



Policy and Legislation of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs for the Modern Administration of School Units

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Abstract: *At the beginning of the 21st century the administration of school units seems to be essentially and in many cases, a personal project! Schools that follows the hierarchical model, having at the top of the pyramid the Principal who has organized the school in the way he considers right and efficient, setting goals and trying to implement them on the basis of the vision he has, seems to be the rule and not the exception.*

Concepts such as indicators, performance, evaluation, due to the misuse and the errors made at the political level in previous years, provoke reactions in the educational community, which is possessed by a lack of confidence in the political leadership and unwilling to participate in processes that are defined unilaterally by the respective higher authority.

The Ministry as the main policy-maker in Greece, has to guide education structures towards competitive and modern practices. The purpose of this proposal is to study the framework within which a Public Vocational High Schools are called upon to operate by adopting private sector techniques such as Principles of Management Through Objectives.

Keywords: *Antimicrobial, Policy for Modern Management, Goal Management, Total Quality Management, Vocational Education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Public education for a country should be a valuable, social good that secures a country's future. Schools are called upon to respond to a complex role, in an ever-changing social environment, with new challenges and problems. Technological challenges accompanied by social and cultural changes require schools as organisations to show adaptability and creativity at all levels.

Moreover, as Xochellis (2006) states, "evaluation results from the fact that every society must be confident that the educational work provided by the institution of the school meets social needs and is of a high quality."

Can a public school of Vocational Education follow modern marketing techniques found in enterprises and what is the role of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs as one of the main participants (Stakeholders) in Secondary Level Education?

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Education policy is part of general government policy and aims to: (a) meet the needs of individuals for their own benefit and (b) to meet the needs of society as a whole and, by extension, to the social, economic and cultural development of the country.

The development of a strategy on Secondary Level Education by the Ministry of Education and Religious

Affairs must find a response to the entire educational structure. The participants (Stakeholders) in this structure, and more specifically the public school and the context in which a public school is currently called upon to meet this challenge, must be studied.

The systematic study of books, publications, electronic media, such as websites, blogs and related case law was used to investigate research questions. Bibliographic research may be defined as any research requiring the collection of information from published materials. At this point, of course, it should be stressed that, as Mialaret (2008) states, "The researcher cannot be content to describe the situation or situations in which he is in: he tries to explain them, to understand them".

The role of the school

The globalisation of knowledge is also shaping new data in the field of educational institutions worldwide and the requirements necessarily lead to flexible and demanding patterns of developments. The rapid socio-economic changes taking place in our time lead to an education with "globalised" social sensitivities and in particular the so-called "developed" countries should design their education system on the basis of the "global citizen".

Schools as a place of education play an important role in our society as shapers of the country's future citizens. The effort to improve the provision of education often stumbles on disorganized movements of the Ministry of Education and especially on the lack of a clear strategic objective.

As organisational units, they provide "services" to citizens, have a hierarchical structure and therefore can and should have informal and formal control procedures (Steiss, 2003). The problem with these processes in the field of education is the "sinful" memories of the evaluators in the 70s and 80s, but also more recent actions that created insecurity and introversion (availability, evaluations with a background of changing grades). These procedures resulted in almost total denial in any conversation involving the words "evaluation", "indicators", "efficiency" (Anastasiou, 2014).

However, a school is de facto obliged to have "internal" self-assessment procedures which are most often informal and "hidden". These are usually discussed at the assemblies of teachers' associations where either measures to be taken (formal forms) are decided and recorded or strategies are simply drawn up to deal with issues, without being recorded (informal).

In the Greek education system the two main categories the upper secondary schools are General Lyceums and EPAL (vocational upper secondary schools) which, for years, were second choice schools and often attracts low-performing students, who usually come from families with lower financial backgrounds.

In recent years this has tended to change. With the new structure of the EPAL ensure that pupils are provided with comprehensive general knowledge and, on the other hand, specialised technological and professional knowledge and skills, avoiding early specialisation. Graduates of the EPALs receive a degree of the specialty they have chosen and a high school diploma equivalent to that awarded by the General Lyceums.

The new structure of the schools of Secondary Level Education, emphasizes for the first time the design of the schools operation, with the participation of all teachers and the student community in particular with ministerial decision 10645/DG4 of the Ministry of Education, the need for targeting and planning is essentially recognised in order to achieve these objectives: "To achieve this goal at the beginning of the teaching year and in cooperation with the student communities, it is proceeding to draw up or amend a framework of rules for the better organisation of school life, the School Life Organisation Framework (SLOF). In this context, the objectives of education, as defined by the Constitution and the relevant laws, decrees and ministerial decisions, apply to the particular circumstances of each school."

In Vocational Education, as informed by the annual report, the Quality Assurance Authority in Primary and Secondary Education (2018) the main problems are the operation of laboratories (absence of laboratories or non-coverage of laboratory operating specifications), the inadequacy of classrooms (small classrooms), the absence of multipurpose rooms, library, reading room and other auxiliary spaces (canteen, dispensary, concierge and warehouses). In the structure of Vocational Education, the main problems related to the design and implementation of educational programmes were the understaffing and delayed placement of teachers,

the difficulties of cooperation and coordination of teaching staff, bureaucratic obstacles (bureaucratic procedures required to ensure the participation of the school in a programme) and the difficulty of moving teachers and pupils access to business premises.

The internal structure of a school

The Greek Typical Education System includes in Secondary Education two cycles:

- The first one is compulsory and corresponds to gymnasio (lower secondary school). It lasts 3 years
- The second one is optional and refers to lykeio (upper secondary school) – general and vocational. It lasts 3 years.

In Greek schools, regardless of grade, the organization is identical and has its own independent administration. There is a principal who together with the deputy principals (depending on the number of students)) constitute the administration of the school. It should be stressed here that in a school, the highest body is the teachers' association, an example of the democratic processes that govern education. In the teachers' association all teachers are equal members and have the right to speak and vote. Meetings may be regular or non-regular.

Teachers are assigned the work (teaching and administrative tasks) by decision of the association. The field of education, of course, as observed in its report by the Quality Assurance Authority in Primary and Secondary Education (2018), is characterized, among other things, by the systematic degradation of the prestige of the educational profession in recent decades. This is the responsibility of both the state and society and is expressed in various ways.

Examples include:

- The systematic economic degradation of the sector.
- The absence of systematic training actions by the state.
- Lack of incentives for continuous improvement and lifelong learning.
- The lack of confidence in teachers, for example in the degree of access to Higher education, the School degree counts little or not at all, despite the close interaction between teachers and pupils over an eight-month period.
- Pressure from parents to provide high grades to their children, although often the grades requested do not correspond to the actual knowledge and skills of the pupils.

The student community is represented by student councils and has elected representatives. At meetings of the teachers' association in cases where it is considered useful or necessary to represent students, the presence of representatives of the student community is provided institutionally.

Strategic planning of vocational education in Greece

Education policy is part of general government policy and aims to: (a) meet the needs of individuals for their own benefit and (b) to meet the needs of society as a whole and, by extension, to the social, economic and cultural development of the country. In Greece the formulation of educational purposes is the work of the Government and the Parliament.

As the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs informs us in the document entitled "The policy of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs for Vocational High Schools" (2018) that: *"The design is based on the holistic view of the whole system of vocational education and training, the recognition and strengthening of its social role, the reduction of social inequalities, the need to continuously harmonize it with the requirements of Greek society and economy, the need to provide quality education to the students who choose it, the need to provide safe professional outlets to its graduates, the consolidation of job security and the development of a realistic vision for teachers."*

It continues defining that *"Our goal is (to convert Vocational Education) from a choice of need, as was the case until now, to a conscious choice for students and young people and in this respect we make every effort."*

In addition to the Strategic Objectives (Tsiotras, 2016) one can include the paragraph 16 of the Constitution of Greece which states *"Education is a basic mission of the State and aims at the moral, spiritual, professional and physical education of the Greeks, the development of national and religious consciousness and their physique in free and responsible citizens."*

The purposes of vocational education provided by vocational high schools (EPALs), in accordance with Law 4186/2013, are among other things:

- The provision of high-level general education
- Preparing young people for European civil society
- Strengthening the values of freedom, democracy, collegiality and solidarity and shaping the conscience of an active citizen
- Providing integrated professional knowledge and skills for access to the labour market
- Strengthening the ability to monitor labour developments
- The recruitment and assimilation of new technological and professional knowledge, skills and competences in the context of lifelong learning
- The possibility of professional development through studies at a higher educational level
- The development of actions to ensure the quality of technical-vocational education.

The Framework for Quality Education

In an Everyday changing society, the need to provide a high service to the citizens of the country is no longer a luxury but an imperative. Education is vital for the future of a country, so educational units should be modernised, transformed into cells providing modern knowledge, without neglecting the social role assigned to them.

Access to education is important, but it is equally important to learn basic knowledge and skills in the classroom. Many children around the world cannot read, despite having attended school for several years. High quality education is a prerequisite for human learning and development.

In order to achieve all of the above, the school unit should be run using concepts such as action planning, operational organisation, human resources management and control of the results of its operation (Garvin, 1988). The above-mentioned concepts are found in modern forms of administration and more specifically in Total Quality Management (TQM).

Total Quality Management as a management philosophy, can be applied to the management of educational units (Fields, 1993), improving their quality and effectiveness overall, through the planning of their action, aiming to meet the needs that arise.

Laws 3230/2004 and 4369/2016 created the framework for the application of the Principles of Total Quality Management to public sector services. In particular, Law 3230/2004 established Objective Management, as well as measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector services, while Article 22 of Law 4369/2016 sets out in greater detail the procedures to be followed.

Finally, with Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD) 153168/IK, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs defines the indicators used in the field of Education for each type of institution in detail.

Law 3230/2004 in summary

In the first article of Law 3230/2004, the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency are clarified and defined as follows: Efficiency is the ability of the public administration to meet the planned objectives and Efficiency is to maximize the results of the actions of the Administration with given resources.

Furthermore, in accordance with Article 3 of the same law, administration is established through objectives, namely:

- (a) Political leadership shall define and distribute the strategic objectives for each subsequent year;
- (b) The official leadership at each hierarchical level shall determine the individual objectives to be applied in the following year;
- (c) Measurement indicators shall be used to assess effectiveness and efficiency.

As stated in the provisions of Article 5 of the same law, the indicators for measuring effectiveness and efficiency are divided into two main categories:

- (i) General indicators
- (ii) Specific indicators

The general indicators are defined by the legislator as: *"the time to respond to citizens' requests, - the satisfaction rate of complaints submitted, - the application of new technologies, - the management costs and the quality of the services provided"*.

The specific indicators shall be defined in addition to each service unit and shall correspond to the type of services provided by them. In accordance with Article 5 paragraph 2 of Law 3230/2004, by a joint decision of the Minister of the Interior and the Minister responsible of each public sector, further specify the general indicators and define the specific indicators, determine the method of measurement, the periodicity of the measurement and any other necessary issues.

Procedures as defined by Law 4369/2016

Law 4369/2016, and in particular Article 22, sets out in greater detail the procedures to be followed for the implementation of the Administration through objectives.

At the top of the administrative pyramid, there are objectives defined by the mission of this Agency and determined by the strategy and vision of leadership.

While at the base of the hierarchical pyramid, objectives specific to the expected operational results of the administrative actions are matched.

By carefully reading the procedures we conclude that in the goal-setting phase, a top-to-bottom approach is followed and, on the contrary, when achieving the objectives, the reverse path "from the bottom to the top" is followed.

Participatory turn is also noted at each administrative level, because the objectives are not arbitrarily set, but are formulated and concretized, following cooperation and agreement between supervisors and subordinates.

In the event of a dispute, it is initially resolved through dialogue and constructive cooperation. If consent is not possible, the supervisor concerned shall, by explaining and substantiation of his views, decide on this.

The definition of indicators with JMD 153168/IK

JMD 153168/IK establishes Efficiency and Efficiency Measurement Indicators of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.

The specific indicators are then defined and general indicators are further specialized by the Central Office of the Ministry of Education and supervised bodies in accordance to the provisions of Article 5, paragraph 1 of Law 3230/2004.

The Ministry defines indicators for all of its subdivisions but the study would go beyond the purposes of this article, so we will focus on the indicators related to secondary level education.

Limited to indicators that we consider to be relevant to the school units of secondary level education and subtracting data that are the responsibility of the Directorates of secondary Level Education or even Regional Education, the following indicators are proposed:

DEPARTMENT MANAGEMENT OF SECONDARY LEVEL STUDIES

A. Special Indicators

D.2.1: Average number of pupils per teacher, per year.

D.2.2: Average pc/student total, per year.

D.2.3: Number of pupils who have stopped their studies before the completion of compulsory education, per year.

B. General Indicators

D.2.1: Average response time to requests from citizens and bodies that do not have the nature of urgency, per year.

D.2.2: Average time to respond to requests from citizens and bodies of legitimate interest or having the nature of urgency, per year.

D.2.3: Number of complaints per year.

D.2.4: Percentage (%) satisfaction of complaints, annually

GENERAL MANAGEMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEVEL STUDIES

MANAGEMENT OF PERSONAL SECONDARY LEVEL EDUCATION

A. Special Indicators

D.2.1: Average number of pupils per teacher, per year.

D.2.2: Average pc/student total, per year.

D.2.3: Number of pupils who have stopped their studies before the completion of compulsory education, per year.

B. General Indicators

D.2.1: Average response time to requests from citizens and bodies that do not have the nature of urgency, per year.

D.2.2: Average time to respond to requests from citizens and bodies of legitimate interest or having the nature of urgency, per year.

D.2.3: Number of complaints per year.

D.2.4: Percentage (%) satisfaction of complaints, annually

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As Matsangouras (2009) very aptly states "The question arises directly: What should be the primary role of education, continuity or change?" The delay on the part of the Ministry of the adoption of new indicators and related implementing circulars certainly does not help in this direction.

Effectiveness is determined (Sallis, 2002) by specific measurable outputs of the education system, linked to evaluation parameters. In this light, the school adapts to the requirements of the labour market and consolidates the view that quality is the education that cultivates skills in the individual, in order to integrate into modern society which is characterized by a rapid pace of change. The person learns to effectively manage information, adapt to changes and collaborate and cultivate his critical and analytical thinking. The quality of the training provided can be mapped through a set of methods, tools and indicators that evaluate both processes and individuals.

School units should be organized in such a way as to make use of the resources available effectively, and in accordance with the circumstances. Assigning decision-making to the school unit, promoting flexible procedures to take decisions decentralised with the support of a leadership that animates and coordinates, is a necessary condition for this to be achieved.

The field of education is stigmatised by interventions to serve micro-political interests and to obsolescence of the work of teachers. Any upgrade in the quality of education cannot be done without the committed participation of teachers who build bridges of knowledge every day so that our children can walk through them and spread their wings in society.

It remains to be seen whether an attempt is being made to implement the laws already passed while, of course, training the teachers who are called upon to implement it.

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