

## Postgraduate studies: The motivation of Greek teachers

**Fortouni Ismini**

M.Ed, Physical Education teacher ,7o General High School Iliou  
fortisath@yahoo.gr

### Summary

The purpose of this dissertation is to thoroughly investigate and present the way teachers think, as regards the motives which urge them to pursue postgraduate studies as well as. The participants in the research consists of 12 permanent teachers who serve in public secondary schools in the Athens region and in order to collect the data of the empirical research the method of semi-structured interview has been used. The findings of the research indicate that the main conclusion is that teachers are involved in a postgraduate program not for one but for several different reasons. Nevertheless, most of them share the innate incentives towards learning that result from their genuine interest in the complex nature of the teaching profession.

**Keywords:** teachers, lifelong learning, motivation, postgraduate studies

### Introduction

One of the main features of the Greek educational system in the 1980s was the large number of Greek students studying abroad at that time (Kanellopoulos, 1996). More specifically, the absence of postgraduate studies in Greece led to thousands of Greek graduates to student migration to European countries and the United States. According to Latinopoulos (2004), most postgraduate programs began in the late 1990s, mainly due to the financial support of their organization from the Operational Program for Training and Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK). Then many new specialization programs were organized and not only were Greek graduates given the opportunity to choose their country for postgraduate studies, because this solution was more economical, but it also led even more Greeks to pursue them. The proliferation of postgraduate students over the past decade has also been helped by changes in the labor market over the same period, raising the unemployment rate for university graduates to 9%. In addition, the basic degree begins at that time not to be considered sufficient for entry into interesting positions offered by the public and private sector, since special as well as additional qualifications begin to be required for their occupation. Therefore, a broader social concept is gradually being established, according to which a master's degree is no longer considered a luxury, as it used to be, but a necessity (Latinopoulos, 2004).

In Greece in 2008 a full institutional framework for postgraduate studies was introduced for the first time, based on law 3685 (Government Gazette 128, 16-7-2008). According to the first article of this law, "the universities (Higher Education Institutions ) in the sense of article 2 of law 3549/2007 (Government Gazette 69APS) are responsible for the planning and organization of postgraduate studies in Greece and grant Postgraduate Diplomas Specialization (MDE) "

In addition, according to the data of: Hellenic Statistical Authority (KANEP / GSEE,2016) in the school year 2013-2014, out of the total of 16,870 teachers who hold a postgraduate specialization degree in Primary & Secondary education in the country, 5.2% (or 872 teachers) serve in Kindergarten, 29.7% (or 5,006 teachers) serve in Primary School, 32.8% (or 5,534 teachers) serve in High School, 23.7% (or 3,996 teachers) serve in General High School and 8.7 % (or 1,462 teachers) serves in the Vocational High School & EPAS (Ministry of Education).

The aim of this paper is to investigate the reasons that push Greek teachers to pursue postgraduate studies. Initially, reference is made to Lifelong Learning and the motivations are

analyzed through the existing theories of adult participation in educational activities. The bibliographic review is also given in relevant empirical research in which the motivations of teachers for further professional development were studied. Finally, the methodological framework of empirical research is presented. The results of our research are then analyzed, and the work is completed with the discussion of the results and the conclusions drawn.

### **Body**

Teachers constitute a social category of workers with a special contribution to the reproductive function of education, but not a homogeneous professional group. The personal, scientific and professional development of the teacher is a particularly important factor in upgrading education (Pedagogical Institute, 2009). According to Eraut (1987), there are two ways for a teacher to gain knowledge during his career:

- The first way that is described as a 'practical component of learning' relates to the learning that the teacher acquires in his / her work environment (school) and results from the experience and interactivity on that experience.

- The second way is more theoretical and relates to the knowledge that the teacher gains through academic studies and additional academic qualifications such as

- Postgraduate training at home or abroad (annual or biennial).
- Obtaining another degree from a University School of Independent Scientific Field.
- Postgraduate specialization.
- Doctoral Diploma, Ph.D.

Most of the goals of individuals are based on motivation. Adults opt to pursue education – or not – for diverse reasons (Patterson & Paulson, 2016).

The term «*motivation*» is derived from the verb motivate and is used to mean «*anything that is capable of moving the person, pushing him into action, inciting him to various forms of behavior*» (Kostaridou –Efkliidi, 1999, p. 17). According to Heckhausen (1991), motivations are idiosyncratic, personal predispositions to things of value, motivated by the intrinsic need to achieve something and affect people's daily lives and all their behaviors. They occur and begin to develop during the early development and have a major impact on adult learning in Lifelong Learning (Rabideau, 2005). There are two types of motivation in organized educational activities: «learning motivation» and «participation motivation». Although the distinction between them is not yet clear, their difference lies in the fact that «learning motives» are related to the purpose and satisfaction of a particular learning need, while «participation motivations» are the means by which this goal is achieved, namely the organized educational activity (Zarifis, 2014).

Learning is strongly influenced by the learner's motivation. The motivation for learning in adult education is a combination of external and internal motivation. *External* are the motives that are usually provided by others and are active by the individual, due to external effects such as money, privileges, growth, promotion, prestige, social status. On the other hand, *internal* motives which are considered more powerful come from its internal causes, behaviors, such as instincts, impulses, goals, emotions and activities, without external reward but feelings of accomplishment and deep satisfaction from doing something worthwhile (Costaridou - Efkleidi, 1999). The primary aim of the educational process is to transform external motivation into internal, so that individuals pursue learning independently (Kapsalis, 1996). Houle (1961), devised a typology that included the motivation of adults to participate in organized educational programs based on the way learners orient themselves to learning. The clusters or types of participants identified by Houle according to their learning orientation are:

- Goal-oriented: Adult learners identify a need or interest and end up viewing the learning process as a goal.
- Learning-oriented: Adult learners are eager to learn and grow, so they participate in educational activities continuously and systematically.

➤ Activity-oriented: Adults attend training programs to gain skills, socialize, and escape the daily routine.

Adult participation in training programs, according to research and theoretical approaches, is defined by four basic concepts:

➤ *Interaction*: It is believed that participation in an adult education program is the result of the interaction of certain positive and negative pressures or forces (Cross, 1981; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982).

➤ *Self-esteem*: Some adults find it difficult to become interested in a training program because they have low self-esteem. and others fail easily because they have low self-esteem (Cross, 1981).

➤ *Transition*: Transition is a period of change that has multiple effects on the life cycle of participants. This leads to the need to wait, manipulate, and reorganize elements of change (Cross, 1981; Aslanian & Brickell, 1980).

➤ *Expectation*: An individual's expectation is considered to be rewarding or integrating into a comparative reference group (Zarifis, 2014).

Finally, it should be emphasized that the motivations vary accordingly for learning-participation as soon as activated.

➤ With the conditions (social, economic, cultural, mood, etc.)

➤ With the expectations of the participants

➤ Their past experiences (learning, educational, etc.)

The interpretation of the motivation for participation is one of the most important issues in the field of adult education both theoretically and practically (Zarifis, 2014).

All research converges on the strongest motivation teachers have for lifelong learning - internal. Since the main factor in the educational process is the teacher, it is clear that an educational system whose educational potential is characterized by strong motivation and high degree of involvement has the most favorable condition for educational productivity (Papaikonou, 2015). Desire for high self-esteem (Sarvanakis, Vitsilakis and Fokialis, 2014), expectations for upward social mobility and further development (Arar, 2017), the need for continuous professional development, (Sağır, 2014) and the desire to reinforce Their knowledge of new useful methods and strategies (Rzejak et al, 2014) to become better educators with a renewed interest in their profession (Tucker & Fushell, 2013) leads teachers to voluntary participation in curricula aimed at their professional development (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). Moreover, according to the above Greek studies it seems that the Greek teacher chose the profession of interest for it and generally has the intention and willingness to participate in professional development program. In this way he believes that he will upgrade his role at school and change his way of working, with the aim of improving the prestige of his profession and contributing to the organization and improvement of our educational system.

### **Research methodological framework**

The purpose of the research is to investigate teachers' perceptions of the motivation for participation and the needs they sought to cover through postgraduate programs. The main research question is:

➤ What are the motivations of Greek public secondary education teachers in the Athens region to pursue postgraduate university studies?

The present work is part of a larger research on postgraduate teacher education, whose interest and originality lies in the fact that it seeks to identify the factors driving this particular professional group (Secondary Public Teachers) to participate in postgraduate studies, as, despite the importance and necessity of continuing teacher education, we find that educational policy does not anticipate teachers to participate in such programs. In addition, it is a field that has not been particularly explored as opposed to the incentives to participate in compulsory or optional short-term training programs. In this empirical study, the qualitative

approach (qualitative research) was selected and the sampling method was snowball sampling. Sample N consisted of 12 teachers, 6 women and 6 men, aged 46-61, who were working in a secondary school in Attica. Of these, four are single, one divorced, one widowed, 6 are married and eight have children. In addition:

- ten (10) studied in Greece and two (2) abroad
- six (6) opted for distance learning and the other six (6) opted for studying at a university.
- three (3) have obtained two (2) masters, one three (3) and the remaining eight (8) one
- three (3) did postgraduate studies before being appointed to the State, four (4) had 4-10 years of service, six (6) with 10-20 years of service and one with more than 20 years.
- eight (8) paid tuition fees ranging from 2,000-7,000 euros and four (4) did not pay tuition fees but did take exams.

For the research tool, this research used the semi-structured interview type,(the interviews were conducted from 28/1/2018 to 13/2/2018) and qualitative thematic analysis was performed to analyze the data, and the categories associated with the theoretical part and the literature review were identified.

### **Research conclusions - discussion of results**

The motivation of teachers to participate in postgraduate studies is an issue of particular interest in the field of continuing education and lifelong learning. Nine (9) teachers out of the twelve (12) interviewed consider it necessary to do postgraduate education while the remaining three (3) consider it important but not completely necessary. The ten (10) teachers in the sample attended and completed their university studies of their first preference while only two (2) in their second choice, in order to pursue the profession of teacher they chose mainly out of love and affection, and secondarily for future career and career advancement. From early on, as it appears from our research, they are seeking their scientific, pedagogical, didactic improvement, so that they can successfully meet the diverse demands arising from the multiple requirements of their occupational role which is consistent with the research of Papaikonomou (2015), linking the choice of profession with involvement in actions promoting educational productivity. All subjects in the sample have inherent learning motivations, stemming from the interest in dealing with the complex profession of teacher. Before deciding to pursue postgraduate studies, they were particularly active in training with many attendances in training, conferences, workshops and more seeking to continually and systematically develop skills, learn and develop without acquiring remuneration but feelings of integration and self-fulfillment. As soon as there are incentives for learning, there are also incentives to participate in activities from which they can acquire knowledge. The incentives listed in the responses of the 12 teachers mentioned in the implementation of 17 postgraduate programs differ only in two (2) of the four (4) holders of more than one postgraduate degree. It is noted that the first postgraduate did so in order to learn and is relevant to their subject, while the second and the third - in one case - chose it according to their personal interests.

We could therefore classify teachers' responses into three categories, depending on what motivates them most to pursue postgraduate studies, but stresses that all of the above motivations are involved and included in all categories.

- **Personal motivation**

The willingness to do something creative at some point in their personal life from which they want to achieve personal satisfaction is the most important motivation for five (5) sample teachers (6 postgraduate).

*..It was a personal desire, a personal bet of mine for a personal development in a transitional period of my life (divorce)..*

The fact that they have worked for many years in education makes them want to do something that will refresh them and put them back into the game of learning. They are

charmed by the idea of becoming students again and returning to college campus after many years

*..I was intrigued by the idea that I would go back to university to see things after it had been over a decade since I had finished so maybe things have changed and something new has happened. That is, I was interested in seeing things I had seen at university but some years ago..*

They feel that professional routine and repetition bring standardization and misery to their daily lives. So, through graduate study, they try to reverse this unpleasant climate.

*..It was a postgraduate I did in the economical crisis, the crisis had affected me so much psychologically I felt a vast misery to be around me and I didn't see a way out of this misery. So I thought the Postgraduate would give me a sense of doing something creative and do something that would open my mind..*

When the conditions are right for them, they decide to pursue academic studies. Indicatively they cite professional stability, settling their family obligations, securing financial resources, finding a suitable institution and finding the correct student for postgraduate studies, appropriate topics and curriculum. They choose to pursue a masters degree in which their subject matter is not related to their subject area, but rather to education in its general sense or to areas of interest that do not appear to be directly related to the teaching profession. The teachers in this group invest in learning capital, without expecting their professional and financial development. They pursue goals that meet their personal motivations, which do not depend on the impact they will have on their social environment. The above conclusions are in line with the findings of Sarvanakis, Vitsilakis and Fokialis (2014).

- **Cognitive motivation**

The need to learn new knowledge, which relates either to the general reasoning process or specifically to their subject in order to become better at their job, is the key motivation for five (5) postgraduate teachers.

*..I was interested in expanding the knowledge that had only to do with the subjects that we handle in the product class of course..*

They understand very early on that undergraduate studies are weak and that it is unnecessary for initial education to provide the teacher with all the knowledge and skills he or she will need for the rest of his or her career.

*...I thought he would do me a great job as an educator and make me a better person. To open my own horizons and find out what has changed in education and teaching methods over the years..*

*...Yes because I would learn psychology and could deal with what is happening at school. As a teacher I was missing a great deal from the field of psychology, I had never been taught it..*

Teachers decide to continue their education in order to improve their teaching and thus to provide upgraded quality educational services to their students. They choose postgraduates either directly related to their subject area or education in general. They believe that they need to deepen their knowledge in order to feel confident with the increased demands of education, to increase their cognitive resources, to learn to use the new tools provided by technology development and to learn new pedagogical theories so they can deal effectively with what is happening at school.

*..The academic knowledge you acquire as well as your subject knowledge combined with new methodologies and educational techniques attract the interest of your students. So it makes you a better teacher..*

Teachers also feel that today, due to the changes and transformations taking place in the field of education and school and the intensification of education, there is an additional need for alertness and the search for sources of knowledge through educational research. They believe that only postgraduate studies show how to recruit but also how to manage new

knowledge. In addition, they believe that only knowledge enables them to win and that, if every teacher becomes aware of and activated in this direction, education can also be improved. The above is in line with the findings of the researches of Sağır (2014), Tucker & Fushell (2013) and Rzejak et al (2014), mentioned in the literature review.

- **Incentives related to career development**

The intention of upgrading the main qualifications, which will help them in their career development and future claiming a position of responsibility, drives four (4) teachers to pursue six (6) postgraduate courses

*..I had served as a teacher abroad and I really enjoyed the experience and there I decided that I wanted to work in Greek language education abroad and in particular I would like to work as an education coordinator. A prerequisite is a pedagogical Postgraduate and excellent knowledge of English. Well the actions I had to take would be to get a Masters and that's why I started..*

The acquisition of additional qualifications is directly linked to their careers and evolution in the educational hierarchy as we have seen in the surveys of Arar (2017), Sağır (2014) and Gorozidis&Papaioannou (2014). This conception is justified by the fact that a postgraduate degree is assigned to all the selection procedures of educational executives. Teachers of this concept choose postgraduate studies which focused mainly on the field of educational administration (3 masters), in which they intend to claim a future position.

*..The first one I chose to nominate as an IT teacher (it was an appointment qualifier) and the second one in education administration, to take charge and now I'm a school principal..*

In this category we included both (2) teachers who did postgraduate studies either because it is a prerequisite for their entry into education or for their appointment to special type schools (eg pilot) as well as the unique case of their teacher our sample who obtained a master's degree in order to consolidate their professional position in the face of evaluation, which is rumored to be applicable in the future.

*..I heard different things about assessment and so on and I felt that the graduate would offer me something better in terms of job security..*

The motivations in this category are teacher-oriented and externalized. Although the motives are different for the whole sample, all teachers find it unacceptable and risky not to participate in lifelong learning processes. They consider it to be a sample of either laziness or 'public servant' mentality, which will sooner or later lead to teachers being overwhelmed with corresponding perceptions. Professional development has been cited by all teachers in the sample as a condition of job satisfaction, and they believe that if the teacher does not feel that he is evolving and failing to deliver, then he will automatically reach professional burnout. Postgraduate studies are essentially a way for a teacher to handle his job and to be active, even when he is older.

### **Conclusion**

In the conclusions of the research we come across almost all the theories of the motivation for participation which were developed in the theoretical part. Teachers under the interaction of specific 'favorable' facts and circumstances (Cross, 1981; Darkenwald& Merriam, 1982), decide to participate in postgraduate programs which they choose according to their orientation (Houle, 1961), expecting specific benefits. The transition, which is interpreted as a continuous evolution of learning events and cognitive and emotional changes (Cross, 1981; Aslanian&Brickell, 1980), leads teachers to the 'need' to learn so they can handle change at a personal and social level. Also behind the teachers' answers are the hope and the expectation (Zarifis, 2014), for change through participation in an educational activity. In addition, intrinsic motivation and self-confidence (Cross, 1981), are so strong that they are able to overcome the difficulties they face during their studies as they try to cope with the many roles they are called upon to play, namely family member, professional and graduate student. Finally, it is observed, according to the findings of the research, that teachers' external motivations also

become internal, so they continue to have a prolonged involvement in educational activities, even after the end of their postgraduate studies. The positive effects of internal incentives for teachers to participate in training programs are also found in research by Gorozidis&Papaioannou (2014) and Arar (2014), which further stress that teacher mobilization and prolonged involvement in learning processes depend primarily on this category of motivation.

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