

A STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

Change is never easy to achieve systematically because “inertia is the greatest force in the world”; and inertia is a particular quality of all educational systems. But the time is right for change in Greece. Nobody we have met is less than certain about its necessity.

The *components* of a change strategy include: the creation of a psychological and cultural climate for it; identifying new aims and objectives; changing structures and procedures, including those entrenched in law, and the power structures that depend on them; redistributing resources towards the new aims; and attending to the demands set up by different interests through political and other channels. Making change in one of these ways usually requires change in at least one other mode. Judgements have to be made about whether such changes are to be made incrementally or whether a show of determination through large scale changes must be made. But they must be made deliberately, not require teachers and institutions to abandon work already started as the result of previous reforms, and if possible should be undertaken so as to ensure that there are as few losers as possible. Even if everything cannot be done at once, having a complete game plan from the beginning is essential.

We believe that such a strategy for change is now required in order to shake Greek education out of its entrenched inertia. It would involve:

- setting up expert and well mandated task forces to analyse key problems and potential solutions, as perhaps contained in the examiners’ report;
- agreement on the analyses with main parties and interests;
- establishment of experimental schemes of full devolution of decision making to the operational base;
- long term movement towards changing the Constitution where it obstructs needed changes;
- laying claim to new resources, and releasing old resources by eliminating waste on unnecessary regulation and on access to provisions not necessary for educational purposes;

- exploiting private resources by allowing controlled supplementation of public provision for higher education and by mobilising family support for state schools.

The *objectives* to which a change strategy would be devoted, and the outcomes which could be expected, would include:

- A new style democracy and equality promoting individualisation within national and social purposes.
- Release from legal and bureaucratic prescription towards frameworks for control and autonomy based on analyses of functional needs.
- Specific freedoms and responsibilities of teachers and students throughout the system. Perhaps charters incorporating these could be drawn up.
- Growing knowledge about educational outcomes and processes through evaluation. This will also secure both accountability and professional development through feed-back.
- Transparent rationales for resource allocations and other decision making.
- Building up a new professionalism that has responsiveness to client needs as a main objective and operating through increased freedom to innovate by the main actors.
- Research on key educational issues to establish much needed facts and constructive critique. There are no cohort studies enabling key developments to be monitored over time, and provision for them should be made.
- Wider dissemination of and experiment with change. Where possible change should take place through experiment rather than through changes of law.
- Financial reforms to include some charging for higher education, and the recognition and regulation of private higher education which will secure return of some of those studying abroad.

The *instruments* of a strategy for change could include:

- The National Council for Education to be given real tasks of considering plans for and reports on reforms. For these purposes it will need a competent professional staff. At an initial stage, the deliberation of the Council could be fed by the analytical work of the expert task forces suggested above.
- Centres for Evaluation and a reconstructed Pedagogic Institute for curriculum development and development of pupil assessment.
- The specification of functions of a reformed and revitalised Ministry, of local authorities and of the institutions in terms that encourage change and development. Within the Ministry, the Minister should be assisted by a task force which will specify and monitor the reform programme. This should be under political direction but should contain the full range of necessary skills

and not be regarded as a political ephemeral to be changed with every change of minister.

In conclusion, we would like to underline once more the importance of ensuring the active involvement of all parties concerned throughout the various stages of the reform process – in the identification and analysis of needed changes as well as in the designing of policies and measures for their implementation. Such is the magnitude of needed change and such is the range of actors and interests involved, that setting up an effective system of *wide consultation* becomes in fact an essential component of a reform strategy of the kind suggested above.

There have been encouraging signs, since our initial visit to Greece, of progress in this direction. The October 1995 Athens seminar was itself a clear example of the Minister's will to initiate processes for open and wide consultation, as is the revamped status of the National Council of Education approved by parliament. The Minister himself has put forward proposals, emanating from our report, on the reform of the university entrance examination and the abolition of the single textbook system, and these have already been the subject of lively public discussion.

We believe that such discussion should now be put on a more organised and systematic basis, and for this a reference framework would be required. We endorse the idea put forward at the Athens seminar that such a reference framework could take the form of a "White Paper", to be prepared by the Ministry, laying down the main directions for educational reform. Consultations around such a paper would hopefully lead to the political consensus which everyone in Greece would like to see on how the future of Greek education should be shaped.