

Evaluation of Educational Work in Greece - A Qualitative Research Study

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Abstract

The evaluation of educational work is one of the most pressing issues in education. Its implementation in Greece during the 2022-2023 school year, after a forty-year absence, presents a significant topic for both theoretical and empirical investigation. This study aims to explore this issue by first providing a theoretical examination of educational evaluation, clarifying key terms, and presenting its most critical aspects. The legal framework of teacher evaluation over the years is outlined, culminating in an analysis of the 2021 law, with its application examined through the research findings. The research part of this study investigates the perspectives of educators and administrators regarding the evaluation of educational work, particularly focusing on its implementation over the last two school years. The findings reveal that, in most cases, the evaluation was carried out in accordance with current legislation. However, certain aspects of the process, criteria, evaluators, and outcomes were identified as problematic or unclear, requiring improvements and clarifications to ensure the objectivity and effectiveness of the evaluation. Despite some concerns, teachers do not oppose the evaluation of their work; they consider it necessary and express a willingness to contribute their insights to the state, as they are the ultimate recipients and implementers of any educational evaluation legislation.

Keywords: Educational Evaluation, Educational Work, Evaluation of Teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of educational work is one of the most pressing issues in contemporary educational discourse. In Greece, its implementation began in the academic year 2022-2023 after a forty-year hiatus. In today's educational reality, the issue of evaluation concerns society as a whole and, more specifically, the Greek educators staffing the country's schools. It is a topic of intense discussion in domestic affairs, drawing attention from politicians, journalists, unionists, educators, and even citizens not directly connected to it. In 2019, the application of the evaluation system in education was announced, filling a gap since 1982, the year the well-known inspectorate system was abolished.

The institutional framework that accompanies it shows that, over the years, efforts have been made for its implementation. However, they did not yield results either due to strong opposition from the unions or due to

the lack of political will to support its implementation. The current legislation was introduced by the political party New Democracy. The "Kerameos" Law, as it is known, by the name of the minister who introduced it, Niki Kerameos (Minister of Education from 2019 to 2023) has the number 4823/2021, and has sparked numerous reactions from the educational community even before it came into effect. These reactions were expressed through declarations from the unions and teachers' walk-out from evaluation processes. Even within the councils of Teaching Staff Associations, tensions and disagreements on the matter have been noted, which have affected their cohesion. In March of the 2022-2023 academic year, its implementation began, affecting the tenure of newly appointed teachers from 2020 onwards.

Thus, it became a significant subject for investigation, both theoretically and empirically. This study aims to analyse the theoretical framework of the

evaluation of educational work and to investigate its implementation through the 4823/2021 law. It represents an initial effort to capture the participants' perspectives on the evaluation of educational performance. Through these perspectives, the initial experience of implementing the evaluation is documented, which can serve as an authentic source of information for legislators. This would allow the current law to be scrutinized and reformed, taking into account the implementation experience of those directly involved.

The objective of the current research is to investigate the perspectives of educators and educational administrators regarding the evaluation of educational work, specifically its implementation over the past two academic years. Qualitative research was conducted and involved interviews with teachers who underwent evaluative scrutiny, teachers who were not evaluated, and educational administrators. The analysis of the participants' responses yielded significant findings. In most cases, it appears that the implementation of the evaluation was carried out in accordance with existing legislation. Furthermore, elements of the process, criteria, evaluators, and results that operated without issues were identified, as well as others that are unclear during implementation and require corrections and clarifications to ensure the objectivity and utility of the evaluation. Finally, it seems that educators do not oppose the evaluation of their work, but they are sceptical about its reliability and impartiality. They consider it necessary and would like to contribute their opinions to the state, as they are the ultimate recipients and interpreters of any educational evaluation legislation.

Educational Work and Its Evaluation in Greece

The term "educational work" has been frequently encountered in the literature of educational science since the 1980s (Taratori-Tsalkatidou, 2015). It constitutes an educational process which, during its execution, takes into account numerous factors both inside and outside the school environment (Xohellis, 2020). In terms of its content, it is not limited solely to traditional teaching and the transmission of knowledge, but extends to the creation and cultivation of trust relationships among class members, as well as to the guidance and critical thinking of students. In this context, the cultivation of skills such as self-regulation, autonomous learning, effective communication, and problem-solving occur on a daily basis (Hatzidimou, 2020). Based on the aforementioned information, it is evident that educational work is characterized by authenticity, relevance, and complexity (Papakonstantinou, 1992). Finally, it is important to mention that educational work can evolve on three levels: at the level of the organization of the educational system, at the level of the organization of the school unit, and at the level of the individual educator (Papakonstantinou, 1992).

The multifaceted nature of educational work means that its evaluation is a complex process. According to Xohellis (2006, p. 43): "Evaluation is understood as the assessment of the functionality and effectiveness of all aspects of educational work, from its prerequisites to its outcomes, using scientific expertise and methodology." The extension of evaluation from prerequisites to outcomes reinforces the notion of a comprehensive understanding of this term in the educational field. This allows social and educational stakeholders to comprehend not only the results but also the manner in which the aforementioned prerequisites influence the educational process and its achievements. The international literature (with representatives such as Stufflebeam, Scriven, Mayo, Tyler, and others) abounds with models, forms, criteria, characteristics, and techniques for the evaluation of educational work. Furthermore, educational theorists analyse the characteristics of the entities tasked with the evaluation of educational work.

Moving from international contexts to Greek affairs in 1982, the institution of inspectors, who were exclusively responsible for the evaluation of teachers, was abolished following strong pressures from the teachers' unions. A significant criticism of this institution were the harsh evaluations conducted by the inspectors, which included not only educational matters but also aspects of the teachers' personal lives, potentially leading to severe penalties (Karafyllis, 2010). Over the next 40 years, from 1982 to 2023, more than 18 legislative acts were published regarding the implementation of educational evaluation. However, a series of reasons, such as the memory of the inspectors' harshness, the fierce resistance from the teachers' unions, and weak political will, were the reasons why educational evaluation was not implemented for 40 years in Greece (Kassotakis, 2022). In the summer of 2019, following national elections that brought the New Democracy party to power, a new chapter began in the country's educational affairs, focusing on the implementation of educational work evaluation.

Today, significant changes have been made at all three levels of educational work organization. At the level of educational policy, there appears to be a strong political will to implement educational evaluation, which is practically supported by a series of laws, followed by clarifying ministerial decisions and legislative acts that outline the evaluative processes in detail. These political decisions have not escaped intense criticism and resistance from educators, a large percentage of whom refuse to participate in any form of formal evaluation procedures within the educational sector.

At the school unit level, evaluation is introduced through Law 4692 of 2020, "School Upgrade and Other Provisions". This involves an internal evaluation where the school's educational staff initially identifies strengths and weaknesses of the school unit

against predefined criteria. Some of these criteria include: "School drop-out and attendance, School-family relationship, Participation of educators in professional development activities" (<https://iep.edu.gr/images/axiologisi/odigos/>). At this level, each school unit conducts a self-evaluation regarding selected criteria chosen by the school's educators and sets clear objectives to be achieved. Educators then design specific actions to be implemented throughout the school year. A specially designed digital platform hosts the recording of all these steps, while the Institute of Educational Policy (henceforth IEP) sets strict timelines for the submission of data on this platform. At the end of the year, a reflection is conducted, and the overall process is reviewed.

A significant proportion of primary schools and kindergartens in the country did not welcome the internal evaluation of the school unit and reacted in an organized manner under the direction of the Primary Education Teachers' Union, the Greek Primary Teachers' Federation (in Greek: Didaskaliki Omospondia Ellados, henceforth DOE). The federation sent coordinated texts for posting in schools across the country, thus expressing the sector's dissatisfaction with the implementation of internal evaluation. Nonetheless, the IEP platform is operational, and during the 2020-2021 school year, Greek educators upload either the internal evaluation they have drafted for their school unit or the scripted texts proposed by the DOE.

Law 4823/2021 aims to regulate the third level of educational work evaluation, at the individual educator level. This level is the primary subject of this paper. This law includes 245 articles concerning the evaluation of educators, educational administrators, and special education staff, providing detailed information on the evaluation criteria and the steps of the process for each category of the evaluand. Various aspects of educational work are analysed.

The entities responsible for conducting the evaluations are clearly defined, and the process, as well as the utilization of its outcomes, is described in detail. According to the law, the evaluation of an educator's work is conducted in three areas:

- **Area A1:** Teaching of the subject matter
- **Area A2:** Learning environment and classroom management
- **Area B:** Service consistency and competence of the educator

It is specified that Area A1 is evaluated by the educational advisor, Area A2 by the director of the school unit, and Area B is evaluated jointly by both aforementioned entities in a consolidated evaluative report that is co-signed.

The process described in Law 4823/2021 specifies that a mutual agreement on the date and time

for a meeting is arranged to inform the subject and the process of the evaluation. Subsequently, the evaluatee uploads self-evaluation data to the IEP platform as per the evaluator's guidance. Through discussion, a teaching scenario is developed for each class that the evaluator will observe (two classes are observed by the educational advisor and a further two by the director of the school unit). The next step involves observing the teaching at a predetermined day and time. This is followed by a reflective discussion about the observed lesson, and the relevant report is submitted to the evaluator. For Area B, the evaluand only completes the self-evaluation components on the special IEP platform. The evaluatee uploads self-evaluation data according to a set of criteria. It should be noted that the evaluation process described likely relies on the observation model for evaluating the educator's work by Metz and Becker, as described by Karakatsanis (1994).

Some of the evaluation criteria are: the design and preparation of the material and the content of the teaching class, its comprehension, accuracy, scientific basis, and reliability of the information provided during class, the extent to which the educator stays informed about developments in his field of expertise, and his or her ability to convey and transform specialized knowledge into a form that is accessible to students. How the educator gets the whole class involved, manages time, whether he or she creates positive conditions for equal and active learning in his or her classroom, the use of technological tools, the handling of unexpected issues, the use of alternative forms of evaluation, and the provision of feedback to students, are also some of the criteria (Ministerial Decision 9950/GD5)

The utilization of the results from the evaluation process is also described. At the end of the evaluation process, the evaluator compiles a summary report for each evaluatee and grades them based on a four-point scale: excellent, very good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory. In cases where the evaluatee receives the lowest rating, "unsatisfactory," they are required to undergo mandatory training provided by IEP, while also retaining the right to be re-evaluated within a two-year period. It is worth mentioning that the law also provides evaluation of the evaluation process itself, aiming in its improvement.

Through Ministerial Decisions, various aspects of the individual evaluation of educational work are clarified. The application of the digital platform is presented, and the method of entering data for both internal and external evaluations by each entities involved is specified. A detailed description of the external evaluation process of educational work is also provided, clarifying every step, evaluation criterion, and grading level. Finally, the timelines for entries, as well as any potential objections that may arise, are clearly stated (Ministerial Decision 9950/GD5/2023 (FEK 388/B/27-

1-2023; Ministerial Decision 12980/E3/2023 (FEK 602/B/8-2-2023)

With the legislative acts of the last four years since 2020, the evaluation of educational work is being actively implemented. The first to be evaluated are the newly appointed educators of 2020, 2021, and 2022, who remain on probationary service until they are evaluated. Thus, the evaluation in this case was not only legislated but also actualized in Greek education after forty years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In exploring the existing literature on the topic, more specific issues related to educational evaluation are identified. Different perspectives are found among educational circles regarding the necessity of evaluation, the role of educational administrators in the evaluation processes, and how the physical and technical infrastructure of the classrooms affects the process and its outcomes.

Analysing these issues in the literature, it is observed that the stance of Greek educators is not uniform, and two dominant trends prevail: structuralism, which supports that evaluation provides valuable information about the quality of education, feeds back to educators about their teaching, and encourages them to use new teaching methods. They believe that evaluation as a scientific field will provide the appropriate tools for monitoring teaching (Athanasiou, 1990). In contrast, others express the belief that through educational evaluation, the state will have a free field to control education, and it can play a significant role in social stratification by shaping the subject matter of the educational process accordingly (Kassotakis, 2022). Numerous studies confirm these two trends, such as those by Andreadakis and Maggopoulos (2006), Dounavis and Zmpainos (2020), and Zouganeli (2008).

Contrary to the stance of educators, the views of educational administrators appear to show no contradictions. Most educational administrators, according to the research by I. Ganakas (2006), support the implementation of educational evaluation. They argue that the years without evaluation have significantly affected the level of educational work. Th. Karamitopoulos (2016) investigates the role and work of educational advisors in relation to the evaluation of educators, as seen by the advisors themselves. Most view it as a means to improve Greek education, while there were cases of educational advisors who saw evaluation as a means to identify the capable from the less capable educators, so that the latter could be removed from their duties. One of the issues that particularly concerned educational advisors was limited financial resources, which made it difficult for them to travel from school to school. Thus, even if they wanted to perform their advisory role, the conditions did not allow it. As a result, those advisors who saw the evaluative process as a way to provide guidance were unable to conduct it as they

would like, so inevitably their evaluative role appeared as predominant.

A significant issue affecting the production of educational work and consequently its evaluation is the issue of building facilities and technical infrastructure provided to Greek schools. In the Greek context, according to the research by K. Rakitzi (2018), the buildings are outdated, posing risks to the physical integrity of students and teachers. The teaching materials have not been kept up to date, where new trends in educational science are trying to find space to be applied.

It is worth mentioning that during the years of absence of formal educational evaluation in Greece, two experimental attempts were made by the Pedagogical Institute (the Ministry of Education's body for educational policy) in 1999 led by I. Solomon and in 2008 by A. Zouganeli, which, although they led to rich conclusions, did not find fertile ground to be applied nationwide. The contributions of these experimental implementations were significant, as many of their findings appear to have been considered in the design of educational policy for subsequent efforts to legislate educational evaluation.

From the above bibliographic references, it is evident that the opinions of Greek teachers on evaluation do not converge. Educators and educational leaders seem not to reject evaluation as a philosophy; indeed, they consider it necessary under some conditions. These conditions, in most cases, relate to the clarity of purposes and goals, the suitability of evaluators, and the use of the results of the evaluation. The entire educational community, however, agrees that the purpose of evaluation should be feedback-oriented towards the active educator, for their improvement and, by extension, for the improvement of the quality of education.

The Starting Point, Aim, and Methodology of the Research

From the literature review, it is evident that evaluation is an issue that concerns the entire educational community: educators, educational leaders, trade unions, public opinion, and the state. Its absence over the past forty years contradicts European standards, which, through the memoranda, bind the country to the issue of educational evaluation. Thus, amidst ideological conflicts and disagreements on practical implementation issues, evaluation is searching for its rightful place within the Greek educational system. In 2021, with the enactment of Law 4823, evaluation was implemented for the first time since its discontinuation in 1982, marking the current year (2024) as an ideal moment for the first feedback on its application.

The purpose of this study is to explore the views of primary education teachers and administrators in the regions of Evros and Rodopi regarding the evaluation of educational work, its necessity, and specifically its

implementation over the last one and a half years. Recording these views is crucial as they reflect the contemporary trends among educators on this issue.

The research objectives are:

- To investigate the views of educators and educational leaders:
 1. On the evaluation of educational work
 2. On the necessity of evaluating educational work
 3. On its implementation according to Law 4823/2021
- To encourage educators and educational administrators to formulate suggestions that could serve as recommendations for the state regarding the implementation of educational evaluation.

The research questions posed in this study are as follows:

1. What are the views of educators and educational leaders on the evaluation of educational work?
2. What are their opinions on its necessity?
3. What are their views on its implementation over the last one and a half years (academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024) according to Law 4823/2021, and what are the participants' suggestions for a more effective evaluative process?

For the exploration of the views of educators and educational administrators regarding the evaluation of educational work, a qualitative research approach was chosen. This method is considered ideal for interpreting social phenomena, such as the evaluation of educational work examined in this study (Bryman, 2017).

We applied purposive sampling, a method in which participants are deliberately selected based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the research objectives, ensuring that they can provide in-depth and insightful information (Gray, 2019). Educational leaders and teachers who either participated in or abstained from the evaluation were the primary population capable of providing essential information on the subject. More specifically, teachers who had not undergone an evaluative process, teachers who underwent individual evaluation during the years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 according to Law 4823/2021, and educational leaders who served as evaluators during the same period constituted the three categories of educators participating in this study. The total number of participants included 8 educators (4 who were evaluated and 4 who were not) and 4 primary education officials from the regions of Evros and Rodopi, who were selected before the data collection process began. The number of interviewees was determined by the data saturation point (Bryman, 2017).

As a methodological tool for data collection in this research, semi-structured interviews were used. This

approach allows each participant to find a fertile ground to express their personal views in the manner they choose, to the extent they wish to delve deeper and expand on the topics they deem important (Bryman, 2017).

The analysis of the research data was conducted with qualitative content analysis. We followed the steps described below:

- Coding of data
- Content analysis
- Interpretation and conclusion-drawing

This process involved the interpretation of patterns, highlighting significant observations, and interpreting the results in relation to the research questions and, by extension, the study's objectives (Creswell, 2011).

The units of analysis included the following:

- Content of Educational Work:
 - Elements that contribute to a successful educational work
 - Criteria set by teachers for evaluating their educational work
- Necessity of Educational Evaluation:
 - Necessity of the evaluation of the educational work
 - Limitations of the evaluation of the educational work
- Implementation of the Evaluation according to Law 4823/2021:
 - Educational work evaluation process
 - Educational work evaluation criteria
 - Educational work evaluation authorities
 - Educational work evaluation outcomes
 - Proposals for an ideal evaluation of the educational work

Once the oral interviews were transcribed into written text and thoroughly reviewed by the researchers, the material was processed and coded into the aforementioned categories. According to this approach, elements of the interview are referenced and corroborated by different participants (Creswell, 2011). After the material was cleared in this manner, conclusions could be drawn, that aligned with the research questions (Gray, 2019).

Qualitative Analysis

Analysis of the data yielded several results. Since the main term of this study is "educational work," the interview began with the participants' definitions. The responses of the interviewees indicate that they perceive educational work as a multifaceted concept. Some of the answers are highlighted below: Educator 6 states: *"I view it as a whole, meaning from the moment I enter the school until I leave, I consider all of this educational work. From my interactions with colleagues,*

how I communicate, how I collaborate with them, my actions in the classroom during lessons or other activities, whether it is a play or a costume party." Educational Administrator 2 articulates: "Primarily, it is about shaping characters and personalities, cultivating skills, and then teaching children academic subjects." Finally, Educational Administrator 1 asserts: "Educational work is anything that occurs and is produced within the school environment. It encompasses everything: from teaching, behaviors, crisis management, participation in events, creating a warm atmosphere... It includes everything related to the school's operation during school hours."

From the responses of the participants, it is evident that everyone has a clear understanding of what constitutes educational work and they associate it with the elements that an educator must possess to achieve desirable outcomes. It is noteworthy that all participants mentioned that their first and foremost goal is to create a friendly and safe environment among all those involved in the learning process and to foster team relationships between students and between students and teachers. Second in importance comes the cognitive aspect of the educational process, the teaching of individual subjects. All participants expressed the complexity of the term and, consequently, the educator's role. The interviewees associate successful educational work with the profile of a successful educator, making the educator responsible for producing work that benefits their students. In addition, it appears that the facilities and equipment of the school also play a significant role, facilitating or hindering educators and students in producing positive outcomes.

Subsequently, the interviewees were asked to articulate the criteria they would set for evaluating educational work. There was no consensus among the participants on this question. Two opposing views were expressed. The majority of the interviewees were able to identify the most critical elements of educational work that, in their opinion, should be evaluated to improve it. Others argued that it is not possible to set specific and precise criteria to do so.

Regarding the view that educational work can be evaluated, below are some verbatim excerpts from the interviews. Participant E.3 believes that "*the first thing that should be evaluated is the atmosphere in the classroom. The group of students and the teacher should have developed a communication code, so that the lesson does not need to be interrupted for issues that should have been resolved since the beginning of the school year ... Next, I would place the handling of problems that arise in the classroom, meaning the teacher's management, problems that children often express either through their behavior or in other ways... As a third factor, I would place the cognitive aspect, the structuring of the lesson content, the proper materials selected, and the way [the teacher] has chosen to present them to the*

children, so that there is critical thinking, initiative, and interest from the students. These are the three areas that I would like to see evaluated in a teacher." Participant E.2 states: "*I think [we should be evaluated] in all aspects, because it would be feedback for me as well*", while Administrator S.E.3 expresses that educational work should be evaluated "*in how the teacher moves within the classroom, their voice, their gaze, the atmosphere they create, the inspiration they provide, and the practices they adopt to suit the nature of the child.*"

From the above excerpts and the opinions of all participants, it appears that the evaluation of educational work includes aspects both inside and outside the classroom. These concern the overall behavior of the teacher in the school environment and the methodology they choose to teach in. It is also suggested that specific criteria could be defined that pertain to the entire educational process. According to the participants, every factor influencing the overall functioning of the school could be evaluated, including parents, teachers, students, and all those involved in its operation.

On the other hand, some of the teachers stated that educational work cannot be evaluated, or that it could only be evaluated under certain conditions. Participant E.4 says that it cannot be evaluated by an external person, but there is always an informal evaluation: "*I see if I'm doing well by the reactions of the children in the classroom or from the attitude of the parents when they come to talk to me.*" Participant E.5 states: "*I don't think it can be evaluated. Under certain conditions... this can only be assessed after a long period of time, let's say at the end of the year. Are the children happy? Do they feel safe? Do they love school? ... You talk to the parents. Do the children want to come to school? Do they study with joy? An external evaluator comes in and sees children smiling, not complaining, but can all this be captured on paper? In 5 minutes? When you have such goals, I don't think it is easy to evaluate this way, in terms of ticking boxes...*" Participant E.7 expresses: "*You can't set criteria to evaluate everything together, because these are things that show over time and often over the course of the year, and sometimes not just one year! And they are visible to parents, colleagues, and children, you can't capture it from just one perspective.*"

What emerges from the above opinions is that evaluating educational work may not be feasible through predetermined and rigid criteria. This is the primary aspect of evaluation to which the above interviewees object, while simultaneously emphasizing the necessity of having an evaluation system in place in Greek schools. The condition under which the evaluation could be conducted would be without pre-existing goals and criteria set by state or evaluators. In this case, an observer would monitor the lesson, followed by a descriptive assessment (not numerical grading) of the proceedings based on the educator's specific educational goals for that

lesson. They propose conducting evaluations more frequently, focusing on the actual conditions of classroom functioning, where teaching would be judged for its actual outcomes in a descriptive manner, given that the results of educational actions are not measurable.

The necessity of educational evaluation is a critical issue in Greece. It generates tensions within teaching staff councils in most Greek schools. All participants in this study consider evaluation to be essential within the Greek educational system. However, they distinguish between the necessity of evaluation and the manner in which it has been implemented over the past one and a half years (academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024). The following verbatim excerpts illustrate this: “*We are dealing with children... we should feel accountable somewhere...*” asserts Participant E.5, while Participant E.3 states, “*It is absolutely necessary, and I would argue that its absence significantly affects the quality of our work.*” Participant E.7 adds, “*The idea of evaluating teachers is good; I initially do not disagree with that. I would like some form of evaluation to exist.*” Participant E.8 further notes, “*I believe it is necessary because no one can work for 35 years in a service or job without undergoing evaluation or an examination...*” Other responses included, “*100%*” and “*absolutely.*”

In support of their argument for evaluation, educators mention the reasons that led them to this conclusion. These include the professionalization of teaching, the improvement of both teacher performance and, consequently, student outcomes, as well as the professional development of the educator, all of which tilt the balance in favor of accepting individual teacher evaluation. Additionally, several participants noted that evaluation is inherently a part of teaching, constituting a cyclical process that includes planning, implementation, evaluation, and the reassessment of goals. Finally, participants expressed that the teaching profession has been deeply affected by the absence of evaluation over the past 40 years, stating that this lack of evaluation has made them complacent and has rendered their educational work less effective at all levels.

The interviews also highlighted some limitations of the evaluation process. The participants expressed concerns and fears regarding certain aspects of its implementation. Notably, some of them indicated that the teaching profession should have been adequately prepared before the evaluation was implemented. As Participant E.6 noted, “*Guidance should precede evaluation.*” Some participants identified gaps in the preparation of educators, starting from their undergraduate studies. Participant E.7 articulated, “*In the university I didn't learn how to be a teacher. I learned to be a teacher in practice. What did I learn in my studies? Theories that I don't even remember now.*” Even after basic training, it was highlighted that excessive emphasis is placed on acquiring formal qualifications, which do not find application in the classroom. Participant E.4

specifically mentioned that there are colleagues who “*fill their portfolios with seminars and master's degrees—though not everyone—but the majority of the educators I've met... and essentially nothing! In the classroom, where are all these theories? They are not applied!*”

There is also significant concern about the evaluators themselves. Participant E.4 noted that the Greek school system does not operate with transparency and meritocracy: “*The principal who has a bad history with me and has conveyed it to the advisor as they see fit, cannot come to evaluate me!*” Others voiced concerns about the bureaucratic aspect of the evaluation. Participant E.6 stated, “*I would like the bureaucratic part to be omitted or at least limited,*” as it adds a significant workload to those being evaluated, which is not in the best interest of the students. The position of DOE is another issue identified by the participants as a limitation of the evaluation process. It was mentioned that there is pressure from union leaders or senior educators on probationary teachers to resist evaluation, to prevent it from becoming widespread throughout the educational community. Finally, another factor that seems to challenge the faith of probationary teachers in the evaluation process is their exhaustion from the trials they have endured during the years of international economic crises in order to remain in the profession. Participant E.5 vividly describes her experience: “*Why should we be substitutes for 12 years, pay for the continuous studies required with significantly reduced salaries and have bachelor degrees, master degrees, degrees in Information and Communication Technologies, seminars of 400 hours or more, know languages, receive training from the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP)... to be appointed based on those qualifications, to be subjected to mandatory training with 50-hour assignments, and then be told: 'You did all that well, we appointed you, but you'll be here for life unless we evaluate you on top of that!' Why? Are we not capable? Are we unsatisfactory?*”

Thus, the lack of adequate training and guidance from school advisors, the fear that formal qualifications might outweigh practical experience, the different approaches of the evaluators, the cumbersome bureaucracy, the stance of the Greek Primary Teachers' Federation (DOE) against any evaluation process, and the challenges posed by the economic, fiscal, and public health crises in recent years are factors that seem to undermine educators' trust in the state sponsored evaluation system. Particularly during the 2022-2023 school year, many teaching staff councils were divided, with intense conflicts, struggled to reach a common decision: for or against evaluation. Some participants found themselves in a difficult position because they wanted to be evaluated but had to face the negative viewpoints of their colleagues. There are also cases of teachers who did not want to be evaluated. In this situation, union bodies were ready to shelter those teachers who did not wish to be evaluated, offering them

legal protection for abstaining from the evaluation process. Finally, there are cases in which teachers did not want to be evaluated but accepted the evaluation to receive the confirmation of their permanent appointment, as mentioned in the interviews.

In terms of the implementation of the evaluation, there is evident uncertainty among the interviewees, as expressed clearly by Participant E.2: "*It is something entirely new for all of us, and we cannot yet form a complete opinion about it.*" In many cases, their expectations and experience of going through the evaluation align, while in others, educators found the process different from what they anticipated. All participants noted that it was a time-consuming and stressful process, with a significant amount of bureaucracy. This view was expressed by both educators and educational administrators.

Specifically, the participants discussed the evaluation process, criteria, evaluators, and outcomes. There was a divergence of opinions regarding the process: some found it satisfactory and moving in the right direction, while others viewed it as more bureaucratic and impersonal. Participant E.3 stated, "*I believe that the current process is a formal attempt to introduce evaluation into the school system. And it is good that it is being done in this manner because there are many oppositions.*" Participant E.5 disagreed, describing a staged teaching process that they found devoid of substance: "*How important is it to conduct the introduction in 2 minutes instead of 10 minutes if I see that they like it and that it motivates them to learn? And then to stop it to move on to the next activity... to keep to the time... and then to do the evaluation activity because if it's not done within 45 minutes, the lesson wasn't successful...*"

The same divergence of opinions appeared regarding the evaluation criteria. Some participants considered them appropriate, relevant, and comprehensive for evaluating the entire educational work, while others felt that there were too many criteria to be effectively implemented and that they were not tailored to the Greek reality and culture. Participant S.E.3 stated, "*I believe they are comprehensive in relation to the current state of education,*" while Participant E.4 was clearly negative: "*The criteria are wrong; their aim cannot be generalized for all schools across Greece*" Meanwhile, some of the criteria were not clear, as noted by Participant S.E.4. Participant S.E.2 also identified a hidden evaluation criterion—the recording of actions by those being evaluated, which significantly influences the evaluation judgment. Finally, it is worth noting that educators who were not evaluated expressed their ignorance of the evaluation criteria.

Regarding the evaluators, opinions were mixed; some considered them suitable, while others did not. Participant E.3 stated, "*In my mind, this entire effort is*

still embryonic; we are at the very beginning of this process... So, for what is currently being attempted, I believe the evaluators are relatively appropriate for this, as long as all of them—the school advisor and the principal—genuinely try to be supportive." On the other hand, Participant E.4 stated, "*These two evaluators cannot evaluate me... someone [principal] who seeks flattery daily and receives it from some colleagues, and someone who has been an advisor for so many years and has lost touch with reality... Can they teach today's children, with the demands placed on us?*" and added, "*The other day the advisor organized a seminar, which was supposed to last an hour... but it ended up being two hours, and they still didn't finish! Everything was pre-organized, and the audience were adults... not me with twenty or twenty-five children inside... these people are out of touch...*"

Beyond their personal opinions, all participating educators agreed that the primary role of the evaluators should be guidance and support, not evaluation. They also unanimously agreed that the bureaucratic workload of the evaluation process should be reduced for both evaluatees and evaluators. A specific issue in the evaluation was mentioned by Participant S.E.4: "*To see how irrational the law can be at times, special education teachers of integration classes and parallel support should be evaluated by the special education advisor; however, their evaluation in Field A1 has been assigned to the general education advisor! The special education advisor has pedagogical responsibility for them, so they appear in the evaluation in Field B! So, as an advisor, I will evaluate someone based on a seminar I attended or a master's in special education that I completed on my own initiative.*" In this case, we can see that an advisor with a primary focus on general education is evaluating a teacher with a different subject matter expertise, special education, which must be addressed in the next implementation of the evaluation process.

All participants seemed to agree on the evaluation outcomes. According to everyone, feedback for the educator should be one of the main results of the evaluation, aimed at their improvement. Proper training, organized and focused on their areas of improvement, should follow the evaluation process. "*The general directive,*" said Participant S.E.1, "*is that anyone who shows issues will be trained, will enter a process of self-improvement. Of course, there must be assistance from the educational advisors.*" Finally, the reward of educators who received the highest grade was mentioned as another important outcome.

The participants provided their suggestions regarding the above. For the process, some of them suggested that it should be based on the actual classroom conditions and not on the conduct of model lessons by educators. They proposed alternative forms of evaluation, such as self-evaluation, collaboration with a

critical friend, or even evaluation through action research. They suggested that the criteria should be clear for each type of school (small rural schools, minority schools, schools in remote areas, large city schools) and definitely fewer in number. They also proposed that the evaluators should not be limited to two educational administrators (the school principal and the educational advisor) but should also include students, parents, and university institutions. Among the participants' suggestions were to reduce the curriculum load, the need for training sessions on classroom management and the nature of educational work and its evaluation, as well as the assessment of the evaluation process itself to improve it.

CONCLUSIONS

Our research leads to several findings, which are presented according to each research question.

The multifaceted nature of educational work is the first point recognized by all participants, aligning with the definition provided by Xochellis (2020). How evaluation can be applied to educational work was a topic that brought about differing opinions among the participants. They were also reflected in the literature, with distinguished theorists in the field supporting both views: those advocating for multiple criteria to evaluate various factors and those highlighting the difficulty of the endeavor, given that educational work is not measurable according to Kassotakis (2022).

Regarding the necessity evaluation, participants agree with the research of Anastasiou and Vanikiotis (2018), Gotovou and Gotovos (2017), Dounavis and Zbainos (2020), and Zouganeli (2008) that evaluation is essential, and they support their positions. How teachers will act professionally rather than instinctively is one of the points mentioned by the participants, confirming the research of Gkanakas (2006), while the enhancement of educational work and the provision of high-quality education seem to be views corroborated by Athanasiou (1990), Salvaras (2020) and Kassotakis (2022).

However, participants also acknowledge the challenges and limitations of the evaluation process, particularly in the areas highlighted by Taratori-Tsalkatidou (2015), namely the process, the criteria, and the evaluators. References to the clientelism between the state and citizens, as described by Kassotakis (2022), also appear in the interviews. It was also found that some participants identified a gap at the level of studies concerning educational work and its evaluation, as noted by Gkanakas (2006). Finally, the fear of a return to the strict evaluative regime of inspectors (Karafyllis, 2010) is a significant concern for many educators, as mentioned by the participants.

In moving forward with the implementation of the evaluation, it is observed that the participants found the process to be complex and stressful, with a heavy

bureaucratic burden, findings that were also reached by Zouganeli in the experimental implementation of educational evaluation for the Pedagogical Institute in 2008. Regarding the criteria, they found them also to be multifaceted, as presented by Dimitropoulos (2004). Their high quantity was something that participants found burdensome, something that is also mentioned by Kyriakidis (2001). Some participants suggested an evaluation independent of predefined objectives, as discussed by Scriven, as presented by Papadopoulou and Bouras (2021). The participants unanimously emphasized the importance of school infrastructure, confirming the research of Rakitzi (2018). Participants temporarily accept the selection of evaluators, while expressing differing views on their suitability. Many argue that there is no institution in Greece with specialized expertise in evaluation. This contrasts with the research of Anastasiou and Vanikioti (2018) and Gkanakas (2006), in which teachers and educational administrators appear to accept directors and education advisors as appropriate evaluators. The participants expect organized and targeted professional development, as well as guidance and support from school advisors, while they await the specialization of evaluators.

What is original from our research is that it includes change in the opinions of some educators before and after their evaluation. In some cases, teachers who had negative expectations about evaluation seemed to develop a positive opinion after their evaluation experience, and vice versa. It also became clear that Greek educators who were not evaluated lack knowledge of the legal framework and key aspects of the evaluation, a fact that contrasts with their strong resistance to its implementation. Finally, it is noteworthy that all participants propose alternative forms of evaluation, adding evaluators, and suggesting the reform of education and training programs, which have been articulated in the international literature, despite not having read about them!

In conclusion, the educators and educational administrators who participated in the research had a formed perception of the content and implementation of educational work evaluation. This perception is shaped more by their expectations and experiences and less by their knowledge of the evaluation, in some cases. Nevertheless, they agree with the literature on most points. The participants' views clearly reflect the complexity of educational work, and because of this, the difficulty in choosing an appropriate method for its evaluation in Greece. Participants in our research consider evaluation necessary, which should be naturally linked to professional development, aiming at the professional advancement of the educator and the improvement of the quality of educational work. Regarding Law 4823/2021, which introduced evaluation after four decades of its absence, they express mixed feelings, experiences, and opinions. It is recognized that this is a process in its early stages, and for this reason,

matters and necessary technical details concerning the design, planning, development, updating, and operation of the special digital application of Article 81 of Law 4823/2021].

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