



# The effect of Formal Qualifications and Continuous Professional Development on Attitudes towards Self-Evaluation: A Study in Primary and Secondary Teachers in Greece

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Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol. 14 (6)

<https://jett.labosfor.com/>

Date of reception: 16 Apr 2023

Date of revision: 09 Sep 2023

Date of acceptance: 11 Sep 2023

Sofia ChrysaMitraka<sup>1</sup>, Argyris Kyridis<sup>2</sup> (2023). The effect of Formal Qualifications and Continuous Professional Development on Attitudes towards Self-Evaluation: A Study in Primary and Secondary Teachers in Greece *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol. 14(6).37-44

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**The effect of Formal Qualifications and Continuous Professional Development on Attitudes towards Self-Evaluation: A Study in Primary and Secondary Teachers in Greece**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background:** In Greece, self-evaluation has been treated with skepticism by teacher unions and several political parties. Self-evaluation has to be promoted, according to the Ministry Decision 6603/ΓΔ4/20.01.2021. Investigating factors associated with teachers' attitudes towards self-evaluation might be vital to successfully implement self-evaluation.

**Aim:** To investigate the effect of formal qualifications and continuous professional development on attitudes towards self-evaluation in Primary and Secondary Education teachers in Greece.

**Methods:** This qualitative study is part of a larger project, investigating several parameters as for their association with self-evaluation in 1.000 teachers in Greece. The independent variables analyzed were questions regarding the formal qualifications of teachers and continuous professional development. The dependent variable analyzed was attitudes towards self-evaluation. Multiple regression was applied, developing models to investigate the potential effect of those independent variables.

**Results:**As for the effect of formal qualifications on attitudes towards self-evaluation, the effect of having a second degree or post-degree qualification ( $p=0.043$ ), having certification in ICT (0.000), having certification in a second language ( $p=0.000$ ), having certification from the School for the Training of Secondary Education Officers or the School for the Training of Primary Education Officers ( $p=0.000$ ), holding an MSc or Phd ( $p=0.000$ ) and having published a book ( $p=0.048$ ) was significant. The adjusted R square was 0.440. The effect of the overall model as significant ( $F=86,504$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). Regarding the effect of continuous professional development on teachers' attitudes, there were significant effects for participation in annual workshops or seminars ( $p=0.000$ ), being a member of continuous professional development team in my school ( $p=0.000$ ), being seminar lecturer in a University ( $p=0.001$ ), participating in life-long learning programs ( $p=0.000$ ) and participating in rating committees during exams ( $p=0.000$ ). The adjusted R square was 0.483. The overall model had a significant effect ( $F=118,682$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Conclusions:** Negative attitudes towards self-evaluation might be a result of fear towards negative evaluation, due to a lack of formal qualifications and actions of continuous professional development. Supporting teachers through knowledge-transference practices, such as mentoring and coaching, is warranted.

**Keywords:** attitudes; barriers; Greece; obstacles; school; self-evaluation

**INTRODUCTION**

Self-evaluation is clearly different from the external evaluation of a school organisation. External evaluation is based on the view that the standards that an educational organisation must follow are set by a higher governmental authority. In contrast, in the case of self-evaluation, the control remains with the educational organisation itself and no higher governmental authority is responsible for the way in which the evaluation takes place, as it is carried out by internal evaluators, i.e. the teachers themselves (Hofman et al., 2009).

According to Patton (1991), self-evaluation serves three main purposes. The first purpose it serves concerns the democratization of the evaluation process. If we ourselves, as well as parents and students, have a say in the issues of the school organisation, then clearly democracy in education is increased. There are therefore more evaluators in terms of numbers, while the evaluators, i.e. the people who interact within the school organisation, are also the ones who are primarily concerned with the issue, and not the higher authority of the state which takes decisions on important issues of a school unit. It is therefore a question of democracy.

The second purpose it serves is our accountability to parents and pupils. Through self-evaluation, we do indeed become more accountable to parents and pupils ourselves and thus feel a greater sense of responsibility towards them. As we therefore have a much greater degree of control over the planning and evaluation of the school's work, we ourselves, and not some higher regulatory authority, are also responsible for the success and failure of this management. We, as teachers, are therefore accountable to a greater extent to the parents and in the case where we trust in our own strengths we have nothing to fear from this process (Patton, 1991).

The third purpose that self-evaluation serves is for our own professional development. Indeed, it is a challenge for us as teachers to be able to continually develop to meet new challenges, to learn new things and to continue to evolve along our professional journey. It is not only a way of enhancing our effectiveness as professionals, but also a matter of self-respect for our very professional identity. As we therefore learn about our weak points through self-assessment, we can improve on them (Patton, 1991).

We can further study the difference between these two forms of evaluation not necessarily in terms of whether teachers or the government maintain control, but in terms of the difference in the results produced between these two approaches. We can therefore understand that self-evaluation entails a multitude of different benefits for us for students and for society, benefits impossible if the evaluation is carried out by external evaluators. As the main benefits we can mention the following (Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004):

1. improving social interactions between members of the educational organization and contributing to a more positive school climate
2. the improvement of the decision-making process
3. improving the school organisation's response to internal and external challenges
4. improving the effectiveness of the teaching work improving the effectiveness of the school organisation

To further understand what self-evaluation is, we can study relevant examples of international practice. A typical case of such an educational system is that of Scotland. In Scotland, self-evaluation was promoted through relevant legislation throughout the 1990s and began to be implemented in a systematic and massive way from 2000 onwards. Indeed, the demand for self-evaluation by Scottish teachers was seen as a way of regaining their autonomy from the central managing authorities of the UK education system. It was therefore an act of freedom against a centralised education system that teachers in the country felt was oppressing them. However, subsequent experience has shown that the self-evaluation of educational establishments was not carried out in the way that would have been expected and did not lead to the maximum benefits. In studying the factors that may be responsible for this, it was found that the country's teachers themselves did not support the project to a significant extent, despite their initial intention (Croxford et al., 2009). It therefore seems that even in cases where self-evaluation has not led to the expected benefits, as for example in the Scottish education system, this can be attributed to insufficient support for the project from teachers themselves, rather than to inherent problems with the self-evaluation process itself.

The fear regarding self-evaluation due to a lack of knowledge and skills is considered as a major barrier by the side of teachers, leading to negative attitudes towards self-evaluation (Peterson, 2000). In Greece, teachers' evaluation consists a controversial issue, since evaluation was dealt up with skepticism by teacher unions and several political parties (Papakonstantinou & Kolympari, 2019). Self-evaluation has been promoted in schools by the current government through the Ministry Decision 6603/ΓΔ4/20.01.2021. Highlighting and tackling the barriers regarding the implementation of this decision might be of most importance to ensure that self-evaluation will be successfully implemented in the educational system of Greece.

Base on the aforementioned data, the aim of this study was 1) to investigate the effect of teacher qualifications on attitudes towards self-evaluation 2) to investigate the effect of continuous professional development on attitudes towards self-evaluation.

## METHODS

The data analysed in this paper are part of a larger study which concerned issues related to teachers' self-evaluation in Greece. The overall study has been carried out as a requirement for the Phd of the First Author at School of Early Childhood Education / Faculty of Education of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. It is therefore a secondary data analysis.

The research process was carried out in three phases. In the first phase, a pilot study was conducted with teachers in a private educational institution in Greece. This was distributed electronically, utilizing Google Forms. The distribution was carried out to a sample of 40 participants. After completing the questionnaire, participants could also report any comments they had about it. Following their comments, the content of two questions was slightly altered and a few typos were corrected. The questionnaire of the pilot phase consisted of a total of 120 questions, which concerned socio-demographic characteristics of teachers and various parameters related to evaluation. Cronbach's (1951)  $\alpha$  analysis demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties for all of the relevant scales administered to the pilot test participants.

A sample of 100 participants was included in the second phase. These participants were included from the immediate friendly, professional and wider interpersonal environment of the first author. However, this sample

was deemed to be small in number and a subsequent phase was conducted to expand the sample size. In the third phase, sampling was conducted via the internet. The measures were posted in groups that were relevant to education and asked primary and secondary teachers to complete them (N=900). Participants were explained the nature and purpose of the survey and emphasized the anonymity and confidentiality of their participation. The enrolment process of those two stages started at 03.01.2022 and ended at 09.26.2022.

This article analyses data obtained from these last two phases of the distribution of the measurement tool. There were therefore 1,000 participants in the final database. For the purpose of this article, only the questions of the scales concerning 1) teachers' certified qualifications 2) actions for their professional development were analysed as independent variables. In the first case there were 9 questions, while in the second there were 5. All these questions were answered by means of "yes and no". The participants' overall attitude towards self-evaluation was analyzed as a dependent variable. This attitude was assessed through 12 individual questions with values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this scale was 0.92.

Data analysis was performed through the development of multiple linear regression models. Specifically, two different models were developed, one in which the potential effect of teachers' certified qualifications was examined and one in which the potential effect of the practices they follow for the ongoing development of their professional identity was examined. These models were also used in the Primary and Secondary Education Teachers. The significance index was set at 0.05 for all analyses.

## RESULTS

The sociodemographic data of the study participants are presented at the following Table. As indicated by the Table, there were slightly more females (51.4%) than males (48.6%). Regarding the year of birth, high proportions concerned those born between 1975-1979 (41.4%) and those born between 1980-1984 (24.3%). The majority of the participants had only a BSc degree (55.6%), while 33.6% held and MSc and 10.8% held a Phd degree. The majority of the participants were primary education teachers (60.9%) and a smaller proportion were secondary education teachers (39.1%). As for their family status, most participants were married with children (53.5%). Regarding their monthly family income, 43.8% of the participants earned 1.501-2.000 euros and 37.9% of the participants 2.001-2.500 euros. More information regarding the sociodemographic data of the sample can be found at the following Table.

**Table 1: The sociodemographic data of the study sample**

Gender	N	%
Male	486	48,6
Female	514	51,4
Year of birth	N	%
1955-1959	1	,1
1960-1964	12	1,2
1965-1969	173	17,3
1970-1974	40	4,0
1975-1979	414	41,4
1980-1984	243	24,3
1985-1989	89	8,9
1990-1994	28	2,8
Degree	N	%
BSc	556	55,6
MSc	336	33,6
Phd	108	10,8
Primary/ Secondary education teacher	N	%
Primary	609	60,9
Secondary	391	39,1
Family status	N	%
Unmarried without children	124	12,4
Unmarried/ widowed with children	104	10,4
Widowed without children	101	10,1
Married	136	13,6
Married with children	535	53,5
Monthly family income	N	%
0-1000€	6	,6

1001-1500€	73	7,3
1501-2000€	438	43,8
2001-2500€	379	37,9
2501-3000€	97	9,7
3001-5000€	6	,6
5001+€	1	,1

The effect of formal qualifications on attitudes towards self-evaluation are presented at Table 2. As indicated by the Table, the effect of having a second degree or post-degree qualification, having qualification in ICT, having a qualification in a second language, having a qualification from the School for the Training of Secondary Education Officers or the School for the Training of Primary Education Officers, holding an MSc or Phd and having published a book had significant effects. The adjusted R square was 0.440. The effect of the overall model as significant ( $F=86,504$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 2: The effect of formal qualifications on attitudes towards evaluation**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	72,231	1,888		38,266	,000
Second degree/ post-degree qualification	-,966	,477	-,053	-2,024	,043
ICT Certification	-4,121	,678	-,153	-6,080	,000
Second language certification	-5,009	,620	-,209	-8,080	,000
Qualification from the School for Training of Secondary Education Officers or the School for the Training of Primary Education Officers	-5,750	,457	-,343	-12,574	,000
Having received a scholarship	1,540	,840	,051	1,833	,067
Having and Msc or Phd	-3,679	,535	-,220	-6,878	,000
Having published an ISBN book	-1,778	,900	-,060	-1,976	,048
Having participated in writing book chapters	-,607	,843	-,022	-,720	,472
Peer-review journal publications	,383	,650	,020	,589	,556

The relevant analysis for Primary Education teachers is presented at Table 3. As indicated by the Table, the effect of having a second degree or post-degree qualification, having qualification in ICT, having a qualification in a second language, having a qualification from the School for the Training of Secondary Education Officers or the School for the Training of Primary Education Officers, holding an MSc. Phd, having received a scholarship and having published a book were significant. The adjusted R square was 0.402. The effect of the overall model was significant ( $p=46,376$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 3: The effect of formal qualifications on Primary Teachers attitudes towards evaluation**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	61,170	5,030		12,160	,000
Second degree/ post-degree qualification	-1,543	,724	-,073	-2,133	,033
ICT Certification	-3,702	,810	-,154	-4,570	,000
Second language certification	-6,383	,755	-,289	-8,449	,000
Qualification from the School for Training of Secondary Education Officers or the School for the Training of Primary Education Officers	-4,643	,643	-,253	-7,227	,000
Having received a scholarship	5,437	1,664	,140	3,267	,001
Having and Msc or Phd	-3,702	,712	-,207	-5,198	,000
Having published an ISBN book	-4,241	1,878	-,108	-2,258	,024
Having participated in writing book chapters	4,267	2,512	,065	1,699	,090
Peer-review journal publications	-,337	,932	-,015	-,362	,718

The relevant analysis for Secondary Education Teachers is presented at Table 4. As indicated by the Table, the effect of having a second degree or post-degree qualification, having qualification in ICT, having a qualification



from the School for the Training of Secondary Education Officers or the School for the Training of Primary Education Officers, holding a MSc. Phd and having published a book were significant. The adjusted R square was .390. The effect of the overall model as significant ( $F=28,743$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 4: The effect of formal qualifications on Secondary Teachers attitudes towards evaluation**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	72,024	2,597		27,734	,000
	Second degree/ post-degree qualification	-,667	,656	-,045	-1,017	,310
	ICT Certification	-4,229	1,329	-,131	-3,182	,002
	Second language certification	-1,433	1,119	-,056	-1,281	,201
	Qualification from the School for Training of Secondary Education Officers or the School for the Training of Primary Education Officers	-6,665	,700	-,438	-9,519	,000
	Having received a scholarship	,231	1,006	,011	,229	,819
	Having and Msc or Phd	-3,648	,802	-,244	-4,549	,000
	Having published an ISBN book	-2,465	1,035	-,121	-2,381	,018
	Having participated in writing book chapters	-,499	,978	-,029	-,510	,610
	Peer-review journal publications	1,052	,870	,071	1,210	,227

Regarding the effect of continuous professional development on attitudes towards self-evaluation, the relevant analysis can be found in Table 5. As indicated by the table, all variables had a significant effect on teachers' attitudes. The adjusted R square was 0.483. The overall model had a significant effect ( $F=118,682$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 5: The effect of continuous professional development on attitudes towards self-evaluation**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	70,922	1,389		51,059	,000
	Participation in annual workshops or seminars	-5,084	,577	-,284	-8,806	,000
	I am a member of continuous professional development team in my school	-5,109	,584	-,301	-8,752	,000
	I am a seminar lecturer in a University	-2,053	,592	-,083	-3,469	,001
	Participate in life-long learning programs	-5,237	,919	-,135	-5,702	,000
	Participate in rating committees during exams	-2,358	,469	-,135	-5,027	,000

Regarding the effect of continuous professional development on Primary Education Teachers attitudes towards self-evaluation, the relevant analysis can be found in Table 6. As indicated by the table, all variables had a significant effect on teachers' attitudes. The adjusted R square was 0.483. The overall model had a significant effect ( $F=115,185$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 6: The effect of continuous professional development on Primary Education Teachers attitudes towards self-evaluation**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	69,050	2,431		28,399	,000
	Participation in annual workshops or seminars	-5,646	,741	-,329	-7,620	,000
	I am a member of continuous professional development team in my school	-4,345	,735	-,259	-5,911	,000
	I am a seminar lecturer in a University	-1,688	1,108	-,046	-1,523	,128

Participate in life-long learning programs	-4,180	1,252	-,101	-3,340	,001
Participate in rating committees during exams	-3,113	,571	-,183	-5,449	,000

The relevant analysis for Primary Education teachers can be found in Table 7. All variables had a significant association. The adjusted R square was 0.422. The overall model had a significant effect ( $F=57,925$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 7: The effect of continuous professional development on Secondary Education Teachers attitudes towards self-evaluation**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	69,842	1,718		40,643	,000
	Participation in annual workshops or seminars	-2,608	,914	-,141	-2,852	,005
	I am a member of continuous professional development team in my school	-6,441	,936	-,393	-6,878	,000
	I am a seminar lecturer in a University	-1,804	,694	-,107	-2,600	,010
	Participate in life-long learning programs	-7,815	1,302	-,248	-6,005	,000
	Participate in rating committees during exams	,338	,800	,020	,423	,673

## DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis carried out, some key findings can be drawn. Firstly, teachers' certified knowledge, such as having a second degree, being certified in the use of modern technologies and undertaking a postgraduate course, lead to more positive attitudes towards self-evaluation. Second, several personal development actions on the part of teachers are associated with more positive attitudes towards self-evaluation. Of central importance seem to be annual participation in workshops or sessions, participation in a group that promotes the development of teachers' professional identity within the school environment, giving lectures, participation in lifelong learning programmes and participation in examination boards. These findings apply to primary and secondary teachers, with no significant differences in the individual findings for these two different groups of participants.

In attempting to arrive at theoretical findings through this research, the findings can be explained in terms of a perceived punitive dimension of self-evaluation. After all, teachers' fear is a key factor that hinders the evaluation of educational work (Conley & Glasman, 2008). As teachers who are distinguished by less knowledge and skills and poorer professional development have a more negative attitude towards self-evaluation, it can be argued that there is a fear of negative consequences due to it.

In any case, this study faces certain limitations, which should be pointed out. A first limitation has to do with the size of the sample considered. The sample size was certainly large, however it was not determined based on any necessary formula of sample size calculation. The absence of using a formula to calculate the necessary sample size implies an increased risk of type 1 and type 2 error, i.e., incorrect rejection and acceptance of the null hypothesis, respectively (Ahmad & Halim, 2017; Campbell & Machin, 1999). This study is therefore prone to this risk of statistical error.

A second limitation of the present exercise has to do with the representativeness of the sample considered. The inclusion of participants in the study was largely carried out via the internet, but this implies an increased possibility of selection error, given that those who use the internet are distinguished by more competent digital skills than those who do not. Indeed, some of the questions in the measurement tool were related to the use of modern technologies, specifically certification in them. Also, no sampling method was used that could ensure the representativeness of the tested sample in the Greek territory, such as stratified sampling (Robson, 2002). Finally, there are certain characteristics of the tested sample, in particular the possession of a doctoral degree, that show high rates, probably much higher than those observed in the wider population of teachers in our country. Therefore, the generalisability of the study's findings is questionable.

A third limitation has to do with the measurement tool that was used. From a methodological point of view, it is preferable to use measurement tools that have been previously developed and weighted, which implies maximum use of them (Babbie, 2013; Robson, 2002). In this study, the measurement tool was not weighted.

However, the use of a non-weighted measurement tool was in a sense imperative, since a questionnaire had to be developed that addressed parameters relevant to evaluation specifically in the Greek reality.

Based on the aim, results and limitations of the present study, some suggestions for future research can be made. This study leads to the finding that teachers with more qualifications and knowledge are also more positive towards evaluation. Therefore, a conclusion is drawn about an effect of teachers' perceived inadequacy as a reason for forming negative attitudes towards self-evaluation. However, this is more of a theoretical finding arising from this study rather than a finding supported by the research data. Therefore, a relevant suggestion could be made to conduct an additional study, which would study through qualitative research, specifically through interviews, those reasons that lead teachers with limited knowledge and skills and insufficient personal development efforts to negative attitudes towards self-evaluation.

Finally, based on the findings of the study, certain proposals for educational policy in our country can be made. As established through the present research, efforts to implement self-evaluation should be inseparably linked to actions to improve teachers' knowledge and skills. The fact that teachers who are characterized by fewer certifications and fewer professional development efforts also exhibit negative attitudes towards self-evaluation dictates the necessity of emphasizing these needs of teachers. In this direction, various policies could be mentioned. As regards the level of certification, the state could make it easier for teachers to access postgraduate courses and seminars. In this way, the certification-related knowledge of teachers would be improved.

As regards the promotion of teachers' continuing professional development, the development of non-institutional ways of learning and knowledge management could be supported at school level. The predominant such modes used in modern education are coaching and mentoring (Bush et al., 2018; Lofthouse, 2019). Within the school units of our country, such initiatives could therefore be developed in order to promote the continuous professional development of teachers.

In general, Greece is in the context of a transition regarding the issue of evaluation in education. While evaluation has been promoted for several decades, it has never actually been implemented. The findings of this research should be shared with findings from other research by educational policy makers in our country, in order to gain a fuller understanding of teachers' resistance to self-evaluation and to develop dynamic interventions to address these barriers.

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