



Teachers' motivation to participate in training and to implement innovations



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Self-determination theory is beneficial in understanding teachers' work motivation.
- Autonomous motivation predicts teachers' intentions to participate in training.
- Autonomous motivation predicts teachers' intentions to teach an innovative subject.
- Controlled motivation does not predict teachers' intentions.

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ABSTRACT

Based on Self-determination theory, a mixed method design was used to explore 218 teachers' motivation and intentions regarding participation in training and teaching of an innovative academic subject (i.e., *Research Project*). Structural equation modeling revealed that autonomous motivation positively predicted teacher intentions to participate in relevant training and to implement innovation in the future, while controlled motivation did not. The findings imply that policy makers should encourage strategies that foster teacher autonomous motivation for promoting successful implementations of educational innovations.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, school innovations have become increasingly important for worldwide reforms in an attempt to improve education and to switch from traditional teaching practices (teacher-centered) to more creative student-centered approaches (e.g., cooperative, project-based learning). A notable example is Greece where many top-down reform efforts have been made in the last ten years in an attempt by the Ministry of Education to improve education and to align national curricula with international trends (e.g., Cross Thematic Curriculum, 2003; New books, 2006; New School-Priority the student, 2011). In the most recent educational change, an innovative new course namely *Research Project*, was

introduced to Greek high schools (10th to 12th grade) (<http://www.pi-schools.gr/>; <http://www.minedu.gov.gr/>). This is based on four pedagogical principles, (a) Inquiry based learning, (b) Interdisciplinary teaching-collaboration, (c) Differentiated learning, (d) Cooperative learning (Ministry of Education, 2011). The new subject requires students to work on interdisciplinary projects in small groups, and teachers to facilitate initiative, choice, experimentation, and individual/group responsibility (Ministry of Education, 2011). In Greece, apart from inductive training, further in-service education is not obligatory; in this context the first act was to support the implementation of this innovative subject by way of an optional in-service training program for high school teachers, provided by The National Organization for Teachers' Training (i.e., OEPEK) in June of 2011.

In the international educational arena, innovations are often introduced via centrally organized in-service teacher training programs (or continuous professional development programs). However, in many cases, participation in these programs is optional, and when it is mandatory there is no way of ensuring

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teachers' optimal engagement in these learning experiences. As Van Eekelen, Vermunt, and Boshuizen (2006) underlined teachers' *will to learn* must be present before their engagement in any learning activity regarding innovations. In their small scale qualitative study, they found that it was only the teachers who were *eager to learn*, and agreed with the new innovative views of teaching, who undertook the appropriate action to do so (Van Eekelen et al., 2006). Accordingly, Shulman and Shulman (2004) proposed that teachers' willingness to learn (i.e., motivation to learn) is one of the basic features of teacher learning and successful professional development. Motivational theorists suggest that autonomous motivation to learn is instrumental for optimal learning and performance, individual adjustment and psychological functioning, greater creativity, and persistence in many different educational settings (see Deci, Ryan, & Williams, 1996; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Reeve, 2002). This means that teachers' motivation to be involved in new learning experiences, such as in-service training programs, should be fundamental for the success of these programs.

In the present study we examined teachers' motivation in determining their intentions to participate in training and to implement the innovative subject *Research Project*. The examination of teachers' intentions and their prediction by motivational variables is very important because according to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991) intentions have greater possibility of being translated into behavior (Ajzen, 2002).

Our primary focus was teachers' motivation to participate in training as there is a consensus that students' learning is dependent on teacher quality, and therefore, teacher professional development is essential (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fullan, 2009; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The substantial influence of teachers' quality on student achievement and the connection between teachers' professional development and school improvement has been supported by both quantitative and qualitative studies (see Darling-Hammond, 2000; Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

The second focus of our study was the examination of teachers' motivation to implement the innovation because teachers play a key role in the implementation of *Research Project* by organizing, grouping, motivating and guiding students (Ministry of Education, 2011). In recent years, the influential position of teachers in the educational procedure has led to the expansion of research in examining the contextual and dispositional factors influencing teachers' participation and implementation of school innovations. Findings from these studies support the idea that teachers' motivation is one of the most essential determinants for the successful implementation of educational innovations (Abrami, Poulsen, & Chambers, 2004; Cave & Mulloy, 2010; Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2011; Lam, Cheng, & Choy, 2010; Schellenbach-Zell & Gräsel, 2010).

Recent studies show that teachers' motivation and cognition (e.g., self-efficacy, attitudes, appraisals, beliefs, goals) are vital for the impetus of their workplace learning (Geijsel, Sleegers, Stoel, & Krüger, 2009; Kwakman, 2003; Lohman, 2006; Runhaar, 2008; Vermunt & Endedijk, 2011). However, only few studies focused on teachers' reasons for participating in formally organized training promoting educational innovation. Livneh and Livneh (1999) administered the Characteristics of Lifelong Learners in the Professions Scale and found that self-motivation (internal) and external motivation (networking with others/salary improvement) to learn predicted K-12 educators' participation in professional development activities during the previous year. Hynds and McDonald (2009) in their qualitative study found that teachers decided to participate in a school-university partnership program mainly for intrinsic reasons (e.g., to link theory to practice, to improve students' learning, to collaborate, for pleasure, for

knowledge) but some extrinsic reasons also emerged (qualification achievement, fee payment). Stout (1996) recognized four motives affecting teachers' participation in professional development: gaining new skills/knowledge to enhance classroom practice, salary enhancement, eligibility to compete for a position/certificate maintenance, career mobility/CV building. In a similar fashion, studies in other work domains show that employees' motivation to engage in occupational training and development is determined by internal motivations (e.g., curiosity, knowledge) and external ones (e.g., compliance with authority, professional benefits) (Dia, Smith, Cohen-Callow, & Bliss, 2005; Garst & Ried, 1999; Noe & Wilk, 1993; Tharenou, 2001). Although these studies underscored the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, we expected that some of these extrinsic reasons would be irrelevant for Greek teachers because their participation in continuous professional development is not considered a work duty and there are no monetary rewards in the form of payment or salary improvement for these activities (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are key-constructs of Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000a) which can be used to investigate teachers' task specific motivation (i.e., participation in training, teaching innovation). Recently, some researchers supported the utilization of an integrated model with constructs from multiple theories as the most appropriate framework for the study of teachers' motivation (Cave & Mulloy, 2010; Jesus & Lens, 2005). However, SDT may uniquely provide a sufficient solution for the study of teachers' situational-level motivation (Vallerand, 1997). Especially in a context where monetary incentives are absent, engagement in continuous professional development is voluntary, and as teachers' wages have decreased substantially as a result of the Greek economic downturn (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice report, 2012), SDT might unveil important intrinsic incentives for individuals' optimal motivation. In addition, it is a well-established theory applied in various domains internationally offering guidelines to improve practice (see Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000b), and it would be informative for policies aiming to foster teachers' involvement with educational innovations.

Based on SDT, Fernet and his colleagues (Fernet, 2011; Fernet, Senecal, Guay, Marsh, & Dowson, 2008) suggested that teachers' quantity and quality of motivation presents a wide variety, relative to the various work-related tasks they have to carry out. Indeed, highly motivated teachers in teaching or in class preparation could be less motivated to participate in further training and professional development, for a number of reasons: some training programs might be limited, or located out of their reach; or they feel satisfied and effective in the way they teach so no training is needed; or they just do not have the possibility, or the will, to devote their personal time for these activities. To this end, teachers' intentional engagement in any in-service training program becomes extremely important and worthy of scrutiny. Therefore, because in SDT, a pivotal concept is the existence of choice in a person's behavioral regulations, it provides an appropriate framework to base a study on teachers' volitional engagement in professional training promoting school innovations.

1.1. Self-determination theory (SDT)

SDT theory posits that peoples' behavior can be intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated, or amotivated depending on the reasons for their involvement in a given task (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for the inherent enjoyment and pleasure derived from it, without the mediating effects of external rewards or pressures, and it is considered as the most self-determined type of motivation (Deci &

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