

Opinions of Secondary Education Teachers on the Selection of Principals of School Units in the Regional Unit of Ioannina

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Abstract: The research deals with the issue of the selection of school principals based on the opinions of Secondary Education teachers of the Prefecture of Ioannina. In particular, their opinions were studied regarding the criteria, the method of selection, as well as the legislative framework in force (Law 4327/2015). In addition, the opinions regarding their contribution to the evaluation of the director of the school unit in which they are located are explored as well as the criteria based on which their effectiveness is evaluated.

From the statistical processing and analysis of the results, it appears that the teachers agree with the new legislative framework and specifically with the voting criterion, considering that the knowledge of the institutional framework is important, but they do not accept as a selection criterion the participation of the parents and guardians' association and the participation of the elected officials of Regional Service Council of Secondary Education (PYSDE). Because they consider that their selection is made on the basis of party criteria, they agree with the equality of administrative-electoral votes and the presence of a judge in the selection board. They consider that the profile of an effective manager is based more in terms of experience and less in terms of knowledge, emphasizing first his personality and general constitution, then his service situation and his teaching experience and finally his scientific qualifications.

Finally, there is no discrepancy regarding the educational evaluation in which they and the Principals of Secondary Schools wish to take part, while they do not consider the participation of the association of parents and guardians as well as the school counselors necessary.

Keywords: Evaluation, Opinions, Principals of School Units, Selection criteria, Effectiveness

Introduction

For the selection of effective managers it is necessary to define certain criteria, as far as this can be applied by the State. Each time they should be selected in such a way as to select the most effective possible principal to run a school. Therefore, the criteria must be defined precisely and clearly in order to highlight each time the most suitable for this position.

In the first systems for selecting principals (1970-1980) the criteria given importance were their seniority and experience as teachers. However, over the years, this process has been enriched by the introduction of new criteria, such as their scientific qualifications or their ability to cope effectively with specific tasks. By changing this belief, it is possible to claim a managerial position even by teachers without long-term experience but with substantial qualifications.

The principal is the most important factor in the school unit since he is called upon to ensure the conditions for a democratic, competitive, efficient and open school to society (Lemoni et al., 2013). His role includes a multitude of responsibilities, both in-school and out-of-school, as well as cooperation with all those involved in the educational process.

Although the position of a school unit director is not the highest in the educational hierarchy, his role is decisive for the management and organization of the school, with the aim of improving its operation and its maximum efficiency. The evolution of the school unit reflects on the one hand its special characteristics and on the other hand its effort, will and future goals (Spyropoulou, 2010).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the present research is, to a certain extent, to fill the gap that exists in the Greek bibliography on the investigated subject and also to be an occasion for further and more organized investigation of such an important issue.

In particular, it attempts to investigate the opinions of the Secondary Education teachers of the Prefecture of Ioannina regarding the selection of the principals of the school units in which they serve, regarding the criteria and their selection process.

The Research Objectives

In particular, the individual objectives of the research are:

- a) to examine the opinion of the teachers regarding the criteria, the scoring and the selection system of the principals.
- b) to examine their view on the profile of the effective manager.
- c) to ascertain whether, in their opinion, the selection process and criteria contribute to the selection of an effective manager and
- d) to propose certain amendments to the legal framework that they apparently consider useful for any improvement in the selection criteria of managers.

The axes on which the research will move concern:

1st axis: The demographic data of the teachers.

2nd axis: The assessments of the teachers regarding the criteria and the method of selection of school principals, as well as the applicable legal framework.

3rd axis: Their views on the profile of the effective manager.

4th axis: Their contribution to the evaluation of the director of the school unit they belong to.

Research Questions

More specifically, this research aims to answer the following questions related to the selection of school unit management, and to contribute to the success of efforts for an effective school. The resulting research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent do they consider the selection process and criteria for directors to be sound and objective?
2. Do they think the selection process has shortcomings and problems?
3. What changes would possibly make the selection system more effective?
4. To what extent do they agree with the scoring of all the selection criteria (Interview, voting, educational experience, scientific training)?
5. What modifications would you suggest regarding the selection criteria?
6. To what extent do they consider the process of selecting school principals effective with the current legislative/institutional framework?
7. In their opinion, which agencies should be involved in the selection of school principals?
8. In their opinion, which elements (knowledge, educational experience, etc.) outline the profile of the effective school principal?

Necessity of Research

The necessity of investigating the subject, based on the bibliographic review, is further founded by the fact that similar issues have been dealt with by Mavroskoufis (2003) who presents and interprets quantitative data and qualitative characteristics regarding the criteria and selection process of managers. Furthermore, based on Passiardi (1994) and the study of the effective principal from the point of view of the self-assessment of needs, the engagement with the effective school through the quality of the education provided is projected. Also, Saiti, Tsimaski & Hatzi (1997) examined the qualifications of an effective leader of a school unit and how they correspond to their work. Conducting the present research is considered necessary because up to now some researchers have been involved, who propose to investigate the subject from this specific point of view. Finally, it is necessary since it examines the views of teachers on a new legislative framework, which has not been researched before.

Research Methods

In order to achieve the objectives, to investigate and test our research hypotheses, it was decided to choose the field survey method. Based on the purpose, it is clear that the quantitative approach should be chosen to collect the data, and a good way to collect it is the questionnaire, because we want to find correlations between variables and examine hypotheses.

For the design of the questionnaire, we did not resort to research questions that we would like to investigate, but we identify, through a literature review, questionnaires that already exist, thus enhancing their validity and reliability. Some questions were used as is, while others were modified to a small extent, in order to serve the purpose of our research (Millan & Schumacher, 2001; Robson, 2002; Pananastasiou & Papanastasiou, 2005; Cohen et al., 2008).

The questionnaire was given and completed by the teachers after telephone contact outside working hours in the afternoon.

Population – Sample

The population of our research was the Secondary Education teachers of the Prefecture of Ioannina. After the number of schools was first calculated, we contacted the principals of the schools and then the teachers and discussed with them the possibility of telephone communication outside working hours. The research sample consisted of 155 Secondary Education teachers of the Prefecture of Ioannina who serve in the schools of the Prefecture during the 2015-2016 school year. The questionnaires were distributed in the first ten days of March 2016 and their collection was completed one month later.

The sampling strategy of our quantitative research was non-probability and specifically opportunistic or convenience sampling, since the selection of individuals will be based on their willingness and availability for the study. This type of sampling includes people who are close to the researcher, participate and help in carrying out the research process. Therefore, in no case can we claim that the teachers who would participate in our research are a representative sample of the general population, and thus the conclusions cannot be generalized.

Data Collection Tool

The questionnaire included 32 questions, which are mostly closed type. In many of them there are graded possible answers as well as an option for the respondent to choose any "other" apart from the box defined by the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is divided into 2 parts. The first part included questions referring to the following personal and professional data of the research subjects (Gender, Years of Service, Education Titles) while the second part, in relation to the theory, covered our research questions through the axes that had been set.

Validity and Reliability of Results

The validity of research can be ensured through the honesty of the content of the data we collect and the participants.

Regarding the reliability of the tool, in our research there is internal consistency reliability, since the administration of the tool will be done once, as well as its version. Each study participant completes the tool once. Answer checking is based on information from the entire tool questions. This is important because it increases the reliability of the tool so that values do not vary in difficulty or change over time (Creswell, 2011).

The validity and reliability of a survey are key components for its success. The term validity refers to the degree to which a view accurately represents the phenomena to which it refers. On the other hand, the term reliability refers to the extraction of the same results in repeated investigations under the same conditions in an attempt to generalize the validity of the findings (Bird et al, 1999).

The researcher took care to ensure validity and reliability at all stages of conducting the research.

Statistical Analysis

The next stage of collecting the completed questionnaires was their statistical analysis. After their responses were recorded, coded and tabulated, their statistical processing followed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (S.P.S.S. V.22). Statistical treatment mainly included frequency analysis and correlation of variables.

The variables were then divided into two categories: "independent" and "dependent". The independent variables were gender, years of service and level of education. The dependent variables were the objectives of our research. At the level of inductive statistics, an existence check was made between the independent and some dependent variables, whose results were interpreted based on probabilities, and specifically with the χ^2 criterion.

Along the way, the results of the research obtained after their statistical analysis are presented. The analysis was carried out based on the examination of the distribution frequencies of each variable separately and based on the correlation of the independent variables, i.e. those related to the individual characteristics of the subjects of the sample, with the dependent variables, i.e. those expressing opinions/attitudes (Melissopoulos , 2006).

Frequencies (relative, cumulative) were used and statistical differences between dependent and independent variables of our sample were tested. The investigation of differences was done with the extracted p-value and significance level equal to 0.05, any deviation $p < 0.05$ is statistically significant.

Results - Conclusions

Summarizing the results - conclusions compared to the axes we observe the following:

Regarding the questions of the 1st axis regarding the demographic data of the teachers, it was observed that the sample of our research consisted of an approximately equal number of men and women, who not only

hold their basic degree, but also higher and higher postgraduates and doctoral degrees in addition to their extensive educational experience.

With reference to the 2nd axis regarding the evaluations of the criteria and the method of selection as well as the current legal framework, from the analysis of the results we observe that both male and female teachers agree with the tenure of the principal of a school unit. The implementation of tenure is a measure that they believe should be in force and has a positive effect on the educational process.

The subjects of our sample, with minor deviations, agree with the way of selecting school principals, as it was carried out in 2015 with Law 4327/2015. From this fact it is clear that they obviously consider this process to be generally fair and objective.

Of course, a skepticism regarding the selection procedures of school principals also continues to emerge, a fact that is also confirmed by their opinions. They believe that in order to become a principal, one must have knowledge of education legislation, which they believe contributes greatly to the smooth running of a school unit, as well as 12 years of educational experience. Furthermore, they are in line with their selection process based on Law 4327/2015 and specifically consider that the voting criterion should be put into effect, putting it first in the choices of the necessary selection criteria, followed by the written competition and finally, the interview. Many even considered the combination of the above criteria necessary for the selection of a school director. On the contrary, although there is relative agreement with the legislative framework applied to the selection of a director, they consider that it does not contribute to the selection of an efficient person for this position.

With regard to their selection process, they consider the participation of themselves as well as of PYSDE in the whole process of particular importance, disagreeing with the selection by PYSDE following a proposal by themselves and the association of parents and guardians. They consider that the participation of elected officials in the PYSDE is not necessary, stressing that the choice of school principals depends to a significant extent on party criteria and that the members of the PYSDE should have an equal number of elected and administrative members as well as the presence of a judge.

Regarding the criterion of written exams exclusively by region in matters related to organization and administration, they express a strong disagreement, and to a lesser extent on the scoring of the selection criteria at 50% and the written exams also at 50%. Although the written test criterion was second in their preferences, and they considered it a more necessary criterion than the interview, this belief does not seem to apply here. On the contrary, the criterion of voting, which from the beginning was considered important and expressed their desire for its implementation in the future, continues to be in their preferences even in a 50% scoring and the remaining 50% given by written exams.

Based on the 3rd axis, regarding their views on the profile of an effective manager, they consider it to be based first in terms of personality, then in terms of experience and finally in terms of knowledge. Long-term studies have proven the emphasis placed on personality (leadership gifts, style, etc.) on the effectiveness of a school principal's position. The fact that they believe that the interview is a necessary evaluation criterion that helps to select an effective manager, perhaps stems from their view that it is a way to evaluate their personality. Experience is also considered an important and necessary qualification (at least 12 years as mentioned in their previous answers). Experience can contribute positively to the more effective performance of managerial duties, but we believe that emphasis should also be placed on the candidates' cognitive background each time, a category that, based on our participants, seems to be considered less important compared to the rest. Finally, with this method of selection, young people with valuable knowledge and desirable qualifications are not given the opportunity to claim a position as a school director, and the positions are constantly filled by the existing ones.

Finally, based on the 4th axis, regarding the contribution of teachers to the evaluation of the director of the school they belong to, the majority of them consider their contribution to the selection process useful and necessary. With the participation of teachers in the selection of principals in their position of responsibility, it is possible to ensure the quality and sustainability of the principal-evaluator role mainly through procedures that ensure their selection beyond partisan expedencies or similar practices (Koutouzis, 1999). They consider the evaluation to be the most important means of improving the administration provided and their participation as well as that of the secondary managers should be active in the whole process. On the contrary, they do not think that school counselors as well as the association of parents and guardians should participate in the evaluation process of managers. Finally, they consider that the eventual evaluation by themselves, on the one hand, particularly affects the way of administration, but on the other hand, it does not contribute to their mobilization to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Suggestions

In this part, some proposals are formulated that derive from the findings of the research carried out. These suggestions are addressed to every reader/interested person/educator, but especially to those who deal with the issue of selecting school principals. We believe that if they are taken into account by the competent bodies, it will be possible to upgrade, even to a minimum, the whole process.

What we explored in conjunction with the findings of contemporary research could be included and taken into account by education policy makers in order to include innovative elements in the design of the selection process of education executives in general.

Also, through the mandatory training of teachers who wish to fill the positions of school unit managers in matters of organization and administration of education, which will be implemented by distinguished bodies (e.g. University or Technological Institutions) is something that has not been found in the literature so far investigated. The acquisition of both theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply it in practice is essential, so that they have full knowledge of the responsibilities and can cope based on measurable criteria rather than their experience.

Also, the pilot application of the assessment in school units is an important means to identify and shape their selection criteria. There should be the possibility of participation and exchange of views by all involved bodies (educators, parents and guardians association, school counselors, secondary school principals). The evaluation of the director in the second phase could be done electronically, through a personal file, in order to integrate the new technologies in the organization and administration of education.

Also, based on the above, other aspects of the issue under investigation could be examined. Finally, the creation of a network of communication and exchange of views for the purpose of effective cooperation, would be useful not only in improving the project but also in finding the factors that strengthen it. In conclusion, the study of the criteria and the more general way of selecting principals of school units, as applied in advanced countries, which have been evaluated and bring positive results, would also have significant benefits.

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