



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



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ISSN: 2226-6348

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v4-i1/1656>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARPED/v4-i1/1656

Received: 12 January 2015, **Revised:** 16 February 2015, **Accepted:** 28 February 2015

Published Online: 20 March 2015

In-Text Citation: (Brinia et al., 2015)

To Cite this Article: Brinia, V., Tiokas, T., & Argiriou, A. (2015). Teachers' Evaluation: Views of Secondary School Teachers in the Greek District of Pieria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 4(1), 207–214.

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Vol. 4(1) 2015, Pg. 207 - 214

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Teachers' Evaluation: Views of Secondary School Teachers in the Greek District of Pieria

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Abstract

This research presents the issue of teacher evaluation. In recent years in Greece, there are continuous efforts for implementing the evaluation of the teachers, but without success. Past experiences of institutional evaluation, and the latest unpleasant budgetary developments in Greece intensify the confrontation between the Ministry and the educational community. The purpose of this research is to investigate the teachers' opinion about the usefulness of evaluation as it will be implemented through the new legal framework. Furthermore, the quality criteria that participants deem necessary for the optimal implementation of the institution (who, when, how and for how long) to improve and upgrade their educational role and their educational work and the connection with the pay and grading changes of teachers are analyzed. The methodological approach of the research was qualitative and the data collection was through semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers in post-compulsory secondary education in the prefecture of Pieria.

The main findings of the research show the teachers' lack of information in relevance to their evaluation, which creates their insecurities and phobic attitudes regarding the implementation and impact of the evaluation in the educational community. They recognize the usefulness of evaluation as a tool for improvement of the educational work and the school's environment, but under conditions that they do not think that they will be fulfilled through the new legal framework. This is why the vast majority of teachers indicate quite frustrated and pessimistic about the developments and the future of post-compulsory secondary education.

Keywords: Evaluation of Educators, Consequences of Evaluation, Objectivity, Evaluation Purposes.

Introduction

The evaluation of educational work is one of the most important factors in the implementation of educational policies and during decision making. The methodologies and techniques which are employed during the evaluation are linked with the effective achievement of the objectives of the educational process (Makrakis et al., 1999). However, the evaluation in

Greece is not widely accepted. A big part of the educators is deeply opposed to the implementation of the evaluation, considering that it is used as a means of justification for the dismissal of teachers who question the government and they work in the public sector. These views are reinforced by the negative influence of the external evaluation (by school inspectors) which was applied until 1981 to teachers of primary and secondary education (Manenti, 2009).

The purpose of this research is to investigate the opinions of teachers in non-mandatory education, regarding the usefulness of the evaluation of their educational work and the criteria they consider necessary for the optimal implementation of the process (who will be responsible, when will it happen, the means and the duration), in order to improve and upgrade their educational role.

The Evaluation in the Educational Process

A conceptual approach to the concept of evaluation is given by Mavrogiorgis (2002): "Evaluation is a systematic process by which we attach a certain value (quantitative or qualitative) to an object, instrument, effect, face, etc. applying specific criteria and methodology". As mentioned by Makraki (1999) "most agree (see Kassotakis, 1990; Chinapah & Miron, 1990; Dimitropoulos, 1991; Calder, 1995), that evaluation in education is a process that aims to determine the degree of achievement of an educational system or its component parts such as a lesson, a teaching method or the performance of the students (Mr al., 1999).

An obvious answer to the question "why is evaluation necessary" is to access and improve the educational work of the school unit, through targeted interventions (Koutouzis, 2008). Through the process of evaluation of teachers useful conclusions can be drawn. If these conclusions are properly used, they will help to improve the educational system and to promote changes and innovative solutions from the government to the problems currently plaguing the area of education (Zouganeli et al., 2007). Many teachers will be able to identify their weaknesses and improve as professionals and as people, resulting in the increment of their self-esteem. But this motivation will even serve educators who practice their profession effectively, helping them to become better since there is always room for improvement (Katsiri, 2010).

The evaluation of the educational work enhances rational decision making, highlights the need for improvements or changes in the implemented educational practices and methods, increases the level of knowledge provided by the educational work and contributes to the development of schools (Katsarou & Dedouli, 2008). Another reason for the usefulness of teachers' evaluation is the encouragement to continue their work with more zeal, since the interventions and structural changes that will come through the feedback of the process will not be isolated. Teachers will share their experiences and concerns with their colleagues and they will gain new knowledge and skills (Loukeris et al., 2009). Therefore, it is necessary for the teachers to see themselves as a part of the educational community.

Critics of the evaluation, consider that it encourages the non-objectivity because there are not specific people with the responsibility to be evaluators. Moreover a large part of the teachers who trust the school principals for the role of the evaluators, emerges as conditions firstly the objectivity for their choice in that role and secondly to be properly trained so that they can cope with the requirements of the new role (Charakopoulos, 1998; Zouganeli k.syn., 2007; Moutzouri-Manousos and DASKALOPOULOS, 2005). One of the arguments against the evaluation is that it

does not include all parties involved in the educational process, but only teachers (Katsiris, 2010), thereby transferring all the responsibility for the implementation of educational policy to them, creating a stressful environment for them.

Some also say that the evaluation will abolish the equality between teachers and categorize them, creating a negative climate among teachers, which obviously is not useful for the educational process.

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate the opinions of teachers in non-mandatory secondary education, about the utility of the evaluation of the educational project, as implemented through the current legal framework. Furthermore, the criteria they deem necessary for the optimal implementation of the evaluation are presented, in order to improve and upgrade their educational role and their educational work.

Participants in Research

The survey participants are teachers serving in General Lyceums and EPAL of Katerini. The selection of the participants is made with non-random sampling. This means that their choice was guided by teachers who possess the typical characteristics of the sample in order to meet the needs of the research (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007; Robin, 2007). So based on the above considerations we reached a sample of 12 secondary school teachers, of whom two are teachers in EPAL while the remaining 10 in General Lyceums of Katerini. This research took place in spring of 2013.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection tools in this study are semi-structured interviews in order to achieve flexibility and quality, thus greater depth in our research (Robin, 2007). The questions are open-ended so we were able to use sub-questions to deepen and to give the necessary explanations in questions that will be arisen. It will also help to develop a climate of cooperation, which will give us the opportunity to have a more accurate estimate of the actual opinions of the respondents about the research topic (Cohen et al., 2007; Robin, 2007).

After collecting the data through the transcript of the interviews, we began compiling the data of each question, using the technique of qualitative and quantitative content analysis. One of the steps of applying content analysis is the construction of thematic categories under which we organized the research data. The category is good to be inclusive and mutually exclusive (Robin, 2007). This research used mainly qualitative analysis since we want to achieve a deeper analysis and interpretation of the views and attitudes of teachers who participated in the research. At the same time we used the quantitative analysis to examine the frequency of these concepts. The categories are:

- a) Perceptions of teachers about the implementation of the evaluation process
- b) Perceptions of teachers about the purpose and objectives of the evaluation
- c) Perceptions of teachers about who and why should be chosen as evaluator.

d) Perceptions of teachers about their fears and concerns about the implementation of the evaluation.

Findings

Perceptions of teachers about the implementation of the evaluation process

With this research question we plan to present the views of teachers about the implementation of the evaluation.

View	Frequency
Doubts as to the objectivity of the evaluation	31%
Identification of evaluation as punishment and intimidation	20%
Doubts as to the feasibility of the evaluation	17%
Evaluation is all about skills and abilities	17%
Prediction of failure of the evaluation	14%

Table 1: Distribution of frequencies of responses of teachers about their views on the implementation of the evaluation process

Table 1 shows that the reservations of participants on the objectivity of the evaluation within the application are many. Major causes of these reservations, as developed through the answers of the respondents, is the fear of domination and political interests and the sense that it cannot be practically applied with clarity and objectivity, due to the specificities of the sector of education. Nine respondents expressed this view. Six participants identified the application of evaluation as punishment and intimidation. Five respondents stated that the evaluation process will reflect the skills and abilities. Also five participants expressed doubts about the feasibility of the application of evaluation. Finally, four participants expressed the belief that evaluation will not be properly applied.

Perceptions of teachers about the purpose and objectives of the evaluation

In our effort to document the purpose and objectives of the evaluation, as teachers think they should be, we invited them to answer the question "What is your opinion about the aims and objectives of the evaluation of educational work ?

Purpose	Frequency
Improving the educational work	32%
Better teachers	32%
Better education	32%
Better rewards	4%

Table 2 Responses of teachers about their views on the purpose and objectives of the evaluation

As presented in table 2, the first view is that the purpose of evaluation should be to improve the educational project and the teachers themselves. Here it is worth mentioning that seven

teachers state that the purpose of the evaluation should be both self-improvement and that the aim should be to provide the best training. Finally it was mentioned by one participant that the aim should be the reward.

Perceptions of teachers about who and why should be chosen as evaluator

The purpose of the third question is to detect and record who and why should be chosen as evaluators in order to have the acceptance of the participants.

Evaluators	Frequency
School Principal	25%
External evaluation from specific team	19%
Students	19%
School Advisor	16%
Teachers' Association	16%
Parents	6%

Table 3: Views of teachers about who and why should be chosen as evaluator

The principal of the school as an evaluator has greater acceptance by teachers, with 8 to 32 responses. The reasons for the widespread acceptance of the principal to the role of evaluator is mainly the fact that they are in daily contact with the teachers of the school unit, so they know the qualities and shortcomings of their staff and the exact conditions under which they perform their duties. Six (6) out of thirty two (32) support the evaluation of independent evaluators in order to prevent any conciliation case because of social and interpersonal relations. Also six (6) participants stated that students should play an important role in the evaluation. However, there are some reservations as these judgments of students should not be affected by the various utilitarian attitudes that might develop from the students and the teachers. Five respondents accept the evaluation by school advisors but only concerning their educational duties. There are reservations about the effectiveness of the evaluation, because of the malfunctioning of the institution school advisors in the past. Also five respondents said they would accept the teachers' association as evaluator. Finally two of the respondents indicate that the parents should take part in the evaluation process, but not in all the activities of a teacher and they maintain some serious reservations, mainly for the same reasons mentioned for the evaluation by students.

Perceptions of teachers about their fears and concerns about the implementation of the evaluation

The purpose of the fourth question is to record the fears and concerns of participants regarding the application of evaluation,

Concern	Frequency
Objectivity	50%
Purpose	17%
Ignorance and lack of knowledge	17%
Quantification of education	12%
Change of the role of the Principal	6%

Table 4: Views of teachers about their fears and concerns about the implementation of the evaluation

The lack of objectivity in the evaluation process, is the main fear for half of the respondents. This opinion of teachers is based, according to them, in their experience so far with similar evaluative procedures employed in the public sector; especially in the field of education with the institution of the inspector. Also three respondents express their concerns for the purpose of evaluation. Three other respondents also express their concerns about the ignorance and lack of knowledge on the subject of the evaluation. Two of the participants expressed their concern is whether and how to quantify the provided knowledge. Finally a teacher fears that the role of the principal will change and he/she will become more of an inspector.

Conclusions

Respondents express enormous prejudice caused by the fear of lack of objectivity in the implementation of the evaluation process. Almost all of the teachers involved in the survey fear the prevalence of nepotism and personal conciliation, which will derail the evaluation process and will be unfair to the capable and deserving teachers. They recognize that the main purpose should be to improve the provided educational work through the self-improvement of teachers, but it should be applied through a participatory and democratic framework. Only under these conditions they believe that the whole process will have a positive impact on the provided educational work, but also to upgrade the status of the school unit.

The Ministry of Education should inform and educate all stakeholders involved in the evaluation process and especially the educational community about the purpose and the means of evaluation. Perhaps it would be useful to be applied with no consequences for teachers only targeted towards their training through feedback, in order for the teacher to make a smooth transition to the new system and used to the idea that they are evaluated. Furthermore, the Ministry should trust and utilize all the human potential in the field of education, which is specialized in management. It can help on the training of teachers and on the design and development of the evaluation process, as far as the implementation and exploitation of results.

The management of education must finally disengage from the political views and should be trusted to people who have specialized in such matters and can meet the requirements of a modern school administration unit. Only then the schools will find the managers who will be able to carry the burden of forming internal educational policy within the school unit and will implement it, while evaluating the process as part of this educational policy.

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