



‘Crisis and Support’: A Transformative Framework for Teacher Evaluation in Greece

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Abstract

Teacher evaluation in Greece remains one of the most ideologically fraught areas of education policy, shaped by a legacy of authoritarian inspection regimes, political instrumentalization, and institutional discontinuity. Drawing on critical discourse analysis of 42 legislative texts (1982–2022) and qualitative interviews with educators and union representatives, this study explores how evaluation is culturally constructed and experienced. Framed by Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power and Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence, the research re-conceptualizes evaluation as a site of embedded power relations and professional identity negotiation—rather than a neutral policy tool. The study introduces the “Crisis and Support” model: a culturally responsive, dialogically grounded framework that reframes teacher evaluation as a trust-based, developmental process integrating mentoring, feedback, and reflective autonomy. Findings reveal persistent emotional fatigue and mistrust rooted in inspection-era practices. Yet, participants express a strong desire for collaborative, formative evaluation embedded in peer dialogue and school-based support. Resistance to evaluation, the data suggest, arises less from opposition to accountability than from a lack of meaningful support and professional legitimacy. While Greece reflects a broader Mediterranean pattern of centralized control and institutional mistrust, the model has potential relevance beyond the national context. Systems shaped by hierarchical inspection—such as those in Cyprus and Italy—may similarly benefit from culturally embedded, trust-oriented approaches. Its broader applicability, however, warrants further empirical validation. Although this study provides rich qualitative insight, future research would benefit from a mixed-methods design that incorporates quantitative data to enhance generalizability and test the model’s broader utility.

Key words: teacher evaluation, disciplinary power, symbolic violence, professional identity, culturally responsive policy

1. Introduction

Teacher evaluation in Greece has never functioned as a neutral administrative mechanism. Historically entangled with political control, bureaucratic surveillance, and authoritarian supervision, it has left deep institutional and emotional imprints on the national education system. The inspectorate model that dominated much of the 20th century equated evaluation with disciplinary regulation and ideological conformity—producing an enduring culture of mistrust between the state and the teaching profession. Although the formal abolition of the inspectorate in 1982 (Law 1304/1982) marked a political rupture, it lacked a coherent, pedagogically grounded replacement.

Over subsequent decades, fragmented legislative attempts to implement formative or participatory models were met with skepticism and, at times, outright resistance. This opposition did not stem from an aversion to professional growth, but from collective memory shaped by top-down enforcement, the absence of mentoring and peer collaboration, and a symbolic framing of evaluation as punitive rather than developmental. Consequently, the Greek educational system remains suspended between the residual trauma of hierarchical oversight and the unrealized promise of teacher autonomy.

This study positions teacher evaluation within broader theoretical frameworks of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) and disciplinary control (Foucault, 1977), arguing that resistance is not solely political but also cultural and epistemic. Reframing evaluation is thus not only a policy challenge but also a symbolic recalibration of how professionalism and authority are negotiated in education.

Based on qualitative interviews, critical discourse analysis of legislation (1982–2022), and comparative Mediterranean case studies, this paper introduces the “Crisis and Support” model—a culturally embedded and trust-oriented framework that reimagines evaluation as a cyclical process of emotional recovery, pedagogical feedback, and peer empowerment. The model is derived empirically and visually conceptualized in Figure 1.

Situated within a Mediterranean pattern of historically centralized, bureaucratically governed systems (e.g., Cyprus, Italy, Spain), the Greek case underscores the need for a shift from hierarchical inspection to trust-based professionalism. Rather than enforcing compliance, the proposed approach fosters institutional solidarity and pedagogical co-ownership. In doing so, it contributes to a wider European conversation on building context-sensitive, democratic evaluation systems.

Recent global disruptions, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, have further intensified debates on evaluation legitimacy, emotional safety, and teacher well-being. Emerging international evidence highlights the value of formative, agency-driven frameworks over rigid audit cultures. This paper builds on such developments to offer a culturally grounded model tailored to post-pandemic reform landscapes.

2. Literature Review

The discourse surrounding teacher evaluation in Greece is embedded in a complex matrix of historical trauma, institutional discontinuity, and ideological contestation. The dominant inspection model of the 20th century positioned evaluation as an instrument of hierarchical control—often conflated with political loyalty and disciplinary enforcement (Tsirigotis, 2020; Ntinou, 2018). Rooted in bureaucratic logic, teacher evaluation in Greece—and in many centralized systems—has historically operated more as a mechanism of mistrust than a tool for pedagogical growth (Charalambous & Philippou, 2023; Dafermos, 2022; OECD, 2020).

From a theoretical standpoint, this dynamic reflects Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power and Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic violence, where evaluation functions not only administratively but also as a mechanism of normalization and social control.

The abolition of the inspectorate in 1982 left unresolved tensions between control and support. Subsequent reforms—ranging from self-evaluation (Law 2525/1997) to performance metrics (Law 4024/2011) and technocratic frameworks (Law 4823/2021)—lacked both teacher buy-in and systemic legitimacy. With limited investment in mentoring or ongoing professional development, these efforts failed to build the relational infrastructure necessary for trust. Instead, they triggered resistance, strike actions, and further fragmentation of institutional coherence (Dafermos, 2022).

Internationally, however, the dominant paradigm has shifted toward formative models grounded in feedback, collaboration, and shared responsibility. In contexts like Finland and Portugal, evaluation is embedded in school culture through dialogic processes and peer mentorship, promoting both school improvement and teacher agency (OECD, 2013; Fullan, 2012). Darling-Hammond and Rothman (2011) argue that evaluation must be relational, iterative, and embedded—functioning as an ongoing professional conversation rather than an external audit.

More recent reports—especially post-COVID—have intensified these calls for reform. OECD (2022) and Rasmussen & Bayer (2024) emphasize the critical link between teacher well-being, reflective autonomy, and sustainable systems of evaluation. Their findings align with a growing European emphasis on compassionate, context-sensitive evaluation frameworks that foster institutional trust and pedagogical resilience. These insights underscore the inadequacy of rigid accountability tools in classrooms shaped by emotional fatigue and increasing complexity.

Comparable tensions are evident in Mediterranean contexts. In Cyprus and Italy, reforms have aimed to move beyond inspectorate-era legacies, implementing phased mentorship schemes and educator-led evaluation frameworks (Charalambous & Philippou, 2023; Coppola, 2021). These efforts—though varied in scope—highlight the symbolic importance of reframing evaluation as professional support rather than bureaucratic surveillance. Greece shares many of these structural features but lags in implementation, with reform narratives often misaligned with educators' lived realities.

This study contributes to this evolving discourse by arguing that reform cannot rest on procedural redesign alone. What is needed is not a more refined instrument, but a fundamental recalibration of the symbolic and professional relationship between teachers and the state—grounded in developmental purpose, mutual dignity, and pedagogical trust.

3. Methodology

This study This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology to explore how teacher evaluation is constructed and experienced within the cultural, historical, and professional realities of Greek educators. Informed by a constructivist epistemology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the research prioritizes meaning-making, cultural memory, and professional identity over measurement or prediction. Given the symbolic and emotionally charged nature of evaluation in Greece, a quantitative or technocratic approach alone would not capture the layered experiences of trust, trauma, and institutional resistance (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.1 Sampling and Site Selection

A purposive, multi-site sampling design was employed to capture variation across geographic and institutional contexts. The sample included 12 teachers (6 primary, 6

secondary), 3 former educational advisors, and 1 national union representative, representing urban (Attica, Thessaloniki), rural (Epirus), and island (Crete) regions. Selection criteria considered gender, specialization, and teaching experience to enrich the analytic frame.

Although the dataset ($n = 16$) offers deep narrative insight, it is not statistically representative. The study thus aims for transferability rather than generalizability. Future research could build on these findings through mixed-methods designs or expanded survey-based validation.

Table 1: Participant Overview by Role, Level, and Region

Role	Level	Location	Number	Gender (F/M)	Experience Range
Classroom Teachers	Primary (6)	Attica, Epirus, Crete	6	3F / 3M	10–32 years
Classroom Teachers	Secondary (6)	Thessaloniki, Patras, Crete	6	4F / 2M	8–30 years
Former Educational Advisors	Both	National	3	1F / 2M	20+ years
Union Representative (OLME)	Secondary	National	1	1M	30+ years
Total	—	—	16	8F / 8M	—

3.2 Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews (30–50 minutes) and open-ended questionnaires. The interviews elicited participant narratives about past evaluation experiences, accountability perceptions, reactions to international frameworks, and visions for formative reform. The questionnaires—grounded in symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969)—invited written reflections on pedagogical identity and policy interpretation.

This dual instrument design enabled both dialogic depth and reflective introspection, capturing not only what teachers experience but how they make meaning from institutional change.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, supported by NVivo 12 for coding and data organization. An inductive-deductive hybrid approach guided the coding: emergent themes included emotional fatigue, mistrust, and peer-based support; deductive codes drew from theoretical constructs such as disciplinary power and symbolic violence.

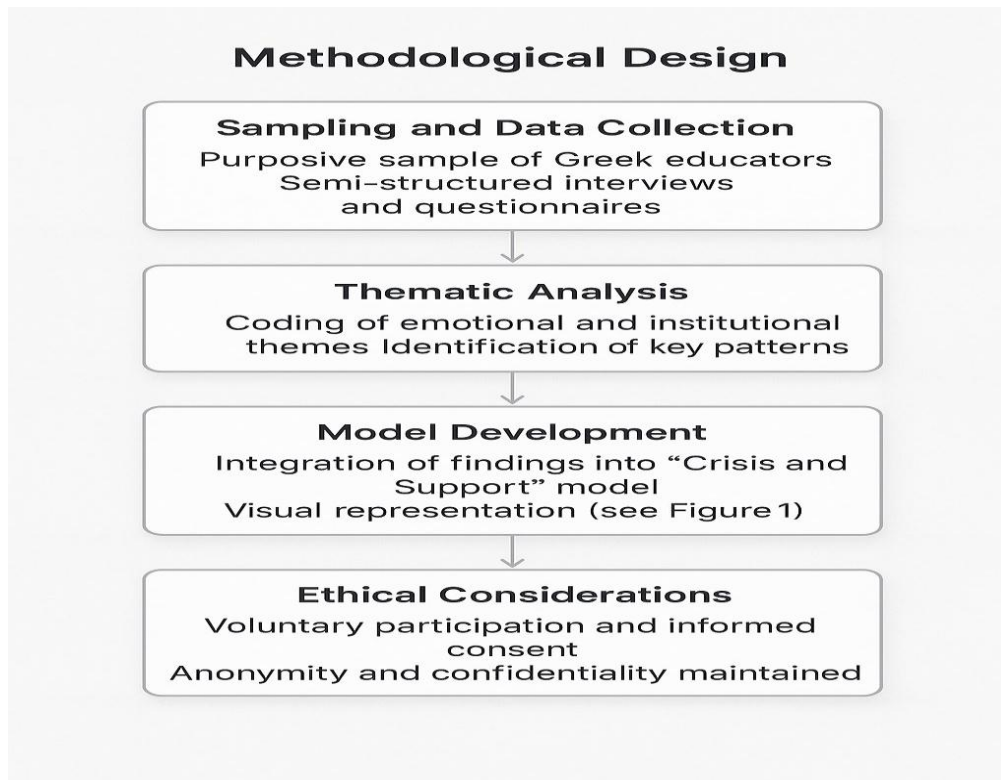
The analysis proceeded in four phases:

1. Familiarization through repeated reading and memo-ing
2. Open coding of interview and questionnaire data

3. Cluster formation and cross-theme comparison
4. Interpretive synthesis integrating theory with participant narratives

Through this process, the *Crisis and Support* model emerged as a grounded conceptualization of how teachers navigate evaluation as both a symbolic and developmental journey.

Figure 1: Methodological Design



3.4 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the European Educational Research Association (EERA) code of ethics. Participation was voluntary and informed, and all data were anonymized prior to transcription. No sensitive or vulnerable populations were involved, and all materials were used exclusively for academic purposes.

3.5 Reflexivity

Given the researcher’s embeddedness in the Greek education system, reflexive strategies were employed to mitigate bias and enhance analytic trustworthiness. These included memo writing, peer debriefing, and triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), ensuring that interpretation remained grounded in participant perspectives rather than researcher assumptions.

4. Findings

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed four interrelated domains that shape Greek educators’ perceptions of teacher evaluation. These themes reflect the emotional, cultural, and institutional layers of long-standing mistrust, while also pointing to an emerging openness to re-engagement—provided that evaluation is reframed as a formative and collaborative process. These themes inform the development of the *Crisis and Support* model.

(Figure 1), which conceptualizes evaluation as a developmental trajectory rather than a disciplinary tool.

4.1 Historical Distrust as Cultural Memory

Educators overwhelmingly associated evaluation with authoritarian control rather than professional support. The legacy of the inspectorate system embedded a cultural schema in which evaluation was equated with surveillance and ideological discipline. As one secondary teacher with 28 years in service put it: *“Evaluation means control. That’s how my generation lived it — and how we passed it down.”*

This form of intergenerational memory—rooted in symbolic trauma—has been compounded by inconsistent policy reforms and shifting ministerial agendas. Mistrust persists as a durable professional habitus, echoing Bourdieu’s (1991) theory of cultural reproduction: past power structures continue to shape current perceptions and practices.

The internalization of these structures also reflects Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence: bureaucratic rituals such as top-down evaluation are misrecognized as neutral or meritocratic, when they often mask systemic asymmetries in professional autonomy. The persistent absence of mentoring and pedagogical support signifies a lack of institutionalized cultural capital—further reinforcing feelings of illegitimacy and alienation.

4.2 Evaluation as Bureaucratic Burden, Not Professional Development

Participants described evaluation efforts as externally imposed, overly formalistic, and disconnected from the practical realities of teaching. Rather than supporting growth, they were experienced as compliance-driven exercises that generated anxiety and superficial engagement.

As a teacher from Patras remarked: *“They ask if I engage the community — which one? I’m alone with 25 kids, no psychologist, no support...”*

This lack of systemic scaffolding—particularly in staffing, emotional support, and workload relief—emerged as a critical constraint. Crucially, resistance was directed not at the principle of evaluation, but at the institutional void surrounding it. Educators argued that the issue was not being held accountable, but being unsupported while expected to perform.

4.3 Lack of Support Structures Undermines Legitimacy

Across all respondent groups, teachers emphasized the near-total absence of sustained institutional support. Formal mentoring, in-service coaching, and professional development opportunities were often described as outdated, ad hoc, or entirely absent.

As one Greek Language secondary-school teacher from Thessaloniki put it: *“My last real training was 15 years ago. Who evaluates someone they’ve never supported?”*

This institutional gap aligns with international research showing that trust in evaluation is not a given—it must be built through consistent, embedded developmental infrastructure (OECD, 2020). Without such foundations, evaluation is experienced as both arbitrary and illegitimate.

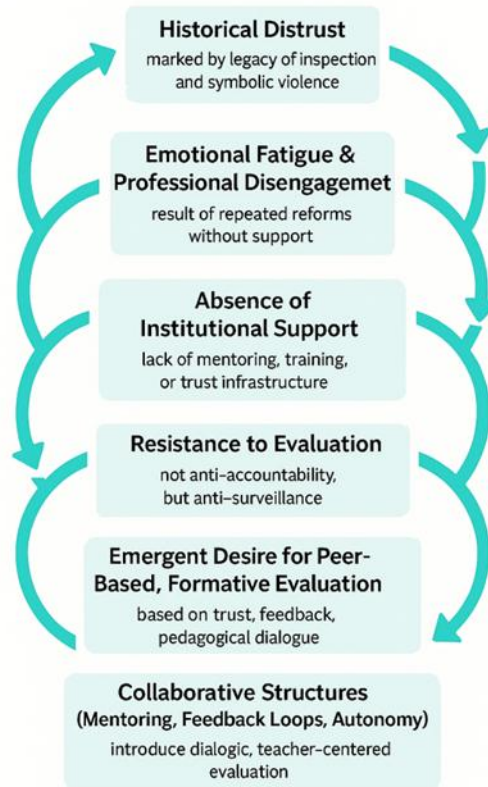
4.4 Desire for Formative, Peer-Based Evaluation

Despite skepticism, many participants voiced conditional support for evaluation models rooted in trust, mentoring, and professional dialogue. Teachers proposed peer review, reflective coaching, teacher portfolios, and voluntary feedback loops as more authentic alternatives.

As one secondary teacher in Heraklion noted: *“I don’t mind being evaluated — if it’s by someone I trust and I get real feedback.”*

This sentiment reflects a discursive shift: from evaluation as a mechanism of control to a collegial, co-constructed process. However, participants emphasized that such reform must be accompanied by clear institutional commitments—and decoupled from punitive consequences—to achieve legitimacy.

Figure 2: *The Crisis and Support Model of Culturally Responsive Teacher Evaluation Reform*



A cyclical model illustrating the transformation from historically rooted mistrust and control-based evaluation practices toward collaborative, formative, and trust-oriented systems. Derived from thematic analysis of Greek educator narratives.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm what many in the Greek educational community have long sensed but rarely articulated through empirical research: teacher resistance to evaluation is not rooted in professional complacency, but in a historically sedimented association with surveillance, coercion, and symbolic disempowerment. This resistance is deeply cultural—encoded through decades of policy discontinuity, emotional fatigue, and bureaucratic volatility.

Framing evaluation as an external apparatus reflects what Foucault (1980) termed *technologies of the self*—institutional mechanisms through which individuals are expected to govern themselves in alignment with dominant norms. However, without relational trust and meaningful support, such technologies provoke anxiety rather than autonomy. This echoes Ball's (2016) theory of policy as performativity and reinforces that Greek evaluation discourse has often operated as a tool of compliance, not care.

What emerges from this study is that teacher evaluation in Greece is not a neutral procedural mechanism. It is a cultural artifact, shaped by symbolic trauma, unstable reform trajectories, and a persistent deficit of institutional trust. In Bourdieu's terms, this reflects a

misalignment between *institutional habitus* and *professional capital*—where policies assume legitimacy without investing in its foundation.

Yet, within this climate of skepticism, a parallel discourse of conditional openness is gaining ground. Teachers are not rejecting accountability in principle; they are calling for a paradigm shift—one that redefines evaluation as a developmental, collegial, and reflective process. Their narratives align with international models in Finland, Portugal, and increasingly, Mediterranean contexts such as Cyprus and Italy (Charalambous & Philippou, 2023; Coppola, 2021), where evaluation is becoming more trust-based and dialogically embedded.

The *Crisis and Support* model operationalizes this shift. It moves beyond the binary of compliance versus resistance by offering a third path: a culturally grounded, trust-oriented approach in which the emotional and institutional crisis of past practices is acknowledged, and reform is anchored in relational infrastructure. Mentoring, peer feedback, and professional learning communities are not supplementary—they are structural pillars of sustainable reform.

Importantly, the findings indicate that resistance begins to dissolve when certain legitimacy conditions are met:

- Teachers co-design evaluative instruments;
- Feedback is decoupled from sanctions or pay incentives;
- Evaluators possess pedagogical credibility;
- Evaluation is embedded in ongoing mentorship and capacity-building.

These conditions do more than improve implementation—they redefine the symbolic contract between teachers and the state. When educators see themselves not as subjects of evaluation, but as co-constructors of its meaning, the discourse shifts from defensive compliance to reflective engagement and professional ownership.

This vision aligns with post-pandemic reform discourse emphasizing teacher well-being, agency, and institutional trust (OECD, 2022; Rasmussen & Bayer, 2024). It also contributes to a broader Mediterranean shift: from hierarchical audit to formative partnership.

To advance this shift, the *Crisis and Support* model can inform the design of:

- Mentoring frameworks that pair novice and experienced educators,
- Professional development policies centered on dialogue and reflection,
- Evaluator training programs grounded in relational and pedagogical credibility.

Ultimately, this study suggests that reform in Greece requires more than technical adjustment. It demands a new educational compact—one rooted in mutual dignity, professional respect, and a courageous reimagining of what meaningful accountability can look like.

5.1 Limitations

While the study provides deep qualitative insight, its modest sample size ($n = 16$) limits generalizability across Greece's diverse educational landscape. Although the sampling was purposefully diverse, it may not capture the full range of institutional and personal perspectives.

Additionally, the principal investigator's embeddedness in Greek education, while enhancing contextual sensitivity, introduces potential for interpretive bias. Reflexivity

strategies—including memoing, triangulation, and peer debriefing—were used to address this, but positionality remains a consideration.

The international comparisons included here are illustrative rather than systematic. Future research could benefit from comparative case studies or survey-based instruments to triangulate findings. Furthermore, subsequent work should include student and parental perspectives to examine how evaluation cultures are experienced across the educational ecosystem—not just by educators, but by those most affected by its outcomes.

6 Conclusion

This study has examined the persistent tensions surrounding teacher evaluation in Greece, revealing how its historical construction—as an instrument of surveillance and compliance—continues to erode professional trust and impede meaningful reform. Although official discourse often presents evaluation as a neutral tool for quality assurance, the lived experiences of educators suggest otherwise. For many, evaluation is not experienced as developmental, but as bureaucratic intrusion—marked by emotional strain, symbolic coercion, and institutional ambiguity.

Yet, embedded within this landscape of skepticism lies the potential for transformation. Greek educators are not rejecting the notion of accountability; they are calling for a redefinition of its purpose and process. Their responses articulate a clear vision: one where evaluation becomes a formative, reflective practice—co-constructed, rooted in peer mentorship, and sustained through collaborative structures.

The *Crisis and Support* model introduced in this study offers a culturally grounded framework for reimagining teacher evaluation in Greece. Rather than replacing one control regime with another, it advocates a shift in the cultural logic of evaluation—from inspection to empowerment. Drawing on international examples from trust-based systems in countries such as Portugal, Finland, and Cyprus, the findings underscore that sustainable evaluation requires more than procedural redesign; it demands a robust relational infrastructure built on shared professionalism, authentic dialogue, and institutional respect.

Central to this framework are five key policy proposals:

1. Institutionalize formative evaluation by prioritizing growth over ranking, using tools such as peer observations, portfolios, and reflective journals.
2. Establish peer mentoring and professional learning communities, supported by formal training, allocated time, and recognition for mentor roles.
3. Implement training programs for both evaluators and evaluatees, centered on relational feedback, coaching, and pedagogy-oriented evaluation practices.
4. Co-design evaluation frameworks in partnership with teachers, ensuring contextual relevance and shared ownership through school-based and regional input structures.
5. Decouple evaluation from discipline and compensation, promoting it instead as a learning-oriented process. Recognition and visibility of strong practice can cultivate a culture of professional solidarity.

In conclusion, Greece does not need a more efficient mechanism of control—it needs a new educational compact grounded in dignity, mutual trust, and shared responsibility. Teacher evaluation must evolve from a symbol of oversight into a vehicle for pedagogical care. Only when feedback replaces fear, and collaboration supplants compliance, can evaluation become a genuine catalyst for teacher empowerment and systemic renewal.

The *Crisis and Support* model offers not just a critique of the past but a blueprint for the future—one in which evaluation becomes an act of educational solidarity and a lever for institutional transformation. Future steps might include localized pilot programs or participatory policy design initiatives to test and adapt the model within real school communities.

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