



## Country Background Report Greece

### 1. Background – Everyday reality versus political framework?

The Greek educational system is a bureaucratic [sic] institution, hierarchically structured and administered through roles, positions and relations, all of which guarantee the uniformity of action in the achievement of centrally fixed targets.

Many reforms were implemented during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Greece in the education field. The Greek educational system was created under the specific conditions that characterized society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in direct relation to the constitution of the independent Greek State; during its development it has acquired some basic characteristics - that are attributed to a nexus of socioeconomic, political and ideological factors - such as its highly centralized and bureaucratic administrative structure, the absence of an overall strategy of financing education, the classical and religious orientation in the curricula of the schools and the remarkably strong popular demand for higher education.

In accordance with the 1975 Constitution, amended in 1986, education in Greece is under the supreme supervision of the State (Ministry of Education) and is conducted at the state's expense. The Minister of Education and Religion has a centralized control over state schools, sets educational curricula and approves school textbooks. In accordance with Article 16 of the Greek constitution, the educational system aims at developing a national and religious conscience and providing adequate training for the future citizens. A focal point of educational policy is the idea that education is a social resource and a right for every citizen.

The authority responsible for education policy has established an interdependence between central and local bodies, one in which central government—as the more senior partner—aims to secure action through local authorities. The Ministry also follows up the implementation of these laws and can intervene if necessary to adapt them to regional variations in practice. It also delegates the responsibility of their implementation to its regional authorities, irrespective of their degree of autonomy.

Despite the degree of regional autonomy, the Greek Ministry of Education examines and controls all actions taken by the regional educational organizations through administrative supervision. Hence there is a strong regional dependence on the central administration based in Athens. This centralization of power creates a number of problems both for the state and for its citizens. The line of authority runs between bureaucratic sectors, often resulting in a fragmented decision-making process. This administrative dependence can be attributed to the fact that most crucial activities—such as the setting of school curricula, the establishment of schools, the appointment of teachers, pupil-related issues, financial issues and the school operations concerning each educational unit—require ministerial approval.

In Greece, the centralization of education administration establishes an expectation of dependency, of reciprocal activity. This dependence is a source of constraint upon an organization but at the same time an organization can act to loosen those constraints. Among the principal arguments for educational centralization is the establishment of consistent quality in policy, programmes and activities. Decentralization on the other hand is a dynamic process and can be defined as the transfer of power, responsibilities and various functions from a central body to different levels of a prefecture or local authorities—an improved process based on accurate knowledge of local needs and circumstances, giving lower levels of the education system substantive authority to participate in local decision-making. The local authorities would only be subject to local political constraints. Despite the advantages of a decentralized system, though, there are inevitable difficulties in fulfilling the above expectations. In reality, there is no educational system in the world that has adopted true decentralization since in the educational process a balance between degrees of centralization and decentralization must be found. Thus, for the particular case of Greece, the question is to what extent central government uses its power and to what extent prefecture or local authorities accept/resist this control.

## 2. Context

In 1975 the Constitution established a new paradigm of education legislation, it established a common language for education, reformed the education division between primary, secondary and higher education, and initiated the improvement of the administration and monitoring of education. The new policy was promoted through the 1997 reform, the major components of which were the following: all the pre-existing types of upper secondary schools (general, technical-vocational and integrated *lyceum*) were abolished and a new general school of academic orientation (*Unified Lyceum*) was instituted, the examinations system was intensified by multiplying the subjects examined for entry in tertiary education at a national level, a new type of downgraded technical-vocational schools - classified as "post-compulsory" (and not "upper secondary") - was introduced, examinations were introduced for the hiring of teachers in compulsory and secondary education - as well as the multi-levelled assessment of teachers by "school advisers" whose role essentially changed to that of inspectors, the administrative structure of compulsory and upper secondary education was modified and new "regional directorates" were introduced. The third period of reforms of the educational system was between 2004 and 2006. These reforms introduced important changes, like a new law for the assessment of education and legislative actions in relation to lifelong learning.

In Greece, compulsory education lasts for nine years, from ages 6 to 15. The first six years are spent in Primary School and the last three years in Junior High School. Pupils may also attend state or private kindergarten schools prior to starting formal education.

### Primary Education

The Primary Schools are either state or private schools and they operate five days a week, with 5 - 6 teaching hours per day according to the grade the pupil attends. At the end of the school year, pupils in Grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are given a progress certificate and pupils in the 6th Grade are awarded a school-leaving certificate for use when enrolling in Junior High School. There are Primary Schools for pupils with special needs and 'all day' schools, which offer 'lunch' and cater for

the needs of pupils whose parents are at work throughout the day.

### Lower Secondary Education

Junior High Schools provide students with general education in all three grades. They operate five days a week, with 6 to 7 teaching hours per day. There are also intercultural schools with a special curriculum adapted to the needs of pupils of Greek origin returning from abroad and to the needs of foreign pupils living in Greece, whose parents are mainly economic immigrants. Some Junior High Schools have been established exclusively for specialised studies (e.g., Music, Sports and Theology). In addition there are experimental schools where advanced pedagogical teaching methods are planned, implemented and evaluated. Children with special needs attend classes in ordinary schools. Finally there are 'second chance' schools for adults who did not have the chance to complete their compulsory education. Students leaving the Junior High School are awarded a School Leaving Certificate. This certificate enables them to enrol in the Senior High Schools (either at a Lyceum or at a Technical Vocational School).

### Upper Secondary Education

In Greece, there are Senior High Schools (Lyceum) and Technical Vocational Schools, which are either state or private. Referring to state schools, there are day and night schools and in general there is no age limit.

In primary and secondary education, the backbone of the Greek educational system, everything depends on the Ministry of Education. Educational policy planning is effected at the highest ranks of the hierarchy and it is issued in the form of laws, presidential decrees, ministerial decisions and circulars which the educational units are required to put into practice.

Reviewing procedures, changes or modifications in the analytical curricula, time-tabled programs, the introduction of new technologies, of new books and other matters are not discussed at the level of the school unit. In all cases, these procedures depend on the decision-making that takes place at the top levels of the educational system, that is, the Ministry of Education.

According to the Ministerial Decision of 1998, the meaning and purpose of evaluation are defined as such:

- The evaluation of the educational task and of educators of primary and secondary education signifies the continual procedure of evaluating the quality of the provided education and evaluating the extent to which the purposes and targets of this education are realized.
- The purpose of the evaluation of the educational task is the improvement and the qualitative upgrading of all the constituent elements of the process of education. The aims are: continuous progress in the practice of teaching in the classroom, the improvement of the quality of school life, the stepping up of the procedure that puts a plan into action, the flattening of inequalities of function between different school units, the shrinking of bureaucratic procedures, the faster transmission of data, the more integrated command and functioning of the school units, the pointing out of the weaknesses of the educational system, the assessment of the efforts and the mobilization of all components of the educational procedure for the optimization of the total educational outcome.
- The evaluation of the educational task occurs in all the educational units and the administrative services of primary and secondary education.

The Law 2525 of 1998 regulates the evaluation of the school units of primary and secondary education (including the Technical-Vocational Education units). The evaluation of the constituent elements of the educational task is a precondition for the qualitative improvement of education and the lack of a systematic and critical evaluation of the educational system has wasted a long period of time where the inherent weaknesses of the system could have been directly dealt with.

### 3. School leadership concepts and practices

The expertise and training of educational members constitutes a rule of strategic importance: on the base of it, the relation of the educational member to its professional circle is continually redefined, its personal and professional advancement and by consequence the advancement of the personnel and the organization to which this member belongs is ensured. The training of school managers supplies school administration with additional and vocational expertise and aims at the smooth and effective function of the school. The correct training of school leaders suggests an educational change that becomes a critical element of reform and facilitates the promotion of the educational members and units.

An extensive survey conducted on the national level was titled "The administration of Gymnasium and Lyceum in Greece from the point of view of school managers". The conclusions that were drawn showed that the majority of school leaders consider their main duty to be the correct functioning of the school as a means to achieve educational targets.

Among administrative and organizational difficulties, those mentioned are notably bureaucracy, the lack of a code for legislation and the defective operation of the school council. Attention was also drawn to the indifference and unwillingness of parents to participate in the school process. The survey reached the conclusion that school managers demanded the enhancement of their role, the shrinking of bureaucracy, training and prospects of professional advancement. According to another survey, school managers consider a necessity the upgrading of their role and they propose the search for further motivation and more training in matters of administration. They highlight the fact that a school manager deals with an extreme amount of diverse activities, while the modern school is at pains to fulfil its targets.

Concerning the position of school leaders with respect to matters of additional training, they esteem that the state does not equip them efficiently to carry out their task nor does it

prepare them ideologically to adequately deal with problems during the exercise of their duties. School managers criticize the limited state efforts to organize seminars that would systematically support their administrative, pedagogical and scientific task, claiming that the overall lack in organization amounts to the unproductiveness of their own efforts.

In order for the unit to be able to function, the Greek school leader should be able to apply practical solutions to everyday problems. It is vital to pursue cooperation among school personnel in order to create a positive climate within the school unit. The system of administration to which the School Unit belongs has a tripartite structure, which comprises the **local**, the **prefectural** and the **national** level. In addition to the teachers, the students and the central or district administration of the Ministry of Education, the administration and management of the educational system involves the Local and Prefectural Authorities, the parents and other public and social agents.

A Greek professor of Pedagogy at the University of Ioannina (Georges Mavrogiorgos) reports that “all the administrative members of education and especially school managers need special training because their task is manifold and complex. Until now, our country has not set the formation of managerial personnel a national priority but it is imperative that it follows the example of other countries of the European Union”.

#### 4. Recruiting and Educating of school managers

The basic law which set the objective and the form of training for educators is Law 1566/85 as modified by Article 7 of Law 1865/1989. The training of school leaders is on the historical trail of the training of educators. After the change of regime in the 1970s, educational training agents became the Instruction schools for Primary and Middle Education while in the decade 1980 the Training schools for Primary Education (SELDE) and for Secondary Education (SELME) emerged. These schools envisaged among others the functioning of short-term programs of training for principals of the Gymnasium and of the Lyceum. These programs, however, never materialized. In

1983, Presidential Decrees 177/83 and 178/83 initiated the training within SELDE and SELME of school leaders, of the heads of the Direction of Education and of the Offices of school advisors. Nevertheless, these programs did not function either, except for one which concerned the training of School Advisors in Athens SELDE in 1984.

From 1985, when the District Training Centres (PEK) entered legislation, until 1992, when their function was decreed by Law 1566/85, no advances were made towards the training of educational members. From 1992, when PEK began to function, until 1996, when the actions of EPEAEK took shape, programs regarding school direction begin to function periodically within the Instruction schools for Primary Education, the District Training Centers (PEK) and in a number of institutions deriving from Higher Educational Institutions (AEI), and from Technical Educational Institutions (TEI), PATES/SELETE.

It is mainly after 1996 that we observe an adequate number of efforts aiming to establish educational direction as an object of study. These efforts include the introduction of respective lessons in the undergraduate studies of future educators, the introduction of lessons in the programs of after-education (Instruction schools for Primary Education) for Primary education trainees and in the programs of training for Secondary Education trainees; they also include the conducting of seminars in the District Training Centres (PEK) and in the school of Educational Functionaries for Vocational and Technical Education (SELETE), and finally the conducting of seminars for members of the education from the National Centre of Public Administration.

This training can be described as “the sum of activities and procedures that are linked with the concept, the planning and application of special programs that aim to stir up, improve, upgrade and further develop the academic– theoretical or practical, professional and personal interests, abilities, knowledge and skills of the educators during their term of office”. The need for training is brought forth by changes in the social, economic and technological sphere that reflect the need for change in the educational process.

According Law 1566/85, the position of the school leader is equal to that of the rest of the teachers for most of the matters that concern the school unit, while for certain decisions the schoolmaster maintains the right for an extraordinary summon of the collective organs. The same Law established collective organs of a consultative, supportive as well as managing nature, as much on a centrally administrative level as on a local level of governance. Supplementary organs on the level of the School Unit, besides the Parents' Association and the student societies, are the School Council, which claims a consultative role, and the School Committee, which assumes a managing function. The School Council and the School Committee constitute the organs of popular attendance on the level of the School Unit, in which participate official parents' representatives. In particular, in every Secondary school, but also in Primary schools, according to the above law, a School Council is operative, which consists of Parents' and Guardians' Association, a representative of the Local Government and three representatives of student societies (from Secondary schools) and has a supportive character. President of the School Council is the Schoolmaster.

The School Council meets regularly three times a year and extraordinarily when either the schoolmaster or at least two other participant agents require it. The meetings take place in the school outside the hours of teaching. (Permanent Educational Code)

The School Council is an organ that conduces to the growth of a new type of administration and internal organization of the school that will render the school relatively flexible and autonomous, with respect to possible actions, to its contact with new sources and to the prospects of its opening to the local community. The other organs of popular attendance on the level of the School unit, which assumes a managing role and in which parents participate officially, is the School Committee.

Article 5 of Law 1894/90, recommends the formation of municipal or community legal entities under the registered name "School Committees", regulated by presidential decree 323/1989. Every School Committee is occupied with matters of one or more public Secondary or Primary schools respective of the needs of the

locality. The leadership of the School Committees is made up of the headmasters of the respective schools, a representative of the respective Parents' and Guardians' Association and a representative of the student societies of Secondary Education. The task of the School Committee is the management of the budget available for covering the expenses of the respective schools, the wage of the cleaners, the implementation of projects for repair and maintenance, the supply of schools with furniture and equipment of general use and books for the school libraries, the management of the profits of the school canteen, and, at large, the adoption of measures that support the administrative function of the School Units. (Permanent Educational Code). The Parents' and Guardians' Association of every school unit consists of parents of various social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

The schoolmaster of every School Unit, reelected every 4 years, is the person in charge of every institutional but also non-institutional communication between parents and school. The law assigns the power to the School leaders to convene a general assembly of parents in order to establish the Parents' and Guardians' Association. The headmaster is responsible, as president, for the regular or extraordinary convening of the School Council and for its basic functioning.

## 5. Challenges, areas of innovation and underlying evidence

A comprehensive review of literature on educational administration revealed that many educational researchers have discussed the issue of shared leadership by giving emphasis mainly to the participation of educators in the decision-making process. For example, Harris has argued that: 'in hierarchical systems and structures, distributed leadership is characterized as a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working together'. However, since distributed leadership is a way of managing an organization and less so a technique or practice, such collaboration can be put in a broader context. Within this frame, a collaborative culture is important for sharing a common vision; the balanced delegation of responsibilities; allowing people to adopt their own initiatives in response

to the needs of the school unit; equal involvement in the decision-making process; instilling confidence and encouragement at all levels; and helping the organization to retain authority and discipline. Successful management demands the clarification of goals and implementation of collaborative solutions. Of course, the importance of networking and collaboration is not a new phenomenon in the educational process. 'They alone do not establish authority and accountability regarding performance but both are essential elements for sustained implementation'. Also, a key strategic point for educational leaders is the level of organization communication since organizational knowledge has been found to play a significant role in effective communication.

Over the last three decades, due to the increasing complexity of the public sector and the demand for effective administration, bureaucracy in Greece has grown considerably. A lack of attention to informal networks and open communications is the main reason why Greek public organizations are neither flexible nor fluid. The latter consideration suggests the need for a reorganization of the strongly centralized Greek civil service—a view being increasingly voiced.

Since 1950 many attempts have been made by policy makers to modernize the Greek administrative system. In response to the recent legislative reforms in Greek education, the efforts of the central administration towards the objective and unbiased devolution of power are evident. However, in practical terms the efficiency of these reforms is rather doubtful since the central administration did not allocate substantive activities to the school managerial bodies. As a result, they have not produced initiatives that take the school closer to the security of a dynamic leadership and hence in forming the school as an ongoing organization. Moreover, Greek educational reforms lack the coordination necessary to achieve long-term goals—they are not part of a national strategic management plan but rather the fruit of individual expectations, views and/or values. The sheer number of Laws governing education administration creates an enormous burden of work for the officials, and prevents the government from implementing efficient education planning and from modernizing the administrative system. However, there has to be a clear and consistent focus on achieving results

both in the short and long term. Short-term results help success to breed success; long-term results are important in creating an enduring culture of continuous improvement in the education system. The two are connected, as Schmoker points out: 'current organizational habits that avoid focusing on short term measurable gains are the major obstacles impeding not only isolated improvements but also system-wide transformation. Palpable gains are the key to leveraging change in the system ...'

Education administration has a critical role for every country as it provides a competitive advantage and thus is viewed as a strong public benefit, essential to the broader public welfare. Education systems in all parts of the world remain dynamic. Efforts are being made (even in the most developed countries) to design new educational systems in ways that minimize and discourage ineffectiveness. There is a growing recognition in many countries, especially in those with heavily centralized administrations, that alternative forms of educational management are necessary to affect a positive change performance. The proposals below have been drafted in view of the Greek case studies previously discussed and aim to improve efficacy in education administration.

In this context, Greece is encouraged to aspire to the following. First, a strongly centralized administration is clearly not viable, not only in the Greek system but in any education system, since it creates difficulties in effective leadership. We are currently seeing a shift towards decentralized structures especially in countries that follow the strongly administrative model such as Greece and South Africa. Some consider the appropriateness of centralization or decentralization to be a matter of striking the right balance. 'A decentralized organisation should function as parts of whole rather than simply independent parts'. The rational devolution of power to regional or prefecture authorities would facilitate a more efficient and productive implementation of education policy and promote accountability through clearly defined responsibilities and more appropriately prescribed tasks. A strong intersystem of collaboration and alliances, a partnership between schools, prefectural authorities and the state based on mutual confidence and trust and collaborative initiatives are needed to make this sense of balance work in Greece and so move

forward with policy development. The emphasis on administrative decentralization is based on the market-led assumption that local governments (and hence prefectures) know and understand their needs better than does central government and they help the public to overcome the physical inaccessibility of central government. 'Put positively, when local leaders do connect with larger system purposes they are much more effective within their own organisations and certainly across organisations when they step out'.

Second, the problem of striking a balance between hierarchical levels and controls remains acute for large systems such as education. Bureaucratic structure can contribute to persistent and effective operation only if it is professionally oriented bureaucracy in the sense that the State plays a recessive role where tangible problems need to be solved. Let us consider that (1) top heavy bureaucracy is inefficient and focuses on 'process' rather than on 'outcomes', (2) greater accountability interaction is the new dynamic in the school community relations (3) 'the replacement of a bureau-professional organisational order in education by a managerial one is dangerous', and that (4) for the particular case of education in Greece, a burdensome administration is certainly a drawback of the system.

Then, educational planners could gradually change the Greek organizational culture by creating fewer hierarchical levels and a 'marginalized' bureaucracy within specific boundaries. The strong state bureaucracy could gradually be eliminated and automatically the negative outcomes would be reduced and the positives would be reinforced. The policy-making process for a less administrative bureaucracy would give emphasis to information channels and communication to facilitate decision-making policy. The principle 'promotion of good leadership in all levels of the system is certainly better for everyone' and 'what goes around comes around' applies to go good things as well as bad.

Third, the proposition that too powerful administration in Greece has limited instrumentalities in educational organizations and restricts the abilities of resources, both human and material, is

accepted. Any measure of improvement for administrative action "cannot come only with the passing of laws or signing decrees". Like most types of reform it is built rather than created. The implementation of the above proposals, though, would be problematic if the policy-makers could not specify clearly their objectives so as to build upon (instead of create) a proper educational administrative system. Many problems in implementation might be avoided if policy-makers strived to link policy and action through a strategic policy with clear, but most of all consistent, objectives and attitudes. The plethora of laws on education related to school affairs should be replaced by a new education reform introducing simpler administrative procedures that protect the system from inadequacies, strengthen the incentives and the capabilities of all groups involved in the education system, and thus ensure better working practices.

The education acts must endure for the long-term and certainly not be replaced as soon as there is a change in political power. In terms of time frame, a system cannot be changed immediately but gradually. This is particularly true of a country like Greece, which has a tradition of bureaucracy. It is not going to be instantly responsive to a more fluid and distributed approach to leadership. The existing system must first develop itself – new roles learned, communication patterns reversed, planning procedure revised, and so forth.

An efficient school manager entertains a vision of his own with respect to the school that he leads. Through his attitude and action, he conveys his vision with enthusiasm to the educators and students of the school as well as to the rest of the members of the educational community, such as parents and local society.

An equally important trait of a school manager is the ability to create a positive climate, which promotes the effectiveness of the school. Providing an inviting and promising atmosphere, the school manager gives the school positive social status. A positive climate is also prompted by the decision-making procedures that the school leader advocates. Effectual school leaders place their confidence on educators within the school and in a democratic manner give them the opportunity to participate in the decision-making that involves the educative work of the school.

The competent school leader is in a position to organize, coordinate and skilfully manage all states of affairs. He or she stresses the personal abilities of the educators, considers the individual needs of the students and seeks to develop a

spirit of cooperation within the school, by adopting a common system of values, beliefs, behaviour, ways of thinking and expressions, setting common targets and objectives.

## Appendix

### References

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