

Teachers' Assessment Contribution to Education Quality: The Case of Primary Education in Greece

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Abstract

Teacher assessment plays a very important role in the quality of classroom teaching and this is a common finding of much research in the field of education in general and especially in the field of Primary Education. Modern views and perceptions regarding the assessment of the educational work directly link the teacher's work with the overall educational work of the school, thereby highlighting the systemization of the whole process. The purpose of this paper is to determine whether and to what extent teacher assessment contributes to the improvement of the quality of the educational process in Primary Education. Eighty elementary school teachers were recruited for the study, which was conducted through the completion of a questionnaire based on measurement indicators of the Educational Assessment Program of the Ministry of Education. Finally, the data collected for the study were subjected to a statistical analysis using SPSS. The analysis of the statistical data reveals that teacher's assessment contributes to the improvement of the quality of the educational process, is therefore accepted. Teacher assessment appears to contribute to the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning processes. It is therefore perceived how topical and burning the issue of school assessment is, in particular, the teacher assessment, the educational work and the quality of the education itself. The contribution of teacher assessment to the improvement of the quality of the educational process in Primary Education is the subject of the present research. This research is a first view of the implementation of the Educational Work Assessment (EWA) program of the Ministry of Education taking place this year in selected schools on a pilot basis. For the collection of the required data a survey was conducted among 80 Primary Education teachers through the completion of a questionnaire based on measuring indicators of the EWA program. For the statistical processing of the data, the application of the descriptive analysis through the SPSS program was chosen. The statistical analysis resulted in the final conclusions reflecting the contribution of the teacher assessment to improving the quality of their teaching.

Keywords. Assessment, assessment of educational work, educational process, quality of teaching.

1. Introduction

It is worth considering to what degree the teacher assessment can be linked to the quality of teaching and contribute to the improvement of both the educational process and the personal development of the teacher.

It is perceived how topical and burning the issue of assessment in schools is, in particular, the teacher assessment, the educational work, and the quality of education in general (Drosos et al., 2016; Stukalina, 2010). For this reason the investigation to the issue, the data collection and analysis and the conclusion drawing are considered purposeful and essential.

It is a fact that in all social activity, assessment is an important function on an individual level (everyone is constantly assessing what they are doing or omitting) and on a collective level (all the groups that act assess their works). Furthermore, in all social institutions the assessment of all the individual functions and the people who serve them is an essential institution for their continuous improvement.

The term assessment in general refers to the process of evaluating the effectiveness and the results of a systematic and purposeful activity, where the basic prerequisite for its credibility is that clear criteria have been adopted and systematic and controlled procedures have been defined (Neave, 1989; Vught, & Westerheijden, 1994; Wang et al., 2004; Liu, 2015).

As a systematized process, assessment was also introduced in the field of education as an integral part of each teaching activity and it concerns all the parties involved in the process of education (teaching staff - students).

It is a fact that both public and private education of all levels constantly received and receive severe criticism of the content, the quality but mostly the results of the educational process (Laurie et al., 2016). All this focus on the issue of the assessment of education in all its dimensions is entirely justified as it is fully related to objectives, goals, aspirations as well as short and long-term investments of societies in both economic and human force (Skordoulis et al., 2014).

The issue of quality assessment becomes more complex when we observe various areas and terms of this issue (Grigoroudis et al., 2007; Chalikias et al., 2016; Skordoulis et al., 2018). Especially, in the case concerning student assessment, teacher assessment, school assessment, assessment of educational work, educational process, and all these in a context, such as education where the measurement of results is extremely difficult and it depends on many parameters and unpredictable factors (Chalikias et al., 2014; Skordoulis et al., 2017).

The teacher assessment - the most basic educational tool - has been both an educational and a political issue. While it is widely accepted that teachers should be subjected to continuous assessment (along with the assessment of other inputs such as school curricula, buildings, textbooks, teaching methods, etc.), the implementation of the assessment is constantly faced with the strong opposition of the educational organizations (Drosos et al., 2016).

The Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs has started for the current school year procedures for the planning, assessment and improvement of the quality of the educational work provided (Assessment of the educational work of the school unit - EWA). This program concerns the self-assessment of school units for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education as well as certain special education schools. It is an internal collective process of defining the school objectives, highlighting problems, developing a spirit of co-operation, solidarity and co-responsibility, with a primary aim of changing the culture of schools, the feedback of the educational work, and the upgrading of education and teachers.

The aim of the EWA program is:

- To contribute to the development and the improvement of the quality of the educational work in schools.
- To provide the school unit with means of improving the decision-making procedures.

The purpose of this article is to investigate whether the teacher assessment contributes to the improvement of the quality of the educational process.

In addition to the theoretical approach, data was collected using a structured questionnaire, which was distributed to 80 Primary Education Teachers in Piraeus. The data analysis also results in the conclusions of the survey.

2. Research methodology

For the collection of the survey data, a questionnaire was distributed to 80 Primary Education teachers. This questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part concerns the demographic characteristics of the sample (gender, age, training, years of service). The second part, which is the main body of the questionnaire, includes a table of 18 indicators of the improvement of the quality of teaching. For each indicator, a five-point Likert scale has been used. These indicators are included in the Educational Work Assessment Program of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Out of the 80 questionnaires, the 74 were completed as the remaining 6 were never returned. Finally, it is reported that the results obtained from the survey were analyzed using the SPSS statistical package.

The research model on which the research will be based, and which emerges from the bibliographic review, is diagrammatically depicted in the following figure.

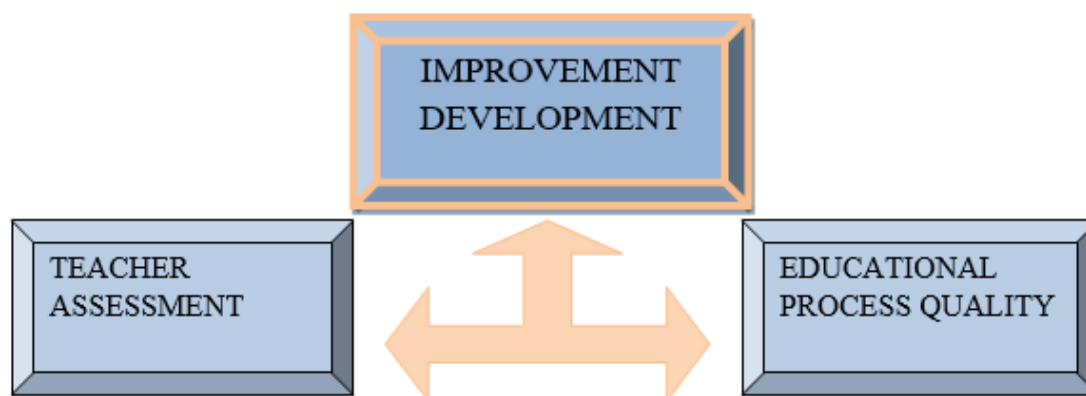


Figure 1. Research model.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Sample demographics

Gender: Out of the 74 respondents, 46 were women while 28 were men. That is in their majority, 62.2% were women, while the corresponding percentage of men was about 38%.

Age: Out of the 74 participants, 34 are 41-60 years old, 22 are between 31 and 40 years old and only 18 are 21-30 years old.

Training: It is noted that out of the 74 participants, where clearly all 74 are holders of a university degree, as evidenced by their professions as teachers, 8 have completed a postgraduate program and only 2 have a PhD degree.

Years of service: Out of the 74 teachers, 48 have a teaching experience of more than 10 years, 14 have been teaching for 5 to 9 years, while 12 have been teachers for 0 to 4 years.

3.2. Indicators that improve the quality of teaching in primary education

Teaching design

Regarding the educator's teaching, it has emerged that 50% of the sample agrees that the teaching planning is done annually and on an overall basis the teacher makes a comprehensive consideration of the syllabus and plans the teaching of the individual modules in relation to the objectives of the subject, the time frames and the specific student potential of their class.

Didactical organizational schemes

Classroom teaching is done through various organizational schemes, such as personalized teaching, teaching with work groups, according to the objectives of the subject and the needs of each student. 40 out of 74 teachers agree with this indicator, while 28 of them strongly agree.

Organization of pedagogical communication

Pedagogical communication is shaped by the teacher, in an understanding environment according to 54.1% of the sample that strongly agrees. That is, 40 out of the 74 teachers consider that this indicator contributes significantly to the improvement of the quality of teaching. Only 4 teachers chose the answer “neither agree nor disagree”.

Teacher-student communication

The 40 respondents, that is 54.1% of the sample, agree that the communication with the students’ indicator, which is based on rules that arise through their collaboration, improves the quality of the teaching. However, 24 respondents (32.4%) strongly agree with this view.

The teacher/student communication is defined by the rules that arise through teacher/student collaboration

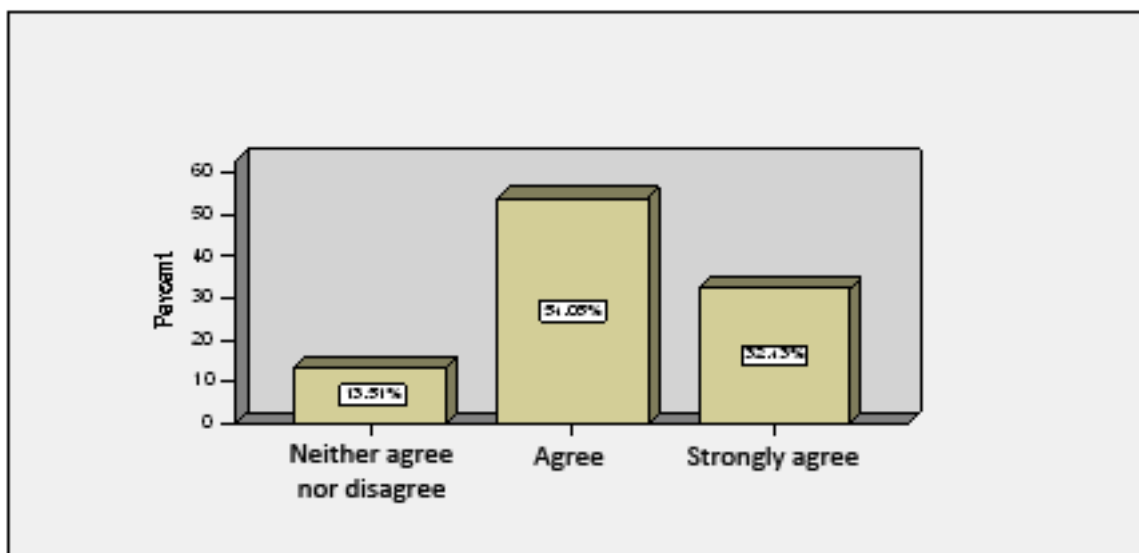


Figure 2. Teacher-student communication.

Participation climate

To a very large extend, communication in the classroom is shaped in a climate of mutual understanding and respect for the student’s personality and, in parallel, discipline issues are dealt discreetly when arisen. 38 teachers hold this belief and claim that such a thing would significantly affect the quality of teaching.

It is worth mentioning that there is a very small percentage of teachers (2.7%) who disagree with this position and claim that this indicator is not related to the improvement of the quality of the teaching work.

Encouragement - reward

The majority of the sample, 48.6%, that is 36 out of 74, tends to agree with the issue of encouraging and rewarding the student as a means of improving the quality of teaching. However, 6 out of 74 teachers disagree with this view.

Pedagogical assessment methods

To a great extent (45.9%, 34 out of 74) it is argued that pedagogical methods used according to the objectives and content of the course affect the quality of teaching. Still, this position is even more consistent with 30 out of 74, an equally high percentage.

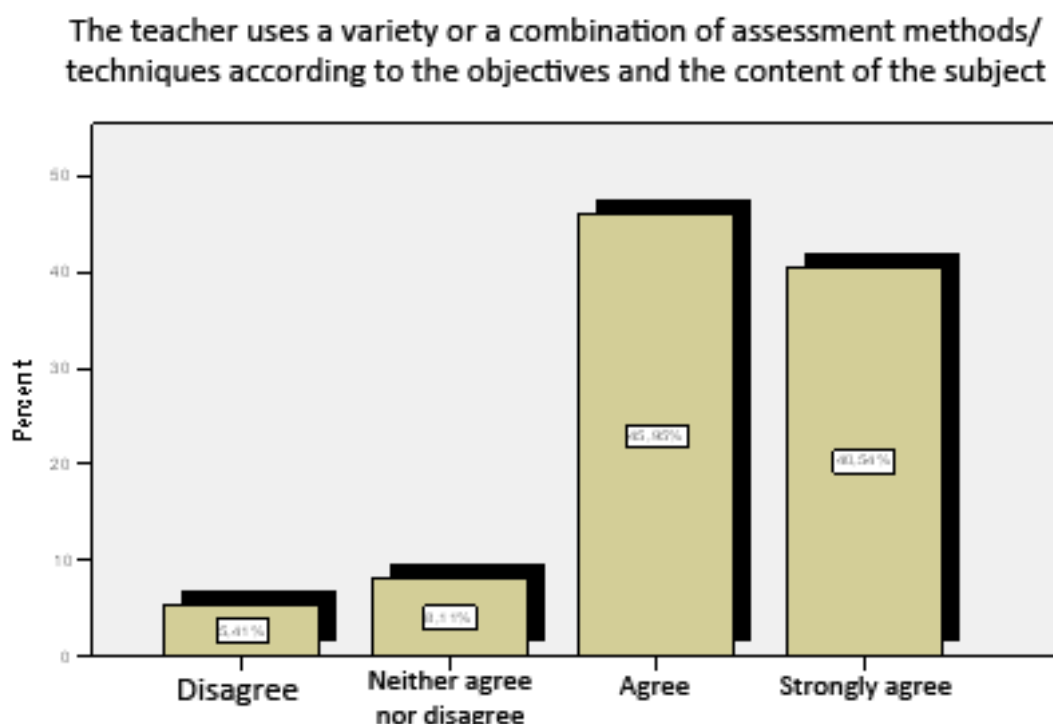


Figure 3. Pedagogical assessment methods.

Methods of assessment

To a great degree, the assessment of the courses is aimed at making more effective use of them for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning processes.

A 40.5% percentage agree that ways of systematic recording of the student assessment results are used, aiming at making more effective use of them for the improvement of the quality of the teaching and learning processes. In contrast, 8.1% disagree strongly with this view, while 10.8% disagree.

Keeping records for student progress

To a great extent, the quality of work, the achievements or the problems in the students' performance is accomplished by keeping records.

Update on student progress

Regarding the tenth indicator of the improvement of teaching quality, the majority of respondents (percentage 63.9%) agree that students are regularly updated about the quality of their work, their performance and their progress. A 5.6% percentage neither disagree nor agree with this view.

Discussion of pupils and teachers about their progress

To a large extent, students discuss with their teachers about their progress and teachers take into account the students' views.

Monitoring of students' individual progress

To a large degree, the students' individual progress is monitored based on the progress they make on personalized or differentiated support actions.

Classroom environment

Students feel pleasant and comfortable inside the classroom, according to 62.2%.

Participation in class

As it appears, the majority of the respondents (percentage 63.9%) agree that the students participate in class, express concerns and support their personal views. The percentage that is agreement with this opinion is 30.6%.

Student response

40.5% of the respondents strongly agree that students respond eagerly to the tasks assigned to them and complete them responsibly. Only 5.4% disagree with this particular opinion, while those holding a neutral attitude amount to a 24.3% percentage.

Student collaboration

40.5% agree that in the classroom there is a climate of collaboration and solidarity among students. The corresponding percentage for those who strongly agree with this opinion is 37.8%, while the percentage of the disagreeing respondents amounts to 5.4%.

In the classroom there is a climate of collaboration and solidarity among students.

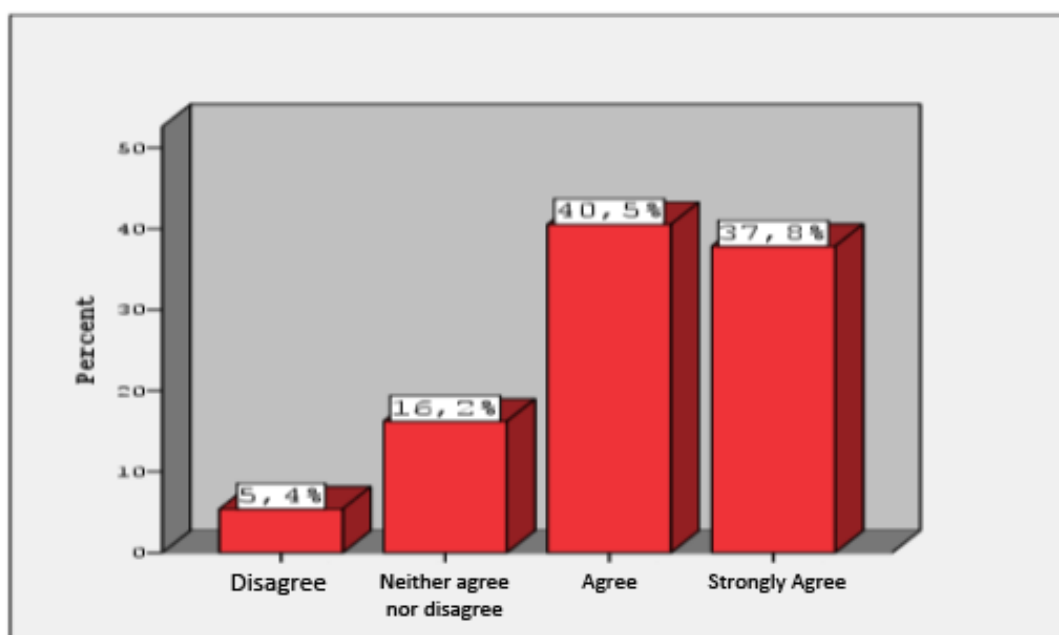


Figure 4. Student collaboration.

Student participation in groups

45.9% of those who participated in the survey agree that students are involved in collective projects and collaborate effectively in groups of different composition and size. Those who strongly agree with the previous opinion follow at a 32.4% percentage and those with a neutral attitude at a 16.2% percentage.

Report on student progress

Regarding the reporting of the student progress, it was revealed that it is realized through newsletters, notice boards, the school website or through telephone contacts.

A percentage of 45.9% of those surveyed agree that parents and students are informed through newsletters, notice boards, the school website or through telephone contacts. Those who neither agree nor disagree with this view account for 8.1% of the respondents, while only 2.7% strongly disagree.

3.3. Indicators improving the quality of teaching

Below are the results of the correlations of the three most essential and popular indicators of improvement of the quality of teaching (1, 3, 5), as revealed from the survey analysis, with the demographic characteristics of the respondents (sex, age, years of service). The following table summarizes the X^2 test results for the correlations reported, where the value of the statistical function T (Pearson chi-square) is shown.

Table 1. Pearson's X^2 correlations.

Indicators of improvement of teaching quality	Demographics	Pearson's X^2 sig.
The teacher plans the teaching both on an annual basis and on a modular level. He makes a comprehensive consideration of the syllabus and schedules the teaching of the individual modules in relation to the objectives of the subject, the time frames and the specific student force of his class	Gender	0.237
	Age	0.012
	Training	0.324
	Years of service	0.018
The teacher sees to the organization of pedagogical communication. He shapes a climate of mutual understanding in the classroom, shows respect for the student's personality, deals discreetly with discipline issues that may arise, regulates conflicts with rational arguments.	Gender	0.003
	Age	0.002
	Training	0.332
	Years of service	0.039
In the classroom a climate of participation, collaboration and collectivity is cultivated. The role mostly assumed by the teacher during teaching (e.g. the role of the coordinator) helps to this direction.	Gender	0.056
	Age	0.009
	Training	0.092
	Years of service	0.356

By looking at the p-value of the Pearson Chi-Square test of the above correlations we can see that in some of these it is very low ($0.000 < 0.05$ level of significance we have defined). Therefore, the null hypothesis H_0 where the variables are independent is rejected, while H_1 where the variables are dependent is accepted. Thus, for the correlations:

- Indicator 1: - Age
- Years of service
- Indicator 3: - Gender
- Age
- Indicator 5: - Age

where sig. < 0.05 , the hypothesis H_1 applies, that is, there is a relationship between the variables and they are dependent.

More specifically, the teacher's planning of teaching depends on the teacher's age and years of service (Indicator 1). The organization of the pedagogical communication and mutual understanding in the classroom is influenced by the teacher's gender and age (Indicator 3). In addition, the creation of a participation and collaboration climate

between the students and the teacher is inextricably linked to the teacher's age (Indicator 5).

4. Conclusion and discussion for future research

The assessment of the teacher's work aims at improving the processes and the results of the learning process, improving the quality of the educational work in the school unit and the professional development of the teachers in the context of lifelong learning, and it constitutes a continuous process of support, feedback and improvement of the teacher himself (Goddard et al, 2007).

The analysis of the survey's statistical data reveals that teacher assessment contributes to the improvement of the quality of the educational process. In fact, some indicators that contribute more to this improvement have been identified. This is in accordance with previous research results as well (Skordoulis et al., 2014; Drosos et al., 2015; Coburn & Penuel, 2016). This could lead to higher satisfaction levels as far as the education provided is concerned (Athiyaman, 1997; Sahin & Shelley, 2008; Tsitsmideli et al., 2016).

More specifically, it has been shown that the teacher, by planning the teaching on both an annual basis and a module level, significantly improves the quality of his teaching. This also happens when the teacher sees to the organization of the pedagogical communication (Aviv & Golan, 1998; Shaidullina et al., 2015). That is, when he creates a climate of mutual understanding in the classroom, he shows respect for the student's personality and resolves disputes within the classroom in a rational way. Also, the creation of a climate of participation, collaboration and collectivity among students in the classroom contributes to the improvement of this quality. The role the teacher assumes during teaching, which is mainly the role of a coordinator, helps in this direction (Baran et al., 2011). All of the above are directly linked and influenced by the teacher's age. The teacher's gender is what is related to the organization of the pedagogical communication and the mutual understanding in the classroom (Könings et al., 2014).

The most obvious future research suggestion is to conduct the present research in other Offices of other geographical departments in the rest of Greece. Furthermore, it would be of particular importance to conduct a similar research at other levels of education, such as Secondary Education, where the validity of the conceptual framework developed and evaluated about the quality of Primary Education teaching could be checked.

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