

EDUCATIONAL POLICY-MAKING, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

At the heart of many of the problems that we have discussed in previous sections of our report lies the highly centralised, highly bureaucratised politico-administrative system within which education operates. Overall, it makes of education a *closed* system, not easily amenable to change and innovation.

At present, central policy making depends on the sanction of laws giving rise to administrative practices ill adapted to the creation of a dynamic and responsive educational system, the fast changing policies of the parties in power, let alone the changing economic and social environment caused by technological change and Greece's appartenance of the European Union. It is too often assumed that the passage of a law guarantees the setting into place of a policy. We state later the case for an exigent analysis of which powers are necessary at the centre and which can be discarded. Such an analysis would have to start from consideration of what are the proper functions of the national authorities in education, and work its way through all of the contingent components. The objectives of the whole enterprise need to be kept under constant review and the edifice of law, institutional structures and allocations related to them.

It is generally agreed that the existing arrangements do not allow the Ministry to act as a rational decision-maker. It needs adequate planning staff, equitable and predictable procedures to be put in place and a resolution to make its policies appropriate, equitable and transparent. We elaborate further on what is required to cause change, with decentralisation (or deconcentration, as some prefer to call it) as the point of departure.

DECENTRALISATION

Greece has begun to move towards decentralisation through the introduction of election of prefects, the delegation to them of funds and functions in respect of school building, the delegation of school maintenance and the capacity to provide for certain educational and cultural services to the municipalities, the creation of district education committees at which the two levels are represented, and the

creation of school committees. The universities have also been given legal right to autonomy.

Although these arrangements are incomplete and only just coming into place they already display logical and operational defects. There is a lack of clear definitions of the rights and responsibilities of the different levels and such an exercise should be undertaken, to include all of the component parts, from the Ministry to the individual teacher, student and parent. The criteria for decentralisation would be whether schools, universities and other institutions are able to make full use of professional judgement and to decide on the use of funds in response to locally defined needs and means, and whether clients have a say in the quality and content of what is provided. This criterion of local control and participation needs to operate within the principle of elective public control and planning so that a local authority can ensure equity and the effective use of resources at the working level. The school should thus have the maximum of freedom within the framework set by the local authority. (At present schools cannot hire a cleaner without permission, though higher education institutions are better off in certain respects.)

There is, in fact, a reconcentration of power rather than decentralisation. The curriculum remains a central prescription, and teachers have no margin for creative interpretation or development but remain dependent on the centrally prescribed texts.

Nor is there a rational pattern of the local government of education. It is against organisational logic to divide capital provision by the regions from the maintenance of physical facilities and to divorce these again from decisions on the nature of school activities by the Ministry. This division explains why school buildings are regarded as collections of instructional spaces rather than buildings designed to meet educational needs and concepts. They have the unloved appearance of buildings that nobody owns.

Local school management

We believe that the Ministry should attempt experiments in local school management. Several patterns are possible. The maximum adopted in other countries provides for a school committee consisting of elected parents, teachers, representatives of the local authority and the head teacher. This committee appoints teachers, subject to safeguards on qualification and open advertisement. It has discretion to spend on maintenance and equipment, subject to audit, and to follow the national curriculum but within substantial margins of freedom to develop content and style. The intention is to cause a sharing of power by the provider and the recipient of the service. A possible example which we have heard discussed is to allow parents a certain amount of resources with which they can purchase the nursery education of their choice.

Functions of local government

In such a pattern, school committees should work within the frameworks set by local authorities, and the national law of education, but the power over education should rest at one level of local government only. In such an arrangement, the powers of a local authority might be to:

- determine the educational needs of its area, and appropriate resources to meet them in the form of teacher and other salaries, buildings and their maintenance, advice and in-service training for schools;
- ensure that children with special needs receive appropriate education;
- make links between education and other services such as health and social work;
- arrange for the evaluation, both external and self-evaluation, of schools.

University autonomy

As far as the universities are concerned the need of their being given a larger degree of effective autonomy is evident from the analysis of their problems which we presented in Chapter 3. Their legal personalities should be strengthened to allow them to receive, on a largely student number based formula, a global budget. This should be based on numbers openly planned in terms of a more rational system of the assessment of national needs and according to resources available. Universities should not be asked to take large increases in student numbers without due preparation and resources. They should be free to determine their own academic staffing patterns, within transparent and negotiated national planning frames which could ensure that they meet declared national needs, whilst fully exercising their function of creating and disseminating new knowledge and of providing testing and critique of existing knowledge form. They should be encouraged to develop income generating activities as long as they are within the definable boundaries of higher education's functions. There should be a bonfire of unnecessary controls by the centre. They are widely regarded as being devoid of purpose.

At the same time, the universities should be open to full evaluation. We have been told that teacher commitment is variable, and that second jobs are frequently held. The academic habits of single texts and weak student assessment cannot be wholly blamed on the central Ministry. Full autonomy will remove alibis as well as impediments to good work.

In sum, then, true decentralisation would create wholly different political settings. They would broaden the base of active policy making, and make people more responsible for their own professional behaviour. But it would be necessary to guard against clientism and patronage so that teacher appointments would be subject to agreed qualifications, procedures for open advertisement of posts, and

the ultimate power of veto for good cause by the Minister or his agent. Similarly, universities would appoint their own professors, but subject to rigorous national procedures of advertisement and on transparent academic selection procedures. In all this, evaluation would play an important place.

These specifics of decentralisation will not be effective unless there are corresponding changes at the centre. Indeed, no change should be made unless its effects on contingent parts of the system are taken into account. On the basis of the analysis of existing central controls and of what is needed and not needed, there could be delegation of resources and decisions to basic institutions, subject to public account of expenditure objectives, and audit.

EVALUATION

The release of central powers to the working levels will be paralleled by the partial replacement of legal-prescriptive controls, by informative/normative influences, including those generated by evaluation. There would be a trade-off in which evaluation would guarantee standards and good practice in institutions which are released from unnecessary central control and regulation. Evaluation at all levels and phases of the system, including the central ministries, would enable accountability to be secured, funds to be allocated rationally and equitably, and the working groups to develop their own self-critique and improvement. These guarantees of quality based on evaluation of process and outcomes would be secured mainly by systematic and public peer review, possibly moderated where appropriate, by foreign experts as is already the case in many other countries.

We have dealt, in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively, with the detailed applications of evaluation at the school level, including pupil assessment and examinations, and at the level of tertiary education. Broadly speaking, the system should provide for self-evaluation which can serve as a basis for summative evaluation, externally moderated, or for self-improvement. It is important that the results of evaluation should be made public for the emulation effect that they can have; but we do not believe that they should form the basis for resource allocation, except where evaluation draws attention to a case for special additions to or reductions of resources.

Evaluation systems of the kind outlined above are by now well developed in a large number of OECD countries, and to which the OECD itself has devoted considerable attention. We believe that Greece could well draw on this available corpus of international experience and technical expertise, adjusted to its own needs. Our own proposal would be that, as an initial step, a Centre for Educational Evaluation should be created to advise on techniques. Working closely with, but independently of, the Ministry, it could eventually evolve into a national agency for monitoring evaluation, in ways which ensure that evaluation will not be used for clientage purposes.

CHANGES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Decentralisation and deregulation do not mean that the system can do without authoritative decision-making. Greek education needs effective central guidance: frame policies must be determined nationally, if education is to be consistent with economic and social policies. And it is only within such frame policies that choices proper to local and institutional needs can best be made.

But it must also be recognised that changes in the role of central government, particularly the Ministry of Education, are also needed. It is widely regarded as arbitrary, prescriptive and opaque in its working, and devoid of rational and transparent planning procedures. Both its functions and its functioning need exigent analysis and reform.

The criticisms lodged against the centre, *i.e.* the Ministry of Education, include:

- Lack of connection between the policies and working of different central agencies. A glaring example is the absence of dialogue, let alone co-ordination, between the extensive training activities of the Manpower Employment Organisation and those of the Ministry of Education.
- The Ministries of Finance, Economic Administration, Interior and Education are each involved in different financial elements which flow through regions and municipalities in a disconnected way.
- There is no rational planning to link resource levels and distributions to an assessment of economic need or social demand.
- Institutions are tied up by pettifogging bureaucratic procedures.
- The system is subservient to archaic constitutional prescriptions, upheld by the courts which enforce the power of the state against the rights of individuals or the judgements of professionals.

Even allowing for exaggeration and for the use of central defects as an alibi for some inaction at the working levels, a thorough analysis of the role and functioning of the centre is called for. The critics do not call for a weakening of the Ministry but for its transformation into a central authority that acts reflectively on national needs and leads the system into creative educational policies and practices. Its present functions must be as tedious to perform as they are obstructive to those in the field. Senior officials spend their time on routine, bureaucratic chores rather than on contributing to the formulation of policy. Many of them feel totally frustrated.

Government has administrative and controlling functions which it cannot avoid but should also have planning, negotiative and supportive functions. It must operate through many different kinds of mechanisms – laws, financial allocations, policy determinations and persuasion.

Activities can be steered by planning in terms of general goals. The Ministry's aim should be to steer local authorities and higher education institutions through

annual negotiations in which all sides commit themselves to the principles laid down in the national development planning set by the Government. In using negotiation on policies and targets the Ministry would be able to listen to the needs and receive the critique of its policies from the institutions upon which so much of Greece's future depends.

The Ministry is responsible for the strategic steering of the system. For this, it needs a Programme and Planning staff which could analyse needs and set in motion a full planning process. It could diversify its modes of operation in several ways. It could give the National Council for Education, at present a rather moribund body and at best a talking shop, a full part in planning and policy direction, and the staff to achieve it. It could use a separate and independent body to advise institutions on evaluative methods, as already proposed. It could encourage policy analysis by outside institutes. It could build up a comprehensive research programme drawing on the potential of university and other research centres. It should greatly strengthen its data bases, indispensable to building up its analytical capacity. In these ways the Ministry would be strengthening both its policy/planning and its enabling role.

Such relationships will best be tested and improved through a process of mutual learning and adjustment. The resulting functions would be:

- assessing the needs of the economy and of society for different forms of education;
- making judgements on the resources and institutional structures needed to meet the needs;
- negotiating with the political and other interests on a rational plan for the adoption of appropriate policies. A well staffed and fully mandated National Council for Education could play a vital role in this;
- distributing resources so as to best achieve policies based on needs analysis;
- supporting research and experimentation in areas where change may be needed, and ensuring that the system is rigorously evaluated to secure accountability and innovation.