

Teachers' Perspectives on the Bank of Exam Topic: Evaluating Implementation and Challenges, and Future Reforms in the Greek Educational System

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ABSTRACT

This study examined teachers' evaluation of the Bank of Topics initiative through interviews with six secondary education teachers. Based on the interviews conducted, the shortcomings of the Bank of Exam Topics appear to stem from broader weaknesses in the Greek educational system. Traditionally, the Greek educational system has been highly centralized, granting limited autonomy to teachers and involving them only to a small extent in key issues related to the educational process. Therefore, it is necessary to implement policies for the reform of the Bank of Exam Topics that take into account teachers' perspectives in the implementation of this policy.

Keywords: Bank of Exam Topics, educational system, exams, perspectives, teachers

INTRODUCTION

Education and educational policy have always been of great interest (Kalantzis & Cope, 2013). Undoubtedly, today's educational systems can and must differ substantially from those of the past, given that the social changes of the last decades highlight the need for a transformation in the field of education (Schwab & Malleret, 2020). Education is the cornerstone of the development and evolution of human societies, since without it the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next would be practically impossible (Lightfoot et al., 2014). The education system is therefore of paramount importance for the very evolution of humanity (Dalio, 2021; Lightfoot et al., 2014).

As humanity evolves at a particularly rapid pace, educational systems must also evolve in order to serve human societies in the most effective way (Dalio, 2021). Humanity has now transitioned to the information society, a period characterised by the knowledge economy, modern technology and global interconnection. The transition to the information society can be broadly defined by the fall of the Berlin Wall, which dictated the need for educational transformation (Bain, 2010). However, for the most part, the educational systems of the information society are based on the way the educational systems of the industrial society operated (Teschers et al., 2024).

In Greece, this lag may be even more pronounced than in other European countries, especially in relation to other highly developed European states. The decade-long economic crisis has highlighted the long-standing pathologies of the Greek education system. It therefore became apparent that the country's education system was ineffective in developing a skilled workforce, leading to a workforce of fairly limited productivity and low adoption of innovation (Karamanidis, 2017).

The way exams are conducted in the Greek education system has undergone significant changes since the time of Kapodistrias until today. Initially, during the period 1828–1831, exams were oral and based on memorization and recitation of the material, while written exams were held every month and a half, with public final exams in front of a committee and an audience (Koukou, 1975). In 1880, with the abolition of the mutual teaching method and the increased specialisation of teachers, examinations were limited to five-member committees and the

number of subjects examined was reduced. In 1920, examinations before a committee were abolished, quarterly examinations and the average of written and oral assessments were introduced, and the examination also became a form of feedback for students. From 1940 to 1970, exams became bimonthly and conduct assessment was added, reinforcing the dual role of education in knowledge and moral character. From 1970 onwards, the changes became less drastic, with quarterly grade notifications, verbal grading in the early years and a numerical scale of 1–10 in the upper years, while primary school promotion exams were abolished and alternative forms of assessment, such as group work, were introduced, albeit on a limited basis (Valavanopoulou, 2006).

In general, since 1970, the changes made to the evaluation system have not been as substantial and significant as in the past. The need to change the Greek education system became apparent much later, during the economic crisis. The economic crisis highlighted the shortcomings of Greece's public administration, affecting education among other things. The way students are assessed began to be reconsidered during the crisis, as a result of the general realization of the pathological way in which the Greek state had always functioned (Karamanidis, 2017).

One of the initiatives of this period was the introduction of the “Bank of Exam Topics,” which was implemented from 2013 onwards. In that year, Law 4186 was passed in Greece, aiming at the restructuring of Secondary Education. It should be noted that, under the above law, no explanatory references were made to the character the Bank of Exam Topics should have or to the way in which it should be organized. In fact, the absence of such a reference was intended to ensure the objectivity and scientific validity of the Bank of Exam Topics initiative. Therefore, since the law did not stipulate how the Bank of Exam Topics should be organized, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs sent an invitation to the Institute of Educational Policy, with protocol number 1827/28-01-2014. The Ministry invited the Institute of Educational Policy to submit proposals.

At a practical level, the Bank of Exam Topics was used for the first time in the promotion exams of May and June 2014 in the first grade of Senior High School. The goal was to investigate certain basic obstacles and difficulties so that its use could gradually be extended to the remaining grades, something that was ultimately achieved from 2016 onwards, when it was applied across all grades of Senior High School. From that point, students' performance grades in the three grades of Senior High School, combined with the grades from the nationally examined subjects, jointly determined their access score for Higher Education.

The implementation of the Bank of Exam Topics inevitably faced significant challenges. In 2015, SYRIZA came to power, forming a government together with the political party of Independent Greeks. This government hindered the further implementation of the Bank of Exam Topics through Law 4326/2015, granting teachers once again the ability to select exam topics themselves. The change of government in 2019 led to a continuation of the policy regarding the Bank of Exam Topics, through the new Law 4692/2020, which stipulated that 50% of the topics in the promotion exams of Senior High School would come from the Bank of Exam Topics. Additionally, in 2022, with an amendment decision by the Deputy Minister of Education, Zeta Makri, the process of drawing lots for the selection of topics was established.

Finally, during this period as well, obstacles and difficulties in the effective functioning of the Bank of Exam Topics persisted. The most notable incident related to the Bank of Exam Topics was its collapse on May 30, 2023, following a cyberattack. This cyberattack thus highlighted the technical weakness of the Bank of Exam Topics system, leading to strong criticism of the government by the opposition, which has generally maintained a more cautious stance towards this initiative (“Efimerida ton Syntakton,” 30.05.2023).

Surprisingly, no other studies have been conducted to date to investigate teachers' perceptions of the Bank of Exam Topics in Greece. The studies concerning the Bank of Exam Topics are mainly technical in nature, thus focusing on proposals for its improvement. For example, Saripanidis (2023) conducted a study on the more effective and accurate production of questions used in exams through the Bank of Exam Topics. Research of this type is certainly useful for improving educational policy. However, the overall volume of research reflects the nature of decision-making in the Greek education system, which takes into account the views and perceptions of teachers themselves only to a small extent. In this context, this study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by examining teachers' own assessment of the specific project, with a view to improving its operation by those responsible for educational policy-making in our country.

Based on the above, the aim of the present study was to investigate teachers' perspectives regarding the Bank of Exam Topics. During the design of the study, specific research questions were formulated for investigation. The research questions that the study attempted to answer were as follows:

1. What is teachers' evaluation regarding the implementation of the Bank of Exam Topics initiative?
2. What is teachers' perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the Bank of Exam Topics?
3. What is teachers' perception of the collapse of the Bank of Exam Topics in May 2023?
4. What is teachers' evaluation of the Bank of Exam Topics in the present and for the future?

METHODS

The design of the study was qualitative, using interviews. This design was considered as the most appropriate to answer the above research questions. In this study, the participants were secondary education teachers. This was deemed necessary, as primary education teachers would have only a partial awareness of the issue studied. Furthermore, it was required that participants have a minimum of one year of teaching experience in order to possess at least a basic level of understanding of the examined topic. No additional inclusion or exclusion criteria were set, such as requiring participants to be permanent teachers rather than substitutes, since the aim of the study was to reach conclusions that could be as generalizable as possible regarding teachers' perceptions of the Bank of Exam Topics. Therefore, the use of more restrictive inclusion and exclusion criteria would have significantly limited this potential for generalization.

The measurements of the study were based on the use of a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide of the present study is included in the relevant appendix. Initially, certain socio-demographic questions were posed in order to provide a more complete profile of the sample under investigation. Subsequently, questions followed that examined participants' evaluation of the Bank of Exam Topics initiative. The measurements therefore consisted of those concerning socio-demographic characteristics and seven open-ended questions. The formulation of these questions was designed to align with the research questions of the study. The first and second questions corresponded to the first research question, the third and fourth questions addressed the second research question, the fifth question referred to the third research question, and finally, the sixth and seventh questions were linked to the fourth research question.

Regarding the process of including participants in this study, they consisted of individuals from the researcher's familiar social, interpersonal, and broader professional environment. The inclusion process took place in April-May 2024. Participants were informed by telephone about the nature, purpose, and subject of the study, as well as about the research procedure followed through the interview. If they agreed to participate, a new meeting was arranged in a mutually agreed location for the interview to take place. The interview was audio-recorded, with the participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed. Participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their participation, while any sensitive personal data disclosed during the interviews were not transcribed.

It is worth noting that during the interview process, the semi-structured nature of the interview was taken into account. The semi-structured format allows the researcher to ask follow-up questions based on an initial question, to clarify, to rephrase, and so forth (Robson, 2002). Therefore, the interview guide presented in the Appendix was used as a starting point for exploring the study's research questions, based on the seven questions that had been formulated. However, this guide was not strictly binding, allowing the researcher the flexibility to direct the questions further according to the course of each interview with each participant.

Regarding the number of participants included in the study, this was not determined by strict criteria. As Robson (2002) noted, while pre-determining sample size is useful in quantitative research, the same does not apply to qualitative studies. Instead, he proposed the use of the information saturation criterion, whereby the researcher stops including new participants when it becomes apparent that they cannot provide a set of information substantially different from that obtained in previous interviews. Therefore, the inclusion of participants in this

study ceased when the researcher determined that new interviews did not differ significantly in content from earlier ones.

The data analysis of the study was conducted through thematic content analysis, as this method is suitable for grouping the material collected in the context of qualitative research and organizing it into central meaning categories (Babbie, 2013). Specifically, the thematic content analysis was carried out using the technique developed by Colaizzi (1978), which has been utilized in various cases in order to inform policy makers about necessary reforms (Han, 2020; Pour et al., 2021; Vahdani et al., 2021). This method of data analysis is based on interpretative phenomenology and follows the steps below (Colaizzi, 1978):

1. Familiarization: Reading all participants' descriptions to acquire a feeling for them.
2. Identifying significant statements: Extracting key statements directly related to the phenomenon.
3. Formulating meanings: Interpreting and restating the underlying meaning of each significant statement.
4. Clustering themes: Grouping formulated meanings into theme clusters, checking them against the original text.
5. Developing an exhaustive description: Integrating all themes into a complete, rich description of the phenomenon.
6. Producing the fundamental structure: Condensing the exhaustive description to the essence of the phenomenon.
7. Member checking: Returning to participants for validation of the findings.

It is important to note that qualitative data analysis is often carried out by comparing the data under analysis with existing literature, that is, with prior research on the examined issue (Babbie, 2013). However, in the present case, such an approach was not preferred. Instead, a method of thematic content analysis focusing on the data itself, with very limited engagement with the existing literature, was selected. This was considered necessary during the design of the study because, according to the literature review conducted in the theoretical framework, there was not a sufficiently substantial body of knowledge regarding the perceptions of Greek teachers about the Bank of Exam Topics to date. Therefore, given the lack of previous studies, it was deemed both preferable and necessary to select a data analysis method centered on the data itself rather than one involving constant comparison with the broader literature.

RESULTS

The sample of the present study consists of six (6) secondary education teachers serving in various General Lyceums in Attica. There are three (3) women and three (3) men, aged between 48 and 60 years old. Regarding their studies, the participants hold high academic qualifications: two hold a Phd, one is a Phd candidate, two hold a master's degree, and one holds bachelor's degree. The teachers' specializations cover a wide range of subject areas: Chemistry (2), Physics (1), Informatics (1), Mathematics (1), and Philology (1). The total years of service range from 15 to 32 years, with an average of approximately 20 years, which indicates a sample of experienced educators. The years of service at their current school range from 4 to 15 years.

Table 1. Sociodemographic data

Interview	Gender	Age	Education	Specialization	Years at Current School	Total Years of Service
1st	Female	50	Master's Degree	Chemist	6	18
2nd	Male	53	Bachelor's Degree	Informatics	15	20
3rd	Female	60	Phd	Physicist	5	32
4th	Male	53	Phd Candidate	Mathematician	4	17
5th	Female	48	Master's Degree	Philologist	4	15

6th	Male	57	Phd Candidate	Chemist	6	18
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The analysis of participants' interviews revealed seven sub-themes regarding the Bank of Exam Topics. These include cautious evaluation of its implementation, progressive improvement of attitudes over time, objectivity as a key positive element, pressure and interference as main negative aspects, lack of effective organization and infrastructure as a cause of its collapse, the need for flexibility and disengagement from bureaucracy, and further involvement of teachers in its development. Due to their similar content, the last two sub-themes were merged into a single central theme, resulting in six central themes, five maintaining their distinct meaning and one arising from this unification.

To provide a transparent link between participants' statements and the resulting themes, indicative quotations are presented below for each of the six central themes. Regarding the implementation of the Bank of Exam Topics, participants' evaluation was, in general, cautious. P5 noted: *"It was a bit abrupt for me... there should have been proper information from the start, but we only had two brief informational meetings, and we weren't even told how the assessment process would work."* P4, a mathematics teacher, similarly pointed to insufficient preparation among colleagues: *"The introduction and implementation could clearly have been better... its value and usefulness beyond examinations has not been communicated to colleagues, so many approach it with mistrust and try to avoid it however they can."*

Participants also described a gradual improvement in attitudes over time. P3 recalled that the initial rollout met a climate that *"was completely unprepared and quite hostile,"* whereas the second version *"was much more thought through... there wasn't as strong a reaction."* P6 likewise described the more recent period as comparatively smoother, while suggesting that allowing teachers a transition period free from exam pressure would have eased adoption further.

When asked about the advantages of the initiative, participants pointed above all to the greater objectivity it introduces. P2 explained: *"There is greater objectivity... students in all schools see the same material and face exercises of the same level of difficulty,"* adding that the Bank should be regarded not only as an examination tool but also as a teaching resource offering ready, vetted exercises.

At the same time, participants identified pressure on teachers and interference with how they organize their teaching as the main drawback. P2 explained that *"the Bank puts you in a mindset that the material must be completed within a specific period, and this creates pressure for the teacher,"* a burden felt most acutely in subjects with extensive curricula. P3 added that the process cannot guarantee equal difficulty across the topics drawn by lot, which may disadvantage weaker classes.

Concerning the collapse of the Bank of Exam Topics in May 2023, participants pointed primarily to inadequate organizational planning and infrastructure, rather than the cyberattack itself, as the underlying cause. P1 stated: *"If we set aside the various theories... I think it simply exposed the carelessness and poor planning behind how the Bank operates. There should have been a plan in place, and clear information about what to do, in the event that the draw could not proceed as intended."*

Finally, participants converged on the need for greater flexibility, disengagement from rigid bureaucratic structures, and, above all, deeper involvement of teachers in shaping and sustaining the initiative going forward. P5 warned that without continued institutional, financial, and technical support, the Bank risks becoming *"just a repository"* disconnected from future curriculum changes. When asked what he would change as a policymaker, P2 proposed starting with a dialogue among teachers to rationalize curriculum content, *"because teachers live the classroom every day... they see what is actually needed,"* a view echoed by P3, who called for a mechanism allowing teachers to comment on and revise proposed topics rather than receiving them as fixed.

Table 2. The initial and final themes	
Initial (Sub)Theme	Final (Central) Theme

The participants' cautious evaluation of the implementation method of the Bank of Exam Topics	The participants' cautious evaluation of the implementation method of the Bank of Exam Topics
The progressive improvement of attitudes towards the Bank of Exam Topics over time	The progressive improvement of attitudes towards the Bank of Exam Topics over time
The objectivity of the process as the main positive element of the Bank of Exam Topics	The objectivity of the process as the main positive element of the Bank of Exam Topics
Pressure and interference as the main negative elements of the Bank of Exam Topics	Pressure and interference as the main negative elements of the Bank of Exam Topics
The lack of effective organization and infrastructure as the underlying cause of the collapse of the Bank of Exam Topics	The lack of effective organization and infrastructure as the underlying cause of the collapse of the Bank of Exam Topics
Flexibility and disengagement from bureaucratic structure as prerequisites for the progress of the Bank of Exam Topics	Merged into: Teachers' involvement and disengagement from bureaucracy as necessary prerequisites for the success of the Bank of Exam Topics
Further involvement of teachers as their personal proposal for improving the Bank of Exam Topics in the future	Merged into: Teachers' involvement and disengagement from bureaucracy as necessary prerequisites for the success of the Bank of Exam Topics

DISCUSSION

In this study, the perceptions of teachers in our country regarding the implementation of the Bank of Exam Topics were examined. Specifically, interviews were conducted with a total of six teachers in order to assess their evaluation of the issue. All the teachers who participated in the study were secondary education teachers. The thematic content analysis led to the following themes: (1) the participants' cautious evaluation of the way the Bank of Exam Topics was implemented, (2) the gradual improvement in attitudes towards the Bank of Exam Topics over time, (3) the objectivity of the process as the main positive feature of the Bank of Exam Topics, (4) pressure and intrusiveness as its main negative features, (5) the lack of effective organization and infrastructure as the underlying cause of the Bank of Exam Topics' collapse, and (6) the involvement of teachers and the disengagement from bureaucracy as necessary conditions for the success of the Bank of Exam Topics. Consequently, through the process of thematic content analysis, seven sub-themes emerged, which, after merging two of them, became six.

Examining the results with respect to the first research question, teachers were quite cautious about the way the Bank of Exam Topics was implemented as an initiative, although they believed that over time its implementation improved. Regarding the second research question, on the positive and negative aspects of the Bank of Exam Topics, teachers viewed the objectivity of the process as a positive aspect, while pressure and intrusiveness were considered negative aspects. Concerning the third research question, the lack of effective organization emerged as the underlying cause that contributed to the collapse of the Bank of Exam Topics. As for the fourth research question, teachers pointed out the necessity of freeing the process from bureaucracy, meaning a broader institutional change in the way the Greek educational system operates, in order to improve the implementation of the Bank of Exam Topics.

Looking deeper into these findings, analysis of the interview data based on the first theme revealed that the teachers who participated in the study were particularly cautious regarding the way the Bank of Exam Topics initiative was implemented. As mentioned above, the Bank of Exam Topics was introduced following reforms that were not accompanied by public consultation to the degree that would have been appropriate, effectively constituting a top-down policy at the educational system level, which is one of the reasons it met with significant resistance (Matthaiopoulou, 2023). Therefore, the teachers in this study's sample expressed certain doubts about the way the initiative was carried out.

Over time, there appears to have been a gradual improvement in teachers' attitudes towards the Bank of Exam Topics. This could be supported through two different interpretations. The first interpretation concerns a

substantial change in teachers' attitudes over time with regard to this issue. Based on this perspective, the Bank of Exam Topics essentially remained the same, but teachers became more familiar with it, and as a result, their negative attitudes were alleviated. The second interpretation relates to the improvement of the Bank of Exam Topics policy over time. Indeed, its weaknesses may have been addressed over the years, leading to an improvement in its implementation and a softening of teachers' attitudes towards it, as a function of changes in the educational reality. At present, both of these distinct interpretations can be supported.

When examining the positive aspects of the Bank of Exam Topics, teachers refer to the objectivity of the process as the most positively evaluated feature of the initiative. In fact, this is the central argument that accompanied the policy implementation of the Bank of Exam Topics (Matthaiopoulou, 2023). The Bank of Exam Topics therefore emerges as a key means of supporting the objectivity of the process, as teachers value the use of questions of the same level of difficulty for all schools in the country.

From this theme onwards, that is, from the third theme onwards, certain weaknesses of the Bank of Exam Topics begin to emerge, which also highlight the changes that should be implemented in the future. Indeed, a key problem identified in this context concerns the development of a rigid, inflexible process for creating the Bank's questions, which leads to significant concern among teachers. They believe that there is a strict top-down policy that they must follow, with limited flexibility, autonomy, and innovation. In this way, the teachers in the study put forward a proposal for improving the Bank of Exam Topics, emphasizing the need to disengage it from bureaucracy and to increase the involvement of teachers themselves in the entire initiative.

In general, the Bank of Exam Topics initiative appears to face significant weaknesses and obstacles in terms of its organization and implementation as an innovation. It is evident that this initiative was, in a sense, implemented hastily and without the necessary support, resulting in its collapse during the well-known incident of May 2023. Regarding this specific incident, as reported in the press, it was attributed to a cyberattack ("Efimerida ton Syntakton," 30.05.2023). However, it seems that there were broader structural weaknesses in the way the Bank of Exam Topics was organized, leading to the conclusion that its collapse was due more to these underlying problems and less to the coincidental factors of a cyberattack. The teachers participating in the study support such an interpretation.

In any case, the present study is subject to some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, although the criterion of saturation was met, the small sample size of only six teachers constitutes a significant limitation that increases the risk of bias and limits the scope of the findings. In qualitative research, the goal is not statistical generalization but rather an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. However, a sample of this size is particularly susceptible to the idiosyncrasies of individual participants; the inclusion of even one teacher with highly atypical experiences or strong opinions could have disproportionately skewed the overall thematic analysis. While data saturation, the point at which new interviews yield no new information (Robson, 2002), was achieved, this indicates that the range of experiences within this specific group was exhausted, not that the full spectrum of perspectives across the diverse population of Greek secondary education teachers was captured. The findings, therefore, are not intended to be generalizable in a statistical sense, but rather to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of these specific teachers' perspectives, which can serve as a basis for further, more extensive research.

Second, the use of convenience sampling, with participants selected from the researcher's professional and personal network, introduces a considerable risk of selection bias that further limits the transferability of the results. This method often results in the inclusion of individuals who share similar characteristics, professional environments, or even pre-existing perceptions with the researcher, creating a potentially homogenous group (Babbie, 2013; Robson, 2002). The participants in this study, for instance, may share a similar professional culture or have been predisposed to discussing the topic due to their connection with the researcher. This can lead to a "cozy" set of data that reflects a particular sub-culture within the teaching profession rather than the broader, more heterogeneous realities of the Greek educational system. Consequently, the perspectives gathered may not represent the views of teachers from different regions, school types (e.g., vocational vs. general lyceums), or with varying levels of experience and attitudes towards centralized reforms. This limitation does not invalidate the study's findings as an exploratory investigation, but it significantly curtails their applicability

to the wider teacher population, meaning the conclusions should be viewed as indicative and hypothesis-generating rather than definitive.

Based on the above, certain suggestions could also emerge for future research. A key suggestion for future research concerns the implementation of a new related project in such a way as to overcome the limitations of the present study. For example, it could be proposed to conduct a similar study with a larger sample size, so as to address this limitation accordingly.

A second suggestion for future research relates to exploring the assessments of other stakeholders in the field of education regarding the Bank of Exam Topics. It is a fact that in modern education, not only teachers have a significant voice, but also parents, who should be considered as individuals that need to be involved in shaping relevant policies (Henry et al., 2016; Kalantzis & Cope, 2013). Therefore, future research should examine the views of parents on the Bank of Exam Topics, highlighting their own perspective on the issue.

Another key issue involves investigating students' attitudes toward the matter of the Bank of Exam Topics. Indeed, students constitute the final recipients of the educational process, which dictates the necessity of taking them into account in research concerning the evaluation and assessment of educational policy (Kalantzis & Cope, 2013). Consequently, it would be useful for future research to focus on exploring students' opinions on this issue.

Finally, it might also be useful to conduct similar interviews with policymakers in our country, such as senior administrative officials of the Ministry of Education. Investigating the perceptions of senior administrative officials regarding the Bank of Exam Topics could be essential for understanding the reasoning behind many of the decisions made about this specific educational policy.

In general, future research on the issue of the Bank of Exam Topics should follow two different directions. The first involves overcoming any methodological limitations of the current project, thus leading to more reliable conclusions regarding the Bank of Exam Topics in our country. The second relates to a multifaceted examination of the issue, studying the assessments of teachers, parents, students, and educational policymakers. In this way, a well-rounded understanding will emerge, enabling the optimal redirection of policies related to the Bank of Exam Topics in the future.

Beyond the proposals for future research, certain recommendations must also be made regarding educational policy. Based on the interviews conducted, the shortcomings of the Bank of Exam Topics appear to stem from broader structural weaknesses within the Greek educational system. Traditionally, the Greek educational system is highly centralized, granting limited autonomy to teachers and involving them only to a small extent in key issues related to the educational process. Therefore, it is necessary to implement policies for the reform of the Bank of Exam Topics that also take into account the teachers themselves in the implementation of this policy. Consequently, scientific committees of teachers could be organized to submit their proposals to policymakers. In this way, teachers could be considered to a greater extent in this initiative, addressing potential shortcomings of the system.

The shortcomings identified in the case of the Bank of Exam Topics may be of a more general nature, reflecting weaknesses that are more broadly found in the Greek educational system. Indeed, a central point of weakness is the highly centralized and bureaucratic nature of the Greek educational system, which may act as a barrier to a range of other current issues it faces, such as the matter of teacher evaluation. Considering these broader systemic weaknesses, there is a need for a wider shift in the policy and orientation of the Greek educational system toward a more decentralized and collective approach to leadership. In this way, the structural problems responsible for the shortcomings in the operation of the Bank of Exam Topics could be addressed, along with the broader obstacles that hinder the progress of the Greek educational system.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the present study highlights the need for the Greek educational system to make broader changes, focusing on flexibility, responsiveness, and alignment with successful practices from other countries. The Bank of Exam Topics was developed to improve the process of examination, but faced significant obstacles related to

the highly centralized and bureaucratic nature of the educational system in Greece, which restricts autonomy and does not take into account their point of view in policy development. The content analysis leads to both positive and negative aspects regarding the Bank of Exam Topics, with the latter being responsible for its collapse in May 2023. In general, it is essential to use a more inclusive approach that actively involves teachers through scientific committees and fosters decentralization and collective leadership. In addition, it is essential to carry out further research in order to study the teachers' perspectives, which might be of high importance in order to develop accurate and targeted policies.

Author contributions

The first author contributed to study design, data collection, data analysis, manuscript writing and drafting the paper. The second author contributed to study design, data analysis, manuscript writing and drafting the paper. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Appendix

1. How would you personally evaluate the procedures followed for the introduction and implementation of the Bank of Exam Topics in our country's educational system?
2. What do you believe was the response of the educational community to the Bank of Exam Topics initiative?
3. What do you consider to be the advantages of the Bank of Exam Topics?
4. Do you believe that the Bank of Topics has weaknesses? If yes, what are they?
5. How do you personally evaluate the collapse of the Bank of Exam Topics in May 2023? What is your opinion on this incident?
6. What do you consider to be the main challenges the Bank of Exam Topics is currently facing and is expected to face in the future?
7. If you were responsible for policy-making, what actions would you take to improve the Bank of Topics initiative?