



# Evaluating an induction training program for Greek teachers using an adjusted level model approach



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## ABSTRACT

This study is about the evaluation of an induction training program for Greek teachers. The program was evaluated by adopting an adjusted level model approach. Qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures were applied in order to assess the value of the training. The induction training was provided to Greek teachers who are appointed as permanent public employees at the beginning of each academic year. The results were encouraging for the applicability of the level model based evaluation in educational settings. The sequential hierarchy of the model was also tested and supported for the levels that were assessed quantitatively. Further evidence is needed in order to support the integration of methods and the sequential order of the level model approach.

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## Training programs and evaluation

Enriching the skills and the knowledge is a basic presupposition for the professional development of a teacher and the improvement of his training. In order to meet the demand for the acquisition of new skills and knowledge, there is an increasing need for training programs, workshops, seminars, and continuing professional development initiatives (Boyle, Lamprianou, & Boyle, 2005).

In the rapidly changing educational settings of the 21st century, teachers are facing various challenges (state regulations, educational reforms, new technologies etc.) that call for a continuous professional development. Therefore, increasing importance is also being paid to the value and effectiveness of the available initiatives for additional training and professional development (Torff, Sessions, & Byrnes, 2005). Besides, any training procedure has to improve teachers' practices, otherwise progress cannot be anticipated in students' learning (Guskey, 2000). That is why evaluation is considered a key feature in identifying efficient training programs and interpreting the positive or negative outcomes that derive from them (Grammatikopoulos, Zachopoulou, Tsangaridou, Liukkonen, & Pickup, 2008; Guskey, 2000).

Evaluation approaches that are based on concrete ground theories and utilize a broad range of procedures have the advantage of providing a more valid and complete picture of the training under evaluation (Lee & Walsh, 2004). Numerous researchers have proposed different approaches in order to evaluate effectively training procedures (e.g. Coldwell & Simkins, 2011; Guskey, 2000; Holton, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 1959, 1976, 1994; Kuzmin, 2012; Leithwood & Levin, 2005).

### Training evaluation level models

The methods that have influenced significantly this domain were the 'level models'. The 'level models' describe the processes through which professional development interventions achieve outcomes. These evaluation procedures suggest that "program design and implementation involve a series of inter-related components and the role of evaluation is to assess one or more of these components and the inter-relationships between them" (Coldwell & Simkins, 2011, pp. 144–145). The level models theoretically are based on the positivist view of the nature of reality, where the assumption is that there is a strong relationship between the observable and objective reality. These procedures are characterized by the scrupulous data gathering and the use of experimental evaluation designs. They can also provide information about the effects of training in a limited but highly valid way (Coldwell & Simkins, 2011). The main advantages of the level models are their competence to evaluate effectively well-defined training programs with clearly identifiable target groups and

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anticipated outcomes (Coldwell & Simkins, 2011; Edlenbos & van Buuren, 2005), and their suitability in simple instructional designs and short-term endpoints (Yardley & Dornan, 2012).

The Kirkpatrick's (1959, 1976, 1994) four-level model is considered by far the most popular approach for the evaluation of training in organizations. It has been criticized occasionally (Alliger & Janak, 1989; Holton, 1996; Kraiger, 2002; Tannenbaum, Cannon-Bowers, Salas, & Mathieu, 1993), but despite the fact that new models or methods are available in the literature, it remains till today the most prevalent approach (Arthur, Bennet, & Edens, 2003; Praslova, 2010; Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). The four levels of Kirkpatrick's model are *reaction*, *learning*, *behavior*, and *results*. The two first levels are considered internal as they focus on what occurs within the training program, whereas the other two, behavior and results are considered external as they focus on changes that occur outside of the training program. The model has not been extensively implemented in educational settings but this is changing and the last decade researchers have started adopting level models for the evaluation of training procedures in educational settings (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Praslova, 2010; Yardley & Dornan, 2012).

An alternation of the Kirkpatrick's model was introduced by Guskey (2000, 2002) who modified the Kirkpatrick's model, by adding an additional level between the second and third level, and by enhancing the content and changing the names of two levels. The new level that was added is named 'organization support and change' and it is considered important in the evaluation of training programs (Davis, Preston, & Sahin, 2009; Michalski & Cousins, 2000). The framework proposed by Guskey (2000, 2002) in order to evaluate effectively training programs for educators, incorporates the following five critical levels: (a) reactions, (b) learning, (c) organization support and change, (d) use of new knowledge and skills, and (e) students' outcomes. Yet, the occasional complexity of the organization who is implementing a training program or the fact that a lot of times different organizations are involved in the same training procedure, create a very complex environment where it is very difficult to assess the impact of this level. Moreover, the estimation of the training's impact on the students' outcomes is unlikely to be assessed effectively due to the limited time and sources that usually evaluations have. These shortcomings do not allow the Guskey's model to be easily adopted in the field practice.

The level model approach is a simple and easy to use framework for evaluating training programs. It is a well-designed procedure that contributed significantly to human resource development as it was admitted by an "opponent" of the model (Holton, 1996). Its successful trajectory for over forty years can be attributed to several reasons. It enables professionals to understand training evaluation in a systematic way, it is a helpful guide regarding the questions that should be addressed, and it reduces the measurement demands and the number of variables. In other words it is simple, easy to use and provides valid results.

An evaluation procedure based on the level-models, that were explained earlier, was adopted in the current study in order to provide evidence of the induction training of Greek teachers. The level model was applied after a modification that was made in Kirkpatrick's and Guskey's proposals, in order to correspond to the nature of the current training program. The modification was that the 'learning' and 'organizational support' levels were assessed through a semi-structured interview. The reasons for using a semi-structured interview were the following:

- (a) The authors wanted to enrich the methodology by using a mixed method design in order to empower the evaluation data. The combination of quantitative and qualitative procedures in a single study provides different aspects and perspectives and

therefore the results allow for a more in depth understanding of a topic (Greene, Kreider, & Mayer, 2005).

- (b) The structure of the training in our case did not follow a traditional schedule and it had different and varied contents. Thus, it was considered that close-ended questions would not elicit the proper information to assess all the aspects of knowledge acquired during the training.
- (c) The participants were appointed in various educational districts and schools with very different and dissimilar environments, and thus a question or two would not investigate adequately specific matters nor would collect the quality of information needed for the organizational support.

One of the difficulties of implementing the level models in educational settings is the evaluation of the last level (results/students' outcomes), which would require a complex and time consuming procedure. There is little evidence in the literature of professional development efforts that improve students' outcomes (Grigg, Kelly, Gamoran, & Borman, 2013). The usually limited time and resources available in the evaluation of programs or training seminars do not allow evaluators to apply demanding designs in the field practice. The major concern in field practice is not to manage to include everything in the evaluation, but to decide what can be left out (Grammatikopoulos, 2012; Williams and Imam, 2007). Because of these limitations, the current study decided to assess the impact of the training on the level 'results', by measuring the changes of the self-efficacy of the participants.

Self-efficacy is considered to influence teacher efficiency in classroom management, students' engagement, and instructional strategies and therefore it can also have an influence in students' knowledge (Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008). Besides, a common expectation from a training seminar is to improve the sense of teachers' efficacy about their teaching skills and practices. Vo, Sutherland, and Conroy (2012) suggested that increased self-efficacy can improve child outcomes. Moreover, self-efficacy improves the quality of teachers which according to Barrett, Butler, & Toma (2012) is a key factor to improving educational outcomes and it is also considered a very important factor in explaining student achievement (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain 2005). Because some researchers argued that self-efficacy is a learning outcome of a training procedure and not a result (Lorenz, Gregory, & Davis, 2000; Martocchio, 1994; Martocchio & Dulebohn, 1994; Martocchio & Judge, 1997), it was decided to test both assumptions in the current study.

#### *The induction training program in Greece*

The teachers (in kindergarten, primary and secondary education) are appointed in the Greek educational system through national examinations. During the first year of their employment they are obliged to participate in the 'Induction training program'. These training programs are delivered by the District Training Centres of the Ministry of Education. There are centers in all thirteen educational districts of Greece and the content of the program they provide is the same for all teachers. The trainers usually are administrative staff from education, university professors or school counselors. The execution of the whole procedure is being monitored by the Ministry of Education nevertheless without the implementation of any evaluation procedure to measure the impact of this program. Because of the absence of official evaluation procedures, there are very limited information and knowledge available about the value and the impact of this training program.

The Greek induction training program consists of a 100-hour training program which is delivered in two phases; the first in a two month period and the second in one month. The first phase

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