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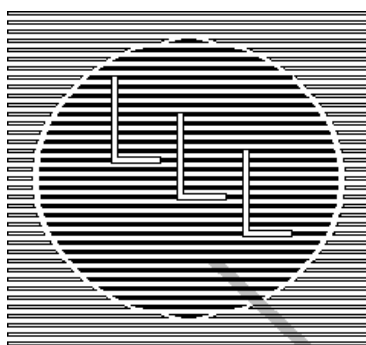
ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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NATIONAL ACCREDITATION CENTRE FOR
CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING - EKEPIS

The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning



Background Report for Greece

March 2003

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NATIONAL ACCREDITATION CENTRE FOR
CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING - EKEPIS

The Role of National Qualification Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning
- GREECE

(A research project for O.E.C.D.)

ATHENS, March 2003

INTRODUCTION	3
1. DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATION SYSTEM IN GREECE.....	5
1.1 Formal Education	5
1.2 Non-formal Education.....	10
1.3 Informal Learning	14
1.4 Sources of Finance	15
1.5 Features of Participants	16
1.6 The role of the social partners (in developing the national qualifications system and lifelong learning).....	18
1.7 Structures linking vocational education and training to employment and promoting lifelong learning	19
1.8 Data on trainee mobility from one area of specialization to another.....	19
1.9 Assuring the quality of training provided.....	20
1.10 Information networks	21
2. THE IMPACT OF QUALIFICATION SYSTEMS IN GREECE	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 The framework of formal education in Greece and the impact on recipients of education	24
2.3 The context of non-formal education in Greece and the repercussions on trainees ..	28
3. PRESSURES AND INITIATIVES	31
3.1 Major reforms and changes in Education & Training over the last decade	31
3.2 Successful initiative for the promotion of life long learning.....	48
3.3 Major debates on qualification systems and Life Long Learning over the last two years	52
4. QUALIFICATIONS AND LEARNING AT THE LEVEL OF PRACTICE AND USERS.	55
CONCLUSIONS	60
ANNEX	63
REFERENCIES.....	76
WEB SITE ADRESSES	77

INTRODUCTION

Life long learning as an objective of governmental policy includes all learning organizations, which provide services in order to upgrade human resources competencies, has been expanded so as to include all educational and training services.

In administrative terms these organizations remain separate while there is tendency of interlinking the subsystems, i.e. the initial and continuing vocational training system linking with employment policies.

In order to promote life long learning and a continuous improvement in the knowledge and skills which are acquired both from formal and informal vocational training and education it is necessary for certification of this knowledge to be accredited via a national qualifications certification system.

In Greece certification of knowledge, skills and qualifications acquired either training or professional experiences is provided up to now by various bodies and not by a specific national agency.

In relation to certification of qualifications acquired via formal education, the main planning and implementation structure in Greece is the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. However, in parallel formal vocational education and training is also provided by other bodies agencies under the supervision of specific ministries such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Development. In addition to public agencies formal education is also provided by private organizations (private schools and Technical Vocational Schools (TEE)) which are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in relation to courses and the level of training provided.

Knowledge and skills acquired outside the system of formal education are only accredited when provided by organizations which themselves design and implement the corresponding training courses for their employees. Such agencies are the public utilities (Public Power Corporation, Hellenic Telecommunications Organization, Hellenic Railways, Athens – Piraeus Water Supply Corporation), financial institutes (private or public banks), and large private sector companies. Accreditation of these qualifications is valid only for the working environment of these specific organizations or enterprises.

Certification of technical qualifications which leads to license for exercising a profession, is issued by the respective departments of the Ministry of Transport and Communications and proven professional experience is required for a certain number of years in that area of specialization in order for it to be issued. In certain areas of specialization written examinations to test professional experience are also required.

Vocational training and education courses are also run by various organizations in the context of life long learning. Knowledge and skills acquired from these courses do not result in any accredited qualification certificate. These courses are aimed at various categories of individuals (the unemployed, workers, etc) and the training subjects cover areas of specialization from all sectors of vocational, economic, social or cultural activity. These courses do not have any specific duration and are either subsidized or self-financed and are either run by training agencies (institutes, liberal studies workshops, vocational training centers, prefectures popular education committees) or by Chambers, the social partners, companies and so on.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATION SYSTEM IN GREECE

1.1 Formal Education

The Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs (YPETH) has the general responsibility for formal education and implements the national policy for education.

1.1.1 Objectives of formal education

The objectives to improve education and training for the promotion of the lifelong learning policy are:

- Modernisation of education and initial vocational training systems
- Interlinking the formal and non-formal education and training systems and their linkage to the needs of the labour market
- Accreditation of training provided and vocational qualifications acquired
- Combating school failure and drop-out
- Further training of instructors on new technologies in education
- Viable postgraduate courses in learning areas evidently connected to the needs of the labour market
- Improvement and modernisation of school and education infrastructure and extension of the use of new information and communication technologies to all levels of the education system
- Systematic intervention for arising social awareness in environmental and cultural issues.

1.1.2 Description of the formal education system

School life for pupils can begin as early as the age of 2½ (pre-school education) in public or private nursery schools, while kindergartens are attended by children aged 4-6.

Compulsory education in Greece lasts nine years from the age of 6 to 15 and comprises six years of primary level education and three years of lower secondary level education. Primary level education is offered by primary schools, where pupils study from the age of 6 to 12. Compulsory education is completed in the lower level of secondary education attended by pupils aged 12-15.

Post-compulsory secondary level education is provided in upper secondary schools (Lyceum), which offer general education and Technical Vocational Schools (TEE), which provide vocational education and training.

The Lyceum lasts for three years (ages 15-18). Lyceums are preferred by 65% of pupils over TEE. During the first year of Lyceum all pupils study the same curriculum, while from the second year, in addition to a common curriculum, pupils also choose one of three different educational branches: sciences, arts or technology. Graduates of the Lyceum are awarded a certificate known as the “Lyceum Leaving Certificate”.

Technical Vocational Schools (TEE) provide vocational training and education in 14 fields for 42 different areas of specialisation. The number of departments and specialisations at any TEE depends on local socio-economic conditions and needs, and on the number of pupils and their preferences. Technical Vocational Schools (TEE) operate on the basis of two independent cycles, one cycle (1st) of two years and one (2nd) of one year. The Ministry of Education has overall responsibility for course development and approval, and also supervises most of these schools (448 TEE). Certain TEE are supervised by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (49), the Ministry of Agriculture (12) and the Ministry of Development (8). These TEE provide vocational training and education in specialisations corresponding to the relative ministries. There are also 85 private TEE.

Vocational training combined with employment is provided by 52 Apprenticeship Technical Vocational Schools run by the Labour Force Employment Organisation (OAED - Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) for working pupils. The first cycle lasts three years. Pupils spend the first year exclusively at school, while over the next two years studies take place in parallel with employment. The 2nd cycle, just as in all other TEE, lasts one year. The advantage of experience in the workplace does not affect the formal qualifications and professional rights of the graduates of Labour Ministry-run TEE compared to Education Ministry-run TEE, but it does provide them with a qualitatively comparable advantage in the labour market.

In parallel with ordinary primary and secondary level education schools there are also **special pre-school, primary, lower level secondary and higher level secondary education schools** for special groups of students, 26 intercultural schools operate for foreigners and ex-patriates pupils, 232 minority schools for pupils from the Muslim minority of Thrace and around 250 independent special schools operate for children with special needs. In the upper levels of secondary education there are equivalent “Pilot” schools in operation (in co-operation with universities), “Music” schools (with an emphasis on music) and “Ecclesiastical” schools (with an emphasis on religious education) and “Sports Departments” (with an emphasis on sports).

Post-secondary education is provided by **Vocational Training Institutes (IEK)** which offer formal vocational training and education of unclassified level (neither higher nor university level) in 110 different specialisations in 14 basic occupational sectors. Overall, there are 138 Vocational Training Institutes (IEK) managed by the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK), 34 Vocational Training Institutes managed by the Labor Force Employment Organisation (OAED), and 41 private IEK which are supervised by the OEEK. Students are graduates of lower or higher level secondary education and are aged between 20 and 30. Studies last 2-4 semesters depending on specialisation. Compared with courses at Technical Vocational Schools (TEE), IEK courses are work oriented and linked to the demands of the labour market. They are designed by tripartite teams of experts (state, employers and employees). IEK courses are attended by graduates of the Unified Lyceum and TEE who decide not to continue their studies in tertiary education but who still wish to

acquire educational qualifications or to add to the qualifications they already have. Admission to IEK is based on criteria primarily relating to grades in the school leaving certificate, and age, professional experience in the area of expertise and social factors. Trainees are provided with a certificate of vocational training, which gives them the right to participate in the final accreditation examinations.¹

Tertiary education is provided in two parallel sectors: a) the university sector comprising Universities (AEI), Technical Universities, the Higher School of Fine Arts, the Military Academies and the Police Officers Academy, and b) the technological (non-university) sector which includes Technological Education Institutes (TEI) and the Higher School of Pedagogical and Technical Education (ASPAITE).

Courses at tertiary level institutes last for 8-12 semesters. In comparison to universities, TEI have a much narrower vocational orientation, applied discipline curricula and a greater focus on training and practice.

Tertiary level education also includes certain other non-university schools such as Higher Ecclesiastical Schools, the Merchant Navy Academies. Admission to tertiary education from the lyceum (for universities and TEI) is via written examinations during the last two years of school (Panhellenic examinations). Graduates of TEE may only be admitted to TEI via special examinations.

In addition to the above schools, there are also certain other post-secondary education schools for which a special admission system applies. These schools are of **unclassified level** and the duration of studies ranges from two to four years. Graduates of these schools can either work in their area of specialisation as professionals or as teachers, or continue their studies via examinations in corresponding tertiary education schools. These schools are:

- Higher Drama and Dance Schools
- Cinema – Television Schools
- Conservatories – Music Schools
- The Fire Brigade Academy
- The Coast Guard Academy
- The Tour Guide School
- Tourist Professions School

1.1.3 Recognition of qualifications via formal education

Recognition of certificates and qualifications acquired by the graduates of TEE and IEK is done by the OEEK. The OEEK determines professional rights for all levels of vocational training and education in co-operation with the respective ministries and social partners. In order to perform this task a National Committee for Professional Rights (EEKED) was established and is in operation. The professional rights of 37 specialisations have been included in draft Presidential Decrees for the professional rights of graduates of IEK. Also, IEK offer numerous courses for specialisations that are unregulated and, consequently, no provisions on professional rights are required. These specialisations are for example

¹ Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, "After the Lyceum, what?", Athens 2001.

information technology technician, tour agent specialist, assistant chef, commercial enterprise specialist, clothing and fashion designer and so on.

The vocational training diploma issued by the OEEK is recognised as a formal qualification for appointment to the public sector,² on determination of qualifications for appointment to positions in the public sector structures.

Degrees and diplomas acquired from tertiary education Faculties and Schools are recognised as formal qualifications for appointment of graduates to corresponding posts in the public sector. Registration to Chambers or Professional Associations endorses graduates of tertiary education to obtain the licence to exercise their profession and have their professional rights protected.

Graduates of the Armed Forces Military Academies become career officers (in the army, navy or air force) and remain in service for a period of between 12 and 15 years. Upon acquiring their degree certificate graduates of Merchant Navy Academies also acquire an officer 3rd class diploma for captain or engineer in the Merchant Navy. Graduates of the Higher Ecclesiastical Schools acquire the right to study for the priesthood.

1.1.4 Promoting Lifelong learning

The following institutions operate in order to promote life long learning:

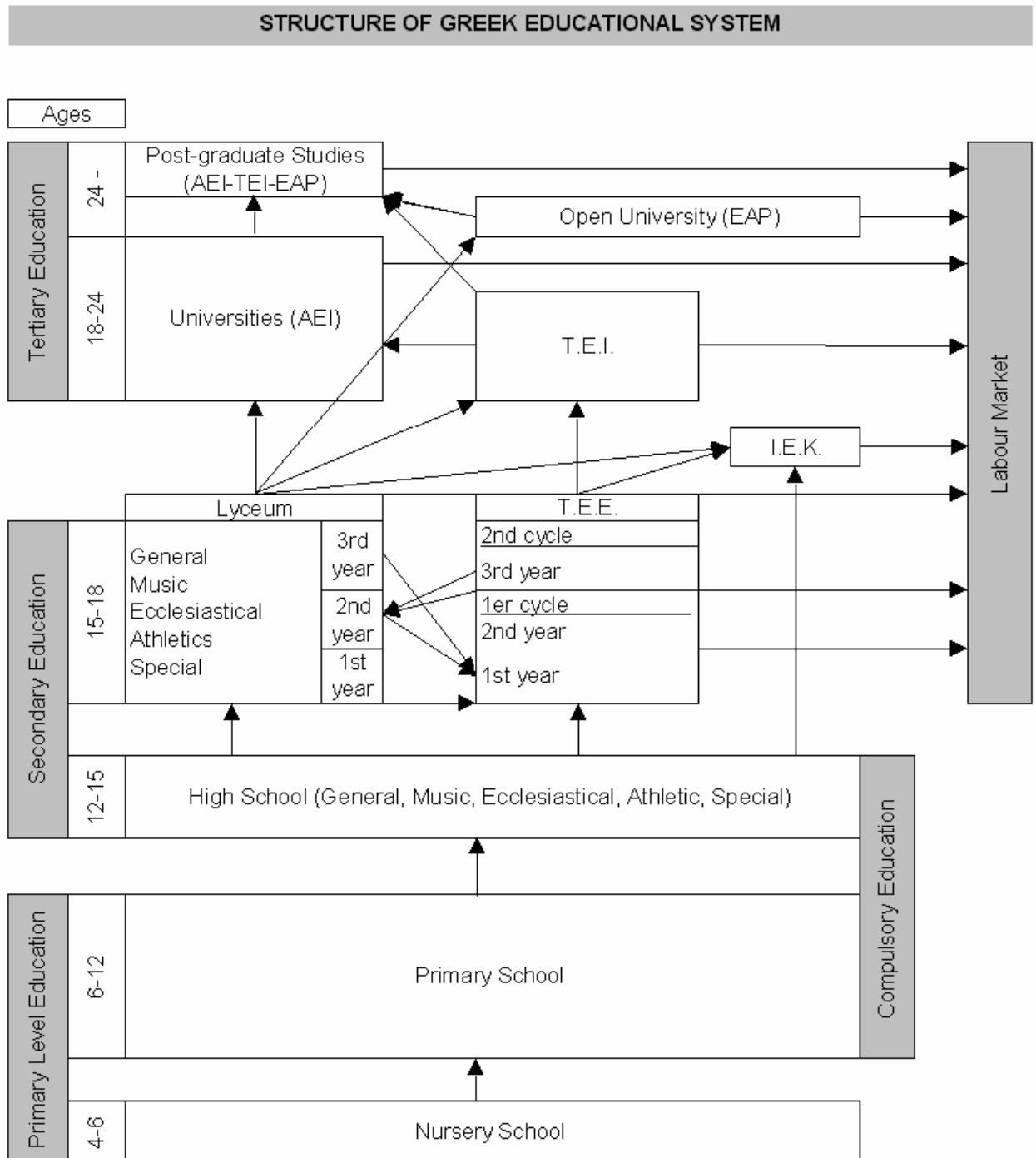
- There are evening schools equivalents for all types of secondary education schools. These are designed for working students and courses are of an extra year duration.
- During the school year 1997-98 student dropout rates from compulsory education reached 8.5%, 22% for the Lyceum and 26% for TEE³. In order to confront school dropout the state provides additional teaching support within schools. The pupils follow individualised courses depending on their needs.
- All adults who have not completed their nine-year compulsory education may acquire a certificate, equal to a lower level secondary school leaving certificate, by attending an eighteen-month course at one of the five Second Chance Schools, which are supervised by the Institute of Continuing Adult Education (IDEKE).
- The Hellenic Open University (EAP) has been in operation since 1997. Academic programs are based on distance learning and award degrees equivalent to those of conventional universities. Admission to the EAP is on draw for persons aged 22 and over.
- In order to assist graduates of formal (secondary or tertiary level) education, there are several foundations (such as the State Scholarships Foundation - IKY) which provide scholarships for higher level studies. Moreover, particularly in the public or in the broad public sector, educational leave is provided to the employees in order to obtain a Master's degree or Ph.D.
- The establishment of Life Long Learning Institutes (IDBE) addressed to adults over 25 years old who are graduates of higher secondary level school, offering modularised training,

² (Presidential Decree 50/2001, Government Gazette 39/A/5-3-01)

³ Paleocrassas, S; et al. Greek Lower Secondary School Dropouts: Results from a National Survey. In *European Educational Research Association Bulletin*, Vol.3, No.1, p. 12-18, April 1997.

under the supervision of universities and polytechnics is in process. The certificates acquired do not permit access to tertiary level education.

Diagram 1. Source: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs



1.2 Non-formal Education

Non-formal education means all organised educational activities outside the formal education system either on an individual basis or as part of a wider activity which is aimed at a specific group and has specific educational objectives⁴ (Coombs P.A. & Ahmed M., 1974).

1.2.1. The necessity of providing non-formal education

As it can be seen from table 1, a very large percentage of the population in Greece only has compulsory education (graduates of primary level or secondary level education). As a result of this, there are many vacancies in the labour market due to lack of a specialised workforce (it is estimated that these vacancies correspond to 3-4% of the overall unemployment rate of 11%).

Consequently, the main reasons that have led to the development of non-formal vocational education and training are⁵:

- The failure of formal education to provide knowledge and skills that fulfil the needs of the labour market.
- The needs of citizens for education, training, and retraining in order to respond to changes arising from the development of new specialisations and the implementation of new technologies in the workplace.
- The effort to confront unemployment and social exclusion of vulnerable social groups.
- The absorption of European community resources in order to improve knowledge and skills of the labour force.

Table 1:

Distribution of educational level of population aged 15 and over.

Educational level	% of overall population (15+)
Tertiary education (ISCED 4,5,6)	17.1
Upper secondary level certificate (ISCED 3)	26.8
Lower secondary level certificate (ISCED 2)	11.9
Primary education certificate (ISCED 1)	39.9
Never attended school	4.3

Source: National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), Survey of Workforce 2002 (3rd quarter)

1.2.2. Evolution of non-formal vocational education and training within the framework of the governmental policies

In 1965 the Adult Education Department of the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs established the Central Committee for People's Education (KELE) as well as Prefecture Committees for Grassroots Education and Training (NELE) which remain in operation to this date.

⁴ Coombs P.A. & Ahmed M., *Attacking Rural Poverty: How Non-formal Education Can Help*, J. Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1974.

⁵ Vergidis D., Abrahamsson K., Davis R. & Fay R., *Adult Education, Social & Economic Function*, Hellenic Open University, Patras, 1999.

In 1983 the Adult Education Department was upgraded to a General Secretariat for People's Education (GGLE) to which the NELE report. The GGLE plans, co-ordinates and supports actions which aim at:

- i. Combating illiteracy and supplementing basic education
- ii. Providing vocational training mainly to the unemployed, and
- iii. Providing social-cultural education.

Following the entry of Greece into the European Community in 1981 until the 1st Community Support Framework (1993), non-formal vocational training was provided exclusively by public adult education institutes already in operation. Such institutes were primarily the networks of the GGLE, the Hellenic Productivity Centre and the Agricultural Education Centres run by the Ministry of Agriculture.

During the implementation period of the 1st CSF the number of institutes providing subsidised continuing vocational training courses increased substantially and new foundations were established for the management of the actions financed by the European Social Funds.

Under the 2nd CSF, a legislative framework was enforced for the development of an accreditation system for training providers, their operation on a competitive basis and the link of training to the needs of the labour market.

1.2.3. Providers of non-formal education

Bodies, enterprises or institutions involved in providing non-formal vocational education and training in Greece are mainly:

The **General Secretariat for Adult Education** (GGEE), which is the leading public institute in adult education and training, is responsible for the planing, co-ordination and support of actions for supplementing basic education and providing lifelong learning. To this end, 300 education centres operate throughout the country, which report to the 54 Prefecture Committees for Grassroots Education and Training (NELE).

Adult Education Centres (KEE) also belong to the Secretariat General of each Prefecture in collaboration with local government authorities. The KEE provide education relating to basic skills, social skills, Greek language for immigrants, outside the educational system and Second Chance Schools.

GGEE activities are financed by public funds while many programmes are also co-financed by the European Social Fund (75% of the total amount).

The main target groups for GGEE actions are the unemployed, the illiterate, the women, the prisoners, the former prisoners, the former drug users, the young people, the young army recruits, the immigrants, the ex-patriates, and the single parent families.

The **Labor Force Employment Organisation** (OAED) implements continuing vocational training courses seeking to cover the needs of the unemployed who require specialisation in order to find work, as well as the needs of the employees, where acquiring extra skills will facilitate their career development. The main focus of OAED is to develop and/or expand

upon existing continuing vocational training courses with the aim of more effective intervention in the labour market and to cover the needs of the largest possible number of interested persons in training services.

The continuing vocational training courses run by OAED in the nation-wide network of educational units (OAED Centres for Vocational Training) are⁶:

- Continuing vocational training courses for the unemployed
- Pilot vocational training courses for young people, who have abandoned the formal education system (dropouts)
- Pilot vocational training courses for registered unemployed people in the registers of OAED
- Training courses for the self-employed that require education or skills to meet the requirements of their professions.

The Education Departments of various Ministries also plan vocational training programmes both for the unemployed and the in-house employees. More specifically:

The **Ministry of Health and Welfare** provides vocational education and training courses in all areas of specialisation in the health sector for the unemployed and the employees in the National Health System, at its 32 continuing vocational training centres within hospitals of the National Health System and the National Ambulance Service.

Moreover, the National Public Health School provides education, retraining and specialisation for health care experts depending on national needs.

The **Ministry of Agriculture** via the Agricultural Vocational Education, Training and Employment Organisation (OGEEKA) runs courses for farmers and other persons employed in various areas of agricultural sector. These programs take place at the 71 “DIMITRA” Continuing Training Centres. “OGEEKA”, in the context of linking formal and non formal vocational education and training with production and labour market, promotes the issuing of “green” certificates which are provided via various combinations of certifying education, distance learning, seminars, practical exercises or apprenticeship.

The **Ministry of Public Order** supervises i) the National Security Academy which educates senior officers of the Hellenic Police Force or other services in the public sector in matters of national security, ii) the Further Education and Training Academy.

The **Ministry of Mercantile Marine** runs training courses for seamen via the Merchant Navy Officer Training Centres.

The **Ministry of the Interior and Public Administration** supervises the National Public Administration Centre, which has two educational units:

- the National Public Administration School which provides pre-entry and post-entry education to newly recruited employees in the public sector and education, further education and postgraduate specialisation to all public administration staff, and
- the Educational Institute which seeks to educate and train employees belonging to central and regional government, local government authorities (first and second level), public law

⁶ National Institute of Labour, “*Methods of recognition and accreditation of skills and knowledge obtained through non-formal education*”, April 2001.

bodies corporate and private law bodies corporate as well as the wider public sector (such as employees of public utilities).

The **Ministry of Defence** runs various Academies for officers and non-commissioned officers of the Armed Forces and security forces.

The **Ministry of Justice** has schools for educating newly recruited prison officers.

Major public enterprises (the Public Power Corporation, the Hellenic Telecommunications Organisation, Hellenic Post, Hellenic Railways, etc.) or private sector companies (banks, companies with more than 100 employees, etc.) as well as chambers of commerce, professional associations, federations of employees, have training departments and/or training units which provide employees with knowledge and skills which are required for their specific jobs.

Centres for Vocational Training (KEK) are private sector bodies (for-profit or not-for-profit) or public bodies providing continuing training which have received positive evaluation and have been certified by the National Accreditation Centre (EKEPIS) and have secured financing from national (Ministry of Labour) and community resources (European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund). The KEK plan, organise and run continuing vocational training courses for employees and the unemployed, graduates from all levels of education, in various subject areas. For 2001-2003 283 continuing vocational training bodies have been certified which have 35,000 training positions in 577 centres throughout the entire country. The majority of KEK are in the private sector. Moreover, 36 specialised Social and Vocational Integration Centres have been certified for disabled people (Decision No. 110466/11-2-2002 of the Minister of Labour & Social Affairs) and 4 for drug users and former drug users (Decision No. 25852/13-1-2001 of the Minister of Labour & Social Affairs). These 40 specialised centres are primarily run by welfare organisations.

By means of decision No. 105127/8-11-2001 of the Minister of Labour & Social Affairs a certification system for centres for vocational training was established.

In Greece **Private Educational Centres** also operate which are profit-making commercial enterprises, which provide non-formal general and vocational education and training. Some of these collaborate with universities from abroad and award foreign university degrees. These degrees frequently are sought after in the marketplace but are not yet recognised by the state in spite of pressure exerted by various social groups and the EU for the implementation of the 89/48/EEC Directive for graduates of Institutions of Higher Education or Technological Educational Institutes.

1.2.4. Accreditation of qualifications required via non-formal education

Certificates issued by agencies providing non-formal vocational education and training are not officially accredited for the purpose of certifying qualifications. Consequently, the above certificates are not documents that their holders can use in order to seek a position in the public sector. Despite this, the courses run by the Education Directorates of the various

Ministries for their staff can lead to certificates which constitute qualifications for their career development inside the departments.

Likewise, in the private sector vocational qualifications acquired via vocational education courses run by companies themselves in their own work environment for their staff are accredited.

In relation to other vocational education courses run by other bodies in the context of non-formal education (NELE, KEK, Liberal Studies Workshops, etc.) there is no certification system for qualifications acquired through these routes. Despite this, certificates of attendance at such courses are an element that may be positively taken into account during staff selection procedures by employers.

1.3 Informal Learning

Informal learning takes place with citizens being involved with vocational, cultural or other social activities. Acquisition of knowledge and skills in some subject area via informal learning can promote and improve the qualifications which someone has to a large extent, even without their being any form of prior formal or non-formal vocational training. However, the effort to measure and certify qualifications acquired in the above manner entails a great deal of difficulty with the result that interested parties encounter difficulties in demonstrating that they have the specific skills.

For employers, the non-existence of a qualifications certification system leads to non-acknowledgement of skills which have been acquired by employees via informal learning with everything this entails in terms of pay, professional rights, etc.

In Greece, despite the lack of a specific vocational qualifications certification system, there is limited opportunity for acknowledgement of skills via the acquisition of certificates or a licence to exercise a profession issued by various services or agencies.

The main services/agencies that provide such types of certification are:

- The Industrial and Commercial Chamber of Athens (ICCA)

The ICCA has established a professional competency certification system for the knowledge and experience of each person involved in his sector. The certification examination procedure includes a theoretical and practical part depending on the case.

The relevant certificate which is issued to show competency in the specific profession, regardless of the formal qualifications of the person certified, is a confirmation which indicates that he holds the knowledge and skills required by the market which are taken into account by businesses for candidates which they would hire. The areas of specialisation for which examinations certifying professional competence are held (regardless of formal qualifications) are for the time being a) accounting office employee, and b) information technology employee. Gradually the system will be enriched with other areas of specialisation with the aim of covering the entire range of business activities in the short period of time.

- **Computer and Information Technology Experts Association (EPY)**

The EPY certifies those individuals who have skills in using computers at two basic levels: basic and advanced. It also operates as an examining centre for acquisition of the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) certificate for candidates.

Moreover, in Greece, various private sector companies operate which provide certification of knowledge for various information technology applications in collaboration with information technology companies from abroad (Microsoft, Oracle, 3 Com, etc.). These specific certificates are only recognised by businesses that use the software applications of the above companies.

1.4 Sources of Finance

Formal education in Greece is provided free of charge and is financed by the state budget.

In addition to state education, in Greece private schools also operate for pre-school, primary and secondary level education, which are controlled by the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, which determines their course content, teaching material and operation in general. With a few exceptions, these are charitable institutions, which operate as private sector non-profit organisations.

In parallel, in the context of the 3rd Community Support Framework (2000-2006) the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs manages the Education and Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK) Operational Programme with an overall budget of € 2.5 billion. The objectives of this programme are in line with the guidelines for the national plan of action for employment and the measures that are implemented are co-financed by the European Social Fund by 75% and 25% by the Greek government.

In the case of non-formal education there is a mixed financing system. More specifically, courses implemented by ministries or other public sector bodies in the context of 3rd CSF Operational Programmes are financed via public expenditure with 25% national participation and 75% community participation. For the operational programme Employment and Vocational Training run by the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs, the overall budget is approximately 2 billion EURO's for the period 2000-2006. It is estimated that approximately 125,000 unemployed people (34% of overall unemployed people) and approximately 200,000 employees will be trained.

Bodies providing non-formal education as described above also implement self financed courses depending on the needs of labour market and the needs for specialisation of the workforce.

The courses that are implemented by large private sector businesses for training their staff cover the costs of such courses entirely by themselves. Moreover, all businesses that use employees can take advantage of the Vocational Training and Education Course Special Account (ELPEKE) for participation of their staff in vocational training courses either at their

place of work or away from it. This account is financed by the contribution of 0.45% on salaries which is paid by employers into the ELPEKE account.

1.5 Features of Participants

Data on the features of participants in training and vocational education courses are provided by the National Statistical Service of Greece, and by the Final Implementation Report of the Continuing Vocational Training and Employment Promotion Operational Programme.

From Table 2 it is clear that in the courses implemented in the context of the Continuing Vocational Training and Employment Promotion Operational Programme participation by woman reached 42% both for employees and unemployed. Moreover, participation of persons aged over 25 was 80% for employees and 66% for the unemployed.

Table 2

Features of participants in continuing training courses during 1994-1999, per gender and age

	TOTAL	Men	%	Women	%	<25	%	>25	%
Employee training	323,221	188,927	58	134,294	42	65,453	20	257,768	80
Unemployed training	194,150	112,912	58	81,238	42	66,730	34	127,420	66

Source: Final Closure Report for the "Continuing Vocational Training and Employment Promotion Operational Program 1994-1999".

Table 3 shows that for the second quarter of 2002 (during the last four weeks when research was conducted) 9.2% of the population was attending some sort of educational or vocational training course. The large percentage that observed in the 15-24 age group is due to the fact that these are persons attending courses in the context of formal education.

Table 3:

Individuals (aged 15+) attending any form of education or vocational training course (last four weeks during which research was conducted)

	TOTAL	Aged 15-19	Aged 20-24	Aged 25-29	Aged 30-44	Aged 45-64	Aged 65+
TOTAL	8,977,231	603,014	670,062	679,560	2,140,928	2,666,760	2,216,908
Yes	829,819	523,591	242,782	41,077	19,751	2,619	0
%	9.2	86.8	36.2	6.0	0.9	0.1	0.0
Male	4,298,131	304,335	323,942	346,889	1,032,308	1,292,778	997,878
Yes	405,348	261,939	111,081	20,889	10,344	1,094	0
%	9.4	86.1	34.3	6.0	1.0	0.1	0.0
Female	4,679,101	298,679	346,120	332,670	1,108,620	1,373,982	1,219,030
Yes	424,471	261,652	131,700	20,188	9,407	1,525	0
%	9.1	87.6	38.1	6.1	0.8	0.1	0.0

Source: National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), Survey of Workforce 2002, 2nd four-month.

Table 4, shows the educational level of courses which were run in the context of formal education as well as the type of courses implemented in the context of non-formal education.

Table 4:

Educational level of individuals (aged 15+) attending any formal education of vocational training course

	TOTAL	%	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-44	45-64	65+
FORMAL EDUCATION								
Primary level education	301	0.04	301	0	0	0	0	0
Secondary level education	408,321	49.2	400,651	6,066	936	670	0	0
Post-secondary education	65,534	7.9	21,203	38,255	4,031	1,979	65	0
Tertiary level education	322,215	38.8	88,626	191,905	31,576	9,076	1,034	0
NON-FORMAL EDUCATION								0
Liberal Studies Workshop	6,175	0.7	1,698	1,962	1,300	1,215	0	0
Informal vocational training course	10,463	1.3	2,052	1,877	1,135	4,044	1,355	0
Other courses	16,808	2.0	9,059	2,717	2,098	2,768	165	0
TOTAL	829,819		523,591	242,782	41,077	19,751	2,619	0

Source: ESYE, Survey of Workforce 2002, 2nd four-month.

In table 5, it is interesting to note that the reason for which trainees attend a certain continuing vocational training course is in order to improve the qualifications or to adapt to technological changes (90%).

Table 5:

Reasons why individuals (aged 15+) attend education of vocational training courses

	Age groups		15-19	20-24	25-29	30-44	45-64	65+
	TOTAL	%	523,591	242,782	41,077	19,751	2,619	0
Initial education or education aimed at acquiring qualifications	797,806		520,507	233,746	33,621	9,756	175	0
Continuing vocational training	29,307	100.0	2,709	8,841	6,524	9,307	1,926	0
In order to improve qualifications or job or to adapt to technological changes	26,378	90.0	1,938	8,061	5,927	8,526	1,926	0
In order to prepare for entry to labor market / return to work	108	0.4	108	0	0	0	0	0
Other reasons	2,821	9.6	663	780	597	781	0	0
Other cases	2,705	100.0	374	195	931	687	518	0
In the context of an official state program to support employment	1,309	48	264	0	553	389	102	0
For reasons not related to current or future work	1,396	52	110	195	378	298	416	0

Source: ESYE, Survey of Workforce, 2nd Quarter 2002

Table 6 shows that of the entire population only 5.6% (6.9% and 4.3% women) have attended and completed some vocational training course lasting more than six months.

Table 6:

Number of individuals (aged 15+) who have attended and completed a vocational training course lasting more than six months, per gender

Gender	TOTAL POPULATION	Number of trainees	%
Men	4,298,131	296,124	6.9%
Women	4,679,101	202,922	4.3%
TOTAL	8,977,231	499,046	5.6%

Source: ESYE, Survey of Workforce 2002 2nd Quarter

Table 7:

Number of trainees who have attended a vocational training course in relation to the way it was implemented

IMPLEMENTATION MODE	No. of trainees	%
In classroom	407,366	81.6%
Exclusively at place of work	9,351	1.9%
Combination of classroom teaching & practice in workplace	76,44	15.3%
Other mode (distance learning, etc)	5,885	1.2%
TOTAL	499,046	100.0%

Source: ESYE, Survey of Workforce 2002 2nd Quarter

1.6 The role of the social partners (in developing the national qualifications system and lifelong learning)

Until 1992 the social partners did not play any role in the development of vocational training in Greece. The State was the most important agency for planning and implementing vocational training and education measures. The ambiguity of the role of the social partners changed as of 1998. They became involved in the administrative boards of organisations involved in training and education (OAED, OEEK, National Labour Institute, National Employment Observatory, National Centre for Vocational Orientation, etc.). In parallel, they have promoted relevant research and publications, and have taken initiatives to invest in human resources, bolster proactive measures of intervention in the labour market resulting in the more effective contribution of social partners associations (INE/GSEE, KAELE, KEK/GSEBEE, IBEPE) to optimising vocational training and employment promotion.

Of the social partners particular mention can be made of the Labour Institute of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (INE/GSEE) which has prepared a series studies on lifelong learning and vocational training. The Labour Institute has also implemented a large number of continuing vocational training courses and has actively participated in almost all community initiatives in the context of the Community Support Framework.

Moreover, the Association of Greek Industries (SEB) has submitted its positions in proposals formulated in order to promote lifelong learning. The last position taken by SEB relates to

the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning formulated in Lisbon in March 2000. It pointed out that the strategy should focus on increasing demand and reducing impediments to lifelong learning, acknowledgement of skills required via informal learning by education and training systems, etc.

1.7 Structures linking vocational education and training to employment and promoting lifelong learning

From everything described above it is clear that policies concerning formal vocational education and training are developed by the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, while policies relating to non-formal, continuing vocational training are primarily developed by the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs. To date, despite the fact that the objectives laid down by both ministries on the matter of promoting lifelong learning and linking vocational education to employment coincide, implementation of the policies has not been done within a single institutional framework or agency. This has resulted in a lack of co-ordination, overlapping in terms of vocational education courses and differing forms of support or treatment for them (for example OAED Apprenticeship TEE - Ministry of Education TEE).

In order to deal with the aforementioned weaknesses and in order to determine an integrated set of compatible functions through which national policy on linking vocational education and training to employment could be planned and implemented in a uniform manner, a draft law on the National System to Link Vocational Training and Education to Employment has been drafted and is currently being debated by the Parliament.

1.8 Data on trainee mobility from one area of specialization to another

In theory horizontal transference is possible at the upper level of secondary education. In practice though, transference is rare, especially regarding transference from TEE to the Lyceum, which due to its academic character and the fact that in effect it prepares pupils for tertiary level education, is considered much more demanding and thus prohibitive for TEE pupils. The small number of pupils who transfer in the opposite direction, from the lower classes of Lyceum to the first year of TEE, do so because of their inability to meet the standards required by the Lyceum.

In the case of graduates of institutes for vocational training (IEK) who completed their studies in one area of specialisation and wish to a course in another area of specialisation, it is possible for them to enter the second or third or fourth semester of the new area of specialisation where the courses of studies in the two areas of specialisation are similar. For example, of the 21,859 students registered in IEK for the first semester of 2002, 500 were studying in an extra area of specialisation (a figure of ~2.3%).

Ten per cent of drop out students and graduates from tertiary education enrol for classes at IEK, in order to obtain some specialisation over the course of two years, which they hope will ensure them immediate entry into the labour market. This is an indication that unemployment

among graduates affects strategic choices of students. There is a certain amount of transference from Technological Educational Institutes to Institutions of Higher Education (1,072 TEI graduates enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education during the 1999-2000 academic year). There is no noticeable transference in the opposite direction.

1.9 Assuring the quality of training provided

Assuring quality in specialisation provision systems is done via mechanisms of the bodies, responsible for formal or non-formal education. In the case of formal education courses, the main bodies within the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs that make and implement policy are:

- i. The **Pedagogic Institute** which is an agency expresses opinions on academic and pedagogic issues, and is responsible for primary and secondary level education, research on education issues, designing course schedules and curricula, development of teaching material and training of teachers.
- ii. The **OEEK**, an independent agency responsible for formal post-secondary vocational training which plans, organises, supervises and implements courses of studies at IEK.
- iii. The **Educational Research Centre** (KEE) which investigates issues relating to Greek education, records views of social partners about critical problems in education, and supports universities and research centres involved in educational research.

Moreover, the following agencies are responsible for accreditation of areas of specialisation and degrees that have been acquired abroad:

- i. The Inter-University Foreign Degree Accreditation Centre (DIKATSA), which is responsible for accrediting degrees from abroad equivalent to degrees issued by Greek University faculties.
- ii. The Institute of Technological Education (ITE) which is responsible for accrediting degrees from abroad equivalent to degrees issued by Greek TEI faculties.
- iii. The Professional Rights & Equivalence Department of the OEEK's Training Division which is the department competent for accreditation of lower and middle technical school degrees from Greece and abroad.
- iv. The Teaching Staff Education School Equivalence Committee, which is the agency responsible for accreditation of degrees of teachers and nursery school teachers from higher (non-University) schools abroad.
- v. The Tertiary Level Education Vocational Certificate Equivalence Accreditation Council which is the agency for the recognition of the right to exercise a certain profession in Greece⁷.

In order to assure the quality of non-formal vocational training courses the main agency for making and implementing policy of the Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs is the **National**

⁷ Presidential Decree 165/2000, Governmental Gazette 149/b. A'/28-6-2000.

Accreditation Centre of Vocational Training and Support Services Centres (EKEPIS)

which, using evaluation criteria, has developed and implemented systems for:

- i. Accreditation of vocational training centres (KEK)
- ii. Accreditation of continuing vocational training trainers via the establishment of a register.
- iii. Accreditation of continuing vocational training courses that result in the acquisition of accredited knowledge, skills and qualifications related to the needs of the labour market.
- iv. Accreditation of staff providing support services via the establishment of a register.
- v. Development of the system for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the work of accreditation centres.

EKEPIS establishes systems of specifications, inspection and evaluation, which include modern views, experiences and new technologies. It implements transparent procedures and draws on social dialogue with the stakeholders.

1.10 Information networks

Developed networks for the provision of advice and information exist in relation to the accreditation of qualifications acquired via vocational education and training as well as how they can be accessed in the context of lifelong learning. These networks include:

- The institution of **Education and Career Counselling** which seeks to provide counselling to pupils during various stages of development of their personality in conjunction with up-to-date, rounded information about educational and vocational choices available to them so as to ensure harmonious, active integration into society. Pursuant to Law 2525/9768 *Regional Education and Career Counselling Centres* were established in the administrative capitals of prefectures, one within the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs, and one within the Pedagogic Institute. Moreover, 200 Education and Career Counselling Offices were established in an equal number of schools around the country. Both the Education and Career Counselling Offices and Regional Education and Career Counselling Centre report to the YPETH. Moreover, pursuant to Law 2224/1994, the **National Centre for Vocational Orientation** (EKEP) was established. One of the main objectives of EKEP is to provide scientific and technical support to the Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs and Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs in planning and implementing national policy in the vocational orientation sector. Moreover, EKEP is responsible for the centers, which provide career orientation services. EKEP participates in the European Information Centres Network.
- **OAED Employment Promotion Centres** (KPA). Part of their role is to provide individualised counselling to the unemployed, to inform them and guide them depending on the area of specialisation towards continuing vocational training courses in order to acquire specialised knowledge and skills, which will facilitate them in entering the labour market.

Lastly, there are various websites of ministries and other agencies and services providing vocational training which provide information to interested parties but it is up to the party interested to take the initiative to search out such information. Specific examples are the

websites of the Pedagogic Institute, of the Ministry of Education, and the Secondary Level Education Pupil Transfer to Education and Labour Market Observatory which was established as part of the EPEAEK I Operational Programme in the context of the educational and career counselling measure. Moreover, the Ministry of the Interior and Public Administration's websites "A citizen's guide" provides important information (an alphabetical list of information about education and training providers).

2. THE IMPACT OF QUALIFICATION SYSTEMS IN GREECE

2.1 Introduction

Since the beginning of the 1990s the structural character of unemployment, has demonstrated the leading role of training in confronting the inequalities in the labour market. Balancing the characteristics of supply with the needs of demand leads to the adoption of active policies such as training or by state bodies involved in planning and implementing education policies and by enterprises who use in-house training in order to update the skills of persons employed by them.

At macroeconomic level, the positive relationship ascertained between investment in education and economic performance (rate of economic growth, rate of increase in living standards) shows the increasing importance of human capital and investments in knowledge in the entire process of development. High-level skills improve the quality of work and increase productivity since they ensure proper responses to complex duties in a flexible manner in a modern working environment and not simply performance of routine work duties. Inequalities in skills are closely associated with inequalities in income distribution. The correlation between low or non-existent skills and limited professional prospects, low pay and property is significant.

Globalisation and progress towards the knowledge society are contributing to economic restructuring, but at the same time a risk of social exclusion and rapid skill value loss is generating. The balance between flexibility and security is becoming of concern to an ever greater part of the workforce and must be dealt within the context of an approach which recognises the important contribution of training to acquiring necessary skills, allowing persons to enter and remain in the labour market and allowing development in terms of pay and work duties.

Lastly, at the centre of the European social model lies the quality of work which contains the conditions of pay and work, health and safety at the workplace, flexible organisation of working time and primarily the conjunction between flexibility and safety. Improving the quality of jobs is closely connected with progress towards a knowledge-based economy since it is clear that the majority of jobs that have been created recently relate to specialised employees in knowledge intensive sectors. The need for lifelong learning and for complementarity between education and training has been accepted by all Member States of the European Union which are currently in the process of redesigning their policies in the base of a more integrated and complementary perspective.

2.2 The framework of formal education in Greece and the impact on recipients of education

The educational system in Greece is significantly different from that in other European countries for reasons related to the philosophy and structure of education, its social function and its role in the economy. The Greek educational and training system, as described in detail above, includes general education (primary, secondary and tertiary level), technical vocational education (secondary and tertiary level) and vocational training (initial, continuing).

Technical vocational training and education in Greece operates in a purely supplemental manner to general education according to the structure of the Greek economy and the characteristics of employment, as well as to the social-cultural standards of the country, while the part of informal education covers the gap between formal education and the needs of the labour market.

The policies, which are followed in relation to formal education, are depicted in the Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK) whose objectives focus on:

- Access of all young people aged between 15 and 20 to education and vocational training
- Restructuring and improvement of the educational system and better linkage with the needs of the labour market, and
- Improvement in educational infrastructures and administration.

The operational objectives of the programme during the 2nd Community Support Framework are as follows:

- Improvement of general and technical education so as to ensure that all young people under 20 years old are provided an accredited form of education
- Improvement of undergraduate and postgraduate studies
- Organisational and administrative modernisation of education.

In programming terms the EPEAEK placed emphasis on improving general and technical education (35.28%), improving tertiary education (31.31%) and improving initial vocational training (31.09%).

Over recent decades in reference to youth employment, it has been observed internationally that young people with inadequate qualifications and skills are more threatened by the prospect of low income or even worse by complete social-economic marginalisation. Through the actions taken under the EPEAEK II Operational Programme an effort is being made to provide high-level basic education, to improve studies and knowledge, as well as to encourage students towards technical vocational training and to professions with great demand in the labour market. It is known that the employment rate affecting Lyceum graduates is particularly high.

According to the National Statistical Service of Greece (ESYE), during the 2nd quarter of 2002 the majority of the participants in the educational system aimed at acquiring qualifications while a small percentage sought to improve his qualifications or to adapt to technological developments (Table 8).

When the content of studies is connected with the characteristics and the needs of the labour market, degrees and the entailed specialties facilitate the access to employment and ensure higher pay and better standards of living. In response to a question about the content of their studies⁸ one in two graduates consider that it was extremely theoretical and the practical training was necessary so that undergraduate education responds to the needs of the labour market. In addition, the results of a research about the graduates of economic schools⁹ and their access to the labour market, which was carried out by the Pedagogic Institute, were ascertained that a postgraduate diploma is the first preference for engagement of financial executives (for 36% of major enterprises listed on the stock exchange) while a university degree is sufficient for 57.8% of enterprises. At the same time a doctorate is required by just 6.3% of enterprises, while the Lyceum certificate is of no value (only 2.8% of enterprises). Additional qualifications, positively considered, are foreign languages and information technologies. The above percentages are indicative that specialities acquired within the company are preferred. It is also characteristic that 58% of persons questioned stated that the company would finance a postgraduate course (even though this has not occurred to the same extent which is stated) in accordance with the international trend for training at work.

Based on the theoretical approach, in relation to employers, training-education procedures are viewed positively whether related to formal or informal forms of education. This positive approach is related to the economic benefits (increase in performance/productivity of workers/the company, improvement in quality/competitiveness of the product/business) as well as the labour conditions (improvement and integration of employees into objectives and priorities of the Company, restructuring of labour relations).

In terms of policymakers, general positive impacts on macroeconomic figures must also include the positive impact at a social level such as increase of employment posts and reduced unemployment, integration of special population groups into the productive system and support of the social cohesion.

Lastly, in relation to trainees, in addition to the positive impacts on their income (improved position in the company, finding a new post or pay during training in the case of subsidised programmes), the improvement in their professional knowledge entails positive impacts at a social level.

⁸ Mpitros, G.; "The educational system and the effective correlation of job positions and employee skills for economic schools", Athens Economic University, Educational Care Centre.

⁹ Magoula, T.; Livada, A.; "The labour market and economic education – The Pedagogic Institute", 2001.

The impact of degrees on income and the career of employed persons is reflected in collective contracts of work. Generally speaking, administrative staff includes all those who are graduates of secondary level education or have a degree from a higher school or university and do not belong to the technical staff category. Technical staff includes all graduates of secondary level and technical schools or higher educational schools as well as graduates of higher technical education (chemical engineers, agronomists, etc.). Auxiliary staff includes all graduates who have as a minimum rudimentary education and of these people practical engineers, electricians, etc., should have a diploma in their area of specialisation.¹⁰ For example, note that graduates of secondary level technical schools based on their degree and on their work experience, depending on sector in which they work, are classified into class A experts, class B experts, technicians, assistant technicians, and labourers. Employees who do not have a diploma/degree are engaged as unskilled persons and remain in that category (for example the tanners sector) for two years at which time they are moved up to the next category.¹¹ The conditions for transition from the category of assistant technicians to technician differ depending on the area of specialisation, for example, in the gold-silversmith sector assistant technicians are considered to be technicians following completion of three years full-time practical experience after they have obtained their degree, while all those who do not have a degree (experience based assistants) move up category after acquiring six years full-time professional experience.

The pay scales of workers also differ based on their degrees and work experience. In particular, on the basis of degrees the pay scale differs for a) graduates of universities, b) graduates of higher schools, c) graduates of secondary level education, d) graduates of rudimentary education.¹² For example, note that employees of private sector insurance companies are paid a degree allowance in the order of 18% for graduates of Greek or equivalent foreign universities and for graduates of technical educational institutes or equivalent technical schools. Holders of postgraduate degrees are paid an extra 5% allowance on top of the basic salary for each year of postgraduate studies (two years in the case of a master and three in the case of a doctorate). Moreover, a financial allowance is also paid in various sectors to graduates of sectoral co-operative schools (5% allowance on the basic salary for the agricultural co-operative organisation sector, 6% for graduates of the one-year course of private sector insurance companies schools)¹³. Allowances are also paid to persons employed in tourist professions who are graduates of tourist schools depending on the level of the school (for example an intensive tourist school allowance, secondary level tourist school allowance, and higher tourist school allowance). Moreover, a foreign language allowance is also paid (10% on the basic salary) under the condition that the employee has the necessary supporting documents and uses the foreign languages for the benefits of the enterprise. The

¹⁰ Codified Collective Contracts, Mediation, and Arbitration Service Vol. I 1998, p. 127

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 116

¹² *Ibid.* p. 129

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 97

financial allowances are also paid to specific professional categories such as accountants and assistant accountants to whom a balance sheet allowance is paid once a year.¹⁴

In addition to the financial allowances agreed on the basis of collective contracts, more favourable working conditions are also ensured for workers who are students such as additional leave to take part in examinations.¹⁵ More specifically, two weeks study leave per year with full pay is granted to students of educational organisations of any type and at any grade in the public sector or at schools supervised by it (Law 1346/83, article 4). Moreover, all employees studying at evening lower or higher secondary education schools whose attendance is continuing on the basis of a relevant certificate, are granted study leave of two weeks with full pay during examinations. Employees are eligible also for educational leave with full pay for postgraduate studies in Greece or abroad. However they are conditioned to remain in the employment of the company for a period of time decided upon the board of directors.

Lastly, vocational training diplomas issued by Vocational Training Institutes are accepted as a formal qualification for appointment to the public sector (Presidential Decree 50/2001 (Government Gazette 39/A/5-3-2001). Similarly, the degrees from Technical Vocational Schools (first and second cycle), TES and Technical Vocational Lyceums or intensive education schools operated by the Labor Force Employment Organization lead to the acquisition of professional permits either directly or indirectly following examinations or the acquisition of professional experience.

Table 8:

Reasons for participation in post-compulsory formal education for each level of education.

	Initial education or education to acquire qualifications	Improvement of qualifications, job position or adaptation to technological change	Preparation to return to work after a long absence	Other reasons	As part of an official state program to support employment	Reasons unconnected with current or future work
Technical Vocational School	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unified Lyceum	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Vocational Training Institutes	92.7	6.6	0.0	0.5	0.2	0.0
Post-secondary vocational training school	88.9	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Higher education school	97.5	2.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
University	97.7	1.7	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.2
Postgraduate studies	68.8	31.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Doctoral studies	75.8	24.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: ESYE, Survey of Workforce, 2nd Quarter 2002

¹⁴ Ibid. p.98

2.3 The context of non-formal education in Greece and the repercussions on trainees

In relation to continuing vocational training, employment structures and accompanying services provided to trainees only in the context of the 3rd Community Support Framework took a systematic form. A negative aspect of the entire procedure of continuing training is the fact that there is still no type of certification or accreditation of knowledge and skills acquired by trainees while the structure and content of the detailed courses is the responsibility and competence of each Vocational Training Centre. These features, as one might expect, cause differences in the impact of training on the target population and the manner in which trainees are confronted by companies and consequently by the labour market, significantly limiting the positive impacts observed in the case of formal education.

Continuing vocational training during the 2nd Community Support Framework was financed in the context of the Operational Programme “Continuing Training and promotion of employment” aiming at qualitative improvement and promotion of the employment. It should be noted that over recent years the resources available for vocational training have increased, a fact, which reflects the importance attributed to human resources as a tool for promoting the competitiveness of the Greek economy.

During implementation of the Operational Programme in the context of the 2nd CSF there were 517,371 beneficiaries of training actions of whom 323,221 were employees in the private sector and wider public sector, including the category of self-employed individuals, while 194,150 were unemployed. According to the data in Table 2, the majority of participants attended a vocational training course in order to acquire new qualifications or skills. For the participants in a continuing vocational training and in particular for those who were unemployed the main reasons for attendance were to improve their qualifications or adapt them to technological change.

Table 9:

Reasons for participation in non-formal education (participants aged 15-64)

	Acquisition of qualifications	Improvement of qualifications or job position or adaptation to technological change	Other reasons	As part of an official state program to support employment	Reasons unconnected with current or future work
Private Educational Centers	68.5%	22.9%	4.3%	0.0%	4.3%
Continuing vocational training courses	25.5%	60.7%	2.8%	8.1%	2.9%
Other courses	68.9%	19.0%	7.0%	2.2%	3.0%

Source: ESYE, Survey of Workforce, 2nd Quarter 2002

¹⁵ Ibid. p.133-134

Assessments of the repercussions of the operational programme on employment¹⁶ are random due to the nature of the outflows and the difficulty of finding an acceptable calculating method. The sample of trainees contained a very large percentage of long-term unemployed persons. In relation to the results of the research, 25% of the unemployed persons who were trained at the OAED vocational training centres were employed six months after the end of the course (approximately half in an area related to the field of training) while the unemployed trainees at vocational training centres found the corresponding figure to be 39.2%. In relation to the second sample, the majority of unemployed people who found work (63.27%) stated that they were employed in a post related to their profession, while a quite high figure (40.82%) stated that their post was related to the subject of the training, which they had attended. Moreover, the majority of participants in vocational training courses concerning the secondary and tertiary sector considered that training contribute to the improvement of their professional skills and their experience, in other words that it has a positive repercussion on their employability.

In relation to in-house training of employees, it emerged that the 79% of trainees considered that the benefits of training were the acquisition of additional skills useful for the company itself, while an equally large percentage the acquisition of skills useful in general for the wider market. Moreover, 68% identified positive repercussions in terms of better collaboration between employees, while 54% believed that the courses contributed to consolidating their job position. A positive impact on the employability of trainees was ascertained from the training courses for unemployed seamen. Seamen who want to continue to work in the context of international merchant shipping must be aware of the most recent rules and developments in general which have been established and the aforementioned courses covered this subject matter.

The results of a research¹⁷ conducted in order to determine the impacts of vocational training on young unemployed people showed that employers consider that the continuing training do not respond to the needs of the market and consequently is not directly linked with an increase in employment. In particular they point out the need for a more effective labour market need diagnosis mechanism and for a more effective training system.

Lastly, in relation to trainees, the social recompense¹⁸ for continuing training is meager for participants in courses where evaluation and certification procedures for vocational skills are absent. Training in these cases is intended primarily to provide a certain allowance, covering rudimentary social protection needs of all unemployed persons who are not entitled to unemployment benefit, without at the same time contributing in a substantive manner to expanding opportunities for access to employment. Unemployment as a state is strongly

¹⁶ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, *Operational Programme on Continuing Training and Promotion of Employment, Closing Report*, Athens June 2002

¹⁷ Sociology Dept. University of Crete, "*Demand for Continuing Education and Incentives for Interested Persons in Greece*", Rethymnon, July 2002

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

related to educational processes and most young people now seem to be aware that their professional career is directly related to a successful schooling which contains elements both of education and training. In relation to the problem of unemployment, young unemployed people consider the institution of education as extremely effective. Most young people seem to be willing to participate in education and training programmes in order to have more qualifications when searching for a job because they are interested in the subject of training and because they benefit from the training allowance.

3. PRESSURES AND INITIATIVES

3.1 Major reforms and changes in Education & Training over the last decade

3.1.1. Developments in General and Higher Education promoting lifelong learning (formal learning)

Technological developments, the globalization of the market, the revolution in telecommunications and the transition from the information society to the knowledge society are major challenges, which Greece has to confront.

The financial assistance provided to Greece from the European Structural Fund since the 1990s have been a major financial instrument for the development of human resources and employment promotion. Adapting human resources to constantly changing market needs is vital to the competitiveness and growth of the Greek economy and to increasing employment and combating unemployment. Success in this area will depend on mobilising all human resources and, more importantly, on the availability of a highly qualified workforce with the skills needed to master advanced technologies and adapt to change.

A. Contribution of the Community Support Frameworks

Community Support Framework II - EPEAEK I

Within the 2nd Community Support Framework (1994-1999), the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs integrated in its educational policy the **Operational Programme for Education & Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK I, 1994-1999)**, co-financed by the European Structural Fund, at both national and regional level with three strategic goals:

- access of all young people aged 15-20 to education and vocational training
- reform and upgrading of the education system and its linkage with the new needs of the labour market
- improvement of infrastructure (libraries, equipment etc) and upgrading of administration.

The analysis report on the correlation between the goals set out in EPEAEK I, and the problems of education concluded that achievement of these goals would meet the needs of education and initial vocational training at a satisfactory degree.

According to the Final Evaluation Report of EPEAEK I, July 1999, it is difficult to measure accurately the extent to which the interventions of EPEAEK I covered the needs of education and initial vocational training in Greece. The EPEAEK I actions can be distinguished in two main categories: those of finite duration (e.g. the establishment of a library or a network) and those which call for regular repetition (e.g. the training of the teaching personnel etc). The first category actions are considered to have covered basically the needs, while it is evident that the second category actions cover only temporarily current needs.

Community Support Framework III - EPEAEK II

The imminent integration of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe reinforce the role of the European Union internationally. The fundamental policy priority of the European Structural Funds is the achievement of economical and social cohesion. The present social needs highlight the importance of the role of the human capital to development and progress. In Greece, the strengthening of the economy and the strong immigration flow give rise to new needs and challenges for the education and training systems.

Within the framework of the 3rd Community Support Framework, the **Operational Programme for Education & Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK II, 2000-2006)** currently in force in Greece aims at the improvement of the education system and the services provided to respond more effectively to the real social needs and link education and training with the needs of the labour market. Pilot interventions, which began during the implementation period of EPEAK I, have provided valuable experience. The Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs draws on the experience gained by EPEAEK I, complements the interventions in human resources development, integrates them into the national strategy for education co-financed by EPEAEK II, and places the focus on:

- (a) the promotion of equal opportunities for access to the labour market and, in particular, for those threatened by social exclusion

Facilitation of access to the labour market is linked to opportunities for acquisition of knowledge and skills. Dropping out from school results in occupational impass and, ultimately, social exclusion. Consequently, students of social vulnerable groups, who usually belong to a minority group, are people with disabilities, have learning difficulties or come from a lower and non-privileged socio-economic background – are in need of support, so that they can face the demands of contemporary education and vocational training. In this way, the education policy aims at the drastic restriction of school failure and dropping-out, which today is more than 11% of the school population of compulsory education. Research in Greece and other EU member states has shown that student support at the level of primary, secondary and technical-vocational education can be a preventive measure for the limitation of school failure and the risk of dropping-out from school (Ministry of National Education & Religious Affairs, EPEAEK II, March 2001).

During the programming period 2000-2006, the actions address two target groups, who will be the recipients of the direct benefits of outcomes and results:

- students of primary, secondary and technical-vocational education, who are in need of special measures to access and stay in the educational system, i.e. students of cultural diversity, students with special needs, students with learning problems
- adults, who due to the fact that they have not completed the cycle of their compulsory education and therefore are not holders of a formal qualification, are at risk of exclusion from the labour market and, consequently, social exclusion.

The actions to promote equality of access and provide opportunities for lifelong learning are as follows:

- **Integration of social groups with a particular cultural and language identity into the education system**

A certain number of schools run programs of cross-cultural education, which will provide teaching of the Greek language, student support in their mother tongue, individual teaching approach as well as communication networks between schools for the school integration of the target groups of Muslims, gypsies, repatriates and immigrants.

- **Schools of Second Chance – Adult Education**

Greece has recently introduced the institution of the «Second Chance Schools» to combat the problem of illiteracy and its negative consequences of social exclusion and unemployment. Over the last two years shortcomings in education are being covered by this institution with the aim of reintegrating adults into the formal education system and eventually the initial and continuing vocational training system. Law 2525/1997 gives Greek citizens aged over 18 who have not completed their compulsory education the opportunity to attend an eighteen-month course and obtain a certificate corresponding to that of junior high school (lower secondary level education). There are five (5) Second Chance Schools currently operating in the areas of Athens hit by high unemployment and school failure and this number will increase to 15 by the end of the year 2006. They offer alternative educational programs for the acquisition of basic qualifications and the development of personal skills coupled with counseling services on education, training and employment opportunities. In Greece, the highest percentage of school dropout occurs during lower secondary education while the dropout figures in primary education now relate to specific social groups, such as the gypsies and the children of Greek Muslims. This institution is aimed at adults, who, save in very few cases, do not make use of their rights to enter formal education in joint classes with of school age. It also provides the opportunity to meet the local community needs especially for people of social vulnerable groups who do not possess a formal qualification of basic education.

- **School failure and risk of dropping-out**

For the school year 1997-1998, the drop out rate from compulsory education was 8,5%, while for the upper secondary education was 22% for the ENIAIO and 26% for the TEE (Palaiocrassas S., *Research on student dropout in the lower secondary school*, Athens 2001). In an effort to raise students' performance and reinforce students at the risk of dropping out, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs promotes programmes for «**Additional Teaching Support**» in upper-secondary schools. These programmes address students with low school performance, so that their school failure and potential early drop out, which eventually leads to exclusion from the labour market, may be deterred and prevented. The number of students participating in these programs has doubled over the last five years (1998-2002). It was also observed that, after the implementation of such pilot programs during 1998-2000 with the participation of 46,000 students, there was actually a small reduction in the failure rate in school examinations (Ministry of National Education & Religious Affairs, EPEAEK II, March 2001).

(b) the development and improvement of education and vocational training within the framework of lifelong learning policy

Interventions aim at:

- i) upgrading of the quality of education and training at all levels providing to the young and adults lifelong opportunities for the upgrading of their knowledge and skills as well as their possibilities for adaptation to change and
- ii) link of education and training with employment.

They focus on the following:

- **Teachers Training**

Greece ranks first at European level in regard to the training of the teaching personnel. During the last years, teachers have attended both obligatory and optional training programmes of six months of one and even two-year duration. Trainers from all levels of education will be trained on new technologies, vocational guidance, health education, library science and other areas via conventional and distance-learning training programmes. The imminent establishment of the «**Organisation for the Training of Teachers**» (OEE) will be responsible for the continuing training of teachers offered to them from the moment they enter the teaching profession until their retirement.

- **Lifelong Learning Institutes (IDBE)**

The establishment of the Lifelong Learning Institutes (IDBE) is a proposal of the work group of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs set out in the Draft Bill for their organisation and operation. They are to be established by higher education institutions to provide educational programmes addressed to either upper-secondary school graduates over the age of 25 or higher education degree holders. These programmes aim at widening adults' educational and occupational options, providing opportunities for further learning and updating their knowledge and skills. The learning programmes are to be flexible in regard to duration, attendance and method adapting to the learners' needs. There will be academic programmes, which will lead to a higher education degree (formal qualification) and further education programmes, which will lead to a further education certificate (non-formal qualification). The learners are to receive credits for every learning unit they complete successfully, which can be transferred only across the programmes of the Lifelong Learning Institutes. Learners will also have the possibility to recognise and credit their relative professional experience acquired prior to their programme admission. Professional experience will be credited for one or more learning units of an IDBE programme.

(c) the development and promotion of entrepreneurialship and adaptation of young people

Interventions aim at reinforcing young people for self-employment. Efforts focus on providing them with opportunities to set up small enterprises and equip them with the knowledge and skills required for entrepreneurial initiatives via respective programmes of entrepreneurialship at the level of upper-secondary, initial vocational training and higher education.

(d) the improvement of the access of women to the labour market

Interventions aim at the promotion of sex equality in education and initial vocational training via programmes of counselling and occupational guidance as well as the establishment of an Observatory for the monitoring and evaluation of the issues in question.

B. The Reform «Education 2000»

Reforms and developments over the past decade aim at establishing an education system which adapts effectively to the demands of the international scene and provides people with the knowledge and skills that respond to the needs of the economy and society.

The recent reform «Education 2000» Act 2525/97 of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs has introduced changes in all levels of school education as follows:

Compulsory Education:

- operation of kindergartens for children aged 4-6 and primary schools on an all-day basis (morning to afternoon) to accommodate for working parents
- drawing up of a comprehensive curriculum framework for primary and secondary education to assure continuity and unity in curricula across all levels of education
- setting up of Second Chance Schools to provide adults (18+) who have not completed their compulsory education with the opportunity to do so (see 3.1.1.2)
- introduction of support teaching programmes for students with learning and other difficulties (see 3.1.1.2).

Upper secondary Education

- institution of the «Unified Upper Secondary School» (Eniaio Lykeio) gradually replacing all the existing diverse types of upper secondary schools, which promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens, so that they may adapt to rapidly changing conditions in the economy and society.

Higher Education

The post-war industrial development in Greece (the highest growth rate among the countries of the OECD for that period) brought about economic and social growth, which led to a significant increase in the educational level of its people over the past years. Eventually, this resulted in a substantial increase in the demand for higher education.

However, the slow pace of modernising institutional frameworks delayed an increase in the provision of higher education. It was only during the 1980s that the eight regional universities of the country began to develop and major reforms were passed. That resulted in the phenomenal increase of 70% in the number of students in higher education between 1980 and 1990. Over the last two decades, the number of people aged 25-34 who are higher education degree holders has actually tripled (Eurydice, 2000).

The recent education reform (Act 2525/97, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, 1997) complements and extends the modernisation drive that began in the 1980s.

In an effort to keep in pace with the rapidly changing international scene and effect a radical facelift of higher education, the main reforms introduced by this act are as follows:

- the abolition of the national examinations system for entrance into higher education

Since the year 2000, there is a significant increase in the number of admissions to higher education establishments (AEI & TEI) in order to accommodate the ever-growing number of students leaving upper secondary education and wishing to pursue higher education. From the year 2002-2003, access to higher education will be determined solely by the system of the upper secondary education **without the requirement of entrance examinations**. Priority for enrolment in departments will be given on the basis of the overall student performance obtained by students at upper secondary level as recorded on their upper secondary school leaving certificate. Although there is still currently an imbalance between supply and demand, it is anticipated that, in the near future, new departments will be established, the choice of academic courses of study will be widened and the supply of places in higher education will eventually satisfy demand.

- the development of open-choice study programmes (PSE) in higher education and the establishment of the Open University

For the academic year 1997/98, the Operational Programme for Education and Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK I) launched a project, which financed 33 **open choice study programmes (PSE)** in Greek AEIs and TEIs. These are flexible programmes addressed to all age groups. The minimum entrance requirement is for people to be holders of the upper secondary school leaving certificate. In cases of excessive demand, the selection criteria pursuant to Law 2525/97 vary depending on the educational level and background of the applicants, their professional experience and their time out of employment.

These study programmes focus mainly on new disciplines. Successful completion of a study programme of four academic years leads to a higher education degree equivalent to the degree of universities (AEI) or higher technological institutions (TEI). Alternatively, students may attend courses for the mere purpose of supplementing their education or even for professional reasons. In such case, a certificate is provided for attending a specific number of courses, a non-formal qualification of further education.

The innovation of these programmes is multi-fold: access is broadened based on different sets of criteria and not solely on entrance examination results or school performance, opportunities are offered for acquisition of qualifications which facilitate integration into the labour market, and lifelong learning is promoted. This has actually been the pioneering aim of the PSE: to introduce lifelong learning in higher education. However, opposition is being expressed by students who apply for conventional academic study programmes and are selected on the

basis of entrance examinations and school performance, while entrance criteria for PSE candidates are more flexible.

The **Hellenic Open University (EAP)** over its five years of operation has been established as a significant higher education provider of distance learning. EAP will double the post-graduate courses of study from the coming year (2004), which will result respectively in the double increase in the number of students admitted. The Open university provides the possibility for higher education studies without entrance examinations and, in the event of excessive demand, priority is given to candidates between the ages of 23 & 45 and residents of the country's border regions. In this way, access is widened and opportunities for lifelong learning are reinforced.

- the promotion of inter-departmental and inter-university co-operation & high increase in the provision of post-graduate studies

There has been a remarkable increase in the provision of **post-graduate courses** of study in Greece over the last decade. It has been less than twenty years that the first post-graduate degrees (Doctor of Philosophy) were awarded. Today, more than 400 post-graduate courses of study run in both public and private higher education establishments. This rise in demand for post-graduate studies is mainly prompted by, on the one hand, the labour market's demand for high skilled workforce and, on the other, the fact that a first degree no longer guarantees employment or a successful career route.

There have also been serious efforts to promote **inter-departmental** and **inter-university** co-operation among both Greek universities and universities abroad in the provision of courses at under and post graduate level. The high demand for such programmes underlines the fact that more and more people need to acquire qualifications in an additional field of specialisation or even in a completely different field of expertise.

On the other hand, there are increasing options in the provision of **post-degree courses** of study, which do not award a formal Qualification. Such courses are geared towards the labour market's needs and provide a certificate of attendance. It is evident that people seek more and more life long learning opportunities and it is also known that the labour market of the private sector adopts its own standards to weigh the quality of education and training received.

- the upgrading of Technological Education Institutes (TEI) in Higher Education

Under Law 2916/2001, the **Technological Education Institutes (TEI) are incorporated in Higher Education**. This development has prompted on the one hand, the operation of post-graduate programmes in the Higher Technological Institutes (former TEI) and on the other, the establishment of Centres for technological research.

To this date, the demand for higher education continues to increase. Based on statistical data for the year 2002, 7 out of 10 graduates from the comprehensive upper-secondary school are

admitted in a higher education institution (AEI & TEI) while 2 out of 10 graduates from the technical vocational upper-secondary schools. The high demand in higher education options in favour of vocational education and training options partly accounts for the fact that, in Greece, higher education qualifications seem to reduce to differing degrees the chances of unemployment. Statistical data present people aged 25-59 who have advanced beyond the level of obligatory education to be in a much less insecure position concerning their employment status (European Commission, 2000, Key Data on Education in Europe).

3.1.2 Reforms in Vocational Education & Training (formal learning)

Vocational education in Greece is rather viewed even today as a way out and a resort after failure in general education options. The government is making continuous efforts to promote vocational education as an alternative option of equivalent status to general education. Moreover, research data present vocational education graduates to have less difficulty in finding employment. Nonetheless, vocational education and training is still of limited appeal to the young and lower prestige from general education.

A. Technical Vocational Education (upper-secondary level)

The Act 2525/97 of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs reformed the upper-secondary cycle of education with the establishment of **Technical Vocational Schools (TEE)** to provide technical and vocational knowledge and skills as well as an occupational awareness to facilitate young people's entry into the labour market. The day TEE are for young people 15+ who do not work, while the evening TEE are for working people up to the age of 50.

The distribution of the student population between the two types of upper secondary schools (see 1.2.2.) is as follows:

65% for the Eniaio Lykeio (general education), out of whom: 54% girls and 46% boys.

35% for the TEE (technical and vocational education), out of whom: 43% girls and 57% boys.

It is evident that the option for technical and vocational education is less attractive to young people and, although there are pathways between the different grades of the two types of the upper secondary schools, in practice, the number of students moving from a TEE to an ENIAIO upper secondary school and vice-versa is very limited. The ENIAIO School is considered more demanding due to the fact that it is more academic and actually prepares students for higher education paths and in this way, students are deterred moving from a TEE to an ENIAIO upper secondary school. Similarly, the small flow of students from the first grades of an ENIAIO to the first level of a TEE is mainly due to the weakness of certain students to meet the rather higher demands of the ENIAIO upper secondary school.

B. Initial Vocational Education & Training (post-compulsory & post-secondary level)

A great number of graduates of upper secondary schools of general education who did not continue their studies onto higher education found themselves in great difficulty when seeking employment and in becoming satisfactorily integrated in the labour market. On the one hand, they lacked basic job qualifications. On the other, the non-existence of recognised trade rights and the lack of a degree or diploma recognised in the European Union placed even the graduates of technical vocational schools in the same unfavourable position.

The integration of the internal European market (1993) and the establishment of the freedom of movement for the workforce in Europe would find those graduates with neither formal nor substantial qualifications. Moreover, up to that time, trade rights were set out for only about 5% of the specialisation's provided in technical and vocational upper-secondary school.

An attempt to enhance the training of the middle-echelon work force to meet the pressing demands of competition within the single European market resulted in the significant reform of Act 1992 of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, which brought about changes in the field of post-secondary education and vocational training as follows:

- **the establishment of the National System of Vocational Education & Training (ESEEK) by Law 2009/1992 with the co-operation of the European Social Fund**

This system observes the changing needs of the labour market, the economic and social trends at local and national level as well as the scientific and technological developments. The system aims at the organisation, development and provision of vocational training, the formal certification of vocational training and the harmonisation of vocational training with the education system.

- **the establishment of the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK) within the framework of the ESSEK**

OEEK is responsible for the Vocational Training Institutes (IEK) and the professional rights for all levels of vocational education and training pursuant to Law 2009/92, article 2. The report introducing the law refers to the incomplete technical and vocational training provided in the respective upper secondary schools. No other system of vocational training had been instituted up to that date with the exception of the OAED apprenticeship schools (see 1.2.2.).

- **the establishment and operation of the Vocational Training Institutes (IEK) under the same law at post-compulsory and post-secondary level.**

IEK provide formal vocational education and training to equip students with qualifications for employment and grant diplomas certifying vocational training at post-secondary level (Vocational Training Certificate). This certificate entitles them to sit for the vocational training qualification examinations in order to obtain the Vocational Training Diploma. This Diploma is a post-secondary vocational training level recognised qualification.

3.1.3 Major developments in Adult Training (non-formal learning)

Over the last decade, the economical developments and technological advances have generated new professions. The conditions for the transition from the education system to employment have changed radically. Moreover, due also to the demographic developments, i.e. the increasing aging of the European population and the retarded entrance of young people into the labour market, the workforce demands for continuing training and lifelong learning.

The European strategy on lifelong learning focuses on providing opportunities for the improvement of knowledge and skills throughout people 's life course. The national policy of Greece on lifelong learning aims at the upgrading of the educational and training system, so that they respond to the demands of the knowledge society and the labour market.

Both the education and training processes are interwoven in the Greek national policy for human resources development and lifelong learning. The education strategy develops the medium-term and long-term policies for initial education and training (formal learning) under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs (YPEPTH) (see 3.1.1, 3.1.2. and 3.1.3). These are complemented by the short-term policies for continuing vocational training (non-formal learning) under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (YPERG) (see below).

A. Continuing Vocational Training (non-formal learning)

Vocational training complements people's educational and training background to respond to the demands and changes of the labour market and the work environment. Training can function as an unemployment restriction measure via specialisation and integration-reintegration of the unemployed and a preventive measure for the devaluation of the skills of the workforce.

In the 1980s, vocational training began to expand in Greece with the absence, however, of integrated strategy planning, on the one hand, and the link between training and the labour market, on the other. The participation of the social partners was progressively provided for in an effort to adapt vocational training to the emerging demands of the labour market. Local Committees were formed to promote vocational training in response to local needs but with poor outcomes due to unfavourable circumstances.

In the 1990s, collective agreements on vocational training were adopted and, for the first time, this led social partners in agreement with employers to the establishment of the **Account for Employment and Vocational Training (LAEK)** / Law 2224/1994 to finance actions for vocational training and promotion of employment. The financial resources of LAEK are the contribution of 0,45% to the Special Account for VET Programmes (ELPEKE) on the part of the employers, and the contribution of 0.36% to the Special Joint Account for Unemployment

(EKLA) on the part of both the employers and the employees, under Law 2224/1994, articles 14 & 15. This account has decisively contributed to the reinforcement of vocational training and employment policies.

Although non-formal training significantly developed in Greece during the last decade, it was heavily dependent upon the financial support of European funding. European Structural Fund interventions became the basic tools for the development of human resources, infrastructure and actions to promote training and employability at both national and regional level placing an emphasis on the unemployed and vulnerable social groups.

Under the **First Community Support Framework (1989-1994)**, the prevailing rationale placed major emphasis on fund absorption and exploitation. Serious weaknesses in co-ordination and absence of outcome evaluation pressed for integrated policymaking and setting quality criteria and evaluation procedures in regard to vocational training actions.

Under the **Second Community Support Framework (1994-1999)**, the major part of the European Structural Fund resources for Greece (45%) were geared towards the improvement of education and training facilities. Continuing vocational training for the employed and the unemployed was supported and employment promotion measures for people out of employment or threatened by social exclusion and exclusion from the labour market were reinforced.

Under the first generation of the Community Initiatives and the **Community Initiatives Employment and Adapt**, EC financial assistance was allocated for adapting training, counselling and employment systems to meet new demands and identify new growth sectors and employment opportunities with particular attention to geographically disadvantaged communities and vulnerable social groups.

An extensive number of people and organisations in Greece have participated in the **European Programmes LEONARDO da VINCI**, which focus on issues related to the evaluation, assessment and recognition of non-formal vocational training. Experiences collected from transnational partnerships have raised concern and further demands among the Greek society. However, due to the pilot projects restriction to target development (for those run during the period of the 2nd CSF), the final products and outcomes have not been incorporated in the Greek national policy or the systems of the participant authorities.

Diverse Ministries implement Operational Programmes which include training actions at both national and regional level, while the Greek Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs also integrates the ESF interventions in the yearly National Action Plans for Employment. The outcomes from the implementation of Operational Programmes during the 2nd CSF, which include actions for the development and support of human resources, and in particular, the

O.P. «Continuing Training and Promotion of Employment» and «Combating Exclusion from the Labour Market» implemented by the Ministry of Labor focused on the following:

- improvement of the training programmes for the unemployed. These programmes have contributed to the development of the mentality for the need of lifelong learning.
- training of the people employed in enterprises of both the public and private sector. These programmes equipped the employees with knowledge and skills useful for their workplace but also their work life in general. The most successful were the programmes for the introduction of new technologies in production. Since 1998, incentives for participation were provided to small enterprises as well.
- implementation of innovative actions for the linking of training with employment.
- programme for the acquisition of working experience (STAGE), which provided unemployed degree holders with the opportunity of acquiring working experience to facilitate their transition from education to employment.
- implementation of integrated programmes for vulnerable social groups, with particular emphasis on programmes for the learning of the Greek language, addressed to immigrants, repatriates and refugees.

The Ministry also proceeded with the establishment of national organisations and the upgrading of existing ones in an effort to form a network, which would significantly contribute to the link between training and the labour market and promote employment policies.

In this perspective, to supervise non-formal vocational training and set quality criteria for the upgrading of the training services provided, the Ministry of Labour established the **National Accreditation Centre of Continuing Vocational Training & Support Services Centres (EKEPIS)** in 1997 / Law 2469/97. EKEPIS is responsible for the design, development and implementation of the National Accreditation System for Continuing Vocational Training, which aims at:

- promotion of quality in continuing vocational training
- assurance of transparency and reinforcement of reliability
- linking of the system for continuing vocational training with the system for initial vocational education and training
- linking vocational training to employment
- recognition of vocational qualifications acquired from continuing vocational training

The National Accreditation System comprises the systems for the:

- accreditation of Vocational Training Centres (KEK) via criteria which evaluate the experience, expertise, human resources, infrastructure and equipment required for the training of adults in and out of employment
- on-going monitoring & evaluation of accredited KEK to inspect conformity to the accreditation criteria (to be implemented from the year 2003) and promote quality in training

- accreditation of Trainers & Support Services Providers by setting up a Register with entry criteria which focus on educational background, professional experience and teaching experience
- accreditation of vocational training programmes to link the needs of the labour market to the needs for vocational training and the content of the training programmes (expected to begin in 2003).

Large differentiation in the outcomes of the training offered so far have shaken the credibility and effectiveness of training programmes. Although the training programmes provided are based on occupational training needs at both national and regional level, in reality, the content of the programmes is not linked to the actual needs of the local labour market in terms of the knowledge and skills required for a job position.

Consequently, absence of effective mechanisms for the diagnosis of training needs at both national and regional level on the one hand, and absence of analytical job profiles on the other, press for common specialisations across the training programmes provided. In this respect, the system for the accreditation of vocational training programmes will be based on job profiles in liaison with the needs and changes of the labour market and will incorporate the needs of vulnerable social groups. Accredited training programmes will assure the acquisition of vocational qualifications related to the labour market demands and in correspondence with the job profile trained for. This will ultimately lead to the recognition of vocational qualifications acquired from continuing vocational training.

The institution of the National Accreditation Centre (EKEPIS) with has led to the accreditation of training providers (KEK) the is considered the most significant innovation for the implementation of training actions during the 2nd CSF. During the first phase of operation (1995), EKEPIS both confronted and caused serious problems in the implementation of training actions, which resulted in the cessation of all training actions for approximately two years. The re-establishment and re-operation of EKEPIS (1997) presented significant work, successful results and applauded efforts providing positive perspectives for its subsequent major schemes of work: the on-going evaluation of training providers, the accreditation of trainers and the accreditation of training programs.

The **National Labour Institute (EIE)** was set up / Law 2150/1993 in an effort to link training to the labour market needs. EIE aimed to develop research and disseminate information on labour market issues and needs in training & retraining as well as employment prospects, support and evaluate ESF actions and initiatives and co-operate with national, European and international organisations for the exchange of know-how.

The **National Employment Observatory (EPA)** was set up / Law 33347/1996 to support employment and training policies. It aimed at providing a systematic analysis of the labour

market needs in training and retraining addressed to specific geographical locations and target groups.

Under the **Third Community Support Framework (2000-2006)**, there is a shift of emphasis on the development of human capital via education, training and employment. Following the outcomes and experiences from the 2nd CSF, the Operational Programme «Employment and Vocational Training» currently implemented by the Ministry of Labour reflects the national policy and focuses on the development of human resources and the promotion of employment as preventive measures against unemployment and, in particular, long-term unemployment, as well as the promotion of equality of the sexes and the vulnerable social groups.

The Community Initiatives currently running aim at consolidating an integrated approach in vocational education & training, promotion of quality in the training actions, linkage of education & training with the labour market and enhancement of lifelong learning opportunities.

Under the **Community Initiative «Equal»**, innovative projects are in progress for the development of systems for the recognition of vocational qualifications and lifelong training with a particular focus on new occupations in the tertiary sector of economy (services). The majority of such job positions has been created in the social economy and is addressed mainly to unskilled labour.

To streamline to contemporary demands, the **Labor Force Employment Organisation (OAED)**, with a long tradition of operation in training and employment services (see 1.2.2.), has reorganised its services / Law 2956/2001 and proceeded with the establishment of affiliated companies to develop flexible and efficient specialised services for the unemployed as well as the enterprises. In view of this development, EPA and EIE ceased their operation and were merged in the newly-established OAED companies:

- the **Employment Observatory Research Informatics (PAEP S.A.)** responsible for the research on the needs of the labour market in human resources
- the **Human Resources Support Services S.A.** responsible for the individual intervention (counselling-vocational guidance) for the unemployed via the Employment Promotion Agencies (KPA)
- the **Vocational Training S.A.** responsible for the design, organisation and implementation of continuing vocational programmes via the Institutes of Vocational Training (IEK) and the Vocational Training Centres (KEK) operating under OAED.

The possibility for the establishment of one or more **Centres for Adult Education (KEE)** in every prefecture opens up with the Draft Bill for «Adult Education» of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. These Centres, in co-operation with the local authorities, are to provide adult education on basic skills, new basic skills, social skills, and language learning for immigrants. The learning programmes are to be based on studies

concerning the specific needs of the local communities carried out by the local authorities and other social and professional bodies under the responsibility of the General Secretariat for Adult Education.

B. Linking of initial vocational education & training with continuing vocational training

In the year 2000, a **National Committee for the linking of Initial & Continuing Training** was set up with the participation of the Ministry of Education the Ministry of Labour, the social partners and stakeholders. They all work on a proposal for the National System which links vocational education & training with employment. This is in line with the Greek Plan for Regional Development (SPA) 2000-2006 and the Operational Programmes of the two Ministries within the 3rd Community Support Framework.

At the end of the same year, proceedings of the Committee commenced a debate over the co-ordination and interlinking of the two systems in Greece, i.e. the system of initial vocational education & training with the system of continuing vocational training. In view of the National Action Plan for Employment, focus was also given to the linking of the systems of vocational education & training with the needs of the labour market. The work of the committee concluded with the Draft for the **National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training with Employment (ESSEEKA)**, which sets out the regulating framework for the implementation of an integrated and co-ordinated policy for human resources development and maximisation of employment (November 2002). The strategic aims of ESSEEKA are the development of:

- a system for the needs of the labour market in human resources and the respective occupations
- job profiles and their correlation with vocational education & training programmes
- optimal co-ordination of the programmes and services provided within the systems of vocational education and training
- integrated regulation for the:
 1. evaluation, accreditation & assessment (providers, programmes, trainers, trainees)
 2. occupational rights
 3. accreditation of vocational qualifications regardless of the way acquired
- a system for counselling, career orientation and linkage with the labour market
- promotion of social acceptance for the systems of vocational education & training

Within the framework of ESSEEKA, it is the first time that an integrated accreditation system will be established, which will enable people to recognise and accredit their knowledge and skills and ultimately their vocational qualifications regardless of the way acquired.

C. Informal learning

There is no national institution framework in Greece to regulate procedures for the accreditation and recognition of vocational qualifications acquired through informal training. There is no system either to identify the extent to which these qualifications contribute to a person's professional development. The question of the recognition of qualifications regardless of the way they have been acquired is urging. In this perspective, few initiatives have been taken for the identification, assessment and recognition of vocational qualifications. On the one hand, there is certain reluctance among unions of degree-holding professionals and professional bodies as this is linked to protected occupational rights and also among education institutions to protect their formal education & training qualifications systems. On the other, the general attitude to the introduction of methodologies and systems for the recognition of vocational qualifications through non-formal and informal learning is positive and is seen a means to promote quality and transparency as well as options for life long learning.

OEEK project work on accreditation of non-formal and informal vocational training of adults

In 1994, under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, OEEK (see 3.1.3.) set up a working group to carry out a research project on the accreditation of non-formal and informal vocational training of adults (25+ years old). Pilot studies were carried out on a sample of four low-skilled professions. Employees were assessed and tested on their qualifications in an effort to illustrate how formal, non-formal and informal learning are linked. The work of the group rather focused on seeking equivalencies between the professional competencies of the employees and formal certification in the education system. It proved to be an impasse. The educational curricula are structured on courses of specific duration with examination periods at the end of the courses and not on flexible modules. Moreover, there is no system for credit transfer. In reality, the formal qualifications acquired from the education system do not often correlate with competencies acquired from the work experience (CEDEFOP, Thessaloniki 2000).

Accreditation of language competency – State System

To this date, there was no integrated system in Greece for the evaluation and accreditation of language competency by a state body, as is the case in other European countries. Moreover, there was no possibility for the accreditation of language competency in all the official languages of the European Union or other languages outside the EU, despite the fact that there are a number of speakers of such languages working and residing in Greece.

To meet urging social needs and be in line with the European policy for the promotion of multilingualism and unified accreditation of language competency in contemporary languages, the Ministry of National Education & Religious Affairs has proceeded this year (2003) with the establishment of a system for the accreditation of language competency. This system acts upon the recent resolution of the Education Council of the European Union and is

linked to the “International Certificate Conference” (I.C.C.), an international network of accreditation systems based in Frankfurt.

This system evaluates and accredits the level of knowledge and skills in the use of a language and awards the State Language Competency Certificate, a formal qualification, upon success in the state examinations held at national level. There are six levels of language competence for “general use” and not for professional or scientific use of the language. In this way, knowledge of foreign languages will be accredited and recognised also as a vocational qualification.

Accreditation of basic skills in the Information & Communications Technologies – Pilot project

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs proceeded in May 2002 to an open international call for tender for «Training in basic skills in the use of Information & Communications Technologies». This project concerns the implementation of continuing vocational training programs in basic skills in ICT use with the participation of 20,000 people, out of whom 18.000 are unemployed and 2.000 are in the process of doing their military service. To assure quality in the training provided, the training programs are linked with the process of the accreditation of basic skills in ICT use. Training providers should collaborate with accreditation bodies and the accreditation process should be based on internationally recognized criteria and procedures developed and implemented by the European Union and other countries.

Upon successful completion of the training programme, the trainees are given the opportunity to accredit their knowledge and skills in the use of ICT. This pilot implementation of the project will provide valuable insight and experience on developing a system for the formal accreditation of continuing vocational training. Such a system reinforces the reliability of the outcomes of training and promotes transparency in the way qualifications are acquired.

Accreditation of computer literacy

It is well known that an ever-growing number of people are self-taught in the use of I/T and have become computer literate through their professional experience or self study and interest. The rapidly increasing demands of the work environment and the limitless possibilities of the computer technology have led a substantial number of people to be knowledgeable in I/T use through informal ways of learning.

In Greece, basic knowledge and skills in I/T is recognised:

- by a certificate awarded upon successful examination by either the Greek I/T Scientist Company (EPI) or other private companies ((Microsoft, Oracle etc) (see 1.3)
- by a solemn statement. This is currently the case for applicants for the public sector calls of tender. The “Highest Council for Personnel Selection” (ASEP) is responsible in Greece for the calls of tender for recruitment in the public and the broader public sector. It is only

recently that basic knowledge and skills in I/T can be recognised as a job recruitment qualification merely by the candidate's official declaration.

(Our priority is making the New Communication and Information Technologies and Lifelong Learning the fundamental pivot for the improvement of our education system. Education is not a mere tool for growth. It produces civilisation and shapes human conscience), P. Efthimiou, Greek Minister for Education, newspaper "Ethnos", p.3, 4 March 2003.

Lifelong Learning is a top priority for the European social model pursuant to the decisions and conclusions of the Council of Lisbon. The aims of lifelong learning are two fold: a) promotion of active social participation and b) increase of employment opportunities. Both presuppose updated knowledge, skills and abilities for participation and contribution into the socioeconomic life.

3.2 Successful initiative for the promotion of life long learning

A successful initiative in the context of formal education is the Hellenic Open University (EAP). The EAP was established pursuant to Law 2552/1997 (Government Gazette 266/24-12-1997) and is a state-run University, fully equivalent to other universities in Greece, and provides its graduates with all professional rights stipulated by the legal framework of Greece currently in effect and removes certain limitations:

- mandatory physical presence of students in teaching rooms
- mandatory entry exams
- lack of supply of short-term educational courses
- low coverage of the age range
- Inflexibility in the choice of course attended based on the initial choice made by students.

It is aimed at a large range of interested persons, provides more educational opportunities to adult workers / the unemployed (than all other universities in the country) and ensures their access to lifelong learning. Pursuant to Article 5 (5) of the same law, "If the number of candidates for courses is greater than the number of available places then all those who are aged 23 or over shall begin priority. If their number is greater than number of available places, a lottery shall be held. If places remain following the aforementioned order of preference, the remaining candidates shall be selected using a new lottery procedure".

The innovative elements of the EAP are:

- studies are exclusively provided using the distance learning method
- a modular system is used and the faculty is replaced by a more flexible programme of studies format which can easily be changed depending on social at educational needs from time to time.
- Studies are certified as five different levels, which range from post secondary level education to doctorates.

- An Educational Material and Educational Methodology Workshop has been established.
- An Internal Evaluation Unit has been established.
- The administrative structure has been simplified by removing the chancellor's board and the establishment of a small of representative Senate.
- The main operational unit of the EAP is the course, which covers the specific subject area of undergraduate or postgraduate level. Each course includes materials corresponding to courses taught over three semesters at Greek universities.

Courses leading to the acquisition of the degree are as follows:

- Studies in European culture
- Studies in Greek culture
- Spanish language culture
- Information technology
- Business and organisation management

Courses, which lead to the acquisition of a certified postgraduate diploma, are as follows:

- Child development in the social environment
- Educational research in practice
- Educational unit management
- Educating adults
- Open and distance learning.

When a student successfully completes the above courses, in addition to receiving the corresponding certificate, he/she also has the following options:

- to continue his/her studies by choosing a course from the above (1-5) each year, following the general procedure for entry into the EAP's courses and when he/she has successfully attended 4 courses he/she can request from the EAP that he/she prepare a dissertation so that in addition to the four certificates which he/she has received he/she can be granted the postgraduate specialisation diploma in the course Studies in Education.
- He/she can enter the postgraduate course Studies in Education by following the general entry procedure. In this case the course corresponding to that which he has already attended will be acknowledged. The same procedure is followed in the case where two or three courses from those mentioned above are successfully completed.

Today there are 11 postgraduate courses run by the EAP which lead to postgraduate specialisation diplomas equivalent to those of other Greek universities being conferred. Graduates of universities or Technological Educational Institutes (TEI) may also be admitted onto these courses as follows:

1. **Studies in education:** a) graduates of universities or TEI who have passed the final examination in one or more course in the context of the programmes run by the Open University which lead to the postgraduate education certificate, b) graduates of the pedagogic faculties in primary school education, kindergarten, pre-school age and special education, the Faculty of Philosophy, Pedagogic and Psychology, the Faculties of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology, Natural Sciences, Theology, Literature, History, Archaeology, Theatre Studies, Music Studies, Fine Arts, Geography, Home Economics and the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport (percentage of places

available 50%). Candidates should have obtained their degree at least five years before the final deadline for submitting applications.

2. **Educating adults:** a) Graduates of universities or TEI who have passed the final examinations in one or more courses in the context of the programmes run by the Open University which lead to the postgraduate education certificates (percentage of places available 50%); b) graduates of universities or TEI who work in Vocational Training Centres (KEK) certified by the Hellenic Certification Centre, in NELE, or in the Managing Authorities - Special Services of Ministries and Regions which were established on the basis of Law 2860/2000 or in the Hellenic Certification Centre, or are registered in the SEK Instructor Register maintained by the Hellenic Certification Centre, or are registered in the Uniform Evaluators Register maintained by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
3. **English language teacher specialisation:** Graduates of Greek University English literature faculties or holders of a similar degree from abroad accredited by DIKATSA. Candidates should have acquired their degree at least three years before the final deadline for submitting applications.
4. **German language teacher specialisation:** graduates of universities with a degree relating to the course (the degree in German language and literature, Linguistics, Literature, Pedagogics, Psychology, Sociology, Philosophy). Candidates should have acquired their degree at least one year before the final deadline for submitting applications.
5. **French language teacher specialisation:** Graduates of University faculties of French language and literature who have acquired their degree at least one year before the final deadline for submitting applications.
6. **Quality assurance:** Graduates of Polytechnic, Agronomy, Positive Science, Economics Science and Management schools of Universities, Statistics and environment faculties of universities, b) graduates of the Applied Technology Schools, Food and Nutrition Technology Schools and Agricultural Technology Schools of TEI.
7. **Environmental planning of cities and buildings:** a) Graduates of five-year courses of University Architecture Faculties (architects or architects with a postgraduate diploma in town and country planning), civil engineers (structural load-bearing capacity experts). Candidates should be registered with the Technical Chamber of Greece for at least four years and have acquired their degree at least four years before the final deadline for submitting applications; b) landscape architects from universities abroad with degrees accredited by DIKATSA. Candidates should have acquired their degree at least four years before the final deadline for submitting applications. Experience in building designs and applications or in landscaping designs for open areas or urban planning designs will be of definitive assistance in attending the course; c) graduates of universities in agricultural science, forestry, engineers who are graduates of military academies and graduates of TEI specialised in horticulture and landscape architecture. Candidates should have acquired their degree at least six years before the final deadline for submitting applications. Experience in building designs and applications or in landscaping designs

for open areas or urban planning designs will be of definitive assistance in attending the course; d) graduates from five-year university courses in civil engineering and other areas of specialisation, mechanical engineering, engineering, naval engineering, electrical engineering, chemical engineering, land planning, agronomy and topography. Candidates should be registered with the Technical Chamber of Greece for at least eight years before the final deadline for submitting applications. Experience in building designs and applications or in landscaping designs for open areas or urban planning designs will be of definitive assistance in attending the course.

8. **Environmental planning of infrastructure projects:** a) graduates of five-year courses from University faculties of civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electronic engineering, chemical engineering, environmental engineering or agronomy and topography. Candidates should be registered with the Technical Chamber of Greece for at least four years before the final deadline for submitting applications. Experience in infrastructure projects (designs, supervision and/or construction) will be of definitive assistance in successful attendance of the course; b) graduate engineers from military academies who have acquired their degree at least six years before the final deadline for submitting applications. Experience of infrastructure projects (designs, supervision and/or construction) as well as knowledge of a foreign language (preferably English) will be of definitive assistance in successfully attending the course; c) graduates of other University faculties with least two years professional experience in the tourist sector (following acquisition of their degree); e) graduates of TEI faculties in tourist enterprises, business and economic sciences with at least one year professional experience in the tourist sector (following acquisition of their degree); f) graduates of other TEI faculties with at least three years professional experience in the tourist sector (following acquisition of their degree); g) holders of diplomas from the ASTER school, equivalent to the tourist enterprise faculties of TEI with four years professional experience at least in the tourist sector (following acquisition of their degree).
9. **Health unit management:** a) Graduates of the following schools-faculties: Health Sciences, Psychology, Social and Political Sciences, Administration and Economics, as well as the National Public Health School, b) graduates of the faculty of Health Unit Management of TEI where they have two years proven professional experience in public services or the private sector or pharmaceutical enterprises after acquisition of their degree. Knowledge of a foreign language (preferably English) will assist significantly in attendance of the course.
10. **National health system health service management:** Executives of the National Health System / university graduates who have completed five years service in the National Health System following acquisition of their degree.
11. **Banking:** a) Graduates of University faculties in Finance and Accounting, Economics and Business Administration who have acquired their degree at least two years before the final deadline for submitting applications, b) Graduates of Management and Economics Schools who have acquired their degree at least three years before the final deadline for submitting applications, c) Graduates of other University faculties who have two years

proven experience at least in banks following acquisition of their degree, d) Graduates of other TEI faculties with at least four years proven experience in banks, following acquisition of their degree.

In autumn 2004 an **additional 12 new distance learning courses** that provide postgraduate qualifications will be added, in the following subject areas:

- Studies in Orthodox Theology
- Graphic arts - Multimedia
- Waste Management
- Technical project management
- Seismic engineering and anti-earthquake constructions
- Advanced studies in physics
- Catalysts and environmental protection
- Cultural unit management.

Based on the EAP's studies regulation, it confers degrees equivalent to normal university degrees under the condition that the students participate in group meetings every 1-2 months (monitoring system) and deliver 3-4 personal written papers (understanding inspection system-coverage of teaching material) and submit to a written examination at the end of each of the 12 courses over a period of 6-36 years.

It also confers postgraduate degrees at the level master using the same system of studies for at least four courses over a period of 4-12 years followed by presentation of a dissertation at the end. Students pay tuition fees (€ 600) for each course which correspond to three semesters at a classical University and are entitled to remain in the studies system if they have successfully passed a course for only three years.

Today the average age of students is 32, and there are more women to men. In addition to the places announced, just as in the case with all other universities, there is a quota for disabled people (10%).

Following matriculation, students with a low income, meeting social criteria or with high academic performance, based on law and an automatic point scale system, where they so wish can be granted total or partial exemption from their participation in student tuition fees.

Despite their cost, studies at the EAP are in immense demand given that each year, taking 1999 as the average, approximately 50,000 individuals have applied. In 2003 there are now twelve postgraduate courses attended by 4,087 individuals and six undergraduate courses with twice the number of students (8,443).

3.3 Major debates on qualification systems and Life Long Learning over the last two years

3.3.1. Accreditation of qualifications and promotion of lifelong learning in the context of the Community Initiative "EQUAL".

As part of the Community Initiative EQUAL, there was public dialogue about the participation of the social partners such as unions of employees, employers and agencies

which would participate in the implementation of the project. Each project is implemented by “Joint Ventures” with the participation of a wide range of bodies from various economic sectors (public and broad public sector, private sector, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, etc). Social partners also participate both as co-ordinators and as implementing agencies for the individual actions of each plan. Pilot projects will be developed in order to promote the culture, education and lifelong learning of the employees in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in specific sectors (environment, manufacture, services), and among the employers, the unemployed and the long-term unemployed.

3.3.2. Transparency of qualifications and linking of lifelong learning with employment - Common European Diplomas

Phase I of the programme “Sustaining Employability” was implemented in the form of an intergovernmental initiative between the Ministers of Education in Greece and France and was completed in April 2002. The results of its work were a description of a method for preparing Common European Diplomas as well as the contents of the diplomas for reception and accommodation manager and logistics technicians. The joint work for each of the diplomas was based on the following plan:

1. A description of the professional activity, professional duties and professional skills.
2. Preparation of a method for processing the data for certification.
3. Processing of complex data for a training guide.

The nine partners in the programme were Greece, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic while Denmark, Germany, and Ireland participated as observers. Upon completion of Phase I of the project, the opposite number Ministers of Education signed a joint declaration expressing their commitment to continue and expand the programme. On an initiative of the Greek Presidency a joint team from Greece and Italy was established with the participation of the French expert George Asseraf, which will undertake to formulate a proposal for the continuation of the programme.

3.3.3. Public debate

A significant debate takes place before the preparation of the annual national plans of action for employment. As part of this dialogue the social partners formulate proposals for the better co-ordination of training actions, which constitute a significant factor for the effectiveness of the plans. The participants represent a wide range of social partners such as the Federation of Greek Industries (SEB), the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), GSEBEE, National Confederation of Greek Traders (ESEE), the Panhellenic Confederation of Unions of Agricultural Co-operatives (PASEGES), as well as representatives of organisations dealing with vulnerable social groups.

3.3.4. *Quality assurance*

Quality assurance in non-formal vocational training and education is achieved via the activities of the National Accreditation Centre (EKEPIS) and in particular via a) the system of on-going inspections, monitoring and evaluation of accredited vocational training centres and b) accreditation of trainers enlisted in the Trainers Register of Continuing VET. During the process of developing the aforementioned systems, the National Accreditation Centre invited all interested parties, e.g. vocational training providers, social partners, representatives of the respective managing authorities and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, to participate in the public dialogue. Views were exchanged and proposals put forward on the procedures, terms, conditions and criteria for the implementation of each action.

4. QUALIFICATIONS AND LEARNING AT THE LEVEL OF PRACTICE AND USERS.

This chapter contains data analysis in regard to the operation of two different learning organisations, which provide accredited study certificates. These institutions are the Hellenic Open University (EAP) for undergraduate and postgraduate studies and the Second Chance Schools for adults who have not completed their compulsory education.

According to their establishment law, management and course regulations, both institutions provide certificates recognised by the Ministry of Education. These bodies implement procedures, which according to the OECD definition can be described as qualification systems.

The certificates conferred entitle their holders to continue their studies in the formal education system, improve their income or broaden their career opportunities. These institutions have introduced innovations into the educational system, by implementing an open entry system (without written entrance examinations) and by developing learning environments adapted to the learning and social needs of adults. These characteristics place the learning programmes offered in the specific measures of the State, concerning the promotion of lifelong learning policies.

It is the first time in Greece, that learning systems ensuring new pathways to acquire accredited knowledge have been implemented.

In order to respond to the questions raised in the 4th component, an analysis has been attempted based on a questionnaire, which was drawn up, taking into consideration the proposed issues of OECD. This questionnaire and the responses - interviews are included in the annex attached.

How qualifications system assists or hinders practitioners and learners in the organisation, delivery and achievement of learning

- **Programme design, access to learning, learning support, access to further learning**

The new routes for acquiring accredited knowledge in the framework of life long learning, differ from the equivalent learning procedures of formal education, mainly in relation to the entry procedure. Entry to the Open University is by application and draw, and not by entry examinations, while the strategy perspective is to assure free access to all applicants. Second Chance Schools offer the opportunity to adults to complete their compulsory education, especially to those to have been long alienated from the school environment. Counselling allows diagnosis of needs and contextual learning methods make the programme attractive and interesting for the students.

Both institutions are in a process of development and limited number of entries is an inevitable measure for effective function. Their management and administration systems do not permit them to respond to the immense demand that has arisen.

- **The main clientele and their learning objectives**

People who attend the courses for completing their compulsory education (at Second Chance Schools) mainly come from poor households. Their average age is around 30, they are either unemployed or seasonally employed and participation by women is slightly greater than that by men.

Most people participating in the undergraduate and postgraduate courses of the Open University are employed. There are 10% more women than men and the average age is 32.

The main objective of individuals who have chosen these two learning programmes is the acquisition of accredited certificates necessary for their social and/or professional development.

Entry preconditions for both systems do not impose any other restriction except that of the required education certificate. Age, social characteristics and employment status in the case of Second Chance Schools students, follow priorities laid down by the Secretariat General for Adult Education¹⁹ which is the responsible governmental agency. The characteristics of entrants, however, are affected by the immense demand of these courses, primarily among employed people, women, and people aged between 25-35²⁰.

The selection process at Second Chance Schools takes in consideration the applicants' personal incentives, a crucial factor not only for entry but also for supporting those with a deficit in required qualifications, and vital assistance for the acquisition of the primary school certificate. The fact that studies are gratis seems to be of major significance for participants of less privileged background.

On the contrary, for Open University course students pay tuition fees. Support measures exist only via the scholarship programmes, which are available for tertiary level education in general.

Special categories, such as individuals with disabilities can enter the University under a special regime (Up to 10% of university entrants). Additional qualifications are only required in the case of postgraduate studies. In faculties where there is major demand, people with professional experience relevant to the subject of the course, are given priority.

- **Programmes appropriate and adequate for the needs of learners**

Given that Second Chance Schools were designed taking into consideration adults education principles (participate methods, contextualised knowledge with reference to the social-economic background of students), they attempt to combine two objectives; on the one hand, acquisition of social skills (media, environmental and historical literacy) and on the other, acquisition of basic skills (reading, writing, numeracy, English language, computers and technology). Consequently, the educational curriculum has to be similar to the third year of lower secondary education, while at the same time it is necessary to provide them with competencies in basic areas of knowledge and encourage them to learn, continue their studies

¹⁹ Preference is given to young and unemployed entrants

²⁰ Most trainees are from the lower social classes, labourers, merchants, accountants, housewives, citizens excluded from opportunities for career development.

and become more active citizens. These objectives are achieved only by the acquisition of the compulsory education certificate. It is only then that the social stigma of organic illiteracy is removed, a fact which raises significantly their self-esteem.

To these undergraduate and postgraduate courses, entry by draw, distance learning, a wide age bracket among students, the provision of modular courses and the option to develop a personal time schedule for completing their studies are the main reasons for people to opt for the Open University.

In contrast, in regard to Second Chance School courses, compulsory attendance and the weakness of the programme to support distance learning methods or even self-teaching educational materials exclude many categories of the population such as seamen.

The fact that these courses are run in the evening facilitates employed people, however the 18 month course duration does not cater for students' personal needs. For this reason, in order to facilitate the unemployed or students with learning difficulties, the option of modular programmes will be offered, permitting them to receive credit for the first year (9 months) module and in case of interruption to pick up their studies again in later years. The programme of studies is fully adapted to adults' needs and the educational methodology encourages and supports students individually (remedial teaching) so that there are no cases of dropouts, with severe effect of distancing adults from organised learning once and for all.

The counselling aspect of education at Second Chance Schools is intended to encourage students to participate in upper secondary education courses (initial or continuing training) particularly for the unemployed and all those who wish to supplement/accredit their informal knowledge and skills acquired at work.

- **Flexibility and transparency of qualifications system**

Both programmes support their qualification system by evaluating students via written examinations on specific educational materials under the supervision of tutors or instructors.

In the case of Second Chance Schools the requirement of written examinations is the main factor for the selected applicants to refuse to join the programme.

In the case of the Open University written examinations in conjunction with individual written progress reports, are the main reasons for dropout or non-registration in courses.

For those students in both systems who are able to manage and bear the learning evaluation and checking system, written examinations, and scoring of performance as well as the general character of regulations within the system²¹ are factors that assure credibility in the certification system.

Being aware of the conflict inherent in alternative studies, learning organisations have failed up to now to make use of alternative methods of effective and reliable evaluation, and attempt

²¹ There are no exceptions (save for dyslectic students who are examined orally).

to motivate students to cover the course material in a systematic way (primarily using papers) and provide opportunities for re-evaluation (at the Open University) or repetition of the course (at Second Chance Schools).

- **Different forms of course delivery and learning**

Acquisition-accreditation of qualifications is achieved in the case of the Open University by combining self-teaching methods, project work and group meetings with a tutor. Student e-mails and the University web page provide prompt information and permit communication.

In the case of the Second Chance Schools there is the combination of a personal portfolio with systematic monitoring of student performance to identify gaps at an individual level.

A strategic objective of both systems is adaptation of the content of studies to e-learning without being any provision for distance evaluation or self evaluation.

- **Linkages between qualifications and other programmes.**

Both systems only award certificates upon successful completion of the course. Any certificates of attendance for a part of the course of studies do not provide access to any other learning systems nor are they acknowledged as formal qualifications.

Qualifications, which are acquired when the course of studies is successfully completed, are recognised by employers, professional organisations and other education and training providers since they are officially recognised by the State.

Certification of qualifications and transfer of credits is beyond the administrative capacity and authority of the two learning organisations. The inexistence of modular study programmes seems to be the main reason for this lack of flexibility in the formal education system.

- **Adaptation of the content of learning to students' needs**

The options provided by both systems for flexibility in adapting the courses of studies are limited in formal terms. There is an inherent conflict in relation to the open and closed character of the processes for adapting programmes of studies. The need for the courses offered to be flexible, to utilise various forms of learning based on the principle of lifelong learning and to implement alternative forms of evaluation, comes into conflict with the requirement to be compatible or appear to correspond to other institutions in the formal education system.

- **Benefits due to recognition of learning**

The main repercussion of the institutions examined in relation to increasing the qualifications of beneficiaries is focused on their capacity for accrediting qualifications with a certificate acknowledged by the formal education system. This is an incentive and is also a form of reward/satisfaction for the participants.

It can be said that compulsory education courses can contribute significantly to achieving the objectives of employment, by including in the active workforce of the country all those

persons (primarily women) who have been excluded from opportunities for specialisation or integration into the labour market due to lack of formal qualifications.

- **Information systems**

The provision of information about the systems has no general appeal. There has been no campaign to provide information because the systems are still in a developmental stage and resources (financial and human) are limited. Adequate and accurate information in the case of the Open University is provided on its website. In the case of Second Chance Schools, which are currently in the second year of implementation, information is provided by and depends on social networks in the local community at which these schools aim and are organised on the basis of demand. In addition to providing information, the social networks also encourage people to participate.

The response of both systems to the demand is very restricted.

- **Contradictions within open and alternative learning programmes.**

Accreditation of knowledge (certification) is implemented currently via compulsory attendance (at Second Chance Schools) or inspection via systematic monitoring (at the Open University) and final evaluation through examinations.

Participants consider the examinations and the stress provoked to be a problem. Implementation of another system of evaluation, which would not undermine the level of studies, is sought after. Those responsible for implementing the courses consider that, as long as the prestige of the awarded certificates depends on their equivalence with the corresponding certificates of formal education, the degree of flexibility and freedom required in order to provide open educational methods and knowledge adapted to the needs and the level of participants, is limited.

The recompensation for participation in courses is the accreditation and prestige that the certificate bears since it permits the continuation of studies in the formal education system and ensures professional specialisation and, in many cases, even professional rights. The existence of regulations and the monitoring of the knowledge and skills acquired is considered by providers a factor which contributes to the non-abandonment of studies, a phenomenon very common in informal courses of studies, primarily in the case of employees.

CONCLUSIONS

The National Qualifications System as implemented to date in Greece has focused on the acquisition of accredited qualifications via the formal education process. Until recently, the provision of accredited qualifications was mainly done via the acquisition of a tertiary level education degree. Over recent years, however, there has been a move towards providing accredited vocational training and education through programmes at both secondary education level (Technical Vocational Schools of the Ministry of Education and OAED Apprenticeship Vocational Schools) and at post-secondary level education (Vocational Training Institutes [IEK]). This trend has led to the accreditation of qualifications for a plethora of technical areas of specialisation, in particular, which are not covered by tertiary level education.

In parallel with the formal education courses, over recent years has been significant increase in continuous vocational training courses. This increase is primarily due to financing of the aforementioned courses as part of the Community Support Framework, as well as due to implementation of self financed programmes by enterprises for their employees. The issue for the years to come is to what extent it is possible to develop and implement a system for certifying knowledge acquired via the aforementioned courses.

In order to promote lifelong learning, it is important that via the national qualifications system:

1. Knowledge and skills be acquired for which there is ascertained demand in the labour market
2. Knowledge and skills acquired are certified and accredited by the labour market
3. There is easy access to learning and the acquisition of knowledge
4. There are specific financial, work-related or other benefits for participants.

The main elements of the national qualifications system which impede promotion of lifelong learning are lack of easy access to learning (primarily for formal education courses) and non-acknowledgement, by the labour market, of qualifications which are acquired (primarily through non-formal education courses or informal learning). The immediate repercussion of non-acknowledgement of such qualifications is that employees or the unemployed are discouraged from participating in the process of lifelong learning or participate it in order to receive the allowances paid or for other reasons.

The main element which generates problems for the development of an integrated national qualifications system in Greece is the failure to record and set out professional profiles for most areas of specialisation which exist in the labour market. Another significant weakness is also the lack of know-how about certifying vocational training courses implemented mainly via the non-formal education route but also relating to certification of qualifications acquired via the informal learning route. The above features also determine the priorities, which must

be set for future research and policymaking. In this context, it is expected that the initiatives which will be undertaken via the National System to Link Vocational Training and Education to Employment, but also via agencies such as the National Accreditation Centre of Greece (EKEPIS), the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training (OEEK), etc., will assist in overcoming these difficulties.

Promoting lifelong learning by developing and implementing an integrated national qualifications system is one means for reducing unemployment and increasing employment. The requirements of the labour market in terms of the knowledge and skills are an incentive for citizen participation in lifelong learning. The draft law on the National System to Link Vocational Training and Education to Employment is an opportunity for the future. This system provides for an integrated set of compatible functions such as:

- Recording vocational structure
- Determining labour market needs
- Determining professional rights
- Determining procedures for acquiring necessary knowledge
- Evaluation and certification structures and agencies which provides vocational training and education
- Evaluation and certification of vocational training and education courses
- Evaluation and certification of vocational qualifications, etc..

Implementation of all this is expected to significantly promotes lifelong learning over the years to come. Moreover, an interesting challenge for the future is the debate taking place about harmonisation of degrees granted by universities of the Member States of the European Union and co-ordination of existing systems for acquiring and certifying vocational qualifications.

Promotion of lifelong learning in Greece to date has not taken place within a specific institutional framework. Citizen participation in the procedure of lifelong learning was dependent to a large extent on the existence or not of direct incentives. These direct incentives were mainly financial (allowances for participation in vocational training courses). Participation in training courses in order to ensure investment in terms of knowledge and skill, which would seem useful in the future, was limited (mainly in terms of in-house training courses).

The reasons for 'non-aware' participation in lifelong learning can perhaps be found in the shortcomings in the system of both formal and non-formal vocational training and education. The shortcomings can mainly be identified in:

- The non-systematic recording of labour market needs
- The non-systematic recording of training needs of interested persons
- Non-acknowledgement by the labour market of knowledge and skills acquired, primarily via the non-formal education route, and
- Lack of information networks both for the unemployed and employees interested in participating in lifelong learning processes, but also for employers.

Our participation in this specific activity seeks, inter alia, to provide an exchange of experiences with other countries relating to the development, implementation and impact of innovative actions, which have been developed in the context of qualification certification systems. A significant objective is also for us to examine how different policy tools have operated in relation to qualification certification systems and to ascertain actions taken by other countries which promoted lifelong learning.

ANNEX

ANNEX I

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUALIFICATIONS: MEASURING THE EFFECT OF ACCREDITED KNOWLEDGE

QUALIFICATIONS: UNIT OF OUTCOME OF LEARNING AND ITS RECOGNITION.

QUALIFICATIONS CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

A combination of 3 elements:

- 1. It should include procedures (for settling issues) for accrediting learning.*
- 2. The procedures should link qualifications with qualifications and destinations. (In other words rules should apply which allow correlation, offsetting, the ability to continue studies in order to increase qualifications, career development and enshrinement in the qualifications and vocational profile).*
- 3. The above arrangements should relate to qualifications accredited by competent agencies (certification) from the social and economic sector, professional and sectoral agencies (primarily Chambers).*

The objective of the case study is:

TO EXAMINE TO WHAT EXTENT THE QUALIFICATIONS CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS OR ASPECTS OF THE PROCEDURE SUPPORT OR IMPEDE TRAINEES AND PROFESSIONALS IN ORGANIZING – PROVIDING (MANAGING) AND ATTAINING KNOWLEDGE.

The choice of cases which constitute qualification accreditation systems mainly among adults but which are subject to discussion or reform or innovation (new initiatives).

1.1 What are the special features of individuals who mainly turn to the specific organisation / learning course?

1.1.1 Are there reasons (financing or strategic) which determine priorities and influence the choice system?

Unemployed – age groups – gender – special characteristics

Social criteria - Employees

1.1.2 How open is the entry / choice system?

What are the minimum formal conditions and why?

1.1.3 To what extent is the final ranking influenced by

The minimum qualifications required / conditions, and additionally by the personal incentives of interested parties?

1.2. What are the learning objectives of individuals who mainly turn to the specific learning organisation?

1.2.1 Career development in the area they are employed in

- 1.2.2 Retooling
- 1.2.3 Personal development without any link to career development
- 1.2.4 To continue studies
- 1.2.5 Quality of knowledge / specialisation or accreditation.

2.1. What provisions has course planning made so that:

Access to learning is ensured?

(Special qualifications, informal knowledge evaluation exams, entry exams for knowledge levels, information, encouragement and counselling, financial incentives)

To facilitate the learning process?

(Flexible structure with flexible time schedule, individual or group remedial teaching, self-learning, exams with special specifications for adults)

To support the continuation of learning?

(Counselling and career guidance, correlation of qualification and access to courses for supplementary knowledge)

3. Do the qualifications acquired by course participants correspond to their needs? (and to their level where they are experienced adults?)

To becoming more active citizens

To continuing their studies

To acquiring specialisation

To assisting their children

4. Do the evaluation procedure, quality assurance and other prerequisites for awarding qualifications facilitate or impede learning and participation in the course?

If yes, in what way is this achieved?

If no, what do you think is wrong?

4.1 How is evaluation done?

(Written – oral exams, individual – group papers, chances for re-examination, course attendance time, rejection criteria, opportunities for repeating)

4.2. Grading of performance and opportunity for improvement

4.3 Transparency in the exams system (preparation, simulation, opportunities for differentiation)

5. Is acquisition – certification of qualifications adequately flexible so as to achieve learning in different ways and forms and in particular distance learning using new technologies?

It has been designed with open and distance learning as an objective

It can be adapted in the case of need or choice

6. What are the options for transferring qualifications acquired via the course to other courses or subjects? Do you consider the linkage satisfactory / adequate?

What exclusions does it overcome?

What is the focus? In-house training, informal ongoing training, initial education and training, higher education

7. Are the qualifications acquired recognised by employers, professional bodies and other agencies providing education and training?

They lead to professional competence

They are associated with professional rights

They are recognised by the selection and career development system in the public sector (required qualifications – pay scale)

They are recognised by the formal education system

They allow the continuation of studies in the formal system.

Do the accredited qualifications acquired in the context of the specific course allow participants either to offset accredited learning acquired previously?

or have non-formal or informal learning recognised? (within the system)

If yes, provide examples

9. Is the qualification accreditation system flexible enough and does it ensure transparency so that it corresponds to the learning needs of individuals it is aimed at and for whom it has been designed?

9.1 What is the need identification methodology?

9.2 What is the control and confirmation procedure?

9.3 IS the learning process participation focussed and how is this ensured?

9.4 Is previous non-formal or informal knowledge acknowledged and confirmed during learning?

9.5 How is the degree of participant satisfaction measured?

9.6 How is the result measured? (exams, re-entry into the educational system, monitoring participant learning choices)

10. In your course what do you consider has a real impact on increasing your qualifications?

Do you think that if something changed in the qualification accreditation system it would result in an increase in your course's effectiveness?

11. Do you think people are adequately and precisely informed both about the qualifications one can acquire and how this option is provided?

12. What problems can knowledge accreditation via certification entail both in implementation of the course and for the participant?

13. What are the advantages of accrediting knowledge via certification both in implementation of the course and for the participant in the course?

VIEWS OF USERS (TRAINEES) ON THE IMPACT WHICH THEY THINK ACQUIRING THE SPECIFIC QUALIFICATIONS HAS

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS ISSUE ALSO COMES INDIRECTLY FROM THE ABOVE DISCUSSION WITH SUPPLIERS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS WELL AS WITH EMPLOYERS.

ANNEX II

Case study I

HELLENIC OPEN UNIVERSITY (EAP)

The EAP introduced the concept of open, distance education to Greece for the first time along the lines of the corresponding British institution (Open University) in 1999 offering five undergraduate, three training and nine postgraduate courses to 5,000 students.

Based on the EAP's studies regulation, it confers degrees equivalent to normal university degrees under the condition that the students participate in group meetings every 1-2 months (monitoring system) and deliver 3-4 personal written papers (understanding inspection system-coverage of teaching material) and submit to a written examination at the end of each of the 12 courses over a period of 6-36 years.

It also confers postgraduate degrees at the level master using the same system of studies for at least four courses over a period of 4-12 years followed by presentation of a dissertation at the end.

Students pay tuition fees (€ 600) for each course which correspond to three semesters at a classical University and are entitled to remain in the studies system if they have successfully passed a course for only three years.

The postgraduate courses focus on training adults and distance learning (training trainers).

The admission system is open to all and is regulated by a lottery system due to the limited number of places. All adults aged 23 years and over are entitled to attend, and the restriction which once applied, setting a ceiling at the aged 45, was abolished. Today the average age of students is 32, and there are more women than men. In most cases, students work. In addition to the places announced, just as in the case with all other universities, there is a quota for disabled people (10%).

Following matriculation, students with a low income, meeting social criteria or with high academic performance, based on law and an automatic point scale system, where they so wish can be granted total or partial exemption from their participation in student tuition fees.

Despite their cost, studies at the EAP are in immense demand given that each year, taking 1999 as the average, approximately 50,000 individuals have applied.

In 2003 there are now twelve postgraduate courses attended by 4,087 individuals and six undergraduate courses with twice the number of students (8,443).

Given that the EAP was established in order to provide learning opportunities at tertiary level education to all those for whom 'person to person teaching creates barriers', creating a new learning and qualifications certification environment²² we chose two cases of students on an undergraduate and postgraduate course and analysed the EAP system in-depth on the basis of a questionnaire.

²² Admission without entry exams, distance studies, covering a wide age bracket, independent sets of courses within a modular system, options to choose a personal time schedule)

The view of a postgraduate course student

Vicky M. applied for the EAP once a postgraduate course was announced in a subject area related to her studies and professional profile.

Having obtained a degree in economics in 1988, since then she has been employed in the financial management of education services and since 1997 has held the post of supervisor in the finance department of the National Certification Centre. Despite being interested in and having attending short training seminars, she always wanted to complete her studies by acquiring a postgraduate degree. This ambition became true with the possibility offered by distance learning from the EAP.

She is married with two children and since she does not have the option for long-term educational leave from our work she could not have obtained her goal in the context of studies in the formal education system.

She was lucky from the outset, since only 10% of applications are chosen by lottery. During the first-year she chose one course instead of two. While in the second year she picked up speed.

Her postgraduate course relates to bank management and financial and accounting courses which are quite familiar to her.

She would not have chosen a course where she had to cover basic areas of knowledge or retool herself given that her job is secure and given that the time available is limited because she works.

She believes that the course, in terms of its structure and the manner in which it is organised, fully facilitates working students and gives adequate opportunities for evaluation in conjunction with the final duration of studies.

The individual papers and examinations on issues which require more judgement rather than memorising create a learning environment which respect the principles of adult learning and encourages one to respond.

The meetings with the educator every 1½ months, the four papers per course, and the examinations are the minimum requirements for evaluation of the student.

She considers that the weaknesses in the course are mainly due to the fact that the EAP has shortcomings in terms of administrative services resulting in delays in the dispatch of books, difficulties in communicating with the Secretariat and in particular the limited ability to borrow books.

The course content is quite interesting, adapted to the modern needs of businesses and participation in teacher evaluation which had commenced the previous year gives her the sense that she is participating in improvements to the system, a fact which adds prestige to the course and the role of the student.

Despite the fact that in her work her pay will not improve based on her postgraduate degree, nor is it required as a formal qualification for career development in the department to which

she belongs, the effort she has made in order to participate in the course is fed by the quality of knowledge which is acquired and the social repercussion which her effort has.

In parallel, she keeps up-to-date about issues, which lie, within her field of interest, something which her work area does not offer.

Nonetheless, she would not attend something similar if the course did not provide an accredited postgraduate degree. The decision was not the result of seeking out information about similar opportunities for studies.

The EAP has introduced quite a few innovations as a system for certifying knowledge.

It implemented the open admission system, which was well received by a public which prefers the luck of the draw to evaluation. It is made easier by distance learning using the modular system, the right of choice during the duration of studies with the upper limit being three years per course, and in particular it accepts a system of evaluation²³ which is based on the performance of participants, makes monitoring easier and consequently attracts the majority of workers who want accredited degrees. Use of new technologies facilitates the provision of information and communication is not implemented in learning and evaluation systems. The percentage of students who have access to new technologies is similar to that in the general population (20%). A full description of the education and evaluation system is presented on the EAP's website: www.eap.gr.

The geographical distribution of students follows the figures for the general population across all prefectures and consequently 45% of registered students live in Athens and 10% in Thessaloniki.

The view of an undergraduate student

Vasso M. is 33 years old and in her second year of studies which lead to a business management degree. She was successfully drawn from the lottery in the second year. She could not enter university via the examination system; reforms implemented excluded her from the universities (she had to be examined on additional material) and the non-accredited diploma from the kindergarten teachers school did not offer her the type of career she wanted. She worked in organizations in the management department as an office employee but the formal qualification she held (a secondary level education graduation certificate) prevented her improving her pay and did not allow her to seek positions of responsibility nor accreditation of informal qualifications which she had obtained based on her professional experience.

She chose the specific subject area because it is familiar since she has professional experience in management but the theoretical courses which are taught and evaluation on the basis of educational material and papers which are different from classical tertiary education are difficult for her. She is attempting to adjust to the context of studies at the EAP considering that, "it is a process of self education in which the basic incentive is the degree. My objective is to obtain a degree within six years. The time required in order to respond pressurises me."

²³ The score is allocated among 4 papers that are a condition for participation in the final exams for the course accounting for 30% of the final score.

She believes that undergraduate studies are a difficult venture for working people and the system of studies does not support them, nor provide incentives for them. Of course, it depends on the profile of the co-ordinator who can make the system of monitoring more lively (communication and interaction) and interesting (participation based). Nonetheless, the papers and examinations are confronted with stress and with awe because it is through these that the learning procedure acquires prestige and individuals are recognised. “It is something like a necessary evil in order to achieve the objective which you set for yourself. On the other hand though, even though your professional experience is not evaluated and is not recognised, it helps you attend related courses with more appetite and interest in the substantive content of knowledge”.

The books, being a selection of texts and materials from different works, are limited to headings and in order to understand them you have to turn to the help materials without any lending library since that of the EAP which is another city (Patra, which is the seat of the EAP) and the inability to borrow books from other university institutes.

All those professors who have experience of open learning change their books and the way in which education is organised, and individualise the system of monitoring the student and make participation easier. The classes consist of large numbers of individuals (with 30 students) with the result that meetings do not give you the opportunity to express yourself and solve your problems, nor do you have the sense that you are participating in a substantive manner in evaluation of the system. The consolidation of each course and the demanding evaluation system seem to create leakage in the system of open education, even though it is not possible to evaluate this yet. Quite a few fellow students did not continue into their second year. The others were either not working in order to be able to keep up (young age) or (usually the older students) made great efforts because the degree was constantly linked with their professional objectives (promotion, pay increase).

It is clear that very few people would not have attended this course if it did not provide an accredited degree, if it did not give them the prospect of acquiring a tertiary education degree.

The view from the educational organisation

EAP Assistant Professor, Alexis Kokkos, one of the founding members of the EAP Academic Committee, considers that the institution of the Open University brought to Greece the experience of the corresponding British University with absolute success since demand far outstrips the number of places announced and the adaptation of students to the system is proven by the good performance levels and the participation in procedures.

The immense demand moreover, permits them to close the selection system by identifying beforehand the special qualifications of candidates (so that a specific profile has a lead or is specifically addressed) and to indirectly ensure the interest of candidates in the subject they choose (based on previous experience or first degree).

In this way a better linkage is achieved with the labour market since there are more possibilities for recognition of the specialised knowledge acquired by students since they

work in related sectors of employment in which identification of the need to improve knowledge and specialisation urge them on the study.

The courses or modules of other universities are not accredited since the procedure has not been enacted, which in any event exceeds their administrative capacity and competencies.

If another institution such as DIKATSA undertook the task of accreditation of courses from degrees or universities and confirmation of correspondence with EAP courses, exemption from courses would be absolutely acceptable and fair.

The EAP does not have the capability to promote its graduates (career guidance department) nor does it seek to enshrine occupational rights other than those which correspond to the level of educational certificates.

The linkage with the labour market is mainly achieved via students who are already working in organisations such as banks, the health sector, education, training, since these organisations are suitable for evaluating in terms of substance the new qualifications of their employees, and of establishing new areas of specialisation as an additional qualification.

Courses which do not lead to accredited degrees were abolished because they ceased to attract students and all those attending them sought to transfer to postgraduate courses, by carrying over courses which they had completed in other departments.

Students are satisfied with the proposed manner of evaluation of their performance since the gradual inspection and allocation of scores is an incentive for continuous monitoring. The trend of students to achieve high performance levels is of interest.

The Open University system is based on strengthening adults and consequently encourages and supports self-confirmation procedures. The special social and economic features of Greece require that this procedure have as a prerequisite the award of an accredited degree.

Studies cover are subject areas which are not offered by other bodies using the distance learning method which the EAP first established and showed that this had value via the positive experience of its students.

Nonetheless, the manner of organisation required by the open method, the ongoing renewal of books, coursework materials, the individualised monitoring of students, presupposes management administration systems which the public character of the EAP cannot respond to. The prospects for establishing a truly open university are constantly being rolled over since although its reputation increases demand, staff levels depend on public budgets (controlled staff engagement procedures) and an expansion of the network of associated educators in areas of specialisation which are not offered at undergraduate level in Greece.

Consequently, it is developing with slow staffing rates just like other educational bodies and depends on the rate of change, which applies to them.

Case study II

SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS

Over the last two years certain shortcomings in education have been covered by the institution of Second Chance Schools with the aim of re-integrating adults into the formal education system or into non-formal education and training.

Law 2525/1997 gives Greek citizens aged over 18 who did not complete their compulsory education the opportunity to attend an 18-month course and acquire a certificate corresponding to that of junior high school (lower secondary level education).

In Greece the highest percentage of school dropout occurs during lower secondary level education while the dropout figures in primary education now relate to specific social groups such as Gypsies and the children of Greek Muslims.

This institution is aimed at adults who, save in very few cases, do not make use of the rights to enter formal education in joint classes with children of school-age.

Social circumstances are taken into account for entry and special weighting is given to former prisoners or former drug users but cases of individuals with adaptation difficulties or mental disabilities are not accepted.

Most students are from low social classes, manual workers, merchants, accountants, housewives, active citizens with a social life similar to other literate members of society, but excluded from chances for vocational development and in particular engagement by public organisations.

One reason for the success of Second Chance Schools and the increasing demand for them was that they were not stigmatised as schools for the socially excluded as their objective and the open entry system risked being misinterpreted in many cases.

Entry to Second Chance Schools is done on the basis of invitations published in the press and on the basis of applications submitted during the previous school year.

Candidates undergo an interview process during which they are informed about the compulsory character of attendance. These schools operate during evening hours in order to facilitate people who work.

The interview, diagnostic tests and individualised counselling procedures help in diagnosing the level of literacy and preparation of the candidate's profile as well as wider social experience and education.

In the case in which interested parties can make the time needed available and attend they are ranked in the list based on priorities.

The criteria taken into account for entry implements the policy of the SGRT which designed and implemented the Second Chance Schools institution.

Preference is given to younger age groups (18-35), the unemployed and seasonally employed, followed by workers.

There is extensive demand from women from the 25-35 age bracket during which time adults re-evaluate their qualifications and take a major decision to eliminate the stigma of formal and/or functional illiteracy.

Younger age groups mainly come forward under the pressure and influence of the family environment and have the characteristics of pupils with a negative attitude to the educational process.

The mosaic of age groups and attitudes presented by the population at which the institution is aimed is supported by the counselling department of Second Chance Schools and an effort is made not to exclude anyone.

Even in cases where the condition of having completed primary school education is not met, the interested party is urged to turn to the Ministry of Education Committee which twice a year organise evaluation examinations (September and February) on reading, writing and mathematical calculation competency and issues a certificate which allows such persons thereafter to register at Second Chance Schools.

Studies are completely free and included teaching material and stationery. In many cases the municipal authorities supports the programme by providing participants with means of transport or youth clubs for children.

The courses taught at Second Chance Schools do not correspond to the courses at lower secondary level education. Despite the fact that in the core subjects (reading, writing, mathematics, computers and English) an effort is made to cover the material taught at lower secondary level, the remaining 40% of courses are not knowledge-based courses but attitude formation courses (social, environmental literacy, cultural education). The philosophy of Second Chance Schools does not include correspondence between courses and branches of academic knowledge, academic knowledge runs through all courses. The courses are aimed at the acquisition of skills and not the accumulation of knowledge.

There is always flexibility in adaptation of the content to real needs and shortcomings which have been diagnosed during the entry phase to the programme when the class was established. Attendance is mandatory (20 hours per week) and is the basic factor for successful completion. The factor of accredited knowledge which will be acquired enters here, which urges students to continue uninterrupted for 18 months.

In illiteracy programmes implemented in the past, non-compulsory attendance and non-acquisition of a certificate resulted in dropouts from the programme.

No such phenomena exist at Second Chance Schools except in the case for someone finds a job and changes his priorities, for example. And here students are given the chance to take a break for some serious reason and pick up studies at a later date having carried the first 9 months of studies forward.

Evaluation is done based on quality criteria, preparing papers and the personal file of the student is organised. Quantitative evaluation is done using tests and with examinations twice per year. The final score is not calculated using weighted criteria but from the overall image of the student and is expressed using quality characteristics in relation to interest shown and in relation to the degree of response to the course requirements. Despite this written examinations create stress and are an inhibitory factor for many interested parties.

The compulsory nature of study covers the weakness of the programme in supporting learning with self-teaching educational material or distance learning which would allow categories of the population to cover the teaching material with alternative educational methods. Students who try hard in order to attain the accredited certificate have a tendency to turn to the classical system. They have not yet been persuaded about the adequacy of the alternative methods which have been introduced.

Authoritarian and closed systems refer to systems because via them the values of many generations are promoted from a time when education related to an elite and excluded people from education for all, putting forward academic standards.

Since the first year of operation of the pilot school in Peristeri in 2002 26 individuals have graduated while 2 did not complete their studies. Of the 26, 18 continued their studies at technical vocational schools, 2 went to the Unified Lyceum and 6 did not continue their studies.

Second Chance Schools are staffed by teachers from secondary level education (paid by the hour) who are trained and specialise in teaching tools prepared under the supervision of the SGRT. Nonetheless, operating rules from the secondary level system have been transferred.

In effect an endogenous conflict has been created in relation to the open and closed nature of procedures. A flexible programme for educating adults which would utilise various forms of learning based on the principle of lifelong learning (typical-non-typical, atypical learning) should be evaluated so as to correspond to the structure of formal education.

Evaluation based on international experience allows practices with reliable methodologies to be implemented in non-formal education courses.

However correspondence introduces limitations.

In Greece the problem of correspondence has been solved with the generosity shown by the legislator. The equivalence of Second Chance Schools with the junior high school certificate,

which completes compulsory education, is stipulated by law. This is a politically generous act which raises many questions in relation to pedagogy.

The effort to make the two systems converge results in the two systems having to be, being and seeming to be in complete correspondence but internally they are different. This characteristic is the special feature of Greek Second Chance Schools.

Corresponding European institutions are not involved with formal education. They operate as an intermediate remedial institution, which prepares and assists students to return to examinations in the formal system.

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