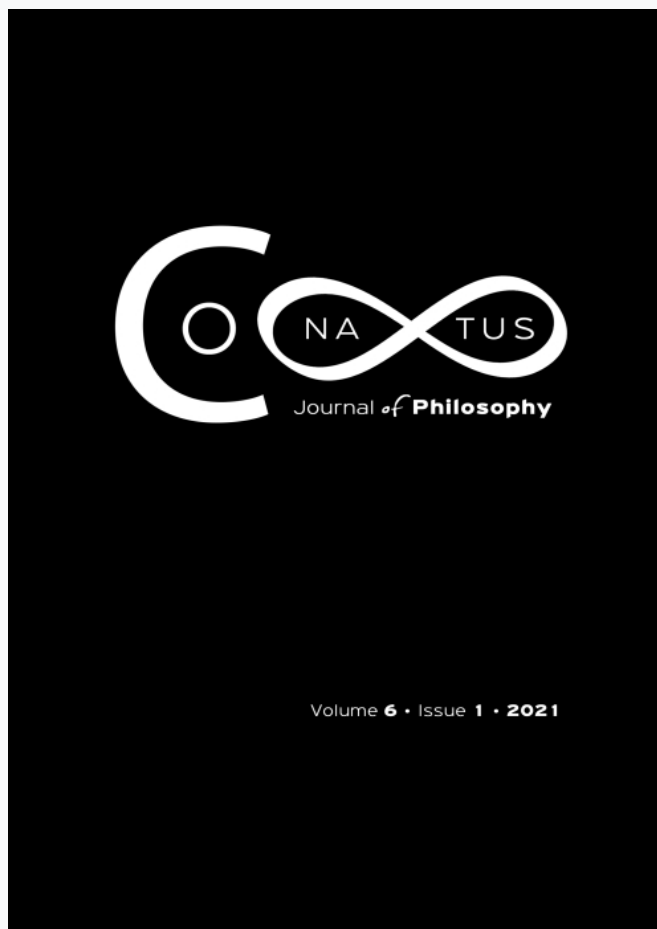


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# Proposing a Frame of Ethical Principles for Educational Evaluation in Modern Greece

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### Abstract

*In a country with a long philosophical tradition like Greece, the lack of Ethical Principles for educational evaluation is surprising. This article presents the reasons for such a gap within the general theoretical framework for educational evaluation, combined with major schools of thought on Ethics. The authors discuss the importance for educational evaluation and assessment and take a critical view of present ethical frames. They proceed to fill the gap by coming up with a list of twenty-seven Ethical Principles, the result of the varying consensus of sixteen Greek assessment experts, upon the researcher's initial proposals. The Delphi Method, that was employed to formulate the list, is described and the first complete Ethical frame of educational evaluation for modern Greece is proposed.*

**Keywords:** *ethical; moral; deontology; educational assessment; evaluation; principles*

## I. Introduction

In the age of “ethical otinanism,” a Greek neologism used to describe the fact that moral and immoral, right and wrong, good and bad are frequently referred to as equivalent, in Greece we are still trying to apply a frame of educational assessment that will meet with all the current scientific standards of evaluation. Unfortunately, most of the efforts seem to overlook that such a project should also include a stable and clear ethical frame. According to Newman and Brown,<sup>1</sup> there are five gradient levels of Ethics concerning

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<sup>1</sup> Dianna Newman, and Robert Brown, *Applied Ethics for Program Evaluation* (London: Thousand

evaluation: Rules, Codes, Standards, Principles and Theories. Apparently, one can simply choose the appropriate ethical level for one's purpose and to put it into practice to secure that a process is ethical. In reality, things seem to be much more complicated. Each country has its own way of solving moral issues about educational assessment. Some, like Greece, prefer simple but clear Rules in order to eliminate morally inappropriate behavior, especially during crucial exams for the assessed. Some other countries tackle the issue by setting up elaborate Codes of Ethics and Ethical Standards that bind everyone involved, notably the professionals. Very few countries, though, solve their problems using Ethical Principles, and even fewer bother to reveal or discover in which way all the above are connected or founded in Ethical Theories.

Relevant literature offers several reasons for this differentiation. First of all, the assertion that there are different levels of ethical behavior presupposes a semantic unanimity concerning words like "moral," "ethical" and "deontology." Unfortunately, this is not the case. In Greece, the word "ethical" represents a notion beyond the science of Ethics, or the quality of a person's character or even one's tendency or decision to act in the right way according to the values of each society.<sup>2</sup> Centuries of philosophical teachings, like Plato's and Aristotle's, and the exemplar of the Eastern Orthodox Church, have shaped the word "ethical" as experienced virtue as well.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, words like "moral," and "morality" focus rather on the duties and the rights of each person, setting the appropriate limits to prevent harmful behavior,<sup>4</sup> thus acquiring a meaning nearer to "deontology"<sup>5</sup> which is used in Greek as a synonym to "Code of Ethics." Furthermore, the word "moral" per se does not exist in Greek, with the exception of words like "amoralism." The Greek word for "moral" is "ēthiko," not to be confused with "ethical" in English, which refers to ethics and morality. Consequently, one might expect, or even claim, that the linguistic wealth of the Greek vocabulary and tradition provides clear ethical directions towards any action for individuals in this country – educational assessment included. This is both arbitrary and misleading. Polysemy creates more problems than the ones it solves, because it must fit the "ethical culture" of each county, each social group or even each person. It is erroneous to consider Greek Ethical tradition superior to the rest of the moral culture in the western world, as it is a falsehood to think that

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Oaks, CA:Sage, 1996), 21-23.

<sup>2</sup> Georgios Babiniotis, *Dictionary of Modern Greek* (Athens: Lexicology Center, 1998), 727; Peter Singer, "Ethics." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethics-philosophy>.

<sup>3</sup> Perry T. Hamalis, "Eastern Orthodox Ethics," *International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Keniston, "Morals and Ethics," *The American Scholar* 34, no. 4 (1965): 628.

<sup>5</sup> Babiniotis, 727.

there is consensus in Greece about what is moral. Any evaluator or evaluated person in Greece has more than one ethical paths to follow and may still fit the “ultimate good person,” who freely chooses the right thing to do: one may adopt the Aristotelian middle point between two extreme options, as described in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, or follow the much more austere and pious Pythagorean way.<sup>6</sup> One can even reach the same goal by adopting a paradigm from contemporary western philosophy, like the Bergsonian “Open morality,” which goes for free and simultaneously exceptional persons.<sup>7</sup> Ethical culture is an additional factor for the aforementioned differentiation, because it influences the way ethical issues about educational evaluation are solved, not only between countries, but also within them.

As a result, the question that arises is on which foundations should a country’s educational evaluation be built on (in this case, Greece) and what difference will it create for the evaluators, or the persons evaluated. These questions can be addressed if we keep in mind that assessment is not a theoretical process, like any other discussion on ethical issues. Instead, it is a purposive moral action with consequences on people’s lives, such as academic, professional, social, and psychological. Some may believe in improvement through chastisement, revealing a juridical, forensic moral perception that has its roots in the Western Church. Others may prefer an evaluator who tries to “heal” their weaknesses, treating them like patients, in accordance with Greek Orthodox Church.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the problem remains. No one can foretell for sure which moral approach best suits everyone who is evaluated. If one’s personal moral system determines the way one copes with educational assessment, then we need many different ethical codes, customized on different individuals; a tremendously difficult, if not totally impossible task.

In view of such a differentiation on a national and individual level, is there any point in discussing about ethics in educational evaluation? If we pretend that morality does not matter on this subject, then we have to be ready as civilized societies to bear the consequences. The first consequence is the legitimizing of unfair practices. The second consequence is the possibility of killing education through assessment.<sup>9</sup> Instead of serving education,

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<sup>6</sup> Irini-Fotini Viltanioti, “Porphyry’s Letter to Marcella: A Literary Attack on Christian Appropriation of (Neo-) Pythagorean Moral Wisdom?” in *Pythagorean Knowledge from the Ancient to the Modern World: Askesis, Religion, Science*, eds. Almut-Barbara Renger, and Alessandro Stavru (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016), 168.

<sup>7</sup> Jozef Maria Bochenski, *Europäische Philosophie der Gegenwart*, trans. Christos Malevitsis (Athens: Dodoni Publications, 1985), 148.

<sup>8</sup> John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 176, 195-196, 215, 226.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Pring, *The Life and Death of Secondary Education for All* (New York: Routledge,

evaluation can be used distortively to impede on any one of education’s goals: personal and social enhancement, critical thinking, or creativity, to name but a few. The third consequence, which we can call “the evaluative paradox,”<sup>10</sup> is that a system does not ultimately practice what it preaches, because it is not ethically reliable. Kaptein has articulated four prerequisites of a reliable system: legitimacy, honesty, meticulousness, and justice.<sup>11</sup> Some people and some societies may not truly embrace educational evaluation and propositions for its reliability, but they acknowledge its necessity for society per se and therefore demand an ethical way of practicing it.

The last reason for the differentiation between countries in how they deal with moral issues in educational assessment has to do with the phenomenon of the evaluation per se, with its graduations, its fields, and its pivots [Table 1]. In other words, it is the differentiation in morality of each country that leads to different solutions, but it is also the variety of educational evaluative issues that seek a convincing answer within the range of all moral scope.

Table 1. Levels and ways of Correlation between Ethics and Educational Evaluation

<b>Graduations of Ethics in Educational Assessment</b>	<b>Fields of application of Educational Evaluation</b>	<b>Ethical pivots of Educational Assessment</b>
<i>Ethical Rules</i>	<i>Assessment of students</i>	<i>Evaluator</i> <i>Evaluation</i> <i>Evaluated</i>
<i>Codes of deontology</i>	<i>Assessment of educational personnel and Institutions</i>	
<i>Ethical Standards of Educational Evaluation</i>		
<i>Ethical Principles</i>	<i>Program Evaluation and Evaluation of educational Systems - Policies</i>	
<i>Ethical Theories</i>		

The simplest and most common way of controlling unfair practices in educational evaluation are the Ethical Rules. Both in Greek and non-Greek literature as reflected in the works of Gipps, Dimitropoulos, Konstantinou, Kassotakis, and Kapsalis and Chaniotakis,<sup>12</sup> there are numerous Rules

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2013), 124-136.

<sup>10</sup> The paradox is that even if the moral and merit person thrives in meritocracy, the same person can be easily elbowed by an immoral person in a corrupt system.

<sup>11</sup> Muel Kaptein, *Ethics Management: Auditing and Developing the Ethical Content of Organizations* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 7, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Efstathios Dimitropoulos, *Educational Evaluation: The Evaluation of Education and the Educational Project. Part I.* (Athens: Grigoris Publications, 2007); Caroline Gipps, *Beyond*

which cover all three pivots of educational assessment: the evaluators, the evaluated and the evaluation per se. In most cases rules are simple ordains that can be set by anyone: a teacher, a school, a parent or even the student, the government, or an educational institution. Their nature is practical, their tone is directional focusing on the do's and the don'ts of each particular situation, and their main disadvantages are their multitude and contradictions. Nevertheless, scholars are unanimous on one point: assessment must fulfill certain scientific standards, like validity, reliability, objectivity and utility, and everybody involved must act accordingly to meet this goal. If an action is seen as a threat to these criteria, then a Rule can be formulated and applied.

Codes of Ethics represent a more systematic effort of dealing with ethical issues in educational evaluation. In Greece there is no official Code. Instead, there are Oaths<sup>13</sup> of high ethical commitment but low specificity, and a proposal of Ethical Code for the evaluation of the students by the Assessment guru in Greece, Michalis Kassotakis.<sup>14</sup> Internationally, although sometimes Codes and Standards are considered the same thing,<sup>15</sup> there are many Associations, Committees and Councils which have set their Codes of Ethics, or have collaborated in order to compose one, concerning different aspects of educational Evaluation (measurement, testing etc.).<sup>16</sup> In any case, Codes provide us with a frame of the appropriate evaluative behavior, that is much more than a collection of ethical rules, and can be official or unofficial, local, national or both.<sup>17</sup> The contribution of the Codes of Ethics<sup>18</sup> in educational assessment is that a) they make clear that educational assessment entails all the steps, from designing an assessment to the announcement of the results, b) they bind most the evaluators, c) they focus on the scientific training and qualification of the evaluators, so that discriminations of any

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*Testing: Towards a Theory of Educational Assessment* (London, Washington: The Farmer Press, 2003); Achilleas Kapsalis, and Nikos Chaniotakis, *Educational Evaluation* (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis Bros - Publications SA, 2015); Michalis Kassotakis, *Assessing Student Performance* (Athens: Grigoris Publications, 2013); Charalampos Konstantinou, *The Evaluation of Student Performance as Pedagogical Logic and School Practice* (Athens: Gutenberg, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> The foundation of professional ethics is considered to be the Oath of Hippocrates.

<sup>14</sup> Kassotakis, *Assessing Student Performance*, 57-60.

<sup>15</sup> Newman and Brown, *Applied Ethics*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Helen Simons, "Ethics in Evaluation," in *Handbook of Evaluation, Policies, Programs and Practices*, eds. Ian Shaw, Jennifer Greene, and Melvin Mark (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 247.

<sup>17</sup> Cynthia Schmeiser, "Ethics in Assessment," *EDO-CG-95-23, ERIC Digest* (USA, 1995), <https://www.counseling.org/resources/library/ERIC%20Digests/95-23.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Two typical examples are the Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement, 1995, by National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME), and the Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education, 2004, by the Joint Committee of Testing Practices.

kind or biases are minimized, scientific protocols are observed, subjectivity is eliminated, and the rights of the evaluated are protected and guaranteed.

Standards of Educational Evaluation include both ethical and practical specifications laid down by organizations,<sup>19</sup> revealing their interest and commitment in the proper implementation of educational assessment. Ethical Standards cover all the fields and all the pivots of the educational assessment. They are easily revised, adjusted according to current demands, or combined with Ethical Rules, Codes or Principles. In spite of the fact that they are very detailed, their most fundamental truth is that in order for an evaluation to be ethical, it must respect scientific knowledge, legislation and the human rights of all the involved parties, including both evaluators and evaluated. Among the deficiencies of Standards is the lack of internal hierarchy that would showcase the most important ones. Furthermore, their adoption or rejection is a matter of personal choice and personal ethics. In addition, in order to ensure their independence, Standards are quite costly for independent evaluators. This has raised questions among some whether their true beneficiaries are the evaluators and the evaluated or, as Lyons and Hall<sup>20</sup> claim, those who “shell” the tests. There is one more issue that complicates matters; Ethical Standards do not always seem to be really ethical. In some cases, the actual word is missing or deliberately effaced. Greece lacks Ethical Standards. The simple act of translating Standards designed for other educational systems demands adaptation to Greek realities, which is a quite complicated procedure.

Subsequently, a new question arises: since there are so many Ethical Rules, Codes, Standards, why do we need Ethical Principles for educational assessment? Perhaps the answer lies in the lack of consensus that calls for an overarching ethical framework to ensure the capacity to make judgments about ethical assessment practices,<sup>21</sup> or the fact that the boundaries between those terms are not always clear-cut. Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada,<sup>22</sup> for instance, are meticulously detailed. They do not have the generalized character or simplicity of such canons as:

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<sup>19</sup> Schmeiser.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Lyons, and Erika Hall, “The Role of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing in Establishing a Methodology to Support the Evaluation of Assessment Quality,” *Center for Assessment*. 2016, 1, accessed July 25, 2017, [https://www.nciea.org/sites/default/files/publications/Standards\\_in\\_Assessment\\_Quality\\_Eval\\_042016.pdf](https://www.nciea.org/sites/default/files/publications/Standards_in_Assessment_Quality_Eval_042016.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Susan Green, Robert Johnson, Do-Hong Kim, and Nakia Pope, “Ethics in Classroom Assessment Practices: Issues and Attitudes,” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 23 (2007):1000.

<sup>22</sup> *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada*, Edmonton, Alberta: Joint Advisory Committee (1993), <https://www.wcdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2017/03/fairstudent.pdf>.

“Do no harm,” “Avoid score Pollution,” “Assess As You Would Be Assessed.”<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, they include specific descriptions of behaviors that should be avoided.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, we may perhaps articulate the substance of evaluation as: “all equal, all different in educational assessment.” This phrase serves as differentiator between Ethical Principles and all the other ethical graduations of educational assessment.

Ethical Principles should be specialized in individual ethical propositions and, vice versa, ethical propositions should be able to produce generally formulated, comprehensive and simple Ethical Principles.<sup>25</sup> This seems to be the best way to avoid strong contradictions between the above ethical propositions. If, for instance, we try to condense all the ethical propositions that focus on the priority of protecting the evaluators, then not only can we have a new Ethical Principle, “evaluator comes first,” but we can also place it at the top of all evaluative principles. Nevertheless, the possibility of seeking Ethical Principles only in simple declarations might prove misleading. Sometimes, they might have the format of Standards<sup>26</sup> or Rules. Other times, they may lurk in the purpose of a research, like Kunnan’s search<sup>27</sup> for fairness and validation, or in the expression of a scientific opinion like the one expressed by Gipps: “The greater the consequences of test use, the more important it is to be concerned about issues of validity and fairness in relation to test use.”<sup>28</sup> There are cases where the Principles emerge from “dead ends.” In order to overcome conflicting phenomena between Principles or other ethical issues, American Evaluation Association encourages evaluators to consult with colleagues on how to best identify and address them, because they deem Evaluators responsible “for undertaking professional development to learn to engage in sound ethical reasoning.” But who is the one to judge or to define which ethical perspective is “sound?” There is always the possibility,

<sup>23</sup> Green et al., “Ethics in Classroom Assessment,” 1000-1001.

<sup>24</sup> “Assessment methods should be bias-free from factors extraneous to the purpose of the assessment. Such factors include culture, developmental stage, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background, language, special interests, and special needs... All students should be given the same opportunity to display their strengths.” *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada*, 5-6.

<sup>25</sup> Masoomah Estaji, “Ethics and Validity Stance in Educational Assessment,” *English Language and Literature Studies* 1, no. 2 (2011): 91-92, according to whom principles provide professionals with guidance upon which they can make choices.

<sup>26</sup> See American Evaluation Association, “Guiding Principles for Evaluators,” last modified August 2018, <https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>.

<sup>27</sup> Antony John Kunnan, *Fairness and Validation in Language Assessment: Selected Papers From the 19<sup>th</sup> Language Testing Research Colloquium, Orlando, Florida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3-5.

<sup>28</sup> Gipps, *Beyond Testing*, 57.



one's personal ethics to be much more "sound" than the directions given by the Principles of an Association. If, for instance, somebody has "diakrisis,"<sup>29</sup> which means the charisma of judging correctly and fairly, knowing always how to treat people and how to handle truth according to uniqueness and the endurance of each person, a virtue which is considered by the Greek Orthodox Tradition as the peak of all virtues, what is the need of any other Ethical Principle? Of course, someone may claim, that "diakrisis" could have been an Ethical Principle per se, but unfortunately there is no bibliographical precedent and no way to guarantee that an evaluator possesses it. So, the Principle of personal responsibility and collaboration between evaluator should be considered to remind us that it is each person's ethical quality that determines the ethical quality of every evaluative action. Finally, some Principles are reflected in simple words that express virtues, personality characteristics, human values or rights. Newman and Brown<sup>30</sup> use such comprehensive words: Autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, and fidelity. In the Greek literature, Dimitropoulos<sup>31</sup> sets three main Ethical Principles: a) Educational Evaluation must be holistic, must include all parts and not be fragmentary; b) differentiation according to the purposes and c) bidirectionality (those who evaluate must also be evaluated themselves). However, this last Principle may contradict the demand for specialization among evaluators. Teachers, being the experts, may evaluate students, but is it possible for students to do so for their teachers? Such difficulties instruct us that an overarching Ethical Principle of Everything in Evaluation seems, at least for now, as far-fetched as The Theory of Everything, due to the subjective nature and the inherent imperfections of assessment. Nevertheless, Principles can not only cover all the fields and the pivots of assessment offering useful ethical guidance in contradictions, dilemmas, and conflicts, but they can also be used with no clear Ethical Theory backup. Moreover, they are the "bridge" between the Theories and all the rest of the ethical graduations because they can both specialize or summarize them. Finally, they are not attached to financial interests, because, as statements of general value, they are not subject to copyright or other restrictions. After all, it only takes a word, e.g., integrity, to compose them or a lot of personal effort to collect them, unless a researcher gathers them for the sake of the rest.

Ethical theories are based mostly on the views of eminent Christian and secular philosophers through the centuries, who have tackled a variety of

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<sup>29</sup> Daniel Coriu, "The Path from the Natural to the Spiritual Diakrisis Through Askesis in the Views of St. Apostle Paul and Elder Joseph the Hesychast," *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 9, no. 4 (2018): 152-175.

<sup>30</sup> Newman and Brown, *Applied Ethics*, 37-54.

<sup>31</sup> Dimitropoulos, *Educational Evaluation*, 349-351.

issues but not the one about educational assessment. Therefore, it is our task to interpret or to translate their thinking so that it fits both our school and the challenges of current evaluation. Even so, there is always the danger of arbitrary interpretations, conclusions or moral misdirections. Still, Ethical Theories can provide a completely new way of dealing with ethical matters by revealing perspectives that can help us understand evaluation clearer and deeper.

*Hedonism*<sup>32</sup> (Aristippus of Cyrene, Epicurus), for instance, could be used as a justification to eliminate educational evaluation altogether or to be indifferent to it, on the grounds that the beneficial results of assessment are, most of the times, long-term or ultimate, demanding the sacrifice of immediate pleasure which must be considered morally superior. Yet, such an interpretation sets aside epicurean “phronesis.” In other words, it is a partial view of Hedonism that neglects other equally important aspects of this school of thought. Objections of this kind can always be raised for all Ethical Theories, but the fact that each one of these Theories provides a different ethical background for educational assessment has its value.

The *Theory of Instinct*<sup>33</sup> (Sophists, Protagoras, Hobbes) stands as a justification not only for educational evaluation, but also for the competitive spirit it entails, since it emphasizes long-term earnings and takes into account personal interest.

The *Theory of Categorical Imperative*<sup>34</sup> (Kant) reminds us the importance of “knowledge,” namely the improvement of evaluative methods and techniques. Apart from that, a very strict and rigid educational assessment can be as acceptable as its abolition, as long as each version can be proved reasonable and consistent with Kant’s Principle of Universalizability.

*Utilitarianism*<sup>35</sup> (Bentham, Mill, Aristotle) may consider educational evaluation to be the guarantee for meritocracy, a state conducive to general happiness. Yet, there are pitfalls in the theory. It is unclear how assessment can be a source of happiness for those who fail due to

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<sup>32</sup> Kurt Lampe, *The Birth of Hedonism: The Cyrenaic Philosophers and Pleasure as a Way of Life* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015); Norman Wentworth DeWitt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1954).

<sup>33</sup> Richard Bett, “The Sophists and Relativism” *Phronesis* 34, no. 2 (1989): 139-69; Howard Warrender, “Hobbes’s Conception of Morality,” *Rivista Critica Di Storia Della Filosofia* 17, no. 4 (1962): 434-449.

<sup>34</sup> Allen W Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, “Mill between Aristotle & Bentham,” *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (2004): 60-68.

reasons irrelevant to their “value,” or whether happiness is a matter of quantity or quality. In other words, utilitarianism finds acceptable and sufficient to conduct an evaluation which is beneficial for majority of population, even if it is very harmful for the minority of it.

*Intuitionism*<sup>36</sup> (Moore, Shaftesbury, Ross) seems too vague to provide any ethical direction to the way educational assessment is implemented. Yet, each of its philosophers supports an idea that can be useful and enlightening for the science of evaluation. Moore, for instance, focuses on the intuitive awareness of goodness. Ross talks about moral “duties,” and Shaftesbury develops the idea of moral sense. It is up to us to combine their beliefs in order to create an educational evaluative system that reaches its ethical peak, bearing in mind that intuition might be a matter of talent – and, as a consequence, an act that can be deemed “moral” only by some “authorities” – or a matter of education and ethical standards of the social milieu.

*Emotivism*,<sup>37</sup> (Ayer, Stevenson, Hare) as a meta-ethical theory, can be interpreted in a way that totally justifies educational assessment or in a way that does not justify it at all. After all, assessment seems to have at least one thing in common with ethics. Both can be considered as expressions of approval or disapproval, which might influence other people’s views. Nevertheless, there is always the possibility for somebody to theoretically embrace an ethical principle but fail to act accordingly. So, any attempt to use “universalizability” as a solution to the failings of ethics or evaluation, may not have the desired results.

Ethical Theories present all the different perspectives of ethical thinking and action. Their contribution to our struggle for a more ethical educational evaluation is that they provide ethical principles, directions, rules, conclusions, or even doubts, questions and objections. All the above not only help us understand the difficulty of reaching our almost utopian goal (or pretending to have achieved it), but also help us realize how important it is to respect and combine different ethical backgrounds or cultures.

In conclusion, in Greece we lack a scientific ethical frame of educational assessment that meets the challenges of all evaluation’s Fields (students, personnel, institutions, policies) and Pivots (Evaluator, Evaluated, Evaluation per se). Among the Graduation of Ethics in Educational Assessment, only Ethical Principles seem suitable to fill the gap, because of their quality to

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); William Donald Hudson, *Ethical Intuitionism* (London: Macmillan, 1967); Philip Stratton-Lake, ed., *Ethical Intuitionism: Re-Evaluations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Satris, *Ethical Emotivism* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987).

“generalize” or “specialize” all the rest of the Graduations and, consequently, to cover all aspects of assessment. This research focuses on composing and setting such Ethical Principles, hoping that this may contribute crucially to a more ethical exercise of evaluation in contemporary Greece.

## II. Methods and Research

In order for *Ethical Principles* to be composed, the *Delphi Method*, has been used. This research method can be considered a mixed one, a quantitative or a qualitative.<sup>38</sup> Although the *Delphi Method* has a long history, especially in the USA, where it appeared during the 1950s<sup>39</sup> inspired by the Oracle of Delphi in ancient Greece, it is not a very common method in Greece in general, and in educational research in particular. Nevertheless, it seems to be the perfect choice for research like the present author, because of its variations. In some cases, the main goal of *Delphi* may be to speculate what is likely to happen in the future, namely the possible, and in other cases to formulate what we hope will happen, namely the optative.<sup>40</sup> In addition, it is considered suitable for issues of ethical business that include ethical dilemmas and ask for consensus.<sup>41</sup>

The most crucial in the *Delphi Method* is the “experts,” who are meant to play the role of Pythia. These experts must be truly authorities in their fields. Their heterogeneity and anonymity are also of high importance if we are to guarantee that the most eminent ones will not unwillingly impose their views and that people with different characteristics and opinions will express them equally.<sup>42</sup> As for the number of the experts,<sup>43</sup> in most cases it ranges from ten

<sup>38</sup> Dia Sekayi, and Arleen Kennedy, “Qualitative Delphi Method: A Four Round Process with a Worked Example,” *The Qualitative Report* 22, no. 10 (2017): 2755.

<sup>39</sup> Harold A. Linstone, and Murray Turoff, “Introduction,” in *The Delphi Method, Techniques and Applications*, eds. Harold A. Linstone, and Murray Turoff (2002), 10.

<sup>40</sup> Muhammad Imran Yousuf, “Using Experts’ Opinions Through Delphi Technique,” *Practical Assessment Research & Evaluation* 12, no. 4 (2007): 2.

<sup>41</sup> Leire San-Jose, and José Retolaza, “Is the Delphi Method Valid for Business Ethics? A Survey Analysis,” *European Journal of Futures Research* 4, no. 19 (2016): 1, 12.

<sup>42</sup> Megan Grime, and George Wright, “Delphi Method,” in *Wiley StatsRef: Statistics Reference Online*, ed. Paolo Brandimarte, Brian Everitt, Geert Molenberghs, Walter Piegorsch, and Fabrizio Ruggeri (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2016), 2, 3; Chia-Chien Hsu, and Brian A. Sandford, “The Delphi Technique: Making Sense of Consensus,” *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 12, no. 10 (2007): 2; Linstone and Turoff, “Introduction,” 65; San-Jose, and Retolaza, “Is the Delphi Method Valid,” 3, 5; Yousuf, “Using Experts,” 1, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Mohammed Alyami, *Modification and Adaptation of the Program Evaluation Standards in Saudi Arabia* (PhD diss., Western Michigan University, 2013), 43: 10-20 experts; Grime, Wright, “Delphi Method,” 2: 5-20 experts at the most; San-Jose, and Retolaza, “Is the Delphi Method Valid,” 6, 7; 10-20 experts; Sekayi, and Kennedy, “Qualitative Delphi Method,” 2757: 20-30 experts; Grime, and Wright, “Delphi Method,” 2: 5-20 experts at the most.

to thirty persons. In our case, the Greek experts of educational assessment who were invited to participate were nineteen. All of them had at least a Master’s degree in educational evaluation. The number of the experts who responded was sixteen. Nine of them were men and seven were women. Seven of the experts were teaching at a University (44%), three held a PhD, three were PhD candidates, and six had a relevant Master’s degree. Nine of the experts, were also members of the Greek Society of Educational Evaluation (GSEE). Only one of the experts had also a scientific specialization in the field of Ethics.

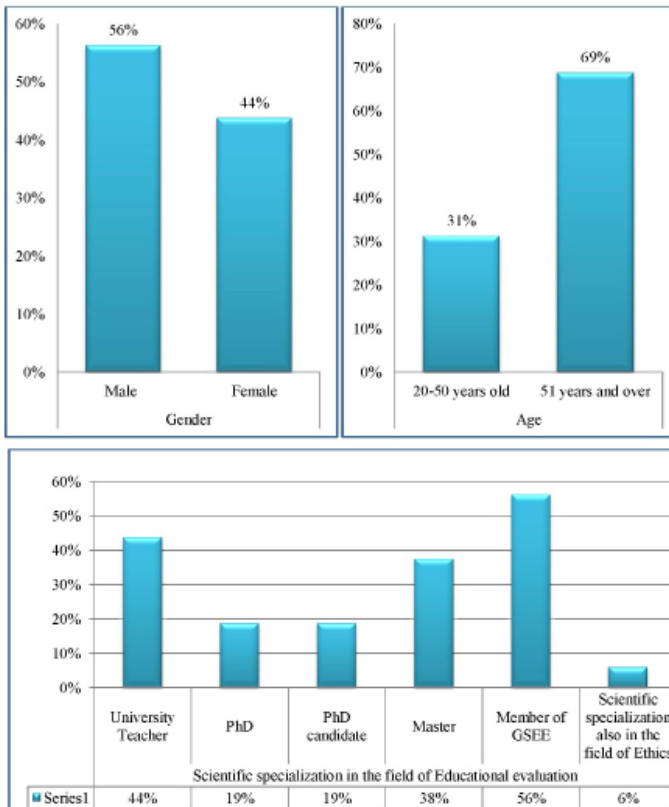


Figure 1. The panel of the Experts

In order to ensure even more the sample’s heterogeneity, the first part of the given questionnaire included nine Likert Scale questions and one of multiple choice about ethical issues of educational assessment. All the experts agreed that *“Assessment as an action has great ethical importance.”* Most of them agreed that *“The ethical quality of the evaluators and the evaluated has determining role in educational evaluation.”* The experts seemed

to disagree on the following sentence: *“Scientific progress on techniques and tests of educational evaluation is sufficient to eliminate phenomena of ethical diversion.”* Nine experts disagreed, three expressed neutrality, and four agreed. All but one disagreed on *“The use of unfair means by the evaluated, as a counterpoint for unfair evaluation.”* Six experts agreed on the assertion that *“Assessment of learning, assessment for learning, improvement, accountability or excellence is ethically equivalent.”* Among those who disagreed, there were five who believed that assessment for improvement is morally superior, three considered assessments for learning to be superior, one (assessment for effectiveness and one restated the initial item, claiming that morally superior is assessment “as and for learning.” Twelve experts agreed that *“In Greece, there are ethical as well as unethical conducts concerning educational evaluation.”* Two of the experts disagreed, and the rest two didn’t express agreement or disagreement. The next sentence divided the experts. Eight out of sixteen believed that *“The evaluated who fails, should endure the consequences of his actions instead of being treated with clemency,”* whereas five believed the opposite and three avoided expressing any opinion. Eleven experts agreed that *“Assessment as an action reflects the ethical level of its society.”* Only one disagreed, and five kept a neutral stance. Six experts believed that *“It is very difficult for assessment to work ethically and with meritocracy in a society of ethical crisis, no matter the number of the implemented ethical valves.”* Seven disagreed and three neither did they agreed, nor they disagreed. Finally, experts thought that *“To be ethical as an evaluator or an evaluated is equivalent...”* *“chiefly to follow ethical standards, then to be ethical himself and final to be lawful,”* (four experts,), *“chiefly to be ethical himself, then to follow ethical standards and finally to be lawful,”* (five experts, and *“to all the above equally”* (seven experts) [see Figure 2 on the next page].

The process<sup>44</sup> of the *Delphi Method* is quite simple and includes a series of rounds, each one of which aims for the highest consensus among the panel experts. At first, a questionnaire is created based on the opinions of the experts on the given issue. Sometimes, like in this case, the questionnaire is created by the researcher himself. Unfortunately, the combination of specialization on both fields, Educational Assessment and Ethics, is very rare in Greece. Consequently, the initial sentences could have been proven scientifically weak, superficial or arbitrary, unless grounded in sound theoretical knowledge, a task that I undertook for my inquiry. Nevertheless, it is very hard to distinguish between the Principles which are my own creation, like the *“The Principle of the Inverted Pyramid,”* and those which are based on previously existing Principles, because in both cases the fermentation of ideas, proposals and beliefs was

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<sup>44</sup> Alyami, “Modification and Adaptation,” 43-44; Grime, and Wright, “Delphi Method,” 3; Hsu, and Sandford, “The Delphi Technique,” 2-3; Yousuf, “Using Experts,” 2.

deep and continuous. Then, the experts are asked to express their agreement or disagreement, to rephrase or to make any other corrections on each item of the questionnaire. The items of high consensus – the higher, the better – are considered to have accomplished their goal and they are not subject to

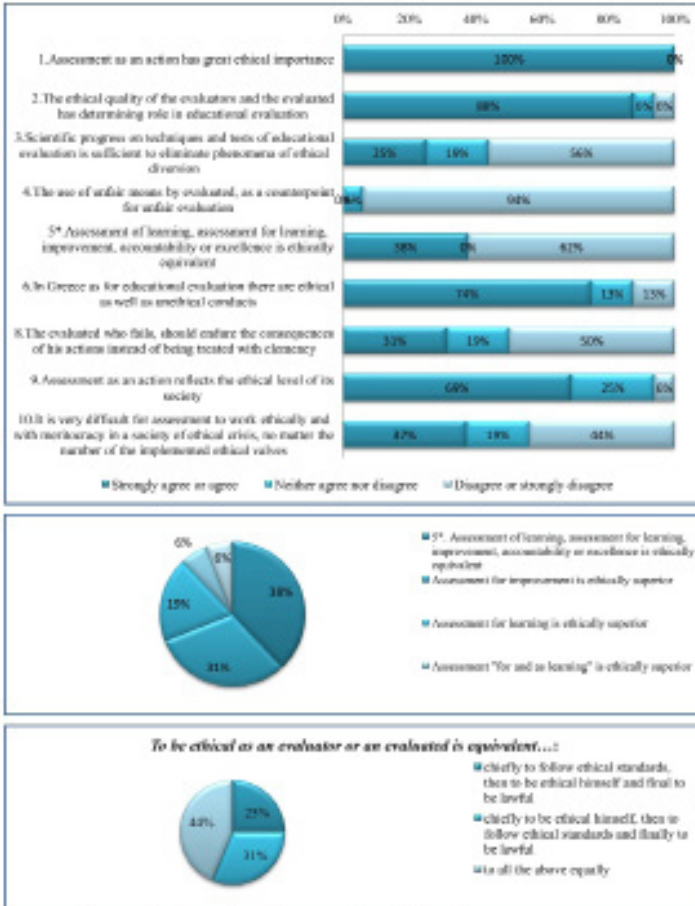


Figure 2. The heterogeneity of the experts through their opinions

further processing. The rest are rephrased according to the feedback of the experts and sent back to them for two or three times, until they score high or at least higher consensus. If they fail to gain consensus, they are recorded separately from the results of the research. The duration of all this process is about 30 to 45 days. In our case, it lasted 32 days.<sup>45</sup> At first, on the first round, a questionnaire of 25 Ethical Principles was given to eleven experts in printed form, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Scientific Conference of the Greek Society of

<sup>45</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> of May-12<sup>th</sup> of June 2018.

Educational Evaluation (11th-13th May, 2018), and an electronic version was sent to eight experts through email. The experts were asked to express their agreement or disagreement on each *Ethical Principle* or to rephrase them. The printed form was answered on the spot by all experts. The electronic form was answered by five experts. Twenty two *Ethical Principles* reached a high consensus, above 75%. A new *Ethical Principle* was proposed, and four *Ethical Principles* were restated according to the corrections of the experts. So, on the second round five new or restated *Principles* were sent, in electronic form through email. Finally, due to the high consensus on the first round and to the significant decrease of the participants on the second round<sup>46</sup> there was no need for a third round.

In the *Delphi Method*, a researcher aims for *consensus*,<sup>47</sup> unanimity of opinions. Nevertheless, a percentage of 70 to 80 is considered sufficient by most researchers, especially if the proportion increases from one round to the next. In our case, eleven *Ethical Principles* reached absolute consensus, seven very high (94%), one 88%, two 81%, two 75%, one 73% and one 31% from the first round. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> round, where the participation was lower – only ten experts participated – two *Principles* reached consensus of 100%, one 90%, one 80% and one 70%.

Taking into consideration all the above, it is quite obvious that it takes a lot of effort in the *Delphi Method* to have *results* that are something more than just opinions. In other words, it is researcher's integrity and determination to stick to the process and to apply the protocol of this technique, it is the willingness to choose the right persons, to let them express themselves freely and to respect their point of view, and, finally, it is one's devotion to serve his goal through the creation of a collective judgment that can guarantee that those *results* are not only valid and reliable but that they can also go beyond subjective beliefs and, therefore, be widely accepted. All the following *Results*, namely the *Ethical Principles*, should be regarded in this perspective.

### III. Results

*The Ethical Principles*<sup>48</sup> of *Educational Evaluation* that came up as a result of

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<sup>46</sup> On the second round ten experts participated instead of the initial sixteen. This perhaps reveals lack of scientific culture in Greece or loose commitment among the experts to the terms of participation in the Delphi Method, a problem that some researchers overcome through the remuneration of experts. The main reason for not choosing such a solution is the possible negative effect on experts expressing freely their opinions.

<sup>47</sup> Hsu, and Sandford, "The Delphi Technique;" Linstone, and Turoff, "Introduction," 22; Sekayi, and Kennedy, "Qualitative Delphi method," 2756. Alyami, "Modification and Adaptation," 48-49, sets 70% as a minimum consensus rate.

<sup>48</sup> In order to avoid misinterpretations, I have followed the form of Evaluation Standards. Each



the research are<sup>49</sup>:

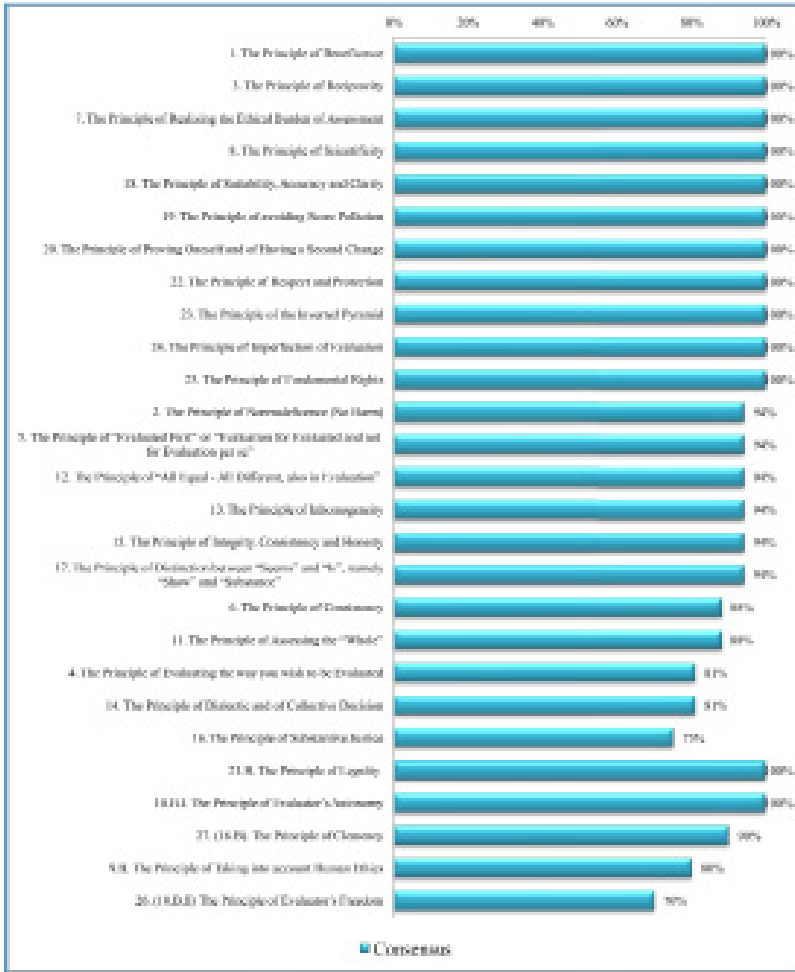


Figure 3. Percentage of Consensus to the given Ethical Principles

a. Principles of 100% of consensus, on the 1<sup>st</sup> round.

1. *The Principle of Beneficence.* Educational evaluation should benefit

*Ethical Principle* that was included in the questionnaire given to the experts was accompanied by an explanatory sentence.

<sup>49</sup> The Principles are listed according to the degree of consensus, namely from the highest of the 1<sup>st</sup> round, to the lowest. The number on the front corresponds to the number of the Principle on the questionnaire of the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 2<sup>nd</sup> round. The letter "A" or "B" also refers to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> round where necessary.

the greatest possible number of people, including the evaluated.

3. *The Principle of Reciprocity.* Those who evaluate should also be evaluated generally and especially on the way they evaluate.

7. *The Principle of Realizing the Ethical Burden of Assessment.* The greater the consequences of an evaluation, the greater the necessity for the involved parts to practice it ethically without deviations or discounts.

8. *The Principle of Scientificity.* Evaluation should fulfill the requirements of validity, reliability, objectivity, discrimination, and practicality, and to be exercised by evaluators who truly have the necessary training and knowledge.

18. *The Principle of Suitability, Accuracy and Clarity.* Assessment, in all its stages (from the initial briefing to the announcement of the results), should be suitable, and its phrasing should be accurate and fully comprehensible by all stakeholders, in order for the results to be applicable and not to mislead or trap the evaluated, their parents or deliberately some of the involved persons.

19. *The Principle of avoiding Score Pollution.* Every effort must be made in order to eliminate factors irrelevant to the evaluation that may alter its results, e.g. personal relationships between the evaluator and the evaluated. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we are allowed to disregard other factors that should be taken into consideration, e.g. the temporary or irreversible impact of a disease on somebody's (student or teacher) performance.

20. *The Principle of Proving Oneself and of Having a Second Chance.* The student should be given the chance to prove that they possess the evaluated knowledge or skills, or that they have adopted the expected attitudes and behaviors. Alongside, prediction must be made for a second chance as a counterbalance for emergencies that may alter the student's image, and as a proof of improvement after the initial evaluation and the following feedback.

22. *The Principle of Respect and Protection.* The evaluated should be treated with respect. Moreover, evaluation should incorporate safety valves that will protect all parties involved and offer the chance of objection and appeal in cases of feeling wronged or offended. Finally, the evaluated should under no circumstances be treated as guinea pigs.

23. *The Principle of the Inverted Pyramid.* Those at the base of the pyramid who bear the weight of evaluations should not pay the price of the failures of those above them in the pyramid who evaluate them.

For instance, students should not “pay” through their evaluation for the incapability of their teachers, and teachers should not pay the price for deficiencies in logistics infrastructure.

24. *The Principle of Imperfection of Evaluation.* Evaluation is subject to the unavoidable errors, subjectivities, and deficiencies of the evaluators, which should be identified, recognized and taken into account, instead of being concealed, covered up or ignored.

25. *The Principle of Fundamental Rights.* Assessment should be consistent with the globally established and recognized human and child rights, the Constitution of its country, to respect their privacy, to be impartial and to assure that there will not be deception, physical, emotional, or psychological abuse or manipulation of the evaluated etc.

b. Principles of 94% of consensus, on the 1<sup>st</sup> round.

2. *The Principle of Nonmaleficence (No Harm).*<sup>50</sup> Educational evaluation should at least assure that nobody is harmed, if not benefiting people, including the evaluated.

5. *The Principle of “Evaluated First” or “Evaluation for Evaluated and not for Evaluation per se.”* Assessment should, among the involved persons, serve chiefly the evaluated, and not political or scientific goals, like the promotion of products or methods of evaluation etc. or the professional ambitions of the evaluators.

12. *The Principle of “All Equal - All Different, also in Evaluation.”* Assessment should show respect to the diversity of the evaluators or the evaluated, due to their cultural or religious identity, ideology, political conviction, social or economical origin, sexual orientation, gender, physical or mental retardation or particularity etc. and should act in their favor, but in a way that does not offend the rest of the people or be unfair for them.

13. *The Principle of Inhomogeneity.* Assessment should not be the same in all cases. It must vary according to the role, the age or the position of the evaluated in education etc. The possibility of evaluating on the same terms or of using the same evaluative techniques to evaluate educational executives and students is not acceptable.

15. *The Principle of Integrity, Consistency and Honesty.* All the involved parts of an evaluation (evaluated, evaluators etc.) should be determined to participate showing moral integrity and respect the terms of the

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<sup>50</sup> This Principle had 100% consensus between those who answered. One of the experts did not respond, perhaps inadvertently.

evaluative process, even if they notice infractions of the rules by other involved persons.

17. *The Principle of Distinction between “Seems” and “Is,” namely “Show” and “Substance.”* Assessment should assure by all means that its results are not fictitious or superficial and that they represent the true substance of people, in order not to allow some of the evaluated to present themselves as superior or better than they truly are, using often unfair means, e.g. acquaintances, social status etc.

c. Principles of 88% of consensus, on the 1<sup>st</sup> round.

6. *The Principle of Consistency.*<sup>51</sup> Evaluation should be consistent, compatible, and attuned to its goals and its framework, in order to conform to the knowledge of the evaluated and not to surprise them. Moreover, it should not favor those who “possess” knowledge dishonestly (e.g. by cheating, or though shadow education) over the rest.

11. *The Principle of Assessing the “Whole”.* Assessment should aim to the full possible image, namely—if possible—to cover the whole, to include all parts, all evaluative aspects and not to be fragmentary.

d. Principles of 81% of consensus, on the 1<sup>st</sup> round.

4. *The Principle of Evaluating the way you wish to be Evaluated.* Anyone who establishes or exercises assessment should act in a way similar to the one he would claim to be evaluated, e.g. clemency for clemency, severity for severity, and if somebody does not wish to be evaluated himself, he should also not evaluate others.

14. *The Principle of Dialectic and of Collective Decision.* Each time Ethical Principles fail to deal with a dilemma or a conflict that arises during evaluation process, the evaluators should a) rely on their personal values and even knowledge and b) ask for the assistance and opinion of their colleagues - evaluators if they have opposite views and, in case of deadlock, decisions should be made collectively.

e. Principle of 75% of consensus on the 1<sup>st</sup> round, acceptable due to precedence but restated in a way that a new Principle (the 27<sup>th</sup>) has emerged.

16.A. *The Principle of Substantive Justice.* In order for assessment to be fair, people of similar characteristics should be treated in a similar way, and people who differentiate themselves from others on some feature should be treated differently.

27. (16.B). *The Principle of Clemency.* In case of doubt about the

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<sup>51</sup> The consensus of the principle per se was 94%. The percentage 88% had to do with small reservations as for the accompanying sentence.

fairness of evaluation, due e.g. to legal gap, ambiguity of an issue or unpropitious conditions during the exam, it is preferable for evaluators to act with clemency then severity. (90% on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round).

f. Principle of 75% of consensus on the 1<sup>st</sup> round, acceptable due to precedence, but restated in a way that an improved version of the Principle has emerged.

*21.A. The Principle of Legality.* Assessment should be exercised lawfully. If the law conflicts with the ethics of the evaluator or the Ethical Principles of Assessment, the evaluators are legitimized to “disregard it quietly” and they have to take action for its “correction.”

*21.B. The Principle of Legality.* Assessment should be exercised lawfully. If the law conflicts with the ethics of the evaluator or the Ethical Principles of Assessment, the evaluators should express their disagreement and take action for its “correction.” (100% on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round).

g. Restated Principles due to inadequate consensus.

*9.A. The Principle of Taking into account Human Ethics.* Assessment should neither overestimate nor underestimate the ethical quality of the evaluators and the evaluated and their impact on the process and the results of evaluation. Assessment should also take into consideration the fact that the final judge of adopting or not adopting and of keeping or disregarding the Ethical Principles is each evaluator or evaluated. (73% on the 1<sup>st</sup> round)

*9.B. The Principle of Taking into account Human Ethics.* Assessment should take into consideration that is up to the evaluators and the evaluated to comply with the rules of an evaluative process and that, among them, there might be people who would not obey the set rules, a fact that might have a negative impact on the results of evaluation. (70% on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round or 80% under certain conditions)

h. Principle of very low consensus that led to two new versions on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round.

*10.A. The Principle of the Autonomy of the Worthy Evaluator.* Assessment should leave space to the evaluators who honor their role to act on their own, to decide and work freely for the sake of their evaluated, even if this comes to conflict with any of the Ethical Principles. (31% on the 1<sup>st</sup> round)

*10.B.I. The Principle of Evaluator’s Autonomy.* Evaluators should be able to do their job autonomously, uninfluenced of pressures, interventions, and interests. (100% on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round)

*10.B.II. The Principle of Evaluator’s Freedom.* Assessment should, (in

specific cases, like in class but not in standardized testing) leave space to the evaluators to act on their own, to decide and work freely for the sake of their evaluated, even if this means small deviations from the letter of the law (70% or 80% on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round).<sup>52</sup>

#### IV. Discussion

Some may claim that in Greece we do not actually need Ethical Principles to improve educational evaluation. Instead, we can deploy fundamental virtues of our nation, like “*diakrisis*.” However, setting *Ethical Principles* seems to be a persuasive answer to the numerous moral issues, problems, and dilemmas that both evaluators and evaluated face in everyday practices of Educational Evaluation. Nevertheless, the phrasing and choice of the right *Ethical Principles*, namely of those that cover all the fields and pivots of Education in modern Greece may be the first step, but not the final one. All parties involved in educational assessment must be informed about this new ethical framework and accept it or reject it in practice. From this point of view, this research is a solid starting point based on theoretical and scientific data that can contribute to a more ethical practice of Educational Evaluation, but there is certainly much more to be done. After all, through all this research we have dealt with all different variations of evaluation. We have seen evaluators of, so called, high or low ethical quality and, vice versa, evaluated who adopt ethically acceptable or morally unacceptable evaluative behaviors. So, it will take a lot of deliberation and a lot of fermentation before we are led to a commonly accepted ethical framework for evaluation, in which several additions and subtractions can be made. But what remains non-negotiable is the absolute need for all moral choices to be based on the one and only *Ethical Principle* that can summarize all others: “*Evaluation must be done from a human being to a human being.*” Evaluation needs to be humane.

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<sup>52</sup> The opinion (agreement or disagreement) of one expert was not stated clearly.

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