

Self-Evaluation as a Key Tool for Religion Teachers' Self-Cognition in Greek Secondary Education: A Modeling Approach

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Abstract:

Introduction: In the past five years, educators and policymakers in Greece have addressed evaluation in secondary education, transforming it into a practical tool for educational improvement from 2019 to 2023 despite its challenges. The evaluation process enhances educational efforts and determines the status of teachers and students. It includes two aspects: a) self-improvement, where teachers self-evaluate based on their contributions, and b) self-cognition, which relates to cognitive and personal characteristics. Both aspects connect closely to the provision of religious education (RE) in Greece. Upgrading RE teachers is essential for the broader educational structure and future social dynamics in Greece and elsewhere. This study aims to: a) examine the relationship between self-cognition and self-evaluation at the potential measurement level, and b) develop a self-evaluation model for RE teachers that illustrates a progress index.

Methods: Developing an educational evaluation model will frame self-cognition within a logical assessment process. A semi-structured interview will help examine the correlation between self-cognition and self-evaluation in social contexts (Third Opinion Theory).

Results: Results are summarized visually and explained within the research's scope and limitations.

Discussion: Achieving self-cognition requires specific methods to enhance teachers' capacities and promote self-knowledge and social skills. This is particularly crucial for RE teachers, who play a vital role in shaping school pedagogical and philosophical culture.

Limitations: The research concentrates on two domains: a) the self-evaluation of Religious Education (RE) teachers within only secondary education and b) a

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Acta Educationis Generalis

Volume 15, 2025, Issue 2

restricted semi-structured interview sample, necessitated by time constraints, which will be presented accordingly.

Conclusions: Religious Education (RE) is not only a vital discussion topic but also a significant subject in Middle Education. It particularly resonates with women's sensitivities, fostering self-awareness in Greek Middle Education. This process leads to a new modeling framework and evaluation system as such.

Key words: self-cognition, self-evaluation, approach rate model, climax of self awareness.

Introduction

Much literature about the Religion Education (RE) discipline in Greece and Europe has been developed lately concerning the teaching realm, the aim, the methodology, and the subject's content (Koukounaras Liagkis, 2014).

In the present research paper, a diversified aspect of the RE in Greece shall be under the lens of research regarding the Self-Cognition dimension and its possible relation with Self-Evaluation, primarily focused on the RE teacher's role (Andersen & Chen, 2002, p.619). Both terms hold significant importance, as the latter mainly represents the external evaluation by an external factor (Borman, 2002, p.8) of the RE teacher's contribution throughout the school year concerning problematics, methods, ideas, and future didactic plans for self-improvement. At the same time, the former emphasizes an intrinsic relationship between self-evaluation and self-critique (Baumeister, 2010), while the pedagogical and social stance of the RE teacher as a personality in the school environment is depicted energetically through the interdisciplinary attribute of his/her own discipline presupposing vivid cooperation and the interconnection among colleagues, which is being famed psychologically. Self-cognition also incorporates a wide variety of self-attributions mainly unknown to the larger social groups (MacDonald, 2002, p.162), such as specific fears, intimate social incapacibilities, personal routines, biases, (undiscovered) skills, and thinking modes that might be perhaps more complex than the emerged ones in the everyday educational praxis. This is why the connection between self-awareness and self-criticism is understood in psychological terms.

All the previous remarks are just some simplifications of the inner self-cognition sphere of the individual, which lies as an observation object by the exterior self and is attached to self-evaluation and critique beyond any alien exterior process (Decety & Sommerville, 2003), also retaining its dynamics and mystique. As all persons and educators, RE teachers should develop internal thinking modes and self-dialogue scenarios, which unconsciously or even purportedly occur within shaping and guiding motives and actions of improvement (Baumeister, 2010). The closer the two circles might be (Figure 1), the more powerful the

interchange between the schemes will be. Profoundly, the relationship depicted below could play a seminal role in the tactical educational situations all teachers are called to deal with, especially RE teachers, whose role is deeply linked with the students' psychological and spiritual state of being. The spiritual state is a challenging concept to measure, yet it plays a crucial role in the development of self-awareness and self-assessment.



Figure 1. Self-cognition and self-evaluation approach.

1 The scope

Self-cognition (S.C.) illustrates a significant psychological parameter during personality development and is an excellent tool for potential beneficial intervention in the educational context. As far as teachers are aware of their intrinsic and extrinsic dynamics (Vago & David, 2012), they may become more capable of coping with social and pedagogical challenges. Therefore, self-evaluation (S.E.) consists of the first step (Vago & David, 2012), which is to process the internal information structured within and intervene with or without help when feasible afterward.

From another aspect, significant studies have shown that producing skilled students positively and energetically affects the state's economic stature (Sodirjonov, 2020, p.901). Schools were considered post-modern age industries producing skilled workers in the social realm (Sodirjonov, 2020). However, the importance of the financial philosophy of the Western countries seems to have little impact on the professional conscience of Middle Education teachers in Greece, for they seem to be more adherent to the psychological and mental factors of education, e.g., social, behavioral, and cognitive formation of the students. Professor Knud Illeris (2008) has collected proper evidence explaining both the complex frameworks in which learning takes place and the specific facets of education, such as the acquisition of learning content, personal development, and the cultural and social nature of learning processes not only of the school students but the teachers as well (Illeris, 2008, p.1), who are not regarded to be an absolute “tabula rasa.”

The academic background of the Middle Education Teachers (RE Teachers included) may designate their exterior cognitive-academic portrait without encapsulating any assurance of their social and pedagogical interaction and stance with students, let alone any personal or professional introspection that has taken place whatsoever. The human factor might be unpredictable regarding psychological issues, and intelligence matters (Titchener, 2014) could emerge at any moment. Therefore, the scope of the present analysis is focused on two particular aspects: a) to examine the collaboration between self-cognition and self-evaluation (MacDonald, 2002, p.4) and b) to design an educational self-evaluation model to provide a relative self-cognition provision and experience for RE teachers.

2 Methodology

RE plays a significant sociological role in how people broadly see their relationships and the world since it belongs to the curriculum framework of Greek education (Antera, 2020, pp.9-10), aiming to form moral and future useful citizens in Greek society. In addition, it would have been a challenge to examine the people's stances about their own experiences of religious discipline teaching when they were of school age. Nevertheless, the latter would cause several problems since such a broad research umbrella, meant to be included in the present context, would hinder from focusing on specific interested areas and more over the memory past recalling might be fussy and indeed not safely objective.

Hence, two central interrelated notions emerge, self-cognition and self-evaluation (Baumeister, 2010), which were used in formulating a survey (questionnaire of semi-directed interview planning). At the starting point, the analyzed sample was randomly chosen from the Agioi Anargiroi region in Athens, Greece. Still, given the fact that a broader range of participants in the province was willing to utter their own opinion about the RE in Greece, the latter provided the opportunity to expand this reply range using Facebook and Viber for posting and forwarding the survey (Kapoor et al., 2017).

In addition, the previous research broadening enterprise was facilitated by the researcher forwarding the survey to his social environment and elsewhere far away from it, implementing an essential part of the chain reaction method (mouth-to-mouth information). The survey invites individuals between the ages of 20 and 70, of any sex, from various professional backgrounds, to express their views on the contribution of self-awareness and self-evaluation to improving the RE in Greece (Little, 2011, p.197). The survey questionnaire was anonymous, and the average filling time was estimated at around 7 minutes. The research process lasted eight (8) days, from 2/7/2023 to 9/7/2023. That timespan was clock-fixed by using the Microsoft Forms application (Table 1).

Acta Educationis Generalis
Volume 15, 2025, Issue 2

Table 1

Methodology summarization

<u>Sample Selection</u> <u>Focus</u>		<u>Web</u> <u>Tools</u>	<u>Analysis</u> <u>Tools</u>	<u>Timespan of the</u> <u>Research</u>	<u>Methodology logic</u>
Age:	20-70	Microsoft Forms Facebook Viber	Microsoft Excel 365, Power User, and Atlas ti. version 9	Eight days (From 2/7/2023 to 9/7/2023)	A mixed methodology is used. A qualitative research methodology prevailed, in which text data is quantitatively analyzed and grounded in the used codes.
Sex:	indifferent				
Identity:	anonymous				
Geography:	Greece and abroad targeting				
General thematic:	Religion education in Greece				Number of inquiries: 18
Specified thematic and self-evaluation area	Self-cognition and self-evaluation of the RE Teachers in Greece				

The qualitative data were transcribed, coded by Atlas ti Software version 9, and visualized by the Power User application as shown in Table 1. In the following analysis stage, the statistical results provided relative frequencies of the text codes used in each text case of the provided replies. The questionnaire guided the researcher to follow the data route and extract valuable results for the text notions utilized through coding (Basit, 2003, pp.143-44). The questionnaire also used a fixed climax from 0 to 10, called the *Climax of Self Awareness* (CoSA), which was provided as an inquiry to the interviewee asking to estimate the proximity between self-assessment and self-cognition through a tricky inquiring verbalism, non-giving further enough clues for any other intrinsic process assumption. The latter led to a final model proximity formation Figure 2, based on Figure 1, and has been used to visualize the results articulated in the final stage.

3 Discussion

A current spectacular movie titled “Ad Astra,” directed by James Gray and starring Brad Pitt, Donald Sutherland, and Tommy Lee Jones (Gray & Gross, 2019) negotiates the fulfillment of a space mission in Neptune regarding the abrogation of a space program spiraled out of the rational human control. Father and son collided during that incredible mission since they represented different perspectives: the father was willing to proceed with the task, while the son was to terminate it. The former lived in a utopia, thinking that an alien intelligence form might exist in outer space in contrast with the scientific evidence so far. At the same time, the latter was a realist grounded on the facts. The result was his father’s utopian doom and death, deciding to let the safety rope loose and get lost in the vast space.

Likewise, education is an uncharted territory like space, where humans must find a mode to co-exist in a manner of cooperation, seeking the best way of transmission and consolidating knowledge obtained and setting forth moral boundaries in their internal relationships for future efficient collaborations. However, specific methodologies are at the teachers’ disposal to help them carry out challenging teaching and formation tasks (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012, pp.1-2). The inner self of humans still plays a significant and many times complicated role in their current and future development, consisting of a dynamic unknown world in the social world (Alkire, 2002, p.191)). Thus, every human is a unique universe co-existing with others, entirely diverted and atypical. That’s why methodological measurements, even from a psychological point of view, should be under systematic scrutiny. On the other hand, students as humans are called to function in the Greek Educational System (as every student in the educational system of their own country) and adjust to every novice system of rules and schedules implemented, which they had never been familiarized with. When the gradual adaptation focus seems to be the resolution to the unknown territory provocation lying forth, that challenge pushes students to react against the new odds ahead, which do not seem consonant with their cognitive or psychological structures (Cole et al., 2004, pp.64-65). New learning environments and tools emerge before them, while new social acquaintances come forward in their realm. So, students have to take over control and deal with all those new universes ahead, while emotionally, they might feel anxiety or frustration whatsoever. Social adaptation is reformed to a pedagogical one, which pushes itself to the limits and continuously enhances its cells based on the outer feedback it gets. The mistake situation is dynamic and justifies the teacher’s presence to hold or let loose the didactical strings according to the class’s needs, inspiring their students’ safety and love of knowledge. The teachers implement the same occurrence at their own personal and professional levels. When thorny situations of error arise, self-cognition (SC) and self-evaluation (SE) should take

Acta Educationis Generalis
Volume 15, 2025, Issue 2

control under the leading ratio and empathy, facilitating the communication between students and the educator. When SC and SE are lacking, bridging is hard to achieve. On the other hand, SC and SE are not always regarded as students' presuppositions because they have not reached adulthood being under the custody of their parents or guardians.

Furthermore, RE teachers are called to manage a pretty thorny task of not only leading their students to organize a new frame of cognitive material of the curriculum as all teachers do, but also to introduce them a new perspective of seeing the natural and social world beyond the trivial category of rationality but faith in a worldish and at the same time not worldish and supernatural being, called God (Jackson, 2004, p.61). The latter task is also extensively linked with two crucial parameters: a) the need to know the inner self and b) the need to meet the otherness following a net of mutual connection and communication. At this point, RE teachers have to facilitate the realization of the parameters above to the best of their efforts. The question that emerges is how this dual task could effectively take place.

Teachers and far more RE teachers should be aligned to discover tricks and solutions, new frames, and playgrounds of action to cope with schooling situations. (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009, p.281)) Self-evaluation and Self-cognition are derived mainly from the psychoanalytic-scientific area and focus on the inner territory of the human cosmos (Masud & Khan, 1989). In contrast, unknown possibilities, functions, or hindrances are active and secretly interact within humans' consciousness; as Thomas Elliot once said: "Go, go, go said the bird: humankind cannot bear very much reality." (Masud & Khan, 1989). According to the researcher, one seminal rule embraces the whole spectrum of the humanities as formulated in the outer sphere: "The best you know yourself, the better you can help others." It may look like quite a simplistic rule for implementation. Still, their consciousness claims to search for drawbacks to fix and potentials to explore to make their lives more bearable, if not much happier. That is why consciousness sometimes cries out loud. In a materialistic and demanding world, orienting and forcing people to prioritize their personal individualistic or close social survival, the individual effort for self-inner improvement may also be an oasis for others¹ (Edwards, 2009, p.119) if the deaf man model is not prevailing.

¹ That is why Self-Cognition and Self-Evaluation are closely related to Social Cognition.

Acta Educationis Generalis
Volume 15, 2025, Issue 2

The logic of the present century's social formation is antipsychanalytic and far more antispiritual². It contradicts the psychanalytic nature of human beings (since human is not made only by material but by soul and spiritual consciousness, which, as a fact, is sometimes neglected), compelling many people to counsel for coping with their issues (O'Connell, 2012). Following the pedagogical spectrum, the schooling education task could also be considered a psychanalytically dynamic and gradual process for all the engaged sides (teachers, students, parents, and guardians) to know themselves better through others. That does not mean teachers must necessarily be psychologists; instead, they must stimulate and aid their students to focus on the inner self simultaneously with their curriculum class tasks. However, that humanitarian task is not affiliated so much with all the disciplines but rather with the RE mostly. RE Teachers should implement an introverted psychological route to achieve that task efficiently (Snowman & Biehler, 2005). The latter might be effectively realized by embodying paradigms and experiences in the curriculum to the best of their efforts. Teaching is not solely about adhering to the curriculum; it also involves creating your own.

Teachers' role is to facilitate the communication and interrelation of the students in their school community according to educational counseling models and simultaneously improve their teaching performance. Beyond that, a question emerges: why, on some occasions, do they not seem to improve themselves? The inner improvement (Snowman & Biehler, 2005) comprises a multi-dimensional pursuit since several factors are engaged and affect the mechanics of that internal function: a) the will of the teachers, b) their introvert and extrovert skills, c) the development of their receiving and acceptance approach, and d) the cultivation of love for themselves, their work, and others. As far as the previous factors start collaborating effectively, the frame of self-cognition and self-evaluation shall begin to run effectively. An interesting inquiry about which of those two self-mechanisms shall create the effects first in the row could be pretty intriguing for the research included in this study and logically considered, knowing the pros and cons of the self, accepting the situation that emerged, and starting the repairing effect when appropriate consists of a circular phenomenon that should be addressed, especially when such a psychological discourse occurs in the Middle Education case. The latter facilitates intersocial bridging in school life.

² Spiritual movements, especially in the Western world, mainly emerged as social or individual reactions, not as an internal need for an anti-materialistic quest. Spiritual retreats are purely silent and far away from the public spectrum.

4 Results and findings

In this section, findings shall be provided through the outcome of the results:

Finding 1: The research theme touched women's interests rather than men's (85% women – 15% men of 20 participants).

Finding 2: Since the survey was mainly addressed to lay people and less to people of advanced education, it was somewhat surprising that most of the participants were well-educated, holding occupational diplomas or college degrees, based on the Figure 2 below:

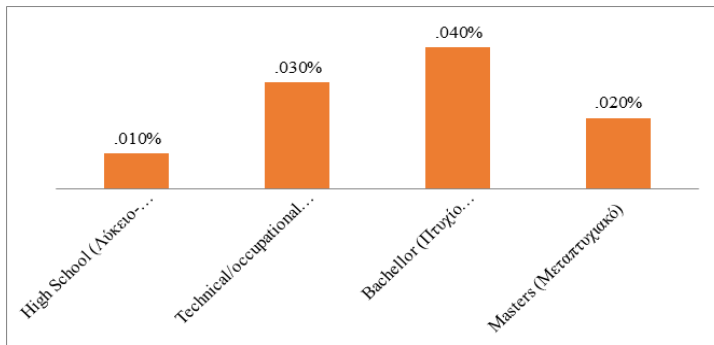


Figure 2. Education level.

Finding 3: Almost all the participants retain a positive attitude toward the significance of the role of RE teacher in Greek (Upper) Secondary education in Greece, which is obvious through the text coding frequency analysis results of the responses, in contrast with the general and maybe ominous social atmosphere that maybe socially inspire. Positive causations (comments and justifications of the participants) are quite high (23.53% - 31 in vivo presentation of the code “Positive Causation”) indeed. The Figure 3 below illustrates the positive opinion - impression of the sample:

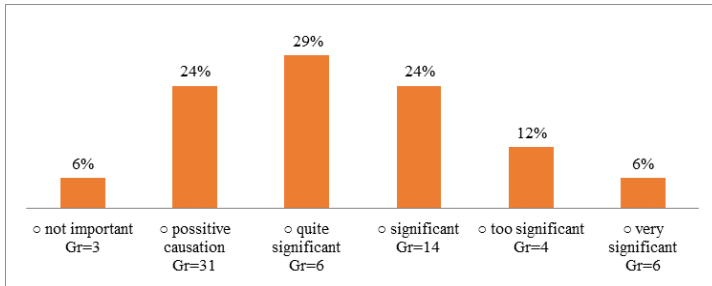


Figure 3. The significance of the RE teacher's role³.

Finding 4: Concerning the previous finding (3), the importance of RE per se in Greece seems to cover the most significant part of the participant's opinion spectrum of the textual analysis since RE appears to be quite substantial (63%) in forming the Greek Middle Education. Only 5% of the quotations denoted RE as unimportant, while another 5% argued the opposite – a neutralizing phenomenon occurrence. Moreover, 16% of the quotes were coded as positive causations, as shown in Figure 4 below:

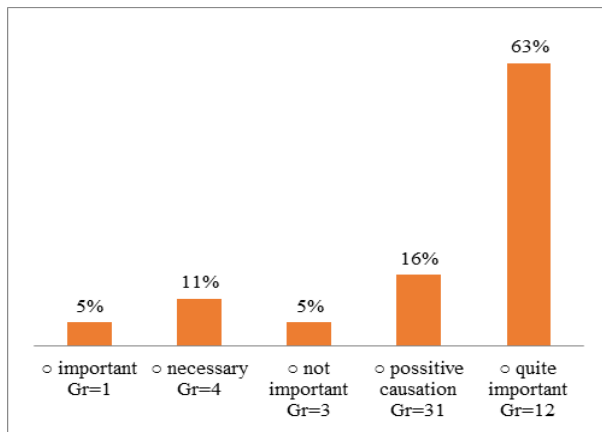


Figure 4. Significance of RE in middle education in Greece.

³ The “Gr” statement denotes the ground of the codes used, in other words, the numeric frequency of the codes.

Finding 5: Self Evaluation (SE) and Self Cognition (SC) are regarded as essential issues in (Upper) Secondary education in Greece since the textual analysis showed a great range of positive attitudes linked with the pedagogical approach and the personal and occupational development of the RE Teacher. Furthermore, SE and SC seem to be solidly connected regarding the textual analysis and based on the visualization below (Figure 5):

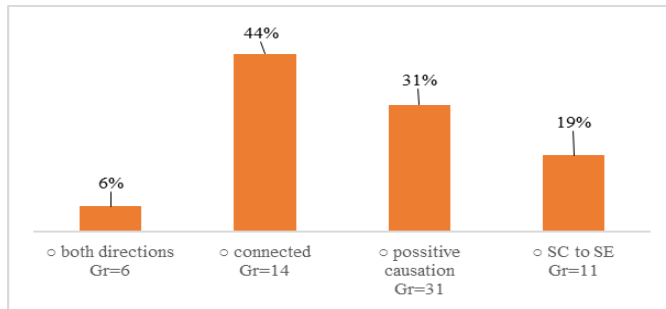


Figure 5. Connection rate of SC and SE.

Finding 6: Although the Survey data provided were not so affluent, it was crucial to mention that SC and SE are essential points in improving the relations, connection, and communication of the students in the school context, as depicted from the research. Seemingly, the more profound inner focus endeavors lead teachers to reconsider their pedagogical strategy and approach, providing positive alarms that frame the continuing development of their teaching and pedagogical mindset. The limitation of this particular section was the abstract approach of the textual responses regarding explaining the development process. The following Figure 6 provides further details:

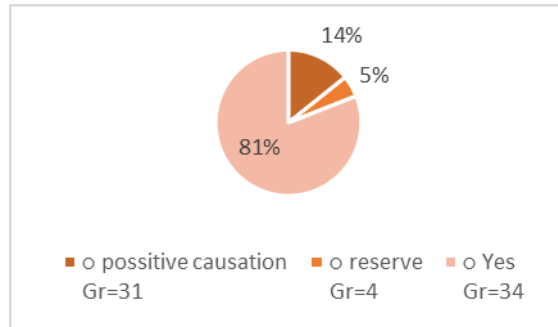


Figure 6. Rate of improvement in schooling communication.

Finally, although technical matters and strategies affect the pedagogical processes by preserving a sum of tricks and techniques (handy indeed) at the teachers' disposal, upgrading their didactical efficiency and repertoire, on the other hand, the personal psycho-analytic cosmos may grasp a far more enormous power not only to upgrade but to change the whole pedagogical perspective as it is known today. Therefore, according to graph (4), "connected" and "positive causation" codes were added, producing a rate of 75%. The previous rate is considered SC and SE's Approach Rate (AR). Forwardly, two circles with the same diameter and radiuses were designed so that their centers and radiuses extended to present the 75% rate according to a reversed scale structure, where the rate of 100% is at the middle of the axes. In that concept and by this quantitative conversion, the AR model can inform about the SC and SE approach or distance (see Figure 7).

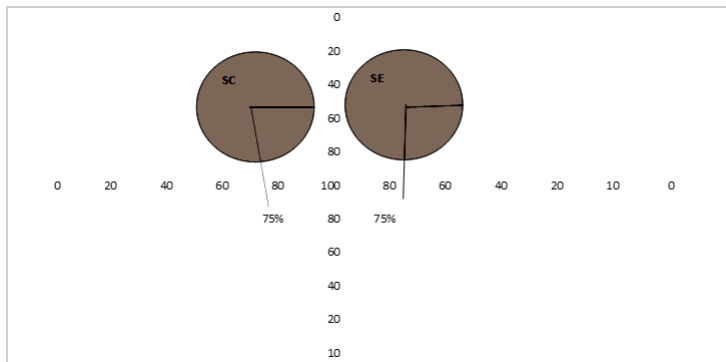


Figure 7. The AR model.

The present research model and concept provide a vantage point for further and more dynamic development of the SC and SE psychological conceptualizations or similar comparisons and measurements (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

5 Limitations of the research and conclusions

Throughout the research process, a few restrictions had to be taken into account, which were the following: a) the notions of self-evaluation and self-cognition and their possible relationship demanded a particular specification or focus that may turn off other psychological or educational aspects of theirs since psychological matters are always in transition. Moreover, self-evaluation is framed chiefly for educational purposes and not psychological ones (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, p.1059). They are related to detecting and improving emerging drawbacks, e.g., *“What was today’s teaching course process?”*; *“How did students respond?”*; *“What drawbacks emerged?”*; *“What other teaching approaches could be followed?”* Conversely, self-awareness in specific contexts associated with the educational framework allows the individual to leverage their comprehensive understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses for the enhancement of teaching effectiveness performance, e.g., *“I am aware of losing my temper quite quickly, so it would be necessary to make an effort to shape a collaboration class, intense-free climate, and to achieve a better teaching performance and attitude..”* Thus, in the above situation, self-awareness of losing temper could be an excellent aspect for fixing the teaching role and performance in class. Of course, other psychological parameters may invisibly function intrinsically that could not be straightforwardly detected while simultaneously affecting teaching performance (Yasin & Dzulkifli, 2010).

In any case, the circular behavior of Self Evaluation and Self Awareness is not abrogated. RE teachers (and every educator) should practice cultivating self-cognition in a self-inquiry shape. The period of the present research endeavor is located during the summer season when most people are preparing for their vacations or are already in holiday mode. The latter significantly hindered the filling survey requirements, and a logical consequence of the previous occurrence is numerically limited statistical sample emerged. Nevertheless, regardless of the tricky timing and numerical sample limitations, the data provided a helpful index dynamically, formulating a measurement model (Figure 7) that could be expanded significantly in other scientific realms. Self-Cognition and Self-Evaluation approach and their interrelation with the educational mission of RE Teachers in Greece might also be developed in other scholarly academic interests (Aron, 2000).

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Acta Educationis Generalis
Volume 15, 2025, Issue 2

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