

THE EFFECTIVE TEACHER AND THE EFFICIENT EDUCATIONAL WORK. A SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH STUDY; FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Dr. Sousanna-Maria G. Nikolaou¹, Dr. Monika A. Papa² and Vasileios I. Zagkotas³

ABSTRACT— *The quality of general education depends to a large extent on the effectiveness of the teacher and his work. The lack in evaluating the performance (internal and external evaluation of schools and teachers) does not contribute in improving the effectiveness of schools. In Greece the profession of the teacher remains attractive, but it is pointed out that the quality of teaching is not evaluated objectively (Education and Training Surveys Report of 2015, Greece). The present research aims a) to investigate the views of future teachers (4th academic year students, shortly before acquiring their degree) concerning the quality of active teachers, based on their school life experiences and b) to identify the elements that constitute and define the profile of the successful and effective teacher. It is noted that education reformers should focus on all different aspects of teacher education and not only in their main studies subject, but also focus on pedagogy and teachers' autonomy concerning decision making in terms of teaching and students social behavior.*

Keywords: effective teacher, evaluation, future teachers, teacher's attributes

1. INTRODUCTUON

Under the perspective of the implementation of Europe 2020 objectives about restructuring the education levels so that the schools will be distinguished by a democratic and open climate that will lead to the alleviation of social injustices, anti-discrimination, exclusion and furthermore the enhancement of participation and social responsibility (National Reform Program 2016), the authors investigate the characteristics of the quality of the teacher as identified by students - future teachers – in order to identify those elements that are changeable through the use of best practices in teacher education. Concerning the views of future teachers on the basis of specific criteria that assess the quality of the teacher (qualifications, characteristics, practices and effectiveness) and regarding the image they have for the teacher, meaning how the effective teacher should work, the authors hope to verify the impact of reforms in education and to promote proposals for action in the immediate and medium-term framework in order to develop appropriate conditions for the School.

2. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH REGARDING THE TEACHER'S QUALITY, THE SCHOOL, AND THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Schools are not only educational systems, but social systems as well. They also operate quite autonomously, in cases such as the organization of learning, the functionality of decision-making, the transfer of learning goals, the maintenance of student's attention, the provision of intellectual challenges, etc. (Probst, 1992; Constantine, 2015). School as a socializing factor is just as important

¹ Corresponding author. Ass. Professor, Department of Primary Education, University of Ioannina, GR 45 110 Ioannina, Greece, snikola@cc.uoi.gr, tel. 2651005875

² Teacher, Athens School of Fine Arts, Athens, monikapapa@gmail.com

³ M.Ed., PhD St., Greek Primary School Teacher, Astakos, Aetolia & Akarnania, Greece, zagkotas@gmail.com

as the family. It differs in its composition and function, but it is the most important system of social interactions, where collective consciousness develops along with a sense of collective responsibility, while better understanding evolves in a wider context of a social reality perception (Tzani, 2003). The young person experiences scientific truths at school, captures social reality dynamically and processes it with the tools of his understanding and ethics.

The school as an educational and social system aims not only to contribute to the adaptation and integration of the individual into society (Parsons, 1973) through an acquisition of knowledge by achieving and preserving tradition and socio-cultural order, but also to the same extent to unfold and awaken the creativity of children, educate them appropriately and humanely for social interaction, prepare them for the job market and their professional life by giving them the appropriate knowledge. School is assigned three tasks taking place at the same time and, according to the cognitive stage of development in which each child is located: education, socialization and culture (Giddens, 2002). Knowledge and education are closely linked to each other as ultimate aims to the school curriculum. Knowledge through specific pedagogical plans and teaching strategies is embedded in the basic structure of education in order to achieve essential intellectual thoughts, experiences and skills. By processing the cognitive information this knowledge becomes or is incorporated into the existing ones. The learning process is an energetic social action in the classroom or more widely in the school that channels the message that the student is useful and necessary. In this way, students develop a sense of belonging, participation and social responsibility that promotes and strengthens their self-esteem and encourages the learning experience. As the teachers and the representatives of society have the greatest responsibility for the proper functioning of education and the achievement of the aims and objectives of the cognitive subjects taught at school, the scientific debate is important regarding the quality of the teachers' performance, their scientific and social upgrade and, last but not least, their role as citizens (Tzani, 2003; Papas, 1997; National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality).

2.1 The debate concerning the evaluation of the teachers and their educational work

The quality of the teacher and his work is usually reflected in his evaluation. The evaluation of the teacher in the school is considered as a necessary procedure insofar as it provides certainty about the quality of his work and the high level of performing the basic functions of institution, namely teaching, socialization and choice (Xohellis, 2006. Doliopoulou & Gourgiotou, 2008). Since the 1960s, the field of pedagogical research has been particularly concerned with the evaluation of education. In Greece, the longest institution of teacher evaluation in the history of modern Greek education was the institution of the superintendent (with active presence for at least one and a half centuries). His role was shaped according to society's economic, political and ideological conditions, and he was often acting following the orders of the government without prioritizing his pedagogical and leadership role. In periods of critical nationality, such as dictatorship, the superintendent has served as a lever of pressure, a mean of strict control over political thoughts as well as persuasions, without offering any scientific and pedagogical aid to the educator. In 1982 (Law 1304/1982) the institution of the superintendent as an authoritarian, anachronistic and anti-pedagogical institution was abolished and therefore along with it the institution of evaluation of the teacher in the Greek schools (Manikarou, 2015: 93, Antoniou, 2002, Tzani, 1998 et al.). At the same time, the institution of the school counselor is established, assigned with a new role of scientific and pedagogical support, in response to the long-standing demands for a democratic and radical reform in education, free from insecurity, dependence, fear, and tutelage inspired by the role and the actions of the superintendent. However, despite the future occasional reforming efforts (by various political leaderships) concerning the institution of counselor, it is clear from the research that the institution did not function as the legislator initially imagined. Various weaknesses are noted regarding the advisory dimension of the counselor's role and the implementation of control and evaluation. It is also noted

that the centralist control of the Greek educational system restricts the school counselor in formal school meetings and in standardized reports concerning the work of teachers at the end of the school year (Manikarou, 2015. Giokarinis, 2000. Pamouktsoglou 2003. Athanasiadis, 2001. Bouzakis, 2011). Under these circumstances, the teacher as a major encouraging structural factor to education, exerts an important role in school process and remains for many years without the necessary scientific and pedagogical guidance or evaluation of the quality of his work. According to this, a teacher is obliged to replenish his own pedagogical shortcomings and experiment with new methods, if the conditions favor him to do so. Therefore, regarding the teacher's evaluation on the effectiveness of his/her work (determination or measurement), greatly related to the quality of the education provided, the improvement of the teacher's professionalism, etc., it remains still an issue under debate without any political power to achieve its settlement all these years (Xohellis, 2006). From 1982 to the present day, while the teacher and his/her educational work are still not being evaluated, various studies examine the (successful and effective) profile of the teacher (Kosmidou-Hardy, 1998), sometimes viewing what the Greek teachers are looking for (shaping their pupils' character, socialization, the acquisition of knowledge or the development of critical thinking) (Xohellis, 1984), or if there is use of counseling practices for students in the school environment (Koskinas & Rafailidis 2006). The purpose of this research is to investigate the views of future teachers (shortly before acquiring their degree, 4th year of study) on the quality of active teachers, based on their school life experiences and the identification of the elements composing the profile of the successful and effective teacher.

2.2 The research target

Through this research, we aim to explore the views of future teachers regarding the quality of the teacher and the factors that influence the effectiveness of their work. In particular, the authors attempt to investigate the views of future teachers on the quality of the teacher with assisted recall of experience from their school years according to basic criteria that evaluate the effectiveness of the educational work and their perceptions of the elements that make up the profile of the successful and effective teacher. The objectives of the research focus on the following key questions:

A. What is their view -based on their experience- about the teacher by identifying it with positive and negative attributes.

B. Which attributes, in their view, determine the effectiveness of the teacher's work.

In order to achieve the objectives of the survey, the authors use a list of four key-categories that was based on the Teacher Quality and Student Achievement report: (March 2008) and is related to:

I. Qualifications of the teacher (credentials, grades, experience, attendance at conferences, seminars, post-training).

II. Characteristics of the teacher (attitudes, qualities, cooperation, team spirit, expectations for students).

III. Practice of the teacher (teaching strategies, pedagogical plans, teaching methods).

IV. Efficiency of the teacher (if he/she contributed to learning, if the pupils' performance scores were higher).

The survey was conducted in March 2017. In order to achieve the objectives of this research, we selected final-year (4th) students of the University of Ioannina Department of Primary Education (total 199, 0.79% of all final-year students). This choice was made because at this exact (4th) year, just before their graduation, the students have already attended almost all the theoretical lessons and practical exercises, which gives them the knowledge and the background to form an opinion on the quality of the teacher. Regarding the geographical origin, the research subjects belong to most (41) of the prefectures of Greece. As a methodological tool, field research was selected and the structured questionnaire with closed and open questions was used as a measuring instrument. The questions were grouped on the basis of their themes and in such a way as to make sense to the respondent (Filiass, 2001: 145 m.)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As to the demographic characteristics of the sample from 199 subjects, 147 were girls and 52 boys. The responses were codified and significant findings emerged. As to the views of the teacher's profile according to the sample (future teachers) by recalling their former experience as students, the following elements emerged:

	Characteristics of the teacher	Efficiency of the teacher	Practices of the teacher	Qualifications of the teacher
Positive attributes	Fair, impartial, friendly, cheerful, understanding with students (85%)	Persistence with learning efficiency, increased student performance (we learned, we became better students, low grade students improved) (62%)	Use of innovative methods, critical thinking development, pedagogical teaching plans (61%)	High educational level, trained (31%)
Negative attributes	No respect for breaks, non-observing program clock, irritable, cyclothymic, anxious, offensive, non-patient, unfair, discriminatory (82%)	Satisfaction, lack of evaluation, excessive humor in his assessments, no interest in critical thinking (61%)	Choosing a subject based on his or her own interests, indifference to innovative pedagogical projects (30%)	Inconsistent, frequent absences, indifferent to the weak, tolerance to mistakes of good students (28%)

A more detailed study of the results led the authors to the following categorization:

The following are marked as positive attributes and characteristics of the teacher according to the selection made by the sample subjects:

- A large percentage of the sample (85%) puts in the first line of interest the teacher's characteristics as the positive elements of an educator (for example, the teacher was fair, impartial, friendly, cheerful, helpful, and understanding for all children).
- A fairly large percentage of the sample (62%) points out as a positive attribute the effectiveness of the teacher in terms of his persistence, his effectiveness on teaching and his contribution to the improvement of the grades of weaker pupils.
- An equally large percentage of respondents (61%) highlights as a positive attribute the teacher's practices, innovative methods, critical thinking development and pedagogically innovative teaching strategies.
- A smaller percentage of the sample (31%) focuses on the teacher's qualifications, identifying as positive the fact that the teacher acquired a higher level of education, training and innovative ideas.
- As far as the negative attributes of the teacher and according to the answers of the subjects of the sample, the following results were emerged:
- A high percentage of respondents (82%) points out negative attributes on the character of the teacher, such as lack of patience, bias and unjust attitudes (indifference to weak learners and tolerance when mistakes are made by good students), gender discrimination and excessive rigidity, as well as excessive humor, frequent absences, lack of accountability, being quick-tempered and cyclothymic, as well as being offensive.
- A fairly high percentage of our sample (61%) focuses on negative characteristics in the teacher's work, which were related to the effectiveness of the teacher, especially regarding his contribution to student learning.
- Nearly one-third (30%) of the sample subjects highlights negative attributes of the teachers related to their qualifications, for example that he did not stick with the timetable, that he was

much more persistent with courses of his own interest, without taking into account the weaknesses of the pupils and the inconsistency between words and works because he was not trained in cognitive subjects.

- Finally, 28% of the sample reported negative attributes related to the teacher's practices, namely the lack of pedagogical plans and innovative practices.

Focusing on the image of the Greek teacher, through the responses of the students (future teachers), it is underlined that their interest is centered mainly on the characteristics of the teacher and secondarily on his efficiency. A fairly high percentage of the respondents focuses on the practices of the teacher only when they are positively valued, while a small percentage of respondents focuses on the qualifications of the educator (educational level, degrees, doctorate) (either as inadequate or as positive elements).

Regarding the four categories a) Teacher qualifications b) Teacher Characteristics c) Teacher Practices and d) Teacher Effectiveness and evaluation of their importance for the success and the effectiveness of the school, the students (future teachers) consider the qualification factor resulting from university education and the continuous participation in seminars to be most substantial. According to them (92% of sample subjects), a very good university education, increases the pedagogical, didactic and scientific choices significantly for a teacher, enabling him/her in using innovative pedagogical plans as well as contributing to the effectiveness of the educational work of the school in general.

Specifically, in order to achieve quality of the work, they consider as essential attributes of the teacher the following:

- 1) The educational level - scientific education, teaching ability and teaching practices - (understanding the educational level as a Bachelor's degree, second degree, postgraduate, doctorate, permanent participation in seminars) (92%).
- 2) Effectiveness of the educational project as a result of the above (improvement of pupils' performance, cooperation with students and teaching staff, cooperation with school board and parents, service consistency and responsibility) (90%).
- 3) The teaching practices used by the educator, which have to be in line with social and technological developments (collaborative learning, compensatory education, multimedia educational software, etc.) (88%).
- 4) The characteristics of the teacher that relate to his love for children and youth, to be the one that stands next to young people and helps them to grow and evolve intellectually, with high ethics and aspirations (86%).

4. CONCLUSIONS - PROPOSALS

In the recent years, education in Greece has undergone a rigorous fiscal consolidation with several corrective reforms in order to improve general and professional education. The modernization of the Greek educational system included measures relating to compulsory education, concerning: school textbooks, reorganization of teaching content, efforts to develop measures for the evaluation of the teacher and the educational work with a view to developing skills and nurturing abilities for a successful transition to the job market. The new Education Action Plan (Memorandum of August 2015) proposes a review on Primary and Secondary education in order to identify the necessary legislative and regulatory changes, a vision to be implemented in June 2016 (European Commission, Education and Training Monitoring Report of 2015). According to the European Commission (European Commission, 2013), Primary School teachers in Greece, when compared to most European countries, are working in a highly centralist educational system and do not enjoy autonomy in terms of teaching and choosing learning methods. However, the profession of the teacher remains

attractive. Taking into account the May 2015 Bill (Law 4327/14-05-2015 "Urgent measures for Primary, Secondary and Higher Education"), which prioritizes improvements in school autonomy and introduces internal/external evaluation, we expect changes in the effectiveness of the educational work, through the actions to be implemented according to the objectives set by the new measures. More specifically, it is expected that the recognition and acceptance of the fact that the quality of the teacher is an important factor for the effectiveness of the school will be followed and supported by a functional blending of theory with practice. That is to say, at a practical level, a dynamic connection of apprentice teachers to practice can be achieved by developing cooperative relationships between universities and internships, or through an education of teachers according to each school's basic needs or the variety of the student population (social origin, linguistic level etc.) (Terhart, 2000).

From our research study, concerning the elements that make up the image of an effective educator, we find that students who are candidate teachers, have an image for the Greek teacher based on their experience as students, which is quite different from the image they shape after completing their studies. Most of the students-future teachers, believe that an essential characteristic of the effective teacher, is to obtain that students really learn, a fact that is proven by their performance. They also consider as a very important and positive attribute of the teacher the choice of learning practices, the methods used by the learner to teach himself "how to learn", to help the student become self-sufficient and independent, to form action plan that assesses reality and the world (innovative teaching methods, critical thinking development).

It is also of great importance to point out that future teachers underline as very significant the characteristics of the teacher as stated by his/her attitude towards the students and the rules of the school which derive both from his/her educational level and from the importance he/she gives to the content and the meaning of his/her work. Regarding the image of the Greek teacher, the factor of education and training (the educational level as a Bachelor's degree, second degree, postgraduate, doctorate, permanent participation in seminars) is not placed in the first order of priority. However, when they are asked to identify the characteristics of an effective teacher, they consider the qualification factor to be very essential. This happens because they link the teacher's education and training with possibilities that give him/her more choices in teaching, for example to use innovative pedagogical plans, new technologies, etc. It is also very important that future teachers have already understood that knowledge and education of the teacher (postgraduate degree, specialization degree or doctoral degree) facilitates everyday life in the classroom and achieves the maximum learning outcomes.

Certainly the educational level, scientific education, teaching ability and teaching practices are key-factors in the effectiveness of the educational work (improving student performance, working with students and teaching staff, working with management and parents, service consistency and responsibility). However, schools have also a social role, since they are increasingly called upon to take up tasks that were formerly exclusively undertaken by parents, (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Nicholas, 2009; Kantzaras, 2011; Kyridis, 2003), the church and communities. Therefore, the role of the teacher through his own social behavior is also decisive. At this point, we experience social and pedagogical characteristics of the teacher (fair, impartial, friendly, affluent, cooperative, etc.) that are able to create and convey to the students a common "ethos" and the sense of "community" (Grant, 1988). In other words, the task of the teacher and the school is also to create citizens and help them integrate to the community with the prospect of a properly functioning society. These tasks partly include the main activities of socialization and classification. Socialization involves the learning of social norms and behaviors, while the classification of the differentiation of roles or the reproduction of social forms for the formation of social backgrounds (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970).

This direction in educational theory, points out that the work of the teacher and his/her effectiveness is not only found in the process of teaching a child to write, count and read, but also in his/her contribution to the formation of his spirit, morals, character, behavior and complex formal and informal social relationships at school (Hopkins & Stern, 1996). Educational reformers should focus

on different aspects of teacher education and not only on their main studies subjects, but should also teach pedagogics and focus on teacher's autonomy to make decisions about teaching and affecting the social behavior of students. It is appropriate to draw up a national system of criteria that will reflect the teachers' performance status and the improvement of their role, taking into account and identifying a) the characteristics of the teachers and the learning field b) the appropriate conditions for a teacher to remain dedicated in teaching even when his/her career is approaching to its end c) appropriate preparation of his/her teaching performance and determination of his/her work expectations (the role of the teacher) d) the possibility of professional development and the forming of conditions for their professional satisfaction , i.e. smaller classes, a safe school environment, absorption of resources, effective management, opportunities for training in new technologies, increasing recognition and appreciation by the world for their work (Key Issues: Improving the Working Environment of Teachers 2008. Ballantine & Hammack, 2015). In order to improve the effectiveness of the teacher and his/her work, the evaluation process which reflects the existing reality and gives opportunities to upgrade the quality of the teacher and his work is absolutely essential.

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