



## Research Article

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# Teachers' Views on the Priorities of Effective School Management

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Doi: 10.36941/jesr-2020-0001

### Abstract

The aim of the present study was to investigate teachers' views on the priorities of effective school management. The possible variability of teachers' views in relation to age and work experience was also investigated. For this purpose, research was carried out in Secondary Public and Private Education schools of Ioannina, the capital city and the largest in the Epirus Prefecture, North-West part of Greece. Over 300 questionnaires were distributed to 32 Secondary Education Schools and 165 completed questionnaires were collected (return rate 54.99%). Teachers were asked to indicate their views on the priorities which should be set for effective School Management. Teachers pointed as most important priorities team work and collaboration with the Principal and their pupils (56%) whereas as least selected priority (24.4%) they pointed their participation in helping pupils to get a job. Compared to Public Schools, teachers working in Private Schools gave increased priority in: pupils' performance, raising teachers' aspirations for their pupils, teachers' job satisfaction, team work, collaboration with the Principal, parental involvement-collaboration between teachers and parents and school environment. The results indicate a significant variability on teachers' age and work experience regarding their priorities for effective school management. This variability highlights the importance of focusing on teachers' attitudes for a successful implementation of effective human resources and school management.

**Keywords:** Effective school management, teachers, human resources management, Greece

## 1. Introduction

Teaching profession over the last decade in Greece, has been characterized by a dramatic decline in recruitment and earnings. During this period, questions have been raised regarding the performance of the country's educational system in alignment with the global debate on the goals of an effective education policy (Levin & Belfield, 2015).

The concept of *effectiveness* is linked and often confused with the concept of *efficiency*. A school unit may be *effective* while at the same time another school may be less *efficient* than expected in terms of a specific outcome. Schools' *efficiency* and *performance* is connected with a number of parameters like: school leader's abilities, teachers, curriculum, work conditions, effective school and

parental cooperation (Edmonds, 1979).

School *outputs* should be evaluated in view of their *inputs* and the regional social and economic conditions. Nevertheless, in times of economic crisis and austerity measures, there is concern about the optimal allocation of funding to public spending, including education spending (Aparicio *et al.*, 2018) with school units having to optimally utilize their available resources. This is not an easy task. School principals have limited choices in terms of resources and they have to make decisions and prioritize their implementation according to the needs of their school unit.

A set of schools' priorities can be established at national, regional or school unit level and goals can vary according to cultural, political, social, economic and technological parameters. At national or regional level, decisions on the strategic goals aligning to an effective educational system are established with school leaders and teachers having to implement these goals.

School leaders set priorities and allocated time and resources on particular features which require attention for ensuring the optimal operation of an *effective school* while at the same time school leaders and policy makers face the "unresolved" question on *what makes one school more effective than another*.

This question requires first to tackle a historical debate on what constitutes *school effectiveness*, a confounding area of inquiry, with academic and political implications. The debate goes on for decades with policy makers facing society's challenging and changing conditions and requirements (Rutter & Maughan, 2002; Gill *et al.*, 2004; Rawolle *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, school leaders' priorities may be shaped according to personality traits and/or particular features/peculiarities of their school units. For example, *personality traits* can have a significant effect on some school outcomes according to their leader's priorities (Dös & Savas, 2015; Li *et al.*, 2016) while in the case of a school with a *high dropout rate*, its leader may give priority to this specific issue rather on focusing on another priority or desirable outcome (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015).

In addition to possible differences in the priorities of school leaders according to *personality traits* and school unit peculiarities, different expectations from the society and policy makers can contribute in shaping educational management priorities. For example, governments set the strategic priorities for their educational system (Benavot, 2015; Moss, 2017) with policy makers taking decisions in terms of *economic efficiency* (Stergiou *et al.*, 2018) whereas parents may evaluate a school unit's effectiveness according to its *academic achievements* (DeAngelis, 2018).

A balanced judgment on school effectiveness requires the consideration of several parameters which may have a significant effect on school outcomes irrespective of background *variables* such as neighbourhood social and economics features (Morrissey & Vinopal, 2018). In fact, effective schools can be viewed as the result of *internal* and *external* school variables, including teacher expectations, leadership, educational goals, culture of change, innovation and student achievement (Wajdi *et al.*, 2018).

*School leadership* has a significant role in optimising the outcomes of schools' inputs, maximising the potential of all resources according the goals and settings of effective school management (Nathanaili, 2016; Koutouzis & Malliara, 2017).

In addition to the leading role of school principals, there is a plethora of evidence to suggest that teachers can have a key role in school effectiveness with initiatives and innovations targeting to inspire and improve pupils' attitudes and academic achievements (Emo, 2015; Gunawan & Shieh, 2016; Tastan *et al.*, 2018). Teachers' attitudes and background may vary according to age and work experience (Fetters *et al.*, 2002; Broström *et al.*, 2015) creating another challenge for school decision making processes.

Teachers' views on what constitutes *effective school leadership* and priorities is of paramount importance for management objectives and decision-making processes.

The purpose of this work was to investigate Secondary Education School teachers' views in Greece on their priorities of effective school management. The possible variability of teachers' views in relation to age and work experience was also investigated.

## 2. Methodology

The research was carried out in Secondary Education Schools of Ioannina, the capital city and the largest in the Epirus Prefecture, North-West part of Greece.

Over 300 questionnaires were distributed to 32 schools and 165 completed were collected (return rate 54.99%) from teachers working in Public (n=133) and Private Schools (n=32).

Teachers were asked to indicate on a Likert five- point scale (1. *Strongly disagree*, 2. *Somewhat disagree*, 3. *Neither agree nor disagree*, 4. *Agree*, 5. *Strongly agree*) their views on the priorities of nine School Management goals which included: 1. *Pupils' Academic Performance*, 2. *Employing innovative teaching approaches*, 3. *Raise Teachers' aspirations for all of their pupils*, 4. *Teachers' Job satisfaction*, 5. *Teachers' team work- collaboration with their Principal*, 6. *Collaboration with pupils*, 7. *Parental involvement-collaboration between teachers and parents*, 8. *School Environment which will influence the personality development of the pupils*, 9. *Preparing pupils for getting a job*.

Furthermore, teachers were asked to respond to a *statement* about the role of their School Principal on effective school management.

The distributed questionnaire has been previously validated and used for research purposes in Greece (Aygeros, 2009). Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the effect of age and work experience was investigated using ANOVA followed by Bonferroni's post-hoc comparisons tests.

## 3. Results & Discussion

A total of 165 Secondary Education teachers completed the anonymous survey. The demographic data of the participants are presented in Tables 1-3.

The sample included 165 teachers: a small percentage of them were younger than 40 years old (15.8%) while the majority were between 40-60 years old and a small fraction (5.5%) were older than 61 years old. All participants had teaching experience ranging from 10 – 25 years to over 30 years of experience, while almost 1/3 hold a post graduate degree (27,2%).

**Table 1:** Age groups of the teachers who participated in the present study

Age group	Count	Percent %
30-40	26	15.8
41-50	61	37.0
51-60	69	41.8
>61	9	5.5
Total	165	100.0

**Table 2:** Teaching experience of the participants in the present study

Teaching experience (years)	Count	Percent %
>10	0	0.00
10-15	44	26.7
16-20	43	26.1
21-25	35	21.2
26-30	24	14.5
>30	19	11.5
Total	165	100.0

**Table 3:** Qualifications of the participants in the present study

Academic Qualifications	Count	Percent %
1 <sup>st</sup> degree	106	64.2
Additional 1 <sup>st</sup> degree	14	8.5
Master	40	24.2
PhD	5	3.0
Total	165	100.0

Most of the teachers (63.03%) expressed their views on the significant role of their school leader in improving the effectiveness of their educational unit.

Their views on the priorities of effective school management included: *collaboration with their Principal, parents, pupils and teachers' job satisfaction*. More specifically, as most favourable priority was indicated the *teamwork and collaboration with their Principal and pupils, teachers' job satisfaction* (39,39%), *parental involvement and collaboration* (33,33%) whereas the least selected priority (26% of the participants replied with *Strongly agree*) was *helping pupils get a job* (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Teachers' (n=165) views for the Priorities of Effective School Management

Teachers' views for the Priorities of Effective School Management	Strongly disagree (%)	Somewhat disagree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Pupils' Academic Performance	0.0	4.24	27.88	39.34	28.45
Encourage innovative teaching approaches	5.45	10.91	21.82	40.61	21.21
Raise teachers' aspirations for all of their pupils	1.21	7.88	22.42	47.88	20.61
Teachers' Job satisfaction	1.21	6.67	22.42	30.30	39.39
Teachers' team work - collaboration with their Principal	1.21	3.03	10.30	29.09	56.36
Collaboration with pupils	0.0	3.03	8.48	32.12	56.36
Parental involvement-collaboration between teachers and parents	2.42	8.48	14.55	41.21	33.33
School environment which will influence the personality development of pupils	0.0	0.61	5.45	7.88	26.67
Preparing pupils for getting a job	4.85	16.97	24.85	29.09	24.24

Some differences were observed in teachers' views according to age and work experience: for example, younger and less experienced teachers gave higher priorities in *pupils' academic performance* and *teachers' team work and collaboration with the Principal*, compared to older or more experienced teachers (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Teachers' age and views on the priorities Effective School Management

Teachers' views for the Priorities of Effective School Management	Age Groups	Average score (±sd)	One-way ANOVA followed by Bonferroni's post-hoc comparisons tests
Pupils' Academic Performance	30-40 a	4.19(0.69)	p=0.033
	41-50 a	4.07(0.89)	
	51-60b	3.71(0.86)	
	>61 b	3.78(0.67)	

Teachers' views for the Priorities of Effective School Management	Age Groups	Average score (±sd)	One-way ANOVA followed by Bonferroni's post-hoc comparisons tests
Employing innovative teaching approaches	30-40	3.81(0.75)	NS
	41-50	3.67(1.04)	
	51-60	3.57(1.21)	
	>61	3.00(1.41)	
Raise teachers' aspirations for all of their pupils	30-40 a	4.12(0.59)	p=0.029
	41-50	3.72(0.93)	
	51-60 b	3.67(0.95)	
	>61	4.22(0.83)	
Teachers' Job satisfaction	30-40	4.27(0.87)	NS
	41-50	4.11(0.98)	
	51-60	3.86(1.03)	
	>61	3.56(1.01)	
Teachers' team work- collaboration with their Principal	30-40 a	4.69(0.47)	p=0.01
	41-50	4.49(0.72)	
	51-60 b	4.26(0.92)	
	>61	3.33(1.50)	
Collaboration with pupils	30-40	4.65(0.49)	NS
	41-50	4.46(0.72)	
	51-60	4.33(0.87)	
	>61	4.11(0.93)	
Parental involvement-collaboration between teachers and parents	30-40	4.15(0.61)	NS
	41-50	4.03(1.03)	
	51-60	3.90(1.07)	
	>61	3.11(1.17)	
School environment which will influence the personality development of pupils	30-40 a	4.73(0.53)	p=0.018
	41-50	4.44(0.85)	
	51-60 b	4.28(1.01)	
	>61	3.89(0.78)	
Preparing pupils getting a job	30-40	3.69(1.12)	NS
	41-50	3.52(1.12)	
	51-60	3.41(1.30)	
	>61	3.67(0.50)	

An analysis (ANOVA) of the results indicated that teachers' views did not vary according to gender or level of academic qualifications (results not shown).

In contrast, there was a significant difference in their views according to their work experience and most specifically regarding the need for *raising teachers' aspirations for all of their pupils/students* and focusing on teaching staff's *job satisfaction* (Table 4, Table 6).

**TABLE 6.** The effect of work experience on teachers' views for Effective School Management priorities

Priorities	Years of Work Experience	Average score (±sd)	One-way ANOVA followed by Bonferroni's post-hoc comparisons
Students' Academic Performance	10-15a	4.18 (0.87)	p=0.035
	16-20	4.07(0.83)	
	21-25b	3.66(0.97)	
	26-30	3.79(0.72)	
	>30 b	3.63(0.63)	

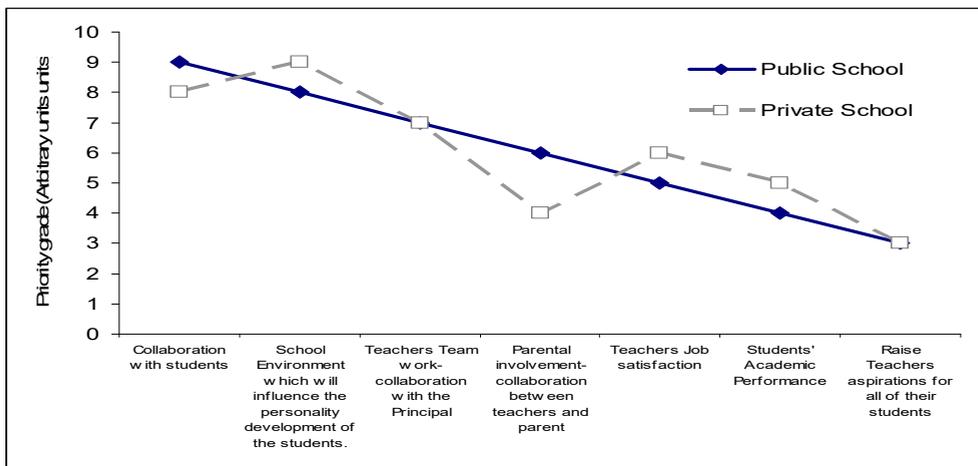
Priorities	Years of Work Experience	Average score (±sd)	One-way ANOVA followed by Bonferroni's post-hoc comparisons
Encourage innovative teaching approaches	10-15	3.89(0.75)	NS
	16-20	3.79(0.99)	
	21-25	3.43(1.33)	
	26-30	3.42(1.21)	
	>30	3.16(1.26)	
Raise teachers' aspirations for all of their pupils	10-15a	4.02(0.55)	p=0.044
	16-20	3.81(1.05)	
	21-25b	3.63(0.84)	
	26-30b	3.42(1.06)	
Teachers' Job satisfaction	>30	3.95(0.97)	p=0.005
	10-15a	4.30(0.85)	
	16-20	4.26(1.00)	
	21-25	3.71(1.02)	
Teachers' team work- collaboration with the Principal	26-30	3.75(1.03)	p<0.001
	>30 b	3.58(0.96)	
	10-15 a	4.73(0.45)	
	16-20	4.53(0.70)	
Collaboration with pupils	21-25	4.26(0.89)	p=0.028
	26-30	4.21(0.83)	
	>30 b	3.53(1.35)	
	10-15a	4.66(0.48)	
Parental involvement-collaboration between teachers and parents	16-20	4.51(0.74)	NS
	21-25	4.23(0.97)	
	26-30b	4.17(0.76)	
	>30	4.32(0.89)	
School environment which will influence the personality development of pupils	10-15	4.14(0.80)	NS
	16-20	4.12(0.91)	
	21-25	3.71(1.27)	
	26-30	4.00(0.88)	
Preparing pupils for getting a job	>30	3.47(1.22)	NS
	10-15	4.61(0.62)	
	16-20	4.53(0.77)	
	21-25	4.17(1.15)	
	26-30	4.17(1.01)	NS
	>30	4.21(0.92)	
	10-15	3.57(1.15)	
	16-20	3.51(1.05)	
	21-25	3.37(1.44)	NS
	26-30	3.50(1.32)	
	>30	3.63(0.76)	

Compared to Public Schools, teachers working in Private Schools gave increased priority on: *pupils' academic performance; raise teachers' aspirations for all of their pupils; teachers' job satisfaction; teachers' team work and collaboration with the Principal; parental involvement-collaboration between teachers and parents and school environment which will influence the personality development of pupils* (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Comparison between Public and Private School teachers on their views of effective School management priorities

Teachers' views for the priorities of effective School Management	Public School (n=133)	Private School (n=32)	Mann-Whitney test
Pupils' Academic Performance	3.79(0.84)	4.45(0.71)	P<0.01
Employing innovative approaches in teaching	3.58(1.19)	3.76(0.61)	NS
Raise Teachers aspirations for all of their pupils	3.71(0.97)	4.09(0.46)	P<0.01
Teachers' Job satisfaction	3.89(1.03)	4.45(0.71)	P<0.001
Teachers' team work - collaboration with the Principal	4.30(0.94)	4.64(0.49)	P=0.005
Collaboration with pupils	4.38(0.82)	4.58(0.50)	NS
Parental involvement-collaboration between teachers and parents	3.86(1.08)	4.27(0.67)	P=0.08
School environment which will influence the personality development of pupils	4.30(0.96)	4.76(0.44)	P<0.01
Preparing pupils for getting a job	3.5(1.19)	3.55(1.12)	NS

To facilitate comparison between the rank of priorities of Private and Public school teachers, the score of the answers on *each priority* was transformed on a scale of 1-10. The *priorities* were ranked according to the sequence of their score and the results were plotted according to the rank of each priority (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Top-seven of teachers' *priorities* (Arbitrary units) for effective school management in Public (solid line) and Private (dashed line) schools

The results indicate that there were minor differences on the top-seven priorities for effective school management in Public and Private schools. In fact, teachers of both Public and Private schools gave the highest priority on: the *collaboration with pupils and teachers, team work and collaboration with their Principal* and low priority on: *employing innovative approaches in teaching and preparing pupils for getting a job*.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of the present work confirm the established notion that teachers give great value on school principal's role for *effective management* of their educational unit (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). A

school leader is expected to take a leading role in identifying and shaping the policies which will serve the goals of a school unit. Teachers' perceptions and priorities for school goals will be equally influenced by *school leadership* (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013).

Researchers, policy makers and school principals frequently explore several methods to *evaluate* school leadership, school effectiveness and possible initiatives which can be employed to enhance school outcomes.

Teachers' views on the priorities and policies of their school is a significant element of effective human resources management (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Understanding what teachers believe about their Principal's contribution, the needs and priorities of their school unit is a practical problem. In this quest for answers lays the difficulty in decision making process and setting the goals of effectiveness or the educational goals of each school unit. Different schools may be facing different problems needs and priorities as a result of several various external and internal variables (Oreopoulos, 2012; Wodtke & Parbst, 2016).

Teachers' expectations for their school leaders exhibited in the present work are in agreement with previously reported views regarding teachers' expectations on the important role of school leaders in creating a working environment that enhance collaboration with the local community (Anastasiou & Papakonstantinou, 2015). Teachers' aspirations can vary according to social and economic variables, all affecting and co-shaping what can be viewed as *important* (Stewart *et al.*, 2007).

The results presented in this study exhibit the significance of *age* and *work experience* on shaping teachers' views and priorities on effective school management. Younger and less experienced teachers appeared more decisive on raising the *academic performance* of their pupils.

This demographic variability may reflect deeper variabilities on teachers' views. Younger teachers may have different educational and personal background, motivations, perceptions and aspirations for their role as teachers (Younger *et al.*, 2004; Watt & Richardson, 2008). *Teaching experience* may shape or reshape teachers' views on what is important for their efficacy (Wolters *et al.*, 2007; Zee & Koomen 2016) with considerable consequences on pupils' teaching and academic performance.

This variability highlights the importance on focusing on teachers' attitudes for successful human resources and effective school management. This is even more important in the case of the Greek educational system which is characterised by a centralised and bureaucratic system in decision making where important decisions like school curricula, textbooks, teachers' appointments, salaries and promotion are taken by the Ministry of Education and uniformly implemented into all schools (Anastasiou & Papakostantinou, 2014).

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