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## INTRODUCTION

Three reports on Greek education have been commissioned and published by the OECD since 1961. The first one, in 1961, reviewed the reform measures of that period, while the second, in 1965, was part of the Mediterranean Regional Project and aimed at an assessment of educational needs and requirements from the perspective of manpower planning, and the third, in 1979, discussed necessary reforms. The 1980 publication, entitled *Educational Policy and Planning* (published by the Greek Ministry of Education), summarised reforms up to that point in time and comprised three parts: Part One reviewed the educational reforms and policies undertaken in 1960-80 and the structure of the education system before and after the 1976-77 reforms; Part Two dealt with quantitative information on Greek education and society, and focused on trends in enrolments, student/teacher ratios, educational opportunities and the performance of the system; Part Three outlined and analysed two major legislative measures – the 309/1976 Law on General Education, and the 576/1977 Law on Technical and Vocational Education. The 1980 report therefore, in its 180 pages, had a very clear and precise goal: to look at educational reforms to the Greek education system.

The 1980 report in its epilogue, expressed apprehensions about the implementation of “educational modernisation and democratisation” not only because these are “arduous tasks in all liberal societies”, but more so, since Greece, is “a country with deeply entrenched traditions, very limited resources, conflicting ideologies and a history of educational conservatism, as well as frequent political changes”. Nevertheless, the authors were optimistic and believed that “since 1974, the country has enjoyed unprecedented stability, educational and public opinion has been more receptive to modern currents of thought, and so, the political leadership is determined to see that the reforms are successfully carried out”. Therefore, they suggested, “there is every reason (...) to believe that (the) educational reform (...) will not suffer the fate of previous efforts”. To what extent the situation has improved will be shown in the present, 1995 report, which will review the current situation. The OECD Examiners’ Report (Part Two) will also provide valuable insights and it is hoped that such descriptions of the system as “highly centralised”, and governed solely by “Parliamentary laws and executive acts” or managed “by a powerful centralised bureaucracy” (OECD, *Reviews of National*

*Policies for Education: Greece*, Paris, 1982), will not be manifest and that unmistakable evidence regarding the participation of the people in the planning and administration of education will be apparent.

It must be noted that during the years 1982-85 a major movement to reform education took place and was evidenced through the application of three fundamental new laws: *i)* the 1268/82 Law for Higher Education, which among other adjustments, abolished the all too powerful institution of "Professorial Chair" replacing it with a more pluralistic approach to subject-teaching and allowed the participation of students in the organisation of universities; *ii)* the 1401/83 Law, which upgraded the Institutions of Technological Education to the level of Tertiary Education institutions and, at the same time, promoted the quality of their studies; and *iii)* the 1566/85 Law which concerned itself mainly with the reorganisation, democratisation and decentralisation of primary and secondary education by introducing new national, regional and local bodies and authorities, new procedures, etc. The latter reform was an all-encompassing reform which shaped the profile of the present education system considerably, promoted special education and adult education, and developed in-service training for teachers. It also introduced the new institution of Integrated Lyceum (EPLs); simplified the language-grammar by establishing the "one-accent-only"; modernised and revised curricula and textbooks; abolished entrance-exams to upper secondary education; created the post-lyceum public preparatory centres for higher education, and so on.

Although in the intervening years, further adjustments, including the abolition of certain reform measures (such as the post-lyceum preparatory centres), have taken place (as will be described in the present report), some continuity in the goals and orientation of the two most recent reforms (those of 1976 and those of 1981-86) are apparent. And this, in itself, is an encouraging development.

However, this introduction is perhaps the appropriate place to mention a few particular characteristics of education in Greece, as determined by socio-economic, historic, political, and other factors. These characteristics may emerge occasionally from the figures and indicators of the relevant research findings – but it is worth pointing out the characteristic concerning curricula for the teaching of the Greek Language (or History in this respect). The Greek language is the oldest language in Europe and plagued by many modifications requiring specialised curricula and syllabi to familiarise the Greek pupil with the texts that were written at the beginning of our century (let alone previous centuries). The quality and outcome of curricula, syllabi, textbooks, therefore, are areas of lengthy debate regarding educational policy in Greece and cannot be examined separately from other interdependent variables such as the financing of education (in Greece public education from pre-school up to university education is provided free) or the deficiencies in classroom stock (which result necessarily in a certain inflexibility for the implementation of new curricula).

Greek education has nevertheless come a long way. Recently, the National Council for Education (ESYP) was established and met for the first time, in October 1995. This Council, will guarantee the participation in all procedures for the three levels of education and especially in their design and organisation.

The same decree legalised the establishment of the Institute for Continuing Education (IDEKE) which aims to develop mainly continuing education using new technology and modern communication media for education from a distance. The Open University will also move in the same direction. It will start in 1996.

An issue which is of great importance to the Ministry is decentralisation of the education system. A special committee has been established to examine this matter carefully and systematically.

The modernisation and reorganisation of tertiary education is one of our main priorities.

One cannot also ignore the continuous increase in the demand for university education – a demand which should be considered as an invaluable national asset. This demand has been met on the one hand, with the creation of new universities or the expansion of existing ones (in a period of limited State budget, both objectives are almost paradoxical), and on the other, with the great numbers (still not estimated with precision) of Greek students studying abroad. Not surprisingly then, the entrance examinations process to tertiary education is a continuous issue of national debate and criticism.

Finally, the development of education in Greece cannot be viewed in isolation of its turbulent, socio-political context. In the 167 years for example, since the country's emergence as an independent State, it has been involved in more than four wars, a three-year foreign occupation, two long-lasting dictatorships, one extremely bitter and devastating civil war, numerous *coups d'état*, intermittent civil wars and large influxes of refugees and immigrants. Such a history for a small country as Greece weighs heavily on national development and has numerous repercussions on Greek education. Evidence of the particular historical conditions in which the Greek State has developed is the fact that the formal title (and in part, function) of the Ministry of Education is "Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs". Its ancestor was, during the 1833 ten-year Greek State, the "Secretariat for *Religious* and Public Education".

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