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MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE & ORGANIZATIONS

POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATION

Job satisfaction among educators in Greece.

Investigating influential factors and improvement measures

Christina Teliporanidou

Supervisor: Dr Maria Argyropoulou

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JOB SATISFACTION AMONG EDUCATORS IN GREECE. INVESTIGATING
INFLUENTIAL FACTORS AND IMPROVEMENTS MEASURES

TELIPORANIDOU CHRISTINA

Supervisor Committee

Supervisor:

Maria Argyropoulou

Co – Supervisor:

Chountalas Panagiotis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the factors that shape professional satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Greece. Against the backdrop of the international crisis in the teaching profession, this research focuses on the interplay between intrinsic motivators and the causes of dissatisfaction. Beyond identifying barriers, the study explores specific measures to improve working conditions and sustain teacher engagement.

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing a deductive thematic analysis with Herzberg's Two- Factor Theory as the guiding framework for both coding and analysis. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten teachers, aiming to investigate their personal work experiences. The analysis distinguishes between internal motivators and external hygiene factors, providing a theoretically grounded exploration of teacher job satisfaction and motivation.

The findings highlight the importance of balancing supportive infrastructure with moral recognition, while suggesting actions for school leadership and policy-makers. The study bridges theory and practice, offering guidance for enhancing teacher well-being in the modern school.

KEY WORDS: Greek Educators, Herzberg's Two- Factor Theory, Job Satisfaction

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Chapter 1

1.1 Context of the study

Ninety thousand hours - that is how much time an average individual spends at work during a lifetime, thereby, the workplace significantly influences individuals' overall well-being. Given this time investment, levels of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction have an impact on overall quality of life. A significant proportion of the worldwide workforce experiences low level of satisfaction with nearly forty percent thinking of a career change within the next three to six months. This emphasizes the need to understand job satisfaction, as well as the variables that shape it (McKinsey & Company, 2022).

A job is not just a primary source of income, but also a significant part of an individual's life (Sharma & Jyoti, 2009) as it consumes much of their daily time and is closely associated with their social position (Smith, 2007). Consequently, the way individuals perceive and evaluate their work plays an important role in shaping their attitudes toward their job, which leads to the concept of job satisfaction (Kantas, 1998; Weiss, 2002).

This concept is actually an attitude which involves a positive or a negative conclusion drawn, regarding employees' overall job experience (Weiss, 2002). It represents a general perception of one's work formed, after considering multiple aspects of the job (Kantas, 1998). It is a complex phenomenon influenced by numerous elements including personal, social, cultural, environmental, financial factors (Stankovska et al., 2017) and it is essential for employees' well-being and effectiveness at work (Garrett, 1999).

How satisfied people are with their jobs, depends on personal factors, such as the feeling of accomplishment, professional development and self- efficacy and external aspects such as salary, working conditions and support from their workplace (Sharma & Jyoti, 2009; Stankovska et al., 2017).

Job satisfaction is among the most widely studied subjects in psychology because work takes up a large part of individuals' everyday life. Identifying what contributes fulfillment, can strongly affect personal well- being. While it is a multi- dimensional concept relevant to all professional fields, it is particularly significant in education, as teachers are considered to be the most valuable resource for a successful educational system (Garrett, 1999). Despite their critical role, many teachers describe their jobs as "humanly impossible". A recent Education Week poll (2025) shows that the real crisis in education is the unbearable pressure rather than

the salaries. In a sample of 2.531 public K-12 teachers in United States, almost one out of two teachers find it difficult to balance work and personal life (Pew Research Center, 2024).

According to Forbes, the crisis that education faces is epic. Teaching is known for being demanding and not well paid, which makes fewer people want to enter the profession. This is reflected in the closure of teacher education programs, such as Harvard's undergraduate teaching program, which ended due to low student enrollment (Perna, 2024).

1.2 Research Gap

Data from early 2023 regarding current levels of job satisfaction among 5.902 U.S. workers indicate that compared to the 51% satisfaction rate across all occupations, teachers' satisfaction is notably lower, just 33% (Pew Research Center, 2023).

Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2021) point out that negative school environments increase teachers' desire to leave the profession. According to the Learning Policy Institute, 2/3 of teaching vacancies are caused by teachers leaving the profession to pursue new job opportunities, rather than by retirements. The main reason they quit is overall job dissatisfaction (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teachers' shortages are an ongoing problem and they get a lot of attention, but the reasons why, are rarely discussed (Will, 2022). Understanding educators' total satisfaction can help improve their work conditions and quality of life (Paulík, 2012; Tria, 2023) since their satisfaction with both work and life outside school, reflects their overall job evaluation, workplace conditions, and general life circumstances (Paulík, 2012).

Teachers who are satisfied with their jobs can promote quality education (Sumanasena & Mohamed, 2022) as their satisfaction is closely linked to the effectiveness of teaching and their students' academic performance (Ingwu & Ekefre, 2006).

Real improvements in working conditions are vital for teachers to overcome dissatisfaction and find true fulfillment (Jyoti & Sharma, 2006). Such improvements enable teachers to concentrate more effectively on their duties (Toropova et al., 2020) and ultimately achieve better professional results (Tria, 2023).

Although teachers' contribution to their students' performances is widely recognized, whether they are satisfied with their working conditions is often overlooked (Liang & Akiba, 2017). Moreover, international research remains limited on how workplace conditions and personal characteristics influence teachers' job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2012).

A teacher's desire to leave the field is closely tied to his / her overall career dissatisfaction (Education Week, 2006). Forbes points out that the teaching profession is facing a major crisis as it has become a toxic workplace threatening both teacher wellbeing but also the whole community, since overburdened educators are less able to give their best in the classroom (Perna, 2024). As a result, real ways to support educators must be identified. By enhancing teachers' job satisfaction, experienced staff will be retained and, at the same time, new candidates will be attracted.

In the Greek educational sector, several studies have explored the factors influencing teacher job satisfaction (Koulis, 2019; Saiti and Papadopoulos, 2015; Lalagka's, 2017). However, research in the Greek educational field do not extend to improvement measures, highlighting the need for research that not only identifies influential factors but also focuses on practical measures that could enhance teacher's satisfaction and contribute to the overall quality of education.

Consequently, there is a clear need for further research to explore not only the influential and motivational factors which affect educators but also the improvement measures that can be taken to strengthen the teaching field.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the literature review and the fact that existing studies focus on what causes dissatisfaction but they do not explore how motivational factors can be used to improve the teachers' well-being, the following research questions were identified:

The first research question seeks to identify the factors influencing teacher satisfaction. Herzberg's theory is instrumental here, as it suggests that satisfaction should not be viewed as a single-dimensional concept but is driven by two distinct categories of factors. By utilizing

this theory, the study can categorize the identified factors into either motivators (intrinsic to the work) or hygiene factors (extrinsic to the work), providing a structured answer that a general satisfaction survey would fail to capture.

RQ1: Which hygiene factors and motivators, according to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, are the primary predictors of job satisfaction among Greek secondary educators?

As for the second research question, which explores the link between satisfaction and classroom practices, Herzberg's framework is essential for interpreting the behavioral effects of motivation. The theory argues that high-quality professional practice is motivated by intrinsic fulfillment. Accordingly, this study applies Herzberg's model to examine whether teachers' pedagogical innovation and classroom effectiveness are driven by the presence of motivators or if they are hindered by deficiencies in hygiene factors. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how an educator's internal motivation influences classroom outcomes.

RQ2: How does teachers' job satisfaction influence their teaching effectiveness and classroom practices?

1.4 Aim and objectives

The aim of this survey is to examine the factors that affect teacher satisfaction using Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and suggest measures that can be taken in order to improve the working environment.

In order to achieve this aim, the study has the following specific objectives:

To identify the factors which cause teacher satisfaction and categorize them into hygiene factors and motivators, based on Herzberg's motivational theory.

To investigate the relationship between these factors and job satisfaction among educators.

To make recommendations based on measures that can be taken in order to improve the conditions of the working environment.

1.5 Brief description of the chapters

The structure of this thesis is organized to ensure a logical progression from theoretical exploration to empirical analysis and ultimately to the final conclusions. In the first chapter, the foundation is established by presenting the context of the study and highlighting the specific research gap related to teacher motivation. It also defines the main aim and objectives, while formulating the research questions that guide the rest of the investigation. Chapter 2 builds on the introduction by reviewing the main literature. It looks at key motivation theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Vroom's Expectancy Theory, and explains why Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory is used as the main framework. It also discusses previous research on job satisfaction in education to give context to the study. Chapter 3 explains how the research was carried out. It describes the research design, the data collection methods, the sample selection, and the procedures used to gather information. It also explains how the study ensures reliable and trustworthy results. Chapter 4 presents and analyzes the collected data. The findings are organized using thematic coding into sections based on hygiene factors, motivators, and participants' suggestions for professional improvement. Finally, Chapter 5 brings everything together by discussing the findings in relation to the theoretical framework. It also highlights the study's limitations and provides suggestions for future research and practical use in educational management.

Chapter 2

2.1 Motivation

The term motivation is derived from the Latin word "movere", which means "to move" and it refers to the internal force that drives an individual to take action and achieve his/ her goals (Stankovska et al., 2017). According to American Psychological Association (n.d) motivation is defined as the inner urge that shapes and directs human actions, functioning on both a conscious and unconscious level. It shapes people's daily routines, influencing everything from health-related behaviors (eating, working out etc.) to how long they spend on social media (Penn LPS Online, 2025).

According to a Penn LPS Online article (2025), there are many different types of motivation, each of which can serve as a benefit or a drawback based on the situation. These types of motivation explain why we feel motivated to act in certain situations but not in others.

As it is a complex concept, it can be classified by the source and nature of the drive. It is primarily distinguished between intrinsic motivation, which comes from personal enjoyment, and extrinsic motivation, which depends on external rewards or demands. The article also highlights identified motivation, where actions reflect personal values and introjected motivation, which is driven by internal pressure or guilt. Last but not least, amotivation which refers to a total lack of motivation or intention to act.

Motivation is not fixed; it changes as people move through different stages of life. Younger individuals, especially those in their 20s, are often more influenced by others' opinions and social approval. As people grow older, for example in their 40s, the focus usually shifts to inner motivation, with personal values and meaningful goals becoming more important (Penn LPS Online, 2025).

There is a significant number of researches which confirm that motivation is far from simple. These studies demonstrate how motivational drivers influence behavior and productivity across diverse environments, including various social groups and professional sectors. Motivation is key to professional life, shaping both our daily work and our early preparation for the job market (Penn LPS Online, 2025). Mullins (2007) points out that motivation leads people to pursue goals in order to satisfy their job-related ambitions. In professional settings, according to American Psychological Association (n.d), motivation is expressed as the desire and willingness to invest effort toward work-related goals.

2.2 Motivation theories

Many motivation theories have been introduced to show what makes people find satisfaction in their work (Ibaba, 2022) and have focused on explaining the nature and the impact of job satisfaction (Stankovska et al., 2017).

These theories show the factors that affect motivation and job perception (Ibaba, 2022) suggesting ways to improve their performance. Such improvements will lead to better working conditions and higher levels of employ commitment (Dartey- Baah & Amoako,2011).

2.2.1 Maslow's Theory

Among the various theories of motivation, Abraham Maslow's model is one of the most widely known and frequently cited frameworks for explaining human motivation (Peterson, 2018). The famous pyramid structure has helped Maslow's ideas remain influential and easy for people to remember. Contrary to popular belief, Maslow never drew it that way. This image was developed by management specialists long after his original work, making the theory easier to understand (Bridgman, Cummings, & Ballard, 2019).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs was initially developed to explain human behavior and personality development. However, it was later applied in professional environments to explain motivation (Koulis, 2019).

According to this model, people have five basic needs which are physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self- actualization. Once a level is met, it stops being a source of motivation (Peterson, 2018) and the individual moves up to focus on the next level (McLeod, 2025). Reaching the upper levels of the hierarchy is difficult as social and environmental challenges prevent individuals from fulfilling these requirements (McLeod, 2025).

Physiological needs are positioned at the base of the pyramid and refer to the basic biological requirements which are essential for human survival such as air, water, food, clothing, and shelter. The next level refers to safety and security which involves the pursuit of a secure environment and a stable lifestyle. Directly above there are the social needs, which refer to the need to belong and to feel connected to others, at this level needs for love, acceptance, and friendship are located. Higher in the pyramid are esteem needs, which include the desire for recognition, respect, status, and a sense of achievement. At the top of the pyramid are self-actualization needs, which refer to reaching one's full potential and personal goals (Koulis, 2019).

Amayreh & Arshad (2025) surveyed a sample of educators in Jordan's public schools, using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It was utilized as a part of the theoretical framework because it provides a structured way to understand how different levels of human needs relate to job satisfaction. Maslow's theory serves as a tool for mapping teachers' needs, beginning with the fulfillment of fundamental needs (e.g., salary and job security) before progressing to higher-level psychological growth.

Agashi et al. (2019), also used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in their study. They wanted to examine the extent to which basic professional requirements influence educators' performance among 302 secondary school teachers in Nigeria. They focused on the first three levels of Maslow's hierarchy, physiological, safety, and social needs. Their findings show that when these basic needs are not satisfied, teachers' effectiveness decreases supporting Maslow's idea that lower-level needs must be fulfilled before higher-level professional development can occur.

2.2.1 Vroom's Expectancy Theory

A person's motivation depends on two main factors: their expectation that their effort will lead to a specific outcome and to what extent that outcome is meaningful to them. (Robbins, 1993). Essentially, people choose their actions based on the desired results they want for themselves, (Suciu, Mortan & Lazăr, 2013). Vroom defines motivation as an effort to reach specific goals as people choose to behave in a way that will offer them the highest level of satisfaction (Suciu, Mortan & Lazăr, 2013) their actions are not random, but driven by their inner psychological state and perceptions at the time they perform them (Vroom, 1964).

According to Vroom's Theory, motivation is driven by three elements: expectancy which is the belief that people's effort will lead to performance. Instrumentality refers to the perception that this performance will be rewarded and valence which is the personal value attached to that reward. Given the above explanations, motivation can be expressed by the following formula:

$$M = E \times I \times V$$

If any of these elements is absent, the final result for motivation will be zero, regardless of how high the other factors might be. People feel motivated when they believe that the hard work will pay off, can see that their performance will lead to specific outcomes and consider those outcomes personally meaningful. (Suciu, Mortan & Lazăr, 2013). They are not motivated when they are indifferent to a certain outcome or when they believe that there is no probability of success. In other words, they will not act if they do not care about the result, even if it is easy to get. Likewise, they will not act if they think that the goal cannot be reached, even if it is much desired (Buchanan and Huczynski, 1985).

Although Vroom's expectancy theory explains how motivation works, it does not identify the specific factors that actually motivate workers. It seems that it focuses on how motivation operates rather than the particular outcomes people work for. (Suciu, Mortan & Lazăr, 2013).

Soupir-Fremstad (2013) utilized Vroom's Expectancy Theory to examine teacher motivation in relation to pay and explored how links between rewards, performance-based compensation, and the main elements of the theory influence teachers' motivation and their satisfaction with their work. Alston, Marshall, & Zambak (2017) also used Vroom's Expectancy Theory because it provides a clear framework for understanding teacher motivation through the relationship between effort, performance, and desired outcomes.

2.2.2 Herzberg's Two- Factor Theory

According to Herzberg's model, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not two sides of the same coin. On the contrary, they are two separate states. Meaning that the absence of one does not automatically means the presence of the other. In other words, when an employee stops feeling dissatisfied as the causes of unhappiness at work are removed, that does not mean that he/she becomes happy and satisfied or the opposite.

Herzberg's theory is also known as dual-factor theory as it separates work related factors into two categories. The first one includes intrinsic motivation factors such as achievement, the work itself, responsibility, recognition by superiors or peers which encourage self- fulfillment and extrinsic hygiene factors such as salary, working conditions, supervision, organization policies which relate to the work environment and the prevention of discomfort. These two sets

of factors, independently shape an employee's attitude toward their work (Garrett, 1999; Herzberg et al., 1959; Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). While extrinsic factors are needed to keep employees happy, the intrinsic motivators will encourage commitment (Dartey- Baah & Amoako,2011).

The intrinsic factors support personal growth and recognition. Although employees may not feel deeply dissatisfied by their absence, their presence encourages motivation which may lead to better work performance (Dartey- Baah & Amoako,2011).

On the other hand, the extrinsic factors are not part of the job itself but they are related to the external conditions and the workplace environment (Dartey- Baah & Amoako,2011). The absence of certain work conditions leads to dissatisfaction but their presence does not necessarily guarantee strong motivation (Gibson et al. 2000).

While intrinsic factors play an important role in motivating people to enter the teaching field, extrinsic ones can influence their desire to remain in the profession (Sharma & Jyoti, 2009).

The combination between hygiene factors and motivators leads to four possible scenarios which are shown in the following matrix (Nickerson, 2025).

	Low Motivation	High Motivation
High Hygiene	Comfortable Few complains, minimal commitment	Ideal Highly motivated, no complaints
Low Hygiene	Worst Case No motivation, many complaints	Passionate Strongly inspired, but many complaints

Investigating the drivers of professional fulfillment among 92 faculty members at private universities in northern Bangladesh, Miah and Hasan (2022) utilized Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. They applied the theory in order to identify which aspects drive to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. According to the results, teachers' dissatisfaction was mainly linked to hygiene factors, which shows how useful Herzberg's model is for understanding low morale in education.

Hamid et al. (2025) applied Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory to examine job satisfaction among 240 Special Education Integration Program (PPKI) teachers in Perak, Malaysia. By distinguishing intrinsic motivators and extrinsic hygiene factors, the researchers aimed to understand which aspects of the job contribute to teachers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In their survey, it was confirmed that Herzberg's framework is a significant tool for identifying elements which prevent dissatisfaction and others which promote a motivating environment that encourages long-term teacher commitment.

2.3 Limitations of Vroom's and Maslow's Theories

Despite its popularity, Maslow's theory has faced significant criticism, particularly regarding the fixed hierarchy often depicted by the pyramid. Bridgman, Cummings, and Ballard (2019) argue that this pyramid structure suggests that needs must be satisfied in a strict, linear order since a need must be satisfied in order to progress to the next. In reality, human motivation is far more complex, as individuals often try to satisfy multiple needs simultaneously, and the importance of each level can shift depending on the person.

According to GeeksforGeeks (2024), Vroom's Expectancy Theory is broadly supported by research and stands out as it can be applied to a wide variety of professional and social fields. It is also notable for its personal approach, as it connects individual efforts to rewards. However, it has some weaknesses. First of all, it simplifies motivation by focusing only on effort, performance and rewards while neglecting important factors such as personality, emotions or social factors. It also assumes that people make perfectly rational decisions, which does not always reflect their real behavior. Moreover, it assumes that people are motivated only by rewards and does not consider how emotions like fear, anxiety, or excitement can affect motivation. It is hard to measure in practice, especially when assessing how much people value a reward or how likely they think their effort will lead to it. Lastly, it focuses mainly on individual motivation and does not fully consider how group dynamics or social factors, like peer pressure or team norms, can affect motivation.

2.4 The justification of Herzberg's Lens

In contrast to the inflexible structure of Maslow's pyramid and the highly complex focus of Vroom's theory on individual calculations, this study will utilize Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory which is more straightforward and practical, as it focuses directly on the workplace and effectively distinguishes 'hygiene factors' that prevent dissatisfaction from 'motivators' that actively drive job satisfaction.

According to Owens (1995) although various arguments have been raised in the literature, Herzberg's theory, following extensive scholarly review over more than two decades, has come to be recognized as a state-of-the-art framework in the study of work motivation. Extensive empirical testing within educational environments has consistently validated Herzberg's model. In the specific context of school organizations, the theory demonstrates strong reliability, confirming its effectiveness in analyzing teacher motivation.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory is selected as the most appropriate framework for this study because, despite the emergence of more complex models like expectancy theory and simpler ones, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it remains a powerful and influential explanation of workplace motivation. Although its findings have been challenged, the theory's enduring

presence in both business and educational literature continues to offer a clear and practical explanation of workplace motivation (Owens,1995).

Taking all the above into consideration, Herzberg's theory provides a reliable and time-tested basis for exploring the fundamental factors that shape motivation and job satisfaction. Consequently, it will be used as a framework to code and organize the interview responses of this research. This approach will help identify the key factors that predict job satisfaction and ensure that the qualitative data will be analyzed within a solid academic framework.

2.5 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is influenced by and directly linked to various work motivations which serve as predictors of job satisfaction levels (Dinham & Scott,2000). Job satisfaction and motivation are closely connected, as both relate to what drives people's behavior at work. Thus, better results are obtained when both motivation and job satisfaction aspects are taken into account (Dartey- Baah & Amoako,2011).

According to Indeed (2024), job satisfaction refers to the overall level of fulfillment an individual feels toward their professional role and work environment. It goes beyond payment, representing a complex emotional state that determines how much value employees find in their everyday work and how dedicated they are to their organization.

High levels of job satisfaction are correlated with improved mental health and a lower risk of physical ailments such as persistent pain, exhaustion and breathing difficulties (Nur Aqilah & Juliana, 2012). People who find their work fulfilling are less worried about physical pains and generally feel happier and mentally stronger in their daily lives (Matud & Sánchez-Tovar et al., 2024). Employees who are happy with their work tend to have clearer minds and better concentration. This helps them stay interested and completely involved in what they are doing (Shellow, 2022).

High job satisfaction benefits both staff and management. When employees are satisfied, organizations experience less turnover and stronger employee loyalty. This satisfaction also

leads to better productivity and improved financial results, proving that workplace satisfaction is essential for shared success (Herrity, 2024).

2.6 Teacher's job satisfaction

The education sector is regarded as the most influential institution for shaping a country's future prosperity (Stankovska et al., 2017). Teacher education is defined as a structured professional training focused on the art of teaching (Paulík, 2012) and well-qualified teachers are viewed as the foundation of a successful education system (Garrett, 1999).

For many, teaching is often considered as the basis of all other professions and attracts numerous individuals who want to become educators regardless of the level at which they intend to teach (Tria, 2023). However, it has become an increasingly challenging career because the education system expects high performance from educators (Gkolia, Belias & Koustelios, 2014).

Although teachers are considered as the most important resource in education since, they play a key role in improving the learning environment and the classroom experience, their personal welfare is frequently overlooked despite the fact that teachers' quality of life is closely linked to their professional performance and overall motivation (Garrett, 1999).

Identifying the elements of educator's satisfaction or dissatisfaction is essential for building and supporting a successful educational environment as teachers are both a great financial investment and a valuable human resource (Jyoti & Sharma, 2006).

Teacher satisfaction is influenced by the impact of their job on their overall quality of life, including time spent with family, personal health and mental security (Paulík, 2012) and can significantly affect the learning outcomes of their students (Jyoti & Sharma, 2006).

Job satisfaction for educators is, on one hand, a subjective outcome of how they adjust to both workplace and external conditions and on the other hand, a factor that helps them continuously adapt to their professional environment (Paulík, 2012).

Constant heavy workloads or a lack of challenging duties can lead to increased dissatisfaction, especially when teachers perceive these conditions as long-term disruptions to their work-life balance (Paulík, 2012).

2.7 Primary researches to the study

Teachers' job satisfaction has attracted increasing attention in the literature, particularly in relation to the factors that influence it and their impact on educational quality and system effectiveness.

Salary is consistently identified as a key determinant in a wide range of research (Education Week, 2006). As stated by Paulík (2012) in many countries, teachers often feel that their salaries do not fairly match the difficulty and social importance of their work and are lower than those of other jobs with similar qualification requirements. A 2024 Pew Research Center survey of a national sample of 2,531 U.S. public K-12 teachers showed that their greatest dissatisfaction was related to their salary levels. 51% of the sample said that there is a huge dissatisfaction among educators regarding their current earnings. This is further supported by Mangaleswarasharma (2017) in whose study, higher salary levels are positively correlated with increased job satisfaction. Interestingly, in their effort to investigate job satisfaction among 178 Greek early childhood educators of both private and public sectors, Tsigilis, Zachopoulou, and Grammatikopoulos (2006) found that despite a general dissatisfaction with economic rewards across the sample, educators in the public sector earned comparatively higher wages than those in the private one.

Research findings regarding gender are inconsistent. On one hand, Rahman (2008) and Mahmood et al. (2011) found that women are generally more satisfied with their teaching careers. This may be linked to traditional gender roles in teaching, where women may feel more comfortable with nurturing and caring responsibilities, while men might feel less suited to these roles (Toropova et al., 2021). On the other hand, Melter (2002) observed higher satisfaction among men, while more recent global data from Sims (2017) indicate no clear relationship between an educator's gender and their job satisfaction. Interestingly, Toropova et al. (2021) identified that, male teachers' job satisfaction was more affected by

how well teachers cooperated implying that collegial support is especially important for men, even though it is often assumed that women are naturally more cooperative. Overall, findings on the relationship between gender and job satisfaction in education are mixed and sometimes conflicting, even within the same country (Toropova et al., 2020).

There is also a link between stress and job satisfaction. According to Singh et al. (2007) reducing and preventing stress is essential for improving teachers' job satisfaction among both men and women. Teachers' well-being is supported, as those who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to experience stress (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Burnout is also a key determinant, as evidenced by Falajunah & Dewi (2025) who surveyed 300 university teachers and 300 administrators from Universities of Regular Higher Educational Institutions in Hubei Province, China, job satisfaction is greatly lowered by burnout. On the other hand, the findings of Chenevey, Ewing, and Whittington (2008) who examined teacher job satisfaction and burnout among 145 agricultural education teachers in Ohio, indicate that educators may feel satisfied with their job while at the same time be emotionally tired because of it. Even if they reported being satisfied, they still show some level of burnout, especially in terms of emotional exhaustion.

Eryilmaz et al. (2025) conducted a large-scale study involving 13,048 8th-grade Mathematics and Science teachers in which more years of teaching were associated with lower satisfaction while in other studies teaching experience did not show a clear relationship with satisfaction (Toropova et al. 2021; Education Week, 2006). Research shows different results about how years of experience affect teachers. Reilly et al. (2014) found that as teachers work for more years, their satisfaction tends to drop slightly while Rahman (2008) found that experience does not play any role in how satisfied a teacher feels. In contrast, Toropova et al. (2020) demonstrated that the relationship between experience and job satisfaction varies depending on the stage of a teacher's career, following a U-shaped pattern. New teachers often feel stressed as they adjust to their new roles, while teachers in the middle of their careers may feel less satisfied due to heavier workloads or limited professional growth. Job satisfaction among experienced teachers varies, depending

on how well they cope with long-term stress and prevent burnout as they approach retirement.

One of the most rewarding aspects contributing to academic job satisfaction is the sense of achievement academics feel when they see the academic growth of their students (Schulze, 2006). Research indicates a close link between teachers' job satisfaction and student achievement. When teachers feel satisfied in their work, they provide better instruction (Tria, 2023) and show increased teaching effectiveness (Toropova et al., 2020). As a result, their satisfaction contributes to positive classroom environments and effective classroom practices which support improved student outcomes (Eryilmaz et al., 2025).

Armstrong and Markow (Education Week, 2006) state that respect for teachers was a key determinant of job satisfaction. Parent involvement was also mentioned as a significant factor, by Armstrong and Markow (Education Week, 2006) who mentioned one teacher who characteristically expected that he would be respected for raising the next generation, but in the end, he realized that such expectation was just a "fairytale" showing his disappointment. Satisfaction levels drop further regarding parents, is also shown in a 2024 Pew Research Center survey, with only 45% of teachers expressing positive feelings about this interaction.

Effective school leadership is also mentioned as satisfaction factor, as principals who seem unresponsive, make teachers feel unsupported (Education Week, 2006). When school leaders provide proper guidance, motivation and support, teachers tend to feel much more satisfied with their work. (Dutta and Sahney, 2016; Anastasiou, 2014; Shen et al., 2012). It is also highlighted by Singh et al. (2007) the important role of school administrators in managing and minimizing sources of stress within the school environment. Moreover, teachers feel more satisfied when they are involved in the decision-making process of their school (Anastasiou, 2014; Benolial & Barth 2017). It is also highlighted by Singh et al. (2007) the important role of school administrators in managing and minimizing sources of stress within the school environment. Moreover, teachers feel more satisfied when they are involved in the decision-making process of their school (Anastasiou, 2014; Benolial & Barth 2017). Interesting findings emerge from the comparison between the public and private

sectors. Administrative leadership seems to be the key factor in the private sector. Dissatisfaction with immediate supervisors is limited for educators within the public sector, whereas supervisors in private sector have increased authority over the educators, probably because most times the former are the owners of the preschool centers Tsigilis, Zachopoulou, and Grammatikopoulos (2006).

Access to personal and professional development opportunities, as well as, the presence of meaningful challenges is associated with higher levels of teacher job satisfaction (Mahmood et al., 2011; Mangaleswarasharma, 2017). Job satisfaction is increased by providing educators with opportunities to improve their skills, as gaining new knowledge, is a key factor in keeping them motivated (Wijerathne, 2013).

In an effort to identify the determinants of teacher job satisfaction, Toropova et al. (2021) analyzed data from a large-scale sample of 3.944 Swedish eighth-grade mathematics teachers from the TIMSS 2015 database. It was found that teachers' views of their workload were clearly linked to their job satisfaction. The findings underline that having a manageable workload is essential for teachers to feel satisfied with their job. Likewise, Eryilmaz et al. (2025) found that increased workload was associated with lower satisfaction.

Toropova et al. (2021) identify self-efficacy as a key factor that influences how student discipline affects teacher well-being. This suggests that the impact of classroom disruptions is not the same for every teacher, it is shaped by how teachers perceive their own professional abilities. Teachers who have strong self-efficacy tend to handle classroom problems better whereas those low confidence can get caught in a negative cycle, where students' misbehavior further weakens their sense of ability. Consequently, managing student behavior is not just a skill, it also protects teachers' well-being and increases job satisfaction by helping them feel more capable in their profession.

The literature also highlights that collaboration among teachers is a cornerstone of occupational well-being (Toropova et al., 2021; Pew Research Center, 2024). However, the link between teamwork and job satisfaction is not just a simple addition, it actually changes the experience in a meaningful way. While Mahmood et al. (2011) and Shen et al. (2012)

identify colleague support as a primary driver of motivation, Sims' (2017) broad cross-national study of TALIS 2013 data indicates that this relationship is consistent across countries, going beyond differences in educational systems and cultural settings (OECD, 2014). Similarly, mentorship plays an important role in helping professionals adjust and fit into their work environment. Education Week (2006) emphasizes that the relationship between experienced teachers and newcomers acts as a link between theoretical teaching knowledge and the real challenges of the classroom. This implies that collaboration is not just emotional support, but knowledge which is transferred to the new teachers, helping them handle the challenges of the classroom, leading to greater satisfaction and stronger desire to stay in the profession.

Chapter 3

3.1 Methodological approach and research design

The study adopts a qualitative methodology to better explore the gap and ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on teachers' work motivation. This approach was considered appropriate because it helps investigate complex human views and understand individual experiences in depth.

The interview data were analyzed using a deductive thematic approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019), adopting Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, which begins with a pre-existing theoretical framework that informs the coding process. For the purposes of this study, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory guided a priori coding process, with themes defined beforehand according to its two central categories: Hygiene Factors which cover extrinsic elements of the work environment such as leadership, collegial relations, salary, job security, burnout and Motivators which cover intrinsic drivers such as recognition, student achievement, professional growth, self-efficacy. Participants' responses regarding sections 2 and 3 were organized and assigned to either of the two categories, allowing for a structured, theory-guided examination of the qualitative findings. The study's deductive orientation is reflected in the interview guide, which was specifically designed to map the research findings onto Herzberg's theoretical model.

Considering the importance of the research topic, qualitative content analysis was used to systematically interpret the interview data. This method ensures that the main themes and aspects of participants' responses are effectively identified.

3.2 Data collection tool

The interview was used as the data collection tool, through which questions were addressed to the participants while their responses were recorded. The questions were open-ended, allowing participants to express themselves more freely, as they were not limited by previous research findings or the researcher's views.

Initially, the number of participants and the type of interview were determined. In the present study, the participants were ten, and the interview was conducted individually. The interviews took place at the schools where the participants worked. Some preferred after the end of the school day in order to avoid any interruptions while others were interviewed during their non-teaching periods within the school schedule. Before the beginning of each interview, participants were informed regarding the purpose of the study and were asked to provide their consent for the recording and processing of the interview through the completion of the consent form (See Appendix A, B). They were also notified that the full transcript of their interview would be sent to them via email for validation and only if their formal confirmation was received electronically, their data would be processed. At the end of each interview, the participants were thanked for their contribution and were asked whether they wished to be informed of the research results, ensuring a process of mutual exchange. In order to have a better structure of the interview, a guide was designed (See Appendix C, D) to help keeping track of the order of the questions. The interviews were audio-recorded, capturing both the questions and the participants' responses, using a smartphone device, ensuring the accurate recording of the discussion. As potential issues might have arisen, a pilot interview was conducted, which was carried out with a participant who met the sample criteria. Since this interview was used to test the procedure and identify potential issues, it was excluded from the final sample.

The interview was structured around five key sections, specifically designed to address the primary research questions of the study. The structure of the interview guide was based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Sections 2 and 3 were designed to examine hygiene factors and motivators respectively, reflecting the deductive orientation of the study and ensuring that the data collection tool was aligned, using the theoretical framework as a basis for analysis.

Section 1: Introductory Questions

The purpose of these questions is to understand the professional background of the participant. Although they do not directly measure motivators or hygiene factors, they provide a baseline that allows for a deeper understanding and interpretation of the participants' responses.

1. Could you please describe your professional background and your current role within the education system?
2. How many years have you been in the teaching profession, and how long have you been serving at your current school?
3. What originally motivated you to pursue a career in teaching? To what extent do those initial motivations still drive you today?
4. How would you describe a typical workday at your school?
5. In a few words, how would you characterize the general atmosphere of your current school environment?

Section 2: Hygiene Factors (Preventing Dissatisfaction)

The purpose of hygiene questions is to evaluate the extrinsic factors of the workplace. Their goal is to identify causes of dissatisfaction which, if not fixed, can make educators feel unhappy and less motivated.

6. How would you describe the support you receive from the school leadership? Are there specific policies that hinder or help your work?
7. How does the quality of your relationships with colleagues affect how you feel at work each day?

8. How has your salary affected your commitment to teaching and the way you see your profession over time?
9. Does the stability or instability of your current position affect your daily life or the way you see your job?
10. Can you describe a period when you felt particularly burned out? How did that affect your motivation and your daily work?

Section 3: Motivators (Promoting Satisfaction)

The purpose of motivators is to evaluate the intrinsic factors of the work environment that inspire educators to find deeper meaning in their profession.

11. How do you feel when your work is noticed by students, parents, or your colleagues?
Does this feedback change the way you work?
12. How does the success of your students impact the way you feel about your job?
13. In what ways does your job help you grow as a person or as a professional? Do you feel you are becoming better at what you do?
14. What parts of your daily teaching tasks do you find most interesting or creative, and why?
15. When you feel confident and capable in your teaching, how does that change the way you approach your work and feel about your job?

Section 4: Improvement measures

The purpose of these questions is to detect opportunities for optimization and gather qualitative feedback on transformative measures that could enhance the working environment.

16. What specific measures could the school administration or the state take to better support your growth and satisfaction as a teacher?
17. If you could change or improve two things in your current working environment to feel more motivated, what would they be and why?

Section 5: Overall Professional Experience

Following the discussion of specific workplace factors, this final section focuses on a broader reflection of the overall professional career.

18. Taking everything into account, how would you describe your overall level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction?
19. Looking back at your career as a whole, how would you describe the balance between what drives you forward and what weighs you down?

3.3 Description of the sample

The study combined homogeneous sampling, used to ensure that the sample consisted of individuals with similar characteristics, with a snowball technique, which relied on initial contacts to refer additional educators willing to participate.

Before data collection, homogeneous sampling was conducted, selecting individuals who shared a common characteristic. Specifically, they were secondary education teachers who are colleagues of the author of the present study. Then, until the desired sample size of ten participants was reached, the four teachers who initially agreed to take part in the study referred other colleagues with similar characteristics and willingness to take part in the research.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Participants

Interviewee	Gender	School Subject	Years of experience	Professional status
INT_1	MAN	IT	6	Permanent
INT_2	MAN	IT	22	Permanent
INT_3	WOMAN	PHILOLOGIST	18	Permanent
INT_4	MAN	PHYSICIST	22	Permanent
INT_5	WOMAN	ENGLISH TEACHER	22	Permanent

INT_6	MAN	MATHEMATICIAN	8	Substitute
INT_7	WOMAN	ECONOMICS TEACHER	12	Substitute
INT_8	WOMAN	ELECTRICAL ENGINEER	10	Permanent
INT_9	WOMAN	PHILOLOGIST	12	Permanent
INT_10	WOMAN	PHILOLOGIST	33	Permanent

3.4 Data collection

In the present study, the pilot interview was conducted on 24th February 2026. The first five interviews were conducted between 25th and 27th February 2026. Since the research is qualitative, the collection and analysis data collection were performed simultaneously. The transcription process began before the required number of interviews was completed. During this stage, the audio recordings were converted into text data. The following five took place between 2nd and 4th March 2026 and their transcriptions were completed on 7th March 2026. As the primary data was collected in Greek, the transcripts were translated into English, ensuring that the original context remained intact (See Appendix E, F).

Initially, the interviews were organized into ten separate audio files, which were compiled into a folder titled “Recorded Interviews”. Each interview corresponded to a single audio file. Each file was named according to the chronological order in which the interview was conducted; for example, the first interview corresponded to Audio File 1, the second one to Audio File 2, and so forth. As the transcription process began, the audio files were converted into textual data, resulting in ten distinct text documents. These were organized into a folder titled “Interview Transcriptions in Greek”. Each text document was labeled chronologically based on the interview sequence, directly corresponding to the associated audio recordings. Specifically, the first transcribed interview was titled 'INT_1 in Greek' and corresponded to Audio File 1, the second transcribed interview was titled 'INT_2 in Greek' and corresponded to Audio File 2, and so on. Subsequently, these transcriptions were translated into English and included in a folder titled “Interview Transcriptions in English”. Each Greek transcript was matched with its

English translation, using the same numbering (e.g., INT_1 in Greek corresponds to INT_1 in English) to keep the data organized and easy to find.

Once the interviews were transcribed, an email was sent to all participants (See Appendix G, H) requesting them to validate the transcript, thereby allowing the author to proceed with the analysis. Each email was titled 'Validation of Interview Transcript' and included an introductory note explaining the purpose of the communication, along with an attachment of the interview transcript. By March 9th, all participants had returned their validation emails, confirming the accuracy of the transcripts. Subsequently, the data analysis proceeded only after each participant's formal confirmation was received.

3.5 Credibility and dependability

In order to produce trustworthy findings, it was essential to ensure the dependability in order to produce stable, consistent, and authentic results and credibility to ensure that the methods and instruments used can accurately examine what the researcher aimed to explore, thus resulting in valid conclusions (Creswell, 2016).

In the present study, the selection of the qualitative method and the use of interviews as a research instrument contributed to ensuring the credibility of the research. A pilot interview was first carried out, in order to minimize potential methodological errors and optimize the final interview guide. The pilot stage confirmed that the questions were clear and effectively addressed the research themes, as no further explanations were requested by the participants.

The Interview Guide (See Appendix C, D) ensures dependability, as it acts as a guide for the research. By asking the same questions to all participants, the study maintains its structure and consistency, minimizing the impact of researcher subjectivity.

Open-ended questions were employed to ensure that participants were not led toward specific answers, allowing them the freedom to elaborate on their views. It must be proved that the researcher is careful and honest by showing a clear and organized process to others. This is why the transcripts were returned via email to the participants so they could check them for

accuracy (See Appendix G, H). By providing participants the opportunity to verify their own words, the study ensures that the data collected is correct and reliable.

Chapter 4

4.1 Data Analysis and Coding Process

The data derived from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006) using Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory as the a priori coding framework. The process began with familiarization with the data through repeated reading of the interview transcripts and initial note-taking. The data were systematically reviewed and coded according to the two pre-defined theoretical categories of the framework: Hygiene Factors and Motivators. Participants' responses were categorized according to the relevant themes, and consistent patterns within each category were systematically documented. The presentation and analysis of the research findings are structured around the five main themes on which the interview guide was based. Each section is analyzed according to the codes that emerged from the qualitative content analysis process, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the participants' views.

4.2 Thematic coding table

Table 2. Coding

Keywords	Code	Theme
Informatics (IT); Physics; Philology; English; Mathematics; Economics; Electrical Engineering; public secondary school; postgraduate studies; varied school environments due to placement system	Professional Background	Introductory Questions: The Foundations of Professional Identity
love for children; knowledge transfer; passion for subject matter; job stability; working hours/conditions; family influence	Initial Motivations	
initial motives still active; Sense of Duty / Accountability; reduced initial enthusiasm due to daily difficulties; survival replaced contribution	The Sustainability of Professional Motivation	
Operational Routine; supervision; paperwork;	Typical working day	Introductory Questions: The Educational Work Context
Professional Responsibility; Interpersonal Relations	School Atmosphere	
Mixed experiences across career; supportive locally/ ineffective at ministry level; supportive principals; neutral; satisfying; too formal	School Leadership & Management	Herzberg's Hygiene Factors
selective strategy against negative colleagues; Primary source of daily satisfaction; essential psychological buffer; outsider feeling for substitute teachers; guidance for newcomers; family-like staffroom	Colleague Relationships	
Not primary motive but signals lack of state recognition; daily source of stress; Subsistence Crisis; relative satisfaction vs private sector;	Salary	
annual uncertainty; weight lifted with permanent appointment; psychological peace; barrier to deep attachment for substitute; anxiety without affecting classroom	Job security/ Permanence	
Role overstepping by parents – growing burden- conflict source	Parental Interference	
COVID remote teaching overload; administrative demands; family pressure; automatic pilot phase;	Burnout	

distance from home; student apathy; low pay		
Emotional fuel; reward that teacher can personally influence; renewed enthusiasm	Recognition of work	Herzberg's Motivators
Core meaning of the profession strongest motivator; overcomes financial and systemic difficulties;	Student success & progress	
Patience; empathy; people management; flexibility; seminar opportunities;	Professional Development	
Freedom from the textbook; greater creativity and experimentation	Self- Efficacy Confidence	
Modern laboratory equipment; digital equipment; functioning projectors/interactive boards	Infrastructure & equipment	Improvements: Administrative & Material Foundations
Reduce administrative workload; more time for lesson preparation and collaboration	Bureaucracy Reduction	
Stable placements; foundation for trust-building with students/families	Employment Stability	Improvements: Workforce Stability & Pedagogical Conditions
Smaller classes; recognition of the educator's role	Teaching Quality & Class Size	
High satisfaction; 9 out of 10; fulfilled professional; great dissatisfaction-wrong career choice;	Satisfaction- Dissatisfaction	Overall Job Satisfaction
Satisfaction from work itself; dissatisfaction from system	System vs work itself	

4.3 Presentation of Findings and Documentation by Thematic Sections

4.3.1 Section 1: Introductory Questions

The study sample is consisted of educators from various specialties and varying levels of professional experience, including both permanent and substitute teachers.

The majority of teachers began their professional journey with a strong sense of contribution and a passion for their field of study. In the first section, it emerges that the choice of profession was primarily driven by intrinsic motivations such as love for children.

« It was primarily the desire to have a meaningful impact on children's lives» (INT1,2,36)

«I have always wanted a career that involves working with children» (INT7,2,34)

«Initially, I was motivated by a love for children and the desire to contribute meaningfully to their development and learning. From early on, I was interested in the learning» (INT10,2,39-40)

Entering the profession was a matter of family tradition for one participant, since he followed his parent's footsteps

« Teaching was somewhat of a one-way street for me. Both my parents were educators, so I grew up in a house full of grading, books, and discussions about school» (INT6,2,36-37)

while another's decision was driven by pragmatic considerations, such as the extended holiday periods in the academic calendar and the favorable working hours, as well as the permanent status

«What initially motivated me to pursue the teaching profession were the working conditions. On one hand, there was the stability and job security; on the other, the conditions of daily life regarding the quantitative aspects of the work—specifically, the number of working days per year and the daily working hours» (INT2,2, 38-42)

However, an interesting distinction appears in the sustainability of these motivations. While teachers with extensive experience report that the desire to support their students remains their primary driving force, newer teachers feel their motivation declining.

« I am certainly guided by the same motives; I love teaching, especially a subject that I personally chose to study» (INT7,2,36)

« The motivation of contribution has been replaced by the motivation of survival» (INT9,2,40)

« The fundamental desire to support students in their learning and improvement remains the primary driving force of my professional journey» (INT10,2,49-50)

The participants' daily work is described as a multifaceted role, where teaching coexists with advisory responsibilities and bureaucratic workload. Their perception of the role varies according to grade level and specialization, encompassing a broad spectrum from academic knowledge transmission to practical professional training.

«Performing supervision duties during breaks» (INT7,2,39-40)

«I participate in school-related tasks such as laboratory preparation, committees, and mentoring students in practical projects» (INT8, 2,28-29)

«Listen to students and suggest options time is also frequently dedicated to administrative duties» (INT10,3,57, 59-60)

«A typical working day at school begins with preparation for the day's lessons» (INT5,2,43)

«the bureaucracy, the paperwork, the data entry those are the exhausting parts» (INT4,3,55-56)

4.3.2 Section 2: Hygiene Factors

The interviews show that the findings vary considerably among the participants. Some participants' views on school leadership primarily emphasize the support and guidance. They describe the administration as a factor that reduces bureaucratic pressures and allows them to focus on teaching, providing a sense of trust and security (INT2,3,4,5,7,8,10)

«The support I receive from the school leadership locally, within my school, is very satisfactory» (INT2,3,65-66)

«They facilitate us so that we don't get 'suffocated' by bureaucracy and can focus on the classroom» (INT4,3,75-76)

«The leadership support is immediate and instructional, facilitating my integration into the school environment» (INT7,3,54-55)

«The support I receive from the school leadership is generally positive and is primarily based on communication and collaboration» (INT10,3,78-79)

On the other hand, some participants describe limited or formal support from the administration, with communication difficulties or minimal guidance, which affects their school experience and sense of security in carrying out their work. (INT1,6,9)

«I am receiving from school leadership this year, I must say it is minimal, characterized by communication difficulties, a lack of accountability, and a failure to support the teachers' work» (INT1,3,55-57)

«Look, the leadership does its job and I do mine. Formal relations» (INT6,3,56)

«Support from the administration is formal, if not non-existent. It is limited to reminding us of deadlines for minutes and evaluations. I feel that the leadership functions more as 'police' than as pedagogical advisors» (9,3,59-61)

The interview findings highlight the importance of interpersonal relationships among colleagues for professional satisfaction and the overall school climate. Participants describe positive relationships characterized by cooperation, trust, and mutual support, which contribute to a more pleasant and supportive daily experience at school.

«If the relationships with colleagues are very good, then I have secured the most fundamental criterion for having a pleasant day at work» (INT2,3,75-76)

«Look, the relationships with colleagues are how can I put it? They are everything for our mental balance..... Here at the school, we've built a team where there is mutual support..... If the climate in the staffroom were 'hostile', I don't think I'd last a single week» (INT4,4,81,85,88)

«In our school, there is generally very good cooperation among colleagues, and this helps us deal with work-related difficulties more easily. I believe that a positive climate among educators overall affects the school environment as a whole» (INT5,3,70-73)

«Look, good relationships are the 'oil' in the machine. If the atmosphere in the office is okay, the day passes without you even noticing» (INT6,3,61-62)

«When there is cooperation and mutual support, daily routines become easier and you feel more motivated to work. Conversely, when there are tensions or a lack of communication, this negatively affects the school climate and one's personal morale» (INT8,3,61-64)

One participant stated that in response to a toxic environment, he chooses to mind his own business, indicating a clear shift from collaborative engagement to isolated task performance

«Where there is negativity, I focus exclusively on my own work» (INT1,3,64)

A participant adopts a proactive approach by seeking support from her colleagues

«I can ask for advice or share a concern makes my daily life at school much more pleasant» (INT7,3,62-63)

A particularly notable finding of the study is the gap between financial satisfaction and professional effectiveness. Although low pay is widely recognized as a key source of job dissatisfaction, most teachers state that it does not reduce their commitment or the quality of their classroom work. From the interviews, participants distinguish their personal financial needs from their “educational duty,” believing that their effectiveness comes from internal motivations, such as moral commitment to their students, rather than material rewards (INT1,2,4,5,10)

« Look, if I were to say the salary is satisfactory, I'd be lying..... My commitment stems from the responsibility I have towards the kids» (INT4,4,91,94-95)

«Salary is certainly an important factor for every professional..... the greatest reward remains the progress of the students» (INT10, 4,103,109-110)

« the salary does not always reflect the volume of work we do....., I do not believe that this has affected my dedication to teaching » (INT5,3,76,78)

Beyond its financial aspect, for some participants the level of pay is perceived as symbolic undervaluation and a lack of moral recognition, creating a sense that their profession is not appreciated in proportion to their contribution.

«Salary has never been my primary motivation; however, its stagnation affects the way I perceive the recognition of our work by the state» (INT3,3,58-59)

«limited financial growth can affect one's sense of recognition and professional satisfaction» (INT8,3,69-70)

It should be pointed out that although, the low salary is considered as a source of dissatisfaction, participants emphasize that it does not decrease their dedication or effectiveness in the classroom.

«My dedication to teaching is not based on pay» (INT1,3,70)

«I can't say it makes me less dedicated inside the classroom» (INT6,3,71-72)

«Salary is certainly an important factor for every professional.....However, for me, the greatest reward remains the progress of the students» (INT10,4,103,109-110)

Despite the widespread dissatisfaction with salary levels, a distinction emerges in the view of a teacher with experience in the private sector, who believes that public school salaries, combined with job stability and predictable working hours, are perceived with a sense of relative satisfaction.

« Compared to my previous earnings in the private sector, my current salary feels satisfactory» (INT7,3,67-68)

The interview data highlight job insecurity (substitute teachers) as one of the most significant factors that negatively affect professional satisfaction. The analysis shows that job security helps with long-term planning. Permanent teachers can plan and develop long-term projects, while substitute teachers often face uncertainty about their future. Because of this instability, it is harder for them to invest in long-term goals.

«The employment status, whether someone is a permanent or a substitute teacher, certainly affects daily life to a very large extent» (INT2,4,85-86)

«Now, the fact that I know this is my school it allows me to plan long-term. It gives me the freedom, for example, to start a lab project that will last two years, or to build a deep rapport with the students. If I felt insecure I think I'd be consumed by how to survive rather than how to evolve. So, tenure doesn't make me complacent; it gives me the 'ground' to be creative without being afraid» (INT4,4,102-106)

«Permanency certainly gives you greater stability and helps you organize your life and work better. Nevertheless, I do not believe that the way I view teaching has changed. I strive to do

my job in the same way and with the same responsibility, whether I was a substitute or now as a permanent teacher» (INT5,4,86-89)

«Look, the insecurity of being a substitute is the biggest demotivator. The lack of tenure makes you operate with an expiration date, you do your duty, but you don't invest emotionally in the school as an organization. It's a permanent state of waiting that wears you out mentally» (INT6,4,91-94)

«As a substitute teacher, job insecurity does not affect my performance in the classroom, but it does cause anxiety regarding where I will be stationed next year» (INT7,3,73-74)

«Job stability plays a significant role in a teacher's psychological well-being. When there is uncertainty, as is often the case with substitute teachers, it can create stress and make long-term planning difficult» (INT8,3,73-75)

«Tenure provides greater stability and security, allowing me to focus more on my pedagogical work and to plan my work within the school environment on a long-term basis» (INT10,4,114-115)

Participants describe a shift in parental involvement from supportive cooperation to excessive interference. This often focuses on grades rather than learning, leading parents to question teachers' decisions and reduce their professional autonomy, creating insecurity among educators.

«parental interference in school matters» (INT5,6,157)

«Parents usually remember the teacher only to complain about grades» (INT9,4,101-102)

«phenomena of parental interference. It is often observed that roles are overstepped or pedagogical decisions are challenged in a way that weakens the educational process and creates a climate of insecurity among teachers» (INT1,3,141-143)

The interview data highlight that professional burnout is mainly associated with periods of increased pressure and demands, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, heightened professional responsibilities, and challenging working conditions. Participants describe different

experiences of exhaustion, which are linked both to external factors, such as lack of support and financial difficulties, and to personal and professional demands.

«A period in which I felt particularly exhausted, I consider that I experienced burnout, was the beginning of the COVID lockdown..... We were forced to carry the operation of the entire school on our backs..... however, it affected my daily work life in a positive way, as that period, paradoxically made me love my job and my science even more» (INT2,4,96-97,100-101,107-108)

«Yes, there was such a period, during the lockdown. It was the year when I had to prepare the Senior class for the National Exams through a computer for the first time I felt a massive responsibility on my shoulders, fearing the students might fall behind on the curriculum..... I was on autopilot» (INT4,4,109-110,113-115)

«The combination of loneliness, a low salary that went entirely toward rent and heating, and the students' indifference toward Math, broke me..... My motivation hit zero. I went to school like a robot, taught mechanically, wrote the exercises on the board, and just waited for the bell to ring so I could leave. » (INT6,4,98-101)

«There was a period during which I felt particularly exhausted, mainly due to the combination of increased professional responsibilities, family obligations, time pressure, and the need to meet multiple demands simultaneously..... This experience helped me better understand the importance of self-care and workload management, so that I can continue to contribute meaningfully to my educational work» (INT10,5,120-122,128-130)

«I'm stressed, rushing to finish chapters, while the students are indifferent and tired» (INT9,4,92-93)

4.3.3 Section 3: Motivators

The interview findings clearly show that student success and recognition of teachers' work are key sources of intrinsic satisfaction. Participants emphasize that students' progress and the feeling that they meaningfully contribute to their learning and personal development strengthen the sense of purpose and value in their profession, even under challenging working conditions.

«When I see my work being recognized by parents, students, and colleagues, I feel very good. The truth is that this feedback changes the way you work; it gives you motivation it makes you feel that there is indeed a response to your efforts» (INT2,5,112-114)

«Recognition from students and parents moves me and gives me the strength to continue with greater enthusiasm» (INT3,3,73-74)

«When I see that our efforts are paying off in practice, I feel that my work has a real impact, and this renews my energy to keep going» (INT7,4,96-98)

«Student success is one of the primary reasons I feel satisfaction in my job» (INT8,4,91)

«It makes me feel proud of my profession and motivates me to try even harder the next day. It is the best confirmation that I am doing something meaningful» (INT4,5,137-138)

«At the same time, student success serves as a powerful motivator to continue improving my teaching practices» (INT10,6,148-149)

The interview findings indicate that teachers perceive teaching as a process of continuous professional and personal development. Through their daily interaction with students and the demands of the classroom, they develop skills such as patience, empathy, people management, and adaptability. At the same time, although they acknowledge the importance of professional training, many express the need for more practical and meaningful programs that address the real needs of the classroom.

«By participating in various programs, in various social actions, or even on a school trip, you can also evolve personally as you develop relationships, contribute to the social whole, and become a useful and critical unit within the local community» (INT2,5,130-132)

«As a professional you definitely become better.....I feel that every year I become a bit wiser in the way I handle people» (INT4,6,141-142,144-145)

« On a professional level, this job has already given me the opportunity to attend four seminars that interest me, something I wouldn't have had the chance to do outside the education system. On a personal level, the daily interaction with so many different people constantly evolves my

personality, as it helps me become more communicative and gain valuable experiences» (INT7,4,101-105).

«Teaching has helped me develop communication skills and patience» (INT8,4,96)

At the same time, a more negative experience regarding professional development was also reported. One participant noted that financial pressure and the constant struggle for everyday survival limit opportunities for intellectual growth, creating a sense of stagnation and a gradual loss of passion for the subject area.

«INT9: I feel like I'm stagnating. When survival is your only concern, there is no room for intellectual growth. Instead of becoming a better philologist, I'm becoming better at saving money at the supermarket. Instead of the job lifting me up, it brings me down. I feel I'm losing my love for the subject, and that is the most terrifying part» (INT9,5,117-120)

The participants highlight self-efficacy as a transformative factor in their teaching. Increased confidence leads to greater creativity, flexibility, and professional pride, shifting the focus from simply covering material to meaningful pedagogical engagement.

«Look, confidence in teaching comes with years of experience....When you feel competent, the profession stops being just a task of 'covering material' and becomes a living experience. I feel proud then, because I feel I'm not just a carrier of information, but a true teacher who is in control of the 'ship'» (INT4,160,164-167)

«I feel more comfortable in the classroom and can approach the lesson with more creativity»(INT5,5,129-130)

«When I feel confident about my lesson and classroom management, I am more inclined to try out new ideas or activities» (INT8,5,107-108)

«I approach my work with greater enthusiasm and creativity..... confidence helps me face classroom difficulties with greater composure and flexibility.....It gives me greater job satisfaction» (INT10,7,184-185,187-188,191)

«When you feel self-confidence and competence in teaching, this certainly makes you feel more pleasant and gives you greater certainty about your profession» (INT2,6,145-146)

4.3.4 Section 4: Improvement measures

Participants propose specific interventions to enhance their professional experience and overall effectiveness. Their recommendations focus on modernizing infrastructure, ensuring employment stability, and providing meaningful opportunities for professional growth. By addressing both environmental and systemic challenges, these suggestions aim to reduce administrative burdens and refocus the educational process on pedagogical quality.

«First, an important measure would be providing more opportunities for training and professional growth.....Furthermore, improving working conditions at school is a key factor. This could include better infrastructure, adequate educational materials, and support for implementing innovative activities in the classroom» (INT10,7,198-203)

«If I had to choose only two, the first would be stability in placement..... The second would be full digital equipment in every classroom»(INT6,6,155,158)

«I would like to see smaller class sizes to allow for more meaningful pedagogical work, as well as greater institutional recognition of our role, in order to strengthen motivation and effectiveness» (INT3,4,97-99)

«The first would definitely be the salary.....The second would be the staffroom atmosphere» (INT9,6,142-144)

«I believe that more substantial seminars.....Furthermore, providing more resources and teaching tools»INT5,5,135-136

«If I had to choose only two the first would definitely be the modernization of infrastructure and equipment..... The second would be the reduction of non-teaching workload» (INT4,7,183-184,186-187)

«Simplify the procedures so that the school can participate in various collaboration programs with other schools, primarily abroad» (INT2,7,186-187)

«The first priority would be upgrading the laboratories and equipment, as this directly affects the quality of teaching. The second would be more time for lesson preparation and

collaboration with colleagues, without such a heavy administrative workload» (INT8,5,117-119)

«Furthermore, improving working conditions at school is a key factor. This could include better infrastructure, adequate educational materials, and support for implementing innovative activities in the classroom» (INT10, 7,201-202)

4.3.5 Section 5: Overall Professional Experience

Despite the systemic challenges and financial concerns, the overall level of professional satisfaction remains remarkably high among the participants. Most educators identify themselves as "fulfilled professionals," distinguishing their frustration with the educational system from the deep satisfaction they derive from the teaching vocation.

«So, I would say I am a 'fulfilled' professional. Tired, yes; occasionally frustrated with the system, but in essence deeply satisfied with the vocation I serve» (INT4,6,200-201)

«I feel quite satisfied with my profession» (INT5,6,147)

«Salary is certainly an important factor for every professional. However, for me, the greatest reward remains the progress of the students.....Taking everything into account, I would describe the overall level of my professional satisfaction as relatively high, even though certain difficulties exist» (INT10,7,226-227)

«I believe that my satisfaction is at a very high level regarding my work. I could say a nine out of ten, for example» (INT2,7,193-194)

However, not all educators feel the same way. A participant expresses deep dissatisfaction, leading to professional regret about her career choice.

«Dissatisfaction. Great dissatisfaction. I feel like I made the wrong choice» (INT9,6,150)

Most educators view their profession as a balance between difficulties and rewards. Although they face many challenges, the sense of making a meaningful contribution and their relationships with students often lead to an overall positive experience.

«I believe that my satisfaction is at a very high level regarding my work. I could say a nine out of ten, for example» (INT2,7,193-194)

«I believe that what I gain from my relationship with students and the sense of contribution outweigh the burdens, although this balance is often tested» (INT3,5,107-108)

«Look if I look at it as a whole, the balance is delicate, but it tips toward the positive» (INT4,8,204)

«I would say that there is a relative balance» (INT8,5,129)

On the other hand, there are cases where the balance is completely lost as the negative factors have significantly outweighed the positive aspects of educator's career or fragile.

«Unfortunately, the negatives have completely overwhelmed the positives»(INT9,6,156)

«Over time, the balance tends to tilt dangerously toward the burden» (INT6,7,177-178)

Chapter 5

5.1 Discussion

The present research study set out to investigate the factors that affect the professional satisfaction of secondary education teachers in Greece. Drawing on ten semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers from different subject areas, age groups, years of experience, and employment status (permanent and substitute teachers), a multifaceted picture emerged regarding the factors associated with professional well-being and dissatisfaction. The findings are set against the relevant literature review, bringing to light areas of both alignment and contrast.

The central role of school leadership in shaping teachers' professional satisfaction is also pointed out in previous researches. Dutta and Sahney (2016), Anastasiou (2014), and Shen et al. (2012) note that when principals provide appropriate guidance, motivation, and support, teachers tend to feel considerably more satisfied. Furthermore, Singh et al. (2007) stress the decisive role of school principals in managing and minimising sources of occupational stress.

The findings demonstrate the important role of school leaders in connecting policy with classroom practice. However, there is considerable variation in experiences, suggesting that effective management in Greece relies more on individual principals than on formal, institutionalized procedures. In many cases, school management is perceived as a protective filter or a mechanism for absorbing the shocks of bureaucracy, allowing teachers to remain focused on their instructional work.

A more defensive approach to leadership is also revealed, where teachers' satisfaction comes not from active support but from the absence of interference. The attitude of being left "in peace" to carry out one's work implies low expectations of the principal's role, which is frequently treated as a formal routine rather than a meaningful process.

The results show a range of attitudes toward leadership. They suggest that when managers fail to communicate or avoid responsibility, they act as obstacles to professional development. A very interesting difference shows up between micro-leadership (the school unit) and macro-leadership (the Ministry, the educational system).

While immediate superiors are frequently assessed positively due to direct cooperation and a more "human approach," central political leadership is met with scepticism or outright dissatisfaction. This position confirms the findings of Tsigilis et al. (2006) for the Greek context, where public sector teachers' dissatisfaction is focused more on the impersonal structures of the system than on interpersonal relationships within the school unit. It is also noted that the heavy paperwork required by the system takes away valuable time from teaching. This turns even supportive principals into office workers, showing a deep problem in the system that hurts the quality of leadership.

The analysis of how professional experience affects views on school leadership shows that years of service help shape teachers' expectations and critical judgment. There is a clear difference between experienced teachers and newcomers, reflecting how teachers gradually adjust to the complexities of the school environment. More specifically, experienced teachers usually form a clearer and more balanced understanding of school leadership. Their long

familiarity with different leadership models allows them to recognize with composure both the functional weaknesses and the strengths of their superiors, avoiding absolute judgments.

Newly qualified teachers, by contrast, show a tendency toward more extreme and polarised assessments. On one hand, there is a marked positivity and enthusiasm, with leadership perceived as an absolute guiding beacon facilitating their initial encounter with the school environment. On the other, cases are also recorded of particularly low expectations, where the teacher adopts a defensive or detached stance, seeking simply to avoid interference in their work. This approach reflects professional maturity, with teachers judging leadership based on how well it handles daily challenges rather than on personal feelings.

Collaboration among teachers is identified as a cornerstone of professional well-being. Mahmood et al. (2011) and Shen et al. (2012) identify peer support as a primary motivating factor, while Sims (2017) confirmed this stable relationship at a cross-national level, transcending differences in educational systems and cultural contexts. Education Week (2006) also underscores that the relationship between experienced teachers and newcomers functions as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and the practical challenges of the classroom. Toropova et al. (2021) moreover found that collective collaboration influences the satisfaction of male teachers to a greater degree.

The research shows that good relationships are the most important part of a happy school. All teachers agree that a school is not just a place for lessons, but a social community. When teachers get along well, they can handle the stress of their job much better.

More specifically, the atmosphere in the staff room is frequently perceived through the language of emotional closeness, with a "family-like" atmosphere functioning as a buffer against the difficulties of daily life. The ability to share concerns and seek advice among colleagues makes the day-to-day experience a less solitary one, reinforcing the sense of belonging. On the contrary a hostile environment with constant conflicts is unsustainable. It quickly leads teachers to total exhaustion and burnout.

The findings highlight a gap between permanent and substitute teachers. Due to job insecurity and frequent moves, substitutes often feel like "outsiders," having only formal relationships.

Long-term placement is essential for building trust and professional growth, as it allows teachers to form deep bonds and share effective teaching practices.

In addition, the research reveals the adoption of selective engagement strategies as a mechanism of psychological self-protection. In environments dominated by negativity, some teachers choose a strictly professional attitude, insulating their work from toxic interactions. This strategy, which focuses on personal self-efficacy, is consistent with the findings of Toropova et al. (2021), suggesting that the teacher's capacity to set limits and to choose where to invest socially constitutes a critical survival asset. In conclusion, collegiality in education functions simultaneously as a source of satisfaction, a tool for professional learning, and a defensive mechanism, with institutional stability representing an indispensable precondition for the transition from formal relationships to meaningful communities of practice.

One of the most prominent aspects of the literature review concerns the role of salary as a factor in professional satisfaction. According to Paulík (2012), teachers in many countries feel that their earnings does not fairly reflect the social importance and difficulty of their work, while it tends to remain lower than that of comparable professions with similar demands. This finding is further confirmed by a large-scale Pew Research Center (2024) study, in which 51% of American teachers expressed strong dissatisfaction with their pay. Similarly, Mangaleswarasharma (2017) states a positive correlation between higher salaries and increased professional satisfaction.

The findings show that the link between pay and job satisfaction is complex. It is not just about the money, but about how teachers view their overall professional life. It was observed that the importance of salary differs for each teacher, as it is heavily influenced by their personal background and living conditions. More specifically, how teachers feel about their salary is relative. Their satisfaction is shaped by comparisons with previous professional environments such as the private sector, or by geographical factors that affect the cost of living. This finding aligns fully with the literature review and in particular with Tsigilis, Zachopoulou, and Grammatikopoulos (2006), who note that the economic satisfaction of public sector teachers in Greece is directly tied to their individual perspectives and personal goals. At the same time,

the interviews show a concerning trend of reduced effort. Low pay, especially when combined with commuting costs and living away from home, leads some teachers to gradually withdraw from voluntary and extracurricular activities. This attitude is seen as an issue of dignity and survival, showing that financial difficulties can reduce the willingness to do extra work, even though teachers' internal commitment to their main teaching responsibilities remains strong.

According to Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory, salary acts as a hygiene factor, meaning that when it is inadequate it creates strong dissatisfaction and can weaken long-term commitment to the profession, while an adequate salary is mainly viewed as a sign of respect and recognition of the profession's social value. In conclusion, the research confirms the gap between the growing demands of the job and the low salary creates both practical and moral tension.

From a gender perspective, the analysis of the data shows a clear difference in how teachers view the importance of salary in relation to their professional identity. Male participants tend to express stronger and more direct opinions about the issue, often describing low pay as a major discouraging factor that can affect their professional commitment and their willingness to contribute beyond their classroom duties. Female teachers, on the other hand, display a comparatively higher tolerance toward lower pay, placing the internal satisfaction they derive from pedagogical interaction and emotional connection with their students as the primary factor in their decision to remain in and commit to the profession.

This qualitative differentiation confirms the findings of Toropova et al. (2021), who highlight that the professional satisfaction of male teachers tends to be more vulnerable to extrinsic, job-related factors such as remuneration and working conditions, while women are more influenced by intrinsic motivations. Women's tendency to value moral satisfaction more than financial reward can act as a protective factor against professional disappointment. However, economic undervaluation still remains a constant source of job-related stress for teachers overall.

Male participants tend to focus more on the financial aspects of their work, viewing teaching primarily as a way to earn a living and maintain social status. In contrast, female participants emphasize the emotional and relational aspects of teaching, highlighting the central role of

emotional labor. This suggests that economic pressures are experienced and understood differently by men and women. Moreover, a clear difference is shown in what drives professional satisfaction, reflecting different priorities between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. For female teachers, student success and the quality of their teaching relationships are the main sources of professional well-being. On the contrary, male participants adopt a more complex and multi-factorial approach. While they acknowledge the importance of student progress, they tend to frame their internal satisfaction within a sharp critical appraisal of external conditions, such as the level of pay and the sense of job security.

These findings are consistent with the observations of Rahman (2008) and Mahmood et al. (2011), who note that female teachers frequently demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction from the teaching process itself. This tendency is interpreted in the literature on the basis of social constructs that associate the female gender with nurturing and caring functions, thereby reinforcing emotional investment in the relationship with the student. While male teachers' outcome-focused approach reflects a professional identity in which satisfaction at work depends heavily on institutional stability and adequate pay. It appears that women rely more on emotional rewards from teaching, whereas men are more discouraged by economic and systemic issues.

Permanence is not examined in the literature as a separate variable. However, job security is broadly subsumed under Herzberg's hygiene factors relating to the prevention of dissatisfaction. The uncertainty surrounding the employment status of substitute teachers constitutes a significant source of occupational anxiety, a fact directly linked to the findings of Toropova et al. (2020), who documented that professional satisfaction follows a U-shaped pattern over the course of a career, with younger teachers experiencing more intense adjustment stress.

Job insecurity is highlighted in the research, as one of the biggest reasons why teachers lose their passion and mental peace at work. The permanent state of uncertainty, embodied in the annual wait to be placed in different parts of the country, is perceived as an exceptionally draining process that undermines the teacher's ability to put down roots in a school

organization. This experience often leads to a stance of a passerby, where emotional distancing from the school functions as a defensive mechanism against impermanence, preventing deep investment in the vision and culture of any given school unit.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the transition to permanent employment is described as the lifting of an unbearable weight, one that liberates creativity and allows undistracted dedication to the quality of teaching. It is observed that job security does not lead to professional complacency but rather provides the necessary ground for experimentation and innovation, freed from the anxiety of survival. The comparison between the psychological equilibrium of permanent staff and the constant anxiety of living out of a suitcase among substitute teachers highlights permanence as a foundational precondition for the formation of a stable professional identity.

Job insecurity hurts both the teacher and the whole school system. It stops stable communities from forming since there is a contrast between security which leads to creativity and uncertainty which results to withdrawal. Having a stable job is the key to moving from just doing a task to being truly committed to teaching.

According the literature review, the relationship with parents emerges as one of the factors that diminish satisfaction. Armstrong and Markow (Education Week, 2006) cite the case of a teacher who had expected respect as a "raiser of the next generation," only to find that this was something of a "fairy tale." The Pew Research Center (2024) study showed that only 45% of teachers express positive feelings about this relationship. The research data reveal the relationship with parents as an emerging and particularly complex source of occupational pressure and dissatisfaction. Teachers view parental involvement as a challenge to their professional independence and authority, which can disrupt teaching and create a sense of job insecurity. The tendency to overstep the distinct roles of family and school is described as a growing burden, one that often turns collaboration into a source of conflict and interference in matters that should remain strictly educational. These findings reinforce the long-standing observation in the literature (e.g., Education Week, 2006) that problematic communication with parents is one of the main factors undermining professional satisfaction. Teachers feel the need

for a clear and practical framework for cooperation that defines responsibilities and shields the school from unnecessary outside interference. A clear and organized approach is seen as urgent because without defined boundaries, teachers face extra stress and the school community cannot function smoothly.

The literature indicates the close relationship between burnout and professional satisfaction. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011), teachers who feel satisfied with their work are less likely to experience stress. Falajunah and Dewi (2025) found that occupational burnout dramatically reduces professional satisfaction, while Chenevey, Ewing, and Whittington (2008) presented an interesting paradox: teachers can report being satisfied with their jobs while simultaneously experiencing emotional exhaustion.

The findings of the research data highlight the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden shift to distance learning as a catalytic factor in professional burnout, one that tested the limits of teachers' resilience. This experience is perceived as a period of intense pressure, during which the lack of infrastructure and central support compelled teachers to take on roles well beyond their teaching duties, often shouldering the entire technical support of their school units. The feeling of responsibility, especially in high-pressure situations like preparing students for national exams, increased teachers' exhaustion, as losing direct contact with students created both a teaching and emotional gap.

Yet an interesting differentiation is observed in the way teachers manage and eventually overcome burnout. For many, recovery is linked to the success of their students or reconnection with their academic subject, transforming the crisis into a source of renewed professional dedication. On the other hand, burnout can become more persistent, especially when teachers face low pay and geographical isolation. Under these circumstances, exhaustion leads to a "mechanical" performance of duties, where the teacher functions like a robot, indicating a complete breakdown of internal motivation and professional satisfaction. These findings confirm the position of Singh et al. (2007), who report that effective reduction of occupational stress is essential for the maintenance of job satisfaction.

The research also highlights the significance of professional maturity in dealing with burnout. More experienced teachers appear to develop reflexive habits of self-care, recognizing their own limits and converting periods of crisis into opportunities for self-awareness and a re-evaluation of their relationship with work. This capacity for reflection and learning through difficulty is consistent with the findings of Toropova et al. (2020), according to which experience functions as a protective factor allowing teachers to manage the pressures of the profession more rationally.

Professional burnout in this study is not fixed but develops over time, influenced by external challenges and personal coping strategies. Events like the pandemic can disrupt job satisfaction, but internal motivation and experience often help teachers recover, except in cases where financial or social instability makes recovery very difficult.

The literature presents mixed findings regarding the relationship between years of experience and professional satisfaction. Eryilmaz et al. (2025), in a study of 13,048 teachers, concluded that more years of teaching are associated with lower satisfaction. Rahman (2008) found no relationship between experience and satisfaction. Toropova et al. (2020) suggested a U-shaped trend where younger teachers feel the stress of starting out, mid-career teachers struggle with higher demands, and older teachers' satisfaction depends on how they handle long-term pressure.

Based on the literature, one of the most rewarding factors contributing to professional satisfaction is the sense of achievement teachers feel when they observe the academic progress of their students (Schulze, 2006). Educational effectiveness and student performance are strongly linked to teacher satisfaction (Tria, 2023; Toropova et al., 2020; Eryilmaz et al., 2025).

In this research data highlight the success of students and the moral recognition of the teaching role as one of the most powerful sources of internal satisfaction. All participants, regardless of years of service or employment status, place student progress at the heart of their professional meaning. The moment when a student overcomes difficulties or understands a difficult concept is seen as a personal success for the teacher, making up for any challenges they face. This recognition is especially significant because it extends beyond learning outcomes to the

psychosocial level, with creating a safe and supportive space for students seen as the greatest affirmation of teaching. Experienced teachers view student success as ongoing feedback that supports their professional growth and reinforces their sense of purpose, highlighting that moral reward is the key driving force in teaching. The most important aspect of this finding is that student success can overcome the challenges of the teaching profession. Even when teachers face job insecurity, remote locations, or financial difficulties, their connection with students and the students' progress provides a strong psychological support. The research points out that while extrinsic factors such as salary and permanence are necessary for occupational health, it is student success that gives the teaching identity its deep significance and lasting strength.

The analysis highlights that professional growth is a continuous journey. It moves beyond simply sharing knowledge and focuses on building complex interpersonal and professional skills. All participants see teaching as a constant learning experience that shapes who they are. It helps them build patience, empathy, and the ability to stay calm and adapt in the classroom.

Teachers seem to reject theoretical seminars that feel like paperwork. Instead, they want practical, hands-on training and learning that actually works in the real classroom. Training should become a practical tool that truly empowers educators, instead of being a bureaucratic burden.

According to Toropova et al. (2021), self-efficacy is a key factor mediating the relationship between student discipline and professional well-being. Teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy manage classroom behavioral problems more effectively, while those with low self-esteem become trapped in negative cycles. Additionally, access to personal and professional development opportunities is linked to higher levels of satisfaction (Mahmood et al., 2011; Wijerathne, 2013).

The research highlights some areas to improve teacher satisfaction and performance. Infrastructure and equipment should be improved. Infrastructure in this research is shown as a key factor for job satisfaction, especially for science and tech teachers. For them, the lab is not just an extra room; it is the core of their work. Having modern tools and materials is essential for creative teaching. When equipment is missing or poor teachers feel they cannot be effective.

The upgrading of laboratories emerges as a primary priority, since the quality of equipment is directly equated with the quality of the education provided. Technical subject teachers link their job satisfaction to the ability to offer practical knowledge in a modern environment, suggesting that material adequacy functions as an empowering factor for their professional role. The need for a stable budget that would ensure the viability of laboratories underscores that infrastructure is not a static condition but an ongoing requirement for maintaining teacher motivation. For a significant portion of the teaching body, physical infrastructure constitutes a decisive hygiene factor, as its inadequacy produces dissatisfaction, while its improvement functions as a powerful incentive for creativity and innovation. This finding highlights the need for a more targeted educational policy, one that recognizes that investment in equipment is not only for the benefit of students but also constitutes an indirect investment in the morale and satisfaction of teaching staff.

Reducing bureaucracy is essential to ease administrative workload, allowing teachers to focus more on lesson preparation and meaningful collaboration. The analysis highlights bureaucracy as a common source of dissatisfaction. It affects every teacher, regardless of their specialty, gender, or years of experience. Bureaucratic tasks are perceived as empty burdens that fail to improve educational outcomes or classroom teaching. The participants emphasize that the time spent on paperwork comes at the expense of their students. This makes them feel that their efforts are pointless. A school leader who acts as a filter for paperwork can greatly reduce teacher stress. However, all teachers, regardless of experience, demand a major cut in bureaucracy. This proves that the system has a core problem that keeps educators away from their real job which is teaching. Cutting down paperwork is key to helping teachers find more time for students and enjoy their job again. Without this burden, they can finally focus on creative and meaningful teaching.

Ensuring employment stability through permanent placements is vital as it provides the necessary foundation for building long-term trust with students and families, ultimately fostering a more resilient educational environment. In addition, reducing class sizes is seen as essential. Smaller classes support personalized teaching and better classroom management, improving both working conditions and the quality of learning outcomes.

Overall, the findings suggest that, despite ongoing systemic challenges and financial pressures, most educators report a high level of professional satisfaction, primarily derived from the intrinsic rewards of teaching. While the institutional framework provides significant hurdles, educators remain deeply committed to their profession, driven by an intrinsic passion for teaching that exists independently of external organizational stressors. A minority of educators express strong dissatisfaction, though. Some of them, question their career choice, while others describe their experience as a delicate balance between rewards and challenges. This balance appears fragile, with negative factors beginning to outweigh the positive aspects of the profession.

5.2 Limitations, challenges and recommendations for further research

This study aimed to examine job satisfaction from the perspective of Herzberg's Motivation–Hygiene Theory and to identify key factors that contribute to its improvement within the educational environment. Although the findings of this study are not exhaustive, they provide a framework for future investigation, aimed at uncovering further dimensions of job satisfaction among educators.

Some challenges were encountered during the data collection process. Although three participants initially agreed to take part in the study, they postponed the interviews twice which ultimately led the recruitment of other participants. Additionally, in some cases, the participants' responses were relatively brief. Possibly because the interviews were conducted after their working hours and they wished to finish quickly.

Moreover, despite the fact that the interviews were conducted individually and in private, without anyone else present, it is possible participants' responses regarding school leadership and colleagues might have been different if the interviews had taken place outside the work environment. They might have felt more comfortable sharing their thoughts openly, potentially including more critical or negative comments.

Since the sample happened to consist exclusively of public secondary education teachers, the inclusion of educators from the private sector or from other educational levels might have led to different conclusions. Although family status was not examined in this study, it may

influence job satisfaction. As one participant noted, the combination of work demands and family responsibilities led to feelings of burnout. Consequently, this variable should be further investigated and controlled for in future research as family commitments may impact professional balance.

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to the broader population, due to the number of participants. The above limitations do not diminish the significance of the present study; rather, they establish a foundation for further investigation, which if employs a mixed-methods research design, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data, might provide a more in-depth exploration of the phenomenon and allow for the extraction of findings that are more widely generalizable.

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APPENDIX A “Consent Form (in English)”

CONSENT FORM (in English)

Within the framework of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) postgraduate program of the Hellenic Open University, a master’s thesis is being conducted titled: «Job satisfaction among educators in Greece. Investigating influential factors and improvement measures».

This research focuses on identifying the professional factors that offer satisfaction, as well as the challenges educators face in their work environment. The collected data will contribute to the identification of practical measures for improving the work environment and supporting educators.

Having been informed about the content and the purpose of this research, I consent to the recording and processing of my interview. I understand that the interview is strictly confidential and that my anonymity is fully guaranteed.

Copies of the signed consent form can be provided for personal use if required.

I would like a copy of the consent form. YES / NO

SIGNATURE

APPENDIX B “Consent Form (in Greek)”

ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΣΥΝΕΝΑΙΣΗΣ

Μέσα στο πλαίσιο του μεταπτυχιακού προγράμματος Master of Business Administration (MBA) του Ελληνικού Ανοικτού Πανεπιστημίου, εκπονείται η διπλωματική εργασία με τίτλο «Εργασιακή ικανοποίηση των Ελλήνων εκπαιδευτικών. Διερεύνηση παραγόντων επιρροής και μέτρων βελτίωσης.»

Η παρούσα έρευνα εστιάζει στον προσδιορισμό των επαγγελματικών παραγόντων που προσφέρουν ικανοποίηση, καθώς και των προκλήσεων που αντιμετωπίζουν οι εκπαιδευτικοί στο εργασιακό τους περιβάλλον. Τα δεδομένα που θα συλλεχθούν θα συμβάλλουν στον προσδιορισμό πρακτικών μέτρων για τη βελτίωση του εργασιακού περιβάλλοντος και την υποστήριξη των εκπαιδευτικών.

Έχοντας ενημερωθεί για το περιεχόμενο και τον σκοπό της έρευνας, συναινώ στην ηχογράφηση και στην επεξεργασία της συνέντευξης μου, η οποία διεξάγεται υπό συνθήκες απόλυτης εμπιστευτικότητας, με εγγυημένη την προστασία της ανωνυμίας μου.

Παρέχεται η δυνατότητα χορήγησης αντιγράφου της δήλωσης συναίνεσης για προσωπική χρήση, εφόσον ζητηθεί.

Θα ήθελα ένα αντίγραφο της δήλωσης συναίνεσης. ΝΑΙ / ΟΧΙ

ΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΗ

APPENDIX C “Interview Guide (in English)”

Title: «Job satisfaction among educators in Greece.

Investigating influential factors and improvement measures»

Date: _____

Interviewer: TELIPORANIDOU CHRISTINA

Participant Code:

Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

First of all, knowing how busy your school schedule is, I would like to thank you very much for your willingness to participate in my research. Your help is truly invaluable for the completion of my master’s thesis.

The objective of this research is to explore factors which affect job satisfaction within the teaching profession and recommend improvements for a more supportive work environment.

This interview serves as the primary research tool for my Master’s dissertation which is conducted within the framework of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) postgraduate program of the Hellenic Open University, titled: «Job satisfaction among educators in Greece. Investigating influential factors and improvement measures».

This interview is structured around five key sections and is expected to last 20 to 30 minutes. It serves as the primary research tool for my master’s thesis, conducted as part of the Master in Business Administration (MBA) program at the Hellenic Open University, titled: “Teacher Job Satisfaction in Greece: Investigating Influencing Factors and Improvement Measures”.

Before we begin, I would like to assure you that our discussion is strictly confidential and is conducted exclusively for the purposes of my master's thesis. Upon completion of the interview, I will proceed with the transcription of the audio material and send the full text to

the e-mail address you provide. The processing and use of data in my research will only take place after your confirmation, via a relevant e-mail, that the content accurately reflects your positions. Therefore, if you agree with the process described, we can start our discussion whenever you are ready.

The first section consists of some introductory questions.

1. Could you please describe your professional background and your current role within the education system?
2. How many years have you been in the teaching profession, and how long have you been serving at your current school?
3. What originally motivated you to pursue a career in teaching? To what extent do those initial motivations still drive you today?
4. How would you describe a typical workday at your school?
5. In a few words, how would you characterize the general atmosphere of your current school environment?

The second section consists of some questions regarding factors which prevent dissatisfaction.

6. How would you describe the support you receive from the school leadership? Are there specific policies that hinder or help your work?
7. How does the quality of your relationships with colleagues affect how you feel at work each day?
8. How has your salary affected your commitment to teaching and the way you see your profession over time?
9. Does the stability or instability of your current position affect your daily life or the way you see your job?

10. Can you describe a period when you felt particularly burned out? How did that affect your motivation and your daily work?

The third section consists of some questions regarding factors which promote satisfaction.

11. How do you feel when your work is noticed by students, parents, or your colleagues? Does this feedback change the way you work?

12. How does the success of your students impact the way you feel about your job?

13. In what ways does your job help you grow as a person or as a professional? Do you feel you are becoming better at what you do?

14. What parts of your daily teaching tasks do you find most interesting or creative, and why?

15. When you feel confident and capable in your teaching, how does that change the way you approach your work and feel about your job?

The fourth section consists of some questions regarding improvement measures.

16. What specific measures could the school administration or the state take to better support your growth and satisfaction as a teacher?

17. If you could change or improve two things in your current working environment to feel more motivated, what would they be and why?

The fifth section consists of some questions regarding overall professional experience.

18. Taking everything into account, how would you describe your overall level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

19. Looking back at your career as a whole, how would you describe the balance between what drives you forward and what weighs you down?

At this point, I would like to thank you warmly once again for your participation in my master's thesis and for the time you dedicated to me. If you wish, I would be happy to inform you electronically about the results of the research.

APPENDIX D “Interview Guide (in Greek)”

ΠΡΩΤΟΚΟΛΛΟ ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗΣ

Τίτλος : « Εργασιακή ικανοποίηση των Ελλήνων εκπαιδευτικών. Διερεύνηση παραγόντων επιρροής και μέτρων βελτίωσης.»

Ημερομηνία : _____

Ερευνήτρια: ΤΕΛΗΠΟΡΑΝΙΔΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑ

Κωδικός συνεντευξιαζόμενου/ης:

Ωρα έναρξης: _____

Ωρα παύσης : _____

Καταρχάς, γνωρίζοντας πόσο φορτωμένο είναι το πρόγραμμα στο σχολείο θα ήθελα να σας ευχαριστήσω πολύ για την προθυμία να συμμετάσχετε στην έρευνά μου. Η βοήθειά σας είναι πραγματικά πολύτιμη για την ολοκλήρωση της διπλωματικής εργασίας μου.

Ο σκοπός της παρούσας έρευνας είναι να διερευνήσει τους παράγοντες που επηρεάζουν την επαγγελματική ικανοποίηση στον κλάδο της εκπαίδευσης και να προτείνει βελτιώσεις για ένα πιο υποστηρικτικό εργασιακό περιβάλλον.

Η παρούσα συνέντευξη αποτελεί το κύριο ερευνητικό εργαλείο της διπλωματικής μου εργασίας, η οποία εκπονείται στο πλαίσιο του Μεταπτυχιακού Προγράμματος Σπουδών στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (MBA) του Ελληνικού Ανοικτού Πανεπιστημίου, με τίτλο: "Η εργασιακή ικανοποίηση των εκπαιδευτικών στην Ελλάδα. Διερεύνηση παραγόντων επιρροής και μέτρων βελτίωσης".

Η παρούσα συνέντευξη έχει δομηθεί γύρω από πέντε βασικές ενότητες και αναμένεται να διαρκέσει 20 με 30 λεπτά.

Πριν ξεκινήσουμε, θα ήθελα να σας διαβεβαιώσω ότι η συζήτησή μας είναι απολύτως εμπιστευτική και διεξάγεται αποκλειστικά για τις ανάγκες της διπλωματικής μου εργασίας. Με

την ολοκλήρωση της συνέντευξης, θα προχωρήσω στην απομαγνητοφώνηση του υλικού και θα σας στείλω το πλήρες κείμενο στην ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση (e-mail) που θα μου υποδείξετε. Η επεξεργασία και η χρήση των δεδομένων στην έρευνά μου, θα πραγματοποιηθεί μόνο κατόπιν δικής σας επιβεβαίωσης, με ένα σχετικό e-mail, ότι το περιεχόμενο αντιστοιχεί με ακρίβεια στις τοποθετήσεις σας. Εφόσον, λοιπόν, συμφωνείτε με τη διαδικασία που περιέγραψα μπορούμε να ξεκινήσουμε τη συζήτησή μας όποτε είστε έτοιμος/ η.

Η πρώτη ενότητα αφορά κάποιες εισαγωγικές ερωτήσεις.

1. Θα μπορούσατε να περιγράψετε το επαγγελματικό σας υπόβαθρο και τον τρέχοντα ρόλο σας στο εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα;
2. Πόσα χρόνια βρίσκεστε στο εκπαιδευτικό επάγγελμα και πόσο καιρό υπηρετείτε στο τρέχον σχολείο σας;
3. Τι ήταν αυτό που σας παρακίνησε αρχικά να ακολουθήσετε μια καριέρα στη διδασκαλία; Σε ποιο βαθμό αυτά τα αρχικά κίνητρα σας καθοδηγούν ακόμα και σήμερα;
4. Πώς θα περιγράφατε μια τυπική εργάσιμη ημέρα στο σχολείο σας;
5. Με λίγα λόγια, πώς θα χαρακτηρίζατε τη γενική ατμόσφαιρα του τρέχοντος σχολικού σας περιβάλλοντος;

Η δεύτερη ενότητα αφορά ερωτήσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με την αποτροπή της δυσαρέσκειας.

6. Πώς θα περιγράφατε την υποστήριξη που λαμβάνετε από τη σχολική ηγεσία; Υπάρχουν συγκεκριμένες πολιτικές που εμποδίζουν ή διευκολύνουν το έργο σας;
7. Πώς επηρεάζει η ποιότητα των σχέσεων με τους συναδέλφους σας το πώς αισθάνεστε στην εργασία σας κάθε μέρα;
8. Πώς έχει επηρεάσει ο μισθός σας την αφοσίωσή σας στη διδασκαλία και τον τρόπο με τον οποίο βλέπετε το επάγγελμά σας με την πάροδο του χρόνου;
9. Πώς επηρεάζει η μονιμότητα ή η εργασιακή ανασφάλεια (αναπληρωτές) της τρέχουσας θέσης σας την καθημερινότητά σας ή τον τρόπο που βλέπετε τη δουλειά σας;
10. Μπορείτε να περιγράψετε μια περίοδο κατά την οποία νιώσατε ιδιαίτερα εξαντλημένος/η (burned out); Πώς επηρέασε αυτό το κίνητρό σας και την καθημερινή σας εργασία;

Η τρίτη ενότητα αφορά ερωτήσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με την ενίσχυση της ικανοποίησης.

11. Πώς αισθάνεστε όταν το έργο σας αναγνωρίζεται από τους μαθητές, τους γονείς ή τους συναδέλφους σας; Αυτή η ανατροφοδότηση αλλάζει τον τρόπο με τον οποίο εργάζεστε;
12. Πώς επηρεάζει η επιτυχία των μαθητών σας τον τρόπο με τον οποίο αισθάνεστε για τη δουλειά σας;
13. Με ποιους τρόπους σας βοηθά η δουλειά σας να εξελιχθείτε ως προσωπικότητα ή ως επαγγελματίας; Αισθάνεστε ότι γίνεστε καλύτερος/η σε αυτό που κάνετε;
14. Ποια μέρη των καθημερινών σας διδακτικών καθηκόντων βρίσκετε πιο ενδιαφέροντα ή δημιουργικά και γιατί;
15. Όταν νιώθετε αυτοπεποίθηση και ικανός/ή στη διδασκαλία σας, πώς αλλάζει αυτό τον τρόπο με τον οποίο προσεγγίζετε την εργασία σας και πώς αισθάνεστε για το επάγγελμά σας;

Η τέταρτη ενότητα αφορά ερωτήσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με μέτρα βελτίωσης.

16. Ποια συγκεκριμένα μέτρα θα μπορούσε να λάβει η διεύθυνση του σχολείου ή η πολιτεία, για να υποστηρίξει καλύτερα την εξέλιξή σας και την ικανοποίησή σας ως εκπαιδευτικού;
17. Αν μπορούσατε να αλλάξετε ή να βελτιώσετε δύο πράγματα στο τρέχον εργασιακό σας περιβάλλον για να νιώθετε μεγαλύτερο κίνητρο, ποια θα ήταν αυτά και γιατί;

Η πέμπτη ενότητα αφορά ερωτήσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με την συνολική επαγγελματική εμπειρία.

18. Λαμβάνοντας τα πάντα υπόψη, πώς θα περιγράφατε το συνολικό επίπεδο της ικανοποίησης ή της δυσαρέσκειάς σας;
19. Κοιτάζοντας πίσω στο σύνολο της καριέρας σας, πώς θα περιγράφατε την ισορροπία ανάμεσα σε αυτά που σας δίνουν ώθηση και σε αυτά που σας επιβαρύνουν;

Σε αυτό το σημείο, θα ήθελα να σας ευχαριστήσω θερμά και πάλι για τη συμμετοχή σας στην διπλωματική μου εργασία και για τον χρόνο που μου αφιερώσατε. Εάν το επιθυμείτε, θα χαρώ να σας ενημερώσω ηλεκτρονικά για τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας.

APPENDIX E “Sample Interview Transcript (in Greek)”

4^η ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗ

X.T: Καλησπέρα

INT4: Καλησπέρα

X.T: Καταρχάς, γνωρίζοντας πόσο φορτωμένο είναι το πρόγραμμα στο σχολείο θα ήθελα να σας ευχαριστήσω πολύ για την προθυμία να συμμετάσχετε στην έρευνά μου. Η βοήθειά σας είναι πραγματικά πολύτιμη για την ολοκλήρωση της διπλωματικής εργασίας μου.

INT4: Χαίρομαι.

X.T: Ο σκοπός της παρούσας μελέτης είναι να διερευνήσει τους παράγοντες που επηρεάζουν την επαγγελματική ικανοποίηση στον κλάδο της εκπαίδευσης και να προτείνει βελτιώσεις για ένα πιο υποστηρικτικό εργασιακό περιβάλλον. Η παρούσα συνέντευξη έχει δομηθεί γύρω από πέντε βασικές ενότητες και αναμένεται να διαρκέσει 20 με 30 λεπτά. Αποτελεί το κύριο ερευνητικό εργαλείο της διπλωματικής μου εργασίας, η οποία εκπονείται στο πλαίσιο του Μεταπτυχιακού Προγράμματος Σπουδών στη Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων (MBA) του Ελληνικού Ανοικτού Πανεπιστημίου, με τίτλο: "Η εργασιακή ικανοποίηση των εκπαιδευτικών στην Ελλάδα. Διερεύνηση παραγόντων επιρροής και μέτρων βελτίωσης".

Πριν ξεκινήσουμε, θα ήθελα να σας διαβεβαιώσω ότι η συζήτησή μας είναι απολύτως εμπιστευτική και διεξάγεται αποκλειστικά για τις ανάγκες της διπλωματικής μου εργασίας. Με την ολοκλήρωση της συνέντευξης, θα προχωρήσω στην απομαγνητοφώνηση του υλικού και θα σας στείλω το πλήρες κείμενο στην ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση (e-mail) που θα μου υποδείξετε. Η επεξεργασία και η χρήση των δεδομένων στην έρευνά μου, θα πραγματοποιηθεί μόνο κατόπιν δικής σας επιβεβαίωσης, με ένα σχετικό e-mail, ότι το περιεχόμενο αντιστοιχεί με ακρίβεια στις τοποθετήσεις σας. Εφόσον, λοιπόν, συμφωνείτε με τη διαδικασία που περιέγραψα μπορούμε να ξεκινήσουμε τη συζήτησή μας όποτε είστε έτοιμος.

INT4: Ας ξεκινήσουμε.

XT: 1. Η πρώτη ενότητα αφορά κάποιες εισαγωγικές ερωτήσεις. Θα μπορούσατε να περιγράψετε το επαγγελματικό σας υπόβαθρο και τον τρέχοντα ρόλο σας στο εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα;

INT4: Είμαι Φυσικός, με πάνω από 22 χρόνια στην τάξη και ένα Μεταπτυχιακό στην Κβαντική Οπτική. Σήμερα υπηρετώ σε ένα Γενικό Λύκειο, όπου εκτός από τη διδασκαλία των μαθημάτων προσανατολισμού, έχω αναλάβει και την οργάνωση του εργαστηρίου Φυσικών Επιστημών. Παρά τα χρόνια που έχουν περάσει, η καθημερινή μου επαφή με το αντικείμενο και η πρόκληση του να εξηγήσω σύνθετα φαινόμενα στους εφήβους παραμένει η κύρια πηγή της ενέργειάς μου. Νιώθω ότι ο ρόλος μου δεν είναι απλώς μεταδοτικός, αλλά ουσιαστικά παιδαγωγικός, προσπαθώ να εμπνεύσω στους μαθητές μου την κριτική σκέψη που απαιτεί η επιστήμη μας.

XT:2 Πόσα χρόνια βρίσκεστε στο εκπαιδευτικό επάγγελμα και πόσο καιρό υπηρετείτε στο τρέχον σχολείο σας;

INT4: Λοιπόν όπως σας είπα, κλείνω φέτος τα 22 χρόνια στην εκπαίδευση. Πέρασαν γρήγορα αν και στην αρχή γύρισα αρκετά σχολεία ως αναπληρωτής, όπως όλοι μας άλλωστε. Στο τρέχον σχολείο, εδώ στο Λύκειο, είμαι τα τελευταία 8 χρόνια. Είναι σημαντικό αυτό, ξέρετε γιατί μετά από τόσα χρόνια στο ίδιο περιβάλλον, νιώθεις το σχολείο λίγο σαν σπιτί σου. Έχεις χτίσει μια σχέση εμπιστοσύνης με τους συναδέλφους αλλά και με την τοπική κοινωνία. Ξέρεις πια τα πρόσωπα, τις οικογένειες και αυτό σου δίνει μια ηρεμία να κάνεις τη δουλειά σου σωστά.

XT:3 Τι ήταν αυτό που σας παρακίνησε αρχικά να ακολουθήσετε μια καριέρα στη διδασκαλία; Σε ποιο βαθμό αυτά τα αρχικά κίνητρα σάς καθοδηγούν ακόμα και σήμερα;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, για μένα ήταν πάντα η αγάπη για τη Φυσική. Ήθελα να καταλάβω πώς λειτουργεί ο κόσμος και, κυρίως, να το μεταδώσω αυτό. Θυμάμαι είχα έναν καθηγητή στο Λύκειο που με ενέπνευσε πολύ και είπα "αυτό θέλω να κάνω". Ήθελα αυτή την επαφή, τη μετάδοση της γνώσης. Τώρα, μετά από τόσα χρόνια προφανώς η κούραση υπάρχει, δεν είναι όλα ρόδινα. Αλλά, ξέρετε, όταν βλέπω έναν μαθητή να του φωτίζεται το πρόσωπο γιατί κατάλαβε κάτι δύσκολο, εκεί λέω "ναι, γι' αυτό είμαι εδώ". Αυτό το αρχικό κίνητρο, αυτή η χαρά της διδασκαλίας, είναι που με κρατάει όρθιο και σήμερα, παρά τις δυσκολίες του συστήματος.

XT:4 Πώς θα περιγράφατε μια τυπική εργάσιμη ημέρα στο σχολείο σας;

INT4: Μια τυπική μέρα κοιτάζτε, ξεκινάει πάντα με αρκετό τρέξιμο. Συνήθως πάω λίγο νωρίτερα για να προετοιμάσω το εργαστήριο. Μετά είναι οι ώρες στην τάξη. Ξέρετε η επαφή με τα παιδιά στο Λύκειο έχει μια ένταση, αλλά είναι και αυτό που με κρατάει σε εγρήγορση. Στα διαλείμματα εντάξει, υπάρχει η κλασική φασαρία, συζητάμε λίγο με τους συναδέλφους στο γραφείο για κάποια θέματα των μαθητών ή για τον προγραμματισμό. Δεν σας κρύβω ότι η γραφειοκρατία, τα χαρτιά, οι καταχωρήσεις αυτά είναι το κουραστικό κομμάτι, αλλά πώς να το πω; Όταν κλείνει η πόρτα της τάξης και ξεκινάμε να λύνουμε μια άσκηση ή να συζητάμε για τη Φυσική, εκεί η μέρα αποκτά νόημα. Φεύγω κουρασμένος, αλλά με μια αίσθηση ότι κάτι ουσιαστικό έγινε σήμερα.

XT:5 Με λίγα λόγια, πώς θα χαρακτηρίζατε τη γενική ατμόσφαιρα του τρέχοντος σχολικού σας περιβάλλοντος;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, θα τη χαρακτήριζα πολύ θετική, σχεδόν οικογενειακή θα έλεγα. Προφανώς, όπως σε κάθε εργασιακό χώρο, υπάρχουν και οι εντάσεις ή οι διαφωνίες, αλλά το κλίμα στο γραφείο των καθηγητών είναι υποστηρικτικό. Υπάρχει μια αίσθηση συναδελφικότητας. Αν κάποιος έχει ένα πρόβλημα, θα τον βοηθήσουμε, θα συζητήσουμε για το πώς θα χειριστούμε μια δύσκολη τάξη. Επίσης, η διεύθυνση είναι ανοιχτή σε προτάσεις, δεν νιώθεις ότι σε πνίγει ο έλεγχος. Αυτή η ηρεμία και η αλληλοεκτίμηση, νομίζω ότι είναι αυτό που κάνει την καθημερινότητά μας ευχάριστη, παρά το φόρτο εργασίας.

XT:6 Η δεύτερη ενότητα αφορά ερωτήσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με την αποτροπή της δυσαρέσκειας. Πώς θα περιγράφατε την υποστήριξη που λαμβάνετε από τη σχολική ηγεσία; Υπάρχουν συγκεκριμένες πολιτικές που εμποδίζουν ή διευκολύνουν το έργο σας;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, η αλήθεια είναι ότι νιώθω αρκετά τυχερός με τη διεύθυνση που έχουμε. Υπάρχει μια σχέση εμπιστοσύνης. Για παράδειγμα, όταν ζήτησα κάποια νέα υλικά για το εργαστήριο ή όταν πρότεινα να κάνουμε μια εκπαιδευτική επίσκεψη εκτός προγράμματος, η ηγεσία ήταν πολύ υποστηρικτική και προσπάθησε να λύσει τα γραφειοκρατικά θέματα άμεσα. Τώρα, όσον αφορά τις πολιτικές ξέρετε, το σύστημα είναι από τη φύση του δυσκίνητο. Υπάρχουν πολλές εγκύκλιοι και μια "χαρτούρα" που συχνά μας τρώει χρόνο από την προετοιμασία του μαθήματος. Αλλά η ηγεσία εδώ προσπαθεί να πώς να το πω; Να λειτουργεί ως φίλτρο. Μας διευκολύνουν ώστε να

μην "πνιγόμαστε" στη γραφειοκρατία και να εστιάζουμε στην τάξη. Αυτό το "μαξιλάρι" που μας προσφέρουν είναι πολύ σημαντικό για να κάνουμε τη δουλειά μας.

ΧΤ:7 Πώς επηρεάζει η ποιότητα των σχέσεων με τους συναδέλφους σας το πώς αισθάνεστε στην εργασία σας κάθε μέρα;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, οι σχέσεις με τους συναδέλφους είναι πώς να το πω; Είναι το παν για την ψυχική μας ισορροπία. Ξέρετε στο σχολείο η δουλειά στην τάξη είναι μοναχική, κλείνεις την πόρτα και είσαι μόνος σου. Οπότε, το να βγαίνεις στο διάλειμμα και να έχεις έναν άνθρωπο να πεις μια κουβέντα, να γελάσεις, να μοιραστείς την απογοήτευση από ένα μάθημα που δεν πήγε καλά, είναι καθοριστικό. Εδώ στο σχολείο έχουμε φτιάξει μια ομάδα που υπάρχει αλληλοβοήθεια. Αν δω ότι ένας συνάδελφος είναι πιεσμένος, θα τρέξω να τον καλύψω, και το ίδιο θα κάνει κι εκείνος. Αυτό το κλίμα αυτή η ασφάλεια που νιώθεις ότι δεν είσαι μόνος σου, με κάνει να έρχομαι το πρωί με όρεξη, ακόμα κι αν είμαι κουρασμένος. Αν το κλίμα στο γραφείο ήταν "πολεμικό", νομίζω δεν θα άντεχα ούτε μια εβδομάδα.

ΧΤ:8 Πώς έχει επηρεάσει ο μισθός σας την αφοσίωσή σας στη διδασκαλία και τον τρόπο με τον οποίο βλέπετε το επάγγελμά σας με την πάροδο του χρόνου;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, αν πω ότι ο μισθός είναι ικανοποιητικός, θα πω ψέματα. Όλοι ξέρουμε την κατάσταση ειδικά μετά την κρίση, οι απολαβές μας μειώθηκαν πολύ ενώ οι απαιτήσεις ανέβηκαν. Πώς με επηρεάζει; Σίγουρα είναι μια πηγή άγχους στην καθημερινότητα, ξέρετε, οι υποχρεώσεις τρέχουν. Αλλά πώς να το πω; Δεν άφησα ποτέ το οικονομικό να μπει μέσα στην τάξη. Όταν μπαίνω για μάθημα, δεν σκέφτομαι πόσα παίρνω την ώρα. Η αφοσίωσή μου πηγάζει από την ευθύνη που έχω απέναντι στα παιδιά και από την αγάπη για τη Φυσική. Προφανώς, αν οι απολαβές ήταν καλύτερες, θα ένιωθα μεγαλύτερη αναγνώριση από το κράτος, θα ήταν μια ηθική επιβράβευση αλλά δεν είναι ο μισθός ο λόγος που διδάσκω. Αν ήταν έτσι, θα είχα παραιτηθεί προ πολλού.

ΧΤ:9 Πώς επηρεάζει η μονιμότητα ή η εργασιακή ανασφάλεια (αναπληρωτές) της τρέχουσας θέσης σας την καθημερινότητά σας ή τον τρόπο που βλέπετε τη δουλειά σας;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε η μονιμότητα, για να είμαστε ειλικρινείς, είναι η βάση που μου δίνει την απαραίτητη ηρεμία. Ξέρετε έχοντας περάσει από το στάδιο του αναπληρωτή στα νιάτα μου, θυμάμαι αυτό το άγχος της βαλίτσας κάθε χρόνο, το "πού θα είμαι του χρόνου;". Τώρα, το ότι ξέρω ότι αυτό είναι το σχολείο μου, μου επιτρέπει να σχεδιάζω μακροπρόθεσμα. Μου δίνει την ελευθερία, ας πούμε, να ξεκινήσω ένα πρόγραμμα στο εργαστήριο που θα κρατήσει δύο χρόνια, ή να χτίσω μια βαθιά σχέση με τους μαθητές. Αν ένιωθα ανασφάλεια νομίζω θα αναλωνόμουν στο πώς θα επιβιώσω και όχι στο πώς θα εξελιχθώ. Η μονιμότητα λοιπόν δεν με κάνει να επαναπαύομαι, αλλά μου δίνει το "έδαφος" για να είμαι δημιουργικός χωρίς να φοβάμαι.

XT:10 Μπορείτε να περιγράψετε μια περίοδο κατά την οποία νιώσατε ιδιαίτερα εξαντλημένος/η (burned out); Πώς επηρέασε αυτό το κίνητρό σας και την καθημερινή σας εργασία;

INT4: Ναι, υπήρξε μια τέτοια περίοδος, στην καραντίνα. Ήταν η χρονιά που έπρεπε να προετοιμάσω τη Γ' Λυκείου για τις Πανελλήνιες μέσω υπολογιστή, για πρώτη φορά. Ένιωσα ότι άδειασα τελείως. Ξέρετε, η Φυσική στον πίνακα είναι δύσκολη, φανταστείτε να προσπαθείς να εξηγήσεις ηλεκτρομαγνητισμό από μια κάμερα χωρίς να βλέπεις τα μάτια των παιδιών, χωρίς να ξέρεις αν σε παρακολουθούν. Ένιωθα μια τρομερή ευθύνη στην πλάτη μου, μην μείνουν πίσω τα παιδιά στην ύλη. Πώς με επηρέασε; Για ένα διάστημα πήγαινα "στον αυτόματο". Το κίνητρό μου είχε θαμπώσει από την κούραση. Έκανα το μάθημα, αλλά δεν είχα εκείνη τη σπίθα, εκείνο το κέφι. Ευτυχώς, όταν είδα τα αποτελέσματα των παιδιών το καλοκαίρι και κατάλαβα ότι τα είχαμε καταφέρει παρά τις αντίξοες συνθήκες εκεί πήρα πάλι πάνω μου. Εκείνη η επιτυχία των παιδιών ήταν η δικαίωση που με έβγαλε από το burnout.

XT:11 Η τρίτη ενότητα αφορά ερωτήσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με την ενίσχυση της ικανοποίησης. Πώς αισθάνεστε όταν το έργο σας αναγνωρίζεται από τους μαθητές, τους γονείς ή τους συναδέλφους σας; Αυτή η ανατροφοδότηση αλλάζει τον τρόπο με τον οποίο εργάζεστε;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε είναι το μεγαλύτερο βραβείο, αν θέλετε. Όταν ένας μαθητής, μετά από χρόνια, σε σταματάει στο δρόμο και σου λέει "Κύριε, θυμάμαι εκείνο το πείραμα που κάναμε", ή όταν ένας γονιός έρχεται και σου σφίγγει το χέρι γιατί το παιδί του αγάπησε τις επιστήμες εκεί νιώθεις ότι η κούραση φεύγει. Πώς με επηρεάζει; Με γεμίζει ευθύνη, αλλά με την καλή έννοια. Με κάνει

να θέλω να γίνω ακόμα καλύτερος, να ψάξω το "κάτι παραπάνω" για το επόμενο μάθημα. Η αναγνώριση από τους συναδέλφους επίσης το να σου ζητήσουν τη γνώμη σου για κάτι, σου δίνει την αίσθηση ότι ανήκεις σε μια ομάδα που παράγει έργο. Δεν αλλάζει τον τρόπο που δουλεύω ως προς την αξιοπρέπεια, πάντα προσπαθώ αλλά σίγουρα δίνει μια άλλη μια άλλη ώθηση, μια άλλη ενέργεια στην καθημερινότητα.

XT:12 Πώς επηρεάζει η επιτυχία των μαθητών σας τον τρόπο με τον οποίο αισθάνεστε για τη δουλειά σας;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, η επιτυχία των μαθητών είναι πώς να το πω; Είναι ο λόγος που κάνω αυτή τη δουλειά. Όταν βλέπω ένα παιδί που δυσκολευόταν, ας πούμε, στις δυνάμεις ή στην ενέργεια, να καταφέρνει τελικά να λύσει μια σύνθετη άσκηση εκεί νιώθω μια τεράστια δικαίωση. Με κάνει να αισθάνομαι ότι ο κόπος μου, οι ώρες στο εργαστήριο, η προσπάθεια στην τάξη... ότι όλα αυτά έπιασαν τόπο. Ξέρετε η επιτυχία δεν είναι μόνο οι βαθμοί στις Πανελλήνιες. Είναι και το να δεις το ενδιαφέρον τους να ζυπνάει. Αυτό μου δίνει μια απίστευτη ενέργεια. Με κάνει να νιώθω περήφανος για το επάγγελμά μου και με παρακινεί να προσπαθήσω ακόμα περισσότερο την επόμενη μέρα. Είναι η καλύτερη επιβεβαίωση ότι ότι κάνω κάτι που έχει νόημα.

XT:13 Με ποιους τρόπους σας βοηθά η δουλειά σας να εξελιχθείτε ως προσωπικότητα ή ως επαγγελματίας; Αισθάνεστε ότι γίνεστε καλύτερος/η σε αυτό που κάνετε;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, η δουλειά αυτή πώς να το πω; Είναι ένα διαρκές σχολείο και για μένα τον ίδιο. Ως επαγγελματίας, σίγουρα γίνεσαι καλύτερος. Η Φυσική εξελίσσεται, οπότε πρέπει να διαβάζω, να βρίσκω νέους τρόπους να εξηγήω τα φαινόμενα. Αλλά κυρίως με έχει αλλάξει ως προσωπικότητα. Έχω μάθει να έχω απίστευτη υπομονή, να ακούω πραγματικά τον άλλον να μπαίνω στη θέση του μαθητή που δυσκολεύεται. Αισθάνομαι ότι κάθε χρόνο γίνομαι λίγο πιο σοφός στον τρόπο που χειρίζομαι τους ανθρώπους. Αν σταματούσα να νιώθω ότι μαθαίνω κι εγώ από τα παιδιά ή από το αντικείμενό μου, τότε νομίζω θα είχε τελειώσει η διαδρομή μου στην εκπαίδευση. Αλλά ναι, νιώθω ότι κάθε μέρα προσθέτω ένα μικρό λιθαράκι στην εμπειρία μου.

XT:14 Ποια μέρη των καθημερινών σας διδακτικών καθηκόντων βρίσκετε πιο ενδιαφέροντα ή δημιουργικά και γιατί;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, χωρίς δεύτερη σκέψη, το πιο δημιουργικό κομμάτι είναι το εργαστήριο και ο σχεδιασμός των πειραμάτων. Ξέρετε, η Φυσική δεν είναι μόνο εξισώσεις στον πίνακα. Όταν στήνω μια διάταξη για την οπτική ή τον ηλεκτρισμό και βλέπω τα παιδιά να απορούν στην αρχή και μετά να καταλαβαίνουν τον νόμο μέσα από την παρατήρηση, εκεί νιώθω δημιουργικός. Επίσης, μου αρέσει πολύ να βρίσκω πώς να το πω; Παραδείγματα από την καθημερινή ζωή. Να τους εξηγώ γιατί ο ουρανός είναι μπλε ή πώς λειτουργεί το κινητό τους μέσω των κυμάτων. Αυτή η γέφυρα ανάμεσα στη θεωρία και την πραγματικότητα είναι που με κρατάει ζωντανό. Γιατί εκεί βλέπεις ότι η γνώση αποκτά σάρκα και οστά, δεν είναι απλά νούμερα σε ένα φυλλάδιο.

XT15: Όταν νιώθετε αυτοπεποίθηση και ικανή στη διδασκαλία σας, πώς αλλάζει αυτό τον τρόπο με τον οποίο προσεγγίζετε την εργασία σας και πώς αισθάνεστε για το επάγγελμά σας;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, η αυτοπεποίθηση στη διδασκαλία έρχεται με τα χρόνια, αλλά είναι αυτό που σου επιτρέπει να "απελευθερωθείς" από το βιβλίο. Όταν νιώθω σίγουρος για το αντικείμενό μου αισθάνομαι ότι μπορώ να διαχειριστώ οποιαδήποτε ερώτηση, ακόμα και την πιο δύσκολη ή την πιο "κουφή" που θα κάνει ένας μαθητής. Αυτό αλλάζει την προσέγγισή μου γιατί πώς να το πω; Με κάνει πιο τολμηρό. Θα δοκιμάσω ένα πιο δύσκολο πείραμα, θα κάνω μια συζήτηση εκτός ύλης που συνδέει τη Φυσική με τη φιλοσοφία. Όταν νιώθεις ικανός, το επάγγελμα σταματά να είναι μια διεκπεραίωση "ύλης" και γίνεται μια ζωντανή εμπειρία. Αισθάνομαι περήφανος τότε, γιατί νιώθω ότι δεν είμαι απλά ένας μεταφορέας πληροφοριών, αλλά ένας πραγματικός δάσκαλος που ελέγχει το "σκάφος".

XT: 16 Η τέταρτη ενότητα αφορά ερωτήσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με μέτρα βελτίωσης. Ποια συγκεκριμένα μέτρα θα μπορούσε να λάβει η διεύθυνση του σχολείου ή η πολιτεία, για να υποστηρίξει καλύτερα την εξέλιξή σας και την ικανοποίησή σας ως εκπαιδευτικού;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, αν μιλήσουμε για την πολιτεία, το πρώτο και κύριο είναι η μείωση της γραφειοκρατίας. Χρειαζόμαστε χρόνο για να προετοιμάσουμε το μάθημα, όχι να συμπληρώνουμε ατέλειωτες φόρμες. Επίσης, η ουσιαστική επιμόρφωση. Όχι σεμινάρια απλά για να γίνουν, αλλά

πρακτική εξάσκηση σε νέες τεχνολογίες και πειράματα. Τώρα, σε επίπεδο διεύθυνσης, αυτό που βοηθάει είναι η εμπιστοσύνη. Να μας δίνουν την ελευθερία να παίρνουμε πρωτοβουλίες, να στηρίζουν οικονομικά και ηθικά τη συντήρηση του εργαστηρίου. Και φυσικά δεν μπορούμε να αγνοήσουμε το οικονομικό. Ένας αξιοπρεπής μισθός είναι δείγμα σεβασμού στο έργο μας. Δεν ζητάμε να πλουτίσουμε, αλλά να νιώθουμε ότι το κράτος αναγνωρίζει τη δουλειά που κάνουμε εδώ μέσα κάθε μέρα.

XT: 17 Αν μπορούσατε να αλλάξετε ή να βελτιώσετε δύο πράγματα στο τρέχον εργασιακό σας περιβάλλον για να νιώθετε μεγαλύτερο κίνητρο, ποια θα ήταν αυτά και γιατί;

INT4: Αν έπρεπε να διαλέξω μόνο δύο το πρώτο θα ήταν σίγουρα ο εκσυγχρονισμός των υποδομών και του εξοπλισμού. Ξέρετε, ως Φυσικός, το εργαστήριο είναι το "σπίτι" μου. Αν είχαμε έναν μόνιμο προϋπολογισμό για αναλώσιμα και σύγχρονα όργανα, η διδασκαλία μου θα γινόταν πολύ πιο δημιουργική και τα παιδιά θα ενθουσιάζονταν περισσότερο. Το δεύτερο θα ήταν η μείωση του εξωδιδακτικού φόρτου. Θα ήθελα οι ώρες που αναλώνουμε σε εφημερίες, πρακτικά και γραφειοκρατία, να γίνονταν ώρες συνεργασίας με τους συναδέλφους ή προετοιμασίας πειραμάτων. Γιατί το κάνω; Γιατί αν φύγει το "βάρος" της γραφειοκρατίας και έρθει η "χαρά" της πρακτικής Φυσικής, τότε το κίνητρο πολλαπλασιάζεται. Νιώθεις ότι είσαι πραγματικά επιστήμονας και δάσκαλος, όχι απλά ένας διοικητικός υπάλληλος που τυχαίνει να ξέρει Φυσική.

XT18: Η πέμπτη ενότητα αφορά ερωτήσεις που έχουν να κάνουν με την συνολική επαγγελματική εμπειρία. Λαμβάνοντας τα πάντα υπόψη, πώς θα περιγράφατε το συνολικό επίπεδο της ικανοποίησης ή της δυσαρέσκειάς σας;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε, αν έπρεπε να βάλω ένα πρόσημο, αυτό θα ήταν σίγουρα θετικό. Παρά τις δυσκολίες παρά το ότι ο μισθός είναι πενιχρός για τις ευθύνες που έχουμε και παρά τη γραφειοκρατία που μας πνίγει, νιώθω ικανοποιημένος. Ξέρετε, η ικανοποίηση για μένα δεν έρχεται από τις συνθήκες, αλλά από το αποτέλεσμα μέσα στην τάξη. Όταν βλέπω ότι η δουλειά μου πιάνει τόπο, όταν νιώθω ότι προσφέρω κάτι ουσιαστικό σε αυτά τα παιδιά, εκεί όλα τα άλλα μπαίνουν σε δεύτερη μοίρα. Θα έλεγα λοιπόν ότι είμαι ένας "γεμάτος" επαγγελματίας.

Κουρασμένος, ναι, ενίοτε απογοητευμένος από το σύστημα, αλλά στην ουσία βαθιά ικανοποιημένος από το λειτούργημα που επιτελώ.

XT: 19 Κοιτάζοντας πίσω στο σύνολο της καριέρας σας, πώς θα περιγράφατε την ισορροπία ανάμεσα σε αυτά που σας δίνουν ώθηση και σε αυτά που σας επιβαρύνουν;

INT4: Κοιτάζτε αν το δω συνολικά, η ισορροπία είναι λεπτή, αλλά κλίνει προς το θετικό. Από τη μία πλευρά, υπάρχει το "βάρος". Η γραφειοκρατία που αυξάνεται, η έλλειψη πόρων, η αίσθηση ότι η πολιτεία δεν σε εκτιμά πάντα... αυτά σε τραβάνε κάτω, σε κουράζουν. Από την άλλη όμως, υπάρχει η "ώθηση". Αυτή η ενέργεια που παίρνεις μέσα στην τάξη, η χαρά της ανακάλυψης με τα παιδιά, το ότι βλέπεις ανθρώπους να διαμορφώνονται μπροστά σου. Αν έπρεπε να το περιγράψω με όρους Φυσικής, θα έλεγα ότι οι δυνάμεις που με σπρώχνουν μπροστά έχουν μεγαλύτερη "ροπή". Οι δυσκολίες είναι καθημερινές και σταθερές, αλλά οι στιγμές ικανοποίησης, παρόλο που είναι πιο σπάνιες, είναι τόσο ισχυρές που εξισορροπούν τα πάντα. Φεύγω από το σχολείο μετά από 22 χρόνια και νιώθω ότι, παρά τη φθορά, το ισοζύγιο είναι κερδισμένο.

XT: Σε αυτό το σημείο, θα ήθελα να σας ευχαριστήσω θερμά και πάλι για τη συμμετοχή σας στην διπλωματική μου εργασία και για τον χρόνο που μου αφιερώσατε. Εάν το επιθυμείτε, θα χαρώ να σας ενημερώσω ηλεκτρονικά για τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας.

INT4: Ναι, φυσικά.

APPENDIX F “Sample of Translated Interview Transcript”

4th INTERVIEW

C.T: Good afternoon.

INT4: Good afternoon.

C.T: First of all, knowing how busy your school schedule is, I would like to thank you very much for your willingness to participate in my research. Your help is truly invaluable for the completion of my master’s thesis.

INT4: I am glad.

C.T: The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors affecting job satisfaction within the education sector and to propose improvements for a more supportive work environment. This interview is structured around five key sections and is expected to last 20 to 30 minutes. It serves as the primary research tool for my master’s thesis, conducted as part of the Master in Business Administration (MBA) program at the Hellenic Open University, titled: “Job satisfaction among educators in Greece. Investigating influential factors and improvement measures”.

Before we begin, I would like to assure you that our discussion is strictly confidential and is conducted exclusively for the purposes of my master's thesis. Upon completion of the interview, I will proceed with the transcription of the audio material and send the full text to the e-mail address you provide. The processing and use of data in my research will only take place after your confirmation, via a relevant e-mail, that the content accurately reflects your positions. Therefore, if you agree with the process described, we can start our discussion whenever you are ready.

INT4: Let's start.

C.T:1 The first section consists of some introductory questions. Could you please describe your professional background and your current role within the education system?

INT4: I am a Physicist with over 22 years of teaching experience and a Master's degree in Quantum Optics. Currently, I serve in a public Senior High School, where, in addition to teaching advanced placement Physics, I am responsible for managing the Science Laboratory. Despite my long tenure, my daily engagement with the subject matter and the challenge of simplifying complex phenomena for adolescents remain my primary sources of motivation. I perceive my role not merely as an instructor, but fundamentally as an educator; I strive to inspire in my students the critical thinking that our science demands.

C.T: 2 How many years have you been in the teaching profession, and how long have you been serving at your current school?

INT4: Well as I mentioned, I am completing 22 years in education this year. They went by fast although in the beginning, I moved around quite a bit as a substitute teacher, like everyone else did. In my current school, here at the High School, I've been for the last 8 years. This is important, you know because after so many years in the same environment, you feel the school is a bit like like your home. You've built a relationship of trust with colleagues and the local community. You know the faces, the families and this gives you a sense of calm to do your job properly.

C.T:3 What originally motivated you to pursue a career in teaching? To what extent do those initial motivations still drive you today?

INT4: Look, for me it was always the love for Physics. I wanted to understand how the world works and, most importantly, to communicate that. I remember I had a teacher in high school who inspired me a lot and I said, 'this is what I want to do.' I wanted that connection, the transmission of knowledge. Now, after all these years obviously there is exhaustion, it's not all rosy. But, you know, when I see a student's their face light up because they understood something difficult, that's when I say, 'yes, this is why I am here.' This original motive, this joy of teaching, is what keeps me going today, despite the difficulties of the system.

C.T: 4 How would you describe a typical workday at your school?

INT4: A typical day look, it always starts with a lot of rushing around. I usually arrive a bit earlier to prepare the lab. Then it's the hours in the classroom. You know interacting with high school kids has a certain intensity, but it also keeps me engaged. During breaks alright, there's the typical noise; we chat a bit with colleagues in the staffroom about student issues or lesson planning. I won't lie to you, the bureaucracy, the paperwork, the data entry those are the exhausting parts, but... how can I put it? When the classroom door closes and we start solving a problem or discussing Physics, that's when the day gains meaning. I leave tired, but with a sense that that something substantial was achieved today.

C.T: 5 In a few words, how would you characterize the general atmosphere of your current school environment?

INT4: Look, I would characterize it as very positive, almost like a family, I'd say. Obviously, as in any workplace, there are tensions or disagreements, but the atmosphere in the staffroom is supportive. There's a sense of camaraderie. If someone has a problem, we'll help them; we'll discuss how to handle a difficult class. Also, the administration is open to suggestions; you don't feel smothered by control. This calmness and mutual respect, I think, is what makes our daily routine pleasant, despite the heavy workload.

C.T: 6 The second section consists of some questions regarding factors which prevent dissatisfaction. How would you describe the support you receive from the school leadership? Are there specific policies that hinder or help your work?

INT4: Look, the truth is I feel quite lucky with our current administration. There is a relationship of trust. For instance, when I requested some new materials for the lab or suggested an extracurricular educational visit, the leadership was very supportive and tried to resolve the bureaucratic issues immediately. Now, regarding policies you know, the system is inherently rigid. There are numerous circulars and 'paperwork' that often consume time meant for lesson prep. However, the leadership here tries to how can I put it? To act as a filter. They facilitate us so that we don't get 'suffocated' by bureaucracy and can focus on the classroom. This 'buffer' they provide is very important for us to do our jobs.

C.T: 7 How does the quality of your relationships with colleagues affect how you feel at work each day?

INT4: Look, the relationships with colleagues are how can I put it? They are everything for our mental balance. You know in school, the work inside the classroom is solitary; you close the door and you are on your own. So, coming out during the break and having someone to talk to, to laugh with, to share the frustration of a lesson that didn't go well, is crucial. Here at the school, we've built a team where there is mutual support. If I see a colleague is stressed, I'll rush to cover for them, and they'd do the same for me. This atmosphere this security of feeling that you are not alone, makes me come in the morning with enthusiasm, even if I'm tired. If the climate in the staffroom were 'hostile', I don't think I'd last a single week.

C.T: 8 How has your salary affected your commitment to teaching and the way you see your profession over time?

INT4: Look, if I were to say the salary is satisfactory, I'd be lying. We all know the situation does it affect me? It's certainly a source of stress in daily life, you know, with bills piling up. But how can I put it? I've never let the financial aspect enter the classroom. When I go in to teach, I don't think about how much I'm being paid per hour. My commitment stems from the responsibility I have towards the kids and from the love of Physics. Obviously, if the pay were better, I'd feel more recognized by the state, it would be a form of moral reward but salary isn't the reason I teach. If it were, I would have quit long ago.

C.T: 9 Does the stability or instability of your current position affect your daily life or the way you see your job?

INT4: Look tenure, to be honest, is the foundation that gives me the necessary peace of mind. You know having gone through the substitute teacher stage in my youth, I remember that 'suitcase anxiety' every year—the 'where will I be next year?' thought. Now, the fact that I know this is my school it allows me to plan long-term. It gives me the freedom, for example, to start a lab project that will last two years, or to build a deep rapport with the students. If I felt

insecure I think I'd be consumed by how to survive rather than how to evolve. So, tenure doesn't make me complacent; it gives me the 'ground' to be creative without being afraid.

C.T: 10 Can you describe a period when you felt particularly burned out? How did that affect your motivation and your daily work?

INT4: Yes, there was such a period, during the lockdown. It was the year when I had to prepare the Senior class for the National Exams, Panellinies through a computer for the first time. I felt completely drained. You know, teaching Physics on a blackboard is hard enough; imagine trying to explain electromagnetism through a camera without seeing the kids' eyes, without knowing if they're following you. I felt a massive responsibility on my shoulders, fearing the students might fall behind on the curriculum. How did it affect me? or a while, I was on 'autopilot.' My motivation had dimmed due to exhaustion. I delivered the lessons, but I didn't have that spark, that enthusiasm. Fortunately, when I saw the students' results in the summer and realized we had made it despite the adverse conditions that's when I bounced back. That success of the students was the validation that pulled me out of burnout.

C.T: 11 The third section consists of some questions regarding factors which promote satisfaction. How do you feel when your work is noticed by students, parents, or your colleagues? Does this feedback change the way you work?

INT4: Look it's the greatest reward, if you will. When a student, years later, stops you in the street and says, 'Sir, I remember that experiment we did,' or when a parent comes and shakes your hand because their child fell in love with science that's when you feel the exhaustion melt away. How does it affect me? It fills me with responsibility, but in a good way. It makes me want to become even better, to look for that 'extra something' for the next lesson. Recognition from colleagues as well having them ask for your opinion about something, gives you the sense that you belong to a team that produces meaningful work. It doesn't change the way I work in terms of integrity—I always try my best—but it certainly gives a different boost, a different energy to my daily routine.

C.T: 12 How does the success of your students impact the way you feel about your job?

INT4: Look, the success of my students is how can I put it? It is the very reason I do this job. When I see a student who was struggling, let's say, with forces or energy, finally managing to solve a complex problem I feel a sense of immense validation. It makes me feel that my effort, the hours in the lab, the work in the classroom that it all paid off. You know success isn't just about the grades in the National Exams. It's also about seeing their interest awaken. This gives me an incredible energy. It makes me feel proud of my profession and motivates me to try even harder the next day. It is the best confirmation that I am doing something meaningful.

C.T: 13 In what ways does your job help you grow as a person or as a professional? Do you feel you are becoming better at what you do?

INT4: Look, this job how can I put it? It's a constant school for me as well. As a professional you definitely become better. Physics evolves, so I have to keep reading, finding new ways to explain phenomena. But mainly it has changed me as a person. I've learned to have incredible patience, to truly listen to others to put myself in the shoes of a student who is struggling. I feel that every year I become a bit wiser in the way I handle people. If I stopped feeling that I'm also learning from the kids or from my subject then I think my journey in education would be over. But yes, I feel that every day I'm adding a small stone to my foundation of experience.

C.T: 14 What parts of your daily teaching tasks do you find most interesting or creative, and why?

INT4: Look, without a second thought, the most creative part is the lab work and designing the experiments. You know, Physics isn't just equations on a blackboard. When I set up an apparatus for optics or electricity and I see the kids being puzzled at first and then understanding the law through observation, that's when I feel creative. Also, I really enjoy finding how can I put it? Examples from daily life. Explaining to them why the sky is blue or how their mobile phones work through waves. This bridge between theory and reality is what keeps me going. Because that's where you see knowledge taking shape; it's not just numbers on a worksheet.

C.T 15: When you feel confident and capable in your teaching, how does that change the way you approach your work and feel about your job?

INT4: Look, confidence in teaching comes with years of experience, but it's what allows you to 'break free' from the textbook. When I feel certain about my subject I feel I can handle any question, even the toughest or the most 'off-the-wall' one a student might ask. This changes my approach because... how can I put it? It makes me bolder. I'll try a more difficult experiment; I'll have a discussion outside the curriculum that connects Physics with philosophy. When you feel competent, the profession stops being just a task of 'covering material' and becomes a living experience. I feel proud then, because I feel I'm not just a carrier of information, but a true teacher who is in control of the 'ship'.

C.T. 16: The fourth section consists of some questions regarding improvement measures. What specific measures could the school administration or the state take to better support your growth and satisfaction as a teacher?

INT4: Look, if we're talking about the state, the first and foremost thing is the reduction of bureaucracy. We need time to prepare our lessons, not to fill out endless forms. Also meaningful professional development. Not just seminars for the sake of it, but hands-on training in new technologies and experiments. Now, at the administrative level, what helps is trust. Giving us the freedom to take initiatives, and providing financial and moral support for lab maintenance. And of course we cannot ignore the financial aspect. A decent salary is a sign of respect for our work. We aren't looking to get rich, but to feel that the state recognizes the effort we put in here every single day.

C.T: 17 If you could change or improve two things in your current working environment to feel more motivated, what would they be and why?

INT4: If I had to choose only two the first would definitely be the modernization of infrastructure and equipment. You know, as a Physicist, the lab is my 'home.' If we had a standing budget for consumables and modern instruments, my teaching would become much more creative and the kids would be more excited. The second would be the reduction of non-teaching workload. I'd want the hours we waste on playground duty, minutes of meetings, and bureaucracy to become hours of collaboration with colleagues or experiment prep. Why would I do this? Because if the 'weight' of bureaucracy is lifted and the 'joy' of practical Physics takes

its place, then motivation multiplies. You feel like a true scientist and teacher, not just an administrative clerk who happens to know Physics.

C.T: 18 The fourth section consists of some questions regarding overall professional experience. Taking everything into account, how would you describe your overall level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

INT4: Look, if I had to give it a final sign, it would definitely be positive. Despite the difficulties despite the fact that the salary is meager for the responsibilities we carry, and despite the bureaucracy that suffocates us, I feel satisfied. You know, satisfaction for me doesn't come from the conditions, but from the result inside the classroom. When I see that my work is paying off, when I feel that I am offering something substantial to these kids, that's when everything else takes a back seat. So, I would say I am a 'fulfilled' professional. Tired, yes; occasionally frustrated with the system, but in essence deeply satisfied with the vocation I serve.

C.T: 19 Looking back at your career as a whole, how would you describe the balance between what drives you forward and what weighs you down?

INT4: Look if I look at it as a whole, the balance is delicate, but it tips toward the positive. On one side, there is the 'weight.' The increasing bureaucracy, the lack of resources, the feeling that the state doesn't always appreciate you these pull you down; they wear you out. On the other side, however, there is the 'thrust.' That energy you get inside the classroom, the joy of discovery with the kids, the fact that you see human beings being shaped right in front of you. If I had to describe it in Physics terms, I'd say that the forces pushing me forward have greater 'torque.' The difficulties are daily and constant, but the moments of satisfaction, even though they are rarer, are so powerful that they balance everything out. I'm leaving school after 22 years feeling that, despite the wear and tear, the net result is positive.

C.T: At this point, I would like to thank you warmly once again for your participation in my master's thesis and for the time you dedicated to me. If you wish, I would be happy to inform you electronically about the results of the research.

INT4: Yes, of course.

APPENDIX G “Interview Transcript Validation Form (in English)”

Dear Sir / Madam,

please find attached the interview transcript in Greek, presented as recorded verbatim, followed by its English translation, as my dissertation is being conducted in that language. I would like to assure you that the translation has been carried out with great care to ensure that the original meaning and essence of your statements remain fully intact and unaltered.

In order to ensure the reliability of the research process, I would like to kindly ask you to review the text of the interview you provided on .../.../ 2026. If the content accurately reflects your statements, please confirm by replying to this email with the following phrase:

"I confirm the content of the interview transcript."

Please note that your interview can be used only if you confirm it. If you wish to personally verify the accuracy of the transcription, you may request the audio recording, which will be sent to you immediately.

As the research is currently in progress and there are strict deadlines for its completion, I would be grateful for your timely response.

Sincerely,

Teliporanidou Christina

APPENDIX H “Interview Transcript Validation Form (in Greek)”

ΕΝΤΥΠΟ ΕΠΙΚΥΡΩΣΗΣ ΑΠΟΜΑΓΝΗΤΟΦΩΝΗΜΕΝΗΣ ΣΥΝΕΝΤΕΥΞΗΣ

Αγαπητέ Κύριε / Κυρία,

στο παρόν μήνυμα σας παρατίθεται το απομαγνητοφωνημένο κείμενο της συνέντευξης στην ελληνική γλώσσα, όπως καταγράφηκε αυτολεξεί. Ακολούθως παρουσιάζεται η αγγλική του μετάφραση, καθώς η διπλωματική μου εργασία εκπονείται σε αυτή τη γλώσσα. Σας βεβαιώνω ότι η μετάφραση πραγματοποιήθηκε με τη μέγιστη δυνατή προσοχή, ώστε να διασφαλιστεί ότι το αρχικό νόημα και η ουσία των λεγομένων σας παραμένουν πλήρως αναλλοίωτα.

Στο πλαίσιο της διασφάλισης της αξιοπιστίας της ερευνητικής διαδικασίας, θα ήθελα να σας παρακαλέσω να εξετάσετε το κείμενο της συνέντευξης που μου παραχωρήσατε στις .../.../2026. Εφόσον το περιεχόμενο αποτυπώνει με ακρίβεια όσα δηλώσατε, παρακαλώ να επιβεβαιώσετε απαντώντας στο παρόν ηλεκτρονικό μήνυμα αναγράφοντας τη φράση:

«Επιβεβαιώνω το περιεχόμενο του απομαγνητοφωνημένου κειμένου της συνέντευξης.»

Η χρήση της συνέντευξης για τους σκοπούς της έρευνας προϋποθέτει τη δική σας επιβεβαίωση. Σε περίπτωση που επιθυμείτε να ελέγξετε την ορθότητα της απομαγνητοφώνησης, μπορείτε να ζητήσετε να σας αποσταλεί άμεσα το ηχητικό αρχείο.

Δεδομένου ότι η έρευνα βρίσκεται σε εξέλιξη και υπάρχουν στενά χρονικά περιθώρια για την ολοκλήρωσή της, η έγκαιρη απάντησή σας είναι απαραίτητη.

Με εκτίμηση,

Τεληπορανίδου Χριστίνα

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.