The Digitally Supported Learning Environment

The Digitally Supported Learning Environment, was launched in October 2019. The Digitally Supported Learning Environment as a modern flexible learning environment supports modern pedagogical approaches and is not limited to a physical space, but extends to a wider digital and online space. The goal of the Environment is to provide access and information to the educators and executives on modern digital technologies and, through standard activities that highlight the pedagogical value of their use, to motivate them to use them for effective learning.

The Environment will also host students with their teachers, offering them experiential activities utilizing augmented and virtual reality, 3D applications and printing, robotics packages and humanoid robots.

Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2018)

Cyprus has participated in the third phase of a Teaching and Learning International Survey which was carried out in 2018 and focused on the beliefs of teachers, their initial education and training and career development opportunities, leadership and management of human resources, the school climate, their job satisfaction, and their self-sufficiency. In addition their motives were investigated on their choice of profession, innovation practices in schools, as well as practices on equality and diversity in the classroom.

The research led to important findings and encouraging results concerning Cypriot teachers and their habits and practices on the issues that were investigated.

The reasons for the choice of profession, as the survey shows, had more to do with the social dimension (influence on child development, contribution to society) and less with personal motivation (relevance to personal obligations, stable professional career, secured job, and reliable income).

On average, teachers in Cyprus participated in 3-4 activities. Exemption from teaching tasks as an incentive to participate in professional development activities decreased from 58.5% (2013) to 20.9% (2018).

The majority of teachers participated in activities that were related to the syllabus (86.9%), in knowledge and understanding of cognition subject (82.6%), student assessment (82.4%), pedagogical teaching skills (79.6%), student behavior, and class management (71.3%).

The involvement of teachers in Cyprus in specific activities was higher than in 2013 and also higher than the involvement of Europeans teachers.

The need of Cyprus teachers was strongly highlighted for training in teaching students with disabilities (27.4%), in teaching in a multicultural or multilingual environment (19.6%) and in communication with people from different cultures (13.5%).
Organisational aspects

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for organizing in-service training for teachers in the public sector. The Pedagogical Institute is the main provider of in-service training, offering both compulsory and optional courses.

The Department of Teachers' In-service Training provides the following compulsory courses, which take place in morning hours and the participants are relieved from their duties in order to attend them:

- Compulsory recurrent course for newly promoted headteachers in primary education;
- Compulsory recurrent course for newly promoted headteachers in secondary education;
- Compulsory course for newly promoted deputy headteachers in secondary education; and,
- Compulsory course for newly appointed teachers and their mentors (induction course).

Optional seminars of the Pedagogical Institute are usually held in afternoon or evening hours and they are open and free for all teachers. They cover a wide range of topics including Psychology, Sociology, Pedagogy and Information Technology.

School-based seminars are also offered focused on identified needs of the individual schools.

Beyond offering centralized training the Department of Teachers' In-Service Training focuses on adopting other forms of teachers' support, such as e-learning courses; supportive educational material development; implementation of intervention programs in school units.

Attendance certificates are issued to all participants.

Further information on the courses and seminars offered can be drawn from the Department of Teachers' In-Service Training.

Incentives, supporting measures and funding for participation in continuing professional development (CPD) activities

Incentives

Promotion is the main incentive for continuing education of teachers in ECEC and school education, as the following regulated measures indicate:

(i) With regard to the promotion of teachers to the post of an inspector or higher, postgraduate qualifications of at least one-year duration are a prerequisite;

(ii) With regard to the promotion of teachers to any post, additional credit units are recognized to holders of postgraduate qualifications;

(iii) Postgraduate qualifications are positively considered by the inspectors in appraising a teacher’s performance, while the teacher’s appraisal reports constitute a criterion for promotion. Similarly, the certificates of attendance issued by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus may be positively considered by the inspectors as well.
(iv) Financial incentives, such as salary increases or extra remuneration do not exist.

**Supporting measures**

Supporting measures are those aiming to eliminate disincentives to teachers’ continuing education. Offering courses free of charge is the most common among them. The Pedagogical Institute, as the responsible body for the teachers’ in-service education, offers both obligatory and optional courses free of charge.

Notably, travel expenses for certain types of CPD activity are sometimes covered by the Pedagogical Institute, but this is not the rule.

Educational leave in order to attend courses leading to a formally recognized qualification is granted to teachers at all levels of school education. If teachers are in receipt of a state scholarship, then a part of the monthly salary is paid. If not, such leave is unpaid.

**References**