Some Aspects of Professional Empowerment to Improve Job Satisfaction of Primary School Teachers

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Abstract Teachers' job satisfaction and their professional empowerment are two main factors which contribute to education improvement. Purpose of the present study is to investigate and record teachers' perceptions of their professional empowerment and their beliefs about their job satisfaction. Also the impact of teachers' demographic and professional characteristics on their perceptions of job satisfaction and the possible correlations between job satisfaction and professional empowerment are examined. The research method is the descriptive and correlative survey, with the use of a self-report questionnaire. Teachers' perceptions of their professional empowerment are measured by the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES), while their job satisfaction by the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). The results indicate that teachers who do not have a permanent position in a school and they are obliged to change school environment every year, or they have to work in more than one school each year, they feel less empowered and satisfied. Findings of this study also show that while there is no differentiation as far as it concerns the sex, the marital status, the age, the studies or the previous experience, there are differentiations according to labor relations and the number of schools a teacher works in a year. Regarding job satisfaction, the majority of respondents are of the view that there is an average overall job satisfaction. In addition the research shows that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and empowerment. This paper provides useful data about the issue of teachers' job satisfaction as well as their empowerment and the factors that influence their feelings about their overall job satisfaction and empowerment. The improvement of labor relations and the decrease in the number of schools teachers work in a year, would essentially contribute to their job satisfaction and empowerment.

Keywords: *job satisfaction, empowerment, primary school teachers*

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1. Introduction

During the last three decades, teachers' job satisfaction is a great issue that concerns many researchers around the world as results to the improvement of education. It is mentioned that teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by external and internal factors (salary, working environment, promotion, job interest, job autonomy and independence, personal relations) [1]. It is also examined in relation to school climate and teachers' efficiency [2], to low stress levels and high levels of job commitment [3]. Empowerment is teachers' participation in decision making concerning teaching methods and teaching environments [4]. It is of great concern among researchers as it is the main factor for teachers' professional development.

Many researchers have been conducted so far concerning the relation between job satisfaction and empowerment. It has been proved that when teachers are empowered and have the opportunity to participate in decision-making are more satisfied with their jobs [5] and that authorized employers are significantly more satisfied with their jobs [6].

It is widely accepted that teachers' job satisfaction is of great importance in order to be an improvement in education. Consequently there is a great concern among researchers to find the factors that influence teachers' job satisfaction. Empowerment, according to researches, is considered to be a main factor which leads to job satisfaction.

However there is limited research examining the impact of job satisfaction in the sense of empowerment of teachers and particularly as regards primary school teachers research is almost non-existent. In Greek Primary schools except Greek Language teachers, there are teachers who teach different subjects like foreign languages, music, art, computer studies, and physical education. There is limited study concerning the perception of empowerment and the job satisfaction of these teachers although they constitute more than the half of the teachers in a school. This study intends to fill that gap.

2. Review of Related Literature

There have been a number of researches focusing on the relation between teachers' job satisfaction and students

learning skills [7]. It is also mentioned that it depends on factors like students- teachers relations, participation in decision making concerning school life, teachers; feelings of autonomy and independence, opportunities for personal development and relations with colleagues [8]. On the contrary job dissatisfaction is mainly connected to the excessive amount of work, low salaries, and professional status [9].

Eliophotou-Menon, Papanastasiou & Zembylas [10] conducted a research among Primary School teachers in Cyprus and they found that four mayor factors influence teachers' job satisfaction: the teachers themselves, the gender, the school climate and the school grade. Man found to be more satisfied than women, low grade teachers and those who had fulfilled their job goals declared to be more satisfied.

Eliophotou - Menon & Athanasoula - Reppa's [11] research examined the relation between personal characteristics and job satisfaction among Secondary School teachers in Cyprus. According to the findings, although there was no differentiation between the two genders, more experienced teachers found to be more satisfied with their jobs.

In Gosh [12] research, which was conducted in Primary Schools in India, it is indicated that the nature of work is not related to job satisfaction, women are more satisfied than men, and those who work in urban areas are more satisfied than those of rural areas. Chapman (2013), investigated the job satisfaction of teachers of Primary Education in Ireland in relation to career commitment among 93 teachers and found that this increases with the years of experience and has a strong positive relationship with professional commitment [13].

Empowerment is the transfer of responsibilities and power of decision making with a view to better performance at work and to more satisfied employers. Empowered people are determined, innovative, and responsible, they feel successful, they cooperate with their colleagues and they ask for long life learning. In schools the transfer of decision making to teachers makes them more responsible and gives them a significant status. As a result they are more willing to changes [14]. McCaslin et al [15] refer that it is of great importance to provide the teachers with the opportunity of decision making concerning school life and class management for their professional development. Similarly, the program 'No Child Left Behind' asks for professional development for teachers' improvement [16].

Hoy & Miskel believe that autonomy of people is developed by the encouragement to make personal decisions and to take responsibilities for their actions [17]. It is believed that by this way schools could be more effective and the problem solution easier [18].

In general, most researches concerning the relation between teachers' empowerment and their job satisfaction focus on how empowerment can predict the levels of job satisfaction [19].

Cypert [20] conducted a research among teachers in Georgia and found that there is a strong positive correlation between empowerment and job satisfaction. So in order to create a satisfactory job environment, it is crucial teacher be empowered.

Similarly, the findings of Bogler & Nir [21] reveal that teachers' empowerment is positively related to their perception of job satisfaction. More specifically, the more efficient a person feels, the more satisfied is.

There have been a number of researches focusing on the positive correlation between job satisfaction and empowerment and on the importance of empowerment for personal and professional development. So it is concluded that the importance of empowerment and job satisfaction is significant for the improvement of schools and education.

2.1. Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Do personal factors affect teachers' job satisfaction and are they related to some aspects of their working conditions?

2 Do personal factors affect teachers' empowerment and are they related to some aspects of their working conditions?

3. Is there a relationship between teachers' empowerment and their job satisfaction?

2.2. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore and record teachers' perceptions about their professional empowerment, as well as to examine their beliefs about their job satisfaction and to identify the personal factors which affect these beliefs.

2.3. Significance of the Study

It is imperative that teachers be more empowered and more satisfied in their jobs. This paper provides useful data about the issue of teachers' job satisfaction as well as their empowerment and the factors that influence their feelings about their overall job satisfaction and empowerment. The improvement of labor relations and the decrease in the number of schools teachers work in a year, would essentially contribute to their job satisfaction and empowerment.

3. Methodology

3.1. Instrument

The research method adopted in this paper is the descriptive and correlative survey, with the use of a self-report questionnaire. For the sample selection the method of convenience sampling was used. Teachers' perceptions of their professional empowerment were measured by the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES), developed by Short and Rinehart, while their job satisfaction was measured by the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), developed by Spector. A 6- point Likert Scale was used and labeled from Strongly Agree to Disagree. Pilot test of the instrument produced an internal consistency coefficient alpha of 0.79.

3.2. Population and Sample

A total of 250 questionnaires were randomly distributed to Primary School teachers in Thessaloniki, Greece. However, a total of 131 questionnaires were returned upon

which the data analysis was based. This represents 55% proportion of the sample size. The participants were English teachers (62), Physical Education teachers (34), second foreign language (11), Music teachers (6), Drama teachers (4), Art teachers (6), and ICT teachers (6). The majority was women aged 40 - 49 and they had 11 - 20 years of experience.

3.3. Data Analysis

Analysis of data was executed with the aid of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 21. Also Mann – Whitney, Kruskal Wall, Friedman parametric tests were used and the Pearson product-moment of correlation was employed to find the strength of relationship between job satisfaction and empowerment.

4. Results

4.1. Research Question 1

1. Do personal factors affect teachers' job satisfaction and are they related to some aspects of their working conditions?

Table 1. Mean score and median for the nine subscales of satisfaction and overall satisfaction

| Subscales of Satisfaction	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Salary	2,063	0,899	2,000
Promotion	2,321	0,901	2,250
Director	4,955	0,921	5,000
Benefits	3,150	1,053	3,000
Possible rewards	4,398	0,709	4,250
Functional Procedures	3,724	0,945	3,750
Colleagues	5,051	0,759	5,000
Nature of Work	3,901	0,739	4,000
communication	4,474	0,888	4,500
Overall Satisfaction	3,716	0,535	3,714

Table 1 presents the mean score, the standard deviation and the median of the overall job satisfaction and its nine axes. The results show that teachers feel an average overall satisfaction, whereas they are very satisfied from their colleagues and their director. In addition they are quite satisfied from possible rewards and the communication and little satisfied from their salary and the possibility of promotion.

Table 2. Classification of satisfaction

Classification	Subscales of satisfaction
1	Director, Colleagues
2	Possible Rewards, Nature of Work, Communication, Functional Procedures, Benefits
3	Promotion, Salary

Table 2 shows the classification for the satisfaction according to its subscales.

Figure 1, Figure 2 present the mean of those subscales of job satisfaction in which there was a differentiation concerning the age. The data analyses showed that teachers aged 50 and up are more satisfied from the possibility of promotion and the salary.
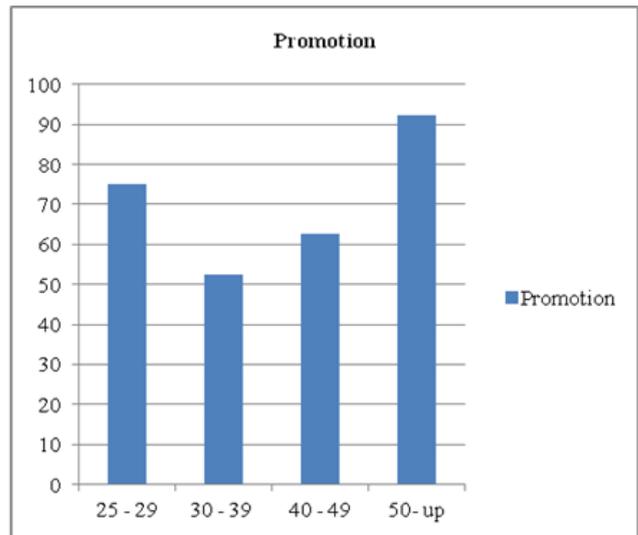
Figure 1. Job Satisfaction concerning promotion according to age
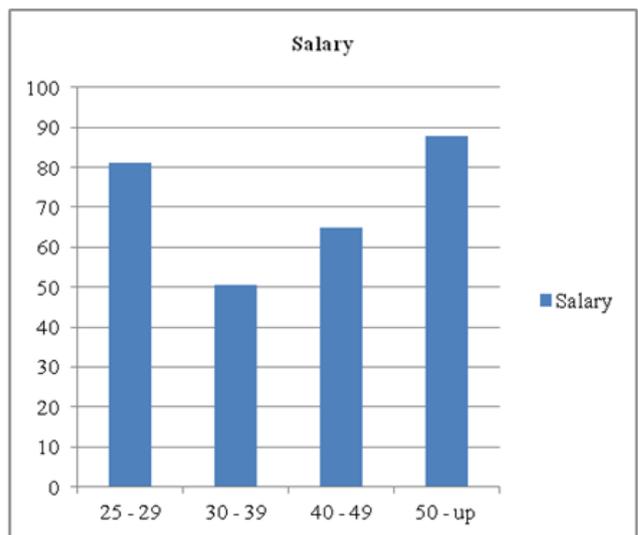
Figure 2. Job Satisfaction concerning salary according to age

Table 3. Mean score and median of satisfaction subscales and overall satisfaction according to years of experience

		Years of experience		
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Functional Procedures	0 - 10	4,20	0,73	4,50
	11 - 20	3,42	0,91	3,25
	21 - up	3,92	0,94	3,75
Nature of work	0 -10	4,45	0,59	4,38
	11- 20	3,78	0,73	3,75
	21 - up	3,80	0,72	3,75
Benefits	0 - 10	3,47	1,02	3,50
	11 - 20	2,80	0,83	2,75
	21 - up	3,46	1,19	3,25
Communication	0 - 10	4,55	0,96	4,67
	11 - 20	4,25	0,83	4,00
	21 - up	4,74	0,87	4,67
Overall satisfaction	0 - 10	3,89	0,50	4,01
	11 - 20	3,54	0,47	3,54
	21 - up	3,87	0,58	3,86

Table 3 presents the subscales of job satisfaction according to the years of experience. Kruskal-Wallis test indicated a significance differentiation.
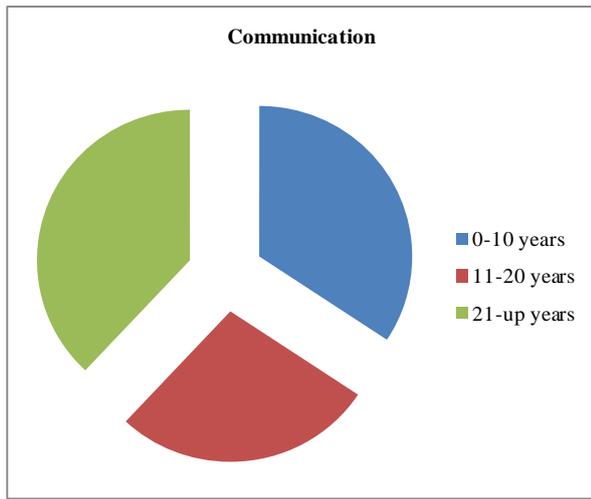
Figure 3. Job satisfaction concerning communication according to years of experience
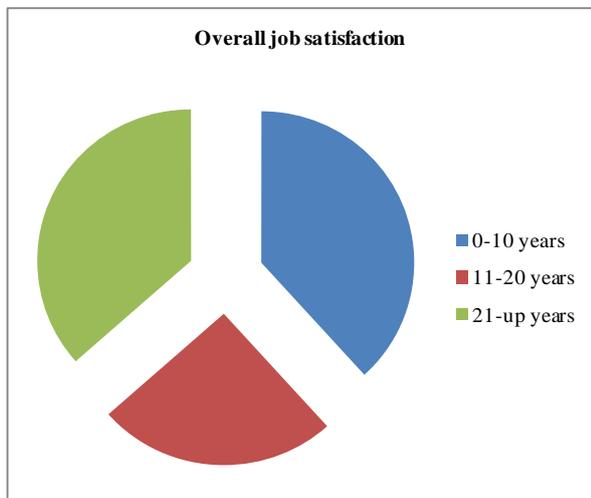

Figure 4. Overall job satisfaction according to years of experience

Figure 3 and Figure 4 present a statistically significant differentiation to the levels of job satisfaction concerning communication and overall satisfaction according to years of experience. Thus teachers who have 0 – 10 years teaching experience are the most satisfied. Teachers with 21 and up years of experience are more satisfied from the communication, whereas teachers who work from 11 to 20 years have less overall satisfaction.

Table 4. Mean score and median of satisfaction subscales and overall satisfaction according to working relations

		Working Relations		
		Mean	**Standard Deviation**	**Median**
Functional Procedures	Permanent	3,57	1,04	3,50
	Substitute	3,97	0,71	3,75
	Temporary	3,81	1,02	4,13
Promotion	Permanent	2,38	0,85	2,50
	Substitute	2,38	0,98	2,25
	Temporary	1,38	0,38	1,38
Nature Of Work	Permanent	3,67	0,71	3,75
	Substitute	4,15	0,63	4,25
	Temporary	4,56	0,83	4,25
Benefits	Permanent	3,00	1,12	2,75
	Substitute	3,43	0,88	3,63
	Temporary	2,88	1,12	3,00

Table 4 shows the job satisfaction subscales according to working relations which measured to have statistically significant differentiation. Teachers who work in a permanent position seem to be more satisfied from the possibility of promotion and the benefits, while substitute and temporary teachers seem to be more satisfied from the nature of work and the functional procedures.
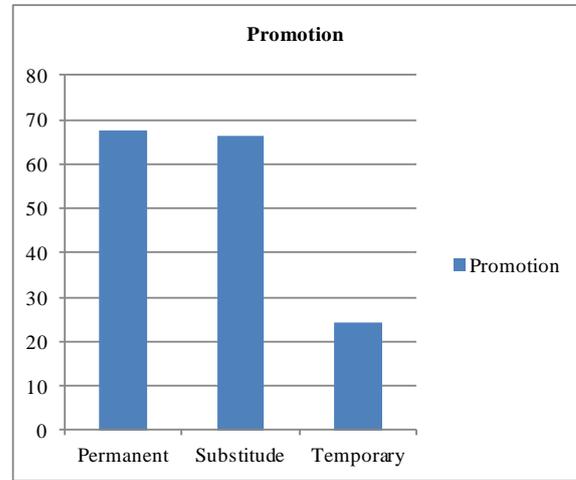

Figure 5. Job satisfaction concerning promotion according to working relations
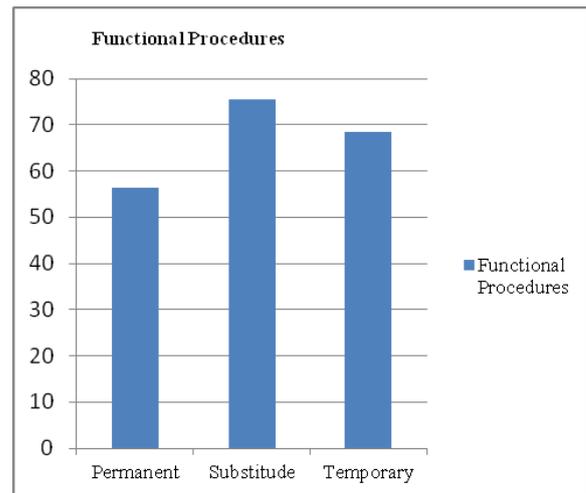

Figure 6. Job satisfaction concerning functional process according to working relations

Figure 5 and Figure 6 show the statistically significant differentiation of job satisfaction subscales that was found after the Kruskal-Wallis test in accordance with the working conditions.

Table 5. Mean score, standard deviation and median of satisfaction subscales and overall job satisfaction according to number of schools

		Number of Schools		
		Mean	**Standard Deviation**	**Median**
Nature of Work	1,00	3,85	0,71	4,00
	2,00	4,35	0,80	4,25
	3,00	3,75	0,51	3,75
Possible Rewards	1,00	4,43	0,69	4,50
	2,00	4,60	0,85	4,88
	3,00	4,00	0,41	4,25
Communication	1,00	4,54	0,92	4,67
	2,00	4,70	0,80	4,67
	3,00	3,93	0,47	4,00

Table 5 depicts the differentiation of job satisfaction subscales as it concerns the number of school a teacher works each year. Thus teachers who work in more than two schools are less satisfied from the nature of work, the communication and the possible rewards.

4.2. Research Question 2

Do personal factors affect teachers' empowerment and are they related to some aspects of their working conditions?

Table 6. Mann Whitney & Kruskal Wallis tests for empowerment according to demographic characteristics

Characteristics		Mean	Standard Deviation	Median
Working Relations	Permanent	3,30	0,54	3,28
	Substitute	2,98	0,43	2,91
	Temporary	3,23	0,46	3,06
Numbers of Schools	1,00	3,21	0,54	3,08
	2,00	3,30	0,42	3,16
	3,00	2,81	0,40	2,91

The data analysis indicated that there is a significant differentiation of empowerment according to working relations and the number of schools a teacher works.
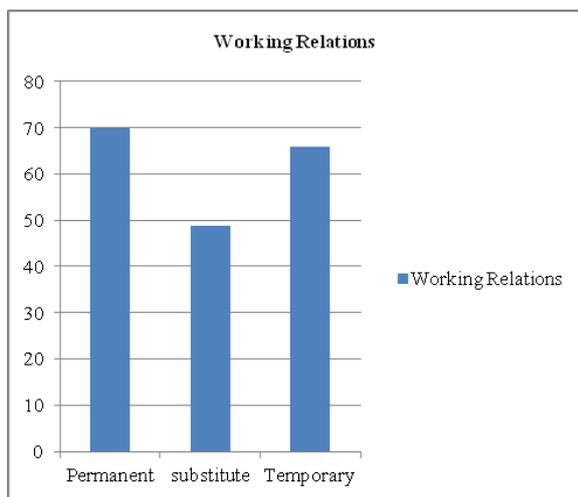

Figure 7. Empowerment according to working relations

Figure 7 shows that teachers who work in a permanent position seem to be more empowered than those who do not hold a permanent position.
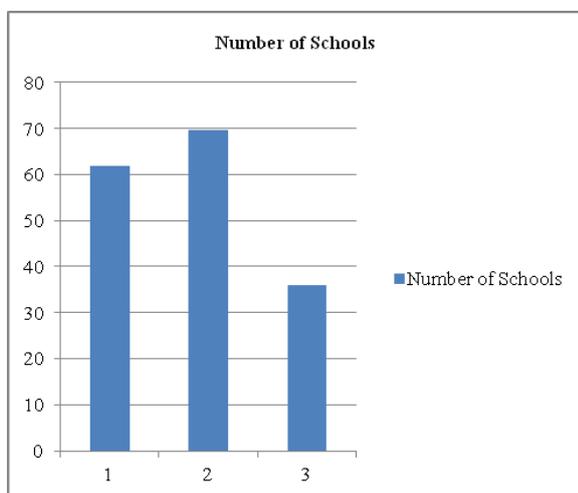

Figure 8. .Empowerment according to number of schools

In Figure 8 there is the teachers' empowerment as it concerns the number of school a teacher works each year. Teachers who work in 3 schools feel less empowered than their colleagues who work in 1 or 2 schools.

4.3. Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between teachers' empowerment and their job satisfaction?

Table 7. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation on investigating the Relationship between job satisfaction and empowerment

Functional Procedures	r	0.230
	p	0.010*
Salary	r	0.082
	p	0.362
Promotion	r	0.019
	p	0.833
Colleagues	r	0.228
	p	0.011*
Nature of Work	r	0.109
	p	0.225
Possible Rewards	r	0.465
	p	0.000*
Benefits	r	0.183
	p	0.042*
Director	r	0.153
	p	0.089
Communication	r	0.423
	p	0.000*
Overall Satisfaction	r	0.282
	p	0.002*

Table 7 shows that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and empowerment. Specifically empowerment influence positively job satisfaction as it concerns the functional procedures ($r=0.230$, $p=0.010<0.05$), the colleagues ($r=0.228$, $p=0.011<0.05$), the possible rewards ($r=0.465$, $p=0.000<0.05$), the benefits ($r=0.183$, $p=0.042$), the communication ($r=0.423$, $p=0.000<0.05$) and the overall satisfaction($r=0.282$, $p=0.002<0.05$).

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore and record teachers' perceptions about their professional empowerment, as well as to examine their beliefs about their job satisfaction and to identify the personal factors which affect these beliefs. As it concerns the job satisfaction, the present study showed that the teachers express an average overall job satisfaction, whereas previous studies had recorded high levels of job satisfaction [22]. In addition teachers were found to be satisfied from their colleagues and the director. This result is the same with previous ones, where the director of the school with his behavior and action, his communication skills and cooperation found to be able to create the right job climate leading to job satisfaction [23]. In addition Saiti pointed out the role of school director as an important factor for teachers' job satisfaction [24]. Quite satisfied are the teachers from the possible rewards and the communication and less satisfied from their salary and the possibility of promotion. In an unstable working environment teachers are positively influenced by their colleagues, the director and the

possible rewards. It could be concluded, thus, that despite the low salaries and the changes in working conditions that influence negatively job satisfaction [25], there are some aspects that influence positively teachers' job satisfaction, such as the high level of communication between teachers and director, a fact that leads to the improvement of schools. Data analysis showed a differentiation according to demographic characteristics. More specifically, women are more satisfied than men; teachers aged 50 and up are more satisfied from the possibility of promotion and their salary and less satisfied from the benefits of their work. These findings are similar to previous ones which showed that gender influence positively job satisfaction and women found to be more satisfied than men[26] [27]. Another differentiation was found in the years of experience. Teachers who are less experienced express more satisfaction from functional procedures and the nature of work. This could be justified as new teachers are more enthusiastic with their jobs and have less burnout. As it concerns the communication in work, more experienced teachers feel more satisfied but they express less overall job satisfaction. It is clear that the years of work influence the levels of job satisfaction, a finding similar to the previous ones [28]. In addition a significant differentiation was found in the levels of job satisfaction according to working relations and the number of schools a teacher works. It could be concluded, thus, the teachers who work in unstable working conditions, they are obliged to move from one school to another during the same year and they have the feeling that they do not belong in a stable school environment they express low levels of job satisfaction. Finally, the research revealed that there is a positive correlation between job satisfaction and empowerment. This finding is similar to previous ones which had found that the more empowered the teachers are, the more satisfied they feel [29].

The findings of the data analysis showed two statistically significant differentiations of empowerment according to teachers' demographic characteristics. More specifically, although there is no differentiation according the gender, the marital status, the age or the working experience, there is a differentiation according to working relations and to the number of schools a teacher works. Teachers who hold a permanent job and work in 1 school are more empowered. As it concerns their studies, teachers who hold more than one diploma feel as empowered as their colleagues. This is opposed to a recent study which has found that teachers with more academic skills feel more empowered. The same is noticed according to age where there are no significant differentiations, whereas the Sotiriadou, Charalampous and Athanasoula – Reppa's research showed that the new teachers' excitement creates a feeling of empowerment [30] and the San Antonio & Gamage's research showed that the older the teachers are, the more empowered they feel [31].

According to the subscales of empowerment in relation to demographic characteristics of the participants, the research revealed that men express greater level of self efficacy and professional autonomy, whereas teachers who have a permanent position express greater level of status, professional respect and autonomy. As they work many years in the same school, they are able to choose their teaching methods, the educational tools they use and they can make decisions concerning the discipline

teaching. Moreover, teachers with more years of experience express bigger feelings of status and professional respect. Finally, it has been noticed that teachers who work in more than one school in the same academic year seem to participate less in decision making. It has to be mentioned, however, that the section that all teachers state that they feel less empowered is that of participation in decisions concerning the school life. This could be explained because the Greek education system is strictly directed by the government and there are no room rooms for initiations.

6. Conclusion

Concluding, it should be mentioned that teachers' empowerment is of great importance for their job satisfaction and thus completely necessary for the improvement and upgrading of schools. Consequently shaping policy on human resource management issues in education should aim at the empowerment and job satisfaction of teachers [32]. According to the present research, it could be mentioned that the teachers feel less satisfied when they do not work in one school as they do not belong to a stable school environment and when their job is not permanent. These teachers feel less empowered so they are less efficient. It is imperative, thus, appropriate working conditions be ensured in order teachers feel empowered and satisfied from their jobs. Teachers are obliged to follow decisions made by the ministry of education which is responsible for the educational strategies. Given the general desire for effective schools and improving the quality of education, it would be the right solution specific formulators of educational policies take into account the factors influencing job satisfaction of teachers, in order to lead to more effective education.

This study course is subject to some limitations, mainly due to the fact that it was conducted in a single region of Greece and because of its small sample. Thus, its results cannot be generalized to all country's public servants since teachers are only a part of all public servants. Moreover, the sample of this study included Primary school teachers, excluding teachers of secondary and high schools and Higher Education (University) teachers. Finally, Thessaloniki is of course a major urban center in which many teachers work, but every researcher should have in mind that in Greece there are schools on islands, suburban and rural areas where working and living conditions differ significantly from those of urban centers. Therefore, there are demographic and organizational - occupational factors which may affect job satisfaction and its connection to empowerment.

Given therefore the above limitations a number of new research questions may be brought. The latter may be related to differences that may arise in the interaction of satisfaction of teachers with empowerment in urban, rural and suburban areas of the country. Another research question could be referred to the differences in the above interaction between different public employees. Finally, interesting issue could be a study of differences in the interaction between teachers from various grades of education among larger samples because of their importance for increasing the effectiveness of training. By this way an overall perception of teachers' empowerment and job satisfaction would be received.

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