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AN EFFORT TO CLASSIFY GREEK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS BASED ON THE RESULTS OF A SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Greek schoolteachers (the term, as used in this text, signifies only elementary school teachers) do not constitute a homogenous group, since there are differentiations in terms of the gender, age, social origin, studies, viewpoints and preferences of the men and women who teach in Greece's elementary schools. The survey that was conducted on a representative sample, with the help of Cluster Analysis, has led to the grouping of elementary school teachers into nine clusters on the basis of the common features identified in analysing each group.

INTRODUCTION

Greek teachers found themselves in the limelight at the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, owing to the mass mobilisations they held for about a month to demand satisfaction of certain demands. During this period, the public was exposed to images on the television, mainly from Athens, of teachers who did not readily fit into a single category. At that period, we were completing a survey that had been conducted in all prefectures of Greece. A representative sample of teachers answered a number of questions that mainly concerned their demographic and social features, their studies, knowledge of foreign languages and information technology, the way in which they perceived their profession and workplace, and their views about how conditions in primary education could be improved. Their replies are presented in the text that follows. But beyond the

percentages derived from their replies, we were more interested in seeing how these replies would could be combined together over the full range of the sample and how the correlation of the total replies could lead to a proposal to classigy Greek schoolteachers into clusters with common features.

The Features Of The Sample. First Findings

The first three tables present the distribution of teachers as regards gender, age and length of teaching service. There are approximately 1.5 times more women than men, a fact that has been confirmed in other surveys (Table 1).

Table 1. Gender of teachers

	N	%
Men	830	39.04
Women	1271	59.78
No reply	25	1.18
Total	2126	100.00

The teachers in the sample aged between 31 and 40 constitute the largest group. Just over half that number is between either 23-30 or 41-50, divided into two groups of approximately the same size (Table 2).

Table 2. Age of teachers

	N	%
23-30	560	26.34
31-40	823	38.71
41-50	535	25.16
51-60	148	6.96
>60	11	0.52
No reply	49	2.30
Total	2126	100.00

Considerably fewer teachers are more than 50 years old. Regarding seniority, most teachers have served either between 0-5 years or 16-25. One tenth of the total has been teaching for more than 25 years (Table 3).

Table 3. Years of service

	N	%
0-5	602	28.32
6-10	406	19.10
11-15	374	17.59
16-25	512	24.08
>25	215	10.11
No reply	17	0.80
Total	2126	100.00

Two-thirds of the teachers who took part in the survey are married, while just over one-quarter is not (Table 4). Some 55.60% of teachers have children (Table 5).

Table 4. Marital status

	N	%
Single	576	27.09
Married	1401	65.90
Divorced	114	5.36
Widow/er	25	1.18
No reply	10	0.47
Total	2126	100.00

Table 5. Do you have children?

	N	%
Yes	1182	55.60
No	601	28.27
No reply	343	16.13
Total	2126	100.00

The social origin of teachers can be traced through their parents' level of education. In many countries, teachers come from the working class strata. In Greece, 43.8% of teachers' fathers and 50.71% of their mothers completed elementary school at most. The proportion of teachers' parents who attended secondary school did not exceed 30%. And finally, 17.88% of fathers and 5.93% of mothers of the teachers in the survey sample attended higher education (Table 6).

Table 6. Parents' level of education

	Father			Mother	
	n	%		n	%
Illiterate	35	1.65		88	4.14
Did not complete primary school	281	13.22		327	15.38
Completed primary school	604	28.41		663	31.19
Completed junior secondary school	311	14.63		276	12.98
Completed senior secondary school	296	13.92		348	16.37
Graduated from school after primary school	26	1.22		21	0.99
Graduated from school after secondary school	144	6.77		96	4.52
Grad. of technical college (TEI)	79	3.72		54	2.54
Grad. of university	301	14.16		181	8.51
No reply	49	2.30		72	3.39
Total	2126	100.00		2126	100.00

Up to the 1980s, teachers were trained in a two-year programme at pedagogical academies. In the mid-80s, teacher training began to be provided in four-year university programmes. For teachers who had graduated from pedagogical academies, study programmes were arranged to make the two types of training equivalent. A good many teachers in the meantime had acquired a university degree in a different field. Thus, just over one quarter of teachers had studied solely at pedagogical academies. Another quarter attended equivalency courses. Thirty percent were trained in university departments, while quite a few combined their teacher training with university studies (Table 7).

Table 7. Basic studies

	n	%
Pedagogical Academy	580	27.28
Pedagogical Academy + Equivalence	547	25.73
University	648	30.48
Pedagogical Academy + University	151	7.10
Pedagogical Academy + Equivalence + University	136	6.40
No reply	64	3.01
Total	2126	100.00

After their initial studies, 14% of teachers enrolled in further education programmes, while 4% have a post-graduate degree (Table 8).

Table 8. Further studies

	Further education			Post-graduate studies	
	n	%		n	%
Yes	298	14.02		84	3.95
No	1828	85.98		2042	96.05
Total	2126	100.00		2126	100.00

The next two tables provide information about the teachers' knowledge in the fields of information technology (IT) and foreign languages. Fewer than 40% of teachers have satisfactory knowledge of IT (Table 9). Half the teachers declared knowledge of one foreign language, but a significant number, i.e. more than one-quarter, had none (Table 9).

Table 9. Level of knowledge of information technology

	n	%
Excellent	207	9.74
Very good	617	29.02
Moderate	905	42.57
Not good	378	17.78
No reply	19	0.89
Total	2126	100.00

Table 10. Knowledge of foreign languages

	n	%
One	1056	49.67
Two	340	15.99
More than two	67	3.15
None	553	26.01
No reply	110	5.17
Total	2126	100.00

For the great majority of teachers, teaching was their first choice of profession (Table
11); they were guided in this choice mainly by their love of children, the prospects for professional advancement and preference for the profession (Table 12).

Table 11. Was teaching your first choice of profession?

	n	%
Yes	1551	72.95
No	545	25.63
No reply	30	1.42
Total	2126	100.00

Table 12. Reasons for selecting profession

	n	%
Love of children	1021	48.02
Job security	612	28.79
Preference	532	25.02
Random reasons	277	13.03
Remain in birthplace	159	7.48
Family tradition	93	4.37

These choices seem to have been rewarded: The great majority of teachers appear to be satisfied with the level of the pupils (Table 13), their cooperation with parents and the general climate in the classroom (Table 14).

Table 13. Satisfaction

	Level of pupils			Cooperation with parents	
	n	%		n	%
Very	514	24.18		529	24.88
Fairly	1296	60.96		1147	53.95
Somewhat	218	10.25		346	16.27
Not at all	19	.89		55	2.59
No reply	79	3.72		49	2.30
Total	2126	100.00		2126	100.00

Table 14. How is the general climate in your class?

	n	%
Very good	1058	49.76
Fairly good	975	45.86
Good enough	45	2.12
Bad	3	0.14
Very bad	5	0.24
No reply	40	1.88
Total	2126	100.00

Regarding those issues that teachers find most annoying, the lack of infrastructure is mentioned in particular, together with low salaries and poor organisation by more than 40% for each cause (both here and in other questions in the survey it was possible to give multiple replies) (Table 15).

Table 15. What do you find most annoying in your job?

	n	%
Lack of infrastructure	1039	48.89
Low salaries	925	43.51
Poor organisation	867	40.78
Bad behaviour by children	336	15.81
Interference by parents	297	13.97
No recognition of my work	238	13.56
Poor relations with colleagues	102	4.80

When teachers were called on to answer the question of how to upgrade education, more than half replied that this could be done by improving curricula and textbooks and by on-going further education. Improving earnings holds third place with 37.96%, followed by the specialisation of teachers by subject (24.32%), the assessment of teachers and employees in education (17.59% and 17.40% respectively) and the duration of educational policy (16.27%) (Table 16). Among the teachers' future objectives, first and second place are held by improvement of conditions and further education with personal advancement coming third (Table 17).

Table 16. What would improve education?

	n	%
Better curricula and books	1356	63.78
On-going further education	1129	53.10
Better salaries	807	37.96
Specialisation for teachers	517	24.32
Assessment of teachers and employees	374	17.59
Assessment of structures and curricula	370	17.40
Duration of educational policy	346	16.27

Table 17. Teacher's goals for the future

	n	%
Improved conditions	702	33.02
Further education	620	29.16
Personal advancement	409	19.24
Training	335	15.76
Retirement	332	15.62
Permanent status	229	10.78
None	82	3.86

Table 18 records the teachers' preference as to how they spend their leisure time. Here, again, teachers could make a multiple choice. More than 60% of teachers declared that reading was their favourite pastime.

Table 18. What do you do in your leisure time?

	n	%
Read	1303	61.29
Travel - tourism	974	45.81
Family matters	893	42.00
Entertainment and friends	805	37.86
Sports and dancing	716	33.68
Computer	616	28.97
Social activities	582	27.38
T. V.	506	23.80
Movies, theatre, listening to music, attending exhibitions etc.	355	16.70
Do-it-yourself projects	272	12.79
Hunting, fishing	246	11.57
Gardening, farm chores	238	11.19
Painting, music, choir, etc.	125	5.88

And finally, the answer to the question of whether or not they would choose the same profession again, just under three-quarters responded affirmatively, while a small percentage (2.59%) replied negatively. Just over one fifth of the respondents were not sure whether they would make the same choice again (Table 19).

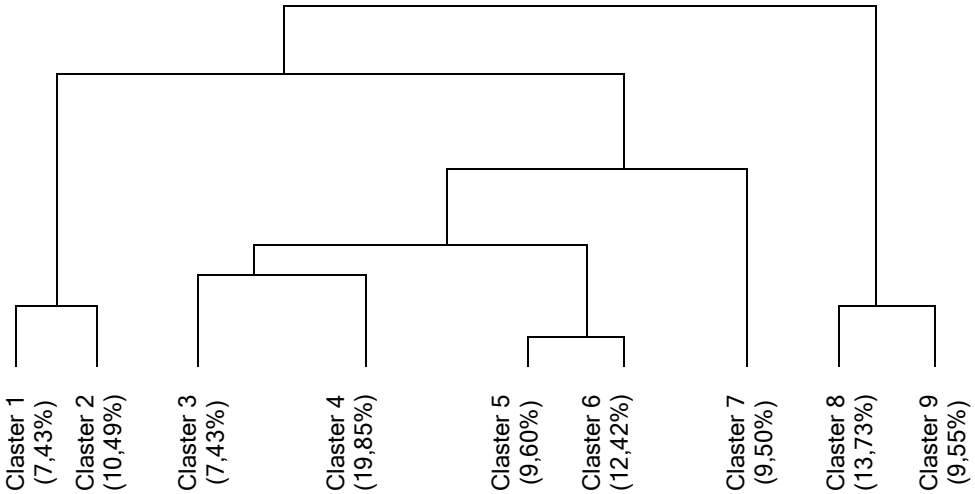
Table 19. Would you select the same profession again?

	n	%
Yes	1584	74.51
Perhaps	457	21.50
No	55	2.59
No reply	30	1.40
Total	2126	100.00

The results of the classification of teachers

In the previous section, we saw that the sample of 2126 Greek teachers answered a number of questions that show their profile. Apart from the presentation of these answers, there is also the combination of replies given by the individuals taking part in the survey. Some combinations are stronger than others and lead to the formation of groups with common features. The resulting classification is feasible owing to Cluster Analysis, a statistical method of Data Analysis. The diagram that groups the sample into nine clusters is presented in Figure 1. Each cluster is accompanied by the percentage of teachers it represents.

Figure 1. Cluster Analysis dendrogramm



The combinations of features that make each cluster different from the others, to a greater or lesser degree, are as follows:

Cluster 1 (158 teachers, 7.43% of the total)

The features encountered in this cluster are as follows: They are men and women teachers with 10 or more years of service, university graduates, with parents who continued their studies after secondary school. Frequently they are divorced. They are not particularly satisfied with the level of their pupils, or their cooperation with the latter's parents or the interference of the parents. They declare that they have no objectives for the future and that they selected their profession by chance. They are not sure that, given a chance, they would select it again.

Cluster 2 (223 teachers, 10.49% of the total)

These are primarily men between 31 and 40 years of age, married, with 6-15 years of service, whose parents had completed secondary school. They declare that they have good knowledge of IT, that they are fairly satisfied with the level of pupils and the cooperation with parents, and they find the climate in their classrooms fairly good. They selected their profession because of the security it offered and as a goal for the future they have their personal advancement. Many of them believe they would probably select the same profession again.

Cluster 3 (158 teachers, 7.43% of the total)

Educators in this cluster are mainly women, frequently divorced, between 31-40 years of age, with 6-10 years of teaching. They have studied at pedagogical academies, in equivalence programmes and at universities, and they have some knowledge of foreign languages. Their parents continued their studies after secondary school. They declare that they are very satisfied with the level of the pupils and their cooperation with the parents. They believe that specialisation of teachers would upgrade education. And finally, they declare that they would perhaps select the same profession, if they had to make the decision again.

Cluster 4 (422 teachers, 19.85% of the total)

This group consists primarily of women educators between 31 and 40 with 6-15 years of experience. They are married with children, and their parents finished elementary school. They studied at pedagogical academies, in equivalence programmes and at universities; they have a moderate level of IT knowledge, and one foreign language. They declare that they are very satisfied with the level of the pupils, their cooperation with the parents and the climate in their classrooms. In selecting their profession, they were influenced by their love of children. They prefer to teach the first four grades, they like reading and if they had to choose their profession again, they would select the same one.

Cluster 5 (204 teachers, 9.60% of the total)

This group consists largely of men between 41 and 50 years old with 16-25 years of teaching experience, married with children, whose parents had completed elementary school at most. They graduated from pedagogical academies and equivalence programmes and have taken further education courses. They have no knowledge of foreign languages. They are perfectly satisfied with the level of the pupils, their cooperation with the parents and the climate in their classroom. In selecting a profession, they were influenced by their love of children. They prefer to teach the last two grades of primary school. They believe that better salaries and longer duration for educational policy would help to improve education and declare that they would happily select the

same profession again. In their free time, they engage in do-it-yourself projects, gardening, hunting, fishing and sports.

Cluster 6 (264 teachers, 12.42% of the total)

This cluster largely comprises women 31-50 years of age with 11-25 years of experience, married with children, whose parents finished elementary school. They studied in pedagogical academies, in equivalence programmes and at universities, and have taken some further education courses. Their familiarity with IT is at a moderate level and they have knowledge of one foreign language. They are fairly satisfied by the pupils' level and find that the climate in their classroom is very good. They do not express any special preference for the grades they like to teach. They selected their profession out of love for children and would select it again. They are annoyed by the lack of recognition for their work, the low salaries, the lack of infrastructure and poor organisation, the interference of parents and the bad behaviour of the children. They believe that education would be upgraded by frequent further education programmes, improvement of curricula and textbooks, assessment of programme structures, teachers and employees and finally by better salaries. Their goal for the future is advancement. In their free time they read, travel and enjoy social activities and the company of friends.

Cluster 7 (202 teachers, 9.50% of the total)

In this group we meet educators of both sexes who are older, 51-60 years old, and have more teaching experience than their colleagues in other clusters. They are married, have children and their parents finished elementary school at most. They are graduated of pedagogical academies. They have no knowledge of IT or of any foreign language. They prefer to teach the early grades. The profession was their first choice and they selected it because it offered a secure position. What annoys them is the non-recognition of their work. In their leisure time they occupy themselves with their family.

Cluster 8 (292 teachers, 13.73% of the total)

Here we find younger men, 23-30 years old, unmarried, with university education. Their parents graduated from junior or senior secondary school, or from some post-secondary institution. They speak two foreign languages, and have very good knowledge of IT, and their goal is further education. They are fairly satisfied by the level of the pupils, judge that the climate in their classroom is fairly good, and prefer to teach the early grades. They declare that they would select the same profession again and in their leisure time they take up sports or dancing.

Cluster 9 (203 teachers, 9.55% of the total)

To this group belong young educators of both sexes, 23-30 years old, unmarried, with university education and with parents who have graduated from secondary school or university. They know more than two foreign languages and have excellent knowledge of information technology. They express no preference as to which grades they like to teach. They selected their profession because they preferred it to others and because they love children, to the point that they would select it again. Their future goals are further education and training. They are annoyed by the bad organisation and lack of infrastructure in education, the bad behaviour of the children, the interference of parents and possibly poor relations with colleagues. They believe that education would be upgraded by improving curricula and textbooks, by the longer duration of educational policy, by on-going further education for teachers, by the assessment of teachers, employees, structures and curricula and by specialisation for teachers. In their leisure time they read, travel, engage in social activities, sports and maintain contact with the fine arts.

From the Cluster Analysis diagram and the features of educators that form the clusters, the following emerge:

The last two clusters are detached from the other seven, and consist of young teachers who are at the same time satisfied with their choice of profession. Cluster 9 includes teachers from a more favourable social environment that than of the teachers in cluster 8.

The educators in cluster 7 are the oldest; they are graduates of two-year programmes in pedagogical academies and whose parents at best completed primary school.

The educators corresponding to the remaining clusters cover the intermediate age groups and a variety of individual cases. The educators in the first two clusters are not satisfied by the level of the pupils or their cooperation with parents, they find that the climate in their classes is not particularly good and they are not sure if they would select the same profession again. In the first cluster, the teachers come from a more favourable social background than their colleagues in the second cluster.

In the other four clusters, teachers declare that they are satisfied with the climate prevailing in their class. In cluster 3 and cluster 4 the teachers are younger than their colleagues in clusters 5 and 6.

CONCLUSIONS

As can be seen from the statistical analysis presented here, Greek elementary school teachers do not constitute a homogeneous body. The main factor that

differentiates it is age. Young teachers of up to 30 years old, about one quarter of the total – with their studies, knowledge and the stance they adopt towards their pupils and their work – leave their mark on that which, under certain conditions, could be the future workforce of schoolteachers. Less than ten percent of teachers, aged over 50 years old, show some of the features of past teachers. Two-thirds of teachers are of an intermediate age. One quarter of them do not feel particularly comfortable in their work. On the contrary, the rest of the teachers in this category, a little less than half of those who took part in the survey, declare that, to a greater or lesser degree, they accept the role of the teacher who experiences the pace of the school and the realities of the Greek educational system.

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