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Master in Business Administration

Postgraduate Dissertation

**Training in the public sector in the era of e-government. The
case of e-EFKA.**

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Patras, Greece, June 2021

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Training in the public sector in the era of e-government. The case of e-EFKA.

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To my parents

Abstract

The public sector in many countries including Greece has been going through restructuring so that it converges to the private sector in terms of efficiency. Public organizations nowadays, are trying to adopt private management practices such as total quality management, efficient allocation of resources, upgrade the human capital, compensation schemes that are related to performance etc. Training refers to the process through which individuals acquire skills and knowledge. During the last decades training methods in the public sector have been upgraded in the context of new management era where public organizations aim at offering public services of higher quality. The purpose of this assignment is to examine several issues with regard to job training in the public organization of e-EFKA. To carry out our methodology we distributed a questionnaire to employees working in the organization who expressed their relative opinions. Our findings suggest that the employees are not satisfied from the training programs provided while training represents a strong incentive for higher productivity but it is not the stronger one. Additionally, education level and working experience of employees does not affect satisfaction from training at a statically significant level.

Keywords

Training, public organization, satisfaction, motivation, efficiency, e government.

Η εκπαίδευση στο δημόσιο τομέα την εποχή της ηλεκτρονικής διακυβέρνησης. Η περίπτωση του e- ΕΦΚΑ.

Ιωάννα Στρατικοπούλου

Περίληψη

Ο δημόσιος τομέας συμπεριλαμβανομένης της Ελλάδας έχει υποστεί αναδιάρθρωση έτσι ώστε να συγκλίνει στον ιδιωτικό τομέα όσον αφορά την αποτελεσματικότητα. Οι δημόσιοι οργανισμοί σήμερα, προσπαθούν να υιοθετήσουν πρακτικές διαχείρισης ιδιωτικού τομέα, όπως διοίκηση ολικής ποιότητας, αποτελεσματική κατανομή πόρων, αναβάθμιση του ανθρώπινου δυναμικού, αποζημίωση που συνδέεται με την παραγωγικότητα κλπ. Η εκπαίδευση αναφέρεται στη διαδικασία μέσω της οποίας τα άτομα αποκτούν δεξιότητες και γνώσεις. Κατά τη διάρκεια των τελευταίων δεκαετιών, οι μέθοδοι εκπαίδευσης στο δημόσιο τομέα αναβαθμίστηκαν στο πλαίσιο της νέας εποχής διαχείρισης όπου οι δημόσιοι οργανισμοί προσφέρουν υπηρεσίες υψηλότερης ποιότητας. Ο σκοπός αυτής της εργασίας είναι να εξετάσει διάφορα θέματα σχετικά με την επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση στη δημόσια υπηρεσία e-ΕΦΚΑ. Για να πραγματοποιήσουμε την ερευνά μας, διανείμαμε ένα ερωτηματολόγιο σε υπαλλήλους που εργάζονται στην υπηρεσία και εξέφρασαν τις απόψεις τους. Τα αποτελέσματα μας δείχνουν ότι οι υπάλληλοι δεν είναι ικανοποιημένοι από τα προγράμματα εκπαίδευσης που τους παρέχονται και ότι ενώ η εκπαίδευση αντιπροσωπεύει ένα ισχυρό κίνητρο για μεγαλύτερη παραγωγικότητα δεν είναι το ισχυρότερο κίνητρο. Επιπλέον το εκπαιδευτικό επίπεδο και η εργασιακή εμπειρία των υπαλλήλων δεν επηρεάζουν την ικανοποίηση από την εκπαίδευση σε σημαντικό επίπεδο στατιστικά.

Λέξεις – Κλειδιά

Εκπαίδευση, δημόσιος τομέας, ικανοποίηση, κίνητρο, αποδοτικότητα, ηλεκτρονική διακυβέρνηση.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Brief literature overview

The human capital represents the most important asset a company has and it consists of employees' skills and competencies. Differences in terms of efficiency and performance among companies, is usually attributed to differences in the quality of human capital. Therefore, a company should constantly try to upgrade the quality of its human capital in order to enhance its competitive advantage.

The basic way of upgrading human capital, is through training. Training refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills required to carry out a specific activity. During the training process several learning actions are taking place, ranging from the training of the individual so that he effectively responds to his duties to knowledge sharing, improving in this way the organization horizon and customer service (Milhem, Abushamsieh, & Arostegui, 2014).

An organization should develop a strategic human resource department for properly established training practices, resulting in the increase of employee efficiency. The human resource management operation represents a crucial way of connecting the human resource function with the strategic objectives of the company.

The financial outcome of training cannot easily be estimated particularly in monetary terms. However the training process generates numerous benefits to the company, since apart of the skills and competencies enhancement, employees have stronger motives to be more productive. According to the motivation theories training represents a fundamental factor of motivation, since employees acquire critical knowledge and skills that will help them improve their performance within the company. Moreover, their daily routine becomes more interesting and they experience a sense of self fulfillment, professionally wise (Aycan, 2003).

During the last decades, upgrading the public sector organization has been one of the top government priorities in all countries, given the poor efficiency of the public sector. The latter plays a significant role particularly in economies where the free market fails so the

government intervention in the economy becomes essential. Apart from this, the existence of public organizations is necessary since the state provides public goods and offers services which result in the maximization of citizens' satisfaction (Reichard & Schröter, 2018).

The human resource function in the public sector differs from that of the private sector since the former aims at maximizing public interest. Therefore many times training programs are not in the top of priorities of public organizations, contrary to the private sector where skill enhancement is one of the primary objectives. In a period where electronic governance is employed in most countries with the introduction of new technologies, the training progress should be indispensable within a public organization (Reichard & Schröter, 2018).

In the present assignment, we examine training issues with respect to the public agent of e-EFKA. The public sector in Greece has been suffering from chronic inefficiencies and the break out of the economic crisis necessitated the restructuring of the sector, aiming at providing high quality services with a minimum cost. Although the Greek public sector is going through the process of restructuring, the outcome generated so far is not so encouraging.

The examining topic is very significant especially nowadays where e-government has upgraded the way public sector functions. The introduction of information and computer technologies changed administrative practices and demand well equipped employees to apply them. Training is vital especially in public organizations where employees have lower skills and the hiring process is not always based on a merit system. Moreover, employees in the public sector are usually old and need training to acquire skills which they did not have the opportunity to get when they were much younger.

1.2. Methodology and research questions

In our methodology, we are going to use to use a questionnaire consisting of 14 closed questions of 5-point Likert scale, which cover several topics such as satisfaction from training, quality of training programs, productivity issues, how useful e-government is,

whether or not training is linked to career development, how frequently training programs are taking place etc.

The research questions we will examine are related to the satisfaction derived from training programs, to the most significant benefits of training, to whether training is a strong motivating factor, to the usefulness of e-government programs and to how educational level and working experience affect satisfaction from training.

The concatenation between research questions and questions included in the questionnaire that led us to our findings follows:

Research questions	Questions
Is the satisfaction derived from training programs high?	Are you satisfied from your training at work?
Which is the most important benefit generated from the training program?	Name the most important benefit from the training programs
Does training program represent a strong motivating factor?	Do training programs provide a strong motivation for higher productivity?
Do public employees find training for e-government useful?	How useful it would be a training program about e-government?
Does the educational level affect satisfaction from training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational level • Are you satisfied from your training at work?
Does the working experience affect satisfaction from training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working experience • Are you satisfied from your training at work?

To obtain our results we are going to use descriptive statistics. We are going to compute the mean and standard deviation of the score of each question together with the frequency distribution. We are also going to carry out ANOVA analysis to examine whether or not two variables have a statistically significant impact on satisfaction derived from training.

1.3. Dissertation structure

The structure of the dissertation will be the following:

Chapter 2 refers to the importance of the training, the concept of training, the training process, how training acts as a motivating factor, the factors that define the effectiveness of training and how e-learning has evolved during the last decades.

Chapter 3 outlines the characteristics of public organizations, the development of e-government, the current situation of the public sector in Greece, the importance of training in the Greek public sector, the introduction of training methods in the public organizations, how e-government has affected training in the public sector and other surveys related to training in the Greek public sector.

Chapter 4 refers to the foundation of EFKA, to the digital transformation to e-EFKA, to organizations' aims, to the downgraded working environment, to the training programs the organization implements and to the author's personal opinion about training in the organization.

Chapter 5 presents the methodology; the research questions, the research tool and the methods we used to analyze our data.

Chapter 6 presents analytically the results of our dissertation through graphs.

Chapter 7 presents our concluding remarks in comparison with the other relevant surveys and our conclusions in general, limitations of our survey and suggestions for the future.

2. The importance of job training

2.1 The concept of training

Training represents a process through which employees acquire skills and knowledge which will enhance their performance. The efforts made are not only restricted to the acquisition of skills and competencies but also to the employees overall professional development. During the last decades training within the working place has emerged as an indispensable business function and as an integral part of corporate strategy.

Given the importance of human capital as an asset, more and more companies implement training programs to upgrade the quality of their personnel. Training is related to employee development where the individual will become competent and confident in his job. Therefore it represents a process aiming at the change of behavior in such a direction. This change in behavior will be observed, resulting in the upgrade of the organization.

Training is an on going process where companies' purpose is to help employees acquire knowledge and skills in order to reach their great potential and performance. Employee training is about teaching employees how to perform a task or a procedure. Training makes employees feel more valued and inspired, more skilled and confident, which result in higher motivation, better performance and job satisfaction. Training makes employees feel more engaged and their loyalty and retention to the company are being increased (Brown, 2019).

The objectives of training programs are to enhance the employees' competence, to strengthen their motives and increase their job satisfaction, to facilitate the adjustment to new technologies smoother, to facilitate job rotation, to familiarize employees with the broad corporate environment and to establish a competitive culture where employees will seek to improve themselves and be eligible for promotions. If effective training programs are implemented, the company's competitiveness will significantly increases, since as we mentioned earlier the quality of human capital represents a major source of competitive advantage (Harrison, 2005).

The trainee is the major stakeholder in the training program since the latter is designed for him aiming at making him more useful for the company he works for. Each trainee plays a significant role since his attitude to the training program is expected to influence the attitude of others. A major condition that will ensure the success of the program is the positive attitude of the participants. Factors which can affect the learning outcome are trainee's learning style, his comfort level with the trainer, his level of self esteem, his personnel problems, his previous training experience, his desire to advance in the company, his expectations related to the program and the relation between the training program and personal objective. Apart from the individual factors, there are also environmental factors which affect the training such as relationship with colleagues, the composition of the training team, the training objective, and the content of the training program or even the infrastructure of the training place (Harrison, 2005).

The role of the trainer is also quite important and several conditions related to him should prevail, so that the training program is effective. To be more specific, he should be aware of each individual's strengths and weaknesses and how these attributes match the organization's needs. Moreover, he should carry out an extensive research, so that he assesses the training opportunities available in the industry and choose of course the most appropriate one. Finally, he should develop a training benchmark where all employees will be evaluated based on it and will be given a certificate provided that they have attended the entire program (Harrison, 2005).

Training types can be classified into on the job training and off the job training. On the job training methods are applied on the workplace while the employee performs his duties; job rotation, job coaching and job instruction are a few of them. The advantage of these methods are that they are closely related to the context of the job, they are more effective since they refer to learning by experience, they are less costly, trainees are highly motivated and they are not affected by artificial situations which can incur within a classroom. Their disadvantage is that the trainer might lack experience, the training program might not be organized on a systematically basis and if it is poorly conducted, safety issues can arise. Off the job training methods refer to classroom lectures, simulation, audiovisual, even sensitivity training. Their advantage is that the trainer in this case is more experienced while the formal character of these training programs guarantees that they will be properly organized. Their disadvantage is that the attendants cannot learn

from experience and it is possible that they will resort to their old habits while artificial situation can arise (Nagar, 2009).

Furthermore, informal training can sometimes be equally important and in many cases is preferred by employees compared to job training programs. In this case, employees can develop skills independently without attending any formal courses. Several researches have shown that informal training accounts for the 75% of learning that takes place within the working place. Informal training refers to interactions and exchange of knowledge with colleagues, discussions with people from different sectors and generally speaking, any kind of training that occurs outside a prescribed learning environment. This type of learning stems from the individual's interests and desire to broaden his horizons (Hager, 2004).

There are several methods used in training programs which are classified in two basic categories. The first one is passive learning method, where one way communication exists. In this case the trainer transmits information to trainees who have a rather passive role. These methods refer to lectures, tutorials, seminars, audio visual, reading and demonstration. There is also the active learning method where the trainee is highly involved. In this case, there is an interaction between trainees and the instructor since trainees engage themselves in the training process. Some of these methods are brainstorming, debates, assignments, case analysis and simulation (Surbhi, 2021).

Whether a company's aim is acquire knowledge, sharpen skills or adjust behaviors, there are a lot of different methods to deliver effective employee training. One of them is team training where people are trained in groups and observation and feedback are required during the learning process. Seminars are the most common method of training, participants are actively involved and being educated on a specific topic. Another training delivery method for improving knowledge and skills is mentoring where expertise mentors impart their knowledge to the trainees and help them understand the concept of the learning program. Simulations and virtual environments are also alternative ways of training. Field trips and tours give employees the opportunity to experience situations away from the workplace as well. Training can also be delivered through e-learning, a method that enhances and supports learning process and provides a variety of learning applications (Milhem et al., 2014).

Job training has always played a significant role in the workplace. However, employee training is not a static industry; technology revolution advances and changes the work place continually and influence training. A digital environment in the workplace requires new specialized skills and leads to changes in the way employers train and employees learn. Although these technological changes require more time and energy to learning, they offer more efficient and effective training solutions. New ways of digital training have been adopted due to digital revolutions and they are gain popularity (“Employee training”, n.d.).

2.2 Training phases

The training process consists of several phases. During the first phase the company has to determine the company’s needs. Noe (2013) indicates that the training needs assessment phase is about the process of finding out if training is required. There is no point to implement a training program if current needs of the company do not require so. Training should be regarded as an investment and if the expected benefits are smaller than the cost, then the specific investment is bound to fail. The costs refer to the resources required to implement a program, to the labor hours that are lost since employees while being trained they do not perform their duties and of course to the possibility that a well trained employee might choose in the future to work in a competitor. In order for an organization to assess the needs for training, it should use several sources such as self assessments, company records, customer complaints, new technology, employee grievances and interviews with managers, customer satisfaction surveys and observation.

During the next phase, a training program suitable to the company’s needs is selected and organized. This is the most important phase to attend to pre-training conditions, training methods and post-training conditions (Ferreira, 2016).

In the third phase, the training program is delivered. Several training methods are being used such as lecture, case method, simulations, apprenticeship, internships, coaching and mentoring, discussions, games role playing, virtual reality and even video games. During the last years the training method of coaching has gained a significant popularity. Under the specific process, a trainer is assigned to provide emotional support to workers and to

change their professional mind set in a direction that promotes their personal development. Coaching has proved to be a significant motivational factor (Martin, Kolomitro & Lam, 2013).

During the last phase, the company evaluates the training program. The company should implement several approaches so as to determine the worth of the program. The success of the latter can be measured both in monetary and non monetary terms. According to Ferreira (2016), Kirkpatrick's famous evaluation framework includes four level of analysis: reaction of trainee, learning outcomes, behavior and results. The effectiveness of the evaluation will be facilitated by the following factors. Although the disadvantage of this method is that it is based on opinions which are subjective and not objective facts, opinion of the participants has to be derived, so that there is feedback for future improvements. Another way of evaluating the training program is through the assessment of the extent of learning. Several tests could also be administered by the company, so as to assess behavioral changes. The company should also proceed in benchmarking though the comparison with other companies.

2.3 Motivating and training

Motivation regulates a great extend human behavior and determine to how individuals are going to act. If people behave in certain ways, then there is a specific motive directing a certain type of behavior. The three basic components of motivation are; direction which refers to what a person is trying to do, effort which refers to how hard a person will try to accomplish the goals set and persistence which refers to the time a person will devote to reach his objective. The efforts made and the persistence depends on how strong a motive is (Kohn, 1993).

In order for employees to exhibit high performance according to the standards set by the company, they have to be properly motivated. Employee motivation represents the process through which a firm should motivate its personnel so that they are more productive and devoted to the company. Motives can take several forms, such as monetary benefits like salaries and bonuses and no monetary benefits such as respect, recognition or even potential for training effective leadership, which sometimes can be equally important.

Motivation represents the inner feeling which drives an employee either intentionally or unintentionally, to perform a job in the most efficient way because such an action provides him with the sense of pleasure and not because he is told to do so. No matter how disciplined an employee is, he will definitely be more productive and efficient if the working environment triggers positive feeling and thoughts (Kohn, 1993).

The motivation theories have been developed at the beginning of the previous century and attached significant weight to the human factor. Several of them have been developed to describe the factors that drive individual's motivation.

According to Maslow theory an individual has a hierarchy of needs where basic needs are located on the bottom of the pyramid of needs and as we move towards upper layers other needs also have to be fulfilled such as the need of recognition, security and self actualization (Wilson, 2019).

In Vroom's theory an individual is concerned not only with the relation between rewards and efforts but also with the probability that these efforts will pay off. For example, despite the employee's efforts, goals set might not be met due to unexpected circumstances. Therefore, an employee will be motivated to work harder if the accomplishment of the company's goals depends on his efforts and not on exogenous factors (Greenberg, 2013).

In the equity theory, the employee desires to be treated in a fair way compared to others. An employee wants to be rewarded according to his efforts. If another employee gets the same reward for a lower level of effort the injustice issues show up. The employee perceives that he has not been treated in a fair way and he is reluctant to work hard. Inequity arises also, when a person is convinced that the ratio of his outcome to his inputs compared to the ratio of other outcomes to other inputs is not fair. The outcome is not only related to the salary the employee gets, but to other factors as well such as respect, recognition, promotions, or evaluation of work ("Definition of equity theory", n.d.).

Herzberg theory states, that motivation can be decomposed into two factors such as hygiene factors and motivation factors. Hygiene factors are very significant but they do not strengthen motivation since they are taken for granted. Such factors refer to the company policies, supervision and relationship with colleagues and supervisors, remuneration, salaries and security. If these factors do not exist, then the employee will

have low motives, job satisfaction will be decreased and they will not put a lot of efforts. Motivating factors which are not taken for granted increase the employer's productivity and they refer to factors such as achievement factors, which provide the employee with the sense of achievement the nature of the job, the sense of responsibility or the potential for promotion (Bright, 2008).

As we mentioned before training represents the process through which people acquire new skills and competencies that will enable them to perform better in the working place. Companies have recognized the importance of training not only for upgrading the quality of the human capital but for offering also higher incentives to employees resulting in higher productivity (Sharma & Shirsath, 2014).

Training increases motivation for the following reasons: firstly, through training an employee's sense importance increase and he understands now that he is valuable for the organization. Through training the knowledge sharing process takes place since training can be conducted two or more persons. The atmosphere during the training process is less formal and participants feel relaxed, something which improves the learning procedure. The friendly and easygoing atmosphere that training prevails results in the creation of narrower bonds amongst the employees. A good working climate generally speaking is very important factor for a motivating working environment as well (Sharma & Shirsath, 2014).

A specific corporate culture develops, where employees now use the same language something which improves the cooperation amongst them resulting in efficiency improvements. Employees now are aware of the fact that they work in a strong organization with significant potential. Training boosts their self esteem since they know that after the training process they will have more skills suitable to the tasks they perform within the company. Training also permits employees to express themselves and gain more respect within the working environment and this in turn, enhances their confidence and commitment. It also facilitates the employee's orientation on the company as well, since during the training process an employee gets an overall picture of the company and will know from now on if he can pursue a more suitable to his skills career within the company. Most importantly the organization its self consists of a high quality human capital (Sharma & Shirsath, 2014).

Moreover, training promotes personal development since participants are encouraged to look for new information, study related articles and books and carry out presentations that require the collection of new data. Last but not least employees can be trained at the minimum cost. If they would have attended the same training programs outside from the company they might have bore a significant cost and this obviously increases their motivation (Sharma & Shirsath, 2014).

Generally speaking, training results in increased motivation which in turn leads to the followings:

- The employee is looking forwards to coming to his work
- The employee is actively and consciously contributing to the company he works in
- He gets more work done and is more creative
- He focuses his energy on the positive aspects of the business rather than the negative ones
- He reinforces the organizational culture
- He treats clients and colleagues with respect
- He serves as positive ambassador for other companies

2.4 Factors that determine the effectiveness of training

The implementation of a training program by its self does not guarantee the company's performance improvement. The specific program has at the same time to be successful. The best way to determine whether or not a training program is effective is to understand the basic reasons for which the training program was implemented at the first place. If the training purpose is not clearly defined prior to the beginning of training, then it will not generate the expected outcomes. Defining a valid need is necessary condition for a training program to succeed. Undoubtedly training is an important component in the training function but sometimes even more important is the way it is conducted so that effectiveness is maximized.

In this section we examine the factors which determine the effectiveness of a training program. Punia and Kant (2013), examine the factors that can render a training program more effective. According to the findings of their study, factors such as motivation, attitudes and emotional intelligence appear to be stronger factors than other ones.

Beigi and Shirmohammadi (2011), found that emotional intelligence training is a very important factor in improving the quality of services or in increasing the effectiveness of training. Therefore a company which offers services should implement emotional intelligence training since the service industry is closely linked to marketing and verbal communication.

A crucial factor of training effectiveness, may be one of the most important ones, is the transfer of training. The latter refers to the generalization of knowledge and skills learned in training on the job and the maintenance of the knowledge that has been acquired through time. The transfer of training activities can be classified into three phases which is before, during and after training which facilitates the entire process (Punia & Kant, 2013). Smith (2018), mentions several importance factors that determine the effectiveness and success of training. One factor is alignment of business objectives with the training program. Another factor is the creation of alliances and partnerships. The formation of the latter will facilitate the way managers communicate to employees the importance of training programs.

2.5 E-learning today

The significant advancements in technology and communications have resulted in the development of e-learning or e-training where training takes place from distance. E-learning represents a mean of education which embodies self motivation, communication, efficiency and technology. The isolation is an intrinsic element to the process and therefore participants should communicate with each other to exchange points of view. Distance is actually eliminated since the e-learning content is designed with media that can be accessed from properly equipped computer terminals and other kind of internet tools. The existing types of e-learning are based on means of communication, schedule, e-learning class structure and technology employed.

E-learning is applied in different perspectives such as distributed training, on line–distance e-learning and hybrid learning. It is defined as the use of information and communication technologies in diverse processes of education. In this case, information and communication technology is used as a complement to traditional classrooms or seminars in the case of job training where the physical presence of participants is required. According to an alternative definition, e-learning refers to the attainment and use of technology which is facilitated and distributed by electronic means (Maltz, Deblois & Educause current issues committee, 2005).

Businesses around the world address the need of training through the development of e-learning programs. The work force is gradually aging and businesses prepare to train and educate the new employees that will be hired. It has been estimated that more than 50 million workers in USA will have to be retrained so that new working demands are effectively met. Companies find very beneficial e-training programs since they are flexible and at the same time cost saving (Yang, 2013).

The learning environment represents a link between the learning and the area created for this purpose and it covers several elements such as the structure of contents, the control and the way of using these elements to promote the training process. Generally speaking, there is lack of studies with regard to the impact of the environment on the effectiveness of training. However factors which might not be important at the first place but actually are such as lighting source, brightness, color, angle, sound clarity and other sources of noise cannot be ignored. The impact of the environmental factor is measured based on the reaction of the trainees in level 1 in Kirkpatrick's model (Sanjeevkumar & Yanan, 2012).

E-learning exhibits several advantages since it is flexible when issues of time and place arise. Students and employees who use e-learning programs have the potential of choosing the place and time that suits them better. E-learning also enhances the efficiency of knowledge and qualification through the access to a significant amount of information. Another advantage is that it provides opportunities for relations amongst the learners who can exchange point of views in special forums. The examining process is also cost effective since students and learners are not obliged to travel in order to assist a class or a seminar. Additionally, e-learning takes into account differences amongst the learners and finally it takes into account that each learner has his own pace when it comes to knowledge assimilation and therefore there is not a need for participants to catch up if they lag in terms of knowledge compared to other participants (Tagoe, 2012).

The examining method exhibits however several disadvantages. Firstly, it might deteriorate the institution's socialization role and the role of instructors as well. Secondly, it might be less effective than the traditional teaching method since learners might be derived the potential to get to explanations and clarifications for several learning issues. Thirdly, when tests are conducted, the possibility of cheating rises significantly. Fourthly, the learner does not interact lively with other learners something which might weaken his motives. Finally, several subjects of studies might not be supported by e-learning programs (Tagoe, 2012).

3. Training in the public sector

3.1 Characteristics of the public sector

The primary purpose of public organizations is to provide goods and services to the society. Although they are autonomous or semi-autonomous corporations, in most cases they work under government's control and they implement government's plans and economic policies. Public organizations even though they are financed by the government, they arrange and manage their own finances (Agarwal, n.d.).

Public organizations have multiple objectives. These objectives are related to the service provision, optimal resource allocation and policy development. Public organization's purpose is not generating financial returns and this is the reason why many public entities run deficits. Its objective is to provide services and goods in an efficient way so that citizens' utility is maximized. Another objective is to conduct economic policies which will increase social welfare such as monetary and fiscal policies. The specific policies aim at economic growth, income redistribution and price stability (Conceptual Framework Task Force, 2011).

A major characteristic of the public sector is the public accountability. Governments are elected through a democratic process by citizens and have specific rights and responsibilities which translate into broad accountability to the public. By public accountability therefore, we mean that since government have been given delegated power through the election process to use public resources, it has to justify the actions of public organizations. Each government has the obligation to report back publicly for the discharge of responsibilities that affect the public. Therefore, a main government's responsibility is to report their actions within a public accountability framework (Conceptual Framework Task Force, 2011).

The government has several rights such as setting monetary policy, enforcing law, impose taxes, penalizing etc. Apart from rights, the government has also responsibilities such as conducting economic and social policy, reallocating resources to enhance social welfare,

delivering services and social goods like infrastructure, national defense, health and education. Government is also accountable for the transparent and effective use of the public recourses (Aggestam & Andernack, 2016).

With regard to human resources public sector is characterized by the lack of a relation between wages and productivity, the non competitive working environment, the absence of significant training opportunities, the bureaucratic environment and the lack of effective leadership. Nonappearance of strong motives for employees in the public sector stems from the limited potential for professional development (Camilleri, 2007).

A recent trend that has emerged over the last years across many countries is the development of e-government. The operation of the latter consists of the implementation of new technologies in public organizations. The aim of e-government is the improvement of democratic process within the public sector and at the same time its intention is to ensure that policies adopted benefit citizens (European commission, 2010).

The government should make sure that the benefits accrues to citizens from the use of information technologies are maximized. The benefits accrued to citizens refer to the improvement of the quality of public services, the increase of the operational efficiency of the public sector, the decline of bureaucratic procedures and the elimination of corruption incidents (European commission, 2010).

Effective electronic government implies a lot of benefits such as increased efficiency and savings to governments and businesses, increased transparency and increased participation of citizens in political life. Although ICT is widely used by government agencies, e-government is not just associated with the use of certain tools. It is linked to redesigning processes and changing attitudes so that public services are delivered to citizens in a more effective way. If e-government process operates smoothly, then interaction between the government and citizens and organizations will be carried out more easily. Additionally, significant cost savings are incurred. Cross border digital public services facilitate labor mobility as well. The European Commission is planning to create European interoperable platforms which will provide a common framework for citizens' electronic identity management and at the same time innovation will be promoted through funding large scale pilots ("e Government and digital public services", 2021).

3.2 The Greek public sector

The Greek public sector has been characterized by chronic inefficiencies hindering to some extent economic development. Amongst these deficiencies were huge deficits, inefficient allocation of resources, absence of a strategic plan, corruption, excess personnel, lack of a merit system, hire of under skilled employees, low productivity, high wages compared to productivity, little incentives for employees, lack of professional development for competent employees and lastly poor infrastructure of public organizations.

During the period 1950-1974 the Greek public sector rapidly expanded due to the development of a clientele relation between public and private companies and the necessity to implement economic policies that would result in high GDP growth. Obviously, the economic model adopted was not sustainable since the increase of GDP was not fueled by high investment activity but mainly by increase in public and private consumption. Additionally, the state intervention was higher than it was necessary (Manojlovic, 2011).

During the 80's several reforms were implemented aiming at modernization and increase of efficient. Salaries amongst different positions were reduced, seniority based promotions were introduced and strong labor unions were created. Despite the reforms made, there was still a huge potential for efficiency improvements. During the specific period wages were considered to be overrated, so the proportion of the wages to total public expenses increased, paving the ground for later budget deficits (Manojlovic, 2011).

During the 90's reforms were accelerated since Greece was preparing to enter the European Monetary Union. Public organizations introduced private business practices that resulted in efficiency improvements, the quality of public services was also improved and administration processes were simplified. A major reform that took place in 2001 was the regulation and constitutional guarantee of independence for five administrative agencies such as the Data Protection Authority, the National Council for Radio and Television, the Confidentiality of Communication Authority, the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection and the Ombudsman (Philippidou, Soderquist & Prastacos, 2005).

The break out of the crisis of 2010 revealed the deficiencies of the Greek public sector which had resulted in the accumulation of a high budget deficit. The necessity of fiscal convergence required the reform of the public sector. A major reform that took place was that of Kallikratis which changed the administrative division of the country. The goal of this reform was to reduce the high administrative costs incurred from the operation of public organizations and at the same time to align the administrative structure to the European standards. Additionally, the accessibility of citizens to local public agents was anticipated to improve (Manojlovic, 2011).

The Greek public sector management has to be governed by several major principles such as decrease of bureaucracy, the provision of services that aim at increasing customer satisfaction, the introduction of market mechanisms and the decentralization of management authority (Fitsilis, Kirytopoulos & Leopoulos, 2011).

3.3 The importance of training in the Greek public sector

The impact of globalization and the increased importance of knowledge has shaped a trend relating to life long learning and adult education. Our society has been transforming from industrial and agricultural society to information and knowledge society, motivating people to acquire as much knowledge as possible, so that they are regarded as competitive individuals. There is an emphasis on exploiting the spectrum of information, skills and ideas held by members of an organization while the significant developments in the information technologies have changes the way business processes are conducted.

Before the 80's it was common knowledge that public organizations were not concerned with the quality of public services but with just providing these services. A public organization perceived its self as hierarchically superior to the citizen and the increase of the satisfaction of the latter as mentioned earlier was not a concern. As time however passed, the idea of the civil service offering a service to the citizens came up giving rise to a new culture where now public services were most concerned with the citizens needs. Public employees had now to adapt to new challenges such as transparency of public operations and decisions, data protection, provision of information in citizen offices, and technological changes. Long serving employees, who were used to work in an entirely non

dynamic working environment, had now to improve their skills in order to effectively respond to these changes. Therefore, training programs of any kind were indispensable in every public organization (OECD, 1997).

Training in the public services until the 80's has been neglected. The necessity for the restructuring of public sector gave rise to the introduction of many training programs that were aiming at restoring to some extent at least the inefficiencies of public organizations. Additionally, there were changes with regard to the role of the government which from now on would have the responsibility of not only providing services but of providing services that would facilitate citizens. New approaches regarding the tasks of the civil service emerged. In order to serve the new objectives, the skills of public sector's employees had to be improved through training programs (OECD, 1997).

It was obvious that more flexibility was required when dealing with staff issues including training as well, where the training methods and topics many times failed to address the needs of the public organization. The introduction of New Public Management aimed at reforming the public sector and attached weight to the transfer of private management techniques to public organizations. After the 90's, there was a shift from public administration to management, in a period where the public sector was under the pressure of reducing government expenses and increasing efficiency (Black & Upchurch, 1999).

The significant technological, social and economic developments have changed global demands and public organizations cannot operate any longer in the way they used to. Nowadays, public organizations have to do the right things rather than doing things right. They have to remain dynamic and adjust to the latest developments. Public or government organizations face many new challenges and have to possess competent and skilled personnel. Therefore, professional development and life long learning opportunities should be available for all public employees so that they improve their productivity and in turn the performance of the organization.

In view of reforms that take place in the public sector, the training system has been also changing since public employees have to be trained in such a way, so that they cope with the new challenges. In 2011, the law 3979/2011 was voted and was referring to electronic government in Greece. According to this rule, all the public agencies are obliged to

maintain electronic protocols and documents while the electronic communication amongst the agencies is established (“eGovernment”, n.d.).

The basic goals of Greece national strategy with regard to e-government are the followings (“eGovernment”, n.d.).

- Provision of digital services to citizens and enterprises; that is services which are linked to the internet without requiring the physical presence of the citizen.
- The creation of such an environment, where digital communication will take place amongst managers of the public administration.
- The implementation of modern infrastructure and the creation of the appropriate framework where digital development will be feasible, both for citizens and companies.

Training and development programs are essential for every organization since that result in the improvement of the quality of human capital which represents a significant source of competitive advantage. The need for training is determined by the difference of actual performance from standard performance (Srimanarayanna, 2011).

The human resource department in every organization including public organizations has a central role since it performs activities such as planning, evaluating, rewarding, maintain employee engagement and training employees. Human resource department consider it appropriate and effective to run training programs for the employees on a regular basis so as to enhance and improve the quality of employees’ contribution to the organization. Growing presence of technology at workplace and modernization of equipment amplify the importance of training in public sector. Training helps public organizations to define their policies, to enhance their performance, to upgrade employees’ knowledge skills and to change their social behaviors (“Importance of Training & Development in the Public Sector”, 2019).

In addition, lifelong training of civil servants is important since after their recruitment they do not participate in any re-examining process which means that their skills and their performance are not systematically monitored. Finally, during the memorandum period, the reforms made in public sector could not be realized if they were not accompanied by a

series of trainings for civil servants, especially for those who are involved in financial services, in social security services, in health services etc. (Rammata, 2017).

The major area where the personnel gets training are soft skill development, problem solving techniques, interpersonal relationships, personality development, quality improvement programs, violence prevention programs, time management skills, goal setting, workplace safety etc. Training increases the employee's skills and at the same time it improves their attitude towards their work since they regard themselves as more active members of the company they work in (Srimanarayanna, 2011).

In addition, managers on the public sector do not usually rest on the skills they have acquired and the training programs they have attended. They engage at the same time in informal learning in order to keep up with the rapid developments that occur within the general environment. The decisions they take can be very crucial and complicated and therefore, the formula training they have received and the relevant skills acquired might be insufficient to lead to the optimal decisions. The position of a manager implies a great deal of responsibility and therefore he should regard training as a dynamic process where he should take initiatives to derive the latest information (Hager, 2004).

3.4 Training in the Greek public sector

The public sector in Greece has been significantly lagging in terms of efficiency compared to the private sector and has to go through a lot of transformation aiming at implementing management techniques that are applied in the private sector. The transformations have started taking place but still a lot has to be done until the desired levels of efficiency are accomplished. During the previous decades, public employee hiring in Greece was not based always on a merit system and therefore many of them possessed low skills.

Greek public sector has been accused several times for the poor level of education and training of its human resources. Lack of knowledge and skills reflect in civil servants' low performance and delays to upcoming developments. It is also a fact that public services do not make proper use of their human resources. There are public employees with high level education that work in positions that do not allow them to make use of their

knowledge and positions that require specific qualifications that are consisted of non specialized staff. Training in public sector can be characterized inadequate and create problems in the effective functioning of public administration (Tsakni, 2020).

According to the article 47 of law 2683/99, official training is every public employee's right. The state is obliged to ensure that civil servants are trained throughout their careers without regard to their sector, category or grade. Introductory training is compulsory and its intention is to familiarize the employee with his duties as a government official. Retraining in public or private entities is also compulsory and its purpose is the acquisition of specific necessary knowledge. Postgraduate training is also official training; it is carried out to local or foreign universities and leads to the acquisition of postgraduate degree or certification. Furthermore, the state permits public employees who are high school students, undergraduate and postgraduate students to take days off during their examinations (Christaki, 2019).

Institutions for continuous training of civil servants in Greece are the followings (Kourkoulou, 2018):

- a) Management of education of the Ministry of Interior which is responsible for the improvement of public employees' quality.
- b) Training units of Ministries which mission is to plan, organize and execute programs for the professional training in public entities with at least 600 organic positions of permanent employees with the cooperation of National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government.
- c) The school of Ministries which are educational centers that have been created by some ministries such as the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs etc. Their purpose is to educate specific categories of public servants such as tax technicians, judicial officers, diplomats etc.
- d) National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government.

The national strategic agent for the development of government employees is the National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government. It was founded in 1983 and is supervised by the minister of Interior. Its vision is to contribute to the development of an effective administration and its mission is to upgrade skills of government human

resources through certified training and life-long education, and modernize public sector (EKDDA, 2019).

National School of Public Administration and Local Government is a very competitive educational unit of National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government which aim is to create skilled and qualified public employees. Entrance exams are carried out once a year and the duration of the educational procedure is 18 months. Students of the school after their graduation are being employed as executive officers in public sector (EKDDA, 2019).

A significant public agent of National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government involved with public employees training is its Training Institute. It is an organization that implements life-long and certified training actions upgrading the human resources of public sector and ensuring high quality of services for citizens. The specific agent aims at training public employees that have just been hired and public employees that already operate their duties in public organizations. The training programs implemented, attempt to help public employees today's modern administrative reality and the challenges the public sector envisages with the new public management framework. The main subjects that the examining educational institute covers are public administration & governance, information science & digital services, economy & fiscal policy, human rights & social policy, sustainable development and cultural & tourist development (EKDDA, 2019).

Training Institute's scientific staff communicates with the General and Special Secretaries of the Ministries in order to clarify general needs and education policies of public sector. After the detection of civil servants' training needs, Training Institute plans and organizes the training programs, implements them and at the end of the training process the trainees are examined on the subjects they were taught in order to determine the degree of assimilation of knowledge and skills they acquired during the program. Finally, the trainees evaluate the content of the program, the trainers and the educational procedure (Tzineri, 2014).

The training program of the agent of Training Institute has been constructed on the basis of several directions such as the detection of problems when it comes to administration actions, to the reinforcement of the new management changes, the simplification of the

administrative processes, the introduction of a merit effective system of public employees evaluation, the high responsiveness to social needs, the employees' productivity assessment and the effective implementation of new technologies in the services provision to citizens in view of the e-government prospects (Terzidis & Tzortzakis, 2004).

Through its programs, the Training Institute contributes to the improvement of the public administration from every aspect; to the public administration's high responsiveness to existing needs, to the promotion of economic development and to the country's improvement of image abroad (Terzidis & Tzortzakis, 2004).

Furthermore, National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government through its Institute for Research Documentation and Innovation emerges as a public information and data portal by evaluating researches, studies and international trends related to the operation of public administration (Papagianni, 2018).

Besides Training Institute of National School of Public Administration and Local Government, learning programs for civil servants are also being implementing by University of Athens and other institutes and organizations. Furthermore, several public employees are interested in improving their level of education by attending undergraduate and postgraduate programs of Hellenic Open University.

It is worth mentioning that e-government and digital transformations of the public administration have brought changes to education in public sector. Digitalization of public sector was inevitable especially in a period where citizens could not afford visiting public organizations due to health crisis. This transformation should advance at a more rapid rate and necessary prerequisite is the provision of training to public employees who generally are not familiarized with new technologies.

Precondition for the digital transformation of the public administration is the improvement civil servants' digital skills. The purposes of e-government and digital transformation are the electronic service of the citizens, the simplification of procedures and the central system of electronic document management. Ministry of Digital Governance has already proceeded with the reactivation of National Alliance for Digital Skills which is a part of the wider European digital skills strategy. The project of developing digital skills requires cooperation of public administration; Ministry of Interior cooperates with the National School of Public Administration and Local Government and with other relative

educational institutions of public and private sector in order to upgrade public employees' digital skills. The aim is to ensure that training in the public sector is in line with the National Digital Skills Framework and the Digital Transformation Bible which include the strategy of digital transformation of the public administration. The above collaborations will lead to a common framework for the design and implementation of training in the public sector. The idea is to provide basic and specialized certified levels of digital skills per category and industry. In particular, the aim is to use and promote digital use and technologies, to develop cyber security services, to use operational intelligence in decision making and develop a digital service model and a mechanism for data protection. The way of planning training actions will be harmonized with the evaluation of the needs and will be implemented in different forms of education such as modern, mixed, asynchronous and life education ("Digital skills and competences", 2020).

3.5 Surveys on training in the Greek public sector

At this point let's examine key findings of several researches regarding training in the Greek public sector.

Christaki (2019), examined the views of the Greek judicial clerks about training and education. She investigated and presented the type of introductory training, the number of training educational programs, the benefit of these programs for judicial clerks, their educational needs and other information relating to this issue. For the purpose of her analysis she distributed an electronic questionnaire to a total of 335 judicial clerks. According to the results of the study, most of the participants were satisfied from the introductory training programs which amongst other facilitated their adjustment to their new working environment. Although the majority of them have attended only in 1-2 training programs, there was a satisfactory transfer of knowledge and skills acquired in the workplace. Results showed that they were informed about the programs through their organization, the internet and from their colleagues. A larger participation was observed in the mandatory programs and their attendance in them contributed to the improvement of their efficiency. Training subjects associated with technology of information and communication were found to be the most useful ones. Almost everyone agreed that they

should be asked about their educational needs before designing a program. Furthermore, judicial officers who have attended 3-4 or 5 training programs considered that their efficiency had improved to a great extent and that they had transferred more knowledge to their workplace compared to those who had attended 1-2 training programs. Finally, they consider e-training and continuous training to be very important.

Rougka (2019), investigated how satisfied from training programs were public employees in the organization of EFKA in the region of Epirus, if the knowledge they derived was useful and whether they believed that the training programs are helpful in the performance of their duties. According to the results of the study, the employees were not satisfied from the training programs and the programs' content, while the knowledge they derived was useful for general purposes but create a very poor link to the duties they performed. Most of them believed that training helped their job performance and fewer of them that helped their career development. An inhibiting factor is the distribution of the educational centers only in big cities such as Athens and Thessaloniki and the fact that the educational programs are not enough and do not include a wide range of educational programs.

Papagianni (2018), examines training issues regarding the public agent of Court of Auditors. Her research questions were about the frequency of training programs, whether these programs were mandatory and targeted and their colleagues' opinion about the employee evaluation. According to the findings of the research, while most of the employees have attended more than 4 programs they were not satisfied by the frequency of the training seminars although these programs were quite beneficial to them. Moreover, most of her colleagues observed increase of their efficiency after attending training programs and they said that the incentives provided to attend training programs were relatively weak.

Antonakos (2017), attempted to investigate the views of employees of the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government with regard to training and education issues and additionally the role of the evaluation of employees in the public sector. According to the results of the study, employees strongly desire to participate in training seminars and they believe that training in job can be very effective training method. They all agreed in the necessity of life long learning and in the fact that training programs improved their efficiency in their work and their professional skills. There is also a statistically significant correlation between age and satisfaction from the time of training

with respondents older than 55 years old showing lower satisfaction compared to other age groups. Moreover the participants were satisfied by the training and educational services but not satisfied from the evaluation techniques.

Kourkoulou (2018), attempted to investigate the views of judicial staff of Dodecanese prefecture with regard to the training needs aiming at identifying the points deemed necessary for further enhancing their knowledge through appropriate training programs. According to the findings of study, training programs in the particular public organization are very important since many public employees lack significant skills which can significantly improve through these programs. Though training programs can cover plenty of needs they are not attended on a frequent basis, 60,5% of those who responded answered that they have not participated in them at all while those who have attended they have participated mainly in programs of National Center for Public Administration and Local Government. Referring to the content of the training program almost a quarter have attended programs on e-government. They said that the reasons for not attending training programs frequently are the understaffing and the fact that they do not have sufficient time due to high work load, the lack of information and the long distance from institutions. They also believed that the biggest motivating factor for participating in such programs is the personal interest for learning and that training programs provide opportunities for career development. Regarding the importance of training programs 50% of the respondents consider them very important and stronger incentives should be created so that employees are more willing to attend them since motive referring to personal will for education is not enough.

4. The organization of e-EFKA

4.1 The organization of e-EFKA

The single agency for social insurance in Greece known as EFKA was found in 1/1/2017. The examining organization has integrated the main social insurance funds and acquired all their relevant features. The main goal of EFKA was to jointly provide insurance contributions, pensions and benefits. Since the implementation of the law 4387/2016 plenty of ministerial decrees were issued in order to provide additional changes necessary for the effective function of the organization. The foundation of EFKA apart from representing a major reform meant also an outstanding success for the social security system in Greece (EFKA, 2018).

The unified social security fund has a Head Office in Athens and network of roughly 350 local offices through out Greece, offering services mainly to its secured members who belong to the labor force and to the members who have retired due to ageing. Since it is a government institution, it has to comply with the public sector's frame of rules and obligations (EFKA, 2018).

The organization is not characterized by full effectiveness since delays, shortcomings and errors are observed frequently causing the dissatisfaction of citizens. With regard to the organization structure, the integration of the previous funds and the accrue of benefits to all citizens provide a framework through which the fragmented and socially unfair system of social insurance that currently prevails and causes inefficiencies will be significantly improved.

EFKA's vision is to develop a modern organization that will be delivering efficient and of decent quality public services to citizens with no discrimination. This will be achieved through a well-managed network of local offices accompanied with well trained and supported personnel. Specifically, EFKA's strategic plan consists of updating the management systems, of evaluating the current IT systems, of reinforcing the control

systems and of improving the quality of services provided so that a trust worthy relation is established between the citizens and the organization (EFKA, 2018).

The personnel had to be distributed according to the needs of each unit and the organization desires for the future is to employ technologies that are user friendly. The organization aims at implementing the law on pensions and benefits and at providing to applicants with their correct entitlements in an efficient and professional way. The way EFKA functions, guarantees that the organization promotes the public interest, under the fundamental principles of equality and justice (EFKA, 2018).

Furthermore, in the era of e-government and according to the law 4670/2020, in 1/03/2020 EFKA was renamed e-EFKA which completed the administrative and organizational integration of security agents. The most important development of this digital transformation is the potential of citizens to have electronic access on the services delivered something which implies that no physical presence is required. In case the individual has limited access to digital services which happens frequently, he will still be able to visit a local office with his physical presence so that he covers his needs. With the creation of e-EFKA, services will be delivered with speed, in a simple and effective way while bureaucratic procedures will gradually be eliminated. Moreover, new technological application will be introduced and citizens will have a better access to the services. The services will be targeted on the customer and all the information needed will be available on e-EFKA's website. Another change refers to the integration and digitalization of social funds. The operation of the social security agent as e-EFKA will result in the saving up of funds which will now be directed for social security purposes. Economies of scale will be generated from the integration of several operations while at the same time the quality of services will further improve ("Genika gia ton e-EFKA", 2020).

The mission of e-EFKA is the creation of an exemplary, effective and sustainable model of social security based on the social maximization welfare and on the equality principles.

By carrying out a SWOT analysis we can make the following remarks;

- The strong points refer to the experienced and dedicated staff, the support of the state, the value of its property, the symmetrical geographical distribution of the units which results the efficient provision of services, the high quality of human

capital, the simplification of internal procedures and the physical and web presence

- The weak points are associated with the complex legislation, the reduced autonomy, the obsolete information systems, the lack of an effective strategy and the lack of a complete IT system
- The organization can exploit opportunities such as experience from abroad, funding from the European Union and economies of scale which can ensure the viability of the insurance system
- The threats the organization faces refer to the rivalry from the private sector's insurance companies and the unstable economic and political climate.

The working environment of e-EFKA is characterized, by the employees currently working, as downgraded. The work load is high since during the last years many employees were transferred to other organizations or retired and there is currently a lack of personnel. Another problem is the ageing of its personnel since only 300 employees are below 50 which means that employees lack innovative ideas and few of them have poor motives to develop within the company since they are on the verge of retirement. Younger people who join the organization are rather disappointed at the first place since they find conditions that are not compatible with a modern working environment. What is encouraging for them is that they can easily get a promotion since they outperform older employees in terms of academic qualifications. Additionally, there is poor communication between managers and employees. It is also not uncommon for tensions to arise amongst the employees due to the pressuring conditions of work. Many employees and particularly those that serve citizens work under pressure and apart from the difficulties associated with the nature of their work they deal with the citizens complaints who want to be served the fastest possible. Another element of the working environment is the high bureaucratic procedures something which however characterizes all Greek organizations and obviously increases inefficiencies. Finally, many departments are equipped with out of date computers causing in this way a lack of appropriate resources for employees.

4.2 Training in e-EFKA

At this point let's examine the training programs e-EFKA implements to improve the quality of its human capital. Employees who have just been hired are obliged to attend an introductory education which takes place in National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government and it is implemented by its Training Institute. The seminar should take place in the first two work years and the attendance is a prerequisite for employees to gain admittance in the organization. This 35-hour education program aims at equipping newly appointed employees with the knowledge on issues such as state organization, application of e-governance, promotion of the principles of legality and transparency and social security services. When seminar is completed and after passing the exams a certificate of attendance is awarded to participants (Egyklios EFKA 23, 2019).

Training Institute prepares and implements life-long trainings actions at all development levels of the public administration human resources. Its training programs are not only designed for employees who have just started entered an organization. Employees of e-EFKA can choose up to two different training programs of the training institute per period; September-December and January-July and up to three training programs per year. After submitting an application at least one month before the beginning of the training, they can participate in programs such as public administration and governance, human rights and fiscal policy, information science and digital development (Egkyklios EFKA 22, 2019).

E-EFKA attaches significant weight on life long learning and claims that employees should receive constant training so that the quality of services improves and citizen satisfaction increases. To fulfill this purpose, e-EFKA has been organizing e-programs which are designed for managers that work in branches in 13 different parts of Greece. The programs aim at improving personnel's skills. The specific programs cover certain areas associates with the daily operation of e-EFKA, duties of managers such insurance up dating, maternal benefits, techniques that contribute to a more effective communication with citizens, award of pensions, management of information technologies, management of warning etc. During 2020, almost 100 training programs were implemented by the organization and other institutes and more than 2.150 employees participated in them (Pagonis, 2021).

The organization also cooperates with several educational institutions to motivate employees to attend training programs and acquire skills that will enhance their productivity. To be more specific, it finances the 50% of the tuition fees for managers who participate in the postgraduate program of accounting and finance in the University of West Attica (Deltia Typou EFKA, 2018).

Recently, the organization has been intensifying its training programs since it faces the challenge of the insurance funds integration. Moreover, the human resource department desires to create a list of trainers who work in the organization and therefore are more aware of the organization's daily operations compared to outside trainers. Through these programs the organizations management will have the chance to detect employees who have the skills and competencies required for a trainer. When an employee will be evaluated to be qualified as a trainer, several elements will be taken into consideration such as his academic background, his skills associated with the nature of the work, his teaching experience, how familiarized he is with technology application and e-learning techniques, his potential to transfer knowledge, his personality, his awareness of the latest developments concerning the organization and his research experience. If an employee is selected as a trainer he will not neglect his other duties, meaning the duties related to training will be complementary ("EFKA epistrofi sta thrania", 2017).

Although the agent of e-EFKA is generally willing to provide training programs, as an employee of the organization, I would say that several problems arise before the beginning of these programs. The latter have to be approved by the managers, who often show skepticism on the grounds of high workload since employees while being trained they do not perform their duties. Moreover, when these training programs take place away from employee's place of residence, the organization bear the cost of transportation and attendance of the courses, something which triggers complaints and dissatisfaction to e-EFKA administrative office. Furthermore, management shows a preference to training programs that entirely concern the organization and are relevant to the nature of their job rather than training programs that providing general knowledge. Judging by my participation in training programs, I would say that the organization doesn't discourage employees to develop their skills, neither encourages them though.

Furthermore, according to my experience, learning in the workplace while you are working is the most popular way of training in e-EFKA, since there is immediate feedback

about what employees are learning but most importantly they do not have to leave their workstation to take a course and they remain available and productive in the workplace. An experienced employee or a manager is executing the role of the trainer who very often doesn't have enough time to play this role alongside his own job. During the training, trainee is familiarized with the working environment and faces the challenges that occur during the performance of the job. The main aim is to make as much progress as possible, as quickly as possible. The disadvantage is that besides the acquisition of practical skills quickly and easily, acquisition of associated background knowledge is also very important.

5. Methodology

5.1 Introduction

In the present methodology we are going to examine several issues associated with training in the public sector. The organization we are interested in is that of e-EFKA. We are interested in examining issues such as satisfaction from training methods in e-EFKA, the frequency of training, the effectiveness of training etc.

The research questions are the followings:

- Is the satisfaction derived from training programs high?
- Which is the most important benefit generated from the training programs?
- Does training represent a strong motivating factor?
- Do public employees find training for e-government useful?
- Does the educational level affect satisfaction from training?
- Does working experience affect satisfaction from training?

5.2 Selection of a research tool

To answer these questions we are going to conduct a quantitative analysis. The experimental tool used will be that of the questionnaire. A questionnaire is used primarily in sample research, experimental research and other methods of observation (Babbie, 2011).

The latter has plenty of advantages since it can be sent to many people, not many resources are required, the participants can easily express their opinion since direct communication exists, the methods through which the content of the questionnaire are analyzed are standardized, the researcher does not have the potential to affect the answer the participants give and finally the entire process does not require plenty of time. The questionnaire as a quantitative tool has several disadvantages since the participant cannot

answer in a clear way to open questions and the way questions are answered is specific (Omar, 2012).

A questionnaire consists of open end and closed end questions. The advantages of open end questions are that answers can be characterized by spontaneity, there is opportunity to probe and they are useful for testing hypothesis about idea. The disadvantages are that they are time consuming, very costly and demand more effort from the respondents. The advantages of closed questions are that they are useful for testing hypothesis, no extended writing is required and they are easy to process. The disadvantages are that they may irritate respondents and there is bias in answer categories (Omar, 2012).

According to White (2017) academic and non-academic literature can help you establish the importance of your study and come up with ideas for research. Research questions of this survey and consequently the questionnaire were created based on the theoretical review carried out in the previous chapters. The aim was to cover all aspects of the research topic and questions were adapted to the objectives of the research. The questionnaire had to be presented with clarity, coherence and brevity so as respondents do not get tired. A pilot application followed in order to determine its effectiveness. The questionnaire was sent to five employees of e-EFKA on a trial basis, so as to measure the degree of understanding the questions and the time required to answer them.

The questionnaire (which is presented on Appendix) was distributed mainly to employees in e-EFKA in Athens also in Xanthi, in Trikala, in Arta, in Drama, in Mytilene and in Heraklion. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed for completion and 82 of them were returned. Therefore there was a response rate of 82%. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants on line and off line, 76 of them filled the form using digital media and 6 of them answered to the questionnaire in the traditional way of gathering answers through one to one interaction. The electronic questionnaire was designed through researcher's personal account and Google form. The electronic questionnaire was chosen because it covers a geographically extended area, it ensures speed ness and the researcher receives the answers electronically and in real time to a spreadsheet and to an excel file.

The sampling procedure was not completely random since participants answered on a voluntary basis and a few of them refused to answer for their own reasons. Therefore, a few people were excluded from the entire process. The sampling process would be

completely random if from all the employees available 100 would be selected randomly. The sample is large enough to draw statistical conclusions since it is much larger than 30.

The questionnaire comprises of the following parts. In the first part the demographic characteristics are presented such as gender, educational level and working experience. In the second part questions from 1 to 3 refer to the level of satisfaction and the components of satisfaction. Question 4 refers to frequency of the conducts of the training sessions while questions 6, 7, 8, 10, 13 refer to the quality of the training programs. Question 14 refers to the biggest benefit derived from the training programs while questions 11 and 12 refer to productivity issues. Finally, question 5 and 9 refer to e learning and e government issues respectively.

Most of the questions included in the questionnaire are of closed Likert type where a score from 1 until 5 is attributed. 1 corresponds to not at all/never, 2 corresponds to a little/rarely, 3 corresponds to I am not sure/from time to time/indifferent, 4 corresponds to enough/often and 5 corresponds to a lot/very often. Close ended questions are more popular in sampling than open-ended questions because they offer great homogeneity (Babbie, 2011).

5.3 Data analysis

To answer research questions 1, 2, 3, 4 we are going to use descriptive statistics. We are going to estimate the mean and standard deviation of the score included in the answers and we are going also to plot the graphs which show how the answers are distributed.

To answer research questions 5 we are going to use ANOVA analysis. We are going to classify participants in three groups according to their educational level (secondary school, university degree and Master degree) and then we are going to make the following test:

$$H_0 : m_1 - m_2 = 0, m_2 - m_3 = 0 \text{ and } m_1 - m_3 = 0$$

$$H_1 : \text{At least one difference is different from zero}$$

m_1 refers to the average satisfaction of participants from secondary school having no other degrees,

m_2 refers to the average satisfaction of participants who have a university degree and

m_3 refers to the average satisfaction of participants who have a Master's degree.

The above hypothesis will be tested with the F test. If F-statistic is smaller than the F_{crit} 5% level of significance we do not reject the null hypothesis while if it is larger we reject it.

To answer to the last research question we are going to use ANOVA analysis as well. We are going to categorize participants in three groups according to their working experience (0-5 years, 5 – 10 years and More than 10 years) and then we are going to make the following test:

$H_0 : m_1 - m_2 = 0, m_2 - m_3 = 0 \text{ and } m_1 - m_3 = 0$

H_1 : At least one difference is different from zero

m_1 refers to the average satisfaction of participants who have 0 – 5 years of working experience,

m_2 refers to the average satisfaction of participants who have 5 -10 years of working experience and

m_3 refers to the average satisfaction of participants who have more than 10 years of working experience.

The above hypothesis will be tested with the F test. If F-statistic is larger than the F_{crit} 5% level of significance, then the null hypothesis will be rejected.

6. Results

6.1 Results of demographic characteristics

Gender:

	Frequency	% Frequency	Cumulative % Frequency
Female	63	76,83	76,83
Male	19	23,17	100,00
Total	82	100,00	

Table 1 Frequency of participants' gender

As we observe most of the participants are female.

Educational level:

	Frequency	% Frequency	Cumulative % Frequency
Secondary school	30	36,59	36,59
University degree	31	37,80	74,39
Master degree	21	25,61	100,00
Total	82	100	

Table 2 Frequency of participants' educational level

We observe that the percentages are relatively evenly distributed amongst the different educational levels. Although a smaller percentage of the respondents have a Master's degree besides a university degree, the overall percentage with higher educational level is quite high.

Working experience:

	Frequency	% Frequency	Cumulative % Frequency
0-5	1	1,22	1,22
5-10	26	31,71	32,93
More than 10	55	67,07	100,00
Total	82	100	

Table 3 Frequency of participants' working experience

The majority of the respondents work more than ten years in the organization of e-EFKA. Only 1,22% of the respondents are newly appointed and 31,71% of them have 5-10 years working experience.

6.2 Results of Questions 1-14

Question 1. Are you satisfied from your training programs?

The first question concerns satisfaction from training programs and is strongly related to the importance of the topic. The results are going to give us conclusions relevant to the first research question.



Figure 1 Frequency of satisfaction from training programs

Mean = 2,01, Std. Dev. = 0,80, N=82.

We observe that the mean is quite low and 57,32% of the respondents derived low satisfaction from the training programs. Only 12,20% of them were satisfied enough while none of them was satisfied a lot. Not at all answered 26,83% of the respondents and 3,66% were indifferent about the subject of the question.

Question 2. Are you satisfied from the content of training?

Second question refers also to the components of satisfaction since it examines the content of the training programs.

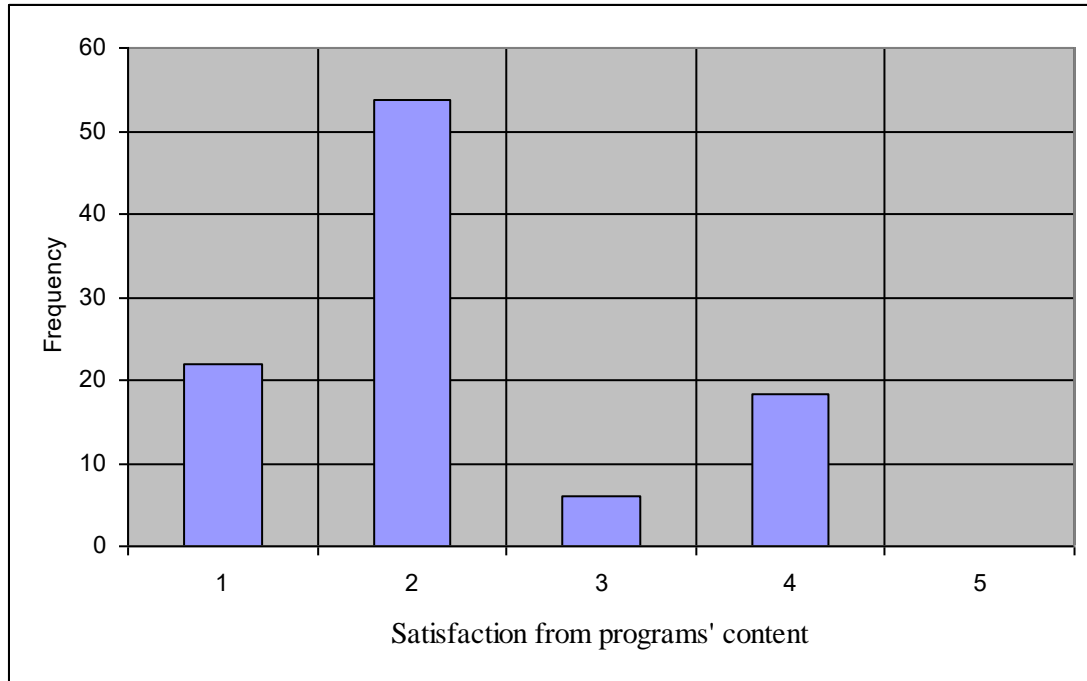


Figure 2 Frequency of satisfaction from programs' content

Mean = 2,21, Std. Dev = 0,98, N=82.

The mean is relatively low and according to [Figure 2](#) 53,66% of the participants derived low satisfaction from the content of the training programs they have attended, 21,95% were not satisfied at all, 6,10% were indifferent, and only 18,29% were satisfied enough while none of them was satisfied a lot.

Question 3. Are you satisfied from your trainers?



Figure 3 Frequency of satisfaction from trainers

Mean = 2,93, Std. Dev = 1,65, N=82.

The mean is relatively low and according to [Figure 3](#) the percentage of almost 35,37% of the respondents was enough satisfied from the trainers while 3,66% of them were satisfied a lot. A percentage of 13,41% was not satisfied at all, 29,27% derived little satisfaction and 18,29% were indifferent.

Question 4. How often do you attend training programs?

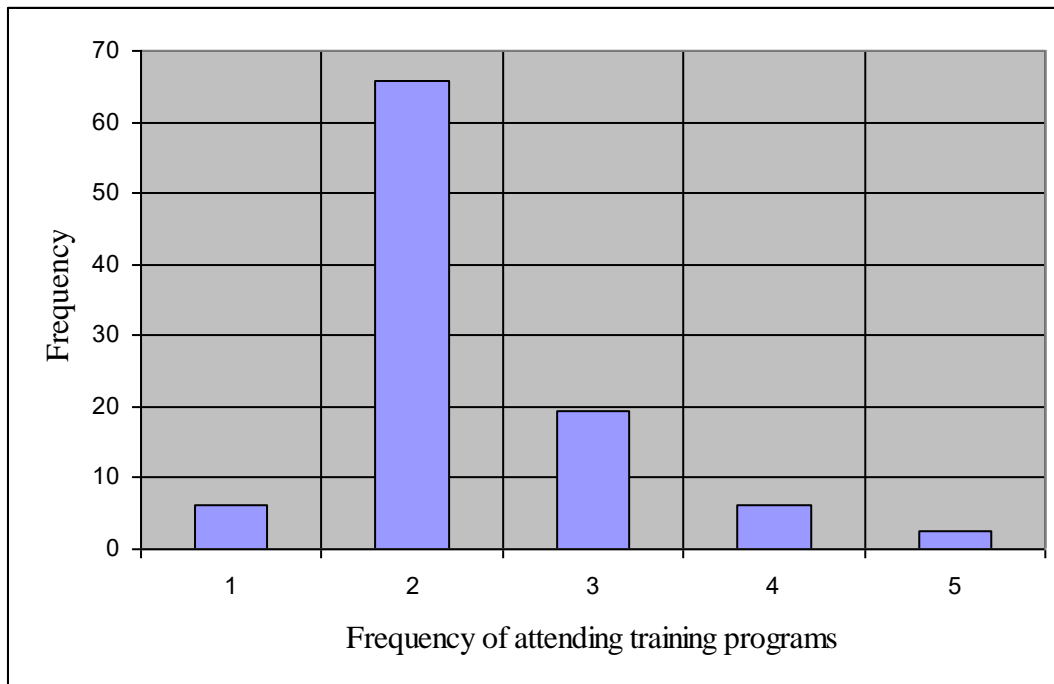


Figure 4 Frequency of attending training programs

Mean = 2,33, Std. Dev = 0,62, N=82.

As we observe the mean is quite low and according to [Figure 4](#) only a percentage of 2,44% attends regularly training programs while 6,10% attends often. A percentage of 65,85% attends rarely and 6,10% of them have never attended. Finally, 19,51% of the respondents answered that they attend training programs from time to time.

Question 5. Would you have attended more training programs if they had been e-learning programs?

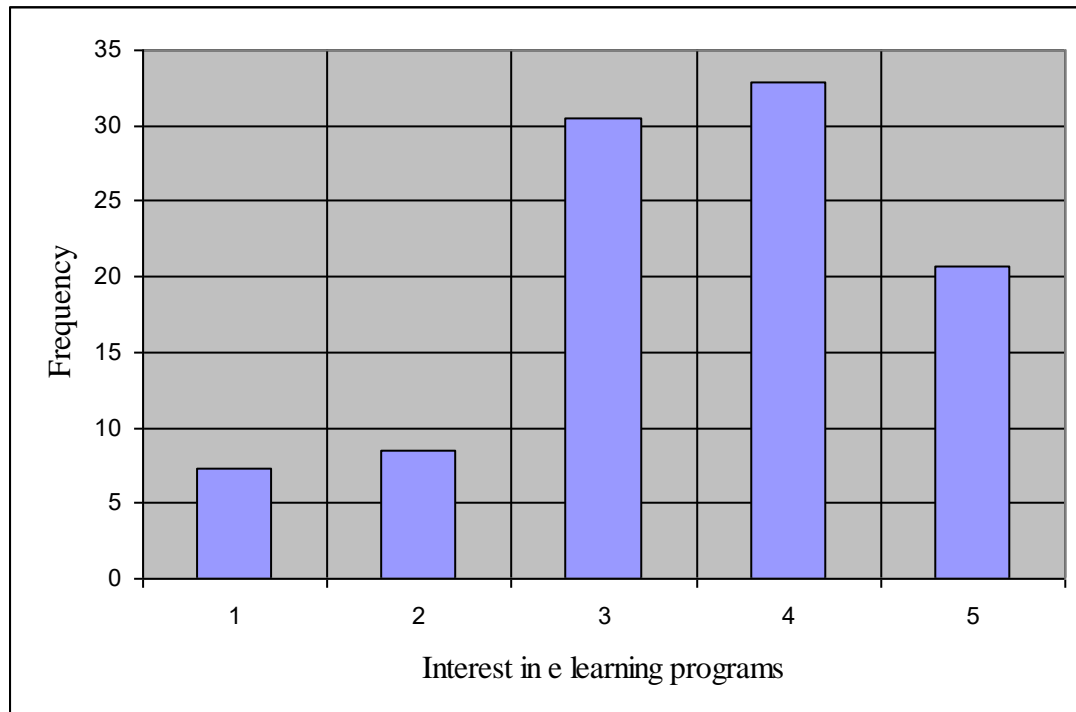


Figure 5 Frequency of interest in e-learning programs

Mean = 3,51, Std. Dev = 1,29, N=82.

The mean is normal and 32,93% would have attended regularly programs if the latter were of e-learning nature. A percentage of 20,73% would have attended a lot, 30,49% answered that they are not sure, 8,54% would have attended a little, while 7,32% would have attended the same as usual.

Question 6. Was the content of training difficult to understand?

This question refers to the quality of the training programs.

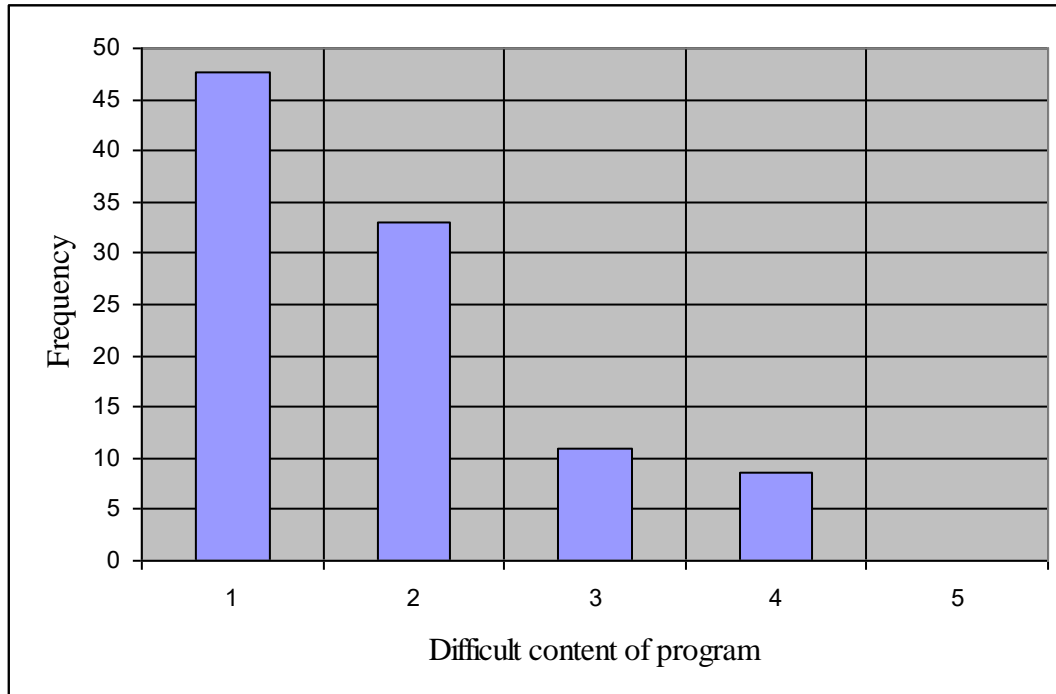


Figure 6 Frequency of difficulty in training programs' contents

Mean = 1,80, Std. Dev = 0,90, N=82.

The mean is quite low and 8,54% of the participants find the content of the training difficult to understand while none of them finds it a lot difficult. A percentage of 47,56% did not find it difficult at all, 32,93% find it a little and 10,98% are not sure about the difficulty of the programs..

Question 7. Are training programs related to the nature of your work?

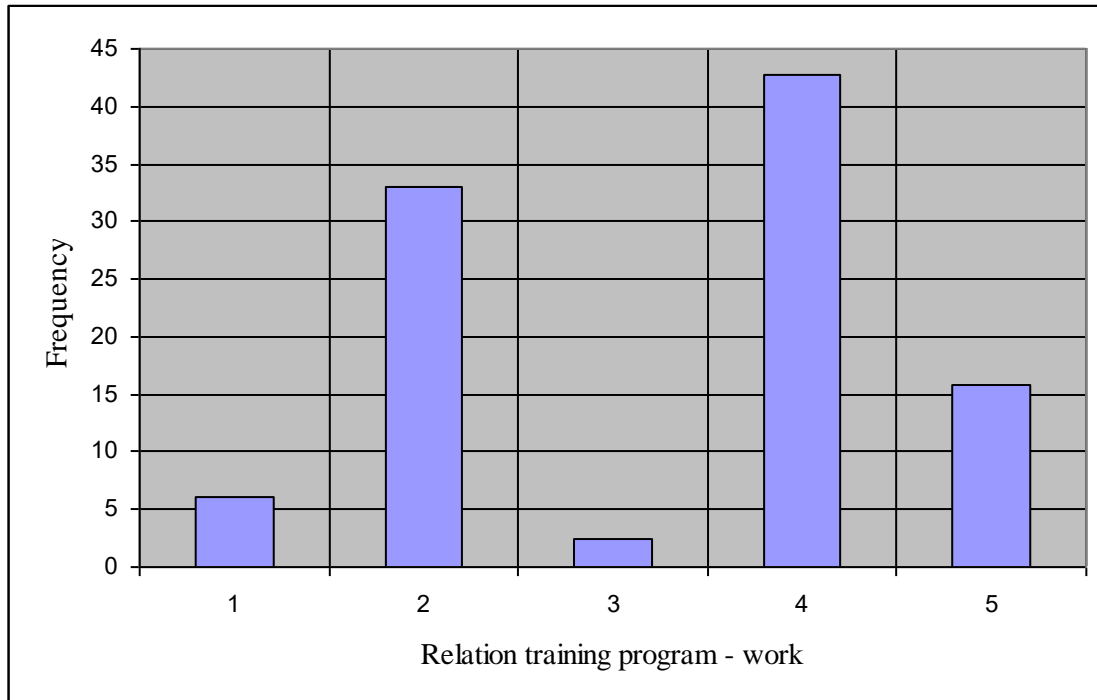


Figure 7 Frequency of relation between training program and nature of work

Mean = 3,29, Std. Dev = 1,57, N=82.

The mean is relatively high and the percentage of about 42,68% agrees that the training programs are enough related to the nature of the work while 32,93% answered that is related a little, according to [Figure 7](#). A percentage of 15,85% declared that there is strong relation between training programs and work while 6,10% said that there is no relation at all and 2,44% are not sure.

Question 8. Training programs have improved your skills.

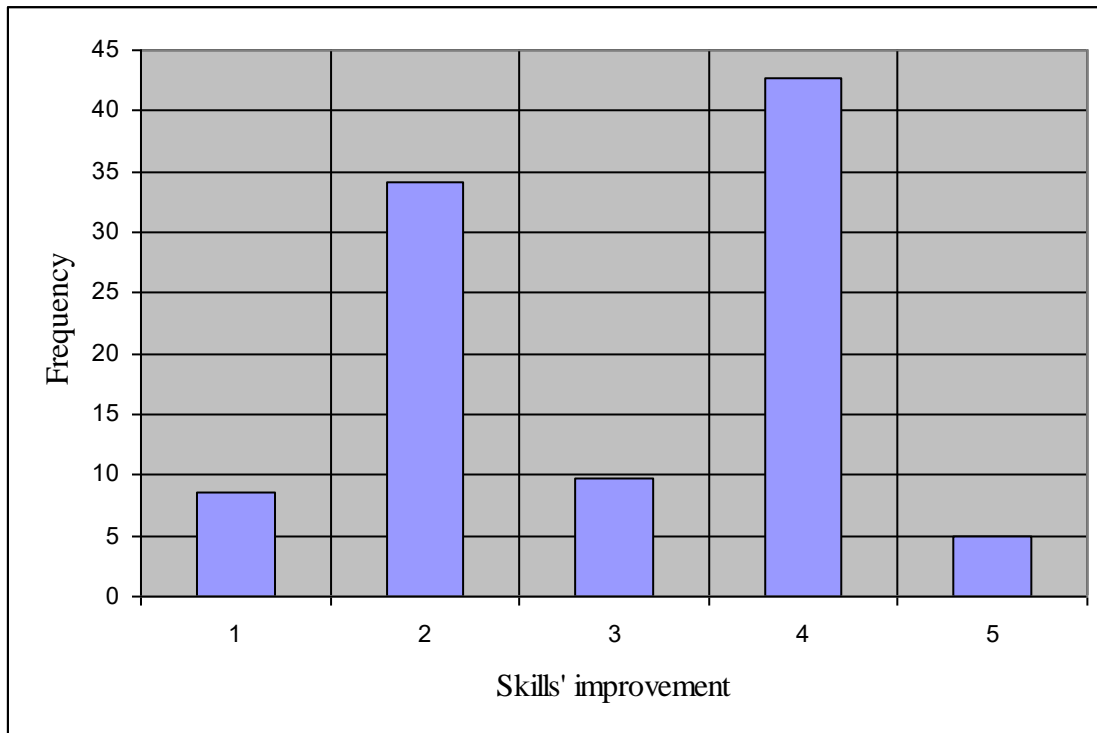


Figure 8 Frequency of skills improvement

Mean = 3,01, Std. Dev.= 1,32, N = 82.

The mean is normal while a percent of 4,88% of the respondents mention that the training programs improved their skills to a big extent, 42,68% that their skills improved enough while 34,15% said that they improved a little. A percentage of 9,76% is not sure and 8,54% did not notice any improvement at all.

Question 9. How useful it would be a training program about e-government?

The results of this question are of great importance since they are going to give us answers to one of the research question.

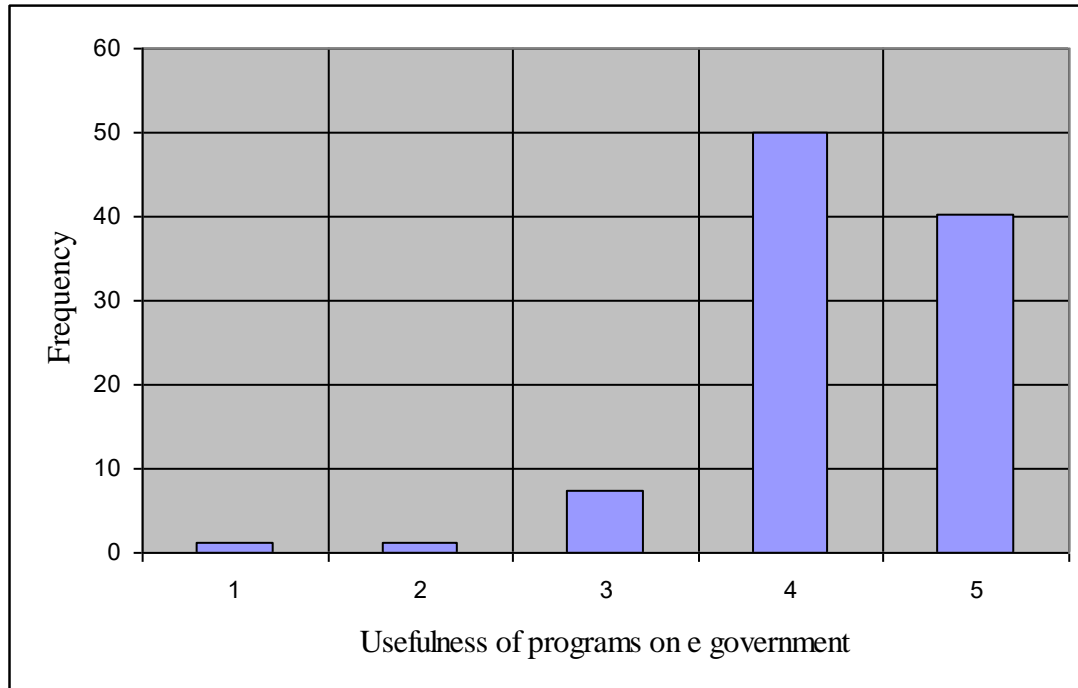


Figure 9 Frequency of usefulness of training programs on e-government

Mean = 4,27, Std. Dev = 0,56, N=82.

Percentages of 50% and 40,24% find e-government programs useful enough and a lot respectively. A percentage of 7,32% is not sure while 1,22% find them a little useful and 1,22% not useful at all. Overall, more than 90% find training programs about e-government useful.

Question 10. Did the training programs improve your productivity?

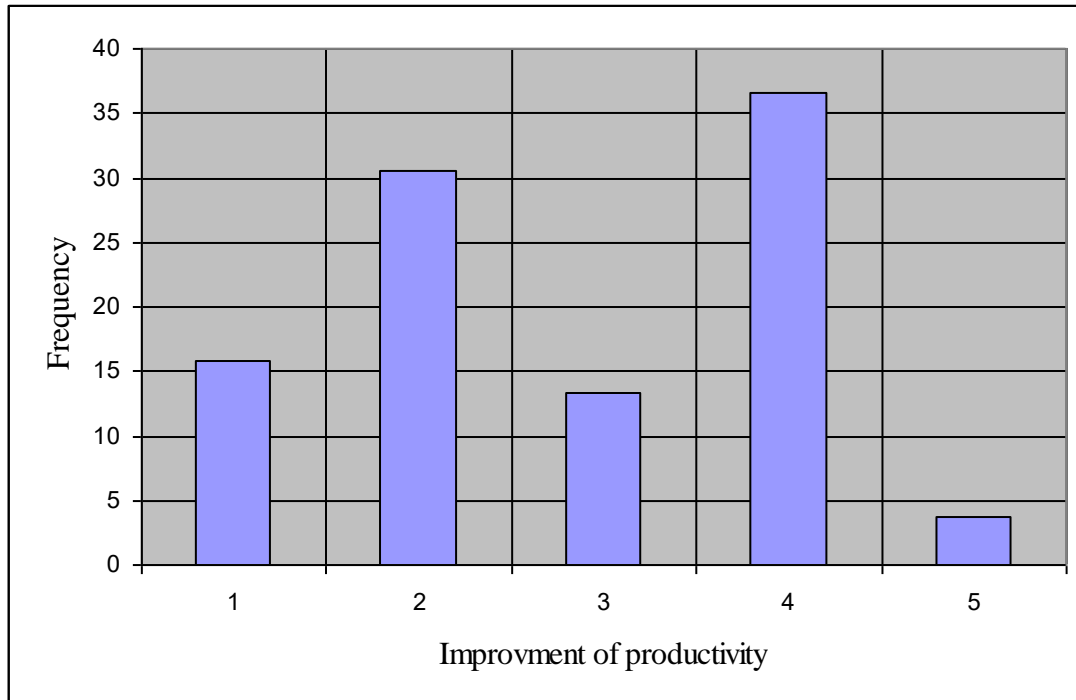


Figure 10 Frequency of productivity's improvement

Mean = 2,74, Std. Dev = 1,25, N=82.

According to [Figure 10](#) the productivity of 36,59% of the participants was improved enough after the training programs while 30,49% answered that their productivity improved a little. Only a percentage of 3,66% declared that their productivity increased at great extent after training while 15,85% did not notice any improvement and 13,41% are not sure.

Question 11. Training programs provide a strong motivation for higher productivity



Figure 11 Frequency of training being motivation for productivity

Mean = 3,74, Std. Dev = 1,11, N=82.

We observe that the mean is quite high and half of the respondents agree that training programs stimulate motivation. Furthermore, a percentage of 21,95% answered that training programs are strong productivity motivators while 3,66% disagree and 12,20% answered a little. Finally, 12,20% did not notice any difference.

Question 12. Which factor from the below mentioned provide the strongest motivation.

	Frequency	% Frequency	Cumulative % Frequency
Salary	33	40,24	40,24
Training	8	9,76	50,00
Nature of work	14	17,07	67,07
Potential of advancement	24	29,27	96,34
Relation with colleagues	3	3,66	100,00
Total	82	100	

Table 4 Frequency of strongest motivation

Only 9,76 % of the respondents consider training the most important motivating factor. According to their answers the biggest motivator factor is the salary (40,24%), potential of advancement follows (29,27%), the nature of work (17,07%) and last one relation with colleagues (3,66%).

Question 13. Training programs have resulted in your career development

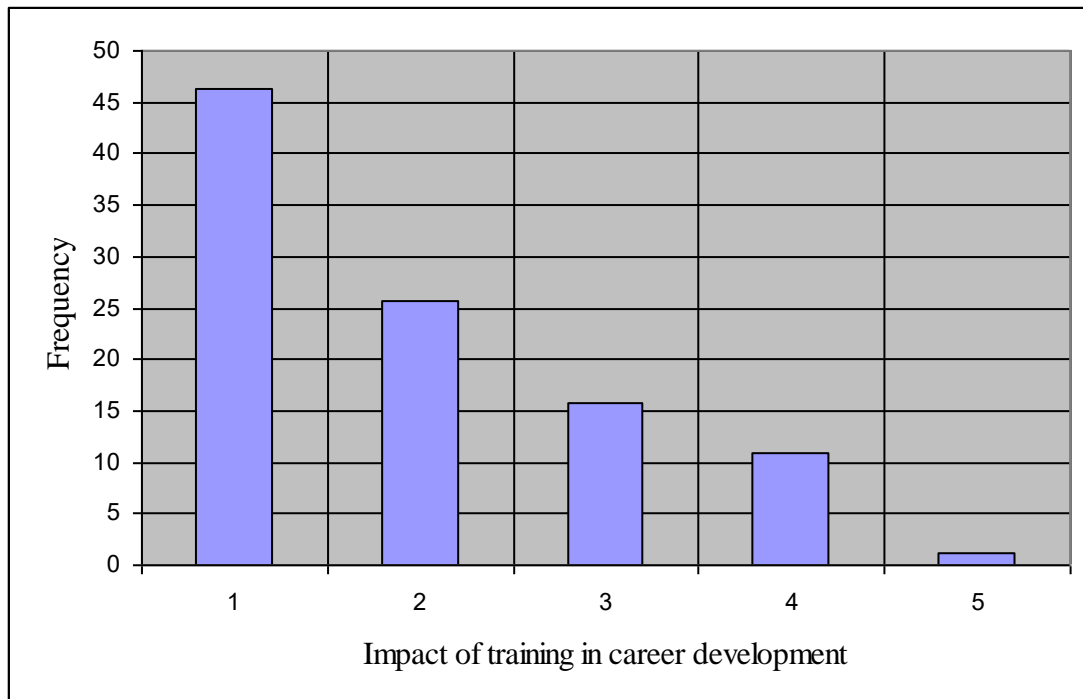


Figure 12 Frequency of impact of training in career development

Mean = 1,95, Std. Dev = 1,18, N=82.

The mean is low while 46,34% of the respondents mentioned that the programs did not resulted in career development even to a slight extent ([Figure12](#)). A percentage of 25,61% answered a little, 15,85% was not sure, 10,98% believed that training programs resulted in their career development enough and only 1,22% responded to a lot of development.

Question 14. Name the most important benefit from the training programs.

	Frequency	% Frequency	Cumulative %
Skill enhancement	28	34,15	34,15
Increased productivity	6	7,32	41,46
Career development	3	3,66	45,12
Broader knowledge of how the organization works	38	46,34	91,46
More effective cooperation	7	8,54	100,00
Total	82	100	

Table 5 Frequency from training programs' benefits

46,34% of the respondents consider company knowledge as the most important benefit derived from the programs. A percentage of 34,15% answered skill enhancement, 8,54% more effective cooperation, 7,32% increase of productivity and 3,66% career development.

ANOVA results regarding educational level and satisfaction from training:

Groups	Sample size	Sum	Mean	Variance
Secondary school	30	60	2,00	0,69
University degree	31	68	2,19	0,89
Master degree	21	37	1,76	0,79

Table 6 Summary of results regarding educational level and satisfaction from training

We can observe that people with a Master Degree have lower satisfaction.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Fcrit
Among	2,339571	2	1,169786	1,475111	3,112262
Within	62,64823	79	0,793016		
Total	64,9878	81			

Table 7 Analysis of variance

As we can see F follows an F distribution with 2 degrees of freedom in the numerator and 79 degrees of freedom in the denominator. Since $F < F_{crit}$ 5% level ($1,475111 < 3,112262$) the H_0 is not rejected. As a result there is no significant difference in the means of educational level.

ANOVA results regarding working experience and satisfaction from training.

Groups	Sample Size	Sum	Mean	Variance
0-5	1	2	2,00	0
5-10	26	52	2,00	0,8
More than 10 years	55	111	2,02	0,832997

Table 8 Summary of results regarding working experience and satisfaction from training

We observe that people with working experience up to 10 years have lower satisfaction.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Fcrit
Among	0,005987	2	0,002993	0,003639	3,112262
Within	64,98182	79	0,822555		
Total	64,9878	81			

Table 9 Analysis of variance

F follows an F distribution with 2 degrees of freedom in the numerator and 79 degrees of freedom in the denominator. Since $F < F_{crit}$ 5% level ($0,003639 < 3,112262$) the H_0 is not rejected. There is no significant difference in the means of working experience.

7. Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

In the section of results we demonstrated the score associated with each question of the questionnaire designed. The objective of our methodology was to extract the opinion of the employees who are working in the public organization of e-EFKA with regard to training issues. Training in the public sector is nowadays very significant given the goal of public organizations to increase their efficiency by introducing private management techniques.

As far as the demographic characteristics are concerned, we can observe that the majority of e-EFKA's employees are female something which is normal since it is women who mainly prefer to work in public organizations ([Table 1](#)). Men usually have higher career ambitions and the latter cannot be usually accommodated in a public organization where the prospects for career development are rather limited. Additionally, more than 30% of the employees do not have a university degree which indicates a relatively low educational level ([Table 2](#)). Many of the old employees have been hired in the past based on criteria other than the educational criteria. Finally, most of the employees have a working experience of more than 10 years ([Table 3](#)). Such a thing was expected since the public sector during the economic crisis has ceased hiring and the personnel within the public organizations are consisted mainly of old employees. Based also on the other researches conducted, we can conclude that most of the employees working in the public sector are women except the case of National Center for Public Administration and Local Government and in all researches very few employees are newly appointed. Regarding the educational level it seems that the higher is that of employees of National Center for Public Administration and Local Government since they all have a university degree and a lot of them have also Master's degree and Doctorate.

As far as the first research question is concerned, we can observe that the satisfaction derived from training in the public organization of e-EFKA is low ([Figure 1](#)). Although Training Institute of National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government and e-EFKA have introduced many training programs, employees still derive low satisfaction.

A basic reason for this is that many of the programs do not address the employee's particular needs but are general in nature. Another problem that can be observed is that employees are not willing to participate so they are inclined to regard the programs as non satisfactory while in fact they can be of decent quality. In other words employees are not always the right people to judge the quality of the training programs since they do not appreciate them at the first place. Our results are in line with findings of Rougka (2019), but not consistent with the findings of other authors presented in the review of literature. Apparently, employees in the organization of e-EFKA derive low satisfaction from training contrary to other public organizations.

With regard to the second research question, the employees of e-EFKA mentioned that the most important benefits derived from training programs were firstly knowledge improvement and secondly skill improvement. In accordance with [Table 5](#), few employees reported as important benefits career development or increase of productivity. The findings are consistent with that of Kourkoulou (2018); specifically judicial staff of Dodecanese regarded training programs as very significant because they resulted in skills enhancement. Although, employee's skills improved after the training programs the question is if the skills acquired will be beneficial for their duty performance. One problem of training programs in the public sector is that they do not address specific needs. Despite the fact that training programs in the public sector provide a lot of knowledge to participants especially with regard to how the public organizations functions, the employees may not have the opportunity to derive knowledge that is closely linked to the nature of their work. No matter the quality of the training programs they have also to be compatible with each organization's goals. In reference to the absence of connection between training programs and career development or productivity, it was expected since the potentials for career development are limited while training programs do not always target productivity improvement but provide general knowledge.

As far as third research question is concerned, training provides strong motivation for higher productivity ([Figure 11](#)). When employees get trained they get to know better the nature of their job and at the same time they acquire skills which can be useful for other purposes. However amongst the five factors mentioned in the questionnaire that can stimulate employees for higher productivity, training is the fourth most important. Motivating factors such as the wage, potential for career development and nature of the

job are considered to be most important. In the case of e-EFKA only 10% of the respondents regarded training as the most important motivating factor as stated in [Table 4](#). Public employees usually lack ambitions and they might not be so willing to get trained knowing that the programs might generate poor benefits.

As far as the fourth research question is concerned, employees of e-EFKA would find a training program for e-government very useful ([Figure 9](#)). Our findings are in line with those of Christaki (2019) and Kourkoulou (2018) since judicial officers showed great interest in learning more about e-government. In general, findings of the rest surveys also revealed the need of acquiring more skills related to technology. The public sector in Greece has been modernized to some extent and the health crisis offered an excellent opportunity for the digitalization of many public services. The average age of a public employee is quite high in Greece due to the suspension of public hiring the last decade and therefore many public employees are poorly familiarized with new technologies. Therefore, they would find a relevant training program very useful. With the appropriate training program they will be more competent to effectively respond to the demands of the e-governments practises.

As far as the fifth research question is concerned, we saw that the educational level of e-EFKA's employees does not affect satisfaction from training. The educational groups examined are those who do not have any degree from a university, those who have a university degree but not a Master's degree and those who have Master's degree. We would expect that in the public sector employees with a higher education would derive less satisfaction from training since they have higher demands. Training programs in the public sector as we mentioned earlier provide general knowledge and they address mainly to employees who lack fundamental skills. Therefore people of higher education will find these programs quite elementary. In our case indeed, according to [Table 6](#) employees having a Master's degree derive less satisfaction from the training programs provided, but the difference of means amongst the several groups examined is not statistically significant ([Table 7](#)). On the other hand, research of Antonakos (2017) indicated a statistically significant correlation between age and satisfaction from the time of training with respondents older than 55 years old having lower satisfaction compared to other age groups.

With regard to the sixth research question, years of experience do not affect the level of satisfaction from training either. [Table 8](#) indicates that employees of e-EFKA with less experience derive less satisfaction but the difference of means is not statistically significant ([Table 9](#)). In our case, the first group consists of employees with up to 5 years of working experience, the second group of participants who have 5 – 10 years working experience and the third group of public employees with more than 10 years of working experience. People who have less working experience are expected to be less satisfied from training since they probably have higher education. In the public sector people who have been working for many years in an organization have usually less academic skills since a few decades ago having a high educational level was not a strong condition in order to enter a public organization. So the satisfaction from training programs is not affected by the working experience.

With regard to the answers to the other questions we can observe that e-EFKA's employees did not realize significant productivity gains stemming from the training programs ([Figure 11](#)). This was expected since we already mentioned that training programs usually do not address individual needs. Additionally, training programs improved their working skills but not to significant extent ([Figure 8](#)). According to Antonakos (2017) findings training programs also contributed to the improvement of employees' professional skills. Employees who probably benefited the most were the ones who had a lower educational level.

An important finding of our research according to [Figure 6](#) was that the most of the respondents found the content of the training programs quite easy. Such a thing can be interpreted on two different ways. A simple and easy content ensures that the participants will easily assimilate the new knowledge provided. At the same time the finding verifies that training programs in the public sector cover usually basic knowledge and someone who desired to acquire deeper knowledge will probably get disappointed.

A striking finding is that e-EFKA's employees would be more willing to attend training programs if the latter were associated with e-learning programs ([Figure 5](#)). When judicial officials were asked about the reasons that affected the most their rare participation in training programs the answer was the long distance from institutes (Christaki, 2019). In addition, e-EFKA employees of Epirus' mentioned as constrain the distribution of the educational centers only in big cities (Rougka, 2019). E-learning programs are

characterized by flexibility, something which is definitely appreciated by public employees and will make them more reluctant to attend more training programs.

Finally, general conclusions were obtained through the surveys on training in Greek public sector. Public employees

- do not participate often in training programs
- need incentives to attend training programs
- prefer training programs related more to the nature of their work
- need more training programs related to technological skills
- agree that training programs increased their efficiency
- are in favour of life long learning.

7.2 Limitations of the primary data survey

The sample size of the survey can be considered as the main limitation of the survey which can potentially create problems regarding generalizations of the results since the number of respondents is 82. Having a larger sample would make the results as accurate as possible. Another limitation can be considered that the complete representative ness of the sample can not be ensured.

Furthermore, a few of the employees did not answer the questions, few questionnaires distributed to regions other than Athens and the sampling process was not entirely random. Finally, we did not use normality tests to secure that ANOVA tests can safely be used.

Despite the limitations, this survey provides important data regarding the training of public employees and future researchers could work further on them and increase the already exciting knowledge.

7.3 Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of the research, certain recommendations can be made about training employees of e-EFKA and public employees in general.

To begin with, a change in e-EFKA's culture towards training programs would be more than beneficial; the organization should prompt more life long learning, especially after the changes arose due the insurance funds integration. The need for continuous learning, changes and demands of work make retraining integral part of every employee's career. It is necessary, employees of the unified social security fund to attend, at regular intervals, retraining programs that are linked to the nature of their work. The programs should attend specific needs of the organizations since e-EFKA's employees' jobs requires acquisition of continuously changing knowledge of law on pension and on labour issues, legislation, finance, administration, information technology and human resource management.

Training programs can generate plenty of benefits within an organization since just academic skills are not sufficient. The nature of the job can also sometimes be unrelated to the academic skills an individual possesses something which necessities the implementation of training programs. E-EFKA provides training programs through several agents or sometimes on their own as well. The problem is that many of the programs are general in nature and do not address individuals needs such as employees' educational level or professional characteristics. Training programs should be designed in such a way, so that are more attractive to their employees and particularly to younger employees, who possess more academic skills and consequently have higher demands.

Considering the fact that during the last years and especially after the outbreak of pandemic, digital technologies have changed the way public sector function, the latter has to put into effect digital transformation strategies and find solutions to meet the changing requirements. Implementing more training programs on e-government is more than essential. Public employees show great interest in participating in them, they have to catch up, change their behaviour towards technology, bridge their digital gaps and improve their skills. Afterwards, they will feel more capable and confident in using e-government applications and they will be able to deliver better public services.

Regarding employees' willingness to attend more training programs on the premise that these programs are implemented on line and administration's office objections to training

programs because of financial and functional reasons, e-learning programs are certainly a solution. The concept of traditional training has changed radically in the recent years. The rise of internet and new technologies changed the training options since physically presence in a classroom is not required. E-learning programs eliminate restrictions, allowing trainees from all over the country to complete the training they are interested in. But most importantly e-learning is cost effective because there is a reduction in training time and the single cost of training is the cost of staff attending the training program rather than the direct cost in terms of trainers, course material, accommodation and travel.

Finally for training programs to be more effective, the organizational culture in the public sector should change. Competition amongst employees should be encouraged through the provisions that will enhance career development. Public employees should stop resting on the job security a public organization provides and should be ambitious enough to advance within the organization. For such a thing of course to occur, the potential for career development should exist and a merit system where the most competent employees succeed should be introduced.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

“Training in the public sector in the era of e-government. The case of e-EFKA”

This questionnaire was created in the context of my postgraduate dissertation for the Master’s Degree Programme in Business Administration (MBA) at the Hellenic Open University. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire is less than five minutes. The selected data will be used for research purposes only and the answers will be anonymous.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

GENDER

Male ☐

Female ☐

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

School ☐

University degree ☐

Master degree ☐

WORKING EXPERIENCE

0-5 ☐

5-10 ☐

More than 10 years ☐

QUESTIONS

1. Are you satisfied from your training?

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

Indifferent ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

2. Are you satisfied from the content of training?

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

Indifferent ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

3. Are you satisfied from your trainers?

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

Indifferent ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

4. How often do you attend training programs?

Never ☐

Rarely ☐

From time to time ☐

Often ☐

Very often ☐

5. Would you have attended more training programs if they had been e-learning programs?

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

I am not sure ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

6. Was the content of training difficult to understand?

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

I am not sure ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

7. Are training programs related to the nature of your work?

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

I am not sure ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

8. Training programs have improved your skills

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

I am not sure ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

9. How useful it would be a training program about e-government?

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

I am not sure ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

10. Did the training programs improve your productivity?

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

I am not sure ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

11. Training programs provide a strong motivation for higher productivity

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

Indifferent ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

12. Which factor from the below mentioned provide the strongest motivation

Salary ☐

Training ☐

Nature of work ☐

Potential of advancement ☐

Relations with colleagues ☐

13 Training programs have resulted in your career development

Not at all ☐

A little ☐

I am not sure ☐

Enough ☐

A lot ☐

14. Name the most important benefit from the training programs

Skill enhancement ☐

Increased productivity ☐

Career development ☐

Broader knowledge of how ☐
the organization works

More effective cooperation ☐

Author's Statement:

I hereby expressly declare that, according to the article 8 of Law 1559/1986, this dissertation is solely the product of my personal work, does not infringe any intellectual property, personality and personal data rights of third parties, does not contain works/contributions from third parties for which the permission of the authors/beneficiaries is required, is not the product of partial or total plagiarism, and that the sources used are limited to the literature references alone and meet the rules of scientific citations.