

Teachers' Pedagogical Competence as a Prerequisite for Entering the Profession

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Introduction

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) focuses on the need to provide high quality education for all, where teachers and their proven competence play a vital role (OECD, 2001; 2005). This is echoed in the data that relate students' performance to teacher qualifications. Indeed, it has been shown that students' performance levels are higher when the teachers' competence has been proven (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000, Darling-Hammond, Berry & Thoreson, 2001, Goldhaber & Anthony 2004, Vandervoort *et al.*, 2004). However, other researchers find evidence that '... certification provides a positive signal of teachers' contribution to students achievement only in a few isolated cases' (Harris & Sass 2009, p. 55). Since 1980, the recruitment of teachers in many countries has followed a selection procedure according to criteria set by the State which are considered to be the minimum qualification (Roth, 1996, p. 243) and promote teachers' professional development (Ingvarson, 1998a, 1998b; Roth, 1996, p. 245).

In the last few years, the term that has been used for the desired level of qualification is competence. Professional competence is not associated with competence, as competence cannot be defined as the ability to act out a professional role, but as a series of capabilities expressed through action (Carr, 1993, pp. 255–258). The complex nature of this idea — as it has both a descriptive and a regulatory character and varies according to circumstances — makes it very difficult to answer the question 'What qualifications does a competent teacher need to possess?'. This article reviews the relevant literature and research in order to record those qualifications that ensure teachers' pedagogical competence at international level and presents the Greek case to reveal the strengths and limitations of this evaluation.

Criteria to Evaluate Pedagogical Competence: content and type

Teachers' complex and ever-changing role does not allow for a clear-cut definition of pedagogical competence. Basic factors that determine this are how expert teaching is defined and the conditions offset by the teachers that guarantee it. To determine the assessment criteria for pedagogical competence and select the evaluation procedures to enter the profession, one must answer the following questions: a) what qualifications does a competent teacher need to have?, and b) how can these be evaluated?

Content of Assessment Criteria for Pedagogical Competence

The basic prerequisite is the sum of the criteria used to 'measure' pedagogical competence as defined at any given time and assess 'professional knowledge' as a whole. The concept of 'professional knowledge' is complex and can be analysed as follows:

In Terms of Amplitude

First, teachers' competence can be classified under four categories, based on amplitude:

- a) Personality traits that are linked to their professional role and are not innate but can be cultivated through their initial and continuous training (Whitty, 1996, pp. 89–90).
- b) Teaching and pedagogical skills, i.e. the acquisition of techniques required to save time and resources for more important aspects of their work and knowledge of theoretical principles and research data that lead to a variety of techniques and strategies which teachers can choose from and structure according to circumstances (Beyer, 2002, p. 311; Conczy *et al.*, 1990; Oser *et al.*, 2006, pp. 1–7).
- c) A specialised body of knowledge that can contribute to teachers' effectiveness on condition that it can help the pedagogical and teaching practice (Shulman, 1986; 1987).
- d) Attitudes and opinions on teaching, learning and the teacher's role which affect not only the way they choose, evaluate, and understand knowledge, but also how they make use of this knowledge and shape their actions (Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Schön, 1983; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

In Terms of Content

The body of knowledge that could guarantee the competence of teachers is defined by the existing circumstances and framework on the one hand and by their personal experiences, views and needs on the other. This makes the *a priori* definition of this knowledge extremely difficult. However, there are knowledge fields that are necessary for every teacher, or at least for many, in order for them to fulfil the basic functions of their role (Meijer *et al.* 1999; 2001). These are (Perrone & Traver, 1996; Scriven, 1994; Shulman, 1986, 1987; Turner-Bisset, 2001): a) Knowledge of the students, b) Knowledge about teaching methodology, c) Knowledge of the curriculum, d) Knowledge of context, e) Knowledge of 'self', f) General pedagogical knowledge, and g) Pedagogical approach to the subject taught. Yet pedagogical knowledge cannot be defined as the sum total of distributed knowledge. What is important is a full understanding of this sum total of knowledge. Shulman suggests 'the pedagogical understanding of the subject taught' (pedagogical content knowledge) (Shulman, 1986; 1987). Pedagogical knowledge and the knowledge related to the scientific field do not just co-exist, but are considered as an amalgamation of inseparable knowledge (Kennedy, 1990). The degree of combination of all this separate knowledge differentiates the 'competent' from the 'excellent' teacher: a competent teacher partly combines this knowledge (partial amalgamation), whereas the excellent teacher makes use of and combines knowledge from all necessary areas (complete amalgamation) (Turner-Bisset, 2001, pp. 131–141).

The Assessment Criteria for Pedagogical Competence

A complex, albeit logical, question arises: how can we check whether prospective and/or existing teachers possess the qualifications that guarantee their pedagogical competence? A prevailing tendency is for their evaluation to be based on the results of their actions, especially student performance (outcome based standards), as it is proof of their competence (Greenwood & Maheady, 1997; Walsh, 2001;

Hess, 2001). However, student performance cannot be solely attributed to teachers' skills and abilities, as many factors, such as the socio-economic status of the students' family, their knowledge of the official language, the school's aids and technical support, and the number of students per classroom influence their performance. Nevertheless, it can be attributed, to a large degree, to teachers' abilities and is one of the main objectives of a school. This is the main reason why teacher training and the definition of recruitment criteria should be based on questions related to outcome (Cochran-Smith, 2001, pp. 527–546). The positive side to this approach is that it emphasises the work of a teacher as a whole and excellent student performance, but it neither concentrates on questions related to teachers' qualifications which are required to secure the desired result nor on the ways of acquiring these.

A different approach is to set performance-based standards. One criterion for pedagogical competence is teachers' pedagogical and didactic actions, but their knowledge of what these actions should be based on is not evaluated. Teacher evaluation, here, is based on the screening of the acquisition of visible skills and on desirable behaviour (Valli & Rennert-Arier, 2002, pp. 203–207). However, such an evaluation has innate difficulties, as, although it is easy to diagnose the 'low standard level' — visible and measurable skills —, it is difficult to define the 'high standard level'. Another disadvantage is that knowledge, abilities and values are perceived as 'products' that are cut off from the human factor, since the way in which teachers carry out their work is not assessed. We cannot understand why they choose one action rather than another and whether they would do the same in a different context. Lastly, we cannot monitor their efficiency or if their chosen actions can ensure the successful accomplishment of the teaching and pedagogical objectives set at a given time. Generally, evaluation through performance standards runs the risk of presenting teachers as mastering an art or a technique, thereby minimising the nuances of their role, e.g. assessment of the framework in which their pedagogical work is structured.

An alternative model is based on their duties (Duty-based Teacher Evaluation — DBTE). Here, competence and excellence are not associated with their didactic and pedagogical actions, which are described *a priori*. Teachers are not expected to adopt specific teaching styles and strategies, but to be able to choose and create the best pedagogical and didactic practices according to circumstances and their abilities (Scriven, 1994, pp. 151–159). According to this approach, teacher evaluation, at any given stage of their career — soon after recruitment but also throughout the career — and whatever form this may take — external or self-evaluation — is connected to duties and should be clearly defined.

In recent debates and research, the focus has turned to the elaboration of criteria based on competence (competence-based standards). Since the meaning of competence could differ, the content of competence standards remains unclear. When competence is perceived as the acquisition of teaching and pedagogical skills, the standards are limited to the presentation of observed behaviours and can be associated with performance-based standards. However, when it is perceived as the acquisition of a body of knowledge, observed skills and teachers' viewpoints, the standards become complex and multifaceted (Ingvarson 1998a; 1998b).

The Standards of Pedagogical Competence in Greece

In Greece, through the institutionalisation of the evaluation for teachers wanting to enter the profession, the State has officially recognised the need to assess their qualifications according to predefined criteria. The acquisition of subject content as a prerequisite for entering the profession and the evaluation of prospective teachers' performances do not seem to constitute particular problems. However, this is not the case with 'pedagogical competence'. Recruitment according to pedagogical competence standards raises doubts as to their credibility and validity. That is why the following question is important: 'According to what standards does the Greek State choose the most pedagogically competent teachers?'

The Institutional Framework

In Greece, teachers' preparation to enter the profession is in transition. Until today, in order to be appointed to a public school, one had to hold a relevant university degree and have passed the national teaching staff selection exams. The preparation programmes for teachers include courses related to the subject that they are going to teach according to the National School Curriculum. Strangely enough, the university departments that prepare teachers for secondary education do not include pedagogical and teaching training courses in their curriculum. The Greek State does not intervene in the university departments' curricula for candidate teachers, as each department is autonomous in determining the content of its programme. The State's influence could be said to be indirect, since it determines the selection criteria for candidate teachers. Hence, if a department wishes to prepare its graduates for participation in the national exams, it will have to adjust its curriculum to the criteria set by the State. However, this does not seem to be the case.

Until 1997, the only prerequisite for teachers to enter the profession was to hold a university degree. They were then selected to serve in the public education sector from a list in which they were ranked according to their date of registration. In 1997, Law 2525 introduced a process of evaluation for prospective teachers, the aim being that, by 2003, their recruitment would be based solely on examination results and the lists drawn up on successful completion of the exams (Article 6, Law 2525). In compliance with this Law, candidates must also obtain a university certificate declaring their pedagogical and teaching competence. This regulation of the 'Certificate of Pedagogical and Teaching Competence' was, however, revoked, as the Presidential Decrees required for its implementation were not issued within the allocated time and the universities did not respond accordingly. The related legislative texts make no reference to teachers' **competence standards**, nor do they indicate what the State understands by 'professional knowledge' for teachers to be considered competent from a pedagogical and didactic point of view.

In June 2010, a new law specified that candidate teachers must have this university certificate following successful completion of the relevant course of pedagogical training which can be attended either during undergraduate studies or after graduation. So far, it has not been implemented, but there is a heated discussion both in the academic community and at the level of educational policy.

As for entering the profession, given that teachers are evaluated in exams set by the High Council for Personnel Recruitment, the qualifications deemed necessary are revealed indirectly by the material tested in the exams (G.G. 244/2000, Article 2, G.G. 265/2002, Article 5, G.G. 1373/2004, Article 5) which comprise two

thematic units: a) subject content; and b) general teaching methodology, pedagogical issues and specific didactics. In particular, the material in the second thematic unit, which concerns the evaluation of pedagogical competence, includes general didactics, specific didactics and general psycho-pedagogical matters. Knowledge of specific didactics is assessed by means of two open-end questions. The first relates to lesson planning and the second to activities linked to didactical performance and evaluation. Pedagogical training is assessed through multiple choice questions. In order to pass the selection exams, one must obtain a score of over 60/100. Nevertheless, passing the exams does not guarantee that the candidates will be appointed to a public school, since the number of appointed teachers depends on the need for staff. This means that one may succeed in the exams, but not achieve a ranking that is high enough to be appointed. In that case, the candidate teacher will have to re-sit the exams.

The fact that teachers' pedagogical competence is assessed in the examinations without there being a system of predefined standards gave rise to this study, which aimed at mapping 'the professional knowledge' of secondary school teachers that is considered a prerequisite to enter the profession in Greece. The following questions were put forward: a) what pedagogical knowledge is assessed through the teachers' exams and to what extent do the knowledge types conform to those suggested in the related literature? and b) which qualifications do prospective teachers need?

Research Methodology

In order to record the qualifications assessed during the recruitment exams, we studied 1,081 pedagogical and teaching-related subjects in which teachers in secondary education of all specialisations were examined prior to 2007. To assess the data, we used a qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The sample unit was defined as all subjects examined in the field of 'Pedagogical and Teaching Subjects', whereas the 'Subject' was set as the recorded unit. For the qualitative analysis, all 1,081 questions were studied, whilst for the quantitative analysis the final sample came to 892 questions examining the content of the subjects, and lastly, 760 questions to determine the objective of the questions.

With regard to the direction of the analysis, 'what' is being said was analysed, together with the content and phrasing of the questions ('how'), in order to determine which objectives were covered by the questions, according to Bloom's taxonomy. By means of the first direction ('what'), the content of the qualifications being monitored was recorded (pedagogical knowledge), whilst through the second the type of qualifications being evaluated was scanned (knowledge, skills, abilities, viewpoints). The fact that the productive taxonomy is derived from relevant related theory and institutional texts ensures its validity. A system of induced subcategories was derived from the sample analysis of the indexed material.

In order to provide quantitative data, the 'question' was set as a measurement unit. To secure the reliability of the categories and subcategories as to the qualitative content analysis, a system of three code recorders was used. In those cases/questions where at least two recorders did not agree with the categorisation, the data were not taken into consideration for the qualitative processing. The reliability of the categories and subcategories was checked by means of the formula $CR = 2m/N1 + N2$ (Holsti, 1969, pp. 135–142).

Results

The quantitative data gathered from the evaluation of prospective teachers show that 48.9% of the questions refer to **teaching methodology** and the second category to **pedagogical psychology** (15.9%), whilst almost the same percentage (15.2%) monitors candidates' training in general **pedagogical knowledge**. It was ascertained that the candidates' knowledge about modern pedagogical theories and the practices derived from these — multicultural educational issues, education and gender, special needs education — was barely assessed. Knowledge of the **curriculum** was only rarely checked, and in a few cases, the ability to evaluate and amend the curriculum was examined. Moreover, only a few questions dealt with knowledge of the school environment, society as a whole and the institutional context. Lastly, only a few questions concentrated on the role of the teachers (specifications and perception of role) and their views on the subject to be taught (Table I).

Furthermore, teachers' acquisition of knowledge and their understanding of and ability to use it are assessed. Candidates' analytical and synthetic ability and their ability to evaluate knowledge and circumstances are only rarely assessed (Table II).

Teaching Methodology

50% of the questions evaluate candidates' knowledge of teaching methodology. Specifically: a) concerning their knowledge about lesson planning, candidates are asked to draw up a plan for the given unit; b) Candidates' knowledge of **learning objectives** is evaluated, together with their ability to identify and assess **teaching goals**, to what extent they understand the role of the goals in the teaching process and whether they can choose the right ones. Candidates are asked to formulate teaching goals according to their students' age and the subject taught, to justify their choices or mention the benefits to be derived from these goals, to evaluate the formulation of the given goals according to the existing theories, or identify the level of classification of the goal in question; c) They are given a specific unit as well as information about the age and profile of the students to whom the lesson is addressed and are invited to draw up a **lesson plan**; d) At the beginning, they are assessed — indirectly — in terms of their knowledge and ability to make use of several **methods of processing or teaching**, when they are asked to draw up a lesson plan, as in this way, they must mention the methods they chose. Also, there are questions where they are asked to prove that they know of and are in a position to use several methods. For example, they are requested to cite cases where a certain method will be more effective or a case is described and the candidates are asked to choose the best method. Alternatively, a method is described and the candidates are asked to identify it; e) They are asked to choose the best teaching aids for their specialisation and the specific subject unit, to justify their choice and mention the pros and cons of using that particular aid; f) Finally, a group of questions aims at monitoring candidates' knowledge of the goals, type, significance and techniques of the evaluation. Moreover, they are often asked to sit for a written exam or determine assessment criteria, based on the information given, i.e. the students' age, the subject taught, the school unit, the purpose of the questions, etc.

TABLE I. Content of the Questions

Content	(%)	N (total of 892 questions)
TEACHING METHODOLOGY	48.9	436
Teaching Techniques	7.8	70
Student Evaluation	7.3	65
Planning	7.2	64
Teaching Methods	6.4	57
General and Specific Objectives	5.8	52
Teaching Types	5.2	46
Use of Audio-visual Material or other Tools	4.8	43
Teaching Path	2.5	22
Teacher Evaluation	1.9	17
KNOWLEDGE OF THE CURRICULUM	2.5	23
Knowledge of the existing curriculum	2.2	20
Ability to amend and adapt the existing curriculum	0.3	3
STUDENT KNOWLEDGE	15.9	141
Behavioural problems	4.6	41
Relationships	2.7	24
Learning Incentives	2.7	24
Personal problems / Problems related to children and adolescents	1.9	17
Problems to adapt	1.5	13
Learning problems / Learning difficulties	1.2	11
Family problems	0.7	6
Effect of school on children	0.6	5
GENERAL PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE	15.2	136
Learning theories	6.5	58
Pedagogical theories	3.5	31
Classroom management strategies / The use of rewards and punishment	2.9	26
Multicultural education	1.8	16
Education and gender	0.1	1
Special education	0.4	4
KNOWLEDGE OF CONTEXT	3.4	30
Knowledge of context/ Relationship between school and society / school and family	1.9	17
Knowledge of school (school environment)	0.8	7
Institutional context	0.7	6
KNOWLEDGE OF SELF	3	26
Knowledge of teacher's role in modern schools	2.4	21
Teachers' self-esteem	0.6	5
PEDAGOGICAL SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE	2.4	22
OTHER	8.7	78
TOTAL	100	892

Knowledge of the Curriculum

In all exams and specialisations, knowledge of the curriculum is checked indirectly, as candidates are asked to give 'the teaching goals' of a unit. Although there is no direct reference to the curriculum, this paper proves that candidates should refer to certain goals, both known and predetermined, which are given in the curriculum in Greece, and/or instructions on teaching subjects that are issued by the Ministry of Education and sent to all school units. There is also an indirect monitoring of curriculum knowledge when candidates are asked to put together a lesson plan for a given subject. The school grade is not stated,

TABLE II. 2 The Objectives of the Questions

Objectives	Percentage of questions out of the total number of questions (%)	Number of questions out of the total number of questions (N)
Knowledge	39.1	297
Understanding	24.7	188
Application	28.7	218
Analysis	0.9	7
Synthesis	4.3	33
Evaluation	2.2	17
TOTAL	100	760

probably an indirect attempt to see whether the candidate is able to recognise in which grade the subject is taught.

'Knowledge' of the Students

Many questions that examine the pedagogical training of prospective teachers refer to issues related to pedagogical psychology and the general knowledge required to understand students. Most seem to assess the candidates' knowledge of the management of various **student problems**. In particular, one subcategory deals with **adolescents** and their idiosyncrasies: the way they express their aggressiveness, the type of behaviour that calls for direct intervention and the kind of behaviour that is to be expected, why adolescents defy adults and how this should be dealt with, etc. Questions that concern students' **family problems** and how these affect teaching and pedagogical work are also included. In addition, with regard to **students' problems in adapting**, candidates are evaluated on whether they are able to identify when students are facing such problems at school, what their most appropriate form of action should be and what can contribute to students adapting well at school. In terms of **students' behavioural problems**, the exam assesses whether candidates are in a position to choose the best course of action in relation to offensive behaviour. In addition, candidates are evaluated on the qualifications they possess to identify and manage students' **learning difficulties**. As for the related training, the topics of the questions are limited to the evaluation of students with learning difficulties, especially those related to speech, e.g. articulation, language distortion, or dyslexia. Within the framework of these questions, candidates are asked to know the causes of these problems, their symptoms and ways of dealing with them.

General Pedagogical Knowledge

The knowledge of pedagogical theories and/or the champions of such theories are a criterion to determine candidates' pedagogical competence. A repetition of the same pedagogical theories and theorists, including Rousseau and his pedagogical principles, the principles of humanitarian education, the new school, Dewey's pedagogical theory and the theory of self-fulfilling prophecy is observed in every exam. One of the main subjects in which candidates are evaluated is **learning theories**. They are asked about children's and teenagers' cognitive development stages, the characteristics of distracted thinking, self-regulated learning, learning theories connected to specific subjects, etc. An effort is also made to evaluate the degree of understanding of these theories, with the description of students' action (e.g. their attempts to learn how to swim) where

candidates are asked to identify the students' development stage. Seldom is any effort made to determine whether they can implement these learning theories when teaching, and only in some isolated cases is an effort made to assess their ability to analyse and detect causal relationships, e.g. students' actions that show whether they are an 'optical' or 'listening' type of student. In most cases where candidates' competence is examined regarding **classroom management strategies** and **the use of rewards and punishment**, the questions mainly check theoretical knowledge and, to a lesser extent, understanding of the relevant theory and the possibilities for transfer to the classroom. In particular, one subcategory concerns praise and punishment. Another refers to questions assessing candidates' knowledge of classroom management strategies.

Knowledge of Context

The questions on the **school and classroom environment** refer to the conditions to create a positive environment and good relationships between the teachers and/or the teachers and the school principal. As for the connection between school and **society**, the questions deal with the relations between school and family. Those related to the institutional context examine candidates' knowledge and understanding of certain regulations.

Knowledge of Self

What is interesting about this category of questions is that, although they are few, there is a large coverage in terms of the questions and their goals. First, a subcategory refers to issues related to the **teacher's role in general**. Furthermore, different, but still relevant questions describe a teaching or pedagogical situation (e.g. creative work) or a teaching goal (e.g. motivation of both 'good' and 'weak' students), where candidates are asked to choose which of the four possible aspects of their role they will adopt. Others concern **teachers' effectiveness** and, more importantly, the conditions required to ensure this, the qualifications required to be effective, and the traits of an effective teacher.

Pedagogical Subject Knowledge

Having analysed the questions, it may be said that the pedagogical approach to the subject taught does not seem to be a requirement for recruitment. It is not deemed necessary for future teachers to have an 'idea' as to 'why' they should transmit a certain kind of knowledge rather than another to their students.

Discussion

The sum of the aspects of pedagogical and teaching training that have been discussed cover all the fields of basic 'professional knowledge', as defined in this article. However, it cannot be said that an adequate and complete body of knowledge for the recruitment of teachers has been examined, since: a) there are very few questions found in each category, with the exception of those related to teaching methodology; hence, the candidates' pedagogical competence is not proven in all the basic fields that make up their professional knowledge; b) the functional limitations of a written evaluation with closed questions do not allow for the monitoring of the candidates' skills and opinions.

What Pedagogical Knowledge is Evaluated in the Exams for the Recruitment of Teachers?

The analysis of the data shows that almost half the exam topics is related to the training of teachers in **teaching methodology** and, primarily, lesson planning, the selection of suitable teaching aids and techniques, and student evaluation. Despite the large percentage of questions on lesson-planning, only a small amount of candidates' knowledge is actually checked with regard to this field, as teacher training has a very limited scope. Specifically, the evaluation is limited to lesson planning and the carrying out of the lesson. Teaching procedures are divided into proactive (before the lesson), interactive (during the lesson) and post active procedures (those that follow the lesson) (Reynolds, 1992, p. 4). The teaching process is a continuum and teachers' actions can only be divided into the abovementioned stages for practical reasons, as the actions are inter-related, i.e. the procedure is cyclical: Understanding/Comprehension — Transformation — Teaching — Evaluation — Feedback — Reflection (Shulman, 1987, pp. 14–19). Only a small part of candidates' knowledge of lesson planning is examined, as they are only asked to prepare a lesson of a maximum of one hour (short-term planning).

When candidates are asked to plan a lesson, describe a lesson, set teaching **goals**, choose the most appropriate **form or method** of teaching, etc., they are not given the special circumstances in which the pedagogical and teaching processes take place. Specifically, in most cases, the age of the students is given, but only in a few instances are candidates given information regarding the duration of the lesson they must plan. No reference is made to other factors which influence the teaching process and need to be taken into consideration when planning a lesson, such as a student's profile, the cultural structure of the classroom, the school's background and culture, its geographic location, etc. A competence criterion for teachers is their ability to adjust their teaching to the needs of the students, to the means available, and to the demands set by the State (Reynolds, 1992, p. 8). The fact that the candidates are asked to produce a lesson plan without any information related to context propels the idea of a teacher as a processor, a 'transferer' of knowledge, who operates without taking into consideration the context or evaluating the circumstances and making decisions accordingly. A circumscribed perception of the role of teachers prevails; indeed, it is limited to the mechanical planning and performance of their duties, and teaching is perceived as a 'craft' (Tom, 1984; Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996; Desforges & McNamara, 1979).

Moreover, related research on teachers' competence in terms of student performance **evaluation** shows that competent teachers are those who can, through the evaluation, diagnose a student's readiness to internalise the information to be transferred and assess the information gathered from the student evaluation and adapt their teaching methods accordingly (Reynolds, 1992, p. 18; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2005, p. 20). However, when teachers' relevant competence is analysed, the questions refer to the selection of the appropriate evaluation techniques or phrasing of the right questions.

Questions that aim to determine teachers' competence with regard to **understanding students** fail to assess their ability to understand their students and adjust their actions accordingly. Although this percentage (15.9%) cannot be considered low, these questions mainly relate to the management of problematic

behaviour and not to the use of information pertaining to a student's profile and needs. Still, related literature and research reveal that teachers' competence, as far as the understanding of students is concerned, has a broader meaning (Darling-Hammond & Barratz-Snowden, 2005, pp. 7–14; Reynolds, 1992, pp. 6–7).

The above outlines teachers' competence by defining the body of pedagogical knowledge they should possess and the ability to apply this knowledge when teaching. However, the exam recruitment system of the Greek teacher candidates does not seem to assess their competence in 'student knowledge' in this way; on the contrary, a positivist approach to the teachers' role is adopted, i.e. candidates are examined on their general knowledge of pedagogy, psychology and sociology, without verifying whether they can use that knowledge in their pedagogical work and teaching.

As revealed by the quantitative data, questions concerning school **context**, be it institutional or social, were seldom asked. However, this context is vital for school and teacher effectiveness and its knowledge helps with the planning of suitable lessons and pedagogical work in general.

The following may be surmised from the quantitative data:

- a) a large percentage of the questions refers to the candidates' general pedagogical knowledge; however, most refer to pedagogical and learning theories, whereas those related to contemporary issues — such as intercultural education and special needs education, etc. — seem to be absent;
- b) teachers' opinions on their specialisation are not taken into consideration. In the US, only recently has research shown that teachers' effectiveness is related to their opinion on the subject they teach and, more specifically, that those who have formed an opinion on the subjects they teach tend to be more effective (Turner-Bisset, 2001, pp. 28–29);
- c) there is a lack of criteria to assess the **pedagogical approach** adopted by candidate teachers to **the subject taught**. The lack of related questions can be attributed to innate difficulties originating from the method of evaluation and the type of questions that render the recording of attitudes problematic. It is therefore very difficult to determine whether the candidates' views reflect their true attitude and define their actions or whether they merely provide a 'socially acceptable' answer;
- d) what is not assessed is whether teachers have the required training to evaluate the **curriculum** and textbooks and whether they are in a position to intervene and adapt the above to the existing context and to the needs of the students.

Which Qualifications do Candidate Teachers Need to Have?

Most questions tend to examine the candidate's knowledge, but the understanding of that knowledge is examined to a lesser extent, and the ability to use it, even less. Only 7% of the questions check the candidate's ability to analyse, synthesise and evaluate. They do not seem to assess **teachers' abilities and attitudes**, despite the fact that, according to research data, some of these abilities — such as enthusiasm, flexibility, confidence, free thinking, fair management of students, patience, respect, organisation, and sense of humour — contribute to teachers' effectiveness and could be the result of systematic studies (Shechtman, 1989; Murphy *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, teachers' **self-perceptions** are not assessed, despite the fact that 'knowledge of self' is a basic element of pedagogical training (Lampert, 1984; Kagan, 1992), as the way in which they perceive their role not

only defines their choices, but also how they perceive, interpret and make use of their knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987).

It could be said that it is through these questions that teaching is defined as a 'craft', and that a teacher's role is limited to the implementation of predetermined principles and techniques that lead to effective teaching (behaviourist approach). For the evaluation of teachers, a 'procedural' model is adopted, i.e. teachers who can ensure quality teaching thanks to their knowledge of certain 'procedures/recipes' are considered effective. Interest is limited to the 'how' of teaching, not the 'why' because the content and phrasing of the questions seem to lack the parameter regarding the impact of the institutional, social, cultural and economic context of teaching and learning. Moreover, the intervening role of teachers is ignored, as they are those who choose their pedagogical and didactic activities, evaluating and tapping into their knowledge and information based on their personal views and values.

In conclusion, the criteria set by the State do not seem to be based on a clearly defined philosophy of pedagogical competence. This raises objections and makes candidate teachers doubt whether these exams select the most competent teachers.

Conclusion

Assessing teachers' pedagogical competence is a difficult and complex task, as competence is ensured through the acquisition of many qualifications in terms of amplitude and content. Assessing the acquisition of these qualifications is based to a great extent on the procedures and the diverse practices of evaluation. Given that contemporary research has triggered a relevant discussion in a context of pedagogical knowledge that secures pedagogical competence, assessing the acquisition of this knowledge is, to a certain degree, possible. The evaluation of pedagogical and teaching skills and opinions is more difficult, and the monitoring of viewpoints, attitudes and beliefs and capabilities is even more difficult.

As for the phrasing of the questions that monitor a candidate's response to standards, there should be a certain 'level of freedom', i.e. room should be given to candidates to react to the same standard in different ways. However, evaluation through multiple choice questions does not allow for that; on the contrary, candidates are evaluated on knowledge of an 'instrumental' nature. That is why a 'procedural' model is adopted, i.e. teachers who can ensure quality teaching by means of certain 'procedures/recipes' are considered effective.

Despite the efforts made in the field, there are still a number of unanswered questions that should be a priority for all those responsible, not only in Greece, but in all those countries where a system for the evaluation of teachers, based on certain criteria, has been adopted. They can be summed up as follows:

- a) What should be the assessment criteria? How specific should they be? How high should they be? What should their 'duration' be?
- b) Who should establish them? Who should evaluate prospective teachers? What is the most suitable procedure for the evaluation of teachers' competence?
- c) What are the costs, in terms of time and money, for the evaluation of teachers' competence? Is it cost effective based on the benefit derived? and
- d) How should the assessment criteria for entrance into the profession be linked to a teacher's initial education and continuous professional development?

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