

# THE TEACHERS' TRAINING IN THE REGIONAL TRAINING CENTERS OF GREECE-25 YEARS EXPERIENCE

Kalathaki Maria

## ABSTRACT

In the last half of the previous century, when Teacher Education and Training is more organized and targeted treated by the Greek State, the Schools of Training for Primary and Secondary Teachers were initially established. After them, the Regional Training Centers, the Organization for Teachers Training, the Institute of Computer & Publishing Technology Diofantos, the School Advisors and the Support Educational Structures offered Training opportunities to the local school staff, along with Postgraduate Curricula of Higher Education Institutions.

The Law 1566/1985 proposed mandatory forms of training for teachers, the Introductory training for newly appointed teachers of Primary and Secondary Education, the Yearly for those who have completed five years in-service to inform them about scientific and educational developments, the Periodic training when curricula change, and Others in regional an Pan-Hellenic level. Training Seminars, Programs and activities of great number, variety and specialty by Trainers for trainees carried out in the last 50 years in Greece, funded by the Government Budget.

In the survey of the Greek Pedagogical Institute, in 2010, which investigated the training needs and priorities of the Greek Teachers in, less than half of the asked teachers positively evaluated the training programs that they had attended, with minor variations by Region, Level and Specialty, in terms of content, methodology and organizing (PI, 2010).

## INTRODUCTION

In a view of the profession of European Teacher, the following characteristics can be attributed to it: a. is a profession with high qualifications since all Teachers are graduates of Higher Education Institutions, b. each teacher has extensive knowledge of his subject, a good knowledge of pedagogy, the skills and abilities required to guide and support learners, and an understanding of the social and cultural dimension of education, c. is a lifelong learning profession where teachers are supported to continue their professional development throughout their careers. Both themselves and their employers recognize the importance of acquiring new knowledge and are able to innovate and introduce new elements into their work, d. It is a profession characterized by mobility as teachers are encouraged to work or study in other European countries for professional development purposes; e. It is a profession based on the partnership of all levels of Education with local organizations, bodies, services, scientists, citizens (SEC, 2007).

Teachers can inspire and help their students to acquire higher and more relevant skills. They also play a key role in introducing new teaching and learning methods, in stimulating creativity and innovation, in overcoming biases and in bringing out the best in increasingly diverse classrooms (COM-6, 2016).

In-service training of teachers is nearly always a right and a moral obligation based on statute. It is, in practice, rarely compulsory, although there are some exceptions. Thus the right to in-service training is indeed a professional right in nearly all Member States, but the application of this principle is very limited. Selection criteria for participation are nearly always applied and are based on an assessment of motivation, the opinion of the head teacher and the applicant's qualifications and seniority. Greece organized until 2013 compulsory training for newly appointed teachers, as up to ten years may elapse between the end of their training and their appointment. Teachers have the right to pursue their professional development and a duty to update their knowledge, but these rights and duties are rarely considered obligatory,

on the one hand because budgets do not allow for it, and on the other because training can have a positive effect only if it is desired and freely chosen (ED, 1995).

These days intense debate has developed in Greece on the new role of RTCs to satisfy the needs of schools in order to serve the objectives of the educational Reform that attempted by the government. RTCs can offer initial training, re-training, teacher training to improve teaching methodologies, communication and collaboration skills, in conjunction with the three levels of Education. Skepticism about the new reform measures expected to be announced shortly by the Ministry of Education is great as educational changes, innovations and major reforms are difficult endeavors that rarely take place successfully and in a sustainable way in Greece due to the limited processing, the lack of dialogue, the resistances they often cause and the risks of degeneration that are still underway, even before they occur (HM-PL, 2017). In the last 25 years, the 16 Regional Training Centers had the duty to download and decentralize the educational policies to the regions of Greece, to the newly appointed and permanent teachers. In the last 5 years, since the Ministry of Education has applied only three short-term Seminars guided, centrally designed and directed, less than 1000 School Advisors have shouldered the full weight of the Primary and Secondary teachers' training all over the Country, those the abolishment is discussed these days, without any evaluation report for their work.

Although the authority ultimately responsible for in-service training often remained in the responsibility of the Ministry or official councils, there was, nonetheless a tendency to take account of the needs at grass-roots level and to proceed with decentralized planning of in-service training. Since in-service training is an essential channel for communicating national education policies, the Ministries generally define its conceptual framework. Decentralization of teachers' training is the strongest trend, but the degree and level of decentralization, at regional, provincial, local authority or school level, varies considerably (ED, 1995).

## **METHOD**

The research was carried out in the in the relevant legislation on the provision of training to the RTCs. It has been made a review into all laws, Presidential Decrees and Ministerial Decisions reported to the RTCs since their establishment (1992) and beyond. The literature gave detailed analysis on the features of theoretical and practical knowledge, the knowledge acquirement methods that used in Regional Training Centers in the 25 years of the operation in supporting the teachers' profession.

The study is a case study with content analysis of archival material, which focused on the training programs that implemented in the Greek RTCs (Bird, 1990; Bell, 1997). Since, there is not available data about the effectiveness of these programs, the study focused more in the conceptual and methodological framework of the training mission and activity of these centers. During the critical reading of the papers, notes were kept referring to the content divided in the research categories, with comments and interpretations, in a kind of dialogue with the document. The collecting data replies to the queries on the conceptual & methodological framework of RTCs' operation, the training programs that materialized and the efficiency of these training programs.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Teachers and trainers play a key role in the performance of students, therefore stresses the need for investment and support for the initial and continuing professional development of teachers in all educational sectors and there is intensive need to ensure quality employment and creation of career guidance services for lifelong career guidance, which should be a permanent priority across the European Union (EP, 2017).

## **Conceptual & Methodological Framework of RTCs Operation**

Lisbon European Council in Presidency Conclusions, invited the member states to meet many targets, among them is a European framework for the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning, such are IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills (LEC, 2000). The main issue in the survey of Eurydice reported in 1995 was that of the compulsory nature of in-service training. It faced budgetary difficulties and was seeking the means of reaching a maximum number of teachers, among the others. However, it would only be possible to solve the problem of making a choice between compulsory and optional training, organized during school time and outside school time, and paid and unpaid training, with the help of a reliable assessment method, setting out the issues and the factors contributing to rational choices.

The law 1566/1985 provided compulsory forms of training for teachers. The Presidential Decree 250/1992 analyzed in details the types, the aims, the methods and the evaluation of the training programs that implemented in the RTCs. In the last 25 years, the 16 RTCs had the duty to download and decentralize the educational policies to the regions of Greece, to the newly appointed and permanent teachers. The Presidential Decree 250/1992 established the way of carrying out the training work in the RTCs, it determined the types, the target population the timing and other details of the Programs, based on the articles 28 of the Law 1566/85 and 12 of the Law 1824/88. The RTCs offered Training to thousands of Primary and Secondary Teachers with many Programs which designed by the Greek Ministry of Education and applied regionally.

According to the current organization chart, each RTC has a Director, a Sub-Director for Secondary Education, who is also Deputy Director, a Sub-Director for Primary Education, and 2 teachers who are elected members of the plenary of trainers. All they participate to the 5 members Coordinating Council. There is also a Secretary. Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs has general supervision over the operation of the RTCs and, within this competence, calls twice a year at a joint meeting the Directors of the RTCs and the representatives of the Pedagogical Institute in Athens or at the headquarters of any RTC, to identify general guidelines for the whole training project on the basis of identified needs, to coordinate the relevant activities and to determine the way in which each of the above actors participates in the realization of the program. Representatives of higher education and training institutions may also be invited to this meeting (article 14 of the Presidential Decree 250/1992).

The arrangements and details for implementing each training program in RTCs on the organization of forms of training were laid down in the Presidential Decree 250/1992 and were specifying in relation to the demands of each particular program with Ministerial Decisions. The training project, according to the approved program, was carried out with modern methods and techniques such as lectures, seminars, studies, workshops, presentations and studies, surveys, practical exercises and in any other way ensuring the active participation of the trainees in the program, all phases and activities of the training process. In carrying out the training work there was a wide use and utilization of supervisory and teaching instruments and modern educational technology (Presidential Decree 250/1992). The training in RTCs was supported by the Department of Training of Primary and Secondary Education Teachers of the PI, by the competent Departments of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, as well as by national and international organizations. EU, with the New Skills Agenda, stresses the states members fostering innovative teaching and learning practices, to facilitate mobility and exchange of best practice in order to achieve the objective of improving the profile and upgrading of teachers, trainers, mentors and educators expanding their skills for more affective educational work, in the fast changing European societies (EP, 2017).

Those teachers, who complete their studies in a Training Program of RTCs, were granted a corresponding Certificate according to a given model Presidential Decree 250/1992. The certificate counts on teachers' assessment with Presidential Decree 152/2013. The years passed after the establishment of RTCs, in 1992, and the training legislation in Greece has not reformed to be in accordance to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF / EQF) and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). It is also important that skills acquired outside the formal educational and training context, through work experience, volunteering, participation in the community or other relevant experience, are not necessarily recorded as qualifications or documented and are therefore underestimated, skills that are not identified, used or rewarded. EU urges Member States to better match skills with positions in the labor market and, in particular, to design high quality apprenticeships to help individuals be flexible during their education, and later in the labor market (EP 2017). A European diploma for basic IT skills, with decentralized certification procedures, should be established in order to promote digital literacy throughout the Union (LEC, 2000).

### **The Training Programs in RTCs**

With the logic of centrally-defined training, the offered training programs through the RTCs had been developed so far to promote the aims and objectives of public education (Karagiannis et al, 2012). In the 1995-96 period, more flexible training took place in the RTCs, with a relaxation of direct control over the program and the teaching staff, but not for the purposes of their implementation. During this period, many short-term and paid out-of-work programs of choice are offered, indicating an increase in the mass of teachers attending those (Karagiannis et al, 2012). The training programs that implemented in RTCs, according the laws 1566/1985, 2009/1992 and the Presidential Decree 250/1992, were the following:

1. Introductory training of nominee or non-appointed teachers prior to taking up their teaching duties. It aimed at the renewal and completion of their theoretical and practical training, the harmonization of the knowledge and teaching methods with the educational reality and their updating on service, scientific and pedagogical issues.
2. Annual training for teachers who have completed five years of service. It aimed to update their science, education policy, renewal of teaching and assessment methods and, in general, their fullest training for more effective exercise of their work.
3. Periodic training for teachers. These training programs took place during the academic year at a regional or Pan-Hellenic level when introduced changes in school curricula and introduced new courses, new teaching methods and school books.
4. Other Types of Training Seminars. They could organized in RTCs to serve current educational needs. The organization and the details of these forms of training are regulated by a Presidential Decree, issued on a proposal by the Ministers of National Education and Religious Affairs and Finance.
5. Special Training Seminars for School Vocational Guidance. The Special Education Programs are linked to educational reforms and innovations, change of school programs, introduction of new courses, new teaching methods and school books.

### **The Efficiency of the Training Programs in RTCs**

Assessment of the in-service training system was carried out by the teachers in the RTCs, during classes and practical exercises and workshops, the school advisers who assessed the teachers after their in-service training, the Pedagogical Institute which makes an assessment at national level on the basis of the observations and proposals made by the schools or other competent bodies in the in-service training field (ED, 1995). The participants' in Training Seminars assessment as a qualifying training scheme causes problems in the teachers' evaluation.

Over the past 20 years, large capitals from the CSF and the NSRF have been used to train teachers, but not always in the most effective way, as the professional development of the teacher has not been materially linked to the existing forms of training (Mpagakis, 2012). In Eurydice survey in member states in 1995 appeared that the budget for in-service training rarely amounts to more than 1% of the total education budget. The content of the budget may also be very different, depending on the organizational structure. It may include trainers' salaries, or travelling costs and course fees for teachers who leave their own school for training. In other cases, it only covers the funds allocated for the organization of training (ED, 1995).

In the survey of the Greek Pedagogical Institute, in 2010, less than half of the asked teachers positively evaluated the training programs that they had attended, with minor variations by Region, Level and Specialty, in terms of content, methodology and organizing. Evaluation and inspection systems can provide valuable feedback to the school to build on its successes and respond to changing needs. EU recalls that in some Member States teacher education has been greatly affected by the economic and financial crisis and underlines the importance of investing in teachers, trainers and educators and providing them with new skills and teaching techniques in line with technological and social developments (EP, 2017).

## **EPILOGUE**

The contribution of teachers is key to the success of each school and the progress of students. Teachers must use the opportunities offered by new technologies to meet the demands of personalized learning and to teach students how to learn autonomously and for themselves throughout their lives. In European member states, with the teacher population of high ages, there is the problem to replace the lost experience of the retired teachers- but also the opportunity to invest in the initial training of younger teachers and to improve the skills of in-service, active teachers.

In-service training of teachers is nearly always a right and a moral obligation based on statute. It must take place within a context of democratic procedures, implying an absence of obligation but promoting teachers' autonomy, to which such training contributes.

Teachers, as learners at all ages, need excellent educators to develop the broad set of skills and attitudes they need both for life and future work. Variation in learners' achievements in education and training depends mainly on individual characteristics and family background. However, in educational institutions, it is teachers and trainers who have most impact on learners' performance.

## **Acknowledgements**

Acknowledgements are addressed to Vardavas Michael Secretary of Regional Training Center of Heraklion who kept updated the archive of Secretariat in the RTC-Her in the 25 years operational period.

## **REFERENCES**

Bell J. (1997) *Methodological Planning of Pedagogy and Social Research*, Gutenberg Publications, Athens

Bird M, (1990). *The implementation of educational policy: a case study of the implementation of the Open College of South London*, Thesis, University of London.

COM-6 (2016) *A New Skills Agenda for Europe*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness, {SWD(2016) 195 final}, Brussels, 10.6.2016COM(2016)381

ED (1995) Teacher training in the European Union and the EFTA/EEA Countries, EURYDICE, The Education Information Network in the European Union and the EFTA/EEA Countries ISBN 2-87116-224-7, EURYDICE European Unit, Brussels

EP (2017) Έκθεση σχετικά με ένα νέο θεματολόγιο δεξιοτήτων για την Ευρώπη (2017/2002(INI)), Επιτροπή Απασχόλησης και Κοινωνικών Υποθέσεων Επιτροπή Πολιτισμού και Παιδείας, Εισηγητές: Martina Dlabajová, Momchil Nekov, Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-%2F%2FEP%2F%2FTEXT%2BREPORT%2BA8-2017-0276%2B0%2BDOC%2BXML%2BV0%2F%2FEL&language=EL>

HM-PL (2017) New Structures in Education and the Institution of the School Advisor, Framework of the Workshop, Co-organizing of Regional Training Center of Piraeus and University of Peloponnese, Ionian School of Piraeus, 16 December 2017

Karagiannis G, Stagia P, Circus M (2012) The role of the teacher in the historical course of education, available on 20/2/2012 at <http://www.elemedu.upatras.gr/eriande/synedria/synedrio3/praltika%2011/karagiannis>

LEC (2000) Lisbon European Council (2000) Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000, available 040216 on [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm)

Mpagakis C (2012) Institutional and new forms of training-To seek synergy and good practices, OEPEK, Operational Program "Education and Lifelong Learning", ISBN 978-960-99912-8-5 SEC (2007) Schools for the 21st Century, Staff Working Paper of the Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 11.07.2007

PI (2010) Contribution of Investigating Training Needs in Teacher Training: A Comparative Interpretation of Results, Major Program of Training, Oct 2010, [http://www.epimorfosi.edu.gr/images/stories/e-books/ap\\_anagk/pdf/8\\_sysxetisi.pdf](http://www.epimorfosi.edu.gr/images/stories/e-books/ap_anagk/pdf/8_sysxetisi.pdf)

SEC (2007) Schools for the 21st Century, Staff Working Paper of the Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 11.07.2007