

*Chapter 16*

## **LIFELONG LEARNING IN GREECE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The implementation of European Lifelong Learning policies has resulted in the development and establishment of relevant institutions in Greece. A remarkable quantitative expansion of lifelong learning activities appeared, while at the same time new types of adult education organizations were created and the number of adults participating in continuing education activities increased. The implementation of the aforementioned policies resulted in a dramatic change in the field of Adult Education in Greece as it directed the huge proportion of funds towards educational activities directly linked to the priorities and needs of the labour market, in expense of other areas of possible intervention, such as personal or local development activities, which remained marginal. In the first part of the chapter, dealing with the present situation, data related to the quantitative dimension of these developments are presented, as well as to the legislative framework and to the specifications of continuing education organizations. In the second part of the chapter a critical analysis is undertaken, focusing on the social and developmental needs of contemporary Greek society.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter we will attempt an analysis and a critical review of the developments concerning Lifelong Learning in Greece. In the first section, we will refer to certain elements of the social and financial constitution of contemporary Greek society, in order to enable the placement of developments in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education within this specific context. In the second section we will exhibit the most important developments of the past

decade in representative sectors of Lifelong Learning in Greece (continuing vocational training, general adult education, second chance schools, distance education, education of educators and the development of Adult Education as an academic field). Finally, in the next section we will attempt to interpret these developments and mainly the intense orientation of adult education activities towards market needs.

## **LIFELONG LEARNING IN CONTEMPORARY GREEK SOCIETY**

The analysis and interpretation of current developments in any institution demand an analysis on this institution's development on the one hand, and a review of the society within which this institution is developing on the other. Only on these terms can the developments in an institution be interpreted without resulting merely in a temporal exhibition of facts.

Greece has been constituted as an independent state with great delay, just in the second quarter of the 19th century. During its first century of existence, the modern-Greek state is practically a pre capitalist social formation, with an extensive agricultural sector. The political system is intensely based on patron - client relationships, while institutions have always been functioning weakly. As most of the institutions are not endogenous, we can establish institutional deficiencies throughout modern Greek history, as well as a minor degree of institutional development and a continuous struggle against traditional structures (Mouzelis, 1986, 1990) The most recent period of Greek history begins in 1974, with the fall of the military dictatorship (1967-1974) and the rehabilitation of parliamentary democracy. From the early 1980's, Greece becomes initially a member of the EEC. (European Economic Community) the time and thereafter of the EU. (European Community) Twenty years later, Greece becomes a member of the core of the 15 state EU. and participates in the Economic and Monetary Union.

The first activities concerning Adult Education appear at the end of the 19th century, but are minimal and essentially result from initiatives of the voluntary and private sector. In her monograph "Adult Education in Greece", a detailed and comprehensive analysis of Adult Education in Greece from ancient to modern times, Boucouvalas (1988) attributes these first attempts of Adult Education to educational and social societies. Later on, in the beginning of the 1920's, we observe the first institutional intervention of the state, with the foundation of night schools for illiterates. A comprehensive description of all developments in Adult Education is beyond the range of this chapter: we will restrict to mentioning that Vergidis (1985, 1995) the first Greek academic who analysed developments in Adult Education in Greece, reaches the conclusion that until the fall of the military dictatorship, the greatest part of Adult Education activities had an intense political and ideological dimension and in some cases took the form of propaganda.

In this chapter, we will examine the most recent developments in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education in Greece and we will focus our analysis mainly on the period extending from the mid-1990's to our days. Given the fact that the institution of Adult Education has always been influenced to a great extent by the developments and the funding of international organisations, we consider necessary to briefly refer to these developments, especially within the framework of the EU, of which Greece was a full member at the period we are examining.

In the international setting and mainly at the theoretical discourse, the agenda of lifelong learning had already been introduced since 1970, with the UNESCO Faure Committee Report (Faure, 1972). An attentive analysis of this important policy text, leads us to the conclusion that lifelong learning is suggested as a scheme of a total reorganization of the educational system, aiming to "a lifelong education for all", with a development balanced between the component of professional training and education for personal development. During the years that followed up to our days, the term *lifelong education* has been gradually replaced in texts of other international organizations, such as the OECD and World Bank, with the term *lifelong learning* (Schuetzte, 2005). In many cases notably, the term has been used interchangeably with the term "Adult Education" or even more "Continuing Vocational Training". Within the framework of neoliberal globalisation, especially after the mid-1980's, the use of this term refers less to an education for all and all the dimensions of life, than to the continuous upgrading of the qualifications of human resources, in order to maintain its competitiveness in the continuously internationalising labour markets. During the same period, but mostly in the 1990's, lifelong learning agenda as examined above, elevates to a basic tool of the EU, directed to increasing the competitiveness of European economy and the integration of Economic and Monetary Union. In this manner, in the policy texts of the EU, references to lifelong learning are single-dimensional and in almost all cases of relevant policy papers (including those concerning Greece), economic targets are put in front, as well as the flexibility of the adjustment of human resources and the meeting of the regional demands of the labour markets (Sipitanou 2005, Prokou 2008), while a great number of EU initiatives is taken towards this direction (Zarifis, 2008). After entering the EEC, developments of Adult Education in Greece are intensely influenced by policies and the funding of the ESF (European Social Fund), through the three ESF (European Support Frameworks), resulting as we will see in the next section, in a quantitative and in some cases qualitative upgrading of Lifelong learning and Adult Education.

## POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS

In this section, we will refer to the main developments in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education in Greece, by organising this presentation based on the sectors in which these developments take place. In the beginning of the 1980's, the country is governed for the first time in its post-war history by a socialist party, which has included in its programme the upgrading of Popular Education. In 1983, the General Secretariat of Popular Education (GGLE) is founded at the Ministry of Education, with regional services throughout the country. The first funds of the ESF to Greece are mainly directed to the GGLE, which is soon elevated to the greatest network of Adult Education, implementing programmes of Continuing Vocational Training, as well as General Adult Education. In the period of its flourishing (1982-1986), the GGLE educated around 1 million learners throughout the country. At the same time, another large organisation of the public sector, the Greek Productivity Centre (ELKEPA), ran a great number of programmes mainly in the field of management and informatics (Karalis, 2002). However, this situation changed to a great extent during the next decade, in various fields that we will refer to below.

## **Continuing Vocational Training System**

Given the fact that the ESF's priorities during the 1st and the 2nd CSF provided the development of a Continuing Vocational Training System for Greece, several actions were undertaken by the responsible public sector bodies in the direction of the absorption of EU funds. However, the guidelines of the ESF's policy, provided only for the funding of those programmes which are related to dealing with unemployment and facilitating the adjustment of human resources to the needs of labour markets, as well as for a policy of keeping an equal distance between public and private institutions within the framework of neoliberal choices, which we described above. On the other hand, there was no integral national policy for this system's goals, for the type of organisations which would fulfil these programmes and for the future of the large organisations of the public sector, which as we have seen above were exclusively running the programmes. Specifically, the period of the 2nd CSF (1994-2000) is marked by an intense legislative activity of the responsible public services, in order to form the necessary institutional framework for the reliable absorption of EU funds, according to the ESF's specifications. At the end of this period, the Continuing Vocational training system had been developed in Greece (Karalis & Vergidis, 2004, 2006), with the following characteristics:

(i) A National Accreditation Centre is created, competent for setting the specifications and certifying Centres of Vocational Training (CVT), which are now the only organisations entitled to absorb EU funds for educational programmes aiming to deal with unemployment. Within three years (1996-1998), 262 CVTs were certified, with 397 sub centres throughout the country. We must point out, that the specifications of the CVT's functioning in an infrastructure, equipment and employees point of view, are extremely demanding - in our days, CVTs are educational organisations with the most complete infrastructures in the country.

(ii) The programmes are assigned public tender offers of the Ministry of Labour and as a result, the CVTs of the private sectors abide better and undertake a greater percentage of programmes. In the late 1990's the continuing vocational training system belongs mainly to the private sector, as private CVTs undertake approximately 70% of the programmes. At the same time, some big organisations of the public sector (such as the ELKEPA) cease their functions either through decisions taken by the responsible authorities, or because they are not fit to compete against the private CVTs.

(iii) During the 3rd CSF up to our days, the functioning of the continuing vocational training system continues without particular problems and private CVTs still undertake the greatest percentage of programmes.

## **Continuing Training in Enterprises**

In the sector of continuing training in enterprises the situation is rather disappointing and one must seek the causes in three factors: a) a great percentage of Greek enterprises employs 2-10 employees and it is thus difficult for them to develop internal systems for the training of their employees. b) entrepreneurs do not invest in the training of their personnel, and c) there are no measures taken by the state to develop the in service training in the private sector, beside minor financial backing provided to enterprises (Ioannou & Karalis, 2006, Tsekouras,

Koutsonikos & Gipali, 2008). The result of those mentioned above is that according to the most recent data available (CEDEFOP, 2003), only 15% of the private sector's employees participated in training programmes, while 18% of the enterprises ran training programmes for employees. Both figures are the lowest within the EU. Furthermore, a contradictory phenomenon appears in the fact that continuing vocational training addressing unemployed, is extremely developed (due to EU funding), while continuing vocational training in enterprises remains at very low levels. The suggestions for overcoming this situation focus on providing incentives for enterprises and employees, on the covering of an important part of the programme's costs by the state and on the necessity of changing the attitudes of entrepreneurs and employees towards continuing education and training (Karalis, 2008).

### **General Adult Education**

The situation in the field of General Adult Education, that is in programmes concerning personal development, spare time, parents' education and social and cultural issues, is quite different. Mainly due to the lack of funding by the EU, but also due to the lack of care by the state, the GGLE network has been degraded since the late 1990's and it runs a small number of programmes throughout the country (approximately 15.000 learners annually). Given the fact that as in the previous case, there is no integral national policy for the development of General Adult Education accompanied by national funding, this sector is practically non-existent. However, during the 3rd CSF, through EU funds given to the Ministry of Education for the development of Lifelong Learning, programmes for some categories of General Adult Education were initiated again through the GGLE, which has now been renamed to General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning (GSLL). Two new types of organisations are created, Adult Education Centres and Parent Schools, in which based on the initial scheduling, 150.000 learners are planned to be educated in various subjects (Prokou, 2008). As we may observe, despite its relative development, General Adult Education is still downgraded compared to its quantitative expansion in the 1980's.

### **Second Chance Schools**

This Adult Education institution is relatively new in Greece, although there had been a relatively large number of night schools for the second cycle of secondary education functioning in the past (Lyceum in Greece). However, Second Chance Schools are not addressed to students of secondary education, but to adults who have left compulsory education (in Greece, compulsory education is that of the first cycle) and wish to return in order to obtain their certificate. Second Chance Schools were institutionalised in 1997 and started functioning in 2000. Studies are of 18 months and 25 hourly classes are attended weekly, while the curriculum and the educational techniques are in accordance with the principles of adult learning and not with the educational practices of formal education (Efstratoglou & Nikolopoulou, 2008). During the period 2007-2008, there were 48 Second Chance Schools functioning, attended by 3.378 trainees, who did not belong to vulnerable population groups according to related research (Anagnou & Vergidis, 2008).

## Distance Education

Distance Education was not developed in Greece until the mid-1990's. Its substantial development is identified with the founding and functioning of the first Greek distance learning institution of higher education, the Hellenic Open University (HOU). The first attempt for the foundation of the HOU was in the beginning of the decade, in 1992, however the related law was abandoned and was never implemented. In the middle of the decade a mixed workgroup of Greek and foreign experts was formed, which modelled the basic framework of functioning and the way in which distance education will be done at the HOU. The conclusions of the workgroup are expressed by a law in 1997 and in the next years the HOU gradually starts functioning. The response of the citizens to this new way of studies was direct, as up today, the ratio of the number of applications to that of students admitted ranges from 1/10 to 1/15 (calculated on all courses). In some courses having a high demand, this ratio even reaches 1/35 in some cases (Hellenic Open University, 2008). The high demand for HOU studies must be attributed to the fact that until the 1990's, access to higher education institutions had been relatively restricted and thus, a great number of citizens had accumulated, who wished to study at a graduate and post-graduate level. At the same time, studies at the HOU are organised in a flexible way, according to the basic principles of adult education, a fact which facilitates the attendance of courses by the students, despite the fact that most students are working. The situation of the HOU today is displayed on Table 1.

**Table 1. Hellenic Open University in figures (Academic year 2008-2009)**

Courses offered	30
Courses modules	184
Undergraduate students	16.763
Postgraduate students	11.305
Tutors	1.321
Candidate students	72.139
Positions offered for students	7.626
Graduates (1998-2007)	8.320

Source: HOU, 2008

The high response which accompanied the foundation of the HOU, resulted in the spreading of the idea of distance education in Greece and its establishment as a reliable institution within a short time. Today, despite the fact that the HOU is the only public institution offering distance studies at a higher education level, there is also a small, but continuously expanding number of private adult education centres, which offer non formal education programmes. The sector of distance learning with the use of Informatics and Communication technologies has not developed to a great extent and the number of e-learning programmes is very restricted. These programmes are mainly offered by private organisations (although some universities such as the University of Athens provide continuing vocational training programmes with e-learning). Furthermore, a distance adult education centre has been recently founded by the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning of

the Ministry of Education (former GGLE), which ran its first programmes with e-learning and intends to run e-learning programmes throughout the country in the coming years.

### **Educating the Educators**

Despite the fact that almost all European countries have education and accreditation systems for educators of continuing vocational training, there had been no such regulation in Greece until the beginning of the current decade. Thus, anyone could declare himself an adult educator, and be employed in continuing training and in many cases, educators applied educational practices oriented towards formal education, but incompatible with the nature of adult education. This situation changed radically from 2002 on, when after a public international tender the Ministry of Labour assigned to a consortium lead by the HOU, the elaboration of a programme for the training of 10.000 continuing vocational training educators. The scientific project manager was A. Kokkos, Professor of Adult Education at the HOU. In the first phase of the programme, two studies were carried out concerning the situation and the deficiencies of adult educators in Greece, special educational material and curriculum of 1000 pages was created and the way in which the educators would be trained, was planned. It was suggested, that the duration of the training should be of 300 hours, of which 75 would be held in a conventional way (face to face training) and the remaining 225 with distance learning. The educators are accredited after authoring three projects and completing a 20-minute training session. Until 2003, the first 250 educators were educated, who thereafter educated the approximately 10.000 continuing vocational training educators teaching in Greece today. The National Adult Educators Programme is one of the basic innovations in the field of Adult Education in Greece, as for the first time, Greece has obtained a reliable system for the education of adult educators. According to the programme evaluation study, 90% of the educators are now considered competent in meeting the complexity and the demands of being an adult educator, while 98,1% of those participating in the programme state that they are satisfied by attending it (Kokkos, 2008). After the successful completion of the National Adult Educators Programme, a corresponding programme was implemented by the GSLL for General Adult Education educators was ran, attended by approximately 8.000 educators.

### **Coordinating Bodies**

In Greece, as in other countries, the responsibility of planning and coordinating non-formal education and adult education is diffused through a great number of public bodies, ministries and organisations. However, the two Ministries accumulating most responsibilities are the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education, which respectively have the basic responsibilities for continuing vocational training and general adult training. The two basic organisations coordinating the planning and the realisation of adult training policies are, as we have mentioned above, the National Accreditation Centre (EKEPIS) and the GSLL. However, because there are still signs of deficiencies of actions and policies, two new line public bodies have been formed. The first one is the National System for the Connection of Vocational Training to Employment (ESSEEKA), founded in 2003 and its basic responsibility is the

coordination of the actions of all bodies engaged in vocational training and dealing with unemployment. The ESSEEKA consists of six different subsystems, each covering partial aspects of the policies linking training to employment (i.e. training needs analysis, accreditation system, initial vocational training, continuing vocational training, professional training consultancy). At the same time, the National Committee of Lifelong Learning was created by the Ministry of Education, for the more efficient coordination of General Adult Education. Until today, these two public bodies have held some meetings, but have not taken extensive actions for the coordination of the sector of Continuing Vocational Education and Training, while there are many cases of frictions and overlapping between these line agencies.

### **Adult Education as a Scientific and Research Field**

Perhaps the sector with the most positive developments in Greece during the last decade, is that of the development of Adult Education as a scientific field. Until the mid-1990's, Adult Education was almost unknown and its scientific community was neither defined nor structured. At universities, despite the fact that there were Departments for the education of preschool and primary education teachers since the mid-1980's, Adult Education was practically unknown as a discipline. Because of the quantitative expansion of educational activities related to continuing vocational education, but also because of the foundation of the HOU, Adult Education was gradually established as a recognised scientific and research field. Today, there is a course entitled "Adult Education" functioning on a postgraduate level at the HOU (in which a module is being offered since 2000), and two postgraduate courses at Greek universities and specialisation on graduate level. At the same time, after the end of the National Adult Educators Programme's first phase, the Hellenic Adult Education Association (HAEA) was created by the first core of educator educators. Today, the HAEA is a scientific association with hundreds of members from all over Greece and it has contributed a great deal to the scientific development of Adult Education in the country. Immediately after its foundation, the HAEA issued the first Greek journal (*Ekpedefsi Enilikon – Adult Education*), where researchers and scholars from Greece and other countries publish their research work. At the same time, it has already organised three international conferences and workshops, inviting scholars from Europe and the USA, while it has also brought the Greek scientific adult education community into contact with significant theoretical approaches (such as that of transformative education).

## **A CRITICAL APPROACH OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS**

As we have established from the developments exhibited in the previous section, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education developed in Greece mainly after the admission of the country to the EU and the absorption of the resources given to the country for tackling unemployment and educating human resources. Precisely due to the low development of Adult Education up to the time, there was no consistent national policy with explicit goals and priorities for the sectors which should have been developed and the ways and the means to achieve this development. As a result, very soon and specifically just before the three



CSFs, the priorities of the EU policy in the field of lifelong learning also became national priorities. These priorities and goals as we have seen, favoured and promoted the privatisation of continuing vocational training and a turn towards adjusting human resources to market and economy needs. Given the fact that national priorities did not provide for the development of other sectors of Adult Education which were not a part of the ESF's priorities, in the 1990's Lifelong Learning and Adult Education was de facto identical with continuing vocational training and a turn towards the needs of the economic field.

However, while trying to interpret these developments, we consider that we should go back to those mentioned in the first section of this chapter, regarding the procedures of constructing the contemporary Greek social structure. Contemporary Greece from its creation to today, has been a state with weak institutions, often involved in wars and having a low Gross National Product until recently. Under these circumstances as expected, Adult Education activities were not favoured and even more those who do not have a directly applicable and usable dimension, that is those who are not single-dimensionally linked with the vocational sector and professional development. Kokkos (2005), who has extensively studied the issue of attitudes towards formal and non-formal education of Greek citizens, states that Adult Education still remains a pattern not incorporated into Greek collective mentality. As it has distinctively been mentioned, according to data of the Eurobarometer, 58% of Greeks aged 18-21 study at a higher education level today, while only 1,2% of citizens aged 25-64 have attended an Adult Education programme within a year.

As we have seen, Adult Education in Greece does not have a historical depth, collective mentalities do not favour its endogenous development and there are no clear national policies. Within this framework, it is obvious that the turn of Adult Education towards the labour market is in fact nothing more than the impression of the corresponding turn of the ESF. It must be however pointed out, that the quantitative expansion of the past twenty years resulted in the familiarisation of Greeks, especially of younger ages, to the procedures of continuing vocational training and it seems that collective mentalities have started altering slowly and gradually. In a research done in 2005 among students of the University of Patras (the third biggest university in Greece), 80,6% expressed a positive opinion concerning lifelong learning, while only 10,4% identifies it exclusively with the upgrading of vocational qualifications and employment (Stathopoulou & Karalis, 2007).

Summing up the analysis and the interpretation of developments in Lifelong Learning in Greece during the past decade, we must point out that in most cases, we referred to Adult Education activities. The application of policies in the sector of lifelong learning requires the reorganisation of the educational system and the commencement of procedures for the better interrelation between formal and non-formal education settings, as it has been the case in some attempts of national policies (Alberici, 1998). This has not yet happened in Greece until today and it has also not been a subject of the educational agenda and it thus remains an open stake for the future.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have looked into the developments in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education in Greece in the past decade and we attempted to find the reasons leading to them.

As it has been found, we can observe a growth of related activities in Greece, mainly due to the incoming of EU funds, but in some points there are signs of qualitative deficiencies. These activities however, concern mainly the labour market and economy, while General Adult Education has only recently started developing again. The development of a national policy with clear targets in this field, and the transformation of attitudes of Greek citizens towards lifelong learning and adult education, remain objectives which have to be reached. Perhaps the best omen for the future and mainly for the qualitative upgrading of lifelong learning in Greece, is those described at the end of the second section, which is the gradual development of the scientific community in this field and the upgrading of the qualifications of adult educators.

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