

The role of Education Counsellors in improving the quality of education for people with disabilities in Greece

Lampros Gkiolias
PhD Candidate University of Alicante
lgkiolias@gmail.com

Purpose of the research

- ▶ The present study aims to explore the perceptions - opinions of education consultants regarding their contribution to the improvement of the quality of education provided and their relationship with school principals.

Objectives

In particular it attempts to:

- To investigate whether and to what extent education consultants and school principals can influence the quality of education.
- To investigate whether frequent communication with principals is considered important and on which issues cooperation is required.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the objectives of the research, the following research questions were posed:

- In what way do Education Counsellors contribute to the improvement of the quality of education provided?
- What is the relationship between education counsellors and school principals?

The role of school directors

The role of the head teacher of the school unit is decisive for the upgrading of the quality of education, in so far as it is linked to:

- absorption and utilisation of financial resources
- the use of resources and the use of innovative actions
- enhancing the self-esteem of pupils and teachers
- enhancing the effectiveness of the school unit

The role of Education Counsellors (1)

► Educational

- Intermediary (linking scientific knowledge and educational practice through training activities)
- informative for parents (information on pedagogical issues as well as better communication and mutual understanding between school and family)

► Supportive-reinforcing

- auxiliary for teachers (improvement of teachers' everyday life)

► Balancing

- solving any problem that may arise in schools (helping and supporting teachers in their everyday life)

The role of Education Counsellors (2)

► Guiding

- ❖ mediating-cooperative (fostering a cooperative spirit in schools)
- ❖ supportive-helpful and advisory (improving teachers, following educational planning and supporting teachers in their daily work)

► Evaluative

- ❖ Developmental (professional development of teachers)
- ❖ Improvement (improving teachers)

► Supervisory

- ❖ Audit (discretionary control of teachers/educational work)

The new role of Education Advisors according to Law 4823/2021

- ▶ They are administratively subordinate to the Director of Education of each region and are supervised in the performance of their work by the Education Quality Supervisor of the Directorate of Education.
- ▶ Each education consultant has scientific responsibility for the issues of his/her field in all or part of the school units of each Directorate of Education.
- ▶ The task of the new councillors is:
 - ▶ the pedagogical and scientific guidance of school teachers,
 - ▶ training and development of innovative initiatives in the field of education,
 - ▶ evaluation of teachers,
 - ▶ support in meeting daily teaching and educational needs,
 - ▶ monitoring of teaching,
 - ▶ the presentation of sample lessons,
 - ▶ support for the operation of school laboratories and libraries, and the use of their materials and equipment.

Research Methodology - Choice of research method

- ▶ In order to achieve the purpose and the individual objectives of the research, the use of the qualitative research method with semi-structured interview was chosen.
- ▶ Six inclusive education counsellors took part in this study, with whom the interview was conducted remotely through the Zoom platform and at a time agreed upon in a preceding telephone conversation.

Main interview questions

- ▶ To what extent do you think that education advisors can influence the quality of education provided and how?
- ▶ To what extent do you consider that school principals can influence the quality of education provided and how?
- ▶ As an education consultant, do you consider it important to communicate frequently with school principals? Why do you think this is the case?
- ▶ On which issues is your cooperation with the school principals in your region required? Why?

Analysis of results

Question 1:

To what extent do you consider that education consultants can influence the quality of education provided and how?

All survey participants responded that Education Advisors can influence the quality of education provided to a large extent. This can be achieved:

- through their advisory role
- by their supportive and guiding role in the educational process
- by their training role in organising training activities for teachers

Question 2:

To what extent do you consider that school principals can influence the quality of education provided and in what way?

All survey participants answered that school principals can influence the quality of education provided to a large extent. This can be done:

- by working together with school counsellors
- by promoting innovative actions on the part of headmasters
- by ensuring an appropriate climate for smooth cooperation between teachers as they are responsible for the proper functioning of the school

Question 3:

As an education consultant, do you consider frequent communication with school principals important? Why do you believe this?

Education Consultants responded that frequent communication between school consultants and school principals is important as:

- problems are solved before they become excessive, whether they are related to teachers or pupils
- resolving questions about the educational process with regard to teachers

Question 4:

On what issues are you required to work with the principals of the schools in your district? Why?

In the fourth question posed to the councillors, different answers were received because each one raised their own issues on which collaboration between school principals and councillors is required. Indicatively mentioned were:

- issues of school and teacher evaluation
- issues of student misbehaviour
- issues related to teachers' conflicts over the proper functioning of the school unit

Conclusions

In this study, an attempt was made to highlight the views-perceptions of education consultants regarding their contribution to the upgrading of the quality of education provided and their relationship with school principals. The results of the research coincide in several points with the existing literature regarding the roles of the tasks of the institution of the education counsellor. Although the sample of the survey was small, the answers given show similarities. All responses converge on the view that both education counsellors and school principals can contribute to improving the quality of education provided.

Restrictions

Prior to conducting the interviews, it was noted that there are some potential limitations that may arise in the implementation of the comparative qualitative research. Firstly, the sample size is limited and does not allow for the generalisation of any results and conclusions drawn from conducting the research. The use of quantitative research tools (e.g. questionnaire) would likely ensure the participation of a larger number of participants. Furthermore, implementing a case study on the topic in question is probably not the most appropriate methodological option, because the working conditions of the education staff under study vary greatly depending on the specificities of each geographical area. In particular, working conditions in urban centres are different from those in rural areas, perhaps most notably the difficulties of transport for counsellors.

Suggestions for future research...

Study on the implementation of the evaluation system:

- Self-evaluation of a school unit
- Self-evaluation of the school self-evaluation

Legislation

- ▶ Proedriko Diatagma 152/2013, «Axiologisi ton ekpaideftikon tis protovathmias kai defterovathmias ekpaidefsis», FEK 240A/5-11-2013.
- ▶ Nomos 4823/2021, «Anavathmisi tou scholeiou, endynamosi ton ekpaideftikon kai alles diataxeis», FEK 136/t. A/3-8-2021

Thank you for your attention . . . ! ! !