

Teachers' Evaluation and Their Professional Development in Greece

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the views of teachers regarding their evaluation and professional development. The preferred methodology is a qualitative approach which has used the semi-structured interview as a data collection technique on a sample of ten primary school teachers. The respondents considered as the main purpose of their evaluation the improvement which results from the interlinkage between the identification of weaknesses and the implementation of training interventions. As far as the evaluation criteria are concerned, they mainly highlighted the teacher's professional skills, the learning environment and the consistency of service. Persons close to the teacher, such as the director, colleagues, the teachers themselves and the Education Advisor are considered to be the most appropriate actors. The benefits of the evaluation include the rewarding of the teachers and the recognition of their work, as well as the establishment of a culture of evaluation, while the disadvantages include negative emotions and unfair practices (e.g., stress, fear, pressure, insecurity, competition), negative consequences (e.g., salary reduction, dismissal), categorization of teachers and additional workload. Professional development is regarded as extremely useful and necessary and is achieved through formal, non-formal or informal processes. Finally, the respondents considered that the teachers' evaluation is directly linked to their professional development, as the former feeds the latter.

Keywords: teachers' evaluation, professional development

1. Theoretical Context

The conceptual clarification of the term "evaluation" is a very complex and "risky" task, since the term is used in various scientific fields by scientists/researchers with a diverse cognitive, scientific, philosophical and methodological background, the result being that different priorities are being introduced and highlighted in the relevant discussion (Dimitropoulos, 2007; Koutouzis, 2008; Katsarou and Dedouli, 2008; Maggopoulos, 2015). It is indicatively reported that, in Greece, the term "evaluation" may be perceived as a rating, a measurement, an assessment, an examination or a control (Kassotakis & Flouris, 2005; Maggopoulos, 2011).

The definition which is accepted by many researchers is simple and concise: "evaluation" is the process of assessing the value of a person, instrument, object or outcome. Based on this definition, several researchers extend their reflection by adding sub-elements. For instance, Constantinou (2000) considers that the evaluation determines the value of a person or object through a systematic, valid, reliable and objective process, in order to find out whether the intended purpose has been achieved, as well as whether there are parameters that hinder its fulfillment. Mavrogiorgos (2002) regards that the evaluation is a systematic process in which a certain value is assigned to a person, instrument, object or result, using a specific methodology and criteria. Focusing on the educational context, Nevo (1995) considers the evaluation as a process of systematic collection of information regarding the nature and quality of various factors in the education. Taras (2005) defines the evaluation as a judgment based on certain weighted objectives and proceeds to a comparative or numerical ranking. Robson (2007) considers that the evaluation is carried out in order to reduce uncertainty, improve effectiveness and assist in making certain decisions. Following a critical assessment of what has been mentioned above, we conclude that the evaluation is a research process which is implemented on the basis of specific criteria and methodology. Data is collected, analyzed and interpreted in order to assess the value of the subject of the evaluation and decide accordingly.

In the educational context, it is common to use the term "educational evaluation" (Dounavis & Zbainos, 2020). For Kassotakis (2005), the educational evaluation is a set of organized and systematic actions that aim to achieve the goals of education. Matsangouras (2012) argues that the educational evaluation is a tool that assesses the degree of achievement of predetermined objectives, provides feedback to the teacher, identifies methods for shaping the teaching approach and improves self-awareness. The educational evaluation may refer to the evaluation either of the educational system as a whole or of each of the factors that constitute the educational system or cooperate within its framework. For example, the educational evaluation may concern the assessment of curricula, students, textbooks, schools, teachers or of the educational system as a whole. The evaluation of their importance is not static but dynamic, whilst it is linked to many decisive actions, such as decision-making. For instance, the decisions made are sometimes intended to: (a) lead to the further development and improvement of the subject of evaluation, (b) contribute to the re-planning of educational interventions, (c) practically establish whether there is a necessity for interventions, material, means and other relevant factors, or (d) justify the choice of persons, procedures or means. Based upon a pedagogical, psychological, administrative and economic background, the benefits of the educational evaluation are numerous and significant.

A deeper specification of the reflection on the evaluation in the educational context showcases the teachers' evaluation playing a key role in the relevant discussion (Michael, Savvidis, Stylianidis, Tsiakkios, & Pasiardis, 2015). A number of studies have been carried out on this issue, both at international and national level. But what is the semantic content of the term "teacher evaluation"? Kassotakis (2018) considers it as a process, which, in a systematic and organized way, determines the degree of knowledge and the skills of teachers that are necessary to perform their educational work effectively. Almutairi and Shraid (2021) argue that the teachers' evaluation explores their effectiveness and suggests interventions to improve their performance. Nolan and Hoover (2009) perceive teacher evaluation as a process designed to explore the performance of teachers and lead to a decision either for their improvement or their reward. Sawchuk (2015) defines teacher evaluation as a process used to review the performance and teachers effectiveness in the classroom. Danielson (2011) considers teacher evaluation as a process of ensuring the quality of teachers and of promoting their professional learning to improve their future performance. A critical evaluation of what is analyzed above leads to interesting conclusions. Firstly, teacher evaluation explores the work of teachers in the classroom in order to collect data and use it as a basis for the determination of their level of performance and the relevant decision-making. The content of the decisions is, to a large extent, determined by the priorities of the education policy as reflected in the broader design of the evaluation. For example, teachers who perform above or equal to the minimum acceptable level of performance are usually rewarded on a scale, either financially or administratively (e.g. points for staff selection), while it is not excluded that they may also receive proposals for feedbacks. For those who do not meet the minimum acceptable level of performance, it is foreseen to participate in training programs, in order to acquire the necessary additional knowledge, skills and attitudes. In the above two cases, the link between the evaluation and the teachers' professional development, as well as the attribution of reason, is clearly evident. However, 'tough' decisions are not excluded in case of teachers with a continuous low performance, which may even lead them out of classroom.

Secondly, the teachers' evaluation explores their effectiveness. The concept of "effectiveness" refers to the extent to which learning objectives are achieved. The evaluation, therefore, explores the performance of students in order to determine the teachers effectiveness. Nevertheless, a number of critical questions may be raised at this point, the most important one being whether the teacher is solely responsible for the learning outcomes. The answer to this question would be in the affirmative, if we took into account the ease with which some researchers refer to teacher effectiveness. Even though teachers are often regarded as the only ones responsible, this approach is not universal. Taking possibly into account the multifactorial nature of learning, several researchers do not refer to the teachers effectiveness. In any case, however, there is an evident link between evaluation and attribution of reason by the teachers for the results of their work.

In conclusion, it seems that three different approaches dominate the issue of teacher evaluation. The first one focuses on investigating only the processes that take place within the classroom, in which the teacher has the main responsibility. The second one emphasizes the investigation of the degree of achievement of learning objectives as a basis for judging the teachers effectiveness, holding them thus again responsible for the results. The third approach constitutes an amalgamation of the previous ones.

The debate on teacher evaluation in Greece is extremely interesting.

Although teacher evaluation has, apart from some exceptions, not been implemented in primary and secondary education since 1982, now since February 2023 its application has been started again. Over the years, the relevant literature has been enriched by much research that demonstrate that the educational community is not a

priori negative towards evaluation (Andreadakis & Maggopoulos, 2006; Dimitropoulos, 2010; Dounavis & Zbainos, 2020; Kassotakis, 2018; Maggopoulos, 2005; Matsangouras, 2012). In fact, many teachers strongly support the evaluation, recognizing its necessity, usefulness and potential. The teachers' evaluation is indicatively distinguished for offering feedback, advice, reflections and improvement (Andreadakis & Maggopoulos, 2005; Dounavi & Zbainou, 2020; Goe, Biggers & Croft, 2012; Katsarou & Dedouli, 2008; Tuytens & Devos, 2014; Tuma, Hamilton, & Tsai, 2018), as well as for professionally empowering teachers, improving learning outcomes and ensuring the quality of the educational system. However, there is also a significant segment of the educational community that is highly sceptical about a number of critical questions regarding the evaluation such as "who", "how", "what" and "why" (Maggopoulos, 2005). It is obvious that, in this case, there is a lack of trust towards policy makers (Goe et al, 2012; Maggopoulos, 2015), that leads to facing the attempt to impose evaluation as a need for ideological, institutional and social control over the teachers themselves and their work (Mavrogiorgos, 1997), thus attributing to evaluation a normative, conformist, disciplinary and controlling character.

In the last 40 years, several legislative acts have been adopted regarding the teachers' evaluation (Maggopoulos, 2005; Svarna, 2022). Nevertheless, alterations of the educational policy, due either to change of government or of the Minister of Education, have prevented the implementation of the evaluation. Many researchers attribute the non-implementation of teacher evaluation to its postponement by governments, the relevant political cost and the persistent opposition and questioning by the trade unions and the educational community in general (Kelpanides, Poimenidou, & Malavitsi, 2016). At this point, it should be noted that, on the issue of teacher evaluation, the tool of consultation has not been used to the necessary extent and no consensus has been achieved ahead of the adoption of the relevant legislation (MacBeath, Schratz, Meuret, & Jacobsen, 2005).

A number of critical questions have arisen in the Greek debate on the criteria of teacher evaluation, (Maggopoulos, 2007) regarding, for example, the origin of those criteria, their content and the persons that decide on their final selection. Regarding their origin, the evaluation criteria very often stem from the theoretical background of pedagogy and, more specifically, from the research on effective teachers, as well as from the experience and practice of teachers.

The coexistence of research and practice is considered to attribute coherence, confidence, validity, reliability and possibility of generalization to the criteria. However, there is no commonly accepted body of criteria (Clipa, 2014) that is adopted unanimously in every educational system implementing teacher evaluation; even though the evaluation criteria adopted by different educational systems share many common elements, they are not identical. This is probably due to the different priorities of education policy from country to country or region to region, the tradition that characterises each education system and the perceptions of the teaching profession, either by teachers themselves or by the wider society.

Despite, however, the numerous and important differences, the role played by the evaluation criteria is common. The criteria describe, on the one hand, the effective teaching and, on the other, the institutional expectations of teacher performance. In reply to the second question, it is worth noting that the evaluation criteria could be grouped into the following main categories: teaching skills, learning environment, professional development, service consistency and competence of teachers. Taking into account the above, it becomes evident what is expected of teachers, which is no longer limited to the classroom (Kyriakides & Campbell, 2004), but includes to be active and contribute to the school, as well as to possess professional characteristics consistent with what is required in postmodern work environments. Finally, with regard to who decides on the selection of criteria, it is obvious that this task is entrusted to those in political power, researchers in the relevant field and the educational community. Although each group may give priority to different criteria, it is essential that they consult, cooperate, trust and mutually understand each other as a necessary condition for creating the right environment for a successful implementation of the evaluation (Maggopoulos, 2007).

As assessment bodies for the performance of teachers are considered the individuals or groups responsible for its implementation. Their role is pivotal, as they are the ones that will use the research methodology to gather data and, based upon those data, either they themselves or other groups will carry out the value assessment. It is clear that the expectations placed on the assessment bodies are many and particular; in order to live up to those expectations, they need to have knowledge and skills regarding the theoretical, scientific and methodological background of teacher evaluation and evaluation in general. In addition, it is considered essential to have research skills, as they will be the ones to collect the data, and knowledge of the pedagogical science and the subject matter. Finally, experience in education and the teaching profession is useful in order to understand and take into account the specificities introduced by the work framework in the teachers' evaluation. In Greece, as assessment bodies for the performance of teachers appear various persons or groups that are usually very close to

the teachers and their work (Andreadakis & Maggopoulos, 2005; Apostolopoulos, 2014; Kassotakis, 2013; Matsangouras, 2019). For example, the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs usually proposes the Education Counsellor (in previous years the School Counsellor) and the school principal as assessment bodies for the performance of teachers. However, other assessment bodies also appear in the wider debate, such as colleagues (peer-to-peer evaluation), the teachers themselves (the case of self-evaluation), the mentor and external evaluators, who may come from different sectors. At the methodological level, it is usually suggested to use the classroom observation, pre- and post-observation interviews, study of records, portfolio, and conduct of surveys with the use of tools such as questionnaires. In this case, the evaluator usually gathers information from parents, students and colleagues of the evaluated teacher (Apostolopoulos, 2014; Maggopoulos, 2005; MacBeath, 2008;). Although in some countries the opinion of students and parents seems to have a weighty importance in teacher evaluation, several researchers (Almutairi & Shraid, 2021; Maggopoulos, 2005) suggest that the relevant findings should be interpreted with special attention. No such suggestions have been made in Greece.

There is a considerable differentiation of the teachers' evaluation in different countries due to the crucial role played by social, cultural and economic variances (Athanasoula-Repa, 2005; Solomon, 1998). At European level, many countries have, since the 1980s, been prompted by the priorities of the European educational policy to either adapt or re-implement teacher evaluation. In several cases, the teachers' evaluation is integrated in the schools evaluation, as priority is given to decentralization on the one hand and school autonomy on the other. In other cases, teachers' evaluation is under the direct control of the central administration of education, thus emphasizing on external evaluation and accountability (Katsarou and Dedouli, 2008). These two approaches may sometimes be combined.

In addition, there are variations in many other individual issues, such as the assessment bodies and criteria, as well as the use and disclosure of the findings of the evaluation (Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff, 2017; Croft, Guffy, & Vitale, 2018; Dounavis & Zbainos, 2020; Jiang, Spote, & Luppescu, 2015; Steinberg & Sartain, 2015; Walsh, Joseph, Lakis, & Lubell, 2017). What is commonplace, however, is the belief that teacher evaluation is a necessary condition for improving the educational work at the levels of classroom, school, and education system.

But how is the teachers' evaluation linked to their improvement? The concept that mediates and enables the improvement through evaluation is that of "professional development". As in the case of evaluation, the semantic content of the term "professional development" has been attributed multiple meanings (Vassilopoulos, 2018; Matsangouras, 2019). As it is not our intention to delve into the relevant discussion, it is only indicatively mentioned here that Papanoum (2014) considers the "professional development" as the pathway by which teachers acquire their cognitive equipment, form their beliefs and values and become socialized at professional level. Hargraves and Fullan (2008) define "professional development" as an ongoing process that enables teachers to become aware of their role and advance their teaching and collaborative skills through the cultivation and enhancement of existing knowledge, procurement of new skills and revision & development of their personal beliefs. The professional development of teachers primarily refers to a lifelong learning process, which is not common to all, but is personal in nature, since it leads to the formation of the teachers' professional identity (Papanoum, 2014). Even though, the teachers transform their practices through this process, the process itself is often painful or even distressing (Mezirow, 2007), as it takes a long time to be completed, while bringing about changes, which may be serious, not only at the level of values, attitudes, motivation and thinking (Callaghan, Long, van Es, van Es, Reich, & Rutherford, 2018; Evans, 2008; Wolf, 2018), but even at the level of knowledge and competences (e.g. teaching methodology).

Other researchers link professional development to critical reflection and argue that the latter aids the personal development of teachers and enhances their professionalism, democracy, cooperation and fairness within the educational context, while it also enables the awareness of the complexity of the their work (Day, 2003; Frydaki, 2015) and of the social, political and pedagogical function of education (Papanoum, 2008). The professional development shows the progress in the career of a teacher, who starts as a novice and slowly evolves into an expert. The rapid changes with regard to the role and qualifications of teachers that take place within the educational context seem to necessitate the professional development of teachers and, in this respect, the teaching profession offers significant opportunities for professional development (Mavrogiorgos, 1999).

Various models of professional development appear in the relevant debate, each of which is based on a different scientific tradition and educational practice (Lionarakis and Fragaki, 2009). In particular, the technocratic model draws principles and values from the "Positivist" Pedagogy, the interpretive one from the "Interpretive" Pedagogy and the reflective-critical one from the "Critical" Pedagogy (Matsangouras, 2005; Harisis, 2016). The discussion regarding the professional development of teachers should also take into account the stages or phases that characterize their careers.

The professional development of teachers can have a formal character, a non-formal character (training programmes designed and implemented by various institutions (Day, 2003; Kokkos, 2011; Psifidou, 2011; Yfantis, 2014) and an informal character. The professional development of teachers is implemented both within and outside the teacher's working environment, while it is sometimes compulsory and other times optional. In any case, however, the professional development of teachers should be linked to their evaluation, and both should be supportive, whilst taking into account their needs, interests, experiences, benefits and problems, promoting their knowledge and emphasising their professional responsibilities. It is also advisable to take into account the school's development plan (Hargreaves, 1994), as well as to provide time and opportunities for teachers to discuss pedagogical/teaching issues that arise on a daily basis within the school context. In addition, teachers should be supported in transforming their practices.

2. Research Methodology

Researches that attempt to link the evaluation of teachers with their professional development have also been carried out in Greece. Their findings appear to be consistent with the findings of related research conducted in educational systems where teacher evaluation is implemented. Based on this research, when teacher evaluation is linked to their professional development, then the improvement of educational practices, school climate, collaborations and student performance becomes significantly possible.

Taking into account the above, the purpose of our research is to investigate the connection between the evaluation of teachers and their professional development. Individual objectives of the research are the investigation of teachers' opinions regarding: (a) the purpose of their evaluation, (b) the evaluation criteria, (c) the institutions they consider most appropriate for their evaluation, (d) the advantages of evaluation, (e) the disadvantages of evaluation, (f) the term "professional development", (g) the ways in which their professional development becomes possible, (h) the link between professional development and teacher evaluation. Based on the above, the research investigated the following questions: (a) what is the purpose of teacher evaluation, (b) what are the evaluation criteria, (c) which institutions are best suited for teacher evaluation, (d) what are the advantages of teacher evaluation, (e) what are the disadvantages of teacher evaluation, (f) how teachers conceptualize the term "professional development", (g) how is the professional development of teachers promoted, and (h) how is the teachers' evaluation linked to their professional development.

In order to achieve the objectives of this research and to gain a deeper understanding of the topic under consideration, a qualitative approach was adopted. In particular, a semi-structured interview was utilized, whereby an interview protocol was drafted and followed. The ten interviewees (seven (7) females and three (3) males) are teachers, selected on the basis of targeted sampling. All of the teachers are graduates of a Higher Educational Institution, while six (6) of them have already completed a Postgraduate Degree Programme and one of them holds two postgraduate degrees. In addition, the participating teachers have been working in public education from four (4) to thirty-five (35) years, while four (4) of them serve as substitutes. The following elements have been ensured in the context of this study: (a) the confidentiality, anonymity and personal data of the participants, (b) the sincerity, depth, abundance and content of the data, and (c) the researcher's objectivity (Lincoln, 2001). With the permission of the interviewees, their interviews have been digitally recorded and then transcribed, converting the spoken word into written text.

With regard to the first research question, the categories of the analysis created from the thematic analysis (atlas) of the data literal, interpretative and reflective aspect (Mason, 2010) relate to: (a) improving teachers' educational work through training and professional development, (b) improving learning achievements, and (c) the control and manipulation of teachers. In relation to the second research question concerning the evaluation criteria, the thematic categories relate to relationships and partnerships within the educational environment, classroom management, learning environment, participation in lifelong learning, professional consistency, teaching organisation, experience and previous work experience, ability to transmit knowledge, learning outcomes and non-measurability of criteria. With regard to the third research question concerning the evaluators of teachers, there appear the following categories of analysis: (a) the teacher's colleagues, (b) the school principal, (c) the self-evaluation, (d) the Education Advisor, and (e) external evaluators, such as faculty members, trainers or an independent authority/group. In relation to the fourth research question and the benefits of teacher evaluation, the categories of analysis relate to: (a) reward and recognition of the teachers' work, (b) motivation for further effort and improvement, (c) the formation of an evaluation culture, and (d) professional development. The categories of analysis with regard to the fifth research question are: (a) the negative emotions that will be developed in the educational community, such as unfair competition, pressure, anxiety, fear, (b) the punitive nature of evaluation that may lead to insecurity, salary reduction and/or dismissal, (c) the lack of objectivity in terms of evaluation criteria and evaluators, as well as the lack of evaluation culture, (d) the categorization of teachers, and (e) the

additional workload that may lead to burnout and reduced performance. As far as the sixth research question relating to teachers' professional development is concerned, the following categories of analysis appear: (a) improvement which refers to additional qualifications, training, further development of knowledge and skills, continuous updating and upgrading of the teacher's role, (b) Lifelong Learning which is linked to updating as well as enriching teaching with innovative practices, and (c) professional identity which refers to self-awareness and self-improvement but also to recognition/upgrading of professional identity. The following categories of analysis relate to the seventh research question: (a) formal and non-formal processes of professional development, and (b) informal processes of professional development. Last but not least, the following categories appear in relation to the question concerning the link between teacher evaluation and professional development: (a) linkage, and (b) skepticism.

3. Research Results

Regarding the first research question, based on the content analysis, improvement was identified by the respondents as the main purpose of teachers' evaluation. Some indicative statements of the respondents are as follows: (CI4): 'The general purpose of the.... teachers' evaluation is identification of weaknesses, with the aim of improving teachers themselves as professionals. (CI7): 'evaluation....facilitates improvement....in teaching practice and enables one to know the problems that...exist in order to improve them...'. (EA3): '...should not be punitive in nature. It should...have the character of promoting teachers, supporting teachers.... that is the purpose of evaluation...to improve educational practices...and enrich them'. (CI2): 'The purpose of teachers' evaluation....is....to improve the educational process...its role is auxiliary, advisory, supportive...not evaluative or punitive'.

Some respondents link teachers' evaluation with their professional development and improved learning achievements. The following statements by respondents are indicative: (CI6): '...the purpose of the evaluation is to identify any gaps to the educator and manage to mend them with training'. (CI1): 'I believe that assessment is done to improve also the learning achievements of the students. Assessment will initially help teachers and students by extension ". (CI4) "Improving teachers through evaluation will... result in improving the learning achievements of students".

However, there is also the opposite approach, according to which teachers' evaluation is perceived as a tool for controlling and patronizing teachers. The following statements by teachers are indicative: (CI5): "...I believe that evaluation, in the form that the Ministry has chosen to implement it, is simply aiming to exercise control over any school ". (EA2): '...the purpose of teacher evaluation as launched by the Ministry of Education...I believe is...to manipulate the teachers and their work...and it is intended to...shift responsibility in a way, in particular, the responsibilities of the state that should...contribute to the improvement of the training of teachers and the enhancement of the material and technical infrastructure of schools and the improvement of the general tone...within schools".

In reference to the second research question regarding the criteria for teachers' evaluation, several teachers focus their attention on relationships, communication and collaborations that develop in the educational context. For example, some referred to: (CI1): 'Their behaviour, their kindness towards students, parents and colleagues'. (CI7): "... the relationships between students. And the relationships between the students and the teacher... but...also how they behave with the other...teachers in the school". (EA1): "...the cooperation with colleagues and the School Principal". (EA3): "...the relationships they have in the school...the cooperation with other teachers and the School Principal and...the cooperation with parents".

Classroom management and school climate also appear as criteria for teachers' evaluation. The following respondents' statements are indicative: (CI3): 'The climate in the classroom.... the management of difficult situations in the classroom or on school premises...'. (CI7): "...the climate in the classroom...". But also, the teacher's professional development and participation in Lifelong Learning appear as evaluation criteria. The following statements are indicative: (EA3) "The criteria by which we should evaluate teachers...are related to their qualifications...lately it has been said that teachers cannot stand on their basic degree alone, so they should be evaluated on the basis of their postgraduate studies, on the basis of the seminars they may have attended and the knowledge they have gained. In other words, to what extent we would say, they have enriched their educational repertoire in order to improve their practices. (CI1): '...is the teacher getting any training? Do educators participate in lifelong learning programs? Do they evolve?'

Some respondents highlight professional consistency as a criterion for evaluating teachers. CI1 mentions as a criterion: "consistency in their obligations...". CI3 "consistency in their work..." and CI4 "their professional consistency. Whether they are compliant in their work". But also, the structure of teaching, teaching competence,

pre-tenure experience, transferability and student performance appear in the evaluation criteria highlighted by the respondents. CI5 refers to "the structure of teaching"; CI4, mentions "experience in terms of teaching" as an evaluation criterion; CI5 considers "it is important to take into account prior experience"; CI3 focuses on "teaching competence"; EA2 "whether they inspire the... students...whether they are...a personality, which in any case can...contribute towards a direction of transmission not only of knowledge but also of values and principles", CI1 focuses on "learning achievements...of students".

We then asked the teachers to pick one criterion, the most important of all the criteria they have mentioned. Most of them stated that all are important, as they all outline the teacher's profile, and they could not single out one (CI2: "I cannot isolate a criterion. I consider all of them equally important"). Those teachers who wanted to answer specifically, singled out the relationship with students (CI6: "For me the most important thing is our relationship with students"), teachers' Lifelong Education and their professional development (CI1: "I consider Lifelong Education the most important thing. If the teacher takes time to develop. To learn, to train"), classroom climate (EA1: "Most important...learning environment. The daily routine plays a very big role", whether it inspires students").

Finally, it is worth noting the positions of some respondents who consider the work of teachers to be extremely complex and, therefore, unmeasurable, thus describing the evaluation criteria as not "objective". CI2 states that "I cannot number the evaluation criteria...I cannot say specifically...because I think that they cannot be objective and absolute", while CI3 considers that "The teacher has multiple roles...it is not only the formal qualifications that they have.... There are too many that they are expected to perform daily. But all of these...are not measurable. Thus, how could we evaluate each of them."

In relation to evaluators, teachers' colleagues are seen by respondents as an important one. CI1 suggests the "Teachers' Association", CI3 "I might prefer...colleagues and peers who have the same anxiety.... the same stress...the same concerns. They are the same people who are going through the process that I would have gone through." EG4 states that "they could be themselves the teacher evaluators. To be evaluated by each other...to evaluate everybody by each other...". CI5 believes that "the teachers among themselves who are in a school and who are in contact and interacting with one another have the opportunity, by observing and interacting with other teachers, to evaluate the work of their colleagues as a whole. Since no external factor can take a clear picture of the work done in a school unit.

But even the teachers themselves are suggested by some respondents as evaluators of their own work. This is the case of self-evaluation. Respondent CI1 proposes "the teachers themselves" and CI7 agrees by stating that "...the teachers themselves do a self-evaluation...".

Also, the school principal is suggested as an evaluator. CI4 states "... the School Principal...who is also a colleague", CI6 "The School Principal could...also evaluate us...in our subject matter but also in our behaviour towards children, colleagues, parents...", CI7 "The role of the evaluator...I think it is...difficult and could be taken by the School Principal...".

Several respondents suggested the Education Counsellor as an evaluator. Teacher CI1 states "Certainly the Education Counsellor. They have some insight... If they also work with the School Principal...if they cooperate, they will have insight for sure...", while CI6 states "The... Education Advisor...but the Advisor provided, they have been in a classroom, they have classroom experience, they know the problems, they know the pros and cons".

It is worth noting that some interviewees highlight the need for the evaluators to come not only from within the school, but also from external agencies. They prefer the coexistence of internal and external assessment in order to ensure its objectivity. CI2 states "...someone who is not directly involved in the teaching process and school life. To be an independent agent", EA3 notes that "It would be good to be evaluated by...external assessors, maybe in collaboration with the School Principal. Also, in collaboration with parents", while CI7 states "...it would be important to have an independent...group. That is not within the school framework for more objectivity".

In order to get a deeper picture, we asked the question which evaluator they would prefer when the evaluation starts. Their positions did not differ significantly. Colleagues (CI7: "I prefer colleagues! That's all"), the teacher themselves (self-evaluation) (CI4: "...on my own to identify my weak points and try to improve them... through discussions with colleagues, through exchanging points of view...by doing...some training on the subject I am concerned with"), the School Principal (CI1: "The School Principal...because that way they will have a ...picture.... and of course, it will be from every day not a person who will come to the school and evaluate

me on a single day! It's a person who sees the general picture. They see progress. They see the progression. They see the classroom "and the Education Advisor again appears as the preferred evaluator.

There are, however, cases of respondents who do not want any evaluator. CI5 states the following: "In fact, if implemented in the form that has been proposed to us this year, I would not want to be assessed by anyone. Because I feel that an external agent or Co-Ordinator or Advisor does not reflect the reality of the school."

In reference to the advantages of teachers' evaluation, respondents focused on the potential of evaluation for improvement, feedback, identification of teaching weaknesses and more effective structure of training. CI1 stated "evaluation is essential...and I see only positives. With assessment the teacher mobilizes, improves...scrutinizes learning...results and gets feedback". CI2 focuses on "continuous improvement and updating of teaching". EA1 states that "with the feedback provided by evaluation we can become better. You see your weaknesses, correct any mistakes and...become better. You improve yourself. You see the...difference." EA3 states that among the "...advantages of evaluation, enhancing.... the professional development of teachers.... could be considered and it would lead to better learning outcomes".

Among the advantages of evaluation, respondents include the reward and recognition of their work. Responder CI2 states " I see positive elements.... I see the reward for the teacher's effort and contribution...". CI3 notes "...the highlighting and recognition of our work...when a person struggles every day...to be recognized...that their work has been done...that their work is good...I think they will be happy. It will boost their morale....it will boost their self-esteem."

Some teachers perceive evaluation as an incentive for further effort and improvement. CI2 notes that "...evaluation could be an incentive for more effort and improvement". CI7 states that "there are positive elements...and... I think...it is...the motivation that can be given to teachers to become better....".

The position of some respondents who believe that one of the benefits of teachers' evaluation is the formation of a culture of assessment in the educational community is of particular interest. Typically, EA2 states that "The positive thing you could say is that a culture of assessment is being formed".

Regarding the disadvantages of evaluation, the respondents' scepticism focuses on the negative feelings that they believe will be experienced by teachers, citing, inter alia, unfair competition, pressure, anxiety and fear. CI2 states "There are negative elements...I think a negative element is unfair competition between colleagues.... which should not exist...It pushes teachers to teach under pressure and control...it cannot be...effective in teaching ". EG3 notes "...the whole process causes stress for teachers...it can also cause competition in the school itself which.... should be an environment of cooperation and support and it ends up being an environment of competition...". EG4 states "I think there are also negative elements.... mainly about the stress it causes to teachers...and the fear sometimes that they might not be able to respond to some...points...". EA2 highlights ".... there is a suffocating pressure and this works against the educational process...".

The "punitive" nature of teachers' evaluation, that will lead to insecurity, pay cuts and dismissal, seems to be a major factor of concern for some respondents. CI1 noted "I am thinking about whether a colleague will be unfairly reprimanded". CI6 states "The negatives concern me...a pay cut...and... a colleague losing their job...". CI2 states "...with teachers' assessment there is.... anxiety....and....uncertainty.... whether...they will be judged as inadequate in an interview...or by an assessment process that might be done for a day or two by some external assessors, which you can see is turning education back to the age of 'inspectionism'. Where...the teacher of the 60's and 70's was petrified by the idea...(laughter) of an inspector coming to his school, and one visit could...cost him the....reduction....of his salary or even a transfer to hard-to-reach areas..."

The scepticism of some teachers is also linked to objectivity, related to criteria and evaluators for teachers' evaluation, and is attributed to the lack of relevant culture. EG3 states that "...I wonder if there will be objectivity...or what we said...that there is no culture of assessment...not everyone has the skills to assess...". CI1 notes "...who will ultimately assess and by what criteria...". CI7 states "...it may be difficult...to see exactly what elements will be assessed each time...often influenced by other factors that are not pre-fixed...and... the issue of...objective evaluation, that is, whether it can exist in practice".

The classification of teachers is another negative factor identified by respondents in teachers' evaluation. EG3 notes that "...our work is not measurable on scales. It is not easy to.... measure with...grade 1,2,3,4 how good you are in each of these roles..."

But the additional work for teachers that would result in burnout and reduced performance also seems to be a matter of concern for respondents. EA1 highlights "...with the resulting workload, it is...very...negative...in the whole scheme of things". EA2 notes "the workload increases at the expense of the teaching.... Therefore,

teachers will have a reduced performance in terms of their actual work, which should be their work in school with their students. And all this is negative."

In relation to the sixth research question concerning teachers' professional development, respondents often referred to improvement, which refers to additional qualifications, training, further development of knowledge, skills, continuous updating and upgrading the role of the teacher. CI1 distinctively states "...I think professional development is about improvement. It's the extra qualifications you get" and continues "Professional development...involves a lot of things.... may involve knowledge and skills development". EG3 notes "... continuous updating and continuous professional development of teachers.... continuously getting better, upgrading their role, keeping up with the times, keeping their knowledge and skills up to date...". EA1 notes: "Anything that can improve me in my daily work. To... help me become better".

Professional development is also linked to Lifelong Learning, updating and enriching teaching with innovative practices. EA3 notes: "I think that professional development is about lifelong and continuous development in the professional space...". While CI1 states: "It is... participating in Lifelong Learning programs". Furthermore, professional development is also linked by respondents to issues of professional identity of teachers. CI2 notes: "Professional development can include many things...self-awareness...upgrading and recognition of professional identity".

Teachers then referred to the ways in which their professional development is implemented. Emphasis was placed on the formal and non-formal professional development processes related to postgraduate studies of the first and second cycle, training programs, conferences and workshops. CI4 states "Professional development is promoted through participation in training...seminars, or workshops...conferences...but also....through having a master's degree...a doctorate...and the like". CI6 states: "...training is the key by which the professional development of teachers is promoted".

Respondents also emphatically highlight the informal professional development processes that come through their own initiatives, such as self-education, discussion with colleagues and collaboration with mentors. EG1 says: "One can develop professionally...by reading research...or even by participating in research...a person that will research, read on their own....I think that mentors are also a way of promoting teachers' professional development". EG4 states: "...one can...do personal reading...maybe through some...books or some articles...even by discussing with colleagues issues that arise in the school". CI2 states that "other things also...that contribute to professional development like autonomy in the practice of teaching. Social interaction.... with students, with parents, with colleagues, and with all those...involved in the process".

Regarding the last question about the link between teachers' evaluation and professional development, it seems that respondents recognize this link. EG1 notes that "Evaluation...is aimed at professional development and professional development cannot be realized if there is no evaluation.... I think they are...communicating vessels. One activates the other". EG2 states: "... the main objective of teachers' evaluation is professional development". CI7 states: "... evaluation...possibly gives the stimulus for someone to...try to...improve...their skills, and the way they teach...to be able to learn....it gives new ways and techniques that will help them in their teaching".

Some respondents on one hand highlight the link between teachers' evaluation and professional development, but on the other hand are sceptical about this link. Their scepticism stems from their belief that evaluation is imposed in order to control and manipulate teachers. CI3 notes that "... yes, it would be linked, with...the theoretical meaning of evaluation. But in the way it is going to be implemented now, I have reservations". In the same tone, EA2 notes that: "Professional development... is linked probably at a level of coercion and...I don't know if it has a meaningful connection....".

4. Research Conclusions

Regarding the first research question, the respondents believe that the purpose of teachers' evaluation is to improve their work. They consider that evaluation offers the possibility to identify weaknesses or shortcomings. Then, training and/or professional development interventions are proposed, again through the evaluation, in order to address the weaknesses and shortcomings, so that teachers can implement their work more effectively. It is obvious that the participants in the survey recognize and emphatically highlight improvement as one of the main purposes of evaluation. Similar findings appear in other studies (Adnot et al, 2017; Andreadakis & Maggopoulos, 2006; Clipa, 2015; Dounavis & Zbainos, 2020; Danielson, 2011; Matsangouras, 2012; Stainberg & Sartain, 2015; Taylor & Tyler, 2012; Taylor & Tyler, 2012b). Given that the teacher is considered one of the key contributors in the educational process, the improvement of teachers' work is considered by the respondents to have an impact on learning achievements. Therefore, they believe that the purpose of teachers' evaluation is

also to improve learning achievements. Finally, control and manipulation seem to be another purpose of teacher evaluation for the respondents.

Regarding the evaluation criteria - the second research question - respondents stress the particular importance of relationships and cooperation in the educational context, classroom management, school climate, participation in lifelong learning, professional consistency, teaching organizing, prior experience, transferability and learning outcomes. Based on their knowledge and experiences from their daily classroom and school practice, respondents propose, as evaluation criteria, the behaviours and practices that are also suggested by research on effective teachers and teaching. It seems, therefore, that the findings of related research on the one hand and the everyday practice of teachers in the classroom on the other hand have much in common. At this point should be noted the position of several respondents who are highly sceptical about the possibility of measuring the evaluation criteria, as they believe that many dimensions of teachers' work are unmeasurable. Similar findings to the above-mentioned appear also in other studies (Papantoniou-Zorpa & Petridou, 2012; Maggopoulos, 2005). Although we asked the participants to choose the most important criterion, most of them did not choose one, as they consider all of them to be important. However, those who "dared" to choose the most important one mentioned the relationship with students, learning environment, participation in Lifelong Learning and the organizing of teaching.

The evaluators were the third research question. Respondents seem to accept as evaluators their colleagues, the school principal, themselves (self-evaluation), the, but also external evaluators such as faculty members, trainers or an independent authority group. Similar findings appear in the studies of Davis et al. (2002), Maggopoulos (2005), Robinson et al. (2008). As our research is not quantitative in nature and our priority is not to measure the acceptability of each possible evaluation body, the conclusion from our findings is that respondents prefer the evaluators to be more than one and to come from different backgrounds. Perhaps they believe that this ensures the credibility of the evaluation and protects teachers from bias.

Regarding the fourth research question and the arguments in favor of teachers' evaluation, the respondents see among its positive aspects the reward and recognition of their work. They also consider it as a motivation for further effort, improvement and professional development. Another positive aspect of evaluation is its contribution to the development of a general culture of evaluation in our education system, which seems to be lacking. Similar findings are presented in other research (Dounavi & Zbainu, 2020; Maggopoulos, 2005; Matsangoura, 2012). Research participants invest in teachers' evaluation and expect its fruits to provide them with the rewards and recognition that they so lack, targeted improvement and professional development, all embedded in the context of a culture that accepts and promotes the above.

However, respondents do not focus exclusively on the positive aspects of the teachers' evaluation. They acknowledge that the process a priori carries risks, capable of turning the positive elements mentioned above into negative or even dangerous. First, they feel that evaluation cannot be excluded from being associated with negative aspects, feelings and unfair practices, such as anxiety, fear, pressure, insecurity and competition. They worry about the 'punitive' nature of the assessment which may be leading to a reduction in salary and/or dismissal. They consider that the evaluation will categorize teachers, dividing them into 'good' and 'bad' teachers. A categorization which, in their view, will also cause many problems to the educational system as a whole and is not objective, since neither the criteria nor the assessment bodies are governed by objectivity. Finally, they are concerned about the additional workload that evaluation will entail, which will lead to teacher burnout and reduced performance. Similar findings appear in other studies (Maggopoulos, 2005; Matsangouras, 2012; Greek Federation of Secondary Education State School Teachers (OLME), 2014).

Regarding the sixth research question, respondents consider the professional development of teachers as extremely useful and necessary. In fact, they link it to Lifelong Learning, through which teachers acquire additional qualifications, knowledge and skills that enhance their role, improve their work and, above all, strengthen their professional identity. Similar findings appear in other studies (Bubb & Early, 2007; Vassilopoulos, 2018).

For the participants in the present research, professional development (seventh research question) is possible either through formal and non-formal processes, such as postgraduate studies of the first and second cycle, participation in training programs, or through informal processes, such as self-education, interaction with colleagues, the relationship with the mentor, etc. Similar findings appear in other studies (MacGilchrist, Myers & Reed, 1997; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Stoll et al., 2012).

Finally, in relation to the eighth research question, the respondents consider that teacher evaluation is directly linked to their professional development, as the first feeds the second. At this point our findings are consistent

with similar research. However, as our research shows, the above relationship is not always functional. When teacher evaluation is not well organized, or when its real purpose is not to improve teachers but other priorities, then its connection to professional development appears to be incomplete, misleading and ineffective.

Although for more than 40 years teacher evaluation has not been implemented in Greece, apart from some small exceptions, many studies have been carried out, fueling the debate. If not all, at least most of them explore issues related to evaluation. In other words, they constitute research on evaluation, as this one does; they are not themselves evaluation studies. The result of this is that issues relating to evaluation are usually examined while, the respondents, or at least the majority of them, i.e., the majority of the educational community, have no living experience of evaluation. It is possible that this fact has its own value in the reflection that is developing in our country regarding teacher evaluation. However, in recent months a lot has changed. The teachers' evaluation is applied in Primary and Secondary schools and we await with interest the findings of corresponding researches.

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