

## **INCENTIVES AND OBSTACLES: PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR HUMAN RESOURCES IN EDUCATION**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This article comes to investigate the incentives motivating deputy teachers to take part in training programs, as well as the obstacles they face in this endeavor. Specifically, in this survey carried out, a set of incentives that work motivationally has been rated by teachers. In the same way, the obstacles they encounter when they want to take part in training programs were rated as well. The analysis of the results has highlighted the theme of the training program as the strongest motive, while the biggest obstacle is the place of residence and work in the case of deputies working in inaccessible and remote areas.*

**KEYWORDS:** Teacher training, deputy teachers, inaccessible and remote schools, motivation and learning barriers.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Teacher education in Greece is an issue that has been of great concern to scholars in the past (Vergidis, 1996, 2012; Xohellis, 2006). Evidence suggests that teacher training was a major issue for the state as it would help to modernize education in Greece (Vergidis, 2012). Due to the centralized Greek educational system, the design and implementation of teacher training are planned and delivered by the Ministry of Education (Lainas, 2000; Papakonstantinou, 2012). In particular, the framework for teacher education is defined by Law 1566/1985 and Presidential Decree 250/92, which defines its aims, forms and procedures. In addition, teachers need to be aware of the need to evolve throughout their working lives and to get better in each sector (Mavrogiorgos, 2011), as professional development implies first personal evolution (Papanaoum, 2003).

The concept of need is often identical with other concepts, such as obligation, duty, desire (Vergidis, 1999). It is a concept, the content of which has been interpreted in a variety of ways according to the context in which it is incorporated each time. For education and psychology, the view is that the sense of need is the one that leads to learning. According to Leagans, (a.c. Rogers, 1999: 124), "learning happens when a person feels a need, he endeavors to meet this need, and he/she is satisfied with the outcome of their effort".

In order to lead to training, the person is motivated by a variety of incentives, while at the same time he/she faces many obstacles. According to the bibliography review, teachers are encouraged to participate in training programs through motivation, such as the subject matter, the facilitation of their educational work, the wage and career development (Logiotis, Malamas, & Papatriadafillou, 2015; Panteliadou, 2000; Pedagogical Institute, 2010; Papastergiou, 2016; Salpiggidis, 2011; Tzovla & Koukis, 2015). On the other hand, the obstacles faced by teachers when they want to take part in training programs include family and professional obligations, lack of time, distance from the training center and poor organization of training (Vassala & Motsios, 2007, Papastergiou, 2016; Fokialis & Raptis, 2008).

## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING**

### **Training**

The versatility of the term "training" causes many confusions and misinterpretations. Jarvis (2004), referring to adult education, refers to vocational training or academic education, and it is also linked to the further training of workers or unemployed job seekers (Hasapis, 1994). More specifically, teacher training is defined as a process that develops them both professionally and personally, giving them new knowledge, skills and attitudes (Xohellis, 2005, 2011). Hatzidimou's definition (2012) seems more complete as it refers to a series of activities aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of the individual, developing his / her personal and professional life, and filling in the gaps basic education.

### **Importance and necessity of training**

Teachers today, in the school environment, face a great amount of new data, and major changes associated both with their role and the education itself as an institution (Makaronis, 2009). Development in technology and science, as well as the wealth of new knowledge, cannot leave them unaffected. Thus, it is understood that teachers will be able to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills on the new data only with additional training in order to be able to respond to their work (Bouzakis, 2000), while through this they will be able to connect the theory with the school reality they have to deal with (Masari, 2013). The European Commission's report, which states that one of the sixteen quality indicators for school education is the training of teachers (Pedagogical Institute, 2010), also shows the great importance of training. Each form of training follows, supports and complements basic education, while at the same time gives the teacher the opportunity to evolve (Makaronis, 2009). Through education, educators are informed about all new innovations and reforms in education (Hatzipanagiotou, 2001) and thus they pave the way for change, modernization and reforms (Iliopoulou & Anastasiadou, 2015).

### **Need to explore training needs and learning incentives**

Every person is urged by his / her educational needs to evolve and become better. It should be remembered that these needs vary considerably from person to person and depend on several factors. Kapsalis and Papastamatis (2000: 29) define the exploration of needs as a "process of collecting and analyzing information, which results in identifying the learning needs of individuals, groups". The process of investigating and

analyzing the training needs of the persons to be trained is at the heart of the design of a training program (Patsos, 2015) and it is considered to be the first and most important stage (Martidou, 2011). The power or cause that drives or encourages someone to try for a purpose or to show interest in something can be described as an incentive (Papastamatis, 2010). Incentives develop in individuals from early age and evolve during their lifetime (Zacharis, 1989), while they are categorized into cognitive, social, emotional and biological. In addition they are the ones that guide the individual in specific behaviors and thoughts (Bosniadou, 2001). There may still be a separation of incentives both internally and externally, depending on their origin. Internal motivation comes from the person himself/ herself and encourages them to achieve their goal. These include instincts, urges and needs, curiosity. External incentives include the external factors that motivate and energize the individual to follow a behavior to achieve a goal. These include remuneration, penalties, reward, avoidance of a risk (Kapsalis & Rabidis, 2006; Kostaridou-Euclid, 1995; Philipou & Christou, 2001). Several scholars have studied the motives and many theories have been developed around them, which have been distinguished in two categories. In the first one there are the ontological theories with Maslow and Alderfer being representatives. Maslow formulated the Theory of Hierarchy of Needs (1954) and Alderfer's (1972) theory was based on the previous theory and expressed its continuity. The second category includes the mechanistic-procedural theories and it is related to the incentives and conditions that motivate and encourage or repel individuals to work. These theories were supported by Herzberg (1959), Locke (1960) and Vroom (1964) (as reported in Lygoura, 2012). Learning motivation, both internal and external, is what motivates an adult to make the decision to participate in a training and education program while at the same time giving him the strength to cope with this effort (Athanasoula-Reppas, 2008; Karalis, 2013). The adult educator will be encouraged to participate in an interesting training program that will correspond to their educational needs and contribute to their development, both professional and personal (Bagakis, 2003).

### **Obstacles faced by adults**

Adults' effort to train and participate in programs that help them improve and develop is often faced with many obstacles. These obstacles come from both the adult learners themselves and their outside environment. Researchers classify them in three categories according to the factor generating them (Cross, a.c. in Karalis, 2013; Kokkos, 2008; Rogers, 1999). The first category includes the obstacles related to the training program itself. A bad design that was not based on the training needs of the team or an outdated training program would certainly cause frustration and discomfort to trainees. Still, inappropriate training methods are another reason to lead adults into indifference, perhaps even resignation. The second category of obstacles encompasses all the commitments and obligations of adult learners and makes it difficult for them to take part in the training. This category includes family responsibilities that an adult acquires, such as children. Still, health-related conditions as well as age-related barriers are likely to be included: reduced memory, vision or hearing impairment, failure to concentrate (Falasca, 2011; Rogers, 1999). Adults usually have difficulty in learning and remembering something new and therefore only retaining what they consider something to be interesting and of major importance (Jarvis, 2004).

It is understood that this should be taken into account by organizers of adult-oriented training programs and constantly striving to respond to the interests of adult

participants. The latter category refers to obstacles that arise from the trainee himself. They are barriers directly related to and influenced by the person's knowledge and past experience, personality and perceptions (Kokkos, 2008; Rogers, 1999).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research aim**

The purpose of this study is to investigate and map out the incentives that motivate teachers to participate in training programs and the obstacles they face in their effort to achieve it. In particular, the motivations and obstacles of deputy teachers living and working in remote and inaccessible schools of Primary Education in the prefecture of Cyclades are studied.

### **Research sample**

The target group of this research is the primary school teachers, who during the school year 2017-2018 served in remote and inaccessible schools, primary schools and nursery schools, in the prefecture of Cyclades. In particular, the survey was addressed to teachers of 37 Primary Schools and 40 Kindergartens with these characteristics. The teachers who participated in the survey were of different ages and years of service and belonged to various specialties of Primary Education. Overall, questionnaire responses were provided by 96 people. It is important to stress that individuals selected to participate in a survey (sample) should represent and characterize the entire group of individuals (population) and be a miniature of it so that the conclusions drawn can be generalized for the whole the population (Vamboukas, 2010; Creswell, 2011).

### **Structure of Questionnaire**

The data collection tool, which was considered the most appropriate for this survey, is the questionnaire. In social sciences quantitative methodology is often used by researchers for data collection, which is processed by statistical programs (Vamboukas, 2010; Bell, 2001; Cohen & Manion, 2000; Karageorgos, 2002; Kyriazis, 1999). This study is part of a larger survey, conducted with a questionnaire consisting of 22 open and closed-ended questions (Creswell, 2011). A section of the questionnaire, consisting of two questions, is related to the specific part of the survey. In these questions, the participants score with a five-point scale (Not at all, Little, Quite, Very, Too much) a list of incentives and obstacles. The questionnaire was shared with the participants after the application of the pilot test of the tool and its finishing. This process was completed in March 2018. Because the population of the survey was scattered in schools in many islands, and the living presence of the researcher was impossible, it was considered necessary to convert the questionnaire into an electronic form using Google's special form. In this way the tool was distributed in a very short time and without cost. The electronic form of the questionnaire helped simplify the process of sending responses. Participants by opening their emails and clicking on the link they were transferred to the questionnaire form where they could respond directly. After submitting responses to the form, the results were automatically gathered in another special answer form, while at the same time ensuring the anonymity of the sample.

**Data analysis**

After collecting the required number of questionnaire replies, they were processed with the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24 statistical program. All the questionnaire variables were set and participants' repositories were stored and the processing for the export of tables and graphs started. Later results and conclusions were produced, which were then discussed and compared according to the existing bibliography and relative researches. Checking the internal consistency of questions about incentives and obstacles, the Cronbach index was equal to 0.770 (Cronbach's alpha = 0.770).

**RESEARCH RESULTS**

After elaborating and analyzing the results, their motivation for the participation of the deputy teachers of the inaccessible-remote schools of the Cyclades in training programs was highlighted in their subject matter ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.719$ ). Then, the incentives of personal educational development follow ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.841$ ), the association of theory with school reality ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.932$ ) and improvement in basic training ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 0.823$ ). A lesser incentive for participation in training is the social recognition of teachers ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 1.169$ ) (Table 1).

	<b>Total Answer (N)</b>	<b>Average (Mean)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (SD)</b>
The program themes	96	4,4063	,71933
Improving basic training	96	4,0729	,82392
Contributing to future career development	96	3,9479	1,00911
Personal educational development	96	4,3333	,84189
The provision of supporting material (books, CD, etc.)	96	3,6354	1,02721
The economic reasons	96	3,1667	1,18470
Social recognition	96	2,3542	1,16961
Providing a certificate / certificate of attendance	96	3,1979	1,21932
Linking theory to school reality	96	4,3125	,93260

**Table 1. Incentives for participation in a training program**

Regarding the obstacles they have to face, teachers rated the answers in the same way. From the results, their place of residence and work ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.824$ ) becomes the biggest obstacle and second, with very little difference, the place, time and duration of the program ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 1.029$ ). Significant obstacles still regard their family, professional and financial obligations ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.189$ ), the non-provision of service facilities, such as permission and the regulation of working hours ( $M = 3.64$ ,

SD = 1.205) and inadequate and timely update on the implementation and content of the program (M = 3.01, SD = 1.209). On the contrary, the smallest obstacle faced by the deputy teachers in these areas is the permanent physical changes they may have, such as reduced vision or hearing, and weak memory (M = 1.57, SD = 0.879 ) (Table 2).

	<b>Total Answer (N)</b>	<b>Average (Mean)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (SD)</b>
Place of residence and labor	96	4,1563	,82498
The location, time and duration of the program	96	3,8438	1,02934
The obligations (family, professional, financial)	96	3,7813	1,18945
Prerequisites (computer, foreign language, etc.)	96	2,0417	1,00438
Permanent physical changes (reduced vision or hearing, poor memory, etc.)	96	1,5729	,87953
Non-provision of service facilities (licenses, timetable)	96	3,6458	1,20507
Insufficient and timely updating (program implementation, content, structure)	96	3,0104	1,20957
Fatigue and saturation from program attendance	96	2,5313	1,10457
Fear of failure to complete the program	96	1,7604	,89142

**Table 2. Obstacles encountered when they want to take part in training programs**

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that the participating deputy teachers consider the subject of the training program to be the strongest motivation, followed by the personal and educational evolution and the connection of the theory with the school reality. From the answers given one concludes that the content and theme of a training program is the main motivation for the participation of teachers in it. Teachers want to participate in programs that have interesting subjects, that meet their needs and the problems they have to face daily in the classroom (Papastergiou, 2016; Pedagogical Institute, 2010; Salpiggidis, 2011). Moreover, some researches (Pandeliadou, 2000; Papastergiou, 2016) have also highlighted the personal and educational development as a motivation for participation, while others have emphasized the wage and career development (Karakiozis et al., 2016; Pedagogical Institute, 2010; Salpiggidis, 2011 ).

Tzovla and Koukis (2015) research reports that getting informed about educational issues, acquiring knowledge and skills, and becoming familiar with new technologies are important incentives for participating. Most participants in the Pedagogical Institute's (2010) research reported as motives the certification provided by the training programs, the place, duration and suitability of the trainers as well. Logiotis et al. (2015) mention the acquisition of skills as a motivation for participation, so that teachers can meet contemporary demands of education, while the results of another existing research are in agreement as well (Karakiozis et al., 2016).

The most important and major obstacle faced by deputy teachers when they want to be trained is their place of residence and work, ie the inaccessible and remote areas of the Cyclades. Typically, training takes place in large urban centers or county capitals so it is inconvenient for teachers to move easily. There are also many researches that highlight the place of residence of teachers and the distance from the training center as serious obstacles (Vassala & Motsios, 2007; Papastergiou, 2016). Lack of time is another barrier faced by many survey participants (Marouli, 2017), while many also report their family and professional obligations (Papastergiou, 2016). Also, the tiring training hours and the exhaustion of job obligations seem to impede teachers in the Kapsalis & Rabidis (2006) research, while Fokialis & Raptis (2008) stress that the difficulty of linking theory to practice is an obstacle for trainees.

### **Consequences for Research and Practice**

It has been stressed by the researchers that there is a strong need for obstacles and incentives to be investigated (Karalis, 2013; Kokkos, 2008). This research has provided useful information and data on the motivation and obstacles of deputy teachers. In addition, this study contributes to the enrichment of the relevant literature. The analyses and results obtained from this research can contribute to the design and organization of effective and useful training programs. However, it should be noted that the results cannot be generalized, as the study was based on a specific sample of deputy teachers. It would be useful to carry out further research with a larger sample to enhance the validity of the results.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

As discussed in the theoretical part of this paper, the need for teacher education has been repeatedly stressed by researchers. However, in order to achieve effective teacher education one key is interesting topics. It is also imperative to explore their training needs and then to design the training programs, which will respond exactly to what they need. In addition, the incentives motivating deputy teachers to take part in a training program and the obstacles they face when they want to attend, are influenced by their daily routine in classrooms and by living conditions in inaccessible and remote areas. Summarizing and taking into account the conclusions that have been drawn, the following suggestions are presented:

- Investigate the training needs of the group of teachers who will participate in each program.
- Ask the teachers about the content of the training, the place, the time and the duration of the training.

- Provide incentives for teachers to participate in the training programs.
- Identify the obstacles faced by teachers when they want to be trained.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

This study attempts to highlight and make known the training needs of the deputy teachers of the inaccessible and remote areas of the prefecture of Cyclades. At the same time, the motives and obstacles that affect their participation in training programs were identified. Therefore, the analyses and outcomes that have emerged can be used to design and organize effective and useful training programs, but it should be remembered once again that they cannot be generalized. It is suggested that further research should investigate the incentives and barriers of other groups of teachers with differentiated characteristics. The results from future surveys could be compared with the present, in order to identify the factors that influence the educational needs and the views of the teachers. In addition, a future research could look at the influence of other independent variables, such as studies, specialization, and other demographic characteristics.

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