

Quality Approaches And Interventions In Greek Secondary Education

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Abstract: *The present paper is focused on the application of quality principles in Greek Secondary Education and comprises of two interrelated parts. In the first part of this work definitions, a theoretical framework and multi-models of quality in education are introduced and discussed, in brief. Next, the initiatives applied for improving the quality of education are emphasized. Since 1996 and for more than a decade, a series of ESF interventions have been applied in Greece with measurable impact on improving the quality of Greek Secondary Education. The most important policy measures focused at Secondary Education together with their results are presented in the second part of the paper.*

Keywords: *quality models, Greek secondary education, ESF interventions.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Secondary Education is the highway between primary schooling, tertiary (higher) education and the labor market. Its ability to connect these destinations and take young people where they want to go in life is crucial. Moreover, demand for access to higher levels of education is growing dramatically as countries approach universal primary education. The global "Education for All" (EFA) effort provides added momentum for the growth in Secondary Education. Furthermore, globalization and the increasing demand for a more sophisticated labor force, combined with the growth of knowledge-based economies gives a sense of urgency to the heightened demand for Secondary Education. In today's world, Secondary Education has a vital mission, which combines the policy peculiarities of being at the same time terminal and preparatory, compulsory and post-compulsory, uniform and diverse, general and vocational. Secondary Education is now being recognized as the cornerstone of educational systems in the 21st century. Quality Secondary

Education is indispensable in creating a bright future for both individuals and nations[1].

Whilst quality assurance and/or implementation of TQM principles in Higher Education are the subject of much discussion recently; see for example [2-4], on the other hand, implementation of quality schemes in Secondary Education has received considerable less attention; only a few published reports on the topic exist [5, 6].

The present paper is focused on the application of quality principles in Greek Secondary Education and comprises of two interrelated parts. In the first part of this work multi-models of quality in education (i.e., the goals and specification model, the organizational learning model, the absence of problems model, etc) and principles for devising school quality assurance system are introduced and discussed, in brief.

Next, the initiatives applied for improving the quality of education are emphasized. Since 1996 and for more than a decade, a series of ESF interventions have been

applied in Greece with measurable impact on improving the quality of Greek Secondary Education. The most important policy measures focused at Secondary Education together with

their results are presented in the second part of the paper.

2. QUALITY IN EDUCATION

2.1 A framework for Quality in Education

The OECD 'Schooling for Tomorrow' project [7] has developed six scenarios describing future schooling. As the following summary indicates, each scenario has clear and different implications for secondary school quality, governance and leadership.

1. Maintaining the status quo

1.1 Bureaucratic System – the continuation of powerfully bureaucratic systems, strong pressures towards uniformity and resistance to change. Priority is given to administration and capacity to handle accountability pressures, with strong emphasis on efficiency.

1.2 Meltdown – a major crisis of teacher shortages triggered by a rapidly ageing profession and exacerbated by low teacher morale and buoyant opportunities in more attractive jobs. Crisis management predominates and a fortress mentality prevails.

2. Re-schooling

2.1 Social Centers – a strong social agenda with schools acting as a bulwark against social, family and community fragmentation. Extensive shared responsibilities between schools and other community bodies but a strong core of high-status teaching professionals. Management is complex, leadership is distributed and often collective, local decision making is strong, and there is wide use of networks.

2.2 Learning Organizations – school revitalized around a strong knowledge rather than social agenda in a culture of high quality experimentation, diversity and innovation. With knowledge moving to the fore, management is characterized by flat hierarchy structures, using teams, networks, diverse sources of expertise, the use of evidence, and continuous professional development. Decision-making is rooted within schools and the profession.

3. De-schooling

3.1 Network – dissatisfaction with institutional provision and diversified demand leads to an abandonment of schools in favor of a multitude

of learning networks provisioned by powerful, inexpensive ICT. Authority becomes widely diffused, there is a substantial reduction in public facilities and institutional premises and the demarcations between teacher and student and parent break down.

3.2 Market – existing market features in education are significantly extended. Many new providers are stimulated to come into the learning market. Indicators, measures and accreditation arrangements start to displace direct public monitoring and curriculum regulation. There is a substantially reduced role for public education authorities. Entrepreneurial management modes are prominent.

Moving closer to the present, the OECD Education Chief Executives' meeting in September 2005 [8] identified three broad policy issues with which they expect to be dealing in the next 3-5 years as:

1. quality, equity and efficiency;
2. lifelong learning and the employment challenge; and,
3. challenges of globalization.

Quality issues include individualized teaching and learning, equity areas such as inclusion and efficiency areas such as autonomy, decentralization, accountability, partnerships, and leadership. Lifelong learning issues include vocational education and training and adult learning. Globalization issues include higher education, migration and the needs of a multicultural knowledge society.

2.2 Defining Quality in Education

In establishing a framework for discussing the role of quality and evaluation in education, frequently four essential attributes of an education system are identified: Access, Quality, Efficiency, and Equity, which are commonly referred by the acronym AQEE (pronounced "a key"). Figure 1 illustrates the interdependence among these various attributes. It is recognizing that these attributes are intimately linked, and moreover, it is important to note that many different meanings and

interpretations of the AQEE concepts have been proposed. Due to restrictions of space,

from the four components of figure, only the quality is discussed in brief.

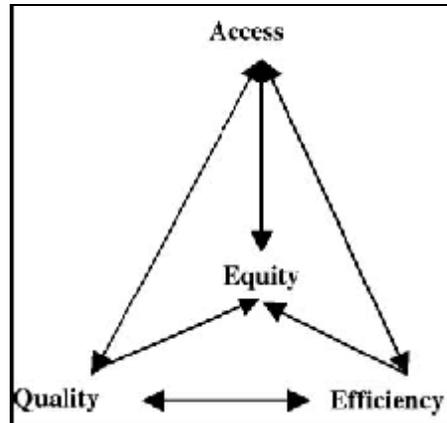


Figure 1. Interdependence of AQEE concepts

In the management literature, the term quality has different meanings and has been variously defined as excellence, value, fitness for use, conformance to specifications (Gilmore, 1974), conformance to requirement, defect avoidance, meeting and/or exceeding customers' expectations, etc; see for an overview [9]. Similarly, education quality is a rather vague and controversial concept in research and policy discussion. The concept of education quality has as many different meanings as it has writers, and generally includes the following [10-12]:

- What learners should know – the goals of the education system as reflected in missions/value statements and elaborated in the curriculum and performance standards
- Where learning occurs – the context in which learning occurs (e.g., class size, level of health and safety of the learning environment, availability of resources and facilities to support learning such as classrooms, books, learning materials, etc.)
- How learning takes place – the characteristics of learner-teacher interactions (e.g., the roles learners play in their learning, teacher and

learner attitudes towards learning, other teacher practices, etc.)

- What is actually learned – the outcomes of education (e.g., the knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, and values that learners acquire).

2.3 Models of Quality in Education

In order to understand the complex nature of education quality and to develop management strategies for achieving it, it should be necessary to review the different conceptions or models of education quality explicitly or implicitly held by concerned constituencies in practice or by scholars in research. Such a discussion is beyond the scope of the present paper, however, it should be mentioned that, in general, seven models of education quality can be identified; see [9]. These models assume that effectiveness and quality are the key-concepts used to understand and evaluate the performance of an Institution providing educational services; they are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Models of education quality [9]

	Conception of education quality	Conditions for model usefulness	Indicators/key areas for quality evaluation (with examples)
Goal and specification model	Achievement of stated institutional goals conformance to given specifications	When institutional goals and specifications are clear, consensual, time-bound, and measurable When resources are sufficient to achieve the goals and conform to the specifications	Institutional objectives, standards, and specifications listed in the programme plans, e.g. academic achievements, attendance rate, dropout rate, etc.
Resource-input model	Achievement of needed quality resources and inputs for the institution	When there is a clear relationship between inputs and outputs When quality resources for the institution are scarce	Resources procured for institutional functioning, e.g. quality of student intake, facilities, financial support, etc.
Process model	Smooth internal process and fruitful learning experiences	When there is a clear relationship between process and educational outcomes	Leadership, participation, social interactions, classroom climate, learning activities and experiences, etc.
Satisfaction model	Satisfaction of all powerful constituencies	When the demands of the constituencies are compatible and cannot be ignored	Satisfaction of education authorities, management board, administrators, teachers, parents, students, etc.
Legitimacy model	Achievement of the institution's legitimate position and reputation	When the survival and demise among education institutions must be assessed When the environment is very competitive and demanding	Public relations, marketing, public image, reputation, status in the community, evidence of accountability, etc.
Absence of problems model	Absence of problems and troubles in the institution	When there is no consensual criteria of quality but strategies for improvement are needed	Absence of conflicts, dysfunctions, difficulties, defects, weaknesses, troubles, etc.
Organizational learning model	Adaptation to environmental changes and internal barriers Continuous improvement	When institutions are new or changing When the environmental change cannot be ignored	Awareness of external needs and changes, internal process monitoring, programme evaluation, development planning, staff development, etc.

3. IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF GREEK SECONDARY EDUCATION.

When discussing educational policy and/or quality one should acknowledge the fact that Greek education has notably been influenced by the country's participation in the EU. This influence has precipitated the social process of important changes that have

transformed the Greek educational system in a European one [13]. In general, the impact of "European educational area" and of a series of European Social Fund (ESF) interventions, which have been applied in Greece, is more significant and measurable, as far as the

improvement of the quality of Greek Secondary Education is concerned, in comparison with corresponding initiatives and schemes arising from other Organizations (OECD, World Bank, etc). The most important policy measures focused at secondary education together with their results are summarized here.

The second Greek Community Support Framework (CSF) 1994-1999 comprised one of the major Structural Funds interventions and represented primarily an effort to build public capital stock, thus laying the ground for longer-term sustainable development. The rationale behind the structure of expenditure might become clearer with reference to initial conditions; see also [13].

Emphasis was also given to human resources and the productive environment. In human resources, expenditure was relatively concentrated on education, rather than on training. In relation to the other cohesion countries (Ireland, Spain and Portugal), Greece spent more on infrastructure, less on human resources and considerably less on productive environment.

The CSF interventions in the field of Education and Training were included in the OP «Education & Training» (EPEAEK) and in relevant measures of the Regional Operation Programmes (ROPs). In all, 2.200 M€ were allocated for education and initial training during the CSF, which were distributed 80% in the sectoral OP (1.745 M€) and 20% in the ROPs (455 M€). Financing from the ROPs was guided to infrastructure improvement while funds from the sectoral OP were directed to innovative interventions in education and not to the support of conventional educational activities.

The main achievements of this OP as far as Secondary Education (General & Technical) is concerned are summarized in the following.

- Reform of the curricula with the production of 234 new books (with 13 cd ROMs for specific courses)
- Innovative school activities with the participation of 600 schools, 6.500 teachers and 70.000 students
- Pilot introduction of IT technologies in school. In particular 14 schools were networked, 13 educational software packages were developed and teachers from 60 schools gained basic ICT skills.
- Formation of 6 Centres of European Languages.

- Pilot and general implementation of remedial training for 10.300 students from 102 schools.
- Introduction of professional guidance with the development of 68 Professional Guidance Centres and training of 600 teachers and executives.
- Introduction of environmental education with the formation of 10 Environmental Education Centres.
- Introduction of new courses such as Health Education and Consumers Education.
- Education of people with special needs (training of 3.500 teachers for students with special needs)
- Innovative actions like the Second Chance Schools and the All Day Kindergarten
- Training of 200.000 teachers
- Development or upgrading of 450 school libraries and 41 mobile libraries.
- Laboratories (IT and physics) for students in almost all school units.

The delays in the beginning of the OP suppressed the actual implementation time and urged on the procedures affecting both the effectiveness and efficiency. The overall effectiveness of the sectoral programme was approximately 90%.

The bulk of ESF resources for Greece (45 per cent) went towards the improvement of education and training facilities. Measures focus on a number of areas, which include:

- Modernising second level education. With the aim of reducing early school leaving, educational material has been updated and adapted to the needs of the job market. Measures included the introduction of new technologies, foreign language training, remedial courses for slow learners and environmental education.
- Improving third-level education. Management procedures and university programmes have been improved, together with the promotion of short post-graduate courses to diversify choice. The ESF also funded improvements for infrastructure and equipment in this area.
- Guaranteeing Education and Training to young people under the age of 20. The national apprenticeship system has been strengthened both in terms of organization and availability.

EPEAEK coincided with a huge effort in the field of Education in the form of an

overall educational reform, which pursued important quality changes at all educational levels. In the context of this reform and regardless of the difficulties, which occurred in the implementation of EPEAEK, the 2nd CSF had a positive effect on the relevant policies in that it opened the way for a series of qualitative alterations, which to some degree constituted the essence of the reform. The main changes with direct relation to the CSF funded interventions were: the introduction of specialized teaching services for disadvantaged pupils, environmental education and the structured further education of teachers. In the field of tertiary education, the contribution of the CSF was decisive firstly for the spread of post-graduate studies, which by now have been introduced permanently in many Greek universities and secondly for the linking with industry through the establishment of special mediation offices.

Educational attainment is generally low in Greece and in spite of the progress that was achieved during the current decade, the educational level of the population is still low when compared with the European average [14]. Roughly, 50% of the population has failed to go further than compulsory education (lower secondary), 33% are Lyceum (upper secondary) graduates and 17% have achieved some tertiary education level degree.

This general picture hides variation between generations and, to a large extent, between the sexes. Young people and especially young girls have made a lot of progress in achieving higher educational levels and as a result the relative gap separating Greece from the remaining European countries is closing fast. During recent years (1990-1998), university degree holders increased impressively by 40% in total, whereas other tertiary, non-university, degree holders increased even faster (by 93% in total). The progress was stronger for women than for men. Negative growth rates have been recorded for persons with low education (up to elementary school).

Public expenditure on education and labour market policies (both active and passive)

4. CONCLUSIONS.

Taking into account the theoretical framework presented in Section 2 and the brief

is very low in Greece by European standards. In spite of the high unemployment rate, for example, spending on unemployment benefits is among the lowest in the EU. It may be therefore that the structure of public spending does not respond well to the economy's real needs. Be that as it might, the fact is that the structural funds have contributed substantial resources on education and training under the second CSF.

Greece's share of resources destined for education and training (23,5% of the total budget), has been roughly on the same level with that of the other cohesion countries (with the exception of Ireland). Both Portugal and particularly Spain however have, contrary to Greece, a lot to show for in terms of employment generation and unemployment reduction. What would then account for Greece's diverging performance? To some extent, the adopted type of interventions in education and training could have been better tailored to the needs of the labour market. In education, technical-vocational education at the secondary level remained underdeveloped, the tertiary system continued to cater disproportionately for the needs of the public sector (in spite of the fact that the latter has seized to grow), and a comprehensive system of further adult education was yet to be established. This is not to deny the real advances made in education during the past decade or so, in terms of for example, participation rates, educational infrastructure, or in terms of quality of teaching. It merely states that skill gaps in the labour market may have not been adequately addressed by the educational system.

To sum-up existing evidence on the efficiency of education and training interventions is rather scarce, precluding the derivation of safe conclusions. It is probable that without the structural funds interventions, the unemployment rate would have been even higher than current levels and conversely employment levels lower. At the same time however, there appears to be ample room for improving the effectiveness of interventions.

description of initiatives and interventions in Section 3, the strengths and the weaknesses in improving quality of Greek Secondary

Education can be summarized as follows.

A) Strengths

- Relative strengths include an adequate legislative framework of the educational system, sufficiency in scientific personnel, which could successfully man the educational system and a strong tendency among Greeks for prolongation of the educational period and life long learning. In addition, strengths include considerable improvement of the educational infrastructure, high participation rates and quality of teaching.
- The education system offers equal opportunities and Structural Funds enhanced this strength by introducing specific measures focusing on population sub-groups threatened by social exclusion, such as the immigrants and Roma (multicultural approach of education).
- The national policy, expressed during the programming period with an educational reform, was aligned with the CSF objectives e.g. the improvement of education, the introduction of life long learning and the strengthening of vocational training structures
- Training has been improved offering better quality services to an increasing number of unemployed persons. It has been remained, however, too short term, which precludes a significant change in the labour market behaviour of the participants, especially when used as a substitute for technical education or initial training.

B) Weaknesses

- The interventions in education and training were not well tailored to the needs of the labour market and the skill gaps in the labour market have not been adequately addressed by the educational system. The technical-vocational education at the

secondary level remains underdeveloped, the tertiary system continues to expand disproportionately and the establishment of a comprehensive system of further adult education has been transferred to the next programming period.

- Significant school drop out is still observed involving mainly students from special categories (immigrants, students from rural areas etc.). There is a lack of evaluation on the quality of education (relevant actions were mostly introduced in the current programming period). Indicators such as the number of students attaining remedial teaching in private preparatory schools (despite the free and public education), student results and book quality, indicate that the quality of education could be further improved.
- Training exhibits a fragmentation between initial vocational training and continuous training. There are no links between the two systems in terms of accreditation, training content and certification, while both systems exhibit low relevance with the labour market needs.
- Training lacked a comprehensive monitoring system, which could trace the pathways of ex-trainees in the labour market and inform the training needs analysis system with relevant data enhancing the link between training and labour market needs.

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