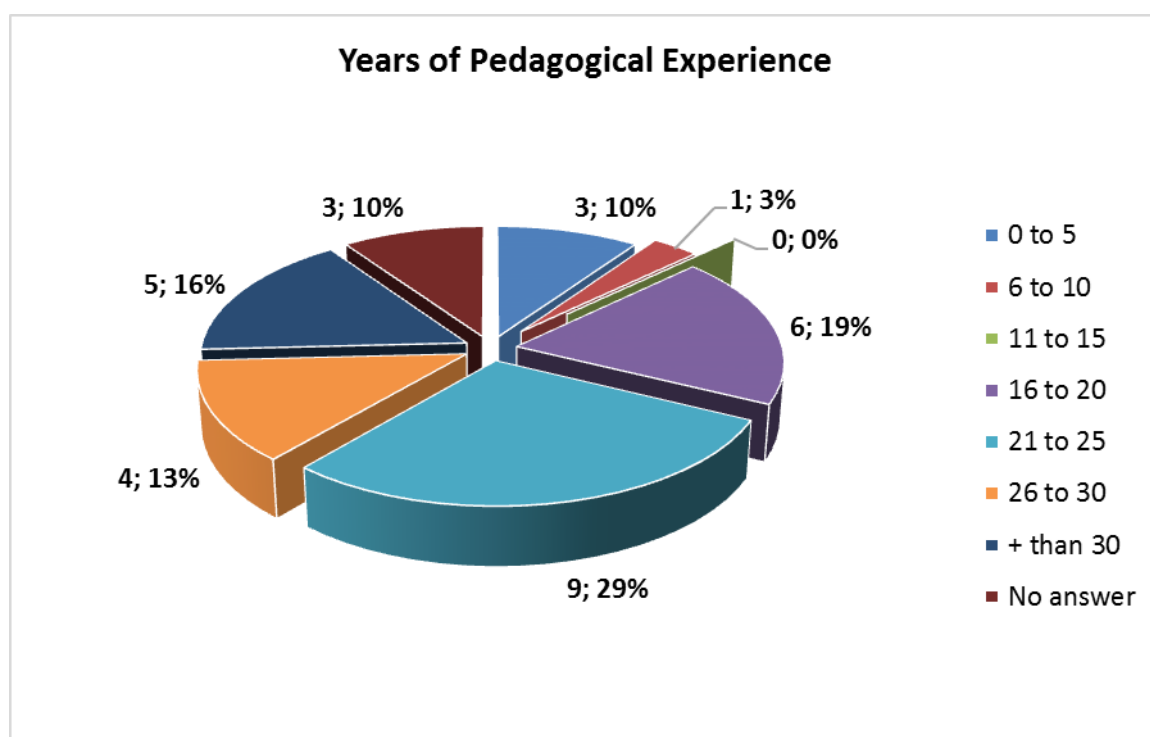


Chart 17: Pedagogical Experience

3.3.2. Knowledge About Dyslexia

About Knowledge on Dyslexia, and analyzing what teachers answered to questions, “...skills to recognise when a student’s difficulties in learning may be due to dyslexia” only 16% feels good about that, and 84%, who rated their skills with 2 and 3, don’t think they are capable to recognising the problem with confidence.

In question “... skills to help a student with dyslexia to overcome his/her difficulties” we have 81% of teachers that don’t feel confident on helping a student with dyslexia to overcome his/her difficulties.

The percentage of those who said that they didn’t know well the national legislation regarding the educational rights of the students with dyslexia is 84%. So the vast majority of teachers have

limited “...knowledge about the national legislation regarding the educational rights of students with dyslexia” and don’t feel confident about that.

If we analyze the answers to the question “Do you know where to direct parents to look for help for their child”, we found that, contrary to the knowledge about dyslexia, teachers, in 84%, know where to direct parents to look for help for their children.

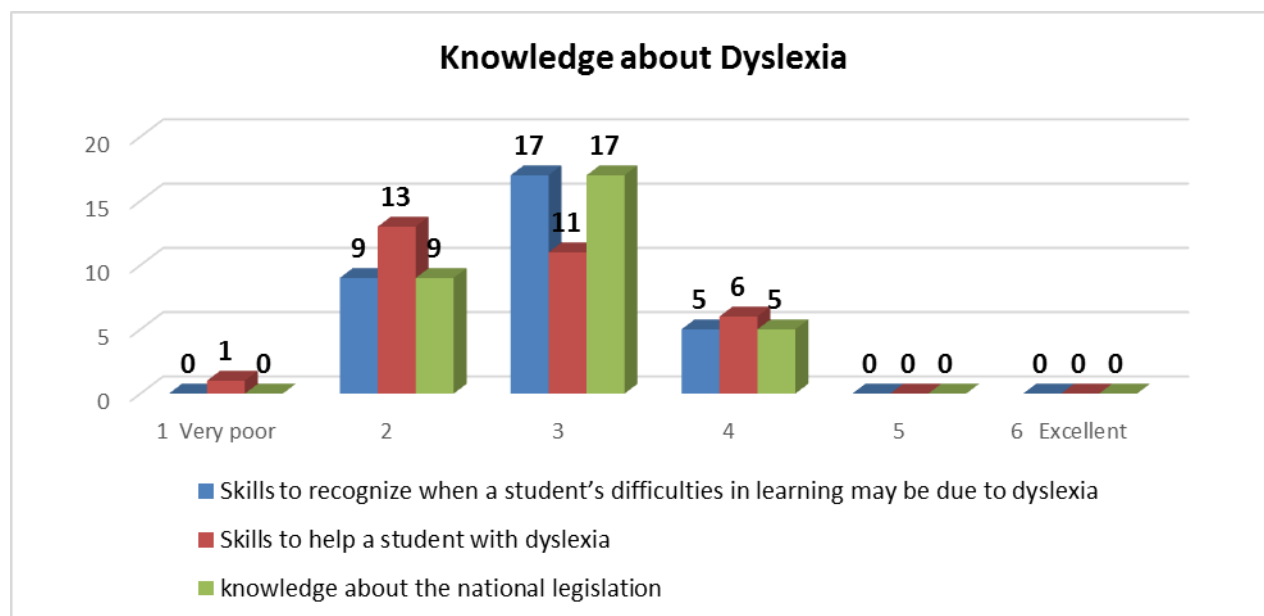


Chart 18: Knowledge about Dyslexia

3.3.3. Trainings on Dyslexia

On chart18 it is clear to us that the majority (68%) of the interviewed teachers didn’t have a previous training on dyslexia, and 26% have receive specific training on dyslexia; 6% (2 teachers) didn’t answer this question.

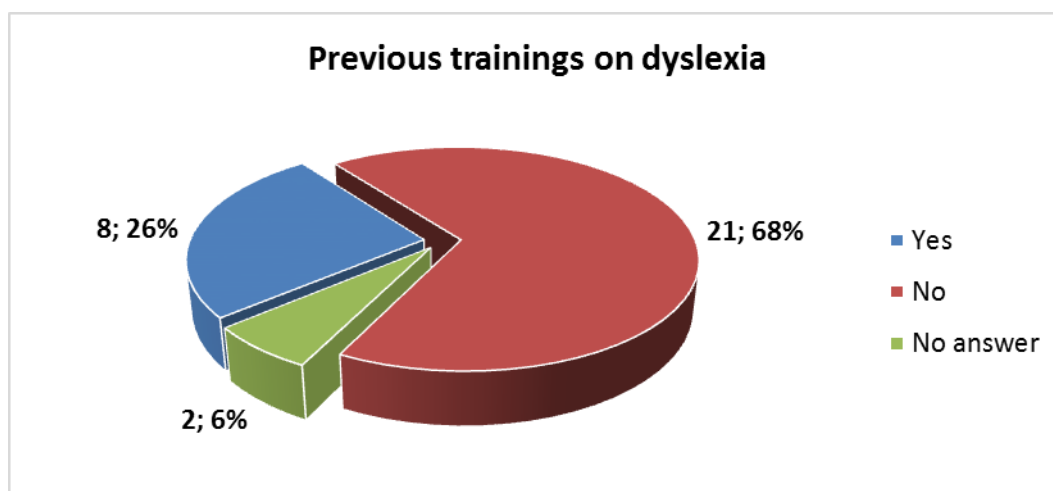


Chart 19: Trainings on Dyslexia

3.3.4. Recognize dyslexic students

In question “Please, rate your skills to recognize when a student’s difficulties in learning may be due to dyslexia” the teachers were asked at what level they could provide effective help to students to overcome their difficulties. In a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is very poor and 6 is excellent, the results on chart 19 show that, none of the participating teachers feels he or she has very poor, very good or excellent skills to recognize dyslexic students; 29% feel that their skills are poor and 16% rated their skills as good; the majority, 55%, rated their skills as sufficient but not enough to recognize dyslexic students.

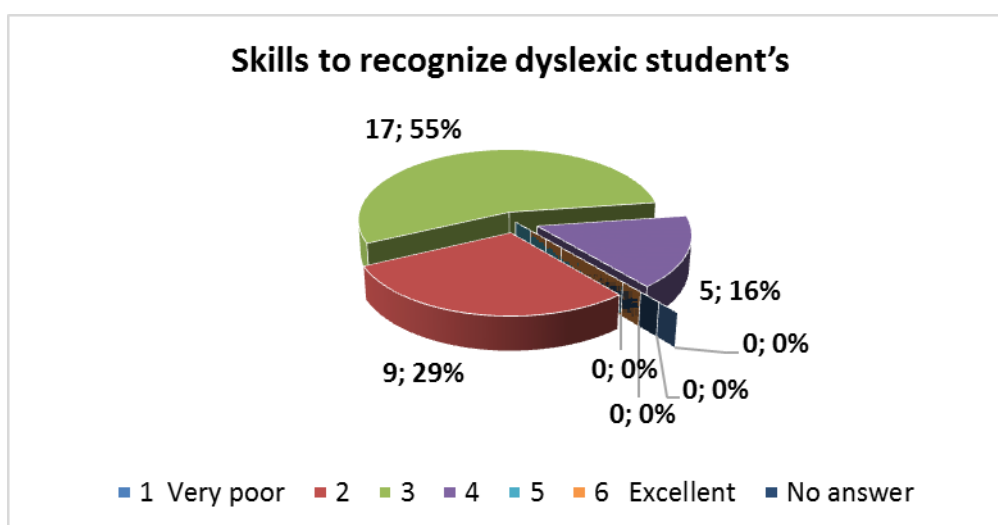


Chart 20: Skills to recognize students with dyslexia

3.3.5. Skills/ Ability to help dyslexic students

In question “Please, rate your skills to help a student with dyslexia to overcome his/her difficulties” nobody rated their skills to help a student with dyslexia as excellent or very good. There are even 19% who believe they are good, we have 81% of teachers who don’t feel confident helping a student with dyslexia to overcome his/her difficulties: 36% of responders rated their skills as sufficient but not enough, 42% as poor and 3% feel they have poor skills.

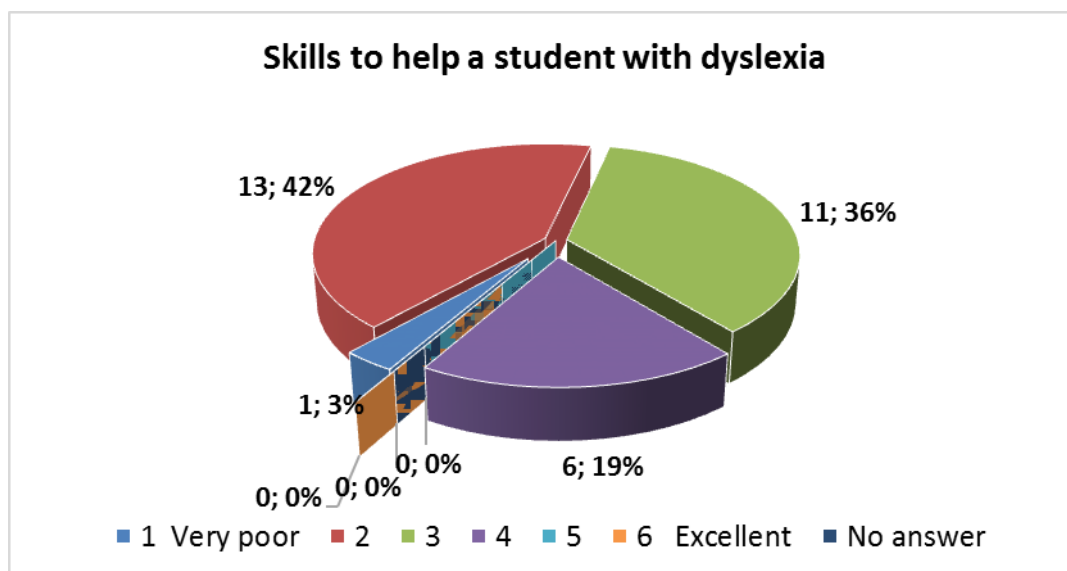


Chart 21: Skills to help students with dyslexia

3.3.6. Difficulties of adaptation to middle school

About the question “Do you think that dyslexic students are more difficult to adapt to secondary school than other students?” 55% of the teachers of this Survey agreed that for students with dyslexia, the transition period from primary to lower secondary school is more difficult than for their peers and 45% didn’t agree with that, as we can see on Chart 22.

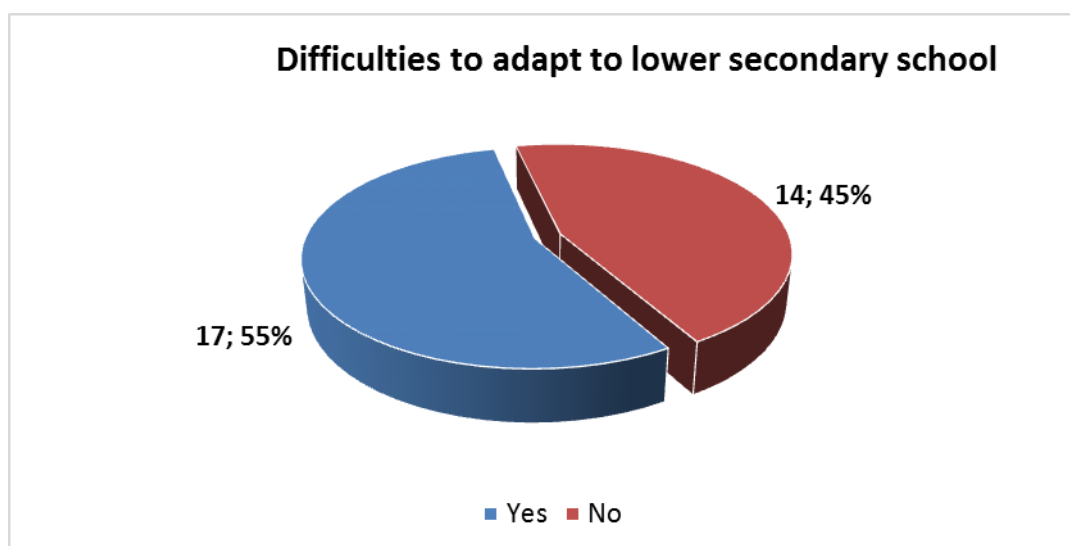


Chart 22: Difficulties to adapt to lower secondary school

As for the question about the kind of difficulties that dyslexic students have during the transition period, and based on the feedback given by the 55% of (17) teachers, on Chart 23 we can see that:

- 23.5% of teachers (4) said they “Stay away from social relations, they are alone”.
- 17.6% of teachers (3) said they “are being excluded by their peers”

- 17.6% of teachers (3) said they “*have not many friends, they are mostly alone*”
- 17.6% of teachers (3) said they “*have problems making friends and maintaining relationships*”
- 17.6% of teachers (3) said they “*are aggressive towards others*”
- 82.38% of teachers (14) said “*Dyslexic students are avoiding group learning activities*”
- 35.2% of teachers (6) said “*Dyslexic students may be subject to bullying*”
- None of teachers said they “*are generally unconcerned with lessons*”
- 52.9% of teachers (9) said they “*generally look unhappy at school*”
- 5.8% of teachers (1) said they “*often sleep or look sleepy in lessons*”

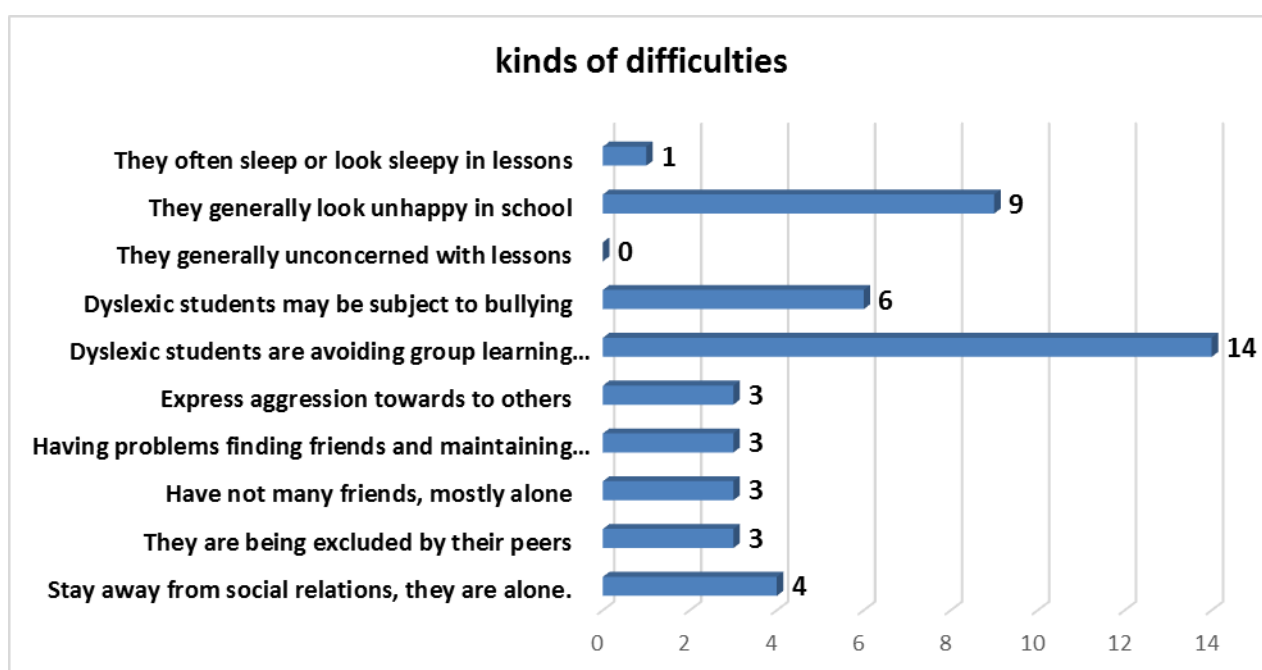


Chart 23: Kind of difficulties

3.3.7. Kind Social Relations Supports

As for the question “*Which of the following strategies are more useful for strengthening the social relations of students with dyslexia?*” the teachers referred with a higher percentage all the possibilities (Chart 24). The average of positive answer is 83.3%

So the strategies they think are of great importance to put efforts in formation and development of good social skills in dyslexic children are:

- In 87% “*Supporting effective communication skills*”
- In 87% “*Supporting emotional awareness and expressive skills*”
- In 90.3% “*Strengths of students need to be highlighted and supported*”
- In 70.9% “*Strengthening artistic and sporting skills*”

- In 74.3% “*Appointing them as the person in charge of an important task in the class*”
- In 77.4% “*Working in pairs/group*”
- In 96.7% “*Reinforcing their self-esteem*”

Almost all teachers agree with the reinforcement of their self-esteem as very important, being this the most important of strategies (only 1 teacher doesn't consider this strategy); very high rated too was the importance of highlighting students' strengths (90.3%), effective communication skills and emotional awareness and expressive skills (both with 87%); almost the same rate (77.4% and 74.3%) was given by responders to the question about work in pairs/group and appointing students as the person in charge; the lower rated strategy is the encouragement of the artistic and sport skills, even so the answer are made by 70.9% of teachers.

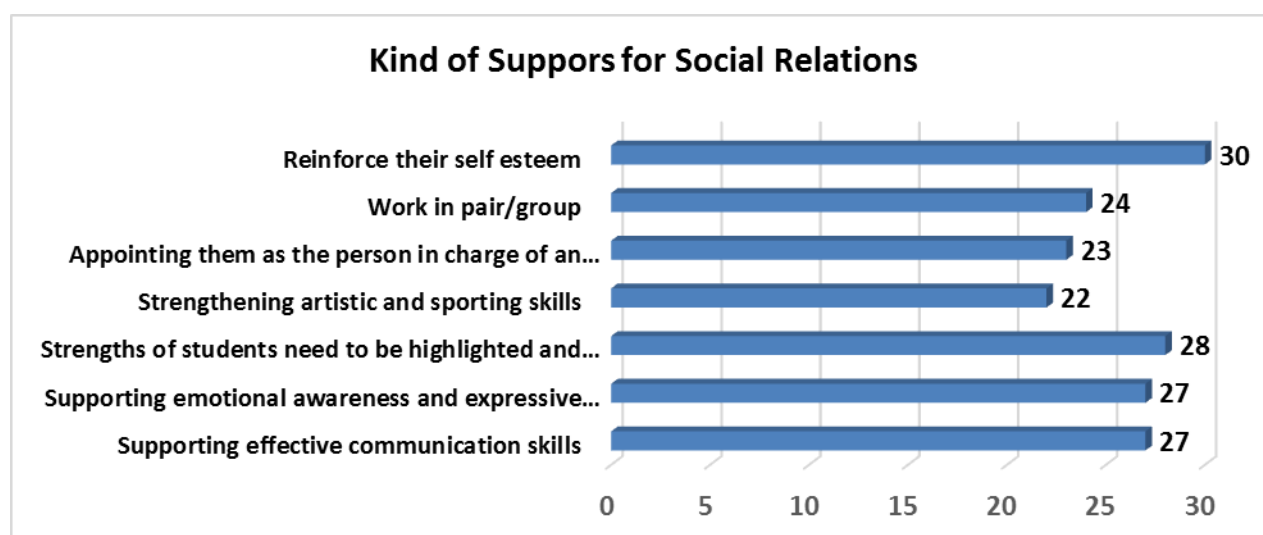


Chart 24: Kind of Support for Social Relations

3.3.8. Kind of Support for Academic Success

Regarding the kind of support for academic aspects, teachers were provided with a list of possible accommodations to check their availability at school and how they consider these accommodations to support the students with dyslexia.

The results of the Survey show the following:

- *Position in class close to the teacher* – 77.4%
- *You read the task instructions aloud* – 90.3%
- *Allow dyslexic student to answer the questions orally and you write down his answers* – 70.9%
- *Give extra time during the tests* – 80.6%
- *Give additional individual lessons* – 35.4%
- *Allow dyslexic students to use schemes, rules, formulas during the classes* – 77.4%
- *Reduce amount of homework* – 41.9%
- *Do not ask dyslexic students to read aloud in front of the class* – 51.6%



- *Adapt the educational activities to dyslexic students' abilities* – 67.7%
- *Building tollerant atmosphere in the class* – 87%
- *Work in collaboration with SEN teachers; psychologist, etc.* – 96.7%
- *Paying attention to empowerment activities* – 77.4%
- *I involve dyslexic students in practical activities* – 90.3%

Almost all teachers referred that work in collaboration with SEN teachers, psychologist, etc is very important, and on the Survey this strategy prevalences above other kind of support (only 1 teacher doesn't consider this strategy); very high rated too was the importance of involving dyslexic students' in practical activities, of reading the task instructions aloud (both with 90.3%), and building tolerant atmosphere in the class (87%); almost with the same rate, giving extra time during the tests with 80.6%, and allowing dyslexic students to use schemes, rules, formulas during the classes / paying attention to empowerment activities / position in the class close to the teacher all with 77.4% ,was given by responders; 70.9% of teachers consider useful to allow dyslexic student to answer orally to the questions and then the teacher writes down his/her answers and concerning the adaption of the educational activities to dyslexic students' abilities, the rate was 67.7%. Not so well rated but still with more than half of the teachers answering positively to this, 51.6% consider not to ask dyslexic students to read aloud in front of the class as a useful strategy Only 41.9% of teachers consider reducing the amount of homework given to students with difficulties and 35.4% give additional lessons.



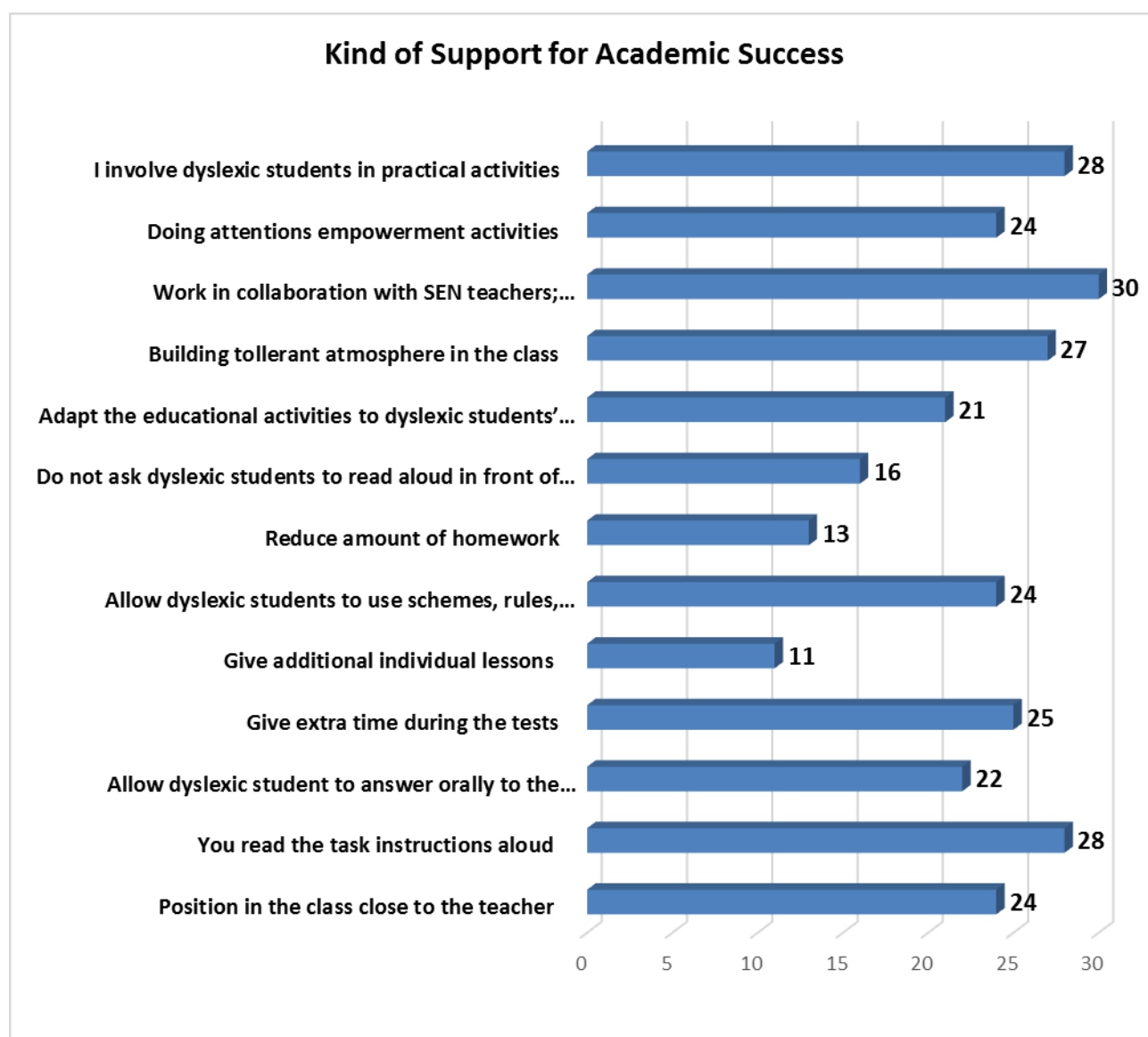


Chart 25: Kind of Support for Academic Success

3.3.9. Knowledge about National Legislation Regarding Dyslexia

The percentage of those who think they know the national legislation regarding the educational rights of the students with dyslexia well is very low, only 16%. The majority, 55%, rated their knowledge as sufficient but not enough, and a considerable percentage, 29%, of interviewed teachers said their knowledge about national legislation regarding dyslexia is poor. No one has rated his knowledge as very poor, very good or excellent. So, 84% of teachers have limited “...knowledge about the national legislation regarding the educational rights of students with dyslexia”

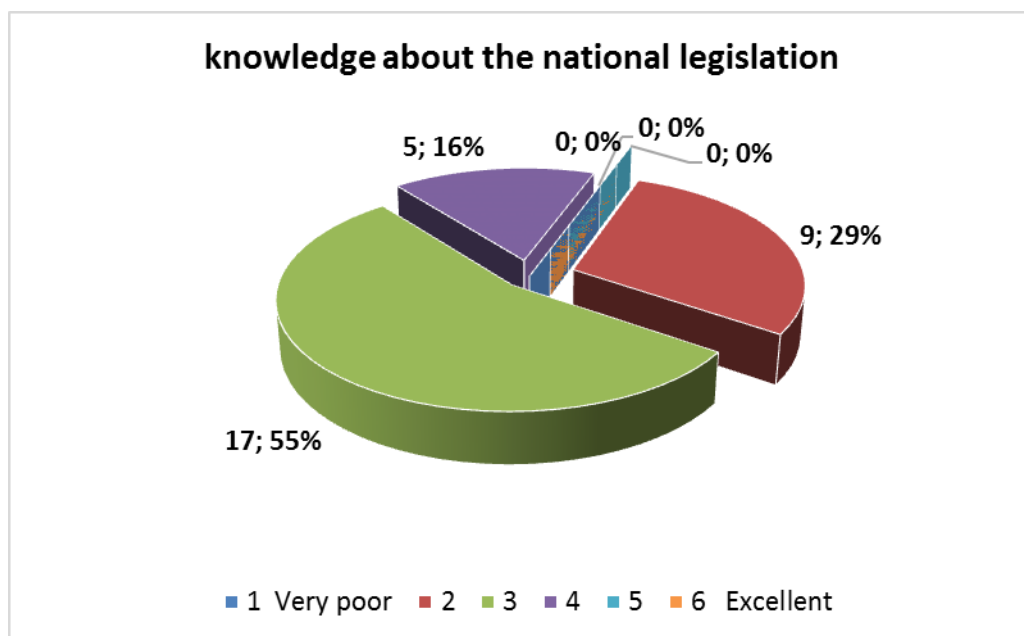


Chart 26: knowledge about the national legislation

3.3.10. Communications with parents for dyslexic students

Most of the interviewed teachers rated their communication with parents of dyslexic students as “good” (26%), “very good” (19%); sufficient but not enough are most answers with 49%, and one (3%) has poor communication. Nobody answered excellent or very poor, and one teacher did not answer the question. Therefore, half of teachers consider that they have limited communication with parents of dyslexic students.

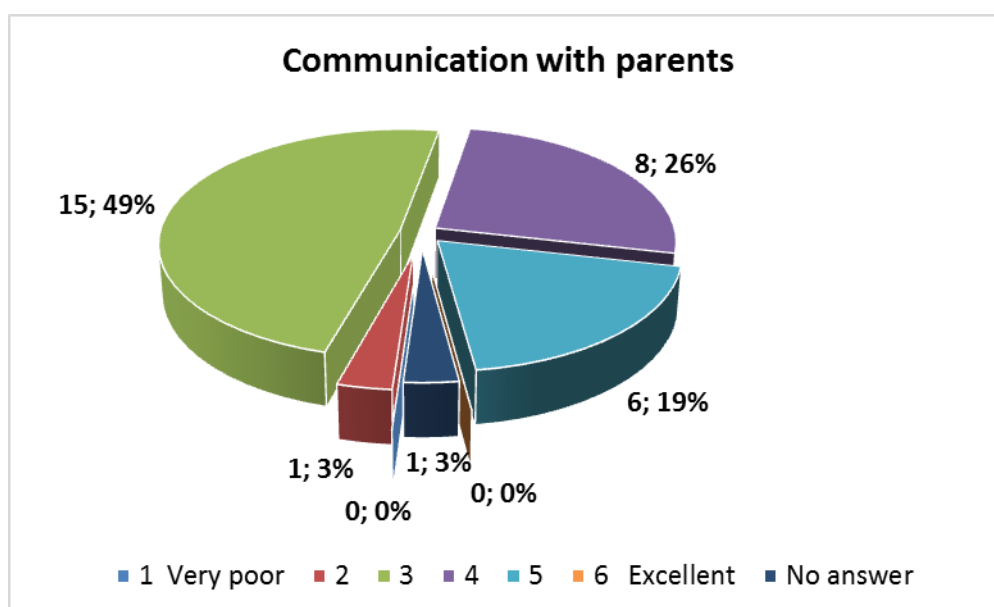


Chart 27: Communication with parents

As for the question ‘Do you know where to direct parents to look for help for their child?’ most of the interviewed teachers (84%) know where to direct parents to look for professional assessment or help for their children.

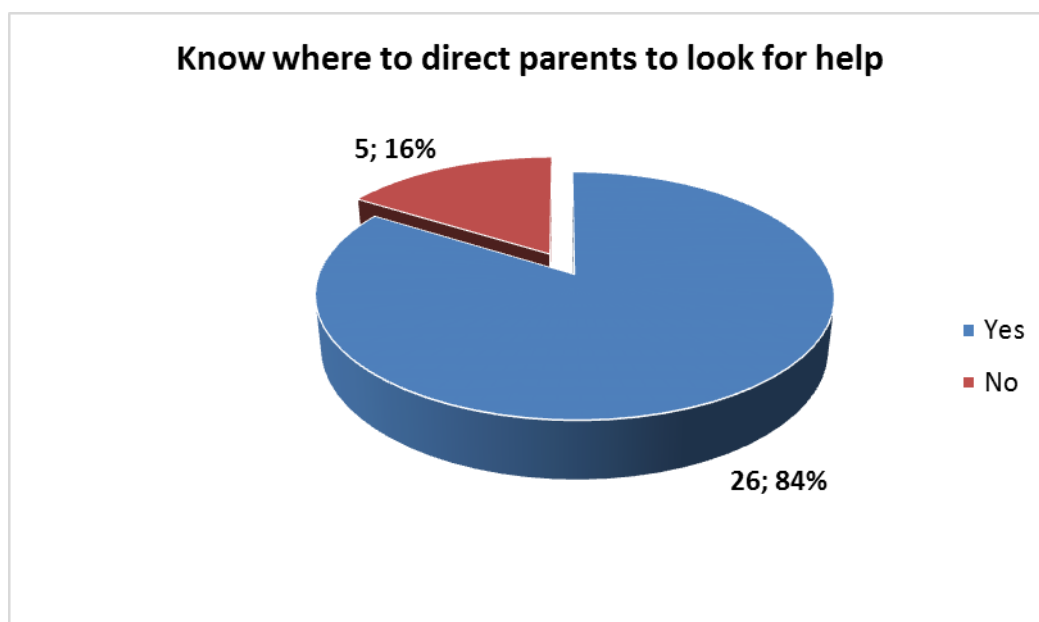


Chart 28: Knowing where to direct parents to look for help

3.3.11. Need for Special Education Regarding Dyslexia

Most teachers (94%) who took part in the Survey said that they need a special training in order to better understand dyslexic students' difficulties and to be able to better support them. Only 6% said they don't need training on the topic.

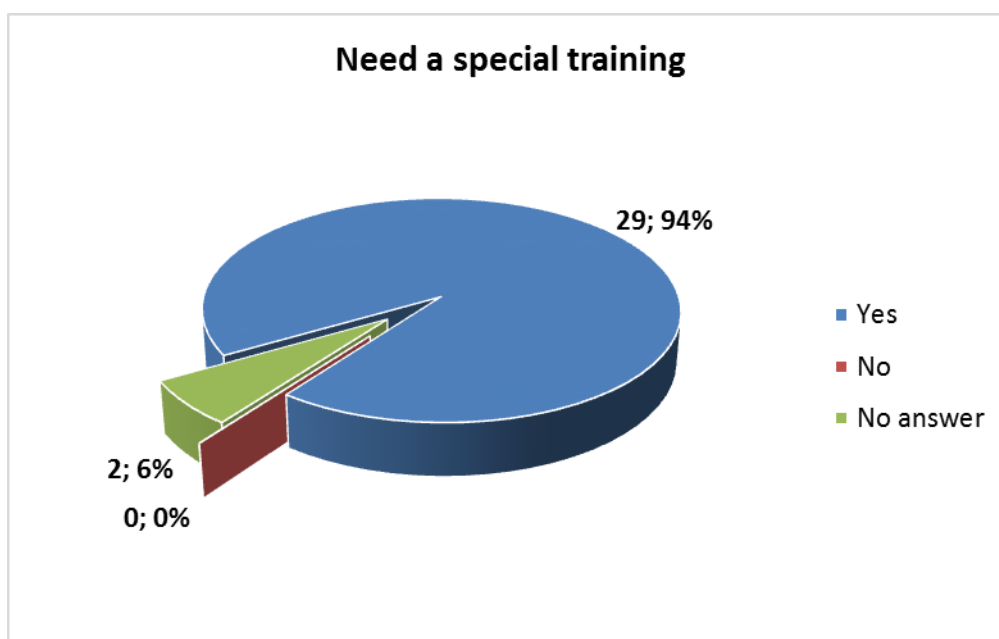


Chart 29: Need of a special training

4. RESULTS

4.1. COMMENTS

Regarding the support received at the school, all students with dyslexia are accompanied by Special Education teachers, whether they have low, moderate or severe dyslexia.

In order to facilitate the integration and success of students with dyslexia, school plays a fundamental role in their lives.

The environment in the classroom is a determining factor for learning, and, as such, teachers take into account some aspects that allow students to succeed.

There is a link between the teachers of the different subjects and the teachers who are responsible for the support, in order to take into account the problems of the student.

Considering the answers given by the students interviewed, the transition of students from primary to lower secondary does not seem to be a great difficulty.

The specific educational measures for dyslexia are beginning to be applied to students from the moment in which the problem is diagnosed.

Students who have this problem feel that sometimes their problem is not taken into account, especially when they have to be exposed in front of the class;

The help given to students outside of school is essential to their achievements, because clarifying their doubts increases their self-confidence which is later reflected in their learning.

It would be very important for the dyslexic students that all teachers have specific training concerning their problem, in order to understand the difficulties they have.

4.2. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Students

The surveys were applied to 12 students, aged between 10 and 12 years. All students attend fifth grade and 8 have dyslexia as a problem; the others have specific difficulties in reading and writing.

Small groups of 2 elements were formed. The questionnaires were read and explained in detail, so that there was no doubt about its content.

Half of the students, that is, 50%, consider that the level of difficulty is equal in Primary and Lower secondary. Those who consider that lower secondary is more complicated said that they have a greater number of contents to learn and that these have a higher level of complexity.

As far as study skills are concerned, it should be noted that 58% of the students consider that they read reasonably and that they understand what is asked of them, so it seems that dyslexia is not interfering in this competence.

Of the students interviewed, 33% mention that they have great difficulty in understanding what is asked of them and in applying and understanding the rules of spelling/grammar well.

Curiously and contrary to expectations, a high percentage of respondents, more specifically 75%, consider that they have no difficulties in creative writing tasks, doing them in a reasonable way.

The feeling about the moments of evaluation, in this case the tests, is quite different among the students interviewed, since quite different answers have been obtained. However, and considering the answers above interval 3 (reasonable), it is possible to note that the majority of the students do not feel constrained at formal moments of evaluation. Perhaps this situation is due to the fact that a large number of these dyslexic students benefit from aloud reading of the instructions, and from being given more time to complete the test and have toleration of the spelling errors, which makes them more comfortable at these moments.

Also the answers given by the students regarding the results obtained were quite surprising, since no students mentioned that they feel unsatisfied with the results achieved.

Most students consider that the time allocated by the teachers is enough to take the test within the time limit, because as mentioned previously, there are a series of educational measures that are applied during the tests, which facilitates their temporal organization.

Especially in the lower secondary, the students reported that they have more time to perform the homework requested by the teachers.

The majority of the students surveyed reported that in Primary school there was a greater concern of the teachers to sit them in the classroom near them. However, in both cycles, care is taken to read aloud the instructions, being the Portuguese and English subjects the most targeted.



In both school levels, students do not have the habit of answering orally, with the teacher writing down their answers. However, 33% of the students say that this situation happened in primary school vs 8% in Lower secondary.

A plus for dyslexic students is undoubtedly the offer that exists in school regarding support in the various subjects. All students can attend these classes in Mathematics, Portuguese and English.

Regarding peer and teacher understanding, the students surveyed consider that they are better understood by peers, because all the students were unanimous in saying they are supported and feel their peers understand their problem.

In both primary and lower secondary schools, students have support from the special education teacher, in their own space, to re-educate their writing and to anticipate/reinforce the learning in the different academic areas, when it proves necessary.

Also at home, most students with dyslexia feel they have support from their parents. As the academic degree gets higher, parents begin to read less aloud to their students, but continue to explain what is requested in the texts/instructions in order to facilitate their understanding. 75% of students report that, similar to primary school, parents continue to explain content that is harder to grasp.

As for the use of educational games these are more used in the lower secondary than in the primary.

Regarding the way they feel at school, 75% of the respondents answered that they feel good, especially because they were with their friends.

Also, the relationship of students with dyslexia with their teachers is globally satisfactory. However, there are 33% of students who say it is so-so.

The majority of students (58%) have activities outside the school, these being mainly sports.

Parents

Parents report that, as a rule, there were no major changes in the well-being of their students in the transition from the 4th to the 5th grades. The support measures at both schools and at home remain the same in both Primary and Lower Primary. Although residual, it was mentioned by the parents the existence of some emotional and relational difficulties, which must be identified, with the possibility of developing adequate psychological intervention.

Parents have stated to be available to be involved in specialized technical support for their empowerment in the support they provide to their children. It is suggested by some parents that the school considers the possibility of adjusting the amount of homework or even suppressing it, due to the difficulties of these students.



Teachers

Concluding, we may say that primary or lower secondary school teachers, even those who have some years of pedagogical experience, have a poor knowledge about dyslexia. Their skills to recognize or help students with dyslexia are poor and they do not have previous training to work with dyslexic students. However, teachers are all the time training to increase their skills about this specific learning difficulty and recognize that they need a special training to improve their support to their pupils.

Teachers are more attentive to students who manifest learning difficulties, especially dyslexia, and recognize that students have difficulties adapting to school. However, they are not always able to adequately respond to the needs of children, because they don't have adequate training. Teachers know what kind of measures are useful to help dyslexic students in order to help them overcome their difficulties or fears. In short, teachers recognize that they need more support to work with dyslexic students, as well as knowing the legislation about the subject.

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