
Understanding the Difficulties of Implementation of a Teachers' Evaluation System in Greek Primary Education: from national past to European influences

GEORGIOS STAMELOS

PTDE University of Patras

ANDREAS VASSILOPOULOS

The Moraitis School, Athens

MARIANNA BARTZAKLI

University of Patras

ABSTRACT This article delves into the reactions of national institutions to various external stimuli originating from supra-national policies formulated by international organisms and other bureaucracies. The authors argue that such stimuli, when ignoring various previous arrangements developed in a given social and/or historic (national) context, may disrupt the institution's balance. In particular, they create divergence among the three pillars - normative, regulative and cultural-cognitive - around which an institution is built and lead the main actors involved with it - players - to act with the aim to best serve their own interests. In the case of Greece the attempt on the part of the Greek government to establish a system of evaluation at the level of primary education - following the country's participation into the European Union - led to severe conflict among the actors involved and to the institution's neutralisation. Accordingly, the level of divergence between what is desirable (normative pillar), what is established by law (regulative pillar) and everyday practice (cultural-cognitive pillar) became larger. Finally, the problematic institution's function resulted to an even more serious crisis, which could well be interpreted as 'creolisation' of the Greek education system.

Introduction: references in modern history of Greece

Immediately after World War II, Greece experienced a civil war leading to the defeat (1949) of the Greek communists and their allies. The period that followed was characterised by definite instability. The democratic regime was founded on suppression, prosecutions against the communists and explicit violence, in the margins of society, by militarist groups (Mazower, 2004, p. 11). The case of the 'Certificate of Social Morale', a precondition for access into public service, comprises a typical example of the political situation in Greece at the time (Mouzelis & Pagoulatos, 2002, p. 4). In 1967 a military coup put an end to this period.

Seven years later, in 1974, social stability and peace followed the establishment of the democratic regime, the legalisation of the Communist Party and the limitations imposed on the jurisdiction of the army and police concerning the suppression of the citizens.

What is important about this period of modern Greek history is the deep division in society and the authoritarian ways of the democratic regime leading to constant limitations imposed on personal, social and civil rights, which were only reinstated gradually after 1974 (Mouzelis & Pagoulatos, 2002, p. 4). At the same time, a definite deficit in the legitimacy of the State, its political decisions and the exertion of its political authority became obvious (Tsoukalas, 1986; Mouzelis, 1987; Diamantouros, 2001). A deficit legitimacy, which confirmed an endemic problem of the

Greek State, has characterised the function of the Greek State ever since, wherein there is a noted distance between what is said – legislation - and what is done - everyday practices (Mouzelis 1980; Herzfeld, 1988; Diamantouros, 2000).

In 1981, PASOK, the Socialist Party, came into power. This smooth political change, for the first time in Greek history, affirmed the establishment of a parliamentary, liberal, western democracy in Greece (Mouzelis & Pagoulatos, 2002; Makrydimitris, 2004). At the same time, a large part of the Greek population, once considered the 'internal enemy' (Rigouste, 2009), once again became socially active and legitimate. Furthermore, in 1981, Greece became a member of the European Economic Community (EEC). The country's accession in the EEC further asserted the establishment of democracy in Greece and moved the political discussion away from the dilemma between left and right to a new one referring to national independence or European harmonisation.

During the 1990s, Greek politics became more focused on achieving the country's Europeanisation – under the maxim of modernisation. Many researchers (Mouzelis & Pagoulatos, 2002; Makrydimitris, 2004) argue that during the 1970s the pre-war political system, which was based on the direct exchange of favours between politicians and the citizens, was transformed, with the emphasis now put on the political parties rather than on the politicians. From the 1990s onwards the State gave space to the powers of the market. Two parties, PASOK and New Democracy, share political power and emphasis is put on the economy under the pressure of both European and global politics (Mouzelis & Pagoulatos, 2002). Finally, during the 1990s, the introduction of neoliberal reforms globally provoked strong criticism (Tsakalotos, 2008, p. 3).

The Development of the Education System in Greece under a Historic Perspective: the education of primary education teachers in Greece and their evaluation

The education of primary education teachers – due to their role in both the socialisation of the new generations and the development of national identity - was done under the direct supervision of the Greek State from the very first days of its foundation. Subsequently, the primary school teacher's profession was never considered as ordinary, or even scientific. It was considered a national mission (Stamelos, 1999, pp. 52-63). Under this particular perspective, the initial teachers' education was under the direct and strict control of the State. The fact that there were only two changes in legislation concerning the status of the institutions of teachers' education (Pedagogic Academies) from their foundation in 1933 to their abolition in 1989 is indicative of the previous argument. In both cases the changes were introduced by non-democratic regimes interested in raising the level of the State's control in the education of primary school teachers (Stamelos, 1999, p. 4).

It should be also added that many people originating from the initial primary school teachers' training institutions got involved in the dispute over the official State language. This dispute, far from being linguistic, became mainly political and troubled Greece from 1830 to 1976/77 when the new – simplified - Greek language (*dimotiki*) became established as the official State language. Knowledge of the *Katharevousa*, a version of the Greek language closer to ancient Greek, and the official State language until 1977, was considered to be a criterion of educational and professional status. It was also indicative of an elite, the agents of the dominant ideology, in contrast to *dimotiki*, which was spoken by the larger part of the population and was considered to be a tool for the promotion of corrosive ideas against the State, a vehicle for the Communist propaganda. In this context, primary school teachers originating from the lower socio-economic layers of society were susceptible to receiving undesirable influences and communicating anti-national (Communist) propaganda (Stamelos, 1999, p. 44). In this context, close supervision on the part of the State was not only limited to the initial access to Pedagogic Academies and the content of studies but also to the professional teachers' careers. The State monitored teachers' careers through a system of evaluation run by inspectors of public education involving, besides, school-related competencies, the teachers' everyday lives and their personal stances and ideas. In contrast, teachers of secondary education – university graduates - enjoyed higher status and above all, due to the fact that they spoke the *katharevousa*, were considered to be immune to any kind of dangerous propaganda (Stamelos, 1999, p. 45).

Following the above-described historic context, primary school teachers were often massively prosecuted on the basis of their political beliefs. In particular, between 1946 and 1947, 2000 teachers were dismissed on account of their political beliefs and a further 1300 for the same reason between 1953 and 1956 (Andreou & Papakonstantinou, 1994, p. 274).

The role of evaluation and its repercussions, along with that of inspectors of public education and their interest in issues far exceeding school and the work of teachers, becomes obvious in the following extracts taken from official documents of the period:

... we have followed him because we have been informed, from a confidential source, that he with his friends buy food for his family from a leftist grocer ... (31.12.1955)

... while the teacher did not follow, in the past, the communist rhetoric, after the radical changes put forward by the revolution of the 21st of April 1967 he has fully adopted the nationalist ideology... (1/4/1968). (Andreou & Papakonstantinou, 1994, pp. 273-274)

The Main Characteristics of the Greek Education System and the Developments Following the Re-establishment of Democracy: primary education teachers and their evaluation

During the past, in the aforementioned historic context, the Minister of Education had accumulated many responsibilities in a centralised education system. However, in the last few years, the establishment of the democratic regime has rendered the control over the education system less strict. In what concerns, especially, primary school teachers, their basic demands centred around: (a) the upgrading of initial teacher training to university level; and (b) the abolition of evaluation through inspection.

Conservative Party governments – from 1974 to 1981 - hesitated at first and then denied altogether satisfaction of such demands. In 1981, however, the Socialist government immediately satisfied both demands and developed strong relationships with primary school teachers. PASOK went further ahead and abolished within the 1980s every monitoring system at the disposal of the State in all parts of public administration with the aim of 'liberating' the country from the Conservative domination over the State mechanisms. Those rulings, on the part of the Socialists, led to a hybrid (education) system where the Ministry of Education and the Minister of Education personally held absolute power over the formulation of policies but lost every control over the implementation of their decisions. We ended up with a system cut in two, where, on the one hand, the politicians decided for themselves – without feeling the need to develop a culture of open dialogue and convergence - and on the other, in the field, every teacher could function autonomously in the name of democracy.

In terms of, especially, the system of evaluation of primary school teachers, the school advisor replaced the school inspector for teacher evaluation. However, the particular provision was never implemented following strong resistance from the syndicate (Didaskaliki Omospondia Ellados [DOE]), who claimed that teachers needed 'advisors' and not 'inspectors'. In this sense, teachers managed, through DOE and their influence in the Socialist Party, to establish the stance that the school advisor should be a teacher under the control of their representatives. Subsequently, the profile of the school advisor was that of a person who had teaching and training experience and who had gained his/her appointment to the particular post following an exceptionally centralised process where the decisive role was in the hands of DOE representatives (Law 3848/2010).

What was mentioned earlier confirms the previous argument that the 1980s was a decade characterised by an interest, on the part of the State, in resolving past problems and re-establishing social cohesion. The country, from the 1990s onwards, moved towards the direction of going along with international trends. Students of various age groups took part in international comparative research – TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) by the Institute of Education Sciences (IEA); and PISA (the Programme for International Student Assessment) by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - where they did not achieve highly. Moreover, the education system raised its level of coordination with the other European education systems following the need to implement common policies originating from the European Union (EU). Finally, since the second half of the 1990s, the issue of quality assurance, and

its most basic tool, evaluation, which was raised both internationally and at the European level, created heavy turbulence in the Greek education system. It became a definite cause of tension between the government – Socialist and/or Conservative - and the education community, altering what had been agreed during the 1980s in a given historic context. In this respect, this article delves into the last issue.

It examines both the governmental initiatives – originating from supranational influences and/or obligations - and the stable resistance of the DOE, collectively, and of primary school teachers, at the personal level, underneath this tension. The focus stays mainly with school advisors since they are, by law, responsible for the evaluation of teachers. It should be noted, at this point, however, that they do not really exert that part of their duties.[1]

Research Methodology

The issue of evaluation and the many disputes originating from any governmental attempt to implement a relevant mechanism has great research interest spanning all levels of the Greek education system.

Our research – carried out in the region of western Greece in the academic year 2008-2009 - constituted part of a wider research project managed by the Higher Education Policy Network (www.hepnet.gr) – University of Patras. It drew on the grounded theory paradigm using qualitative methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Woods, 1986; Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 1996, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In this article we will present evidence referring to primary education, based on:

- Content analysis of the legislative framework (1993-2008) regarding the issue of evaluation of primary school teachers. The starting year (1993) coincides with the transformation of the EEC to the EU (Maastricht Treaty) and the expansion of the EU jurisdiction to social and subsequently educational issues;
- Content analysis of the DOE's official statements regarding the issue of evaluation of primary school teachers;
- Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews with primary education school advisors (every one of the 31 who accepted our invitation to take part in our research) carried out in the region of western Greece in 2009. We chose to interview school advisors, since they are the ones responsible for the evaluation of primary school teachers;
- Seven interviews with primary school teachers, with the aim of facilitating the triangulation of the data.

In relation to respondent validation, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) highlighted three elements that the researcher has to consider. They referred to the social context, the time of the research, and people's identities and social locations. All these three elements were considered during data collection and especially in the phase of the research when interviews were planned and respondents were being decided upon. The questions of the interviews revolved around three main themes relevant to the literature review and the research questions: quality, evaluation and the contemporary role of primary education officials in Greece. The recorded material produced from the interviews, in accordance with the relevant literature (Corbin & Strauss, 1998), was immediately transcribed upon completion, allowing the researchers to make a written record of the non-verbal behaviour of the interviewees as well.

In relation to the second data collection method, researchers analysed the relevant Greek legislative documents portraying the governmental choices on the matter, consisting of policy documents on the subject – originating from various sources, such as the EU - and other documents that incorporated the stances of the local education practitioners' unions (DOE) on the issue of quality in primary education in Greece.

Data analysis was based on the constant comparative method suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Their approach to theory generation places heavy emphasis on induction and openness to the data. New conceptualisation from one's data is encouraged at the early phases of the research. Low-level categories are generated out of a process of constant comparison in the early phases of data collection. The researcher is urged to avoid forcing round data into square categories. Categories and their processes should be analytic and sensitising. Relations between categories and

their properties are then formulated in hypotheses, which are in principle subject to verification. The aim of the procedure is primarily to generate theory (Bulmer, 1979); otherwise, as is the case in this study, it is to describe a phenomenon in all its dimensions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 205; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Accordingly, researchers had some general notions in mind at the beginning of data collection. The conceptual categories of analysis emerged, through a process of constant comparison, from the examination of the data at hand, which allowed for descriptive adequacy (Berelson, 1971; Krippendorff, 2004; Kiriazi, 2006, p. 289). The researchers became sensitised to issues raised by the relevant theory, and particularly by neo-institutional, organisational theories, which refer to the function of institutions (Scott, 2001; Crozier, 2010).

Ethical matters, finally, should always be considered in the design of a research method. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) indicated five issues that the researcher must bear in mind, related to ethics: informed consent; privacy; harm; exploitation; and the consequences for future research. Burgess (1989), additionally, highlighted that informed consent may be a dubious matter given the power relations involved in a situation such as this where primary education (PE) officials were interviewed. In this particular study, respondents agreed to the research after being informed about its aims. Their privacy, also, will be protected since all their names have been changed.

A study addressing the question of the role of different groups in the formulation and implementation of the legislation concerning the issue of quality in PE in Greece will be presented in the following paragraphs. Specifically, the research questions of the study aimed to: (a) identify the policy makers as well as the processes involved in the development of policies on the subject of quality in Greek PE; (b) present the content of the Greek – national - policy concerning quality in PE and its relation to evaluation, in particular; and (c) describe the process of implementation of the introduced legislation about this issue.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The argument of Scott (2001) concerning the existence of three pillars (regulative, normative, cultural-cognitive) governing the function of institutions constituted the main analytic tool for our data analysis and interpretation. In what concerns, especially, the third pillar – cultural-cognitive - and in order to analyse best everyday practice of the actors in the field, we adopted Crozier's (2010) and Dubet's (2002) notions regarding the role of actors in relation to change within an organisation.

The Regulative Pillar

The important issue about the first pillar is the examination of the regulative protocols governing the institution, and, in our case the dominant standards concerning evaluation. It is important to discern the stances of teachers – as expressed in their syndicate (DOE) - as well as those of society – as expressed by the legitimate government.

Analysis showed that the notion of 'democratic school' seems to be central in the official documents published by the DOE. The democratic school is founded on past experiences and has no control over its teachers. The DOE, in fact, bases its argumentation regarding the reinstatement of an evaluation system addressed to primary school teachers on this idea of the democratic school. Subsequently, over the years, it has adopted a rather defensive negative stance concerning the issue of teacher evaluation. The reactions of the DOE are based on an appeal for democracy and on its allusions to the democratic school. It maintains that democracy means absence of hierarchy and control and vice versa. Accordingly, the terms accompanying any reference to evaluation are: authoritarianism, terrorism, manipulation, surveillance (DOE, 1997, 1998, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009):

[Evaluation] causes human relationships to crash in the educational, pedagogical and learning community and cannot be part of what is called the democratic school. (DOE, 1997, pp. 6-11)
[Evaluation] oppressed the school and the teachers with the imposition of a network which removed pedagogical freedom and the autonomy of the school community. (DOE, 1998, p. 16)
The education sector will under no circumstances permit a return to the past, to a system of authoritarianism, terrorism and surveillance. (DOE, 2004, p. 107)

One could wonder whether the DOE's arguments hold limited interest due to their (syndical) origin. The answer is that this is not the case, and this has already been implied by references made earlier in this article. On the one hand, Greek society is sensitive to a discourse about democracy due to its historic background. The reorganisation of Greek society and the foundation of the State resulted from a demand regarding democratisation and the abolition of any type of exclusion imposed during the 1967 junta. On the other hand, and in what concerns, particularly, the case of the primary school teachers, the democratisation demand became political and was implemented as such by the Socialist Party. This was expressed by a series of legislative initiatives regarding the abolition of the institution of inspectors, teachers' evaluation, increases in their salary, the abolition of pedagogic academies and their transformation into university departments responsible for primary school teachers initial training, etc. Additionally, as teacher representatives gained access to high posts in the Ministry of Education, their control over decisions relative to their interests increased considerably. For example, the DOE's representatives had a remarkable presence (two representatives out of seven) on the central committee for the appointment of school advisors, who had the responsibility of evaluating teachers. In this context, New Democracy, when it came into power, both in 1990 and in 2004, did not do anything to reverse all these concessions made by the Socialists to primary school teachers.

To sum up, it could be argued that both the wider political and social context and teachers in particular are very sensitive to issues referring to democracy and democratic function. Accordingly, they are sensitive to any criticism concerning their restriction.

The Normative Pillar

It has already been mentioned that the legislation comprising the normative pillar was formulated after 1974, and especially in the 1980s, based on internal societal demands and in an attempt to resolve problems from the past. In this sense, it was in accordance with the regulative pillar, described in the previous section of the article.

Ever since the 1990s, however, international pressures, along with Greece's obligations towards supranational organisations, led to the need for gradual convergence with the international standards. In relation to education, those pressures took the form of, among other things, quality of education and establishing a system of evaluation (Lee & Fitz, 1995; Reezigt, 2001; Saunders, 2002; Cheng, 2003; Newton, 2010; Sahney et al, 2010).

Greek governments, of both parties, were particularly active in what concerned legislation in relation to evaluation at all levels of education. Within a period of 15 years, from 1993 to 2008, two laws (1997, 2002), two presidential decrees (PD), (1993, 1998), one ministerial act (MA) (1998) and 13 circulars were issued referring to primary education and the issue of quality assurance and evaluation. They had mainly two characteristics: (a) they were all an attempt to conform to the respective European discourse on the issue in terms of the relevant terminology; and (b) they were all inconsistent in their use of expressions and concepts, as well as ambiguous in terms of their content. In relation to the second characteristic, it seems that the legislation published is not characterised by coherence. PDs and MAs supposedly issued to emphasise certain parts of the law were ambiguous or indifferent in relation to the law.

For example, since 1993, a significant number of circulars have been issued regarding quality in primary education in Greece, referring to the previously mentioned legislation. Various expressions have been used in what concerns quality in Greek education. The expression used in 1993 concerning quality in the Greek education system – 'improvement of the quality standards' (F. 12/445/C1/1072) – changed in 1996 to 'the qualitative and quantitative improvement' of the Greek education system, (F.3/939/C1/1213). In 1998, a new expression was used – 'educational reform' (F.3/768/C1885/C2/4791). In 1999 there was a new term used – the 'more effective school function' (F.361.1/502/D1/11638), while in 2000 the expression 'improvement of the quality standards' in the Greek education system was used again (F. 12/896/C1/693). In 2001 (F.4/115/C1/791) the term 'improvement', in general, was used again for the first time since 1993. In 2002 (F.12/676/61336/C1) discourse about quality revolved around the expression 'improvement in quality standards in education', which was thought to be achieved through modern, creative and effective schools and the introduction of new institutions and innovative

projects facilitating the achievement of goals regarding equal opportunities and avoidance of school failure. From 2003 (F.3/447/91696/C1, 94018/C1, 94021/C1) to 2007 (F. 3/129/97038) one term was used - 'qualitative reconstruction' - aiming at high-quality education and equal opportunities. In 2008, (F. 3/976/108630/C1a, F.15/1714/C1) two new expressions were introduced – 'high quality education' and 'improvement in educational processes' - whose content was not clarified further.

It is necessary to note at this point that: (a) the particular legislation was not formulated out of an internal need to address certain problems or societal demands, but resulted from international influences and obligations; and (b) the Greeks were not familiar with the use of benchmarks and indicators for the evaluation of any particular task (the educational task in our case). This is reflected in the almost random use of expressions and concepts. Additionally, what is most important is that both the discourse and the policies developed referring to quality and evaluation became understood as an external intervention – an attempt to reinstate practices of a bad, anti-democratic past. An example may be that of the inspectors who, through evaluation, monitored the ideas and lives of the teachers.

In the end, the regulative and normative pillars stopped being coordinated. Subsequently, a crisis broke out concerning the relation between the government and teachers on the one hand, and teachers' everyday practice on the other. It has been expressed, in the last 20 years, by the DOE's resistance to any attempt on the part of the government to establish a system of evaluation for primary school teachers. Of course, it is actually true that things did not exactly develop so linearly as previously described and that many things have changed in Greek society in the last fifteen to twenty years.

The institution, the Greek education system, though in conflict, managed to find a balance to the point where, on the one hand, governments would develop policies in accordance with international influences and obligations and, on the other, on account of the absence of any mechanism established for the monitoring of their implementation (abolished since the 1980s), autonomy in the field would be limitless. One could probably even argue that Greek governments were at ease with the situation. At least this is a way to explain the fact that PDs and MAs, supposedly issued to emphasise certain parts of a law, were ambiguous or irrelevant to that particular law. For example, while school advisors were, by law, responsible for teachers' evaluation, beyond the DOE's objections, no governmental act (PD or MA) provided for benchmarks and indicators on which their evaluation would be based. Accordingly, in the case where a school advisor would want to be engaged with the task attributed to him/her by law, s/he would have neither the established processes nor the tools to enable this to happen.

Additionally, the DOE has always exerted a high level of control over the selection of school advisors:

The union board will proceed directly with signed and specific complaints and will call on the elected representatives of the Central Administrative Committee of Primary Education [KYSPE in Greek] to do the obvious and take into serious consideration the specific conduct [of school advisors] in the next round of appointments for education posts. (DOE, 2005, pp. 12, 15)

However, as time has gone by, any potential for special treatment on the part of the DOE has become limited since international research (PISA) and international pressures for convergence (open method of coordination) have required substantial and not virtual adjustments. In this context, characterised by the divergence between the normative and regulative pillars, we should include the economic crisis, which has transferred to education in the form of limited resources resulting in the decrease in the number of schools and personnel.

Cultural-Cognitive Pillar

The everyday practice of actors in the field – in our case, teachers in the education system - may be influenced by the status quo in both the normative and the regulative pillars – the legislation and the dominant practices, perceptions, etc. However, they may also affect and reformulate the main characteristics in the field. In our analysis we have also used some notions adopted by Crozier's (2010), and Dubet's (2002) theoretical work. Obviously, divergence between the regulative and the normative pillars influences the everyday practice in the field.

In relation to our research, the emphasis was on school advisors **to AT** the point where they are responsible for teachers' evaluation. It should be interesting to investigate their perceptions regarding, on the one hand, the DOE's stance towards them, and on the other, the fact that they are deprived of their responsibility to evaluate teachers. It should be interesting to examine the problems they face in their everyday practice and their opinion concerning their role on the basis of its transformation from what is provisioned by law to what is implemented in the field.

Before that, however, we should focus on the school advisor's job description according to the legislation (MA 353.1/324/105657/Δ1/16-10-2002):

- *In-service trainer*, because s/he takes part in the in-service training of teachers, organises seminars, updates teachers on the latest scientific, pedagogical and teaching issues, and so on.
- *Coordinator*, because s/he works with the parents' and guardians' associations, with members of local government, and with the trade unions, and supports every effort to develop productive relationships between school life and the social environment.
- *Programmer*, because s/he controls the implementation of the educational programme and the feedback from the state on its effectiveness, indicating and submitting to the Ministry of Education and to the Pedagogical Institute his/her observations and recommendations concerning the books, teaching methods and so on.
- *Evaluator*, because '[i]n collaboration with the teachers, s/he evaluates the results of whatever had been planned...' (Law 1304/1982, article 2), 's/he prepares a brief report, which s/he submits to the Ministry of Education in which s/he evaluates the work that has been carried out...' (Presidential Decree 214/1984).
- *Colleague*, because s/he works together with the heads of the school units and the teaching staff, as well as with the director and members of the local education authority, on every issue related to the improvement of education, with the aim of providing pedagogical, scientific as well as administrative support for the operation of the school.

School advisors, according to our research, believe that they do their job in very unfavourable conditions. They aim their critique at the State, arguing that it has not provided for a stable, unambiguous facilitative framework.

One government comes along and issues law, the next comes and the same thing happens, they change everything, and by the time they start over from the beginning, years go by and the same thing happens again. (Interview 24)

... the State always refers to the issue of quality when it wants to cover its shortcomings. (Interview 23)

I believe that a lot of what is sent out in government circulars is ... rhetorical, ... I don't know how much real meaning they have ... I mean to say qualitative upgrading... there's no point ... what's important is to give concepts which are measurable, provide all the necessary tools. (Interview 26)

... the legislative framework makes provision for a lot of things that never happen. (Interview 20)

In what concerns teachers' evaluation, school advisors argue that it is pointless to establish a system of evaluation to the point where there is strong resistance by both individual teachers and the DOE.

... it's a great burden for the school advisor. (Interview 1)

... even today, if the school advisor says I'm here to evaluate you, reactions will certainly be intense. (Interview 2)

Do you know many school advisors who have gone into the classroom and watched a lesson? They avoid it. (Interview 4)

Nobody does it! What am I supposed to do? To have a fight with them? (Interview 5)

I'm afraid that ... to say something negative ... it's difficult and I'm not so sure that a Greek teacher will agree to it. (Interview 11)

... the school advisor can't evaluate ... extremely difficult ... they'll tear him apart! (*laughter*).
(Interview 27)

... eh, of course ... the teachers' association will take measures, they'll start to shout in the streets that the school advisor is doing this, that and the other, and most of the time we're in no mood to come into conflict with our colleagues, it's only reasonable! (Interview 14)

... they don't come into conflict with professional teachers' groups, nothing, a situation like that, ... evaluation won't take place, it's a political issue. (Interview 23)

OK, so it has been introduced, but it has not been implemented ... because they don't ask for it, there's no political will ... because there is political cost. (Interview 21)

I believe that the trade unionists don't want it ... every government don't touch the issue and it has remained the same ever since. (Interview 28)

... there, the state is to blame, ... because they don't want to risk upsetting those who voted them. (Interview 27)

It is not only the teachers and the DOE that react to the establishment of a system of evaluation - the politicians also get involved. They formulate relevant policies and issue laws, but do not seem interested in implementing them, considering the huge political cost.

The PD and MA haven't been issued. (Interview 23)

The implementation of the law is insufficient, the PDs haven't been issued ... accordingly the responsibilities are found in a very grey area. (Interview 22)

The PDs haven't been issued yet ... Who's going to tell me exactly what to do? (Interview 15)

In this sense, the DOE's apparent hostility towards the government's attempts to establish a system of evaluation seems justified and cannot be considered as isolated. In fact, in a recent document to head teachers and teaching staff in primary schools in Samos [2], the union suggests that they should not send their Annual Evaluation of Educational Task to the school advisors, since, as it claims, the school advisors' job description does not incorporate any such provisions. The document also states that there will be full syndical cover in the case of any attempt by school advisors 'to undertake any responsibility regarding evaluation-manipulation of teachers' to which it is categorically opposed (<http://www.doe.gr>, 2008).

Under these circumstances, an obvious question relates to the potential of school advisors to resume action regarding evaluation:

Since there is not any provision for action ... I don't know what s/he can do ... but I don't think you can force someone to do something. (Interview 26)

... besides, everything is at the mercy of God! Why should s/he do it? Why should s/he do something stressful, especially when there are not going to be any consequences in the opposite case? (Interview 24)

... if asked, s/he can intervene in some matters, but s/he doesn't check, you can't even reprimand a teacher's obvious bad practice. (Interview 22)

... no one dares to say anything to them. (Interview 19)

... as a piece of advice we'd tell them that things are done like this ... we tell them but nothing happens, the same again. (Interview 16)

... you invite them to seminars, to in-service training courses, and s/he doesn't come, or if s/he does come, it's only for a laugh ... after that there's not much else you can do, (Interview 12)

... nothing, I could do nothing, I just observed [incompetence, weakness and lack of preparation on the part of teachers] and recorded it. (Interview 10)

School advisors seem to be disappointed. They perform their duties in a typical manner admitting that, under the circumstances, they cannot do anything else. We should note here, however, that out of the research came the point that a minority of school advisors try, through the development of personal networks, to overcome the dead end created by the dispute over the establishment of a system of evaluation.

The Greek Case: what does it tell us?

At the beginning of this article, we examined the situation concerning the establishment of a system of evaluation for primary school teachers in the 1980s. It was mainly formulated in relation to the past experiences of Greek society, within a given historical context.

We also showed that international influences and implicit pressures originating from the country's participation in supranational organisations resulted in the need to reconsider the previous arrangements.

The fact that the need for rearrangements resulted from external pressures opposed to the teachers' interests led to a definite crisis. Scott's (2001) work helped us analyse and interpret the reasons underneath this crisis. The dominant values and norms (normative pillar) diverged, in the 1990s, from what was provisioned by the relevant legislation (regulative pillar). The politicians, out of fear for the political cost, did not show much interest in implementing the legislation that they were formulating and voted in accordance with international trends. They managed to limit, even avoid, reactions on the part of the teachers and unionists after coming up with this 'ingenious solution'.

The particularity of the Greek case is not founded so much on the distance between theory (provisions by law) and practice (everyday practice in the field); in fact, it is commonly accepted that the nation state can take a large number of decisions, but is often incapable, despite its best intentions, of keeping track with their effects (Crozier, 2000, p. 216). On a small scale, this translates into a distance which separates what is planned from what is actually brought into effect (Dubet, 2002, p. 382). In the Greek case, what is unique is the great distance between those two in a rather confrontational manner. The problem lies, though, in the fact that no society can exist functionally when the distance between what is said and what is done is excessively great (Dubet, 2002, p. 382).

From this point forward our undertaken work is of interest in that it examines the extent to which social tensions and conflicts constitute a manifestation of the difficulties encountered in the implementation of policy. At the same time, these tensions and conflicts can be interpreted as the reaction of actors and groups within an organisation who wish to hold on to, or even improve, their position within that organisation and not lose any of their vested interests (Crozier, 2000, p. 106). However, in order to understand the power relations, it becomes necessary to investigate the extent of the existing margin for freedom within the organisation. In other words, it becomes necessary to investigate the capacity to influence and the scope for action that individuals and collectivities have within the framework of the organisation - to investigate, that is to say, the conduct which develops in the organisational system (Crozier, 2000, p. 231), and the extent to which human relations are characterised by negotiations, pressure, manipulation and also blackmail (Crozier, 2000, p. 288).

Notes

- [1] The level to which school advisors fulfil their duties and the reasons why they do so do not fall into the direct interests of this study.
- [2] A Greek island.

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GEORGIOS STAMELOS is a professor and Director of the Higher Education Policy Network in the Department of Primary Education and Educational Sciences (PTDE) at the University of Patras. His field of interest is educational policy. *Correspondence:* gstam@otenet.gr, stamelos@upatras.gr

ANDREAS VASSILOPOULOS holds a doctorate in Educational Sciences. He is a member of the Higher Education Policy Network – University of Patras, Department of Primary Education and Educational Sciences. He works in The Moraitis Primary School. *Correspondence:* andyv@otenet.gr

MARIANNA BARTZAKLI* holds a doctorate in Educational Sciences. She is a member of the Higher Education Policy Network – University of Patras, Department of Primary Education and Educational Sciences. She is a headmistress in a public primary school. *Correspondence:* marbar@otenet.gr

*Contact author