

The role of training regarding teacher's evaluation: A survey with second-grade teachers at the regional unit of Achaia

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the views of second grade teachers of the prefecture of Achaia in Greece regarding the relation between the training teachers receive and their evaluation on their teaching performance (teacher's training and evaluation). More specifically the relationship between the training programs teachers have attended and their attitude towards evaluation is investigated. The obstacles teachers meet regarding their participation in training programs is also investigated. The research was carried out with the tool of questionnaire while the analysis of the data collected was made with the statistical package SPSS. The results showed that there is a neutral to negative attitude towards the evaluation process, while regarding the obstacles encountered in attending training programs, the most important one was the lack of support on behalf of the state.

Keywords: Evaluation, Assessment, School evaluation, training

Introduction

In a rapidly developing and increasingly globalized world, where technology has influenced all types of domains and fields of the human activity, education is called upon to play a special role. On the one hand, the smooth transition to the digital educational age should take place and, on the other hand, a constant updating of teachers' training should be applied. The latter is more urgent, as the demands on education differ year after year, while at the same time the teachers' role changes. In relation to Greece, the European Commission notes in its annual report the absence of data concerning the quality of education provided and notes that it is worrying that the procedures for the evaluation of schools and teachers (self-evaluation for schools and individual teachers' evaluation), even in private education have been suspended (OECD, 2016) · (European Commission, 2016).

Moreover, in primary and general secondary education, participation in professional development is optional in Denmark, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden (European Commission, 2019, p.31). In most EU countries, teacher appraisal is common practice (reference years 2016/2017). In many cases, it is regulated by top-level education authorities, such as ministries of education while in other cases, schools or local authorities have been given full autonomy in this matter (e.g. Czechia, Denmark, the Netherlands). Greece, Ireland and Malta are the only countries that do not carry out in-service teacher appraisals (European Commission, 2019, p.34). Although legislation on in-service teacher appraisal exists, its implementation is currently suspended pending a review (European Commission, 2019, p.35). According to the bibliographic review, several masters and doctoral theses on teacher evaluation have been written.

Teachers should be trained in the new educating approaches and methods and after they have explored their usefulness, they should implement them in their classes. Thus, teachers are offered the opportunity to share their experiences with colleagues through an open procedure of self-reflection and cooperative building of knowledge (Anastasiadis, 2011, p.693). Through the above procedure, "training aims at systematically influencing the teachers' knowledge, skills, values, concepts and attitude. This influence can lead to a change in their educational ways, which, in turn, can cause positive changes in the wider educational or societal frame in the long run" (Maniatis, 2014). From the plain proposal to the cooperative

learning tools – for example, web 2.0 – teachers’ training encounters a multidimensional, ever-evolving environment. Evaluation not only of the programs but also of the teachers and educators, as they are directly involved in the procedure, can be achieved through training programs (Giotopoulos, 2014, pp.26-27).

The new data presented by this research deal with the role of training towards evaluation and on the other hand with teachers' points of view concerning evaluation. Since the interaction with other teachers affects what one does, relations are critical. The change implies that a teacher is willing to learn something new, and the interaction is the primary basis for social learning. New concepts, new behaviors, new skills and new beliefs / attitudes, directly depend on whether teachers work as isolated individuals or not. Teacher isolation and collegiality provide the best starting point for examining what works best for the teacher (Fullan, 2007).

Theoretical underpinning

Although teachers are responsible for shaping the school reality and contributing to the promotion of educational changes and the effectiveness of the Education Act (Pedagogical Institute, 2009, p.3), in Greece a deficit is recorded concerning the systematic training of teachers in daily school practice (didactic, pedagogical, administrative) (Komninou et al., 2016, p.200). The implementation of the training activities is fragmentary and does not meet the expectations of the majority of Greek teachers (Koumentos, 2015, p.390).

In surveys conducted in fifty US states (Darling-Hammond, 2000) that had to do with case-study analyses, there was a correlation between the qualifications of teachers and the performance of students. The findings of the qualitative and quantitative analysis suggest that the investment policies in the quality of education are associated with improvements in the performance of students (Darling-Hammond, 2000) and that certified teachers (who had attended training several weeks), improved the performance of their students than teachers who did not attend this training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Even a relatively small increase in the financial resources of the school can relate to a significant improvement of students’ performance (Greenwald et. al., 1996).

Professional development

Evans (2002, p.13) believes that very little attention has been given to the question of what professional development means. As Papanoum argues (2008, p.57) training, in any form, has to do with knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers and aims to improve their work. According to Xochellis (2006, pp.117-119), the basic training of Secondary-school teachers is conducted at university level, while it is still geared towards preparing scientists without any professional preparation as future teachers. Secondary school teachers in their majority are not prepared for the future scope of their professional activity (Xochellis, 2006, p.118). According to Nikoloudi (2016, pp.246-254), in her research regarding the professional development of teachers as a result of in-school training, it seems “there is improvement in the professional development of the kindergarten teachers, the relations among colleagues and in how the educational environment is shaped in the classroom”. In-school training was recognized as one of the most positive parts of the self-evaluation pilot in a research conducted among secondary education school directors in five (5) educational districts in our country (Marabea & Darra, 2016, p.48). In addition, it seems it is the most appropriate form of training when it comes to both self-evaluation and the professional development of the teachers, while at the same time it constitutes an element of instrumental autonomy and self-management of the school-units. Hence, substantial subsidiarity of school units can be achieved (Marabea & Darra, 2016, p.48).

In such a competitive and international environment in which we live in nations are compared to the performance of their students and the results are used as potential economic indicators. Therefore, the politicians and policy makers – want to avoid unforeseen

implications caused by external assessments, such as the OECD or other external organizations with great influence. Therefore, the 'Know thyself' is extremely important in the international arena (MacBeath, 2005, p.34). According to the "Redesign of Education" (European Commission, 2012), it is emphasized that the well-established continuous professional development of teachers should include regular feedback and support from teacher trainers. This assessment can be used to help teachers recognize their strengths and to address their weaknesses in terms of their teaching methods. This support also enhances their self-esteem towards society.

Nias et al. (1989) and Leithwood (1992) have noted three dimensions in the process of personal development which supports professional development. The first dimension involves the idea that the evolution of a person goes through different stages, with the highest levels not achieved until several years after this person enters teaching. The second dimension involves the idea that teachers at different points in the life cycle have different attitudes towards change and improvement as well as different demands in terms of professional development. Personal development issues, which are specific to the teaching career, constitute a third dimension. Whereas promotion is accompanied by rewards and incentives, those who suffer denial of promotion may become discouraged and feel undervalued by their management for the work they offer. If commitment and enthusiasm are withdrawn, it will have an obvious impact on the classroom performance. It might be argued that these aspects of personal and professional development place an overemphasis on the importance of personal factors in teaching.

Moreover, the implementation of educational transformation efforts from 2010 onwards, even though they had been legislated and funded (Koumentos, 2015, pp.397-398), was unsuccessful. Eventually, the entire effort of this educational "roadmap" was not developed as initially planned, was deconstructed and finally abandoned (Koumentos, 2015, p.399).

Fullan & Hargreaves (1992) point out that many factors can help or hinder the development of educational initiatives. The possible lack of resources for instance, may limit the provision of basic daily materials of the school, which would prevent in its turn the planning and implementation of attending to workshops or give the opportunity for the teacher to listen to their colleagues while teaching and cooperate with them. Hargreaves & Fullan (1992) argue that the context of teaching is the focus and the epicenter for teacher development. They urge the development of collaborative school culture in which teachers support and learn from each other. In this way, the above framework will work for the benefit of the successful implementation of educational change, best practices in professional development and focus on the positive results of student's achievements. Avalos (2011) made a review of papers published in the journal 'Teaching and Teacher Education' for a period of ten years (2000-2010) on the professional development of teachers. In the second part of her research, she selected nine articles for closer examination. The work highlights the complexity and multifactorial professional learning of teachers and especially that research, having taken note of all these parameters, can provide optimism for the results. What remains is to ensure their sustainability over time.

Self-evaluation is considered to serve professional development through the tools used by teachers to record their own performance and professional development and, thus, gain greater self-awareness, become more thoughtful and exercise greater self-criticism (MacBeath, 2005, p.35). A framework for self-evaluation of school units as it operates in England, is presented by MacBeath (2005: pp.36-49 ·Faubert, 2009) in which, when organizations share the sense of a common goal, they function in a concrete context, use concrete criteria and have the necessary tools for teaching, schools are reinforced to tell their own story. Greece faces some of the challenges that are widespread in OECD countries such as initial teacher education, effective induction and continuous professional development, but also some very country-specific challenges (OECD, 2017).

Methodology - Research aim

The purpose of this survey is to explore the views and attitudes of teachers concerning training and especially its role in relation to teacher's self-evaluation.

Research questions

The research questions posed to investigate the role of training towards the assessment and self-evaluation of school units are:

1. What are teachers' personal opinions on evaluation?
2. What are the obstacles encountered by teachers when they evaluate the school unit?
3. What are teachers' personal opinions on training in relation to the assessment and self-evaluation of schools?

Sample of research, distribution and collection of the methodological tool

The questionnaire used consisted of six sections and a total of 118 questions. The choice of the quantitative sample of teachers was made from the website of ELSTAT (Greek Statistical Authority). According to ELSTAT and the latest published data relating to the year 2014 for secondary schools and high schools, it seems that 750 persons work as teachers in secondary high schools in the prefecture of Achaia, while in secondary junior high schools there are 1057 teachers. Overall, in Achaia for the school year 2014, 1807 people served teaching positions. The filling of the questionnaire was either written on printed sheets, or electronically via Google forms. In total, 251 questionnaires were collected in the survey conducted from April 15, 2018 to 31 May 2018. The responses were digitized and anonymized and then processed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 21).

In the second section, after the demographic questions, both positive and negative attitudes of teachers towards evaluation were investigated through Likert-type questions. Using appropriate statistical operations, two new quantitative variables were created to investigate their positive and negative attitude towards evaluation. The reliability of the scale was controlled, using Cronbach's Alpha, the statistical index of internal consistency (0.925 for the positive attitude and 0.871 for the negative attitude) which represented a satisfactory quality of the measurement. Through descriptive statistics the measures of Central Tendency, Position and Dispersion were processed.

Results of the Survey

In the present survey, the structured questionnaire (Cohen et al., 2008, p.418) was utilized, consisting of 5 parts and 33 questions in total, 28 of which are structured, closed ended and 6 structured, open ended questions in order for participants to answer freely, expressing their opinion or views (Cohen et al., 2008, p.419).

Starting from the sex of the participants teachers, we see that 40% of the sample is male teachers and the rest 60% female teachers. Regarding the age of the participating teachers, the majority (42%) was over 50 years old. Just 20% of the sample was teachers younger than 41 years old at the time of the survey. The vast majority of the participating teachers, 89%, almost 9 out of 10 were living in Patras at the day of their participation in the survey. The majority of the teachers that participated in the present survey were graduates of a university, without an additional postgraduate degree, 45.42%. 12.35% were TEI (Technological Educational Institute) graduates. 36.25% were teachers with a postgraduate degree. 4% had completed a doctoral thesis and just 2% had had postdoctoral studies. Eight out of ten of the participating teachers (81%) worked as tenured teachers. 6% worked as full-time substitutes, 11% as hourly teachers while just 1% of the sample worked as either part-time substitutes or something else. The majority of the sample worked in high school at the time of their participation in the survey, 39%. One out of three participants (33%) was a teacher in a general upper secondary school (Lyceum School). 19% of the participating teachers worked in a vocational upper secondary school, 6% in a VTI and finally, 2% in primary education.

In the 2nd section, there are 16 Likert-type questions (ordinal 5-point scale), separated into two sub-sections, aiming at depicting the positive or negative attitude of the teachers towards the evaluation procedure. Specifically, 8 questions with a positive expression towards evaluation were asked. The results of these questions are presented in the following aggregated table.

Table 3: Results of the positive expression questions

QUESTIONS (POSITIVE EXPRESSION)	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Teachers receive feedback regarding their work in order to improve its quality.	8%	22%	30%	24%	16%
Student performance is improved	21%	31%	25%	16%	7%
Teachers that lag behind receive proper support	22%	29%	26%	16%	7%
Teachers who do not work systematically will increase efforts	12%	30%	29%	19%	10%
Real weaknesses and inadequacies may surface	7%	19%	34%	29%	12%
Teachers are obliged to work together even when the interpersonal relations are poor	16%	27%	32%	20%	5%
It provides results that reflect the real needs of the teachers for improvement	11%	27%	27%	28%	7%
It aims at securing and evaluating the quality of education	14%	24%	26%	28%	8%

Table 4: Reliability Statistics. Evaluation of the internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized		
Cronbach's Alpha	Items	N of Items
,925		8

The result of the above survey demonstrates that the internal consistency of the 8 elements – questions is secured. More specifically, Cronbach's Alpha index was calculated as equal to 0.925, a number close to the unit and is significantly higher than 0.70, with is essentially considered the minimum acceptable value.

In the following histogram, the distribution of the teachers' positive expression scores regarding the evaluation procedure is presented. A slightly negative shift of the scores can be seen, that is towards lower grading. Just one in four teachers has a score higher than 29 out of 40.

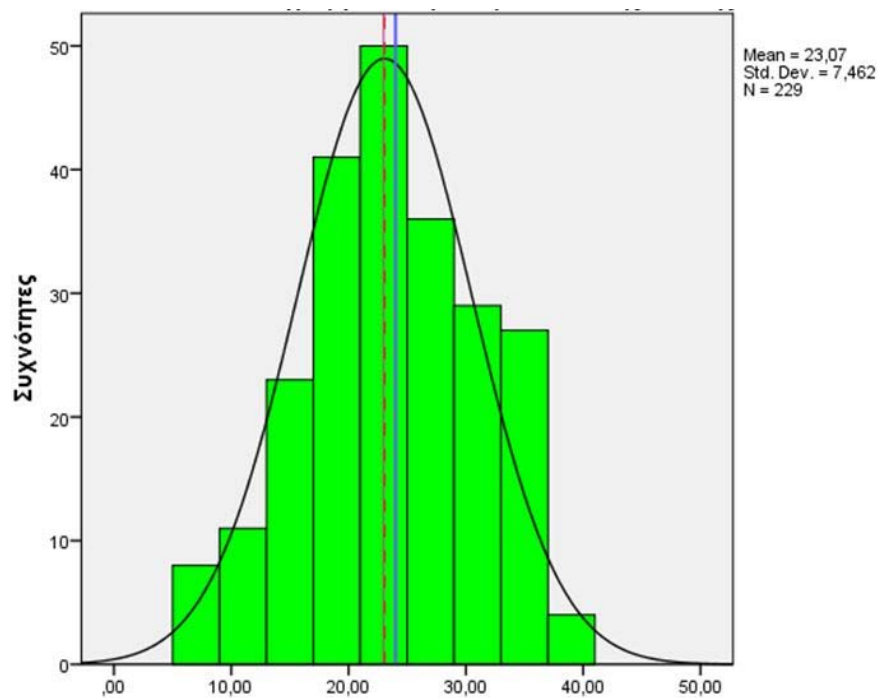


Image1: Histogram of the positive expression scores

Table1: Results of the negative expression questions

Questions (Negative expression)	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Individualism and rivalry are promoted rather than the cooperation of teachers	24%	24%	21%	19%	12%
The teachers' autonomy is limited so their role is downplayed	32%	33%	17%	11%	7%
It is used as a means of controlling the teachers by the Ministry of Education	15%	23%	28%	17%	17%
It is a means to dismiss teachers	25%	22%	16%	18%	19%
It is devised and applied without seeking the teachers' assent	12%	13%	25%	24%	26%
It is conducted by evaluators whose scientific knowledge and objective judgment are disputed	11%	17%	22%	28%	22%
It is not necessary as teachers work responsibly and systematically	30%	34%	22%	11%	3%

Table 7: Reliability Statistics Evaluation of internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,871	,871	7

The result of the above survey demonstrates that the internal consistency of the 7 elements – questions is secured. More specifically, Cronbach's Alpha index was calculated as equal to 0.871, a number close to the unit and is significantly higher than 0.70, with is essentially considered the minimum acceptable value.

In the histogram below the distribution of the negative expression scores of the teachers is presented. It is easy to observe that the scores of the teachers shift in their majority towards

negative, towards lower scores that is. The blue dotted line defines the position of the median while the green continuous line the position of the arithmetic mean

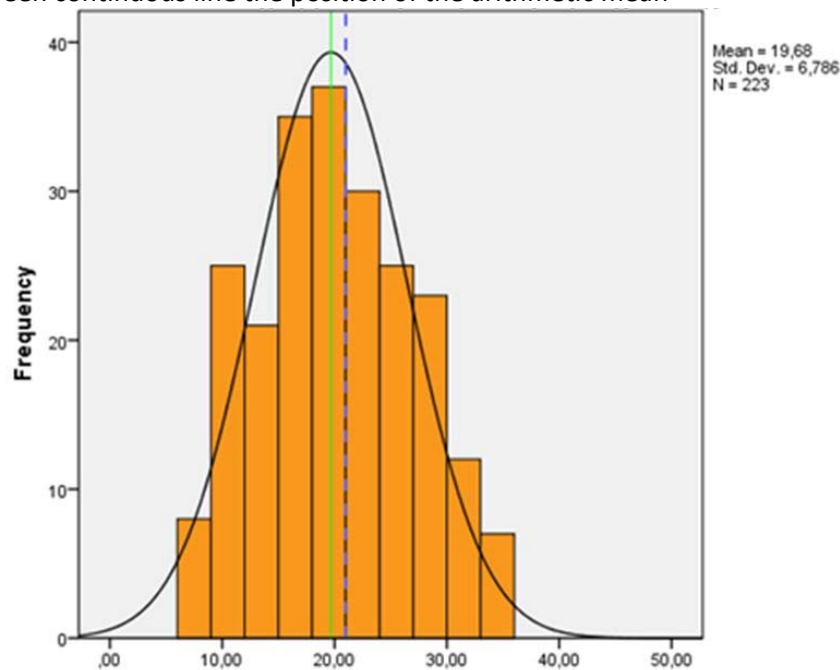


Image 11: Histogram of the negative expression scores

The statistical analysis and presentation of results of the present survey is divided into two parts, the univariate and the multivariate analysis (Giotopoulos, 2018). In the first part of the research, that of the univariate analysis, the distributions of responses of the participants were presented to all the closed questions cited in the questionnaire. In the second part of multivariate analysis an investigation of the potential impact of specific factors on how teachers responded was made. More specifically, the effects of the factors such as sex, age, educational level and employment status were investigated.

In the second section, after the demographic questions, Likert-type questions explored the positive and negative attitude of teachers towards evaluation. Both positive attitude scale together with the negative attitude scale demonstrated a neutral to negative attitude of teachers towards the evaluation process, which does not seem to be verified by Zouganeli et al. (2008, p.433), where the majority of respondents perceive positively the evaluation of teachers.

The influence of gender factor did not appear to significantly affect the attitude of teachers towards the assessment as it is verified by researchers Kasimati and Gialama (2003, p.4), while it is not verified in Charakopoulos' research (1998, p.216).

The influence of the age factor seemed to affect significantly the attitude of teachers. Teachers from 26-35 years were significantly more positive towards evaluation in relation to other teachers, which is not verified by the research of Kasimati and Gialama (2003, p.4), who argue that in terms of years of teaching, those who work several years as teachers are in favor of the evaluation (11-20 years and over 26), while teachers with less years of work (1-5) and (6-10) are against evaluation. Charakopoulos' (1998, p.212) findings are similar to the above researchers' stressing that teachers with over 25 years of work are more positive to both the evaluation of the teaching work at the school, together with the individual evaluation of teachers. On the contrary, teachers with work experience from 6 to 15 years have the most negative attitude.

Moreover, the level of education seemed to significantly affect the teachers participating in the present study. Teachers who had only graduated from university had a less positive attitude compared to those with a master's or a doctoral thesis (e.g. M.Sc. or PhD graduates).

In addition, the employment status greatly influenced the attitudes evaluation scores of teachers towards evaluation. Teachers holding a tenure (i.e. with an open contract) had considerably less positive attitude towards others, which is also verified by Kasimati and Gialama (2003, p.4) where they note that substitute teachers are mostly in favor of evaluation compared to teachers.

In the third section of the questionnaire, questions about the barriers that may exist for (self-evaluation of schools) in-school self-evaluation were investigated. According to teachers' answers the sorting of the obstacles from more significant to less significant showed that the lack of training in the school accounted for the most important obstacle. The second most important obstacle was the reduction of state financial resources. The above finding is in agreement with Passias et al. (2013, p.10) where they argue that the indices with negative valuation (which were assessed as areas with quite serious problems or had more negative than positive indices), the index 'Financial resources of the school' appeared as the first obstacle by 60%. As third and fourth obstacles the lack of school culture and the lack of teachers were highlighted. The age factor has largely determined the responses of teachers in assessing the significance of obstacles. Also, the assessment of obstacles was differentiated for teachers with different educational levels and different working time contracts.

In the fourth section, the concept of teacher training was mainly investigated. The most important obstacle for attending seminars had to do with the lack of state support which is confirmed by Katsarou & Dedouli (2008, p.97), while the lack of free time and the use of the training programs as a vehicle for the trainer's self-promotion and not as an opportunity to learn new things were also highlighted.

Additionally, in this case, the teachers' answers were significantly determined by the factors of age, educational level and employment status, which are confirmed by Katsarou and Dedouli (2008, p.76). The majority of teachers had attended until the time of the survey ICT training (A level) or training from Regional Trainings Centers for teachers. Monitoring in person was evaluated by teachers as the most appropriate training type, followed in order of importance, by repeated cycles of in-person seminars at regular time intervals and lastly the mixed model. Of course, different types were assessed by teachers according to their age, their educational level and their employment contract. The vast majority of teachers argued that they want to attend training that deals with the development of skills and enhances their knowledge which is confirmed by Matsagouras et al., (2014, p.139). The forthcoming evaluation appeared to be the least significant reason for attaining training sessions. Teachers said they would like to be trained mainly on classroom management and various teaching methods, also put forward by Passias et al. (2013, p.20), as well as Katsarou & Dedouli (2008, p.74).

In the fifth section combinatorial questions related to the concepts of evaluation and training were addressed to participants. 60% of teachers consider that there must be training on the evaluation of educational and in-school self-evaluation before they start, something confirmed by the Greek law 152/2013, according to which there must be a direct link between evaluation and training (Matsagouras et al., 2014, p.17). Also, the majority of teachers consider that the training should be continuous throughout teachers' careers, according to Katsarou & Dedouli (2008, p.98), while additionally, a large percentage of teachers argued that the training should be done with exemption of the teacher from his teaching duties, which is confirmed by Katsarou & Dedouli (2008, p.98). Finally, teachers noted that training should start before the assessment, for purposes of better information and also for directly addressing their concerns and queries, a claim also made by Matsagouras et al., (2014, p.17).

Discussion

According to Fullan & Hargreaves (1992), a highly developed and informal culture of cooperation can be just the frame needed for schools to be more effective. In the above phrase there is an agreement with the results of the answers as recorded in this investigation. More specifically, according to the answers regarding the Question 'I think that the evaluation: a) forced teachers to work together, even if they don't have good interpersonal relations among them, ("Not at all" and "Slightly" was responded by 43.43%, while "Very" and "Extremely" by 25.09%) and b) promotes individualism and competition rather than cooperation among teachers ("Not at all" and "Slightly" was responded by 47.41% while "Very" and "Extremely" by 32.27%). It seems that teachers have a positive tendency towards cooperation between them.

According to Koumentos (2016, p.123) we need an education policy that is scientifically proven, has duration, continuity, control and evaluation that has been redrawn and adjusted to concerning all the changes that are linked to social and productive needs of Greek society. In the above proposal, teachers can assist by thinking that their being informed in assessment may promote educational change. More specifically, according to the question 'To what extent do you consider that training in evaluation issues can support educational changes and reforms?', "Not at all" and "Slightly" was selected by 27.30%, while "Very" and "Extremely" by 37.90%. There is a tendency of approximately 38% arguing that the implementation of training concerning assessment can be realized so as to support the necessary changes and reforms.

The role of education in particular, should play precisely this role: the continuous renovation with all that happens in education. The institution of the evaluation can be tapped through training so that teachers may acquire a positive or more positive attitude towards it. According to the question 'To what extent do you consider that training can affect the attitude of teachers in the evaluation?', "Not at all" and "Slightly" was responded by 24.50%, while "Very" and "Extremely" by 36.80%. Also, according to the question 'To what extent do you consider that training can create a positive attitude while implementing?', "Not at all" and "Slightly" was responded by 27.80%, while "Very" and "Extremely" by 36.10%. There is a tendency of approximately 37% arguing that training can affect teacher's attitude towards evaluation and more specifically create a positive attitude by 36.10%.

Additionally, to the question 'Training should be continuous throughout the course of teaching career, for specific periods', "Not at all" and "Slightly" was responded by 11.15%, while "Very" and "Extremely" by 61.35%. Consequently, there is a fairly large percentage of teachers wishing their continuous training, which is confirmed by relevant researches (Katsarou & Dedouli, 2008 ·Kasimati & Gialama, 2003 ·Matsagouras, 2012, p.6).

Implications to Research and Practice

An aspect that could be investigated in the future is exploring the views of school executives (namely, of principals/directors and assistant principals) on the same questionnaire in order to compare their views against teachers' responses.

Furthermore, a future research study focused on detecting training needs of teachers on the evaluation and in-school self-evaluation, with a detailed description of the educational frame (i.e. means of training, teacher's motivation) would help to improve the implementation of the evaluation.

Additionally, conducting future research on a larger sample size, either at regional level or at country level, will allow the fulfillment of the criteria of validity and reliability. In this way, the results could be generalized and become a reference point for the entire educational community in order to make corrections or interventions by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs.

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