

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the "Skills Workshops" Program in Primary Education

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Abstract: A quantitative survey involving 250 teachers from PE 70 and various specialties assessed the "Skills Workshops" program in primary education. Most teachers showed a positive attitude towards innovative programs, recognizing their significant contribution to learning objectives, while a smaller percentage remained cautious. Teachers emphasized the importance of students' active participation and viewed training and support as crucial for the success of new initiatives. They also highlighted the necessity of having specialized teachers consistently present in schools and recommended improvements in the duration and frequency of the workshops. Gender differences were noted, with female teachers being more open to new methods and valuing training more highly, while male teachers expressed concerns about the practical implementation and effectiveness of these programs. Age and experience also played roles, as younger and less experienced teachers showed more acceptance and enthusiasm for innovative programs. Overall, teachers believed in the potential of the "Skills Workshops" but stressed the need for ongoing improvement and support.

Keywords: Innovative programs, Skills Workshops, teachers, primary education, educational development.

Introduction

Primary education is a fundamental stage in a child's academic and social development, shaping cognitive abilities, interpersonal skills, and lifelong learning habits. Educational programs play a crucial role in this process, influencing teaching methodologies and student engagement. One of the key challenges in modern education is ensuring that curricula evolve in response to societal and technological advancements. In this context, innovative teaching approaches, such as the "Skills Workshops" program, aim to integrate experiential learning, interdisciplinary education, and 21st-century competencies into the school curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

The "Skills Workshops" initiative in Greece seeks to enhance student learning by incorporating project-based learning and skill development into the traditional education framework. These workshops focus on areas such as critical thinking, digital literacy, communication, and creativity—competencies identified as essential for students' future success (OECD, 2018). By shifting the focus from rote memorization to active problem-solving and collaboration, the program aligns with global trends in education reform (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Internationally, similar programs have been implemented with varying degrees of success. Countries such as Finland and Canada have adopted skill-based curricula, emphasizing interdisciplinary learning and competency-based education (Sahlberg, 2015). These models suggest that such approaches contribute to increased student motivation, engagement, and improved academic outcomes. However, challenges persist, particularly in teacher training, curriculum integration, and resource allocation (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014).

In Greece, the "Skills Workshops" program represents an important step toward modernizing primary education. However, its effectiveness depends on several factors, including teachers' perceptions, the availability of resources, and institutional support. Understanding how educators experience and implement this initiative is crucial for refining the program and ensuring its long-term success. This study evaluates the program through the perspectives of 250 teachers from primary education, analyzing their attitudes, challenges, and recommendations. The findings will contribute to ongoing discussions about curriculum innovation, teacher professional development, and the role of skill-based education in modern schooling.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to assess the effectiveness and reception of the "Skills Workshops" program among primary education teachers. A structured survey approach was used to gather numerical data, enabling statistical analysis of teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences. This method allowed for a systematic evaluation of key variables, including gender differences, years of experience, and the perceived impact of the program on teaching practices.

Participants and Sampling

The study included a sample of 250 primary school teachers, comprising general education teachers (PE 70) and specialized educators. The selection followed a random stratified sampling method to ensure representation across different school types, teaching backgrounds, and geographic regions. The final sample consisted of 60% female and 40% male teachers, with varying levels of professional experience ranging from less than 5 years to over 20 years.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data from participants. The survey consisted of three main sections:

Demographic Information – Gender, age, years of teaching experience, and subject specialization.

Perceptions of the Skills Workshops Program – Likert-scale questions measuring agreement with statements on program effectiveness, student engagement, and resource availability.

Challenges and Recommendations – Open-ended responses allowing teachers to provide qualitative insights on difficulties encountered and suggested improvements.

The questionnaire was distributed electronically, ensuring accessibility to a broad range of participants. A pilot test was conducted with 20 teachers to refine the clarity and reliability of the questions before full-scale deployment.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated to summarize overall teacher perceptions.

Inferential Statistics: Chi-square tests and independent t-tests were conducted to explore relationships between gender, teaching experience, and responses. Additionally, correlation analysis examined associations between teachers' attitudes and specific program factors such as training adequacy and student engagement.

Data processing and statistical analysis were conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26, ensuring robust and reliable findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant educational authorities. Participation was voluntary, and teachers provided informed consent before completing the survey. Responses were anonymized to ensure confidentiality, and data were stored securely in compliance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) guidelines.

Results

Demographic Profile of Participants

The study surveyed 250 primary education teachers, including both general education teachers (PE 70) and specialized educators. Of the participants, 60% were female and 40% were male, reflecting the gender distribution in primary education. The majority of teachers (55%) had 6–15 years of teaching experience, while 25% had more than 15 years of experience. Younger teachers (under 5 years of experience) accounted for 20% of the sample.

Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Participants

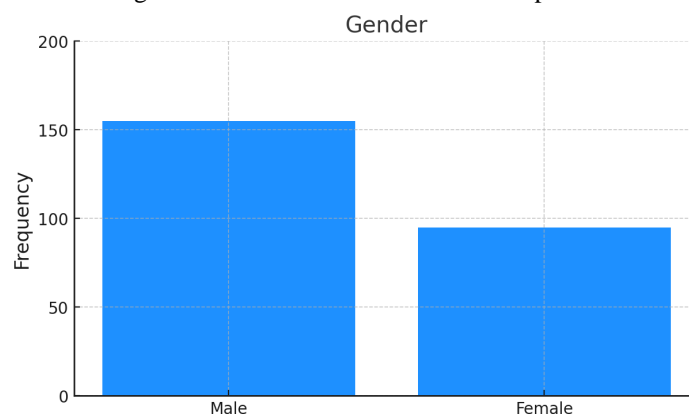
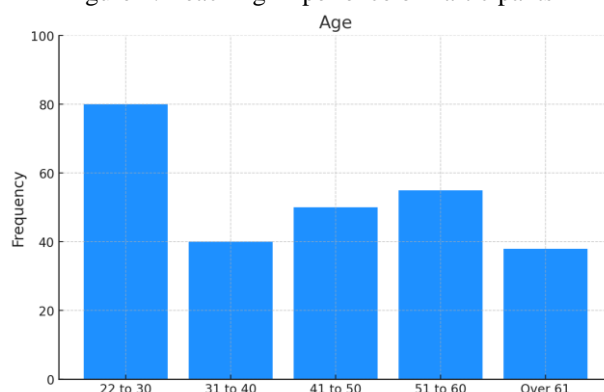


Figure 2: Teaching Experience of Participants



Teachers' Perceptions of the Skills Workshops Program

The majority of teachers (72%) reported that the Skills Workshops program had a positive impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. Many teachers noted that hands-on, interactive activities enhanced student motivation and fostered skill development beyond traditional curriculum subjects. However, 28% expressed concerns about challenges such as limited time allocation, lack of resources, and insufficient teacher training.

A significant gender difference emerged, with female teachers (78%) showing greater support for the program compared to male teachers (65%), who were more skeptical about its practical implementation. Teachers with fewer years of experience (0-5 years, 85% approval) were more enthusiastic than those with over 15 years (58% approval), suggesting that younger educators are more receptive to innovative teaching methods.

Challenges Faced in Implementing the Program

Despite its positive reception, the study identified several challenges:

Time Constraints: 68% of teachers felt that the workshops competed with core subjects, making integration difficult.

Lack of Training: 55% of respondents reported that they had not received adequate training to effectively implement the program.

Resource Limitations: 42% of teachers cited insufficient materials and classroom resources as a barrier to conducting hands-on activities.

Need for Specialist Support: 50% of teachers emphasized that the continuous presence of subject specialists (e.g., ICT, arts, and STEM educators) would improve the effectiveness of the workshops.

Correlation Analysis: Teacher Training and Program Effectiveness

A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) was found between teacher training and perceived program effectiveness. Teachers who had received comprehensive training were more likely to integrate the workshops successfully and view them as beneficial. In contrast, those without proper training found it difficult to implement and adapt activities to their curriculum.

Recommendations from Teachers

When asked about potential improvements, teachers suggested:

- Increasing workshop duration (65% of respondents)
- Providing structured guidelines and lesson plans (58%)
- Enhancing training opportunities (72%)
- Allocating dedicated resources (50%)
- Ensuring consistent collaboration with subject specialists (55%)

These insights suggest that while the Skills Workshops program is well-received, addressing training gaps, time allocation, and resource availability is critical for its long-term success.

Conclusion

The Skills Workshops program in primary education represents a significant shift toward a more interactive, student-centered approach to learning. By integrating experiential learning, interdisciplinary methodologies, and 21st-century skills, the program aims to enhance students' critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. The findings of this study highlight both the positive impact and the challenges associated with implementing the program in Greek primary schools.

Key Findings

The study revealed that a majority of teachers (72%) perceive the Skills Workshops as beneficial, particularly in terms of student engagement, motivation, and skill development. The interactive and hands-on nature of these workshops appears to resonate well with students, fostering a more dynamic classroom environment. However, several critical challenges emerged, including insufficient training, time constraints, and a lack of resources. A notable trend in teacher perception was observed based on gender and years of experience. Female teachers showed a significantly more positive attitude (78%) compared to male teachers (65%), while younger educators (0–5 years of experience) demonstrated greater enthusiasm (85%) than their more experienced colleagues (58%). This suggests that novice teachers are more adaptable to new educational methodologies, whereas veteran teachers may require additional training and institutional support to embrace such innovations. Furthermore, statistical analysis indicated a strong correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) between training and perceived program effectiveness. Teachers who received structured training sessions were better equipped to integrate the workshops into their curricula, while those lacking proper guidance faced implementation difficulties. This finding aligns with Guskey's (2003) assertion that professional development is a crucial factor in educational innovation and teacher effectiveness.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Given the findings, several policy recommendations emerge to strengthen the Skills Workshops program and maximize its effectiveness:

Enhanced Teacher Training and Professional Development

As training was identified as a key determinant of success, ongoing professional development programs should be integrated into the educational system.

Training should focus on innovative teaching strategies, interdisciplinary approaches, and classroom management techniques for workshop-based learning (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Blended learning models, including online modules and in-person workshops, could make training more accessible and practical for educators.

Curriculum Integration and Time Management

Teachers expressed concerns about time constraints; therefore, the program should be better aligned with the existing curriculum to ensure seamless integration rather than being seen as an "extra" subject (OECD, 2018).

Schools could adopt flexible scheduling models, such as project-based learning weeks, where traditional subjects are merged into workshop activities.

Resource Allocation and Infrastructure Improvement

A dedicated budget should be allocated to ensure schools have adequate materials, technology, and infrastructure to support interactive learning (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014).

Increased funding and partnerships with educational organizations could facilitate the development of resource banks, where teachers share lesson plans, activities, and best practices.

Collaboration with Specialist Educators

Teachers highlighted the need for specialists (ICT, STEM, Arts educators) to be consistently present in schools. This could be achieved through:

Rotational schedules, where specialists visit schools regularly.

Co-teaching models, allowing subject specialists to collaborate with general education teachers.

Online expert sessions, where educators can virtually bring in specialists to enhance classroom learning.

Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights, further longitudinal research is needed to assess the long-term impact of the Skills Workshops program on student achievement and teacher practices. Future studies could:

Evaluate student learning outcomes and skill acquisition over multiple academic years.

Investigate how regional disparities (urban vs. rural schools) affect program implementation.

Examine the effectiveness of different teacher training models in supporting educational innovation.

Final Thoughts

The Skills Workshops program marks a progressive step in the modernization of primary education, reflecting global trends in competency-based learning. However, its long-term success depends on continuous evaluation, adaptation, and support for educators. By addressing the identified challenges—teacher training, curriculum alignment, and resource availability—this initiative can evolve into a sustainable model for 21st-century education.

As Trilling & Fadel (2009) emphasize, education should not merely transfer knowledge but empower students with adaptable skills to navigate an ever-changing world. If properly implemented and supported, the Skills Workshops program has the potential to transform primary education in Greece, equipping future generations with the critical skills necessary for lifelong learning and success.

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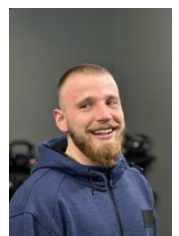
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