

The Teacher as Citizen: Affirmation of Primary school teachers in Greece during economic crisis¹

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Abstract

European countries experiencing economic crises are becoming increasingly more common and Greece is no exception. The right to quality education, which represents a cornerstone in the affirmation of citizenship, and the ability of teachers to provide this, is one of the sectors that has been affected by the economic crisis. Teachers draw on their entity when they act as citizens in their teaching. The present study aims to investigate the beliefs of Greek primary school teachers as citizens in terms of the conditions they teach under and their satisfaction with public expenditure on education, facilities and logistical means, working conditions, and their feelings about their training proficiency. It also seeks to look at their satisfaction in terms of their rights from economic benefits not limited to salary and as such concerning the amount of time and the work they perform as related to providing quality education. Teachers identified the factors that positively or negatively affect their educational work. The study, also, examined suggestions for improving education and educational processes in general. The sample of the study consisted of 52 primary teachers of Western Greece. Data were collected through questionnaires and were analyzed statistically. The results appear to support that there is dissatisfaction on the part of teachers not only from financial expenditures in primary education, but also from economic benefits not limited to salary. The results give insight into the educational situation and satisfaction of primary teachers in terms of both their rights as educators as well as how these relate to enhancing the quality of education services provided. Suggestions for improving education and educational process are also given.

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Introduction

Countries experience economic crises. This phenomenon is becoming increasingly more common in Europe and Greece is no exception. The right to quality education, which represents a cornerstone in the affirmation of citizenship, and the ability of teachers to provide this is one of the sectors that has been affected by the economic crisis.

Teachers constitute the backbone of schools and they are responsible for the educational system's success (Ballantine & Spade, 2007). The progress of a nation is reflected in the quality of its people that have been modelled on teachers who constitute a source of inspiration and guidance in peoples' lives. Primary education introduces students to rudimentary facts and basic skills, being their first school experience (Weiss, 2002). This is why primary school teachers need appropriate knowledge and training in order to perform well, but this performance is possible only if they are satisfied with their teaching job (Ali, Zaman, Tabassum, & Iqbal 2011; Aziri, 2011; Gilman, Peake, & Parr, 2012; Griffin, 2010).

Taking into account the previous facts and research, the present study aims to investigate the beliefs of Greek primary school teachers as citizens in terms of their satisfaction with public expenditure on education (e.g., facilities, logistical means, working conditions) and their beliefs about their training proficiency. Teachers will also identify the factors that affect positively or negatively their educational work.

Teacher and citizenship

Teaching constitutes an activity affecting at least a fifth of people's entire lives. Furthermore, given the way compulsory education is administered, it affects everyone more directly and more closely than other public services. In most countries, teachers are considered as civil servants with the task to act democratically, transmitting socialization and education to those in their charge in accordance with the national Constitution. Since most of the teaching process is controlled by the nation state, there are more factors that influence teaching than in other major professions (Adams, 2005).

Teachers make up the major leadership group, which guides the nation during the course of unsettled transitional periods, surpassing the responsibilities of policy

or other experts, exercising their latent power to influence public opinion. Thus, teachers constitute key servants of the public and the obligations of citizenship rests upon them with a special urgency (Hartmann, 1938).

The category of citizenship embraces more than the realm of teaching. Before one is a teacher, one is a citizen and a person and these three aspects should be combined harmoniously. Teachers try to accomplish their work in the classroom by participating actively in the processes of social reconstruction (Hartmann, 1938). Thus, teachers should not distance themselves from their class origins in order to be able to connect their experiences with students of the same state, by developing an empathetic understanding of students' behaviours and values that might conflict with those of the school's mainstream culture (Erickson, 2001). Teachers need to develop reflective cultural and national identifications if they want to effectively help students from different cultures and groups to construct clear cultural and national identifications (Diakiw, 1994). To achieve that, teachers must be helped in order to critically analyze and rethink their notions of race, ethnicity, and culture, viewing themselves as racial and cultural beings (Nieto, 1999; Omi & Winant, 1994). Therefore, teachers' job is not limited to the transmission of the preferred segments of their racial inheritance. They must also assist in the enlargement of the culture in order for new values to become incorporated in children's lives who constitute future citizens (Hartmann, 1938).

Most teachers today are inadequately prepared along political and economic lines. Only as teachers' profession eliminates its deficiencies will the next generations be able to turn the present world crisis into a new Renaissance rather than into another Dark Age. In short, without a strong educational program managed by courageous and competent teachers, social catastrophe will occur (Hartmann, 1938).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction constitutes an indicator of the degree of fulfillment experienced (Maslow, 1970), a construct indicating how an individual feels about his/her job or career or about specific facets of the job or career (e.g., compensation, coworkers etc.), that can be related to specific outcomes, such as productivity (Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991). Concerning the definition of teachers' job satisfaction, there is not a general agreement upon this definition but notions such as the fact that teachers are most satisfied by matters intrinsic to the role of teaching: helping students, students' achievement, self-growth, positive relationships with students and others etc. (Dinham & Scott, 2002; van den Berg, 2002). Lawler (1973) attempted to define teachers' satisfaction as a teacher's affective relation to his teaching role and the perceived relationship between what one wants from teaching and what one perceives that teaching is offering to a teacher.

Job satisfaction is affected by a wide variety of factors (Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991). Herzberg (1966) tends to group these factors into two broad domains:

intrinsic factors (or *motivators*) and *extrinsic factors*. Intrinsic factors refer to the nature of the work, the job content, such as achievement, teaching and working with students, which tend to promote satisfaction and relate to what the person does. Extrinsic factors are associated with the work environment, which constitute matters external to what a person does (e.g., poor working conditions such as salary and role overload), which tend to result in dissatisfaction through their presence, but they do not increase job satisfaction when they are absent. Likewise, the presence of intrinsic factors leads to job satisfaction, but their absence does not lead to job dissatisfaction.

Previous research supports the notion that the major source of teachers' satisfaction comes from intrinsic factors (e.g., Dinham, 1995; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008; Raza & Ahmed, 2017) such as pupils' and teachers' achievement, changing pupils' attitudes and behaviours in a positive way, recognition from others, mastery and self-growth, and also positive relationships. Relationship with students can be a major positive motivation to become a teacher and to stay in the profession (Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006) and is positively related to teachers' job satisfaction (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Sergiovanni, 1967). Working with children and nurturing student learning (e.g., Cockburn, 2000; Klecker & Loadman, 1999) were reported by teachers as prime influences of job satisfaction. Furthermore, intrinsic factors affecting teachers' satisfaction constitute student characteristics and perceptions of teacher control over the classroom environment (Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). Problems with classroom management and disruptive student behaviour contribute to teacher attrition early in the career (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011), and they can cause teacher stress and feelings of burnout later in the career (Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003).

With regard to extrinsic factors, a variety of such factors have been associated with teachers' satisfaction, including salary, availability of school resources, perceived support from administrators and school safety (Bobbitt, Leich, Whitener, & Lynch, 1994; Choy, Bobbitt, Henke, Medrich, Horn, & Lieberman, 1993). Other extrinsic phenomena and factors contributing to teacher dissatisfaction included impacts of changes to educational procedures and policies, new responsibilities for schools, increased administrative workloads, greater expectations on schools to deal with social problems, the declining of teachers' status in society (Dinham & Scott, 1997), lack of parental support, students' apathy and troublesome behaviour (Meek, 1998; Perie & Baker, 1997; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008) and professional autonomy (Perie & Baker, 1997). A lack of instructional resources, of participation in decision-making, of administrative support, and doubt about the professional expertise of teachers indicate an increase in the degree of teacher dissatisfaction (van den Berg, 2002; Kelchtermans, 1999). In addition, teachers might be more satisfied if their salaries were higher (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Macdonald, 1999; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991; Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008).

Demographic variables

Although relatively few studies have examined the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and their demographic characteristics (Bogler, 2002), findings in this area have shown that job satisfaction has been positively related to personal characteristics such as gender, age and educational level (Eliophotou-Menon, Papanastasiou, & Zempylas, 2008; Koustelios, 2001).

Concerning gender differences in the overall job satisfaction, female teachers tended to be more satisfied than male teachers (Akiri & Ugborugbo, 2009; Bogler, 2002; Dinham & Scott, 1997; Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Michaelowa 2002; Raza & Ahmed, 2017; Spear, Gould, & Lee. 2000). Inconsistent with these studies are Bishay's (1996) and Mwamwenda's (1997) which concluded that female teachers were less satisfied than male teachers were. However, some other studies (Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Sargent & Hannum 2003) found no relationship between gender and teachers' job satisfaction.

Regarding differences based on age and experience, young teachers are more likely to have higher levels of satisfaction than older teachers, while older and more experienced teachers expressed significantly less satisfaction with their professional role (e.g., Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Perrachione, Rosser & Petersen, 2008). On the other hand, other studies (Galloway, Boswell, Panckhurst, Boswell, & Green, 1985; Liu & Ramsey, 2008) indicated an increase in job satisfaction with age.

Finally, concerning differences based on the level of education, teachers with higher qualifications (higher education level or degree earned, more professional development) tended to be more satisfied than those with lower qualifications (Meek, 1998). This evidence seems not to be the case in other research (Akiri & Ugborugbo, 2009; Sargent & Hannum, 2003) indicating that teachers with higher levels of education were significantly less satisfied with the teaching profession and were significantly more likely to state that they wish they had changed their career.

The present study

The present study aims to investigate the beliefs of Greek primary school teachers as citizens in terms of the conditions they teach under and their satisfaction with public expenditure on education, facilities and logistical means, working conditions, and their feelings about their training proficiency. Furthermore, teachers are asked to identify the factors that positively or negatively affect their educational work. As has been found in other studies (e.g., Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004), the higher the teachers' extrinsic motivation (salary and working conditions) is, the more satisfied are the teachers with their jobs.

In order to investigate the previous research concern, the research questions that were posed are:

1. Are the teachers satisfied with public expenditure on education (salary, facilities, logistical means and the working conditions they teach under)?
2. What are their feelings about their training proficiency?
3. Which factors affect positively or negatively their educational work?

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 52 primary teachers of Western Greece, of which 13 were male (25% of the sample) and 39 were female (75% of the sample). Their age ranges between 29 and 62 years.

Research tool

In order to achieve the objective of the current quantitative survey a pre-existing questionnaire was used. This questionnaire has been used in the research of Bouzakis, Katsis, Emvalotis, Kamarianos, Haramis, and Philiopoulou (2011) using Greek data. As noted in Bouzakis's and his associates' research, this questionnaire is the result of a pilot survey with semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Relevant validation and reliability checks were made both during the statistical processing phase and during the data collection phase.

On the first page of the questionnaire, a special mention is made on the anonymity of the questionnaire, as well as a request for special attention to its completion. The axes that the questionnaire explores relate to social, educational and personal parameters. The questionnaire consists of 42 numbered questions with sub-questions, of which the initial 13 are demographic data. The questionnaire consists of closed-type questions, which saves time for the respondent and assists in data encoding.

The questions concerning satisfaction with public expenditure on education and teachers' satisfaction with training proficiency were evaluated on a 4-point Likert scale, where 0 stands for "very dissatisfied" and 3 for "very satisfied". The questions concerning the importance of specific factors negatively and positively affecting teachers' educational work were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale, where 0 stands for "not important" and 4 for "very important".

Results

Teachers' satisfaction with public expenditure on education

As mentioned above satisfaction with public expenditure on education was evaluated on a 4-point Likert scale, where 0 stands for "very dissatisfied" and

3 for “very satisfied”. The means of teachers’ satisfaction with public expenditure on education in Greece are mainly below (see Table 1), indicating that Greek teachers are mainly dissatisfied with regular earnings, which include salary and allowances, the current pension plan, the health care system, overall expenditure for public education, laboratories, and gym/sports area. On the other hand, they do not seem very dissatisfied with the condition of the school buildings, the school library, the teachers' offices, the classrooms, and the schoolyard.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviation concerning teachers’ satisfaction with public expenditure on education

Satisfaction with domains of public expenditure on education	Inventory score		
	n	M	SD
Regular earnings (salary and allowances)	51	.75	.72
Current pension scheme	52	.56	.67
Health Care System	52	.67	.73
Expenditure for public education	51	.53	.64
Condition of school building	50	1.36	.85
Laboratory	51	.88	.89
School Library	51	1.31	.95
Teachers' Offices	51	1.61	.94
Classrooms	49	1.59	.91
Gym / Sports Areas	50	.62	.85
School yard	50	1.70	.86

Teachers’ satisfaction with their training proficiency

Teachers’ satisfaction with training proficiency was evaluated on a 4-point Likert scale, where 0 stands for “very dissatisfied” and 3 for “very satisfied”. Concerning their training proficiency (see Table 2), teachers seem to feel mainly satisfied with their specialty, scientific training, psycho-pedagogical training, and, to a lesser extent, with the application of the knowledge they gained in the classroom.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviation concerning teachers' satisfaction with their training proficiency

Teachers' satisfaction with training proficiency	Inventory score		
	n	M	SD
Specialty	52	2.02	.73
Scientific training	52	2.19	.56
Psycho-pedagogical training	52	2.13	.71
Application in classroom	52	1.67	.86

Factors negatively and positively affecting teachers' educational work

The questions concerning the importance of specific factors negatively or positively affecting teachers' educational work were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale, where 0 stands for "not important" and 4 for "very important".

Regarding the factors negatively affecting teachers' educational work, lack of resources, relegation of education and educator, lack of pupils' interest and low earnings are the most important ones. The lack of educational staff, the curriculum, the grading and testing system, bad co-operation with colleagues, stress and workload, and lack of training also seem to be important to a lesser extent.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviation concerning factors negatively affecting teachers' educational work

Factors affecting negatively teachers' educational work	Inventory score		
	n	M	SD
The lack of educational staff	51	2.45	1.46
Lack of resources	52	3.13	.84
The curriculum	52	2.62	.99
Grading and testing system	51	2.59	1.27
Relegation of the education and educator	52	3.13	.99
Bad co-operation with colleagues	52	2.67	1.34
The lack of pupils' interest	52	3.12	1.08
Stress and workload	52	2.83	1.02
Low earnings	52	3.06	1.07
Lack of training	52	2.79	1.16

Finally, concerning the factors positively affecting teachers' educational work, all of the factors presented were evaluated as being very important. The interest and love for children is the most important one. Then they follow in

order of importance: the interest of pupils, good relationship with school management/support from it, good climate in school, good cooperation with colleagues and the club, good relationship and cooperation with parents, teachers' permanence, educationally appropriate schoolbooks and adequate equipment, and work hours.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviation concerning factors affecting positively teachers' educational work

Factors affecting positively teachers' educational work	Inventory score		
	n	M	SD
Interest and love for children	52	3.87	.44
Good cooperation with colleagues	52	3.48	.90
Support from school	52	3.62	.77
The interest of pupils	52	3.77	.51
Cooperation with parents	52	3.46	.80
Good climate in school	52	3.56	.78
School books and equipment	51	3.27	.92
Work hours	52	3.10	.89
Permanence	50	3.38	1.01

Differences in gender, age and level of education

Differences between variables and personal characteristics such as gender, level of education and age were examined. Significant differences emerged for gender and satisfaction with the current pension plan [$t(50) = 2.73, p < .05$], ($M_{men} = .92$ and $M_{women} = .43$), satisfaction with laboratories [$t(49) = 2.07, p < .05$], ($M_{men} = 1.31$ and $M_{women} = .74$), satisfaction with the overall condition of the building infrastructure [$t(48) = 2.52, p < .05$], ($M_{men} = 1.84$ and $M_{women} = 1.19$), and, finally, for gender and good relationship and cooperation with parents (as a positive factor affecting teachers' job) [$t(50) = -2.05, p < .05$], ($M_{men} = 3.08$ and $M_{women} = 3.59$).

Furthermore, concerning age differences in domains of job satisfaction, significant differences emerged for age and satisfaction with the level of public expenditure on education [$F(50) = 4.37, p < .05$], ($M_{22-33} = .56, M_{34-49} = .22$ and $M_{50-63} = .82$). Also, significant differences emerged for age and factors negatively affecting teachers' educational work, namely lack of pupils' interest [$F(51) = 4.19, p < .05$], ($M_{22-33} = 3.62, M_{34-49} = 2.63$ and $M_{50-63} = 3.17$), and stress and workload [$F(51) = 3.29, p < .05$], ($M_{22-33} = 3.12, M_{34-49} = 2.37$ and $M_{50-63} = 3.06$).

Regarding differences based on level of education, significant differences emerged for the level of education and satisfaction with the health care system [$t(49) = 2.52, p < .05$], ($M_{p.g.} = .92$ and $M_{nonp.g.} = .42$). No significant

differences were found between gender, age, and level of education with respect to feelings for teachers' training proficiency.

Discussion

The current research suggests that the majority of teachers are dissatisfied with their current earnings and the level of public expenditure on education in Greece, which, to a large extent, negatively affect their educational work. Other research also claimed that teachers are dissatisfied with their salary and promotional opportunities (Bouzakis et al., 2011; Koustelios, 2001) and their work conditions (Bouzakis et al., 2011; Liu & Ramsey, 2008). The overall expenditure on education seems to be very important since, among beginning teachers, research suggests that many of them leave the profession due to lack of financial support (Murnane et al., 1991). This dissatisfaction with the overall expenditure on education is not surprising concerning the fact that Greece, as well as many other European countries, has undergone an economic crisis.

Regarding teachers' training proficiency, most Greek teachers seem to be satisfied with the training proficiency they gained during their undergraduate studies. Consistent are the results in Bouzakis' and his associates' research (2011), where a great number of teachers claimed satisfaction with their training proficiency.

Concerning the factors positively or negatively affecting teachers' educational work, all of the factors presented were evaluated as being important as Bousakis' and his associates' (2011) research has already indicated. Results also agree with "interest and love for children" being the most important factor that positively affects teachers' work, and "relegation of the education and educator" being the most important factor negatively affecting their educational work.

With regard to demographic variables, previous research has indicated that job satisfaction has been positively related to gender, age and educational level. Findings in this area have shown that teachers' satisfaction can be predicted based on teachers' personal characteristics (Koustelios, 2001). The present study also found differences associated with gender, age and level of education.

Concerning gender differences in job satisfaction, men claimed more satisfaction than women concerning the current pension plan, the condition of laboratories, and the overall condition of the building infrastructure. These results are in line with other studies (Bishay, 1996; Mwamwenda, 1997) claiming that male teachers were more satisfied than female teachers. On the contrary, these results seem to be inconsistent with studies suggesting that female teachers tended to be more satisfied than male teachers (Akiri & Ugborugbo, 2009; Bogler, 2002; Dinham & Scott, 1997; Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Michaelowa 2002; Raza & Ahmed, 2017; Spear, Gould, & Lee. 2000), and studies that found no relationship between gender and teachers' job satisfaction (Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Sargent & Hannum 2003).

Regarding differences in age, middle-aged teachers (34-49 years old) seem to be the most dissatisfied with the level of public expenditure on education, while the oldest one seems to be the most satisfied. These results are inconsistent with research indicating that young teachers are more likely to have higher levels of satisfaction than older teachers (e.g., Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Perrachione, Rosser & Petersen, 2008). On the other hand, they seem consistent with studies claiming an increase in job satisfaction with age (Galloway, Boswell, Panckhurst, Boswell, & Green, 1985; Liu & Ramsey, 2008). Satisfaction with the level of public expenditure on education improved with years reaching its peak at the end of teachers' career. This may be due to the fact that dissatisfied teachers tend to leave their career earlier, leaving more satisfied teachers in the profession. Another way to explain this phenomenon is by the professional maturity teacher's gain, which breeds more job satisfaction, leading experienced teachers to become more satisfied with resources than newer teachers. Furthermore, experienced teachers may have the privilege of enjoying and utilizing more resources and better facilities at school due to their seniority (Liu & Ramsey, 2008).

Finally, concerning differences in the level of education, teachers with higher qualifications (higher education level or degree earned, more professional development) tended to be more satisfied than those with lower qualifications (Meek, 1998). A similar result seems to appear in the current research concerning the level of education and satisfaction with the health care system, where teachers with postgraduate studies seemed to be more satisfied with the health care system than teachers with no post graduate studies. This evidence seems not to be the case in other research indicating that teachers with higher levels of education were significantly less satisfied (Akiri & Ugborugbo, 2009; Sargent & Hannum, 2003).

Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the beliefs of Greek primary school teachers as citizens in terms of the conditions they teach under and their satisfaction with public expenditure on education, facilities and logistical means, working conditions, and their feelings about their training proficiency. Furthermore, teachers were asked to identify the factors that positively or negatively affect their educational work.

Concerning satisfaction with public expenditure on education, the majority of teachers are predominately dissatisfied. Regarding their training proficiency, teachers seem to feel mainly satisfied. The three most important factors negatively affecting teachers' work are: downgrading education and the educator, lack of resources, and lack of pupils' interest. On the other hand, the three most important factors positively affecting their work are: interest and love for children, the interest of pupils and good relationship with school management and the support they get from it.

With regard to the limitations of the present study, it should be mentioned that the size of the sample was not large and was limited to teachers of primary education of specific areas of Greece. Thus, the results of the survey cannot be generalized.

Teachers' satisfaction constitutes a very important domain, which may have strong implications for student learning and citizenship construction, since teaching constitutes an activity affecting a large part of people's lives (Adams, 2005). Teachers constitute key servants of the public and the obligations of citizenship rests upon them (Hartmann, 1938) to act democratically, transmitting socialization and education to those in their charge in accordance with national Constitution (Adams, 2005). Teachers try to accomplish their work in the classroom by actively participating in the processes of social reconstruction (Hartmann, 1938). Since most of the teaching process is controlled by the nation state, there are more factors that influence teaching than any other major professions (Adams, 2005). Research suggests that teachers who do not feel supported in their work may be less motivated to do their best while working in the classroom (Ostroff, 1992; Ashton & Webb, 1986) and may leave the profession (Choy et al., 1993).

In order to keep teachers in their profession and assist them in their work which is not limited to the sphere of knowledge, but also to the sphere of citizenship, many reforms and changes may need to be made. In order to increase teachers' satisfaction with the overall expenditure on education educational, interventions should not only concern the increase of teacher's income using monetary incentives. Work conditions should also be improved, because monetary incentives alone may not compensate for teachers' disappointment in their work conditions, which may lead them to leave the teaching profession (Liu & Ramsey, 2008). It could also be argued that international consultation is essential. There is need for international cooperation in order for challenging topics such as economic crisis, citizenship, human rights or the environment to be addressed (Adams, 2005).

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