

Teacher Training as an Influential Factor in the Use of Visual Materials in Education

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Abstract

The use of visual materials in education is a traditional way of teaching. Images are one of the many kinds of teaching methods used by teachers in order to enrich the teaching of their lessons and to revitalise the way they teach. The utilisation of illustrative material when teaching depends on many factors. One of these is the instruction and training of the teachers. This study aims to investigate the influence of the teachers' profile on the use of images in the teaching of lessons.

Keywords: image, illustration, image and education

Introduction

The current requirements to develop and improve education have established further education and training as now being a necessity (Kostika, 2004). For this reason, the Greek state has designed a series of further education programmes (Taratori-Tsalkatidou, 2000), so that Greek schools can provide pupils with an up-to-date education. Teachers have been asked to implement these programmes and to spread the belief that, in addition to a targeted education policy, a correct use and utilisation of teaching aids in education also depends on the teachers' knowledge and training.

Given this viewpoint, all the activities of the teachers should be aimed at adopting a new educational role where the teachers are not the sole and exclusive provider of knowledge (Pange, 2009), but a means of interconnecting knowledge with their pupils. Within this kind of learning environment, the teacher encourages the pupils to acquire abilities and skills, so that learning becomes a process of personal discovery for them (Flouris, 2003). The further education programmes inform teachers about new ways of teaching and the results that these bring (Taratori-Tsalkatidou, 2000).

The use and the utilisation of teaching tools in education (Salvaras & Salvara, 2011) is an important topic which is tackled by the further education programmes. There are many kinds of educational tools. One of these tools is that of images (Tisseron, 2008). Images are a factor of crucial importance in teaching and learning. Through them teachers enrich their lessons and bring their way of teaching up to date. The illustrative material, in both its traditional and modern form, occupies an important position in the learning process.

Starting point, goal and methodology of the research

The starting point for carrying out this survey was the importance of illustrative material in conducting the teaching process. The goal of the research was to show *how much the teacher's profile affects the frequency with which images are used in the teaching of the lesson*. For the above goal to be achieved and for the research to be carried out, a questionnaire was used as a research tool for collecting data (Keeves, 1990; Daoutopoulos, 2002; Zafeiropoulos, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morisson, 2008). The processing of the research data statistics was carried out with the help of the SPSS programme (Kelpanidis, 1999; Roussos & Tsaousis, 2011).

Analysis of the research data

Two hundred and eighty eight teachers took part in the survey. Of these, 63 were men (a percentage of 20.5%) and 225 were women (a percentage of 79.5%) (Table 1).

Table 1.

Distribution of teachers according to their gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Men	63	20.5
Women	225	79.5
Total	288	100%

Regarding the *years of service*, the participants in the survey could be split up as follows: 41 individuals (a percentage of 14.2%) had been working for from 1-5 years, 89 individuals (a percentage of 30.9%) had been working for from 6-12 years, 72 individuals (a percentage of 25%) had been working for from 13-20 years, 49 individuals (a percentage of 17%) had been working for from 21-26 years, whilst 37 individuals (a percentage of 12.8%) had more than 27 years of service (Table 2).

Table 2.

Distribution of teachers according to their years of service

Years of service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5	41	14.2
6-12	89	30.9
13-20	72	25
21-26	49	17
> 27	37	12.8
Total	288	100%

The teachers who took part in the survey were asked to answer the following questions:

how much do you think that the basic studies affect the frequency with which images are used in the teaching of a lesson?

how much do you think that further education programmes influence teachers in including illustrative material in the teaching of their lessons?

how much do you think that having a Master's Degree contributes to teachers deciding to use images in the classroom?

how much do think that having a PhD affects teachers' wishes to enrich the teaching of their lessons with images?

how much help is given by other factors which have a decisive effect on whether teachers choose to use illustrative material in their lessons or not?

All the questions included in this module, apart from the last one, were "closed-end" questions and the answers which they could give to these were as follows: "not at all", "a bit", "quite a lot" and "a lot". For the last question the teachers were able to mention one or more factors which they considered as being decisive in their decision to include illustrative material in the teaching of their lessons.

The answers from the teachers in the survey indicate the following things: 95 individuals (a percentage of 35.1%) stated that the *basic studies* contribute "quite a lot" in motivating teachers to use images when teaching their lessons. Eighty-six of them (a percentage of 31.7%) stated that the basic studies help "a bit" in this direction. Fifty-six of their colleagues (a percentage of 20.7%) gave this assistance a positive rating of "a lot", whilst 34 teachers (a percentage of 12.5%) did not credit it "at all" (Table 3).

Table 3.

Contribution of basic studies to the use of images

Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all	34	12.5
A bit	86	31.7
Quite a lot	95	35.1
A lot	56	20.7
No answer (missing)	17	-
Total	288	100%

The answers from teachers who think that *further education programmes* contribute “quite a lot” or “a lot” to the use of images were at about the same level (88 individuals, a percentage of 42.7% put “quite a lot” and 83 individuals, a percentage of 40.3%, put “a lot”). Another twenty-five (a percentage of 12.1%) stated that further education programmes had helped them “a bit” in this direction, whilst 10 of their colleagues (a percentage of 4.9%) maintained that they were “not at all” helped in this field (Table 4).

Table 4.

Contribution of further education programmes in the use of images

Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all	10	4.9
A bit	25	12.1
Quite a lot	83	40.3
A lot	88	42.7
No answer (missing)	82	-
Total	288	100%

Thirty-eight of the teachers taking part in the survey expressed an opinion on whether a *Master’s Degree* contributed towards teachers deciding to use images when teaching their lessons. To be precise, 21 of them (a percentage of 47.7%) thought that their subsequent studies had helped them “a lot” in making this choice, whilst another 17 (a percentage of 38.6%) thought it helped “quite a lot”. It is worth noting that a large number of teachers did not answer this question, something which indicates that these individuals probably did not have this qualification (Table 5).

Table 5.

Contribution of Master’s Degree to the use of images

Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all	5	11.4
A bit	1	2.3
Quite a lot	17	38.6
A lot	21	47.7
No answer (missing)	244	-
Total	288	100%

To the question “whether and to what extent a *PhD* contributes to the decision by teachers to include illustrative material when teaching their lessons”, the answers given are of no relevance for the purposes of this research (Table 6).

Table6.

Contribution of a PhD to the use of images

Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at all	2	28.6
A bit	2	28.6
Quite a lot	1	14.3
A lot	2	28.6
No answer(missing)	281	-
Total	288	100%

Six of the teachers asked mentioned the contribution of *other factors* in introducing illustrative material when teaching lessons, without, however, specifying what these factors are (Table 7).

Table 7.

Contribution of other factors in the use of the images

Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Quite a lot	2	33.3
A lot	4	66.7
No answer(missing)	282	-
Total	288	100%

Conclusions

An analysis of the above data shows that the participants in this survey sample do not think that the basic studies help teachers to recognise the contribution made by images and to include them when teaching their lessons. On the other hand, they consider that further education programmes, with the structure and content which they provide, contribute more in this direction. This could be due to the fact that the majority of the teachers in the survey sample had not done any post-graduate studies, whilst a minimal number of respondents had a PhD.

The training and further education of teachers in relation to the use of visual material in education is of crucial importance. Since the processes of representation and communication in contemporary societies have shifted the centre of gravity from the word to the image, the utilisation of illustrative material in the teaching of lessons (Kantartzi, 2002) has become an issue of paramount importance.

As has been evidenced, studying further education programmes can help teachers to reassess their ideas and recognise the contribution of images to the learning process (Bonidis, 2004). But the state, too, through training sessions, should train both current and future teachers so that they realise the value of visual education and intersperse their lessons with images.

However, in addition to the further education programmes (Hatzidimou, 2011), the teachers themselves will, on the one hand, have to aim at changing the current mindset and, on the other hand, to experiment with something new (Fykaris, 2012), modern and innovative: the inclusion of images in the educational process (Zangotas, 2016). A factor which will boost this activity is the individual will and the personal inclination shown by each person. Only in this way will the traditional method of teaching be brought up to date (Hatzidimou, 2003) and educational practices improved.