

ETUDES HELLENIQUES

HELLENIC STUDIES

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

Edited by / Sous la direction de
Michael Damanakis
Stephanos Constantinides
Theodosia Michelakaki

Contributors / Contributions de
Nikos Andreadakis
Siphis Bouzakis
Stephanos Constantinides
Michael Damanakis
Athanasios Gotovos
Michael Kassotakis
George Markou
Theodosia Michelakaki
Despina Papaguéli-Vouliouri
Anastasios M. Tamis

Lefkios Zafeiriou
Andreas Kalvos in the English Press (1818-1821)

Volume 19, No. 1, Spring / Printemps 2011

1

Admission policies for Greek Universities A Historico-sociological View of the Period 1837-2010

Siphis Bouzakis*

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur de cet article, examine les points tournants importants des politiques d'entrée aux universités grecques. Dans une approche historico-sociologique, il analyse les facteurs qui mènent de la politique de libre entrée en 1837 à l'introduction de conditions d'admission depuis 1922. Au cours des décennies qui ont suivi, la relation entre le lycée et l'université est devenue très tendue. En outre, le nombre limité d'étudiants admis aux universités et aux instituts d'enseignement supérieur technologique ainsi que les examens d'entrée stricts, ont abouti à la promotion des droits de scolarité, de l'immigration des étudiants et à la perte du rôle éducatif du lycée.

Il y a peu d'espoir de trouver une solution afin d'améliorer le système éducatif grec dans un proche avenir, même si dernièrement une discussion concernant le système d'entrée aux universités et aux instituts d'enseignement supérieur technologique ai commencé.

ABSTRACT

The author of this article examines the significant turning points of the admission policies of Greek universities. In a historical-sociological approach he analyses the factors that lead from the free admission policy of 1837 to the admission requirements in force since 1922. Over the decades that followed, the relationship between the lyceum and the university has become very strained. Moreover, the limited number of students admitted to the universities and technological institutes of higher learning and the strict entrance exams have led to the promotion of tuition fees, student migration and the erosion of the educational mission of the lyceum.

There is not much hope for any solution and improvement of the Greece's educational system in the near future, although debate has started on the admission system of universities and technological institutes of higher learning.

* University of Patras

Introduction

In this article we try to answer a number of questions while taking into account the work of other researchers¹. What distinguishes our study is the historico-sociological approach adopted, as indicated in the title.:

- Which were the admission policies at the university during the period studied? When did they change and why?
- Were the admission policies influenced by the needs of the market?
- Which factors (sociopolitical, financial, ideological, cultural and pedagogical) influenced the adoption of these policies? Why especially these ones? How were they interpreted?

How did these entrance policies affect both education, especially the stages before higher education, and the students themselves? Did they also affect students' evaluation during those stages and particularly during the years spent in secondary education?

We extracted the historical material from both the institutional framework on the basis of which issues of entrance to higher education were regulated (bills, laws, speeches in the Parliament and the Senate, preambles, memos, commission reports, parliamentary proceedings, rectors' addresses, decrees), as well as secondary sources.²

The time limits of the period studied, namely 1837 and 2010, were not selected at random. In 1837, free admission to the first Greek university (called the Othonian University) was institutionalized within the framework of the Greek educational system newly formulated by the Bavarians during the period from 1834 to 1837. The other date, 2010, was selected because it was the year that the Ministry of Education announced that the issue of the university entrance policy would be the subject of a dialogue among the stakeholders.

Methodological and Theoretical Assumptions

We analyze the historical documents and attempt to give an answer to the questions by using the historical interpretative method. This means that we reconstitute the past in order to organize a number of events by means of the sources, to understand the past and interpret it in relation with the overall context (sociopolitical, financial, ideological and cultural). Again, this is achieved using as a theoretical framework reproduction theories, approaches of the School of Annals and neo-Marxist theories about the Greek state, according to which it is the political-ideological element that prevails.³

The Most Significant Institutional Milestones of the Admission Policies

The study of the documents relevant to the diachronic evolution of university entrance policies may be broken down into four periods highlighting the distinct features of each period:

First Period: From the free admission adopted in 1837 to the introduction of entrance examinations in 1922.

Second Period: From the entrance examinations (1922) to the *numerus clausus* (quota) of students accepted in Higher Education Institutions (1930).

Third Period: From the *numerus clausus* of the students accepted in Higher Education Institutions (1930) to the academic diploma (1964).

Fourth Period: From the General Pan-Hellenic Examinations (1974) to the reform by Gerasimos Arsenis (1997/98).

The Othonian University, founded in 1837, was free to all those who had a high school *baccalauréat*. The candidates were to be “introduced to the Rector either by a landowner or a permanent resident of Athens whom the University authorities might address in case they needed to send notification to the student...”⁴ The choice of both studies and courses was free and attendance was free of charge. The fact that university admission was free for the candidates and attendance was free of charge allowed K. Tsoukalas⁵ to speak of an “early democratic” school system. Furthermore, he characterized it as simplex/dimensional due to its vertical structure: primary school, Greek school, high school, university. In the subsequent decades, the above system developed into two conflicting and contradictory “educational products”: the over-education (very high attendance rates at secondary and higher education compared to other countries) and, at the same time, very high rates of illiteracy.

Obviously both the entrance and the attendance policies at the first Greek university sought to attract the number of students necessary to the newly created Greek state. That state started “out of nothing”⁶ in its effort to staff its basic institutions: justice (law school), education (school of philosophy), religion (school of theology) and health (medical school). As a result, the state mechanism began to increase and strong social classes earning their living exclusively from the state were created. Later on, the inflow of foreign capital provided support to those services that were essentially supported by education and which also served as a springboard for the social mobility of the middle classes. Those social strata contributed effectively to the urban transformation of the Greek society.

Despite the free admission and tuition, the number of students enrolled rose slowly. However, at the same period Greece was internationally ranked very high in terms of the number of university students,⁷ and despite the fact that Greece had a large number of university students, it maintained a high percentage of illiterate citizens.⁸

During the long first period of the free entrance to the University of Athens, many objections to that policy were raised. In 1889, Pantazidis⁹ wrote: “the spectacular increase of the university students stimulated neither the joy nor the admiration of the rectors...many of them were trying to get this policy withdrawn as being harmful both to the university and to the state”. At the beginning of the twentieth century, basic measures for the selection of the students were taken by the Departments of Philosophy and the Law Schools in which most of the students were enrolled. According to a decision made by the Senate, the number of students was limited in those Departments, although “many students were begging in tears for a chance to perform their studies in the above Departments”.

1st Period: From Free Admission (1837) to the Introduction of Entrance Examinations (1922)

No entrance examinations were included in the bills of 1899 “About the organization of the University”, while A. Eftaxias was the Minister of Education (see Table I). However, the role of secondary education as a “handmaid” of “higher education” was strengthened. Entrance examinations were not foreseen even by the Organization Act of 1911 by which, according to the will of Dobolis, the University of Athens was split into the “National” and the “Kapodistrian”. “For someone to get enrolled in the National University a baccalauréat from a public national high school or an equivalent public high school of foreign or another recognized high school or from the Practice High school of Athens is necessary” (art. 12). On the contrary, attendance in the Kapodistrian University was not allowed to students having graduated from the Practice High School of Athens. However, some class barriers were introduced by the Organization Act of 1911 regarding attendance at the University, since “every student has to pay a 180 drachmas tuition fee for each academic year”. One may assume that this measure would discourage some of the students. Entrance examinations at the University of Smyrna were foreseen in the memorandum of Karatheodori, in 1919: “It would be a privilege for many students to take entrance examinations appropriate with their direction in order for them to study in University”.

TABLE I

No	Document	Subject	Provision
1	Royal Decree, 1836	“About High Schools”	The High School as a “Handmaid” of the University
2	Royal Decree 221, 2/24/1837	“About the establishment of the University”	Free entrance Free selection of studies
3	Eftaxias’ Bills, 1899	“About the organization of the University”	Secondary education gets established as a “handmaid” of higher education
4	Organization Act, 1911	“About the National University” and “About the Kapodistrian University”	Free entrance
5	Memorandum by K. Karatheodori to El. Venizelos	“About the foundation of a new university in Greece” (University of Smyrna)	Proposal for the introduction of entrance examinations set on the basis of the different directions

The Case of Technical Education

During the first period, the entrance policies applied at the technical education were different from those applied at the Higher Military Academies (see Table II). More specifically, in 1887, attendance at the “School of Industrial Arts” required entrance examinations. Those examinations sought to both limit the number of the students and increase the prestige of the School. Furthermore, as of 1918 the Department of Rural and Surveying Engineering of the National Technical School introduced a *numerus clausus* of entrants who “afterwards were mandatorily appointed by the state as probationary rural surveyors engineers at the Ministry of Transportations and at the Ministry of Agriculture”.

TABLE II

No	Document	Subject	Provision
1	Legislative Decree (1834)	“The Polytechnic Collection” (School of Elementary Technical Education)	Free entrance (admission)
2	Legislative Decree 1836	Sunday Technical School (Precursor of the National Technical School)	Free entrance (admission)
3	Legislative Decree 1886	Operation of Practical Lyceum	Entrance examinations in the Departments of Civil Engineers and of Mechanists
4	Law AFA’ 5/27-6/20/1887	“About the organization of the “School of Industrial Arts” in Athens”	Introduction of entrance examinations
5	Law 1565 12/21-24/1918	“About supplementing the 972a Law “About amending the Laws for the operation of public works etc”, the 1466 Law “About the assimilation of the temporary staff in the Secretariat of Public Works” etc.”	Introduction of a closed number of students enrolling in the Department of Rural and Surveying Engineering of the National Technical School

2nd Period: From the Entrance Examinations (1922) to the Numerus Clausus of the Students Accepted in Higher Education Institutions (1930)

During the period of the “free (admission) entrance to higher education” the following problems were accumulated, which led or served as the legitimizing argument for the introduction of entrance examinations:

- Inability of the labor market to absorb the graduates
- Supersaturation of the universities
- Degradation of the prestige of studies in higher education.

In marketing terms, “selection filters” for attendance in higher education were introduced by the Organization Act of 1922 (see Table III): “Only those students who hold a baccalaureate from an educational institution and succeeded in a test have the right to get enrolled in the University, according to the article 139. The educational institutions the baccalauréat of which allows entrance to higher education, as mentioned in article 135, include the public national high schools, the Practice High school of Athens or equivalent public educational institutions as well as the Rizarios Church School”. The graduates of the Practice High school of Athens or of an equivalent educational institution could register at the Medical School or the School of Physics and Mathematics, whereas the graduates of the Rizarios Church School could register at the School of Theology. Examinations were conducted by the professors of the University of Athens. Entrance examinations were systematically applied two years later (1924/25) at the Chemistry Department and four years later (1926/27) at the other Departments. At the beginning of the 1930s, a limited number (*numerus clausus*) of students were accepted at the University after having taken entrance exams. The above change was provided by the Law 4620 of 1930 “About amending and supplementing the provisions of the Organization Act of the National and Kapodistrian University”. The introduction of this quota, as it shows in the explanatory statement of the Law, aimed to improve the scientific training of the University students, which carried the risk of degradation due to the large number of students. Not is random that a few months before the voting of the above Law, a dramatic reduction of the students from 6,040 to 2,850 (about 60%) was proposed in a memorandum (the Law was based on it) that Konstantinos Karatheori submitted to the Venizelos government. The Minister of Education, Georgios Papandreou, having adopted the proposal made by Karatheori, told Parliament: “The unlimited number of students would have been a disaster if we had not reduced the number of the entrants at the proper time”.

TABLE III

No	Document	Subject	Provision
1	Law 2905 7/23-27/1922	“About the organization of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens”	Introduction of examinations with responsibility of the University professors
2	Memorandum by K. Karatheodori (May 1930)	“About the University of Athens”	Proposal for a dramatic reduction of the students and for the introduction of strict entrance examinations
3	Law 4620 7/30-8/6/1930	“About amending and supplementing the provisions of the Organization Act of the National and Kapodistrian University”	Introduction of the <i>numerus clausus</i>

3rd Period: From the Numerus Clausus of the Students Accepted in Higher Education Institutions (1930) to the Academic Diploma (1964)

In 1954, while Gerokostopoulos was the minister of education, the entrance exams introduced in 1930 were replaced, through the 3011/54 Legislative Decree. Instead an examination was organized once a year by the departments. Those who introduced this measure sought the strict observance of the *numerus clausus* of the students accepted in the Higher Education Institutions and thus, both the improvement of the level of studies and enhanced prestige of the same institutions (see Table IV).

- In 1958, the Education Committee presented some significant proposals. The Committee, in order to decrease the number of those students who were inadequately prepared for Higher Education, proposed a) the creation of a separate branch of middle and lower technical education, and b) the division of the six-grade High School into two cycles. Moreover, the Committee suggested, on one hand, the establishment of a one-year preparatory cycle for those students who wanted to study in the institutions of higher education and, on the other hand, the establishment of special colleges. Both of the above

proposals were rejected. In 1959, a united body was formed for higher education, whereas, in April 1959, the Ministry of Education suggested the application of a mixed entrance system, on the basis of which those students graduating from the High School with high scores would cover, without taking any exams, the quote of the students to be accepted in each Department.

- The reform of 1964 aimed to change completely the educational system. The Lyceum acquired a double role: a) it offered a broader (compared to that of the previous grades) formal education to young people (those who would not attend Higher Education Institutions), and b) it prepared sufficiently those students who would attend Higher Education Institutions. The most important regulation concerned the new system of admission to the post-secondary institutions. The degree issued by the Lyceum certified graduation from secondary education but was not sufficient for attendance at institution of higher education for which obtaining a two-step (A and B) academic diploma, based on an examination, was required. One type of academic diploma qualified students for theoretical studies; the other, for science. In some departments of social sciences, attendance was allowed to the owners of either type of diploma. In addition to the exam performance, the students' grades during the two last years of the Lyceum (having a factor of 2) were also taken into account.

If this last regulation proved satisfactory, then the Lyceum certificate would allow all graduating students to enroll at the university. The complete exclusion of the University from the process of the students' selection as well as the fact that the exams were held locally, though with central planning, were the innovative elements of this reform.

TABLE IV

No	Document	Subject	Provision
1	Legislative Decree 3011/9/15/1954	“About the way of the students' registration at the Universities, the National Technical School...”	Conversion of the entrance examinations in competitions under the responsibility of the Departments
2	Education Committee 1957/58	Findings	Dichotomy of secondary education, establishment of one-year preparatory colleges

3	Legislative Decree 4379/1964	“About the” organization and the administration of the general education (elementary and middle)	Establishment of the A’ and B’ (theoretical and positive direction) type academic baccalauréat, decentralization of the examinations, the dual role lyceum
---	------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4th period (1974-1997/98): From the General Pan-Hellenic Examinations to the Reform by Gerasimos Arsenis (1997/98)

The most significant turning points after the abolition of the 1964/65 reforms are listed below:

- Common examinations by groups of schools (1968-1979)
- The liberal transformational educational policy after the fall of the dictatorship and the Pan-Hellenic Examinations
- General examinations (1983-1997)
- The Arsenis’ reform 1997/98 (Comprehensive Lyceum certificate)

During this fourth period, the entrance system underwent many transformations. All of which tended to turn the Lyceum into a preparatory stage of the University and to prevent it from being a self-contained educational diploma. The relationship between the Lyceum and the University became tight and resulted in the expansion of tutoring.

Conclusions-Interpretation

The entrance policies at Greek universities have undergone several changes due to the following reasons:

1. *Supernumerary of students:* This prohibited students from getting an adequate education in the universities. The number of enrollments in the school network certified the above observation. In the preamble to the legislative decree of 30/11/1954, according to which examinations were changed into a competition, it is mentioned that free entrance to the University “would result in the crowding of a large number of young people in small classrooms and in poorly equipped laboratories...” and, consequently, in the “insufficient training and,

finally, in the offering to the society of half-taught owners of a university degree". The numbers indicating enrollments in the school network confirm this. For example, from 1878 to 1895, the number of elementary school students doubled, as did the number of high school students from 1875 to 1888. Enrollments in universities rose from 561 in 1880 to 957 in 1890; i.e., a 42% increase.

2. *Changes in the workplace and intense social demand for studies.* This strong demand for studies led to some violation of the strict entrance systems. In the first years after the creation of the Greek State, the unorganized capitalist mode of production was not yet reflected in the school system. Specialization was not necessary, control of the students' social origin was not necessary since it was performed through extracurricular factors. Nevertheless, from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the Second World War, work was characterized by rationalization, organization and specialization. The pressure to adapt education to the new data within a framework in which education should be functional was very strong. Consequently, the ideology of meritocracy in the higher degrees of education, particularly in higher education, would find a fertile ground. In short, universities needed those students who were capable, charismatic, excellent.
3. Inability of graduates to integrate the labor market which was often affected by economic crises (Crash of 1929). During the period 1928-32, unemployment increased vertically. School was no longer able to fulfil its distribution operation.
4. Strengthening the state's ideological-political control over education and consequently over the selective mechanisms of social reproduction (examinations). Those strict mechanisms resulted in a reduction in the number of students enrolling in higher education. In 1929, there existed 20 students per 10,000 people, whereas in 1937, after the introduction of the *numerus clausus*, there were 14 students per 10,000 people.
5. Attempt to reinforce the prestige of the university departments. The introduction of the quotas starting from the Department of Rural and Surveying Engineering of the National Technical School in 1918 provides a characteristic example of this attempt. The limited number of the students enrolled in the University after the introduction of the measure above would be appointed to the public sector after graduating. The public sector (and, consequently, the state) would be the future employer of the graduates, thus it could have control over the curricula. This was justified as follows: "Since

the public sector was the only solution for the graduates' vocational rehabilitation, each department should educate as many students as the public sector would need to absorb".¹⁰ If the state had treated the education departments in the same way, the instructors' pedagogical training would have been achieved. In 1877, Ioannis Pantazidis, Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Athens, realized that "the quality of the education in all our schools was low due to the teachers' incompetence". He decided then to teach on his own a course called "Gymnasium Pedagogics". In 1997, 100 years later, the 2525 Law by Gerasimos Arsenis made the acquisition of a certificate of pedagogical knowledge and teaching ability as a requirement for the appointment of teachers in Greek secondary education. Unfortunately, this institution remained locked in the 'time-closet of History'.

6. ***Worsening quality of the studies at high schools.*** With regard to the introduction of the academic diploma, it is mentioned in the preamble of 1964 that: "...The entrance examinations for the institutions of higher education were introduced for two reasons: first, the current situation required quotas for the students accepted and, second, the level of the studies at high schools declined dramatically over the past thirty years".
7. The last factor resulted in the change of the grading scale. Over the period studied, the grading scale in the secondary education changed twice: a) during the 1880 decade, the scale from 1 to 6 changed to a scale ranging from 1 to 10; b) during the 1930 decade, the grading scale from 1 to 10 changed into a scale from 1 to 10.¹¹ The entrance systems described impacted both the structure and operation of the preceding degree which turned out to be its "handmaid". The notion of the functioning of each educational grade as the "handmaid" of the one that followed first appeared in the Presidential Decree of 1836 with regard to the secondary schools (Greek school and high school). According to that Decree, high school aimed primarily "to prepare those students who want to study in higher education". The same perception dominated in the drafts by Theotokis in 1899: "the low level of the students in higher education is due to their incomplete preparation in secondary education". The term "handmaid" was first used in a rhetorical question by Athanasios Eftaxias in 1990: "Is there any other place in the civilized world where nowadays primary education has turned out to be a "handmaid" of secondary education having been exclusively adapted to its requirements?"¹²

Based on the above, the structure of the Greek educational system and particularly the relationship between secondary and higher education was formulated on the basis of the changes and interventions already mentioned.

More specifically, a progressive movement of the social production procedures into the school itself occurred which sought to match the social and educational pyramid (see Table V); i.e., to reproduce the social *status quo*. The above ideological-political and social intention was clear in the nineteenth century documents. In 1899, the Eftaxias bills mention that the educational system should be changed in order to provide “each social class with the knowledge that best suits it”.

TABLE V

Matching of the Social and Educational Pyramid (social reproduction)

	Stages	Text
A	1899 (A. Eftaxias' bills)	School “should provide each social class with the best education it needs”
B	1913 (I. Tsirimokos' bills)	“Studies last three years in the urban school whose students come from the urban class, whereas studies last four years in the high school whose students derive from the upper class.”. “Only students who belong to the administrative social class could graduate from the University”.
C	1930 (4620 Law by Georgios Papandreou)	Attendance at the University is allowed only to “gifted” students.

The same objective was expressed in the bills of 1913: “Studies last three years in the urban school whose students come from the urban class, whereas studies last four years in high school whose students derive from the upper class.”. Ioannis Tsirimokos, who drafted the bill of 1913, provided that “only students who belong to the administrative social class could graduate from the University”. Seventeen years later, in 1930, Georgios Papandreou, during the latter period of Venizelos' mandate (1928-1932), limited attendance at the University to “gifted” students. In the following decades, the relationship between the lyceum and the university became very close. Moreover, the limited number of candidates accepted to universities and to the higher educational technological institutes as

well as the strict entrance exams resulted in the promotion of tuition, in student immigration and in the loss of the educative role of the lyceum. Unfortunately, there is not much hope for a solution in the near future, although lately a conversation concerning the admissions system at the universities and higher educational technological institutes has begun. At the beginning of 2009, a committee under Georgios Babiniotis, former rector of the University of Athens, proposed, among other measures, the participation of the universities in the selection procedure by defining weighting factors by department or school, the inclusion of the lyceum grade point average (*G.P.A*) in the selection criteria, the modification of the lyceum curricula, etc. The financial crisis that struck Greece along with the rest of the world, and the change of government created other political and social priorities that resulted in the “freezing” of the proposals of this committee. Once again, reform is being suspended.

Extension to Today

Given the current financial crisis, there is continuous pressure for a change to the system allowing entrance to the institutions of higher education. Many of the changes in education that took place in the past are being applied again. Thus, the following time-tested formulas are being discussed:

- Establishment of the national degree as a prerequisite for entering university, as happens in many European countries (the *Abitur* in Germany, the *Baccalauréat* in France, etc.)
- Introduction of a preparatory year after graduation from Lyceum and then enrollment in a Department
- Enrollment in a Department or in a University and afterwards enrollment in a Division
- Free admission to Departments hardly selected
- Participation of the institutions of higher education in the selection procedure with weighting factors for the programs.

NOTES

1. A. Dimaras, "The University and its handmaids", Proceedings of the 4th International Scientific Conference on the History of Education, Patras, October 6-8, 2006.
M. Kassotakis & A. Papangueli-Vouliouri, *Entrance to Higher Education: a Historical Flashback, Problems and Perspectives*, Athens, Gutenberg, 1996.
Th. Mylonas, *Sociology of the Greek Education: Contributions*, Athens, Gutenberg, 1998.
2. M. Kassotakis & A. Papangueli-Vouliouri, *op.cit.*
3. N. Mouzelis, *Post-marxistic Perspectives for a New Economy and Sociology*, Athens, Themelio, 1992.
4. S. Bouzakis, *Higher Education in Greece: Historical Documents*, vol. A' 1836-1925, vol. B' 1926-2005, Athens, Gutenberg, 2006.
5. K. Tsoukalas, *Dependence and Reproduction. The Social Role of the Educational Mechanisms in Greece (1830-1922)*, Athens, Themelio, 1982.
6. G. Dertilis, *History of the Greek State 1830-1920*, Athens, Hestia, 3rd edition, 2005.
7. Tsoukalas, K., *op.cit.*
8. Tsoukalas, K., *op.cit.*
9. I. Pantazidis, *Chronicle of the first fifty years of the Greek University*, Athens, 1889.
10. A. Dimaras, *op.cit.*
11. Th. Mylonas, *op.cit.*
12. A. Dimaras, *op.cit.*