



# The skills dimension in the talent acquisition processes of Greek private schools

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## Abstract

This paper explores the processes involved in talent acquisition practises, including recruitment, selection, and professional development, within the context of private schools in Greece. Unlike the standardised recruitment and selection processes observed in the Greek public educational sector, which assess formal qualifications alongside social criteria, the private sector in Greece adopts a talent acquisition approach primarily based on job-matching theory. The theoretical section of this paper examines the divergence in talent acquisition processes between the Greek public and private educational sectors. In the empirical research section, the study presents findings from qualitative research conducted through semi-structured interviews with 15 managers from private schools in Northern Greece. Thematic analysis was employed for data analysis, with convenience sampling used as the sampling method. The research aims to capture managers' perspectives on selection methods, training practises, and professional development initiatives for educational staff. The findings highlight the emphasis placed on soft skills during the recruitment process, the diverse blend of skills and qualifications that form the occupational profile and managers' significant role in facilitating the professional growth of educational staff.

**Keywords:** job-matching theory, qualifications, educators' occupational profile.

## 1. Introduction

In contemporary dynamic educational organisations, whether public or private, human resources are the central and driving force of the educational process. Their effectiveness determines the success of the school unit. Therefore, proper staff selection and management are imperative for every educational institution. This article explores the processes involved in talent acquisition practises, including recruitment, selection, and professional development, in private schools in Greece. The theoretical part of the research aims to identify

discrepancies in talent acquisition processes between the Greek public and private educational sectors and briefly analyzes job matching theory. The empirical part of the research records the views of school managers regarding selection methods, training, and professional development practises for educational staff.

## **2. Theoretical Assumptions**

### **2.1 Legislative and Administrative Conditions for Recruitment and Selection of Educational Staff in Primary and Secondary Public Education in Greece**

In the realm of Greek education, the recruitment and selection of educational staff are pivotal functions deeply entrenched in the nation's legislative and administrative framework. Rooted in the constitutional mandate outlined in Article 6, education emerges as a fundamental mission of the State, tasked with shaping the moral, spiritual and professional development of citizens while fostering national identity and responsible citizenship. This chapter examines the intricate legislative and administrative conditions governing the recruitment and selection processes of educational staff in primary and secondary public education across Greece.

Under the purview of the Ministry of Education and the supervision of the Supreme Personnel Selection Council (ASEP), recruitment procedures are strictly regulated. Recent legislative acts, such as laws 4589/2019 and 4823/2021, have introduced a framework for teacher appointments. These laws also provide a framework for the recruitment of part-time teachers who are paid by hour for general and special education. Specifically, the appointment and recruitment of teachers are carried out exclusively through evaluative ranking lists of candidates by educational level and specialty, which are drawn up by the ASEP following a request from the Ministry of Education, in accordance with educational needs.

The process of assessing the need to recruit teaching staff is based on documenting the operational needs of public schools. For the recruitment of staff in public schools, ASEP, at the request of the Ministry of Education, announces and conducts a call for interest for teaching staff and ranks candidates based on their total score obtained from the point system. This procedure is carried out every second school year. Ranking is conducted on a first-come, first-served basis by discipline (higher education degree category) and candidate's specialty in accordance with Law 4589/2019, which is currently in force in accordance with Law 4823/2021 (Sytziouki, 2022).

The basic requirement for candidates to be recruited is to participate in the open call for appointment and to possess a degree from a higher education institution. Other criteria, such as professional teaching experience and holding a certificate of pedagogical and teaching competence, are also demanded in the recruitment process.

The selection process follows a counting system that aggregates credits based on degrees, work experience, and personal and social criteria. At the end of the selection process, a ranking list is published by the Ministry of Education, which prioritises the appointment of educational staff based on the following predefined and objective criteria (Sytziouki, 2022): (a) academic criteria (first cycle degree, possession of second or third cycle degrees, language proficiency, certified computer skills, etc.). Degrees from foreign universities are also accepted based on their academic equivalence; (b) teaching experience; (c) social criteria (parents of two or more children, disability, disability of children, e.t.c.).

## **2.2 The Recruitment and Selection System of Teachers in Primary and Secondary Private Education**

Regarding the recruitment and selection of educational staff in private schools, prospective teachers are required to submit an application to the school management or human resources department, along with a certificate of registration in the Private Education Register (Skouris & Koutoupa-Regakou, 2009). Additionally, they must submit a declaration document indicating their specialisation and relative work experience (Law 682/1977). The school management must then submit a proposal for the recruitment of teaching staff or the allocation of teaching hours to the relevant Director of Education. Administrative acts for appointing the teacher formalise an employment contract between the employer and the recruited teacher.

In the context of recruiting teachers in Greek private primary and secondary schools, if the employer does not have a teacher to propose to fill a vacancy by the start of classes, the relevant public Directory of Education may assign the corresponding teaching hours to a qualified teacher (Law 682/1977). The same procedures are followed when a teaching vacancy occurs during the school year.

Furthermore, Law 682/1977 stipulates that private teachers must possess the qualifications required of public school teachers, such as basic qualifications. Pedagogical and teaching competence, while formally required, is no longer a necessary qualification for employing teachers in private education. The competence of private teachers can be certified either before their appointment or within two years from the date of their appointment through the successful completion of special training programmes, in accordance with the provisions applicable to public teachers (Law 4589/2019).

It is noteworthy that, in contrast to the standardised recruitment and selection procedures observed in the Greek public education sector, which evaluate formal qualifications alongside social criteria, the private sector in Greece adopts a talent acquisition approach based primarily on job matching theory.

To sum up, the differences between the recruitment and selection processes of teachers in public and private schools in Greece are evident. The public education sector follows talent acquisition practises that are based on a purely administrative, uniform, and ranking system. This system assesses and ranks specific objective criteria, such as degrees, certified computer skills, teaching experience, and certain social criteria. However, it is worth noting that this system does not allow other factors such as the skills or personality of candidates to be assessed before an appointment. Instead, when recruiting teachers in private schools, an attempt is made to match the needs of the educational organisation concerned with the qualifications and skills of the candidate teachers. Clearly, certain qualifications, such as a degree or registration of candidates in the Private Education Register, as prescribed by the Ministry of Education, are necessary for the recruitment of teaching staff in private schools. However, the selection of staff is carried out either by school management or by the HR manager, who, in addition to formal qualifications, is able to assess other factors, such as the skills and personality of the candidate, to determine whether he or she fits job requirements and school culture. Hence, both recruitment and selection practises and professional development practises evidence the job matching theory principles of aligning employees' skills and preferences with job requirements.

### **2.3 Job Matching Theory and Its Effect on the Recruitment and Selection of Educational Staff**

Job Matching Theory, developed by Burdett and Jovanovic, posits that firms and job seekers continuously seek optimal matches until they achieve mutual compatibility (Burdett & Jovanovic, 1978). This theory is fundamental in Human Resource Management (HRM), highlighting the critical importance of aligning employees' skills, experiences, and interests with job requirements to enhance overall performance (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Disparities in job outcomes can be attributed to variations in job matching because this theory elucidates the formation of job contracts through the equilibrium of worker search and job offers.

According to the literature, Job Matching Theory views job matching as a continuous process rather than a one-time event. As job roles and individual capabilities change over time, ongoing reassessment and realignment are necessary to maintain optimal matches (Burdett & Jovanovic, 1978). Optimal job matches result in greater job satisfaction because employees whose skills and interests align with their job roles tend to experience higher levels of contentment and motivation (Latham, 2006). Moreover, when there is a strong alignment between an employee's capabilities and the job's demands, job performance improves. This approach allows for effective utilisation of the employee's strengths, leading to increased productivity and efficiency (Kristof-Brown et.al, 2005).

The issue of recruiting and selecting individuals who fit the organisation and job requirements is crucial in the literature. Competitive theories to Job Matching aim to explain this match and include Human Capital Theory, the Job Competition Model, and Search-Matching Theory, offering additional perspectives that complement the principles of Job Matching Theory and Person-Environment Fit Theory (Peterson et.al, 1999). Specifically, Human Capital Theory emphasises the significance of investing in employee education and training. This suggests that enhancing employees' skills and knowledge through education increases their productivity and economic value to the organisation (Becker, 1964). The Job Competition Model, on the other hand, proposes that job allocation is determined by the relative qualifications of candidates. Individuals compete for positions based on their credentials; those with higher qualifications are more likely to secure desirable jobs, irrespective of a precise skill match (Sattinger, 1993). Search-Matching Theory integrates job matching with labour market dynamics and argues that job creation and employment depend on the interactions between job seekers and job openings (Pissarides, 2000). Effective matching requires a balance between worker supply and demand for specific skills. Finally, Person-Environment Fit Theory focuses on the alignment between an individual and various aspects of the work environment, including the job, organisation, and colleagues, which leads to higher satisfaction and productivity (Kristof-Brown et.al, 2005).

Based on the Job Matching Theory, private educational organisations apply customised procedures when selecting teaching staff, considering the skills and qualifications of candidates in relation to the specific needs of the school. This includes assessing the academic achievements, teaching experience, and personal characteristics of candidates (Ballou & Podgursky, 1998). Private schools do not limit themselves to the academic qualifications of candidates but try to ensure that new teachers are a professional fit with the school environment. This is achieved through interviews, personality assessments, and teaching probes (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Furthermore, through online platforms and specialised recruitment tools, private schools can publish detailed job descriptions and search for candidates with specific qualifications (Boyd et al., 2005).

In this framework, the purpose of this paper is to explore in depth the processes involved in talent acquisition practises, including recruitment, selection, and professional development

within private schools. The empirical field of research that maps the views of managers and leaders of private schools in Northern Greece on talent acquisition practises aims to elucidate basic principles of Job Matching Theory and contribute to the academic and policy discourse on the recruitment and selection of educational staff.

### **3. Methodology**

The research approach of this study is qualitative. The aim of this study is to explore the views and perceptions of private school managers in Northern Greece regarding the selection criteria, as well as the training and professional development practises used for talent acquisition. The qualitative methodological approach was deemed appropriate for the purpose of the research because it allowed the participants to freely express their views on the issues under consideration without facing any restrictions (Creswell, 1998; Plummer, 2000). Based on the main purpose of the research, the sub-objectives are described as follows:

1. To explore the selection and recruitment criteria in the private education sector.
2. Map the necessary qualifications and skills of teachers, which are critical indicators for their selection in teaching positions.
3. To explore the methods and practises of training and development applied at the level of the educational organisation.
4. To examine the role of school managers in professional development within the educational organisation.

According to the main objectives, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What are the recruitment and selection criteria for teacher candidates in private schools?
2. What qualifications and skills do modern private schools seek from their teaching staff?
3. What is the professional profile of a modern teacher?
4. What teacher training and development practises are in place in private education organisations?
5. What is the role of a school manager in the professional development of teachers?

#### **3.1 Research methods and data analysis**

The semi-structured interviews were chosen for this research as it is considered appropriate for the study's purpose. Through open-ended questions divided into thematic axes, the research questions are addressed. The interview guide consists of 15 open-ended questions, which are categorised into three main thematic axes:

- **Axis A: Recruitment and selection criteria for teachers in private schools** (e.g., In the selection process, do you give more weight to the individual's experience or educational background?)
- **Axis B: Methods and practises of training and development of teachers in private schools** (e.g., Is continuous education and training of teachers in an educational unit important to you? If so, why?)
- **Axis C: The contribution of education managers to the professional development of teachers in private schools** (e.g., What do you think is your role as a leader in the professional development of the human resources in your educational unit?)

The interview guide also included basic demographic questions to profile the interviewees. These questions relate to their position and status within the educational organisation, years of experience, and their highest educational attainment.

To interpret the data, a thematic analysis was conducted as follows (Nowell et al., 2017; Tsiolis, 2018):

1. **Recording and Transcription:** Each interview was conducted face-to-face between the researcher and participants and audio recorded. Each session lasted 20-30 minutes. The recorded conversations were then transcribed into written text.
2. **Reading and Identification:** A thorough reading of the collected materials was carried out to identify the information that answers each of the research questions.
3. **Coding:** The data were coded, with each segment attributed to a conceptual definition, known as a "code".
4. **Theme Development:** The codes were then grouped into themes, which are conceptual entities that answer the research questions. These themes led to the overall conclusions of the research process.
5. **Recording Results and Conclusions:** The final stage documenting the results and conclusions of the research process.

### **3.2 Sample**

Convenience sampling was used to collect the sample for this qualitative research. The sample consisted of 15 managers of private schools in Northern Greece. Specifically, 33% of the participants were primary school managers, 33% were secondary school managers, 20% were primary school managers, and 14% were secondary school managers. Regarding gender distribution, 60% of the participants were male and 40% were female.

In terms of educational background, 27% of the participants had a bachelor's degree, 60% had a master's degree, and 13% had a doctorate. Regarding years of experience in the management of an educational institution, 33% of the participants had 11-20 years of experience, 27% had 21-30 years of experience, and 27% had more than 31 years of experience. Only 13% of participants had less than 10 years of experience. Finally, 87% of the participants received additional training related to the management of educational establishments.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Axis A: Recruitment and selection criteria of teachers in private schools.**

The data from the interviews indicate that scientific knowledge and qualifications relevant to the job are the primary selection criteria for teachers. However, most participants emphasise that character, personality, and soft skills were also crucial selection criteria.

Opinions on the importance of previous work experience as a selection criterion are divided. 20% of participants indicate that any previous work experience, regardless of its relevance to the job offered, is desirable. Meanwhile, 13% argued that the necessity of work experience depends on the specific job. However, 54% of participants believed that experience relevant to the job is particularly important, while only 13% considered experience a non-key selection criterion.

In addition to formal qualifications, participants highlighted the importance of nonformal qualifications, such as principles and values. Specifically, 60% of the participants indicated

that modern teachers should possess a variety of skills, including communication, organisation, crisis management, adaptability, flexibility, digital skills, classroom and student behaviour management, teamwork and collaboration, critical and abstract thinking, problem-solving, social skills, conflict resolution, and student assessment skills. Furthermore, 40% of participants emphasise the development of teachers' communication skills and the importance of volunteer activities and personal hobbies related to education, such as painting and dancing.

Thus, participants outlined the professional profile of a modern teacher as someone who should have up-to-date knowledge relevant to the job, be adaptable and flexible, possess a variety of soft and digital skills, and have a passion for teaching and a love for children.

#### **4.2 Axis B: Methods and Practises of Training and Development of Teachers in Private Schools**

All participants unanimously agreed on the necessity of continuous education and training for teachers. They describe the acquisition and transfer of knowledge as a continuous, rapidly changing and dynamic process that make lifelong education essential. In the training process for teachers in private schools, 60% of the participants reported that their role was supportive, advisory, facilitative, and mediating. Additionally, 20% of the participants believed they should serve as examples and guide teachers based on their personal work experience. Notably, 20% of the participants indicated that managers should identify teachers' needs and encourage participation in professional development programmes based on those needs.

67% of participants mentioned additional training methods provided in private educational units, such as seminars and workshops organised by external institutions, collaboration with universities in Greece and abroad, participation in European educational programmes, use of electronic tools (e.g., flipped classroom, e-learning platforms), and training courses organised by the Ministry of Education. Finally, all participants agreed that professional training for teachers should focus not only on theoretical knowledge acquisition but also on skill development and improvement.

#### **4.3 Axis C: Contribution of Education Managers to the Professional Development of Teachers in Private Schools**

The majority of respondents (87%) stated that professional development concerns the development of knowledge, skills, and competencies related to teaching. Notably, only 13% mentioned personal improvement and individual development aimed at maintaining a high quality of life, which may not be directly work-related.

Regarding professional development models, interviewees were asked for their familiarity and use of relative models' teachers' in-house training. 40% of participants mentioned that they use the Technocratic, Interpretative, and Reflective-Critical models in teachers professional development programmes. The Technocratic model, based on positivist or experimental pedagogy, focuses on educational practise as a methodical process that requires specific technical, organisational, and teaching skills (Matsangouras, 2005). The Interpretative model, based on the theory of interpretive pedagogy, views knowledge as contextual and socially constructed, emphasising practical knowledge created by teachers (Matsangouras, 2005). The Reflective-Critical model, based on Critical Pedagogy, focuses on the political and ethical dimensions of education and promotes critical reflection and its impact on professional development (Matsangouras, 2002). The remaining 60% of the participants declared that they use blended learning models for teachers' professional

development and co-operate with e-learning providers to develop content relevant to teaching methodologies and social skills.

Moreover, all participants agreed on the importance of professional development training, emphasising its role in developing both individuals and educational units. They highlight the positive impact of teacher professional development on the educational organisation. Training should combine theoretical knowledge and skill development. The role of a school manager is also crucial, as managers are responsible for personnel management and play a guiding, motivating, and facilitating role. A total of 20% of the participants mentioned that managers should serve as role models, providing an impetus for teachers to engage in training processes.

Finally, when asked about actions, activities, or programmes focused on teacher professional development, 100% participants mention organising seminars and workshops on various topics, promoting sustainable practises in schools, inviting experts (e.g., child psychologists, speech therapists), participating in Erasmus programmes, conducting theatre performances, organising literary walks, choirs, and creative writing activities, and collaborating with universities abroad.

## **5. Discussion of Results**

In the recruitment and selection processes of Greek private schools, the primary criteria are relevant qualifications and specialised knowledge about the job position. Additionally, significant emphasis is placed on the personality, character, and developed skills of candidates. Research on the recognition of prior job experience offers a divided perspective. Half of the participants believed that prior work experience in a specific field is essential, whereas the other half viewed any type of work experience as beneficial. The selection criteria established by HR and school managers are designed to align with both job requirements and the overarching goals and vision of educational institutions, thereby ensuring effective and profitable operations. This alignment supports the job matching theory in recruitment and selection, where proper selection of personnel promotes the vision, mission, and objectives of the organisation (Mathis & Jackson, 2010). Conversely, improper selection can have detrimental effects on the organisation (Papalexandri & Bourantas, 2016), while the correct choice maximises profits and reduces costs.

Modern private schools prioritise several key qualifications and skills when recruiting their teaching staff. Communication skills are considered fundamental, and there is a strong emphasis on proficiency in new technologies, engagement in hobbies related to education (such as painting or dancing), and adherence to the principles and values of the institution.

Furthermore, teachers are expected to possess a range of skills, including adaptability, flexibility, digital literacy, critical and abstract thinking, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, conflict resolution, social skills, and classroom management. These competencies align with 21st-century learning skills, which encompass critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation (Tzotzou et al., 2022). Many of these skills are also part of the 12 essential life skills identified by UNICEF (2017). Notably, the research indicated a greater emphasis on the development of soft skills rather than vertical skills among teachers.

Hence, the ideal profile of a modern teacher in private schools includes having up-to-date knowledge of their teaching subject through continuous education, a passion for teaching, adaptability and flexibility. They should also have developed a comprehensive skill set that includes soft, vertical, and digital skills.

Continuous education and training are essential for professional development in private education. Teachers enhance their skills through seminars, workshops, collaborations with domestic and international universities, participation in European programmes and training sessions organised by the Ministry of Education. Some private schools have dedicated Human Resources Management Departments responsible for organising and financing these training programmes, ensuring that teachers remain engaged in the learning process. Designing and implementing tailored training programmes to meet the educational needs of teaching staff is beneficial for institutions.

Lastly, the role of a school manager in the professional development of teachers is crucial, serving as a guide, advisor, motivator, and mentor. Effective managers inspire teachers and create a positive working environment characterised by security and trust (Karagianni, 2018; Kafantari, 2014). This leadership significantly contributes to the professional growth of teachers and the overall success of educational institutions.

## **6. Conclusions**

The research findings indicate that the private educational sector in Greece follows talent acquisition practises that fall along talent practises of private sector and are contrary to administrative and uniform practises of public educational sector. Hence, both recruitment and selection practises and professional development practises evidence the job matching theory principles of aligning employees' skills and preferences with job requirements. This study highlights the emphasis on relevant qualifications and specialised knowledge specific to the job position. Additionally, significant consideration is given to candidates' personalities, character, and developed skills. The selection criteria are meticulously crafted by HR and school managers to align with both the job requirements and the broader objectives and vision of the educational institutions, ensuring effective and profitable operations. This alignment with job matching theory underscores the importance of selecting the right personnel to promote organisational goals. Private schools place a premium on communication skills, technological proficiency, and engagement in educational hobbies, alongside critical, abstract thinking, and other soft skills. Continuous education and training, facilitated through seminars, workshops, and collaborations, remain pivotal. Managers play a crucial role in fostering professional development by serving as guides, advisors, and mentors, contributing significantly to creating secure and trusting work environments.

This research has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The chosen methodology was qualitative, utilising convenience sampling and semi-structured interviews with managers and HR leaders from 15 private schools in Northern Greece. Due to the non-representative nature of the sample, the results cannot be generalised to all private educational units regarding teacher selection, training, and professional development. Another significant limitation is the exclusion of teachers' perspectives on the research questions. Additionally, the qualitative approach did not allow for the measurement of the participants' views and attitudes. To achieve this, a quantitative study is necessary.

Despite these limitations, the study retains its validity and reliability. The research team adhered rigorously to qualitative research methodologies in data collection and analysis, applying job matching theory to talent acquisition practises in educational organisations. Consequently, this study stands as a pioneering effort in Greece that focuses on the use of HRM theories in educational organisations.

Lastly, future research should include teachers' perspectives through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches. A comparison of managers' and teachers' views would provide

a more comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, it would be valuable to contrast these findings with similar studies on public education and private schools abroad.

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