

# Motivational factors of Greek directors of special education school units.

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## ABSTRACT

The present study examined the motivational factors of Greek principals of special education school units in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. For the needs of the research, a questionnaire was created with questions from the questionnaire of Amabile et al. (1994) Work Preference Inventory (WPI) whose validity and reliability have been examined in many previous studies. The research uses a descriptive design to analyze the motivational factors of managers. The research sample consist of 24 principals of special education school units in the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data, which was sent electronically along with the instructions, objectives and ensuring the anonymity of the research to the principals of the 24 Special Schools of the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Region. Limitations of the study include a small sample size and the potential response bias of self-administered questionnaires. The usefulness of the results lies in the fact that knowing the motivations that motivate special education school directors can be useful for retaining employees in these positions. In addition, when a special education school with its special requirements, has a director who is properly motivated to work, then this is the added value for achieving the school's goals and meeting the special needs of its students.

**Keywords:** - Motivation factors, Leadership, Special Education, Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation, Greece.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Many organizations have introduced integrated incentive reward systems to motivate employees while increasing their performance and satisfaction (Schlechter, et al., 2015). According to the international literature, there are many and different motivational models for motivating employees. In the last decade, the models of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are probably the ones gaining ground. According to Ryan et al. (1983) the notable difference between the two categories is that, in intrinsic motivation the driving force (motivation) is internal and in extrinsic motivation it comes from the external environment. Extrinsic motivations are those that motivate the individual externally to perform a task and are as usual financials. On the contrary, Reis (2012) states that, intrinsic motivations are those that regulate the individual's self-disposition to be active in order to achieve a task. Allen et al. (2004) also state that intrinsic motivation is the internal feeling of satisfaction one feels during one's working life.

### 1.2 Leadership in special education

The administrative leadership is important in achieving the goals of school units. A key person for the success of the goals is the school director, who should have abilities-skills that make him a special model in the school unit (Pashiardis & Johansson, 2016). In particular, special education directors according to Sussan et al. (2018), must provide the best of their abilities to achieve the desired result. Various studies have been carried out in the international literature on the motivation factors of leaders in education. There is researches linking motivation to school unit effectiveness, motivation to staff effectiveness, and studies that have identified correlations between leaders motivation and student and parent satisfaction (Ayub & Rafif, 2011; Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014;

Mohamad & Yaacob, 2013) (Norazmi et al., 2020). Additionally, Hendrik et al. (2021) in their research come to the conclusion that , both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors have an important role in retaining special education teachers in their jobs. Appropriate motivation for a leader's work in special education is essentials for caring, teacher well-being, and solving student problems (Mohamad & Yaacob, 2013).

### 1.3 Structure of Special Education in Greece

In Greece, special education and training was established in 1982 with the presidential decree P.D. 603/1982 - GPS 117 -A- 21-9-1982.

The School Units for Special Education and Education (SMEAE) that operate are:

#### *Special Kindergartens*

Students study for two years from the age of 4 with the possibility of repeating up to 2 years.

#### *Special elementary school*

Students up to the age of 15 are studying.

#### *Special Education High Schools*

They are attended by students up to the age of 18. Special Education high schools include the preliminary class and three subsequent classes A, B, and C.

#### *General High School of Special Education*

Students up to the age of 22 attend these schools. The Special Education General High Schools include the preliminary class and three subsequent classes A, B and C.

#### *Special Vocational High Schools and High Schools*

Primary school graduates of general or special education are eligible to enroll and the courses last five years. In these high schools, a program is implemented for the completion of the nine-year compulsory education and the provision of professional education.

#### *Special Vocational Education and Training Workshops*

The course lasts from five to eight years. Graduates of primary schools of general or special education enroll in them, covering the compulsory education until the age of 18. (<http://www.vimatizo.gr/Eidiki%20agogi%20k%20ekpedevsi.htm>).

### 1.4. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate the way in which the managers of special education school units are motivated to work so to appropriate proposals can be made for the implementation of policies and the achievement of the special goals of the school units.

## 2. Methodology

For the purpose of the research, a questionnaire was created with questions from a previous tool. The tool was the Work Preference Inventory (WPI) which is a tool developed by Amabile et al. (1994) and aimed to assess extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to work. The tool includes a total of 30 items-questions. In the WPI there are elements of intrinsic motivation such as: self-determination, competence, goal involvement, curiosity, enjoyment and interest. As a reference extrinsic elements include motivations such as: competition, evaluation, constraints and tangible incentives. The tool has been widely used in many different work areas and has formed the basis of many variations. There are also several studies that have confirmed the validity and reliability of the tool in the educational

field (Loo, 2001; Cooper & Jayatilaka, 2006; Subadrah, N. & Mohammed T. Alkiyumi, 2011; Baleghizadeh & Gordani, 2012). For the purposes of this research, the factors of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were used. Factor intrinsic includes 4 statements and factor extrinsic includes 5 statements, graded on a 5-point Likert scale 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neither disagree nor agree, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree. Also, the tool includes 5 questions about the demographic data of the sample regarding the sheet, age, education, time of total professional experience and time of previous service in the position of manager. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data, which was sent electronically along with the instructions, objectives and ensuring the anonymity of the research to the principals of the 24 Special Schools of the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Region. All of them returned completed questionnaires.

## 2.1 Findings

**Table 1:** Sex of the respondents

Sex	N	Percentage
Man	14	58,33
Woman	10	41,66
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that, the majority of the sample 58.33% are men.

**Table 2:** Age of the respondents

Age	N	Percentage
18-28	0	0
28-38	4	16,66
38-48	8	33,33
48 end up	12	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

Half of the School Directors in the sample are aged 48 and over, 33.33% of the sample are between 38 and 48 years old, 16.66% are between 28 and 38 years old, and none are between 18 and 28 years old.

**Table 3:** Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Attainment of the Respondents	N	Percentage
Degree	14	58,33
Master	6	25
Doctoral	4	16,66
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority of the sample has a bachelor's degree, 25% have a master's degree and only 16.66% have completed doctoral studies.

**Table 4:** Time of total professional experience in years

Time of total professional experience in years	N	Percentage
0-10	0	0
10-20	1	4,16

20-30	20	83,33
20 end up	3	12,5
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the above table, the majority has between 20 and 30 years of total service, 12.5% has more than 20 years of total service and only 4.16% has 10 to 20 years of service. Also, there is no one with up to 10 years of service.

**Table 5:** Years of seniority in years as director

Years of seniority in years as director	N	Percentage
0-10	12	50
10-20	10	41,66
20-30	2	8,33
20 end up	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority of School Directors have up to 10 years of experience as a manager, also 41.66% have 10 to 20 years and only 8.33% have 20 to 30 years of experience as a manager.

**Table 6:** Statements about the factor intrinsic motivation (N=24)

Statement	Absolutely disagree		Disagree		Neither		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I like to tackle problems that are completely unknown to me.	4	16,6	5	20.83	3	12.5	6	25	6	25
I want to get feedback on the result of my work.	3	12.5	4	46.6	3	12.5	7	29.2	7	29.2
The more complex a problem is, the more I enjoy solving it.	8	33.3	8	33.3	2	8.33	3	12.5	1	4.16

What is most important to me is to enjoy what I do.	2	8.33	2	8.33	0	0	12	50	8	33.3
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The table above shows that 50% of the sample consider themselves motivated to work by solving problems that are completely unknown to them, so there seems to be an interest in further development. Also, 58.4% stated that feedback on their work is an important motivation, while 66.6% do not believe that solving complex problems is a motivation for work. Additionally, the vast majority the sample 83.3% believe that it is very important to enjoy what you do.

**Table 7:** Statements about the factor extrinsic motivation (N=24)

Statement	Absolutely disagree		Disagree		Neither		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
My salary is an important motivation for me.	3	12.5	2	8.33	2	8.33	10	41.66	7	29.22
I am motivated to work by the recognition I can gain from other people.	2	8.33	2	8.33	0	0	8	33.3	12	50
I worry about what other people think about my work.	1	4.16	3	12.5	13	54.16	3	12.5	4	16.6
I need to feel like I'm getting something for what	4	16.6	2	8.33	9	37.5	5	20.83	4	16.6

I'm doing.

Flexibility in working hours is an important motivation for me.	0	0	6	25	1	4.16	7	29.2	10	41.66
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As a reference the results from the extrinsic motivation factor, the vast majority 70.88% of the respondents believe that the salary is an important motivation for work. At the same time, 83.3% of respondents consider that job recognition is an important motivation. Regarding the way others see their work more than half of the sample does not consider it an important motivation. Additionally, as many managers (37.49%) consider getting something from what they do as an important extrinsic motivation, as many (37.5%) neither agree nor disagree. Finally, the statement about flexibility in working hours gathers the highest percentage of agreement at 70.86%.

## 2.2 Limitations

Limitations of the study include a small sample size and the potential response bias of self-administered questionnaires. Future research could investigate the effect of training on employee motivation in other public sector organizations and in different geographic locations.

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the research showed that according to the statements about intrinsic motivation, the directors of special education school units that participated in the research stated that they are motivated to work by the solution of unknown problems, by the feedback they will get on their work, as well as from the pleasure they will get from the work. On the contrary, they do not consider solving complex problems so important. As reference to extrinsic motivation, salary, recognition from others and flexible working hours are what motivate managers to work. Finally, the majority of the sample stated that they do not care what others say about their work, nor do they want to feel that they have something to gain from it. The policies implemented for the retention and recruitment of the directors of special education school units should take into account similar researches as the field of special education and education has very special characteristics, imposes a great emotional involvement of the employees and needs special handlings. So, if we provide the right motivations for the school directors will have positive results for the staff, the parents and the students.

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