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SCHOOL EDUCATION

STRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS

The Greek school system has a rather simple, clearly delineated structure that has not changed since 1977. Compulsory schooling consists of six years primary, followed by a three-year comprehensive *gymnasium* or lower secondary school. At the post-compulsory upper secondary level four different types of school are available: a general *lyceum*, a technical/vocational *lyceum*, a comprehensive *lyceum* that offers both general and technical education (operating on an experimental basis since 1984) and a two-year technical/vocational school. Besides these schools there is also an apprenticeship system.

Whatever problems there may be – and undoubtedly there are many – no-one imputes them to inadequacies in the structure of the system, a view which we fully share. Overall enrolments in the schools have remained more or less constant since 1980. There has been a slight increase in the late 1980s, followed by a decline that brought the 1993/94 enrolments down to slightly less than the 1980/81 level. The numbers of teachers have slowly but steadily increased. As a result, the teacher/pupil ratio has decreased and is now on the low side as compared to other Western European countries: 16/9 in the kindergarten, 20/4 in primary, 15/6 in the gymnasium, 14/7 in the general lyceum and 13/2 in the technical and vocational schools.

These figures, however, conceal important discrepancies between the sparsely populated regions (islands and mountainous areas) and the major cities: in the latter, teacher/pupil ratios are often unacceptably high, in the former they have often gone down to very low levels indeed. As already mentioned, the rampant depopulation of the rural areas, to the benefit of a savage growth of the cities, is one of the major problems that Greece – and its educational system – faces. Maintaining an adequate public education service in the depopulating regions has had as its counterpart an inadequate supply in the cities: inadequate not just in terms of teacher/pupil ratios, but also in terms of available school facilities. The building of new schools has not kept pace with needs and in many cases there is a distressing shortage of classrooms. Very large numbers of schools share their facilities with other schools and work in two or even three shifts. Others are housed in rented, totally inappropriate accommodation. The shortage is greatest in the Attica

prefecture, but also Heraklion and the Salonika prefecture have massive and urgent needs, as we were able to see on the spot. In some of the "problem schools" which we visited the teaching and living conditions are simply unacceptable and often the most elementary hygienic and security conditions are not met. Every possible space – including cellars, corridors, store rooms, teacher rooms – has been turned into a classroom, and an overcrowded one at that.

It seems that money is not the only or even the main problem. The main obstacle to providing new schools is the lack of building sites. Lack of foresight of the various administrations at the time when the "boom" started, as well as inadequate regulations, must carry the blame. The Ministry of Education and the henceforth co-responsible local administration alone cannot solve the problem. We suggest that there is a strong case for a government-backed emergency programme, possibly supported by EU funding, to deal with the immediate needs of priority designated areas. (We understand that EU funding has indeed been made available now and that this new money is being used for the purposes stated here.) It may well be that the possibilities of expropriation, *e.g.* of unused building plots, need to be widened. In our view, the higher interests at stake would fully justify such a step.

There are still large numbers of small schools in the island and mountain regions, schools with less than four teachers and classrooms. The problem of the depopulation of the rural areas is a familiar one. Closing down the small schools and concentrating the educational facilities in the towns meets with strong resistance from the local communities, besides requiring transport of children that is costly and that for social and human reasons has to be kept within reasonable bounds in terms of time and distance. Besides, in these regions children are often asked to help out in their family's business – farming and tourism – and parents do not want their children to be away from home for too long a time. The major educational and social advantages of maintaining the small schools in the villages need to be carefully weighed against the educational and economic advantages of concentrating schools in the towns and bigger villages.

There are no miracle solutions to these problems. It may, however, be worth having a close look at the solutions that other countries have adopted to solve similar problems – Portugal, Canada and several Scandinavian countries in particular. Part of the solution may lie in distance teaching. A reorganisation of time-schedules (over the week, over the year) in order to reduce the transport periods and release children from school when they are needed at home may be considered. Teacher instead of pupil mobility is another possibility, as is closer involvement in their schools of the parents and of other adults in the community.

A prospective study of the needs and conditions of schooling, in particular of compulsory schooling, in present day Greece is called for in order to chart such problems and weigh the various solutions that would be best adapted to particular circumstances. The new responsibility of the local administrations for education

offers a welcome opportunity for such an initiative. School building and equipment, under the rules that came into force as of 1 January 1995, are the responsibility of the Prefectures (although the funds are still provided by central administration), whereas school maintenance is now the responsibility of the municipalities. (We deal with the problems and possibilities which arise from decentralisation as it affects school building, equipment and maintenance, in Chapter 4 below.)

PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION

Pre-school enrolments have remained stable since 1980. Roughly speaking, half of the 3½-5½-year-olds are enrolled and this rate has practically not increased in the last 15 years. It seems that, because of the lack of places, many children are refused admission. The growing participation of women in employment leads to a steady increase in the demand for pre-school education, a demand that in the present circumstances cannot be satisfied. There is also a great need for "all day" kindergarten for the children of employed mothers.

Many kindergarten share their premises with primary schools, or, more precisely, are given a minimum of space in already overcrowded primary schools. Their conditions are often such that there is no place for play or for creative activities. Playgrounds are often missing or are very poorly equipped. The sharing of facilities could be turned into an advantage, in particular in view of making the transition from pre-school to primary education more flexible; it seems, however, that very little is done to exploit the possibilities of a forced "cohabitation", even though it is recognised that children who have attended kindergarten adapt on the whole much more easily to the primary school than those who have not.

The answer to this is not necessarily to make all children attend kindergarten and to make the kindergarten into a preparatory stage for primary education. It may also lie in reconsidering the pedagogy of the first year(s) of primary education, as has been done in other countries.

On the other hand, it seems necessary to rapidly expand the number of places in kindergarten education, in addition to improving the material conditions of the existing ones. One of the obstacles to such a policy is the scattered responsibility for pre-school matters over several ministries. (The Ministry of Education has responsibility for kindergartens but not for day-care centres.) It might be best to give the Ministry of Education sole responsibility for all pre-school matters or, if this is not possible, at least entrust it with a co-ordinating role. Particularly in urban areas, the priority of all-day care for all children below the schooling age should be explored. Half-day care does not meet the needs of all parents, besides the fact that transport to and from the kindergarten occupies a disproportionate amount of time in relation to the actual time that children are taken care of.

COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

The general view is that the quality of primary schooling in Greece is rather good, and we have no reason to quarrel with this view. Our concern is to ensure that this high quality is maintained against a background of ever smaller schools in the villages and overcrowded ones in the cities, combined with the "greying" of the teaching force resulting from the *epetiris* system of appointment. Moreover, the single-textbook rule in primary schools makes for a stifling formal uniformity all over Greece. It is a disincentive to creativity and initiative, of teachers as well as pupils, and an incentive to rote learning. Children are thus as of an early age accustomed to an externally imposed learning environment and content that rewards conformity and sanctions individual initiative. Furthermore, the decline of enrolments implies that few new teachers are hired. Thus, another source of change and initiative has dried up.

Underneath this formal uniformity there are, however, large differences. As already mentioned, very many primary schools have less than four – and many even only one or two – classes. This is not necessarily a disadvantage. It is said that the children from these small rural schools often do better in secondary education than those from the larger schools. But there are also disadvantages. The small schools cannot offer English as a second language. They cannot afford sophisticated teaching aids. The children often travel over long distances and in the summer they are kept at home to help in farm work or in the tourist business (see also above).

Some years ago grade-repeating was abolished, rather to the general satisfaction. But the measure was not accompanied by its necessary counterpart, *i.e.* support for pupils with learning difficulties. On the other hand, automatic grade promotion would be more beneficial if it were accompanied by adequate pupil assessment that would provide trustworthy information as to the pupils' weak and strong points and thus guide the teacher in the next grade.

Voices are heard here and there in favour of re-establishing grade-repeating, in particular in the first grades where many pupils have serious learning and adaptation difficulties. It seems to us that this would not solve the problem. A much more effective measure would be to arrange for external support for pupils with such learning difficulties and to smooth the transition from kindergarten to primary school by introducing more creative and flexible, child-adapted pedagogical methods in the first years of primary education, as already mentioned.

There are too few school advisers to carry out this special support task and individual support is not part of their mandate. Besides, most of them do not have the required competence. The solution would consist in either providing the teachers themselves with the required competence or introducing a system of external counselling by adequately trained staff.

A growing problem is that of the absence of custody for primary school children after school hours (schools are half-day). This seems to be one of the reasons why parents send their children to private schools, where such custody is provided. In some schools the parents themselves have taken the initiative and have hired competent persons (often teachers without employment) to take care of the children in the afternoons. Such initiatives deserve support by the local communities and administrations as well as by central administration.

Upon completion of primary school pupils are given a certificate recording their achievement in the various disciplines. Admission to the *gymnasium* is automatic, and the certificates are merely for information communicated to the *gymnasium* administration. It seems, however, that often they are not put to any use and that the procedure thus fails to meet its presumed pedagogical purpose.

Concerning the *gymnasium*, we were told that many pupils entering this level are not well-prepared. Grade repeating in the *gymnasium* is not formally abolished, but in reality nearly all pupils are almost automatically promoted to the next grade. There is, as throughout the system, one textbook per discipline. Most teachers to whom we spoke feel that this practice is regrettable and damaging. It must be added that in the *gymnasium* each discipline is taught by a subject teacher. *Gymnasium* teachers have, contrary to their primary school colleagues, received very little pedagogical training. The new regulations, however, make some pre-service training mandatory. At any rate, for many pupils the transition from primary to secondary school is difficult.

Very few initiatives seem to have been taken by principals or by individual teachers to break the one textbook rule, a fact that may come as a surprise if one considers that these teachers have been academically trained in their discipline. It must be recalled, however, that the textbook rule also applies to higher education and that secondary school teachers have never been exposed to other practices. Thus, the very idea of using different sources of information is probably alien to most teachers.

The textbook problem, however, is only part of a wider problem. In many schools the prevailing attitude seems to be one of resignation. Whereas many teachers agree that "something has to be done", the overall reaction is that, in view of the lack of facilities and the absence of any reward for extra performance or for initiative, teachers cannot be expected to do more than the strictly necessary. Initiatives are foredoomed. Besides, teachers' low salaries do not warrant any extra effort. Without (much) more money, we were told, for the teachers and for the equipment of schools, nothing can be done.

Many teaching hours are lost because teaching posts remain unfilled or because absent teachers are not replaced. This may seem paradoxical in a system with a ten-year waiting list for teachers. Sometimes the reasons for vacancies,

particularly in the outlying regions, are administrative: rules as to appropriation are (too) complex, money is appropriated for other purposes. Schools do not have the freedom to replace an absent teacher themselves. In spite of the waiting list, it is difficult to find teacher candidates for schools in remote regions.

As we emphasise later on, a hard look at management competences and management practices throughout the system – from the Ministry of Education down to local administrations and schools – seems necessary in order to find solutions to this accumulation of problems. More flexibility and more devolution of responsibility, including budgetary matters, to the "workfloor level", in particular to the schools themselves, should be the first rule that should govern a thoroughly revised system of educational management.

The *frontisteria*, or private cramming courses, are already fairly common at the *gymnasium* level. It is generally felt that they are needed to make up for the shortcomings of the public system and many teachers seem, in defiance of the rules, to be engaged in private afternoon courses. The *frontisteria* also help to solve another problem, *i.e.* that of the afternoon occupation of pupils, in particular those of working parents. It seems that an earlier initiative to organise custody for those who want or need it has again been abolished. As in some primary schools, parents have – here and there, with the help of teachers and the local community – hired staff to take care of pupils in the afternoons.

The enrichment of the curriculum with information technology is generally welcomed and adequate equipment has been made available to most schools. But in many schools teachers have not received the necessary training in information technology and the subject is not systematically assured.

The appropriateness of a uniform curriculum with no options until the age of 15 is not universally endorsed. Many teachers feel that some degree of differentiation should be offered, in order to better suit the diversity of needs and abilities. But no concrete ideas were put forward as to how and what. As in other matters, the overall reaction is that the idea in itself is perhaps good, but in the present circumstances, both in terms of resources and of central management, there is no place for initiatives of this kind. Nevertheless, we feel strongly that the possibility of a somewhat diversified curriculum should be considered. We shall come back to this later in this report.

The Background Report mentions that in 1991/92 8.9 per cent of pupils had dropped out from the *gymnasium*, nearly all of them (7.3 per cent) in the first year. Regional drop-out rates varied very strongly, from 1 per cent to 29 per cent. In 17 of the 120 administrative regions they were over 15 per cent. The high rates occurred mainly in the rural regions. It seems likely that work in family businesses is one of the main reasons.

This raises in the first instance questions as to the adequacy of the compulsory schooling period. Few, if any, people in Greece would want to shorten compulsory schooling, but special arrangements for pupils in rural areas that would allow them to help out in their parents' business in the summer would probably be welcomed by many.

On the other hand, these drop-out rates provide a strong argument in favour of a policy of continuing education. Facilities for continuing education in Greece, particularly in the remote regions, are almost non-existent. Parallel to preventive and remedial measures against early drop-out serious consideration needs to be given to the possibility of making continuing education and training available in these regions.

UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

The vast majority of *gymnasium* pupils continue their studies in upper secondary schools. About 60 per cent enrol in general *lycea*, 5 per cent in polyvalent *lycea*, 25 per cent in technical *lycea* and 10 per cent in technical/vocational schools. Pupils are free to attend the upper secondary school of their choice. But obviously the marks of the final certificate of the *gymnasium* play a large role in the choice: the best pupils go to the general *lyceum* and the least performing ones to the technical/vocational schools.

It seems remarkable that this free choice does not lead to an even greater rush on the general *lycea*, as these are the only direct access to university. The percentage entering the general *lyceum* has even decreased in the past decade, although the target of 40 per cent entrants to upper secondary technical or vocational education has not been entirely attained. On the other hand, the demand for entrance to the general *lycea* seems to exceed the number of places available and many candidates are refused admission or are discouraged from applying.

The question must be raised whether this "spontaneous" allocation would not better be accompanied by guidance of pupils, on the one hand, and by a certain amount of freedom for schools to select their pupils, on the other. Even if Greece is in this respect not alone, it is regrettable that technical and vocational education almost automatically receive the academically weaker candidates.

Many teachers in the general *lycea* feel that pupils have not been adequately prepared in the *gymnasium*. Without further information it is difficult to say whether this is true. If anything, it confirms the need for systematic assessment of pupil performance in the *gymnasium*. It also provides a further argument in favour of some degree of curriculum differentiation in the last year of the *gymnasium*. On the other hand, the criteria on which the marks mentioned in the final certificate of the *gymnasium* are based need to be revised, or at least be made more explicit, so as to

allow for more rational judgements as to the appropriateness of choice of upper secondary school.

A certain amount of horizontal transfer takes place between the general and the technical *lyceum*, particularly at the end of the first grade. But this is almost entirely a "downward" movement, from general to technical. Low achievers recognise that they will be better off in the technical *lyceum*. The latter is thus burdened with another load of involuntary candidates.

In the upper two grades of the general *lyceum* the DESMI (academic streams) system is the dominant factor. It entirely determines pupils' and teachers' approaches to learning because of its direct preparatory role for the respective entrance examinations to university. This is widely thought to be undesirable and harmful, because of its various negative side effects: it reinforces the role of rote-learning and it reduces the range of subjects that are taken seriously by pupils, parents and teachers to those that appear in the university entrance examination.

It can, of course, be argued that over three years pupils are exposed to the full range of subjects and that this exposure cannot but have positive effects. But one may just as well wonder whether this effect is proportionate to the time, energy and money that are invested in their teaching. And, more seriously, whether such a reduction to a few academic subjects (even if the range is somewhat wider than is usual in the Anglo-Saxon A-level tradition) is compatible with the broad aims that *lyceum* education is expected to achieve: "(...) help young people to understand social reality and to choose their future career, so that they can successfully integrate into society and contribute to the country's economic and cultural development. A solid education in an oecumenic and humanitarian national conscience shall enable the graduates to work together with the other citizens from their country and from the entire world in order to promote science, art, the quality of life, peace and, in one word, civilisation" (freely translated from the report of Greece to the 44th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 1994, French text p. 20).

At any rate, it is likely that very little attention is given to the full range of the common core of subjects – which in the last grade covers religion, history, principles of science policy, a foreign language and physical education, altogether ten out of thirty weekly hours. According to the DESMI (the group of subjects that students must chose for entry into higher education) selected, pupils in the higher grades are no longer exposed to mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, economics or sociology. The number of "real" disciplines is thus restricted to four or five.

The final certificate of the *lyceum* is granted on the basis of the achievement in the foregoing grades and it is given to all pupils who have completed the third grade. It is the sole responsibility of the school and does not include any special final examination or test. The certificate mentions the marks that have been

obtained, but these are not taken into account for the university entrance examination.

In the upper grades of the general *lyceum* private cramming courses have become, for everybody concerned – pupils, parents and teachers – nearly the only thing that counts, *i.e.* the only thing that it is worth spending time and money on. The dominant role of the *frontisteria* is nothing short of an open admission of the inadequacies of the public system. The demoralising effect on the public *lyceum* is immense.

It goes almost without saying that this situation should not be allowed to continue, and everybody we met is in agreement with this view. But concrete and "feasible" proposals as to what and how are rare. There are indeed several obstacles to be overcome:

- The monopoly of the university entrance examination must be broken. As already indicated, the pursuit and attainment of the aims of *lyceum* education are thoroughly thwarted by the tyranny that this examination exercises over the *lyceum*.
- Evaluation of studies and assessment of achievement must be given their due role in the *lyceum* itself. They must cover the full range of subjects and rely on criteria that are derived from the teaching objectives of every discipline.
- The final certificate given at the end of *lyceum* education should be given a value in its own right. We have been heartened to learn that plans for the introduction of National Lyceum Leaving Certificate – *Ethnico Apolitivio* – have since been drawn up and are ready for implementation. This aim would be achieved if a school-external element in the validation of achievement were introduced. Such an "external element" could take various forms: a final examination with participation of external examiners, or (partly) based on externally-formulated examination tasks. Externally-developed achievement tests could also help to attain this aim. The final marks given should be based on these external criteria and on the internal school attainment measurement.

Such external measurement instruments need to be developed professionally. External advice and assistance may also be needed in order to allow schools to develop and improve their own, internal achievement assessment.

The required external professional competence is at present not sufficiently developed in Greece. A long-term policy is therefore needed that may include calling on external advice and help, while simultaneously promoting the training of Greek specialists – in a first instance probably best abroad. In the shorter term, one may have to rely predominantly on external assistance.

Parallel to this mustering of the required technical competence, sustained effort is needed in information and persuasion in order to develop among teachers, parents and pupils, but also among the wider public and particularly among policy makers and administrators and among those who shape public opinion, an awareness that the maintenance of a public service – *i.e.* public education – is jeopardised if the above safeguards for its quality are not provided.

The *polyvalent lyceum*, probably the most innovative venture in the Greek education system of the last ten years or so, seems, after a period of standstill, to have entered a period of growth and development. The decision has now been taken to set up 15 additional establishments in addition to the 25 existing ones. This would mean an increase of pupil numbers from over 22 000 to about 35 000. This is still far from the policy objective that has been formulated several times of making the *polyvalent lyceum* the dominant model, but it is a firm step in that direction.

The merits and advantages of the *polyvalent lyceum* are generally recognised. The choice between general and technical education is delayed and can be made on a more informed basis than in the traditional system; the polyvalent *lyceum* induces a greater proportion of pupils to opt for technical studies (about one-half instead of one-third). Furthermore, the *polyvalent lyceum* rides, so to say, on the wave of innovation: it attracts good and motivated pupils and teachers, its curriculum is well adapted to the comprehensive nature of the first year and in the higher grades all pupils maintain contact with technology. The first year prepares for a motivated choice in the second.

But there are also disadvantages. The high cost per pupil is one of them; the rather great number of pupils required per establishment, in order to be able to offer a wide range of technical specialisations, is another. As a result, the *polyvalent lyceum* needs a large catchment area and cannot survive in sparsely populated regions. Nevertheless, the advantages largely outweigh the disadvantages. One major achievement is that the dominant position of the *general lyceum* has been successfully challenged.

Many *polyvalent lycea* offer a fourth optional year which leads to a more advanced technical specialisation. In under six months in an IEK polyvalent lyceum, graduates can obtain a European-recognised technical certificate.

Vigorous promotion of the *polyvalent lyceum* as the "model of the future" is, in our view, fully in order. The cost factor should be carefully scrutinised. It may well be that, all other things being equal, the cost per pupil is not higher than in the other *lycea* (including, of course, the technical ones). And even if it appears to be higher, the apparently excellent quality of the technical and laboratory equipment undoubtedly allows for better technical training.

Equally, the problem of the great number of pupils required needs to be looked into. It may well be that the targets in terms of number of specialised training

courses have been set somewhat too high and that after consultation with regional and local economic partners more realistic and less costly investment plans can be proposed for the new establishments. Such plans would also allow to keep the numbers of pupils required per school lower than is the case at present.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational and technical education has, over the past years, been the subject of many reforms. The old secondary vocational schools had disappeared with the 1977 extension of compulsory schooling until the end of the 9th grade and the introduction of the comprehensive *gymnasium*. The 1977 reform created the three-year technical *lycea* and the two-year upper secondary technical/vocational schools. In 1992 a new type of post-secondary school was established, the Institute for Vocational Training or IEK. The old KATEEs had been transformed into the present Technological Educational Institutions (TEIs).

Great progress has been made in terms of the proportion of upper secondary pupils enrolled in vocational and technical education: in 1979 it was only 18.5 per cent (and thus the lowest of all OECD countries). By 1993 it had risen to over one-third of all upper secondary enrolments, a very substantial progression in a short lapse of time. Seen from this angle, the structural reforms have achieved their target.

However, one may have doubts about the selection and choice processes for technical and vocational education. In particular, one may question the criteria on which pupil choices for vocational and technical education are made. In our view, there are three elements which justify such questioning:

- the absence of a valid system of achievement assessment and of certification in the gymnasium;
- the lack of curriculum diversity in the gymnasium that could guide pupils in their choice of upper secondary programmes;
- the absence of a system of pupil guidance.

In these circumstances, the choice of vocational or technical education, as already indicated – and this was confirmed to us from various sides – is mainly guided by such factors as the marks obtained in the final certificate of the *gymnasium* (but it must be recalled that their validity can be questioned); by parents' expectations and perceptions as to the value of technical or vocational education and the career expectations of their children; and by a host of less easily identifiable criteria and factors that have much to do with traditional status considerations, with attitudes and values and the like.

We were told that technical occupations in Greece are on the whole not highly valued and that the prestige of general education and of the ensuing academic

education is so high that technical and vocational education is by definition a second choice. This is, of course, a familiar problem in many countries and particularly so in those of the Latin-Mediterranean tradition. In Greece it is compounded by the fact that industrialisation never really came off the ground and that the training needs for the booming tertiary sectors are often not clearly defined. Valid labour market studies and employment forecasts that could guide policy for vocational and technical education as well as pupils' decisions seem indeed to be almost totally lacking.

As to the quality of technical and vocational education, opinions diverge, and reliable information is not available. The fact that in the second grade the technical *lycea* enrol many pupils who are unable to continue in the general *lyceum* is often quoted as an indication of the poor quality of the pupil intake. And though many technical *lycea* are well-equipped, others are not able to adapt their equipment and course offers to the rapid changes in the labour market in favour of tertiary sector occupations. The heavy investment in equipment for training for the manufacturing sector is, as a result, often under-used and is moreover rapidly becoming obsolete. Employers on the whole prefer graduates from the private technical schools which seem to be more responsive to the new skills required by the growth of the service sector.

One of the expected effects of the decentralisation of decision-making to the local levels is that it will facilitate the adaptation of technical and vocational training to the local economy needs. The relevant proposals, which can come from the schools themselves but also from the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, are channelled through the Prefecture to the Ministry of Education where final decisions are taken.

The creation of the IEKs does not seem to have been heartily welcomed by the technical *lycea*. They largely train in the same specialisations, but their advantage over the *lycea* is that they give a diploma that is recognised at the European level. Many people feel that the market is too small for these two types of technical training institutions. Here and there, a not always healthy competition between the two seems to exist.

However, the IEKs fulfil several other very useful functions. They offer in particular a two-year technical training course to those youngsters who have failed the university entrance examination. Furthermore, they offer additional technical education to graduates from the technical, but also from the polyvalent, *lyceum*. The duration of courses varies from six months to two years, according to students' earlier education. They are largely given in the afternoon and in this way allow a combination of work and studies.

But the strengths of the IEKs are at the same time their weakness. At least for the time being, classes are small, too small in view of the high cost of technical

equipment. The great diversity of the students' educational background requires a very complex pattern of courses. At the same time, the employment prospects of the graduates still seem to be rather uncertain, due to their novelty, but perhaps also to the hesitant policy with regard to the development of IEKs.

It seems to us that there are several good reasons – the flexibility of the formula and its adaptability to a wide diversity of students and to the local needs being the main ones – why the IEKs should be strongly promoted and an end be put to the present uncertainty as to their status and future. They fill an important gap in the Greek technical and vocational training system. One may argue that part of their *raison d'être* lies in the malfunctioning of the system. This may well be so. But the IEKs offer much more than a remedy to these malfunctions, *e.g.* the massive numbers of students not admitted to higher education. They are innovative in their organisation and represent the missing link in the Greek educational system that was badly needed.

A key role in Greek technical and vocational education is played by the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED). Its tripartite structure potentially assures an optimal co-ordination between education/training and the labour market and we were told that within the OAED co-operation, consultation and understanding are on the whole satisfactory.

The OAED finances and organises an important part of technical and vocational training programmes, in the first place out-of and post-school programmes that the educational system is not concerned with, but also a large part of the formal vocational training programme, in particular a great number of technical/vocational schools and IEKs. To its total budget of Dr. 200 billion – the major part of which serves to finance unemployment benefits – the State contributes only a minor part, *i.e.* 9 billion, or less than 5 per cent. The bulk comes form employers and employees' contributions, but there is also significant support from EU funds.

In the OAED apprenticeship programmes the numbers of pupils admitted to each specialised training programme corresponds to the numbers of training places that industry is able to make available and the relevant numbers are every year determined by common agreement. One of the implications of this restricted admission is that only half of the demand for apprenticeship places can be met. The counterpart is that the great majority of the apprentices trained find work.

It seems that the validity of these apprenticeship schemes is here and there questioned. It may be that the level and the quality of the training that they provide do not fully meet the requirements of an employment market that is rapidly changing, while at the same time many of its sectors pass through a period of depression. But whatever changes may upon closer scrutiny appear necessary, they should, in our view, leave untouched the main characteristics of what appears to be good

formula, in particular the tripartite control and the management and financing out of contributions from the social partners.

We did not have time to look in any detail at the out-of-school and after-school training programmes that are organised under the auspices of the OAED. But here, also, the formula of a tripartite body (State, employers, employees) for financing and organising the courses seems to be the right one – and one that other countries would do well to study more closely.

In view of the fact that OAED resources are clearly insufficient to meet the need for increased investment in technical and vocational education and training the possibility of increased public funding should be envisaged. There is also need of a more active policy directed at enhancing the awareness of the social partners of the key role that technical and vocational education and training play in economic growth.

There is also an urgent need for a less complex decision-making and management structure for the entire sector of technical and vocational training. At present, besides the OEAD and the Ministry of Education, several other ministries finance and manage technical and vocational training programmes. In addition, private initiative is strongly represented: there are 100 private IEKs besides the 68 public ones. While an element of healthy competition may be helpful, this must not be at the expense of a rational and co-ordinated approach to the overall national effort to develop and manage technical and vocational education. A clearer definition of roles and responsibilities, as for example between the OAED and the Ministry of Education's Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK) is necessary. More broadly, there is need for a central co-ordinating mechanism, whether under the Ministry of Education or elsewhere, to oversee the whole enterprise and ensure its further development. It goes without saying that whatever the solution to be adopted it should not be to the detriment of well-functioning bodies such as the OAED.

There is indeed, in our view, an urgent need for co-ordination between the OAED-managed courses and those organised by the Ministry of Education. We were told that between the two there is a great deal of overlap and that resources are unnecessarily scattered. Without better data it is difficult to verify these allegations. Be that as it may, better co-ordination between the various ministries and services involved in the provision of technical/vocational education and apprenticeship courses should, we believe, be given top priority.

CURRICULA

Curriculum policy in Greece is, as already mentioned, strongly determined by the one-textbook rule and by the fact that all curricula/textbooks are centrally developed and produced. In such a system there is no place for school-based

curriculum development, for adaptation of curricula to local needs or to the needs of specific client groups nor, for that matter, for teacher initiative.

The disincentive that this situation represents for innovation is enormous. The fact that many teachers with whom we talked said that they were unhappy with the system, and that some of them more or less openly defy the rules and use other teaching material than the one that is centrally prescribed, must in this context be seen as a sign that change, at least in large quarters of the teaching profession, would be welcomed.

An advantage of the single textbook and the centrally prescribed curriculum could be that it makes rapid curriculum change possible. The introduction of modern Greek as the language of instruction was thus, in the early 1980s, swiftly and successfully carried through. The new textbooks were produced rapidly and there was probably no major need for teacher in-service training.

But where these favourable conditions were not met, curriculum innovation has appeared to be a cumbersome process in spite of centralism. Thus the decision to introduce information technology in the *gymnasium* was not followed up in what concerns teacher in-service training, whereas equipping the schools with hardware and software is taking many years. The result is that often the subject is taught in an amateurish way and in many schools it is not taught at all.

A general critique that we heard concerns absence of "modernity" in the curriculum. Modern issues, it is said, are not given adequate attention. Furthermore, the curriculum is said to be excessively "Grecocentric" and, in spite of the indeed well-developed teaching of modern languages, gives insufficient place to the European dimension. Nor does it convey much in terms of knowledge and understanding of other people and other cultures, whether European or worldwide – an anomaly indeed for a country with a cultural tradition that throughout history has been open to international influences and that, in its commercial relations, has always been thoroughly international.

A widespread criticism relates to the fragmentation of the secondary school curricula, and in particular that of the *gymnasium*. New issues and new subjects have been introduced by simply adding other disciplines to the timetable. Their introduction (information technology, a second modern language) has thus led to overcharging the timetable of the *gymnasium*. A load of 35 hours a week, as compared to 31 hours in 1984/85, is very heavy indeed. Of course, the teaching of both modern and ancient Greek (eight to nine hours a week) weighs heavily on the timetable. On the other hand, it is notoriously difficult to reduce the number of teaching hours of any discipline. Perhaps, as suggested earlier, modest differentiation of the curriculum in the last year(s) of the *gymnasium* could offer a way out of the dilemma. The load of language teaching, or conversely of the sciences, could thus perhaps be slightly reduced to the benefit of an overall reduction of the

number of teaching hours. On the other hand, efforts could be made to introduce interdisciplinary teaching, allowing thus for a more simplified curriculum within which new issues could be treated more adequately.

After the considerable changes in the curricula in the recent past it might be unwise to embark in the near future on another major reform of the school curricula. Neither, in our view, is such a major reform needed. The effort should rather concentrate on *qualitative reform,* and focus on three main tasks:

- Re-considering the balance between the various groups of subjects. Mention has already been made of the heavy weight of language teaching, *e.g.* in the timetable of the *gymnasium* (13 to 14 hours out of 35). It should be possible to slightly reduce its overall load in addition to differentiation possibilities suggested above.
- Teaching continues to be organised in separate disciplines. In particular, as far as the sciences are concerned, the possibility of grouping subjects under interdisciplinary themes should be considered, as already mentioned.
- Adapting the curriculum to specific regional and local conditions. It can be assumed that intensive teaching of modern languages is particularly important in tourist regions, whereas in others science may be equally or more important. A body of common learning should, of course, be maintained across the country and here the concept of a "core" or "national" curriculum comes into play. This would clearly set the signposts and limits for the adaptation of the curriculum to whatever special needs. In the present situation, the local and regional actors have no criteria or guidelines which could help them to develop their own curriculum plans.

In general, we believe that a close look is needed at the way in which new curricula are developed. (We were told, for example, that little place is given to the "specialist view" in the formulation of new curricula.) Any revision of the procedures and criteria that govern the development of new curricula, including related issues in the production of textbooks, would imply a careful scrutiny of the role and competence of the Pedagogical Institute and the role of the Ministry of Education itself in providing the needed strong and professionally competent guidance in this area.

TEACHERS

The teacher issue in Greece, more than in other countries, is at the same time simple and complex: simple to describe and analyse, complex to resolve.

Teachers for all schools are now trained in the universities. Those for primary schools receive a thorough pedagogical training. Those for the *gymnasium* and the *lyceum* are graduates in their respective disciplines. In the past few years an

attempt has been made to provide them with some pedagogical training before they are appointed to a school (but it must be remembered that before their appointment an average of ten years have elapsed since they graduated from university). Re-training in their discipline may hence be as much in order as pedagogical training.

A new system of pre-service training is now being put into place, designed to remedy the shortcomings of the former system. The new PEKs are located in every prefecture and are thus closer to the teachers than was the case in the past.

In-service training has also been reorganised. It covers courses lasting several terms, but the present capacity would not be sufficient to accommodate all teachers at regular intervals. Besides, the absent teacher undergoing in-service training requires temporary replacement that often cannot be assured. Many teaching hours are said to be lost as a result.

But the overriding problem is a different one: in the Greek system, there is no external incentive – besides the recent obligation of pre-service pedagogical training for the secondary school teachers – for in-service training. Promotion and progression in salary are entirely dependent on seniority.

The problems caused by the "waiting list" have already been touched upon. It engenders an enormous need for updating that the existing pre-service training obligations can, in the best of cases, only very partially meet. Combined with the lack of incentives or rewards, this confronts the newly established PEKs with an impossible challenge: not only because of the high cost of replacing teachers in in-service training, but also because of the likelihood of low interest in training on behalf of an ageing teaching force.

Rapid ageing is indeed another key problem of school staffing. Teachers are not only well over 30 before they are first appointed: they must also remain active to at least the age of 65 if they wish to obtain a full pension. The demographic decline strongly reduces the need for replacement and for budgetary reasons it is unlikely that the past practice of maintaining or even raising the level of recruitment in spite of a standstill in enrolments (or of their decline, in the case of primary education) can be continued.

There are no easy remedies. An obvious solution, and the one which we favour, would be to establish new criteria for teacher appointment based on objective assessment of qualifications and competence rather than exclusively on seniority. But we recognise that this would be strongly resisted. Abolishing the waiting list would amount to depriving many thousand "unappointed" teachers of a certain, even if delayed, job prospect. Early retirement schemes would be too costly. Hence, a well-conceived and well-funded pre- and in-service system, accompanied by measures that affect the promotion and salary progression chances according to the fulfilment of training obligations, seems to be the only realistic alternative. Never-

theless, an open discussion of several alternatives with the teachers and their representatives could lead to a breakthrough if it can convincingly be demonstrated that the present system can only lead to further deterioration of Greek school education.

The training and appointment of school principals is another touchy issue. Seniority is the only formal criterion. But we were told that political considerations also play a large role and that any change of government leads to a massive replacement of school principals. The politicisation of public life in Greece thus reaches down into schools and represents a serious obstacle to the functioning of the educational system.

No mention is made in the Background Report of any special training for school principals; neither, for that matter, of training for other management functions. In our view, the sooner training of principals and of other management staff is provided and made mandatory, the better. The matter is all the more urgent now that rapid progress is made with decentralisation and with greater school autonomy. The margin for initiative on behalf of the schools and of their principals will gradually widen. Many local authorities wish the schools to become more enterprising. Besides, many of them have themselves little management capacity and even less in-house pedagogical competence. The burden of exploiting the newly gained power lies, therefore, in the first place, with the schools themselves.

The idea has been put forward that the schools themselves, instead of the Ministry, should become the legal employers of the teachers. Parents would be given a role in the appointment and promotion of teachers, presumably through the Schools Councils. This would certainly be a radical and beneficial innovation. The attributions of the School Councils could be enlarged to include responsibility for all staffing matters. Some involvement of the local educational authorities will, however, remain necessary in order to ensure an optimal utilisation of the staff resources in the region and in order to help those schools that themselves cannot muster the required expertise.

We recognise that any move in this direction is likely to be strongly resisted by teacher organisations anxious to maintain the security of the existing civil service status of their members. In this, as in so many other areas, change can only come about on the basis of consultation, leading to mutually accepted solutions that safeguard the legitimate interests of all parties concerned.

EFFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

On many occasions during our visit remarks were made and opinions voiced about the efficiency and performance of the Greek educational system. Repeatedly, we were told that the Greek system produces competent people. But we tend to

agree with several of our interlocutors who thought that this was in spite of the system rather than because of it.

Greece has an excellent record of pupil retention. According to OECD data in 1988/89, enrolment ratios for the 15-year-olds were 88.1 per cent, for the 16-year-olds 84.6 per cent, for the 17-year-olds 58.5 per cent, and for the 18-year-olds 18.1 per cent. Of 1 000 entrants to the primary school in 1985/86, 862 are expected to complete the *lyceum* in 1997. For the 1975/76 cohort this rate was 673 per thousand. Not less than 923 of 1 000 entrants to primary education reach the third and last form of upper secondary education (see Table 7.1 of the Background Report, and *Education in OECD Countries, 1988/89 and 1989/90,* OECD, 1994, Table 4.3).

These rates are excessively high and their accuracy should be checked. But at any rate they tell as much about the real performance of the system as about the absence of assessment in Greek primary and secondary education. For beyond quantitative "retention" the system should produce good quality, and here probably lies the major problem in Greek secondary education.

We have already indicated that the system does not seem to have eliminated social bias: the access to vocational and, to a lesser extent, to technical education continues to be strongly dependent on social background. It may be assumed that, besides other factors, the ability to pay for private tutoring plays a role in this. It seems likely that the *frontisteria* system undoes a great deal of the formal opportunity that the public system promotes. The Background Report further provides a few data about the gender bias (see Figure 7.1 of the Background Report), at least in higher education. It is very likely that this bias is already effective in secondary education, in particular in the choice of DESMIs.

The *frontisteria* are an important element in any discussion about the performance of the system. Bluntly speaking, they have to be seen as compensating for the poor performance of public education. But it may well be that the ability of Greek education to produce competent people is to a very large extent due to the private cramming courses. If this is so, two remarks are called for:

- The final performance of the system is at a high cost. To the 4.2 per cent of GNP spent on public education must be added the cost of private tutoring. We have not been given reliable figures as to this cost. But in 1979/80 there was an estimated number of 1 232 Ministry-approved *frontisteria* enrolling 176 226 students. In 1983/84 their number had shrunk to 1 132 and the student number to 82 598. We got, however, the impression that since then the numbers have again increased. At any rate, we were told that nearly all secondary school children follow private courses. For the mid-1980s a cost figure of Dr. 2 billion was mentioned. Taking into account inflation and a likely increase in numbers, the present cost can safely be estimated at a

minimum of 7 or 8 billion Drachmae. (To this must be added the cost of some 30 000 Greek students in foreign universities.)

- The private tutoring system absorbs a great deal of the human and financial resources, to the detriment of the resourcing of public education. Pupils and teachers save much of their time and energy for the afternoon private courses. Parents are not willing to invest in public education as long as investment in private courses yields a much higher return. Any attempt to raise the resourcing level of the public system is doomed to fail as long as a more performing private system competes for these resources.

The Greek system rates very favourably on indicators such as drop-out and repeating. But here again the figures do not mean very much, because of the absence of valid performance indicators.

Our main conclusion is that the Greek educational system, because of the way in which it operates, thwarts any attempt at seriously judging its efficiency and performance. Only systematic assessment of pupil and student performance on validated criteria would make it possible to draw conclusions. Such assessment could use longitudinal comparison of performance over time, or horizontal, comparing Greek educational performance with that of other countries. At present, neither is available. We recommend, therefore, that high priority be given to the establishment of systematic and objective achievement measurement throughout the system, as spelt out in Chapter 4 of our report.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Statistical data

The collection and processing of statistical data in Greece are mainly the responsibility of the National Statistical Service. However, according to the Background Report, the Service, due to lack of resources, is about ten years behind in its collection of data on education. The Statistical Unit in the Ministry of Education seems to suffer from a similar shortage of resources. A chaotic and wasteful network of data collection within and outside the Ministry (the Pedagogical Institute also collects its own data) has resulted. The multiple overlapping requests for data exasperate the schools and nobody seems to be in charge of bringing some order in this chaos. A strong relevant recommendation from the UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) was not followed up and it seems that the situation has since (*i.e.* the mid-1980s) further deteriorated. We were able to see for ourselves on the spot that essential data were not available and that on many matters widely diverging data were being used.

This state of affairs represents a serious handicap to educational policy making and management. We therefore fully back the recommendation in the

Background Report which states that it is "(...) imperative that steps are taken towards the creation of a modern, comprehensive and efficient Information Base, facilitated through new technologies and which will provide both to domestic and international users (...) qualified statistics and indicators". The report mentions that discussions have already taken place about the establishment of a "Committee for the co-ordination of statistical information and questionnaires". We strongly recommend that these discussions be carried out as rapidly as possible and that pertinent decisions be taken and implemented without delay.

Guidance and counselling

A second major function consists in advising, guiding and counselling the educational actors at all levels, particularly those in local administration and in the schools, from principals to pupils and parents. This task is at present entrusted to the School Advisers who are attached to the regional/prefectural educational administrations under the supervision of the Pedagogical Institute. The administrative and the pedagogical advisory tasks are entrusted to different officers. These advisory functions have developed out of the former inspectorates. The limited number of advisers restricts the scope of their activity to in-service training and to support for teachers; but as there is often only one adviser for 150 to 200 teachers, even this task cannot be performed satisfactorily. There is no room for individual pupil guidance or counselling, neither for reporting on individual teachers.

From our discussions we gained the impression that the advisers do not play any significant role towards either the schools or the teachers. They seem to be mainly concerned with informing and advising the regional educational offices to which they are attached. It may be advisable to closely scrutinise their present attributions. Their two-fold task – towards their "superiors" and towards schools and teachers – may be difficult to combine, in addition to the fact that obviously the resources available for this double purpose are inadequate.

Pupil counselling is, as already indicated, almost non-existent. Many teachers recognise, however, that professional external advice would be helpful, in particular for pupils with learning difficulties. But the automatic promotion practice conceals much of the system's malfunctioning. As a result, no data exist about the potential clientele for pupil guidance and counselling.

Educational research

A third support function is that of educational research. At present the educational research effort is spread thinly across the Pedagogical Institute and the educational departments of most Greek universities. Some education-related research is also carried out within specialised social research institutes, but overall research capacity remains limited. Furthermore, there seems to be no programme,

nor a structure, that could give guidance to the research activity, either in the universities or in the Ministry. The Pedagogical Institute largely determines itself its research programme, but often it responds to specific requests from the Ministry of Education. The incidental research reports from the university side, on the other hand, have a very limited impact and are probably often given more attention abroad than in Greece. A strategy for policy-relevant educational research is badly needed.

The Pedagogical Institute

The Pedagogical Institute is the central support institution. It disposes of an important number of staff (several hundred), of whom there are about 100 detached teachers, and a great number of counsellors. At present 80 per cent of the latter posts are not filled. Thus the capacity of the Institute to carry out the many tasks that it is expected to fulfil is strongly reduced. But there are other reasons why the Pedagogical Institute does not function satisfactorily. It is, on paper, an independent institution, but in fact it depends heavily on central administration which seems to consider that the *raison d'être* of the Institute is to serve the Ministry's interests and not those of the schools. In consequence, schools and teachers do not seem to expect much from the Institute which is perceived as being too remote from their concerns.

The Pedagogical Institute has among its functions the development of the school curricula and the preparation of textbooks. This is in itself a vast enterprise which absorbs a great deal of its resources, even if the actual publication of the textbooks is carried out by a special service of the Ministry.

It would be advisable to restrict the involvement of the Institute to the definition of general guidelines and policies that should steer the actual writing of the textbooks. The preparation of the textbooks and their publication should, in our view, be left to free market initiatives. The Institute could, however, be in charge of the approval of those textbooks that can be used in public education, it being understood that the principle of the single textbook is abandoned. Energy would thus be released for other tasks. Among these, educational research and the steering and monitoring of innovation should be given a large place. This may require changes in the staffing of the Institute, which could be greatly facilitated by the formula of the detached staff.

But there is another, equally important change to be made: the working relations of the Pedagogical Institute with the Ministry of Education on the one hand, with the regional and local educational department on the other, as well as those with schools and teachers should be overhauled and be based on the real demands of these partners. Procedures would need to be installed to register these demands and to translate them into programmes of work.

At present the link between the work of the Pedagogical Institute and central educational policy making is unclear and the intermediary structures that should make it possible to connect educational research and innovation with policy making and administration are lacking or are not functioning satisfactorily. The reason, for that matter, may also lie in the way in which policy is made and legitimated: in an excessively politicised practice of policy making there is little place for rational and "objective" information, except in as far as it can fulfil a legitimising role.

The decentralisation currently underway imposes new tasks on the Pedagogical Institute. The regional and local administrations need information and guidance in order to carry out their new tasks. At present, the Institute is not capable of providing this assistance. Dearth of material and personnel resources is not the only reason. There is also the problem of the nature and the quality of its work which is not adapted to the needs of these users with their specific requirements and conditions. The possibility of branch offices of the Institute has been raised. It is not necessarily the best solution. One may also consider the creation of a small number of semi-autonomous institutions in the regions, closely linked with the universities, which for a major part would rely on work that is contracted on the "free" national and international market. The Athens Institute could, on a contract basis, become one of the "providers" of the required research and innovation work, but it would have to compete with other providers. These regional institutes could also be in charge of providing guidance and in-service training to the local educational advisers who would be given a more independent professional status than they have at present.

The question must finally be raised whether the concentration of so many functions in one single large institute is the best formula. The possible "regionalisation" of part of these functions, as suggested above, should result in alleviating the administrative structure of the Institute. In addition, it is a matter for consideration whether such functions as in-service training of teachers and curriculum development could not better be carried out by an autonomous service. The overall result would be a more manageable Pedagogical Institute that would concentrate on a small number of R&D tasks, assessment and evaluation being one of the most central ones.

Consideration should also be given to the specific needs and interests of vocational and technical education. The "fors" and "againsts" of serving this sector in one comprehensive support institute or of creating a special service or institute for vocational and technical education must be carefully weighed.

Government must realise that its close control over the support services is almost bound to affect negatively the quality of the services that are provided. A much greater and real autonomy than they have at present is a condition for their improvement. The statutes of the Pedagogical Institute may need to be revised accordingly.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

Our discussion, in this part of our report, has ranged over the whole spectrum of issues in school education, focusing on those points which seem to us to call for special attention. Cursory as this discussion may necessarily have been, we believe that the suggestions we put forward, all directed at improving the position of schooling and raising its quality, could serve as a useful basis for further educational policy-thinking and action in Greece. It would be convenient to provide here a summary of our proposals.

The main needs are as follows:

- a policy plan to be prepared for the maintenance of adequate educational provision in the sparsely populated and remote regions;
- an emergency programme, with specially-allocated funds, for the provision and improvement of school facilities (buildings and classrooms, equipment, maintenance) in those cases where at present they do not meet minimum requirements;
- a study into the most urgent needs for additional pre-school provision, in particular in the urban areas, and how these needs could be met;
- better co-ordination of policies and management for pre-school and primary education in order to ensure a better transition between pre-school and primary school;
- provision of special support for children with learning or adaptation problems in the first years of primary education;
- re-consideration of the nature and the quality of the certificate given at the end of primary education in order to make it an effective document that guides teachers and pupils in the gymnasium;
- consideration of the possibility of curriculum choice and differentiation in the last grade or the upper two grades of the gymnasium;
- adoption of emergency measures in order to reduce regional disparities in early drop-out from compulsory schooling and early school leaving;
- improved provision of school-internal and school-external guidance to pupils in their choice of upper secondary education;
- review of the procedures and the criteria for granting the leaving certificate of the general lyceum, in order to give it a value in its own right and to adequately reflect the curriculum objectives given to the lyceum;
- rigorous promotion of the polyvalent lyceum and study of the possibilities of reducing its unit costs and its overall size;
- reconsideration of the division of tasks between the technical lycea and the IEKs. The IEK should be encouraged to maintain its flexibility in responding

to a wide variety of needs and to improve its adaptation to local economic interests;

- raising the status of technical and vocational education by, among other things, widening the possibilities of access to further, higher education and by adapting its management structures in order to better respond to the interests of the local economic community;
- review of the distribution of responsibilities between the Ministry of Education, other ministries and the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) towards a more rational and co-ordinated structure;
- a full revision of the instruments and methods for defining and implementing curriculum reform for all school education;
- revising the provisions for school-internal and school-external pupil guidance and counselling and clearer definition of respective responsibilities and competences at the national, local and school levels;
- enlargement of the possibilities for adapting curricula, of technical/vocational as well as of general education, to local and regional needs and conditions, while at the same time providing adequate guarantees for maintaining an educational service that meets the national interests and that warrants equal educational opportunity;
- in the above context, definition of a national core curriculum to be developed for all secondary education;
- improvement of the data base for measuring the performance of the educational system and the needed competence to be acquired at all levels of the system;
- redefinition of the tasks of the Pedagogical Institute and consequent revision of its management structure. The advantages of creating special institutes for such vital tasks as curriculum development, guidance and counselling, performance measurement and teacher pre- and in-service training should be weighed against those of redefining the relevant tasks of the Pedagogical Institute and restructuring its management structures accordingly;
- entrusting the responsibility for collecting and analysing educational statistics to one agency and improving drastically the quality of the statistical data base.