



## The evolution and challenges of evaluation in Greek education: A historical overview and empirical investigation

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2025, 15(02), 1305-1310

Publication history: Received on 14 April 2025; revised on 24 May 2025; accepted on 26 May 2025

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2025.15.2.1569>

### Abstract

Evaluation in Greek education is a timeless and much-debated issue, with its roots tracing back to the early 20th century, specifically with the establishment of the institution of the Inspector. Despite occasional reform efforts and the enactment of legislative frameworks, the effective implementation of an accepted system for evaluating educational work and teachers remains a challenge. This study examines the historical evolution of evaluation policies in Greece, highlighting periods of implementation, suspension, and transformation of related institutions. Furthermore, based on recent empirical research, it investigates the views of Primary Education teachers regarding the necessity of evaluation, its forms (individual, school unit), and the challenges of its application, especially under the specific conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings indicate teachers' acceptance of the necessity of evaluation, but simultaneously reveal significant concerns and reservations regarding its purposes, procedures, and potential consequences, such as the categorization of schools and mergers. Historical suspicion, combined with a lack of trust in the state and the conditions of implementation, create a complex landscape that requires careful planning and meaningful dialogue to achieve a functional and accepted evaluation system.

**Keywords:** Teacher Evaluation; Greek Education; Historical Evolution; Educational Policy; School Unit Self-Evaluation; Covid-19 Pandemic; Teachers' Views

### 1. Introduction

Educational evaluation is a fundamental component of any modern educational system, as it contributes to the monitoring, improvement, and accountability of the educational work provided (Dimitropoulos, 1999). In Greece, the discussion surrounding evaluation, and particularly the evaluation of teachers, has a long history, marked by tensions, legislative regulations, and periods of implementation suspension (Giannouli, 2022). From the establishment of the Inspector institution in the early 20th century to recent efforts to introduce internal and external evaluation systems, evaluation has consistently been at the forefront of educational discourse, provoking various reactions within both the educational community and the wider society.

The issue of evaluation in Greece is not merely technical or pedagogical, but inextricably linked to the socio-political context, ideological confrontations, and trade union demands (Kolymbari, 2020; Stamelos & Bartzakli, 2013). Historical experience, especially the connection of evaluation with the controlling and punitive nature of the Inspector institution, has shaped a culture of caution and distrust towards any new attempt at its implementation (Mavrogiorgos, 1993; Giannouli, 2022).

Given the above complex reality, the purpose of this article is to present a historical overview of the evolution of evaluation institutions and policies in Greek education, from the early 20th century to the present day. In parallel, the

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views of Primary Education teachers regarding evaluation will be investigated, as reflected in recent empirical research, focusing particularly on their perceptions in light of contemporary legislative regulations and the unprecedented conditions created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this dual approach, the aim is to highlight the perennial challenges and contemporary concerns surrounding the implementation of educational evaluation in Greece.

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## 2. Theoretical Framework of Educational Evaluation

The concept of educational evaluation has evolved significantly over time. Initially, it was primarily associated with measuring student performance (Efthymiou, 2018). However, during the 20th century, its content expanded to include the evaluation of stakeholders, contributors, programs, and the educational system itself, with an emphasis on quality, improvement, efficiency, and accountability (Efthymiou, 2018; Papakonstantinou, 1993).

According to classic definitions, evaluation involves collecting information to judge the value of a program, process, or outcome (Worthen & Sanders, 1973) or investigating parts, processes, or outcomes of a program in relation to desired levels, goals, or standards (Tuckman, 1975). Pophan (1975) emphasized the importance of systematic assessment of the value of educational phenomena.

Various models and forms of evaluation are distinguished. The basic models include the technocratic/bureaucratic (control model), which focuses on quantitatively measurable results and hierarchical control, and the humanistic-pluralistic/investigative-transformative (development model), which emphasizes qualitative research, understanding weaknesses, and improvement through feedback (Adam, 2017; Nasika, 2014; Giannouli, 2022).

In terms of forms, evaluation can be internal, conducted by members of the organization itself (e.g., school unit self-evaluation), or external, conducted by individuals or bodies outside the organization (e.g., inspection). Other forms include peer evaluation, bottom-up evaluation, as well as evaluation by students or parents (Doliopoulou & Gourgiotou, 2008; Giannouli, 2022). The choice of the appropriate model and forms of evaluation depends on the purposes, context, and specific characteristics of the educational system.

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## 3. Historical Evolution of Evaluation in Greece

The history of evaluation in Greek education is long and complex. The institution of the Inspector appeared as early as 1834, with responsibilities for organizing, controlling, and evaluating teachers (Giannouli, 2022). During the 20th century, various educational reforms (1913, 1917, 1929, 1964, 1976) addressed the issue of school administration and supervision and teacher evaluation, while maintaining the Inspector institution as a central mechanism of control and evaluation (Giannouli, 2022). This evaluation often included not only pedagogical and teaching ability but also the political beliefs of teachers, especially during periods of political instability (Konstantinou, 2015; Giannouli, 2022).

The effective abolition of the Inspector institution occurred in 1982 with Law 1304, which replaced the Inspector with the School Counselor, with limited, mainly pedagogical and advisory responsibilities (Konstantinou, 2015; Giannouli, 2022). A period of relative inactivity followed regarding the issue of teacher evaluation, with any discussions remaining at a theoretical level (YPAITHPA, 2012).

From the mid-1980s, legislative regulations began to be enacted that reintroduced the issue of evaluation:

- **Law 1566/85** laid the foundation for the evaluation of educational work, providing for the issuance of a Presidential Decree on criteria and procedures, which, however, was never issued.
- **Law 2043/1992** designated school principals, deputy principals, and heads as responsible for teacher evaluation.
- **Presidential Decree 320/1993** defined the procedure for evaluating educational work, teachers, principals, and heads of education offices.
- **Law 2525/1997** introduced the concept, purpose, and bodies of evaluation for teachers and school structures, providing for the creation of a Body of Permanent Evaluators, which, however, was never established (Konstantinou, 2015; Iliadis, 2014).
- **Presidential Decree 140/1998** linked evaluation to the permanent appointment and career progression of teachers, designating principals, school counselors, and permanent evaluators as evaluators.
- **Ministerial Decision D2/1938/27/2/1998** defined the concept, purpose, and bodies of evaluation for educational work and teachers.

- **Law 2986/2002** defined the purpose of evaluation as the improvement and qualitative upgrading of the educational process, assigning the evaluation of educational work to the Centre for Educational Research (K.E.E.) and the Pedagogical Institute (P.I.). It also provided for the evaluation of teachers by principals and school counselors.
- **Circular G1/37100/31-03-2010** prepared for the pilot implementation of school unit self-evaluation.
- **Law 3848/2010** referred to the planning and evaluation of school unit activities.
- **Law 3966/2011** provided for the establishment of the Institute of Educational Policy (I.E.P.) as a new evaluation body, abolishing the P.I. and K.E.E. as responsible bodies.
- **Ministerial Decision F/361.22/116672/D1 of 01/10/2012** set evaluation criteria for principals and teachers in Model Experimental Schools.
- **Circular G1/14841/ 13-12-2012** concerned the preparation for the generalization of educational work evaluation and the self-evaluation of School Counselors.
- **Ministerial Decision 15/03/2013** defined the framework and procedure for school unit educational work self-evaluation.
- **Circular G1/190089/ 10-12-2013** concerned the implementation of school unit self-evaluation during the school year 2013-2014.
- **Presidential Decree 152/2013** defined in detail the teacher evaluation system, distinguishing between administrative and educational evaluation and setting criteria and a four-level scale. However, it provoked strong reactions and was eventually abolished (Anastasiou, 2014; Giannouli, 2022).
- **Law 4547/2018** reorganized education support structures, abolishing the institution of the School Counselor and replacing it with Educational Work Coordinators. It provided for the evaluation of education executives.
- **Law 4823/2021** referred to the upgrading of the quality of public education, introducing new structures (Regional Quality Supervisors, Quality Supervisors, Education Advisors) and integrating Education Advisors into the process of teacher evaluation and school unit self-evaluation.
- **Ministerial Decision No. 108906/GD4/2021** defined in detail the procedure for collective planning, internal and external evaluation of school units, describing the process in three stages (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) and setting nine evaluation axes on a four-level scale.

Despite continuous legislative activity, the implementation of evaluation systems in Greece has often been fragmented or unenforceable, leading to a situation of "non-use of laws" (Kolymbari, 2020; Giannouli, 2022). The lack of consensus, the reactions of trade unions, and the absence of trust between the state and teachers have contributed to this situation (Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2017; Giannouli, 2022).

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#### 4. Teachers' Views on Evaluation: Research Findings

Within the framework of recent quantitative research conducted on a sample of 113 Primary Education teachers, their perceptions regarding evaluation were investigated, both at the individual level and at the school unit level, with particular reference to the period of the Covid-19 pandemic (Giannouli, 2022). The research used a questionnaire with closed-ended questions, covering demographic data and views on three thematic axes: teacher evaluation, evaluation of educational work at the school unit level, and evaluation during the pandemic.

The results of the research highlighted the following main findings:

- **Individual Evaluation:** The majority of teachers (74.3%) believe that they should be evaluated individually. The ideal frequency is mainly suggested as every 3-4 years (34.5%), while smaller percentages refer to more frequent evaluation or evaluation only for taking leadership positions or promotion. A significant percentage (60.2%) believe that evaluation leads to the qualitative upgrading of education, while about half (54.9%) believe that it will lead to empowerment through feedback and training. However, a significant percentage (46%) believe that evaluation can reduce their autonomy. The participation of parents in the evaluation of educational work is rejected by the overwhelming majority (75.2% disagree or strongly disagree).
- **School Unit Evaluation:** Regarding school unit self-evaluation, the majority of teachers believe that it can contribute to improving the quality of educational work (51.3%) and highlighting strengths/weaknesses (60.2%). More than half (54.9%) believe that it can lead to checking effectiveness. However, there is a strong belief that the evaluation of school units will lead to mergers/abolitions (79.6%) and categorization of schools (85%).
- **Evaluation during the Pandemic:** Teachers largely negatively judge the fact that school unit self-evaluation began amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority (73.5%) consider evaluation during this period to be a pointless formal procedure and that priority should have been given to the difficult conditions prevailing in

schools due to the pandemic (83.2%). A significant percentage (47.8%) believe that teachers should have been evaluated on how they managed the educational process and the difficulties they faced during the pandemic.

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## 5. Discussion

The findings of the historical overview and the empirical research highlight the complex and contradictory nature of evaluation in Greek education. The perennial effort to introduce evaluation systems consistently clashes with the resistance of a part of the educational community, which is largely explained by the traumatic experience of the controlling institution of the Inspector and the lack of trust in the state (Mavrogiorgos, 1993; Giannouli, 2022).

While the majority of teachers in the research recognize the necessity of individual evaluation for the qualitative upgrading of education and their professional empowerment, they set clear conditions regarding its frequency, stakeholders (rejecting parent participation), and purposes. The fear of reduced autonomy and, mainly, the strong belief that school unit evaluation will lead to categorization and mergers, suggest that evaluation is not primarily perceived as a tool for improvement, but as a mechanism of control and potential negative consequences for schools and themselves (Giannouli, 2022). This perception is reinforced by the feeling that evaluation policies are linked to broader economic and administrative restructurings, rather than a genuine effort of pedagogical support (Stamelos & Bartzakli, 2013; Giannouli, 2022).

The start of the school unit self-evaluation process amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, as reflected in Ministerial Decision 108906/GD4/2021, is negatively judged by teachers. The unprecedented conditions, the difficulties of distance education, and the increased workload during this period led to the perception that evaluation was a pointless formal procedure that distracted from the immediate and pressing needs of the school reality (Giannouli, 2022). Their desire to be evaluated for managing the difficulties of the pandemic indicates the need for recognition of their efforts and the adaptation of evaluation procedures to the specific conditions.

Compared to other European countries, where internal and external evaluation systems are more established, often with an emphasis on school unit autonomy and the link between evaluation and training (as in Germany or Sweden), the Greek case is characterized by discontinuity, confrontations, and lack of consensus (Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2017; Tsepelidou, 2018; Giannouli, 2022). The transition from individual teacher evaluation to the evaluation of the school unit as a whole, although a global trend, is met with skepticism in Greece, as it is associated with fears of categorization and impacts on school functioning.

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## 6. Conclusion and Proposals

The historical overview and the findings of the empirical research demonstrate that evaluation in Greek education remains a field of confrontation, deeply influenced by the past and present socio-political conditions. While the necessity of an evaluation system is generally recognized, its acceptance by the educational community critically depends on how it is designed and implemented.

A key challenge is building trust between the state and teachers. This requires transparency in the purposes of evaluation, clear and objective criteria, as well as independent and specialized evaluators. Evaluation must be perceived and function as a tool for supporting and developing teachers professionally, identifying weaknesses and providing appropriate training and guidance for their improvement.

It is important to consider the specific characteristics of school units (e.g., size, geographical location, student population, special education) when defining evaluation criteria. Linking evaluation to the provision of adequate material resources and opportunities for continuous training is essential for the substantial improvement of educational work.

Teachers' strong concerns about the categorization and merging of schools as a consequence of evaluation require particular attention. The state must ensure that evaluation is not used to create a competitive landscape that undermines cooperation and leads to inequalities, but to support all schools in fulfilling their mission.

Finally, the pandemic experience highlighted the need for flexibility and adaptation of evaluation procedures in emergency situations. Recognizing and evaluating the efforts of teachers during this period, as well as adapting criteria to the specific challenges they faced, could contribute to building trust and accepting future evaluation processes.

For evaluation to become a substantive tool for improvement in Greek education, an open and honest dialogue with the educational community is required, based on mutual trust and a shared commitment to upgrading the quality of education for the benefit of all students.

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