

ETUDES HELLENIQUES

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**L' éducation en Grèce et
dans la diaspora
Education in Greece and
in the Diaspora**

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Structure, Function and Functionality of the Greek Educational System

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, on décrit la structure et les fonctions du système éducatif grec. On se concentre sur les changements et les réformes, qui avaient l'objectif suivant:

- a) renforcer la fonction de socialisation de l'école
 - b) améliorer les compétences prévues des diplômés et
 - c) l'opération sélective à travers les examens d'entrée à l'enseignement supérieur.
- L'article montre comment l'absence de mesures d'efficacité affecte toute la planification et la programmation du système éducatif grec. Bien, qu'un système d'évaluation soit décrit par un certain nombre de lois, depuis 1985, nous discutons des raisons de l'absence d'application de tout système d'évaluation.

Enfin, nous discutons du cas du lycée, qui est devenu une étape préparatoire pour les examens universitaires, et la façon dont il affecte la fonctionnalité du système éducatif.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to describe the structure and functions of Greece's educational system. We focus on changes and reforms targeted at:

- a) reinforcing the socializing function of the school;
- b) upgrading the skills of graduates; and
- c) the selective process of entrance examinations to higher education.

The paper shows how the absence of effective measures affects the planning and programming of the Greek educational system. Although, an evaluation system is described by a number of laws since 1985, we discuss the reasons why no evaluation system has been applied.

Finally we discuss the case of the Lyceum, which has become a preparatory step for the university examinations, and the way that it affects the functionality of the educational system.

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Introduction

In order to study the functioning and the functionality of the Greek Educational System, one has to consider the challenges that education had to face after the political transition in 1974 until today.

These challenges have emerged from both the rapid changes in political, economic, social and technological structures in the world, at a global level, and the specificity of the adaptation of Greece in the above areas.

At a global level, all educational systems are affected by the following factors:

- Globalization, which imposed a restructuring of the whole production and economic fabric of the different countries.
- Development of new technologies and the direct transfer of the information, which created the need for flexible adaptation to the new realities.
- The mobility of people and goods between states.

With specific reference to Greece the following factors should be also added:

- The various changes were more intense, given the political and social transformations that occurred in Greece after 1974.
- The entry of Greece into the European Union redefined all the determinants of Greek society and highlighted education as a ratio to adapt to new circumstances.
- The influx of immigrants into the country has created new standards for society and education, adding the integration of migrants to the aims of education.

The Greek state, through a series of reforms and legislation, attempted to adapt the Greek educational system to the above data. The ultimate goal of these reforms were: to enhance the socialization of the school, providing graduates with skills and a clear selective operation through entrance examinations in Higher Education. The effectiveness of the reforms and the current recording operation and functionality of the educational system is the subject of this article.

1.1. Legislative Reforms and Legislative Changes Since the Political Transition in 1974 until today

The 1975 Constitution enshrined the Dimotiki (oral form of the language) at all levels of education and the nine-year compulsory education. In the first attempt to reform the post-Junta period (Law 309/1976), the High School (Gymnasium) attendance becomes mandatory and the second cycle of secondary education, the Lyceum and Technical Vocational Lyceum, non-compulsory. Only the first gives the opportunity to its graduates to follow the Tertiary Education.

The reforms adopted by the new government in 1981¹ modified the structure and the functioning of education, mainly in:

- Establishing a single multi- Lyceum (1984) aimed at bridging the gap between general and technical education
- The creation of Unified Multi-Disciplinary Lyceums (1984) aimed at bridging the gap between general and technical education
- Passing a framework law on the functioning of Higher Education (Law 1268/1982)
- The initiation of post-graduate studies in various university departments
- The establishment of Education Departments
- The Law of 1566/1985 clarifies the frame of functioning of Primary and Secondary Education, aiming to democratize the education system through participation in decision making of all stakeholders in education (students, teachers, parents and staff).

The next reform effort refers to the Law 2525/1997, which amended without necessarily changing substantially the character of upper secondary education, the Unified Lyceum. The examination entrance to Higher Education, at a bundle of subjects, was abolished and replaced by directives and the national exams were renamed Panhellenic. In addition the way recruitment of staff for primary and secondary education was made changed and the all-day primary school, with an expanded curriculum was introduced.

Table: Reforme Efforts in Chronological Order

Year	Number of Law	Title	Minister of Education	Basic points
1976	309/1976	General Education	Rallis G.	Establishment of dimotiki, 9 year obligatory education
1977	576/1977	-Technical- Professional Education	Rallis G.	
1978	815/1978		Rallis G.	Not applicable
1982	1268/1982	On the structure and functioning of the Higher Education	Kaklamanis A.	Mode settings of Higher Education

1983	1304/1983	Scientific and Pedagogical management of the General and Secondary Technical Education	Kaklamanis A.	Adoption of scientific guidance
1985	1566/1985	Primary and Secondary Education and other provisions	Kaklamanis A.	New curricula, textbooks, upgrade of the Pedagogical Academies to the University level, remedial teaching, post-lyceum preparatory centers, Pedagogical Institute
1992	2043/1992	Supervision and management of Primary and Secondary Education	Souflias G.	Selection of educational managers
1997-1998	2525/1997	The Unified Lyceum, access of graduates in Higher Education, evaluation of educational work	Arsenis G.	Establishment of the Unified Lyceum, Access to Higher Education, full-day kindergarten and elementary school, second-chance schools, a system of appointing teachers, evaluation of educational work
1998	2640/1998	Technical - Professional Education	Arsenis G.	
2004	3255/2004	Subjects of all educational levels		Establishment of Departments in Universities

2006	3467/2006	Select strains of primary and secondary education, issues of education management	Giannakou M.	Establishment of a method of selecting staff training
2006	3475/2006	Organization and functioning of secondary vocational education	Giannakou M.	Establishment of Professional High Schools, Vocational Schools, and access of graduates to Higher Education.
2007	3549/2007	Reform of the institutional framework for the structure and operation of the Universities	Giannakou M.	
2010	3848/2010	Upgrade the role of the teacher evaluation and establishment of rules of meritocracy in education	Diamantopoulou A.	Establishment of rules for teacher's recruitment, selection of management training, evaluating training activities, establishment of post-secondary centers, etc.

1.2. Education Structures

Compulsory education

The public education is free in Greece at all levels and all costs are borne by the state budget. The system is divided into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary, while in recent years an interim post-secondary, but non-tertiary level of education, has operated as well.

The compulsory education covers 10 years and extends from 5 to 15 years of age (kindergarten and Primary School).

Kindergarten Education

From the age of 4 years children can optionally enroll in public or private kindergartens. The monitoring of the Kindergarten is compulsory for children of 5 years. The school year 2009 - 2010, the number of children who attended public kindergartens was 146,250 and 11,658 attended private ones.

The problems encountered with the implementation of compulsory education in kindergarten constitute a typical expression of dysfunctioning of the Greek educational system. While there was no change in the structure of the kindergarten, the personnel was limited and thus could not handle the large number of kids, at least during the first year of implementation. Therefore the private institutions covered the resulting mismatch and the malfunctioning.

Primary Schooling

Primary education constitutes the fundamental level and extends to 6 years. The only prerequisite for registration for a child who has a certificate of Kindergarten attendance is the adjacency of residence to the school.

Since 1997 (2525/1997) all day long school is adopted with extended schedule and enriched curriculum.

Although its initial target was to provide extra help for the next day's lessons and homework, combined with creative activities programs, it ended up taking care of the children of working parents.

The Pedagogical Institute² designs the Curricula which are approved by the Ministry of Education. The compulsory subjects include language, mathematics, religion, geography, history, environmental studies, science, social studies, music, two foreign languages and physical education. In addition, there is a Free Zone of interdisciplinary and creative activities.

In primary education all courses are taught by the class teacher, except physical education, music, computing, theater, education and foreign languages that require specialized teachers.

These teachers are under special work status (part-timers) and their restricted presence at school results to dysfunctions (restraints) as well, since this small presence prevents the development of a pedagogical relationship between teacher-student.

Secondary Education

Attendance at the first cycle of secondary education, the High School (Gymnasium), is mandatory. In high school taught courses, in addition to the

Primary Education subjects, ancient Greek, chemistry, biology, home economics, computer technology and Career Guidance are also added as compulsory courses. Pupils aged over 14 who work may attend Evening High Schools.

There are also some alternative forms of Gymnasium such as the religious, the minority, the intercultural, the experimental, the music schools, etc.

The quality of provided education for most pupils is defined by three disparate factors: the obligatoriness of education, the type of training and the evaluation. The kind of knowledge offered in High School is not in any case, the general knowledge that should be given to someone who will not continue his studies. Thus, much of the student population has no capacity to adapt to this kind of knowledge, and thus remains functionally illiterate.

Tightening of the tests, targeting the resumption of study in the same class, does not lead to any improvement, given the inability to adapt. So, the examinations become more and more elastic, and eliminate any evaluation system. Obviously, the lack of assessment spreads over the school's student population, creating the need for tuition for some students (*frontistirio*) and full depreciation of school for another portion of them.

Optional Secondary Education

Optional Secondary education comprises two types of High School: the General Lyceum with academic orientation and the Professional Lyceum that combines general education with specific technical-professional skills. In addition, the Professional Schools for students aged 16-18 years belong to the Secondary Education.

Both general and technical-professional Lyceums provide equivalent diplomas that enable graduates to enter the tertiary education. There are also Evening respective Lyceums (General and Professional) that cover 4 years of attendance. Alternative High Schools are the Religious, the Music, Fine Arts, Experimental, Minority, the Intercultural Lyceums etc. These alternative forms of High School were initiated by the law 3475/2006 which abolished the Unified Lyceum.

The Schools of Professional Education provide a two-year program that might be extended for another year devoted in training or apprenticeship. This type of school can be established and operated under the supervision of other Ministries. Their graduates obtain a 3rd level diploma integrated directly into the labor market.

Since 1985 (1566/85), the nature of the Lyceum is closely related to the entrance examination process to Higher Education. Initially four bundles of subjects were examined. The law 2525/1996 removed these bundles introducing courses' directions (theoretical, technological, math) connecting the graduation

from High School with the entrance general exams (panhellenic exams). This resulted in malfunctioning both in final and entrance exams. By adopting a series of presidential decrees, the next Minister of Education (2001), decoupling the graduation exam from nationwide entrance exams and simultaneously decreased the number of examined courses.

The technical - professional education worked and seems to continue to operate on the margins of the education system. The establishment of the multidisciplinary Lyceum (Law 1566/85), was perhaps the only approach to an equitable development of technical and professional education, along with general education. Their small number, only in large urban centers did not allow their overall development, highlighting the Technical Professional Lyceums which also functioned as the precursor form of the technical training that we have today. The significant change in the various forms taken by the technical-professional education, doesn't show any improvement in the educational functioning. The only essential element of change was the graduates' possibility to have access to tertiary education with or without examination.

Post-Secondary Education

A new structure in the Greek Educational System as a post-secondary level is the Vocational Training Institutes (IEK). The post-secondary Vocational Training Institutes (IEK) offer a wide range of specializations, tailored, largely to local business needs.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education is provided also by the Centers for Post-secondary Education as providers of non-formal education and training. The certificates or certificates of education or any other name certificate issued by the Centers for Post-secondary education do not constitute academic qualifications equivalent to those granted under the Greek system of formal post-secondary education, including Universities, Technical Education Institutes and the aforementioned Vocational Training Institutes (IEK).

The establishment and operation of Post-secondary Education Centres under state control is exercised by the Minister of Education.

Higher Education

Since 2001 (2916/2001), tertiary education consists of two parallel sectors:

- a) the academic (Universities, Polytechnics, School of Fine Arts, Greek Open University) and
- b) the technological (Technological Educational Institutes and the Highest School of Pedagogical and Technological Education).

The entrance mechanism to tertiary education is based on the available openings according to the scheduled planning (numerus clausus), on the candidates' preferences for specific schools/departments and their General Access Grade. Special exams are required for certain departments (e.g. drawing for the School of Architecture, or athletics for Physical Education). The student population of higher education (AEI and ATEI Students' whole number) is 16.3% of all students and during the eight years between 2001 and 2008 it has been increased by 14.4% (Paizis, 2010, 37).

The higher Education Institutes are dispersed throughout the country and cover a wide range of cognitive domains. The place, the structure and the connection of departments with the labour market is not always without problems. There are several institutions without enough active students.

The student population of higher education (AEI and TEI whole) is 16.3% of all learners and the eight years 2001-2008 have seen an increase of 14.4% (Paizis, 2010, 37).

Tertiary education in Greece is diachronically associated with social classes. Up to 1964, it partially relied on tuition and later it had austere exams that permitted to a restricted number of students to climb up the social strata, through education and ensured career. This is not the case anymore, because of the increase of the number of Universities and their graduates, coupled with the large number of graduates of foreign Universities.

2.1. The functionality of the Greek Educational System

The Notion of Reform in the Greek Educational System

A special feature of educational policy in Greece is the discontinuity from one government to the other and from one minister to the next.

Although everybody explicitly advocates facing obvious malfunctions and dead ends, this doesn't proceed through a gradual amelioration of the system, but through an abrupt reform which seems to reinstall all aspects of education on a new basis.

Most of the time the arguments put forward leads to a confrontation of the interested parties exhausting any innovative dynamic in itself rhetorical.

Every intended innovation carries the air of decisiveness and as such precludes conversing with the involved partners, who are certain that the novelty will be washed out in words.

Usually the whole thing goes on in a permanent conflict between the government who advocates the correctness of the proposed changes while the

partners argue that the eminent law will be invalidated in practice. The dialogue will be exhausted in rhetoric.

At the end, after a series of confrontations with various aspects, a law is passed which needs a number of presidential decrees and ministerial decisions clarifying its content side by side. The result is that after a series of conflicts taking on different forms, passes a law which to be implemented, requires a series of presidential decrees and ministerial decisions, interpreting the law as they see fit.

These clarifications dissolve the law as a whole, resulting in very little time to work on any improvement, thus leading to the next “reform” by the next minister.

A typical example that confirms such a course is the existence of threshold scores, the minimum grade (base) needed to enter the University. Law 2525/1997 provides for grade 10 to 20 and was also the prerequisite for the graduation from the Secondary Education.

The interconnection of graduation and University entrance resulted in a malfunction which appeared right when the law was firstly applied. Thus the next minister of education abolished it, and a lot of secondary education graduates entered the Universities with lower grades than the base 10. This regulation provided mainly provincial departments of Tertiary Education with students who didn't possess elementary literacy. The malfunction was rectified by the next minister who introduced the minimum base of 10.

The justification of the legal intervention was based on pedagogical and scientific criteria, but didn't consider two parameters: the future of the already existing departments that didn't receive enough students to continue and the local communities that had already invested in the students' presence, under the impulse of parliament members.³

The new solution to the impasse came again through the form of a new minister and a new deal, which abolished the minimum grade, the base of 10.

Control Mechanisms of Effectiveness

In what has already been analyzed - and which raises several problems -, one has to mention also some positive provisions. Any development process should go through an assessment mechanism of positive and negative effects, the effectiveness and functionality of each component of the educational system. In other words, any developmental effort needs assessment, a notion that has been defined properly by educational organization and administration.

For the Greek educational system, the evaluation is a concept with multiple

meanings, most of them negative. Some imply a rigorous monitoring mechanism within the ministry and leads to political influence, according to the unions of teachers.

Although evaluation has been a main demand by unions for years, its legislative launch, in whatever form, raises reactions. Thus as a consensus proposal, delivered by the ministry, the concept of self-evaluation, which is important and effective for education systems, with experience in established structures and functions, might well be vacuous for a system like the Greek one, with its difficulty identified in operating organizational and administrative structures. On the other side, the lack of evaluation affects the efficiency of the education system.

This reduced effectiveness is due to two reasons:

- To formulate any strategy planning the use of reliable data is required, something which results from measuring the effectiveness of past practices. This is the reason that every educational policy in Greece is always named a "new beginning" as a constantly improving system requires an assessment and correction.
- The effectiveness doesn't depend only on strategic planning, but relies crucially on human resources responsible for the implementation. On the other hand, the lack of evaluation deprives qualified material and moral incentive to take initiatives. It also deprives the political leadership of the necessary data to staff the administrative system, with the most talented.

In the usual practice, either the selection is based on partisan criteria, whether an ostensibly transparent process (points awarded), which in most cases, promotes executives who have brought more to the development / ultimately of bureaucracy, rather than efficiency. It should be noted that the lack of assessment is accompanied by a lack of planning, since it evaluates the effectiveness of a planned activity.

Functionality of specialized structures: the case of Lyceum

All the previous remarks might serve as a reliable tool to analyze the malfunctions mainly at the High School level (Lyceum) and more specifically in the domain of technical-professional education. The lack of an evaluation culture in the entire range of the educational process is reflected, in the final and crucial stage, on students' evaluation. With the introduction of compulsory schooling in High School (Gymnasium), in conjunction with the kind of knowledge provided, the students' evaluation is very loose.

In the second cycle of secondary school education (Lyceum), although not

mandatory, it is implicitly accepted that the evaluation might not be objective, since it will be corrected through the mechanism of entrance examinations for higher education which is very austere.

Therefore, the role of High School (Lyceum), has become a necessary transition to Higher Education. Stripped of its pedagogical role it leaves the space free for the development of a parallel educational system, the "tutoring", ("Frondistirio") which provides a unique knowledge in tertiary education. This knowledge is highly specialized, focused exclusively towards the entrance examination and is fairly evaluated by the entrance examination committees, but it doesn't have any further utility.

Technical-Professional education

The secondary education diploma became devoid of value, both in general and technical-professional education. Reform efforts in organizing technical and professional lyceums have failed, for two reasons:

- Technical and professional education used to be considered as a minor form of education and any suggestions for reform had no coherence and continuity. An organized, however, Technical-Professional Education requires long-term planning, since these structures need laboratory infrastructure in order to function, qualified teaching staff and direct connection to the productive sector.
- Instead of having this organization be the long-term target of all interventions, it seems that changes are either verbal in the renaming of structures for example, or accessing mechanisms of entrance examination to Higher Education of the graduates of the Technical-Professional Education, usually under special conditions.

Note that the Technical-Professional Education represent 3.9% of all primary and secondary schools and even there is a decrease during the eight years 2001-2008. The student population of the Technical - Professional Education represent 7.3% of the total of the student population. The decline for the same periode 2001-2008, was 30.6% (Paizis 2010, 31-32).⁴

Instead of an epilogue

The spectrum and depth of Greek education problems is such that the researcher finds it difficult to analyse and prioritize the issues, thus the scientific discourse is akin to the journalistic...

Current reforms and changes should cease to be purely referring to structures

or functions exclusively. They also should cease renaming the existing structures and focus on their functionality and address the obvious deficiencies and rigidities, which prevent feedback and self-improvement of a system dealing with humans and knowledge.

NOTES

1. In general, after 1981, reforms focused more on internal changes and less on the structures of the system Bouzakis, 1995 (In Greek).
2. The Pedagogical Institute is undergoing a reorganization of its functioning and structure.
3. At this time, according to the new reform which is in process, there is a plan to merge or eliminate some university departments. In this case the function of a lower limit in graduation will be affected.
4. Data of the Greek education system for the year 2008 (Paizis, 2010):
 - number of primary and secondary schools: 15.236
 - number of students: 1.476.606
 - number of teachers: 181.546
 - Cost per student: primary education: 2.711,89
secondary education: 3.780,78
 - cost per teacher: primary education: 26.269,38
secondary education: 25.989,96

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