

## **Incentives to participate in adult education for officials in the Ministry of Education**

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**Abstract:** *One of the basic principles of adult education is the active participation of adult learners in the educational process. The purpose of this research project is to identify those factors that act as incentives for participation administrators of the Ministry of Education of the Prefecture of Thessaloniki to participate in training programs and as well the impact their demographic characteristics may have. The data analysis of a questionnaire which was administered to 165 participants indicated that the factors that influence positively the group in question are related to better performance at work, willingness to learn new things, lifelong education, rising qualifications and obtaining the certificate through participation.*

**Key - words:** *motivation, incentives, adult education, public sector.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Regarding the public sector, the demand of the citizens is the existence of a current and efficient public administration that responds to the growing challenges faced by modern society. Philosophy of public institutions is to provide the best possible service to citizens, while officials desire the development of multiple skills in order to cope successfully with the roles assigned to them in the context of their work. Consequently, the most valuable capital of any organization is its human resources and that is why public institutions are relying on their human resources to cope with the new socio-economic conditions that have formed.

Trigger for this research is the fact that inadequate training of civil servants is a timeless problem in the management of the public sector in Greece. The mobility that existed in recent years due to adjustments to services and government organizations through the process of redeployment (mandatory and voluntary), changed staffing services. Inevitably, the labor data also changed and each employee must respond to them.

This paper aims to highlight the incentives faced by officials in the Ministry of Education during their participation in training programs.

### **Theoretical Part**

#### **Motivation in adult education**

According to Kostaridis - Euclidi, incentive is "anything that urges, pushes or lures a person in action. The incentives may activate the person from within or attract him/her to act from the outside" (Kostaridis - Euclidi, 1998). Thus, incentives are divided into internal and external. Ryan and Deci (2000) state that internal incentive motivates the person out of personal interest or pleasure, whereas external incentives motivates the individual to achieve a specific result. Therefore, the inner motivation is defined as an activity for the person's inner contentment and not to achieve a result and external motivation helps to achieve a particular result or reward.

Additionally, an incentive can be defined as psychological forces that determine the direction of the behavior of an individual in an organization, the level of effort and finally the level of perseverance in dealing with obstacles. Motivation therefore plays a central role in the administration because it explains why people behave in a certain way within an organization (Jones & George, 2003).

According to Lieb (1991) there are at least six factors that motivate the participation in adult education. These factors are:

- The interest in knowledge, such as the desire for the pursuit of knowledge or personal satisfaction
- The personal development, such as seeking professional development and gain a competitive advantage over the others
- The establishment of social relations, such as contact and getting to know new people, the need for socialization
- Avoiding routine, such as changing the daily habits and obligations at work and at home, getting rid of boredom
- The social contribution, as the desire to offer and to participate in society
- The external expectations, such as to comply with the instructions of another or fulfill the expectations or recommendations of someone else who holds official power.

For Jaques (2004) driving forces for further learning are the reward for commitment and hard work combined with challenge and support.

Noye and Piveteau (1999) consider as basic factor for adult participation the real interest shown by the individual for learning objectives followed by personal success, competition, the presence of other people and test the limits of each individual. Also, Noye and Piveteau (1999) refer to learning opportunities in the workplace. Mobility of workers can be a convenience factor for learning as well as the resolution of problems arising in the workplace (Noye & Piveteau, 1999).

## **II. Literature Review**

Houle (1961 in: Zarifis) conducted the first systematic research to explore the motivation of adult learners. It is a qualitative survey using interviews with people involved in adult education programs. Houle concluded that there are three different types of participants:

- (a) oriented to the goals, who are interested in achieving the goal set by
- (b) oriented to learning, who do not have a specific goal, but are characterized by a strong desire to learn and
- (c) oriented to the activity, participating to meet personal or social needs.

Although the typology proposed by Houle cannot be generalized, it had an impact and triggered the conduction of subsequent research as to the motives for participating in adult education programs (Zarifis, 2011).

In their research Johnstone & Rivera (1965) asked participants to choose from a list of ways that they believed that the activity of adult education which were involved will be helpful to them. The motives were classified based on the needs for (a) assistance in their current job, (b) preparing for a new job, (c) their daily chores (d) the escape from the routine of everyday life, (e ) being better informed, (f) acquaintance with other people, (g) leisure and free time, etc. The analysis of the results showed that the most frequently motivation was the expectations related to work.

Tough (1968) using a similar to Houle standard quality research using interviews, confirmed to some extent the results of Houle. The main conclusion of the research was that participants have a desire to apply their knowledge and skills acquired through learning.

Boshier (1971) in an attempt to confirm the types of Houle, proposed the Participation Scale in EPS Education (Educational Participation Scale). The research was conducted with adult learners in New Zealand using the questionnaire which was developed by Boshier. He expanded Houle's research focusing not only on the types of participants but also on the incentives for participation of trainees. The findings of Boshier linked the desire for participation in society, the need to make new friends, professional development, intellectual development, the joy of learning to escape from everyday life and routine with adult participation in education programs.

Burgess (1971) in his study "Reasons for Adult Participation in Group Educational Activities", identified several characteristics affecting adults in order to participate in the educational process: (a) desire to learn, (b) accomplishment of personal, social or religious objectives (c) desire to escape, (d) engagement in any activity; (e) need to meet standard requirements associated with the job.

Morstain & Smart (1974) used Boshier's ESP scale and carried out a research on adults who participated in the US education programs. Their aim was firstly to replicate the study conducted by Boshier, to identify any similarities between the scale ESP factors in an intercultural context and to determine significant differences in incentives for participation in education of adults when they are categorized into different groups according to age and gender. Thus introduced a new Scale Participation by grouping the factors of participating in training programs in the following six basic categories:

- (a) Social relationships (development of friendship, acquaintance with people of the opposite sex, desire for personal contact with others).
- (b) External expectations (compliance with the instructions, performance expectations of someone with power).
- (c) Social welfare (citizenship, contribution to society).
- (d) Professional development / progress (in response to competition, higher prestige in work, professional development).
- (e) Escape (escape from everyday life, boredom and routine of home and work).
- (f) Interest in knowledge (satisfaction of curiosity and search for new knowledge).

In the research conducted by Aslanian & Brickell (1980) the focus and inequality observed in participation rates of descriptive studies were mentioned. Their data were collected with interviews and the results showed that the various crises and changes that occur in one's life, such as death, marriage or job change are factors that motivate adults to participate in education procedure.

The study of Fujita - Starck (1996) investigated the stability and validity of the Boshier's scale of ESP as part of a series of studies aimed at better understanding of the adult learners involved in a wide continuing educational program. The results of the study confirmed the typology of the seven factors of Boshier and claimed that the scale ESP is reliable and acceptable.

Nason (1998) conducted a survey using a questionnaire for participation motives of officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency in voluntary training sponsored by the government in the US. An analysis of the results showed that higher incentives for participation in education are the cognitive interest and the professional development. In relation to the demographic characteristics of the participants there was no significant difference in the professional development of men and women while negative correlation existed between career development and educational level.

Cedefop (2015) conducted a research on vocational education and training, for the political objectives set for 2020 in the EU member countries and in five more countries (FYROM, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Turkey). The survey selected 33 indicators on participation in lifelong learning. The measurement basis for each index was 100 and if an index was above 100 it was more than the average measurement, whereas if it was below 100 then were below average. For Greece in terms of accessibility and attractiveness, the index for employees participating in vocational training programs was 42, it was 28 on the participation of adults in lifelong learning and it was 30 for employees participating in vocational training.

The most recent version of the Boshier scale consists of the following categories of factors: improvement of communication skills, development of social relationships, professional development, improvement of family relationships, search of social stimuli, cognitive interest and preparation in an educational object (Karalis, 2013).

### **III. Research Part**

#### **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research is to identify and highlight the incentives of public employees during their participation in adult training education programs taking into account the theoretical framework of adult education. The research results are expected to contribute to the organization level (micro - level), finding motivation against the participation of civil servants in training programs. At the level of Ministry of Education (macro - level) it is expected to contribute to selected actions and training programs as part of a strategy for public vocational training of civil servants, which is the training leading to the knowledge society.

The research raises the following question: What are the reasons that motivate participation administrators of Ministry of Education in adult education training programs.

#### **Research methodology**

The methodology chosen for this research is the quantitative approach. The quantitative approach was deemed appropriate against the others because the results obtained are measurable, can be interpreted through statistical analysis, is characterized by objectivity and lack of bias on the part of the student (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008).

The tool used to conduct the quantitative approach is the questionnaire. The questionnaire was selected as a data collection tool because of the convenience it offers to the organized research and the coding of responses, allowing the processing of data in a relatively short time. Moreover through the anonymity it offers the opportunity for participants to express their views freely (Creswell, 2011). Statistical control for processing of the results was performed using the test  $\chi^2$ .

#### **Sample**

For the selection of the sample two criteria were set: First criterion is the number of employees in the prefecture of Thessaloniki, since there is employment rate of 66.5% of the total number of employees in the Region of Central Macedonia. The second criterion is the accessibility of researchers in this area.

Given the characteristics of the sample and the availability of participants the sampling approach without possibility with anonymous questionnaire was chosen (Robson, 2010). In particular for the purposes of this survey, the sampling approach without possibility, the feasibility sampling method and the convenient sampling were combined. The feasibility sampling was chosen because there is experience and knowledge of the area and people who work in it. The convenient sampling was chosen because there is easy access to participants for quick handling of the questionnaire and the time available for the survey is limited (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008). Regarding the representativeness of the sample, the sample can be considered representative with respect to the population under study since the survey covers the entire population in the prefecture of Thessaloniki (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008).

### The questionnaire

The survey questionnaire is based on Karalis's (2013) with some necessary modification and adjustments to fit in the study population. This tool was chosen for two main reasons. The first reason stems from the design because the questionnaire took into account respective questionnaires about motivation factors in participation in adult education in order to be able to compare findings. The questionnaire is adapted to the Greek reality (Karalis, 2013). The second reason is that this tool has been used recently in a nationwide survey, which makes it more reliable and valid to draw firm conclusions.

The questions are closed type (Armstrong & Kotler, 2009) and include questions of disjunctive type, where the choice of a reply automatically excludes the other (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2008). The design of the questionnaire is related to the research question and is related to the reasons and incentives to participate in training.

## IV. Findings

The questionnaire of this survey asked respondents to answer positively or negatively to a number of factors that may be the incentive for them to participate in an educational program. In this question there was no limit to the number of responses (Table 1). Then they were asked to choose the three most important factors, starting with the most important (Table 2).

Table 1 presents the results of research on the positive attitude of each of the factors and the extent to which an incentive to participate in an educational program.

**Table 1. Incentives for participation (no limit in choices)**

Incentives	Percentage (%)
To be more efficient at my work	92,6%
I like to learn new things	87,7%
Education should last throughout our life	85,3%
To increase my qualifications	82,2%
To get the certificate of participation	51,5%
To give a good example to my children	50,9%
To be more responsible citizen	47,2%
To increase my earnings	43,6%
To keep my job	42,9%
To meet people and improve my social network	27,6%
In the past I could not study as I would like	27,0%
To find a better job	23,3%
To make the best out of my free time	19,6%
To escape from the problems of personal / family life	6,1%

It is observed that higher ratings respond to the answers "To be more efficient at my work", "I like to learn new things", "Education should last throughout our life" and "To increase my qualifications". Lower rates obtained by the answers "To escape from the problems of personal / family life", "To make the best out of my free time" and "To find a better job".

Regarding the question about the three most important reasons for choosing to participate, the same ranking remains. Table 2 below presents the findings on the incentive to participate in the choice of only three actors.

**Table 2. Incentives for participation (three choices)**

Incentives	Percentage (%)
To be more efficient at my work	26,0%
I like to learn new things	16,8%
To increase my qualifications	16,6%
Education should last throughout our life	15,8%
To increase my earnings	7,1%
To keep my job	5,2%
To give a good example to my children	2,5%
To get the certificate of participation	2,3%
To be more responsible citizen	2,3%
In the past I could not study as I would like	2,1%
To find a better job	1,7%
To meet people and improve my social network	0,8%
To make the best out of my free time	0,6%
To escape from the problems of personal / family life	0,2%

Regarding the findings when participants are asked to make a single choice, the choice that brings together the highest percentage is still the incentive that is linked to the performance at work, followed by

incentives related to the interest in learning. The findings of the responses on only one choice are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Incentives for participation (one choice)

Incentives	Percentage (%)
To be more efficient at my work	50,9%
I like to learn new things	15,8%
Education should last throughout our life	9,7%
To keep my job	8,5%
To increase my qualifications	6,1%
To increase my earnings	4,2%
To be more responsible citizen	1,2%
To give a good example to my children	0,6%
In the past I could not study as I would like	0,6%
To find a better job	0,6%
None of the above	1,8%

## V. Conclusions

It emerged from the literature review (Morstain & Smart, 1974; Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Manolopoulos, 2007), that adults receive internal and external influences from their environment that lead to active participation. These effects are the incentives that affect motivation to participate in the educational process and vary according to the stage or the needs of each period of life of the individual.

Regarding the research question about the incentives that motivate participation of officials in the Ministry of Education in adult educational training programs, the results showed that the factors that bring together the greatest acceptance are "work improvement" and "interest in learning." Thus, the efficiency factor at work collects the highest rate (92.6%). Afterwards, it is the incentive associated with the interest in learning (87.7%). This result may be related to the gradual increase in participation in adult education. In contrast, lower hierarchy (the last two ranks in all cases) are incentives associated with family and personal life or leisure activities. Regarding the incentives related to the improvement of qualifications and the acquisition of a certificate, they are in third and fourth ranks respectively.

After the analysis of the findings, it can be concluded that the incentives which are related to professional upgrading and interest in learning, followed by incentives that fall within the category of certification of education. Low-ranked incentives are included in the categories of personal and family life.

## VI. Suggestions

Based on the conclusions of this research and given that there are no comparable surveys in Greece in the public sector, future research efforts can focus on widening participation rates in adult education programs and the removal of obstacles which the adults face.

Consequently, proposals for further investigation can be:

- Undertaking research on motivation and participation barriers in the same population using qualitative and quantitative approach
- Comparative expansion of research at national level about participation in lifelong learning and removing barriers.
- Providing more data associated with the profile and social features, and the views of the learners so that through a standard quality approach (such as the interview), the research can focus on the deeper motives to urge them to join lifelong learning.

To conclude this research, it can be said that in order to widen participation in adult education there should be improvement in access through innovative human resource management strategies, mitigation of the disparities in participation and the necessary flexibility to make adult education more accessible and attractive to all stakeholders.

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