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The Comparative Argument in the Case of the Greek Educational Reform in 1997–1998

SIPHIS BOUZAKIS & GERASIMOS KOUSTOURAKIS

ABSTRACT *The purpose of this study is to investigate how ‘comparative argument’, namely references to the educational policies and practices of other countries, was used by Greek politicians in the framework of the 1997–1998 educational reform. Employing the method of quantitative and qualitative content analysis, we attempted, on the basis of original sources (parliamentary minutes/debates) both to count and interpret the comparative references. Our research questions were: do politicians in Greece use the comparative argument and in what way? Which specific countries, issues and practices is comparative argument centred on? What is the form, the role and the quality of the comparative argument?*

Introduction

Comparative argumentation [1] has historically constituted a core component for the implementation of both educational policy and practice in various countries. This is due to the fact that this practice, as the father of Comparative Education Marc Antoine Jullien de Paris indicates, has been considered to be an effective means of persuasion that could contribute to the adoption of educational policies as well as to the modernisation of the educational systems in underdeveloped countries [2]. Moreover, in his book under the title *Preliminary Outline and Aspects of an Opening Towards Comparative Education [Esquisse et Vue préliminaires d’ un ouvrage sur l’ éducation comparée]*, Jullien suggested that elements deriving from the educational reality of another country can be adopted after having been fruitfully transformed so that they match both with the peculiarities and the mentality of the receiving country. However, the task of the data and information collection is assigned to the scientific field of Comparative Education (see Epstein, 1990, p. 3). Nowadays, as Phillips (1999, p. 16) indicates, comparative studies on education are useful since, among other things, they:

- Show what is possible by examining alternatives to provision ‘at home’.
- Describe what might be the consequences of certain courses of action, by looking at experience in various countries (i.e. in attempting to predict outcomes they can serve both to support and to warn against potential policy decisions).
- Contribute to the development of an increasingly sophisticated theoretical framework in which to describe and analyse educational phenomena.
- Serve to provide authoritative objective data which can be used to put to the test the less

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objective data of others (politicians and administrators, principally) who use comparisons for a variety of political and other reasons.

- Have an important supportive and instructional role to play in the development of any plans for educational reform, when there is concern to examine experience elsewhere.

Furthermore, Noah & Eckstein think that by means of international data those problems referring to the relation between education and society can be evaluated (Noah & Eckstein, 1969, pp. 112–115). Noah, sustains the idea that intercultural studies contribute to the revelation, understanding and explanation of the educational borrowing function (Noah, 1986). Moreover, Schriewer (1989) [3] notices that those international comparative studies which focus on educational phenomena of an intercultural nature reveal the common cultural links among various countries and contribute to the formation of social scientific theories. On the other hand, Psacharopoulos (1990, p. 372) stresses the fact that dealing with epistemological and methodological issues leads to a situation of scientific introversion and does not seem to influence political action. However, if that were the case, and if the findings of comparative researches were seriously taken into account by the policy makers, various educational problems would be solved in the best way possible. Nonetheless, Phillips (2000) notices that those results which derive from comparative studies and contribute to both the knowledge and understanding of other countries' educational issues inevitably lead to educational borrowing practice [4]. Since, according to Phillips, the motives leading to the educational political borrowing are complicated, he suggests the following 'typology of attraction' that is associated with both the sources and the reasons for the query regarding the educational systems of other countries (Phillips, 2000, p. 299):

- Serious scientific/academic investigation of the situation in a foreign environment;
- Popular conceptions of the superiority of other approaches to educational questions;
- Politically motivated endeavours to seek reform of provision by identifying clear contrasts with the situation elsewhere;
- Distortion (exaggeration), whether or not deliberate, of evidence from abroad to highlight perceived deficiencies at home.

There is no doubt that over the last decades the comparative argument has been used by the developed western countries for *legitimation purposes* in the exercise of educational policy.

Mann indicated that 19th century America profited much from the study of the educational reality and experience of other countries. To this end, American specialists centred comparative argumentation on the need to use European Educational institutions that were already tested in practice, with the aim of supporting the liberal institutions of American society (Mann, in Noah & Eckstein, 1969, pp. 17–23). Even after the educational crisis that was generated by 'Sputnik Shock', Trace (1961) tried to use a comparative analysis of the USA and USSR educational systems, to testify to the need for the reform of American schools. He reached the conclusion that the USSR educational system was superior to that of the United States. Furthermore, in the 1980s, the quality of the American school came into question. Comparisons of students' performance with those of other countries indicated the necessity for improving the performance of American students to bring them up to the level of students' performance in those countries that were competing with the USA [5]. The Swedish comprehensive school has also operated both as a model and as a reference point for those countries that wanted either to adopt or to avoid it (see, for instance, Nilson, 1989; Husen, 1989). Moreover, at the end of the 1980s, the English Minister of Education Kenneth Baker used the comparative argument to introduce a national curriculum, underlining the need for the English educational system to converge with those of Germany and

France, which were the basic competitors of Britain within the entity of the European Union [6]. Finally, comparative argumentation was recently used in Switzerland where there was a desire to adapt the German system of professional education to the Swiss context. It was argued that since the education of teachers in other countries lay with the universities, this should also be the case in Switzerland (Gonon, 1998, p. 21), expressing the will that teacher education should be upgraded through advanced studies, as was already the case in other European countries (Baumann, 1993; Beernaert *et al.*, 1994; Gonon, 1998, p. 21).

The use of comparative argument by politicians constitutes a characteristic of the Greek case. The following discussion (see Mattheou, 1996; Bouzakis *et al.*, 2000) derives from the relevant research concerning some of the reform episodes of the second half of the twentieth century. Comparative arguments are generally used with reference to the structure of educational institutions. Information concerning the educational issues of other countries tends to be segmentally given whereas the conclusions drawn are not documented. Frequent appeal is made to generalisations and concern turns around the educational issues of particular countries (especially Germany and France). However, convictions about the singularity and the importance of the Greek nation's cultural heritage dominate both the political and educational communities' teaching to preclude simplistic copying.

An analysis of the general orientations of comparative argumentation leads to the conclusion that two separate trends exist. The first one appears in the nineteenth century and it is known as the 'reliability of institutional alternative solutions'. It concentrates on the discovery and the promotion of 'the new', targeting its adoption. In this case, 'the new' is detected in institution 'X' that was successfully applied in the educational system of the socio-economically developed country 'Z'. In addition, comparativists provided politicians with valid and useful scientific knowledge for the planning of educational changes, that basically related to the structure and the organisation of compulsory education. However, the politicians either ignored the aforementioned scientific findings or used them selectively so that they could legitimise their own chosen educationally transformative approaches (see Carter & O'Neill, 1995; Halpin & Troyna, 1995).

The second trend of comparative argumentation appeared mainly in the twentieth century and it is termed the 'evaluative approach'. Evaluation through comparison is the basic method used. It aims to show that national achievements in a certain field of educational reality in a specific country are inferior to those in other countries (Gonon, 1998).

Comparative argument is distinguished by its analytical accuracy, its focus, its increased objectivity, and its use of explicit documentation (see Mattheou, 1997). Comparative argument can be used for the detection of and promotion of solutions to specific educational problems. Furthermore, the subject of comparative argument may be used both in the institutional and the ideological framework of education (Mattheou, 1997, pp. 7–8; Bouzakis *et al.*, 2000).

In this essay we will try to approach and analyse the 'comparative argument' that Greek politicians used in the process of forming and supporting, in its final stage, the last attempt at educational reform in the twentieth century (1997/98) (Law 2525/97, G.J. 188A' and Law 2640/98, G.J., 206 A'). We refer to that reform movement through which the institutionalisation of the rules related to the function of the contemporary Greek educational system was attempted. This research issue was selected for the reasons given below:

- The testified utility of comparative argumentation supplies politicians and administrators with authoritative objective data and leads researchers to the examination of the way a specific argument is used by policy makers.

- During the decade 1990–2000, there was an effort to adapt the Greek educational system to European norms in order for it to support the efforts and demands of Greek membership of the European Union. Consequently, there has been a great interest in Greek comparative educational argument in terms of kind and quality, as well as justifying the way educational selection is promoted in order for the Greek educational system to get modernised.
- The fact that interest focuses on the last stage of the institutionalisation of educational policy as well as the analysis of the way politicians deal with comparative data can operate in a twofold way: on the one hand it contributes to the revelation of the rationale and the potential ideological influences on the side of those forces that propose the specific educational measures. On the other hand, it reveals the officially expressed political resistances towards the educational reform attempted.

The 1997–1998 Educational Reform in Greece

In 1997–1998 educational reform was attempted through the introduction of the 2525/97 Law regarding the Lykeio as well as through the 2640/98 Law that targeted Technical-Vocational Education (see Babiniotis, 1999; Dimaras, 1999; Bouzakis, 2000; Kassotakis, 2000).

The 2525 Law was intended to legitimise the Comprehensive Lykeio, to abolish general exams, to establish the day-long pre- and elementary school as well as the second-opportunity schools, to remove the enrolment list of the teachers to be appointed, to modernise the Pedagogical Institute, to evaluate both educational achievement and educators; to reform the school occupational guidance system; to enrich universities with new departments; to work further on the elective curricula and to create an Open University.

However, perhaps the main innovation of the reform Law was in the establishment of the Comprehensive Lykeio that includes three different orientations, on the basis of which curricula are planned. After graduating from Lykeio, students can enrol for higher education without taking any exams.

The reform Law 2640/98 that refers to Secondary Technical-Vocational Education represents the final institutionalisation of the educational reform and introduces Technical-Vocational Schools. These Schools are structured in two stages; the first one lasts two years whereas the second one lasts one year. After having completed the first stage, students obtain a certificate that permits them to get a job. The same holds for the second grade graduates, who, moreover, can go on with their studies in the Institutes of Technical Training or, provided that they first get six-months practical training, in the Technical Professional Institutes.

Research Questions and Methodology

In this article we approach the last and particularly significant phase of the process of reform concerned with the institutionalisation of the provisions of the law on educational reform. Thus, we concentrate on the presentation and support of the specific educational drafts of the law in the Greek Parliament.

In analysing and elaborating on our research material, we address the following research problems:

- Which political agents use the comparative argument and how often?
- On which fields of educational theory and practice does the comparative argument focus?

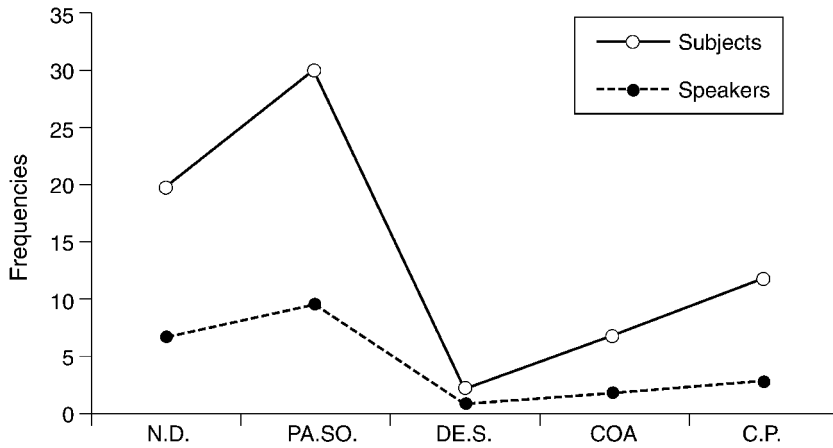


FIG. 1. Speakers subjects.

- What references to the educational situation in other countries are made and why are specific countries selected?
- What is the 'role' and the 'quality' of comparative references? That is, is comparative argumentation being used in order to legitimise the educational policy adopted, or is its goal to disseminate information about the educational reality of other countries?

The research methodology employed involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis [7] (see Berelson, 1952, p. 116; Koustourakis, 1997, p. 156).

The 'subject' is taken as the 'analysis' unit' of our research material. To be more specific we should clarify that by the term 'subject' we refer to that part of the content that is based on the meaning of a word group and which is incorporated in a specific category of analysis. On the other hand, the entire part of each speaker's speech is considered to be the 'context unit' by means of which the clarification as well as the best understanding of each subject's significance is achieved (see Berelson, 1952, p. 146; Holsti, 1969, pp. 116, 118; Koustourakis, 1996, pp. 34–35).

The following categories of analysis resulted from the systematic study of our research sources:

1. Structure and organisation of education.
2. Targets - goals, philosophy and ideological framework of Education.
3. Society, economy, production and education.
4. Educational expenditure.
5. Evaluation of the educational system.
6. 'We' and the 'others': national particularities and the relative ideological framework.

In order to come up with valid conclusions the researchers classified the various subjects, including comparative references, on the basis of the preceding analytic categories, in two periods, one-month apart. A subject was accepted only if it was classified, at least three times, in the same analytic category (the acceptable percentage of agreement being 0.75) (see Berelson, 1952, p. 156; Vamvoukas, 1988, p. 280).

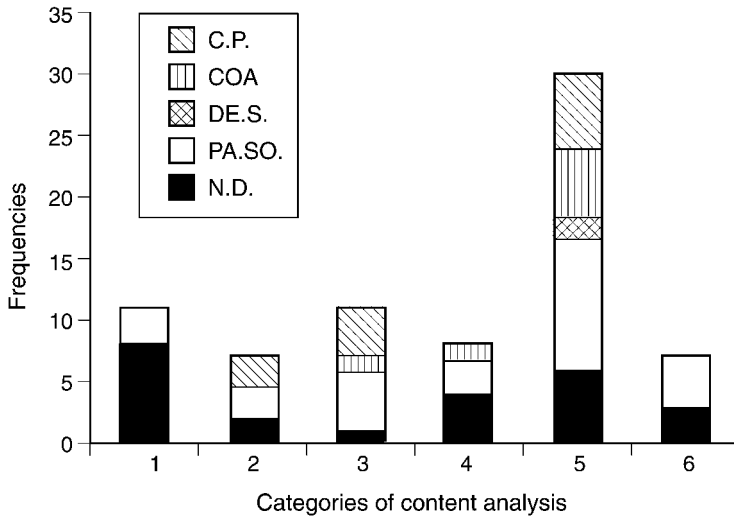


FIG. 2. Categories of content analysis on the speakers' political position.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1 presents the numbers of both politicians and subjects that include comparative argumentation, on the basis of the party they belong to. The political forces represented in the Greek Parliament during 1997/98 can be schematically categorised as follows:

- centre-left government: Panhellenic Socialistic Movement (PSM.);
- authoritative opposition: conservative-neo-liberal New Democracy (NÍD);
- broader left wing, represented by the following parties: Democratic Social Movement (DSM), Coalition (renovated Left wing—C)—Traditional Left wing (Communist Party of Greece—CPG).

Our study of the data depicted in Figure 1 leads us to conclude that the comparative argument is mainly used by the representatives of the two big parties, namely the governmental party (PSM) and the authoritative opposition (NÍD). More specifically, in a total of 23 deputies who had incorporated comparative argumentation in their speech, as well as in a total of 73 subjects, the following correspondence was observed: on the side of the Panhellenic Socialistic Movement 10 deputies in 30 subjects (that is, 42.2%), in the case of the New Democracy Party, 7 speakers made 20 comparative references (namely, 28.2%) compared to one speaker belonging to the Democratic Social Movement, who used comparative argumentation in two subjects (3%), whereas two Coalition deputies made seven references (9.8%), and, finally, three speakers from the Communist party made 12 such references (16.9%).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the subjects in various analytic categories on the basis of the political position of the deputies who have used comparative argument in their speeches. Observing the data given in Figure 2, the following conclusions can be reached:

- The comparative arguments used by the representatives of the political parties constituting the Greek Parliament in 1997/98, mainly focus on the category 'Evaluation of the educational system'.
- In addition, politicians' arguments were detected, on the basis of their quantitative presentation, in the analytic categories below: 'Society, economy, production and edu-

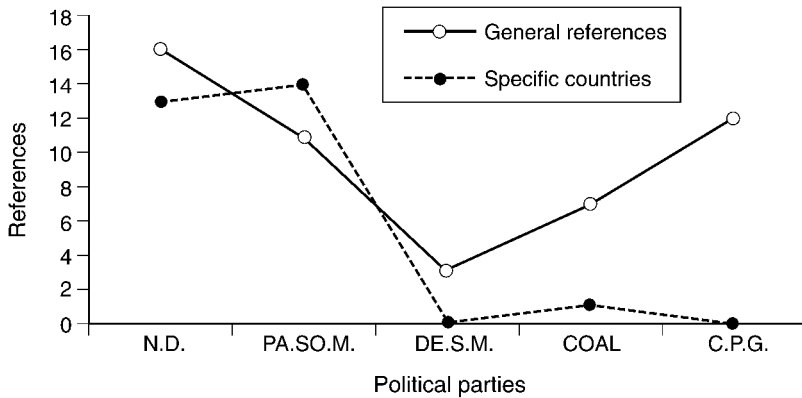


FIG. 3. Comparative references on the basis of their content orientation.

cation' (used by all the political forces except for the Democratic Social Movement); 'Structure and organisation of education' (Panhellenic Socialistic Movement—New Democracy); 'Educational expenditure' (Panhellenic Socialistic Movement—New Democracy—Coalition); 'We and the others' (Panhellenic Socialistic Movement—New Democracy); and 'Targets - goals, philosophy and ideological framework of education' (Panhellenic Socialistic Movement—New Democracy—Communist party).

The distribution of the comparative arguments used by the Parliamentary representatives of the various parties is presented in Figure 3 under the criterion of their content orientation.

Figure 3 shows that:

- General comparative references are made mainly by the opposition's speakers. This observation contrasts with the practice followed by the government deputies who centre most of their arguments on the educational data from certain other countries.
- The comparative argument used by those speakers who belong to the Democratic Social Movement and to the Communist Party is exclusively of a general character.
- Comparative references to specific countries are found almost exclusively in the speech of the deputies representing the two big parties.

The distribution of general comparative references is depicted in Figure 4, the party of the speakers using them taken into consideration.

From Figure 4 we notice that:

- Deputies, regardless of the party they represent, mostly tend to be interested in an overall assessment of the educational facts in Europe and more specifically in the European Union.
- The approach to the educational issues of the Balkans as well as of the Mediterranean in relation to those in Greece seems to be of particular interest to the Government deputies responsible for promoting the specific educational reform.
- The arguments of the Communist Party's deputies go beyond the European reality, to focus upon educational facets in the periphery (third world, Africa), as well as the educational action of the international capitalistic centres. By contrast, the arguments used by the Coalition speakers are not influenced by Marxist analyses and seem to maintain their European orientation.

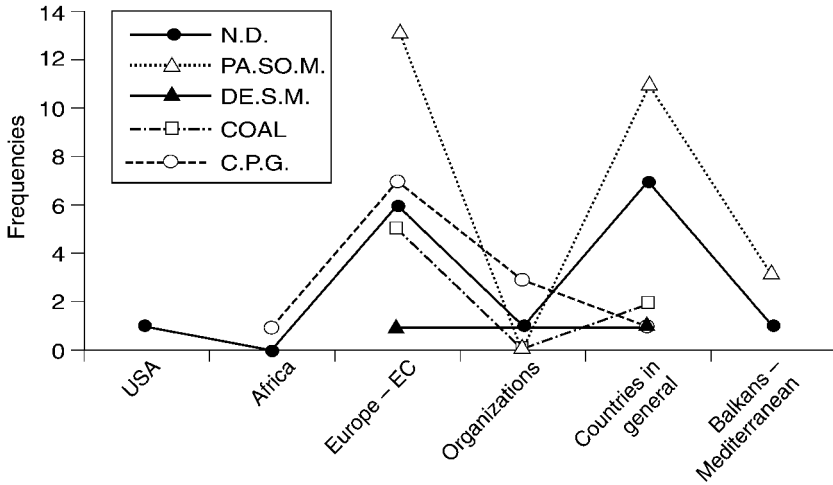


FIG. 4. General character of comparative references.

Figure 5 shows the comparative references made to certain countries by various speakers, according to political party, and leads us to conclude that:

- Out of the 13 countries in total, that are located in the axis 'X' of the figure under examination, six countries are referred to by the authoritative opposition (New Democracy) speakers, nine of them are used by Government speakers, whereas one positive reference to France is made by the Coalition deputy P. Kounalakis.
- The countries in which comparative argumentation, on the side of the conservative opposition, focuses are ordered, on the basis of their quantitative use, as follows: USA, England, Sweden, Germany, Canada and Turkey. We should notice that only one reference is made to the last three countries above.
- The countries mentioned by the Government deputies, on the basis of the reference

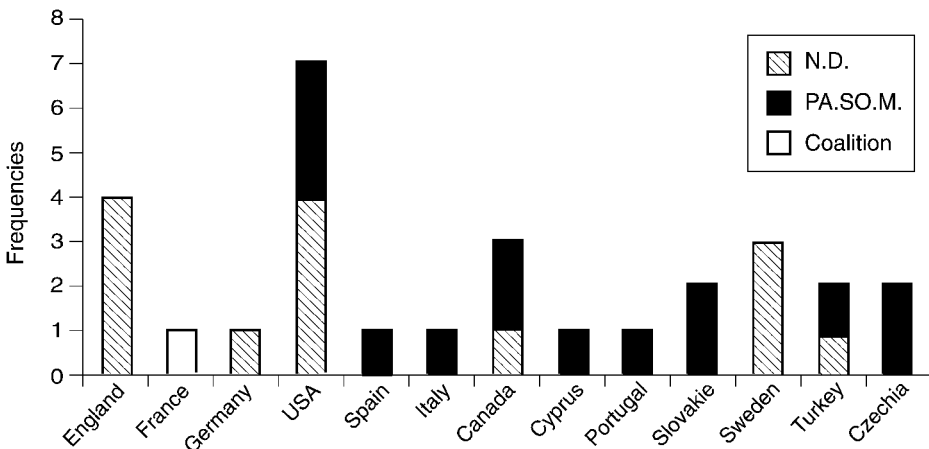


FIG. 5. Comparative reference to specific countries.

frequency, are: USA, Canada, Czechia, Slovakia, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Portugal and Turkey. The various deputies refer only once to the last four countries listed above.

- Proceeding in a cumulative evaluation of our quantitative findings we come up with the conclusion that all the speakers consider the following countries as being the most important: USA, Canada and England. That is, those countries where the Anglo-Saxon educational and political ideology prevails are the ones that rank highest.
- In the next part of this article, we attempt a qualitative analysis of our research material, on the basis of the aforementioned categories.

Organisation and Structure of Education

The Education Ministry officials use comparative argumentation in order to legitimise the sought-after reform that targets the Comprehensive Lykeio institution. Thus, the Minister of Education, Gerasimos Arsenis, considers it to be a contemporary institution and in accordance with general European politics. Furthermore, the under-secretary I. Anthopoulos views it as a particularly successful institution with positive results, which has already been applied in specific countries:

The institution of the Comprehensive Lykeio, for example, exists in eight European countries, in the USA, in Canada, in Czechia, in Slovakia. I am wondering why it was claimed in the Parliament that it is an unsuccessful institution. It is actually a model that has been fruitful up to date and, moreover, it functions in the way we have planned it to while introducing it in our country. (Parliament Proceedings (PP), 1997, p. 1026)

An opposite view in regard to the need of the Comprehensive Lykeio institution's establishment as well as its probable effectiveness is expressed by the authoritative opposition's representatives. More specifically, the N.D. deputy V. Kontogiannopoulos claims that the international trend suggests a pattern for the unification of school units at the compulsory education level, but of school differentiation at the Lykeio level. Furthermore, he maintains that the institution of the Comprehensive Lykeio exists only in Sweden, since it was abolished in England as being ineffective. Moreover, he rejects the view that the model of the Comprehensive Lykeio adopted by the Government relates to the respective one in the USA. The conservative deputy, A. Bratakos agrees with V. Kontogiannopoulos' observations, since he, also, considers the institution of the Comprehensive Lykeio as being unsuccessful:

They [the government agents], also, do not take into consideration the fact that in no other country stands the institution of the Comprehensive Lykeio, except for in Sweden, where it operates in a different form. In England, as well, an attempt aiming to the application of this institution was soon abandoned. (PP, 1997, p. 962)

Targets - Goals, Philosophy and Ideological Framework of Education

The Education Ministry officials underline the need for the dominant educational philosophy in Greece to change, so that the country will, on the one hand, be able to compete successfully with the other nations in the 21st century, and, on the other hand, to participate successfully as part of the European family:

Cost free public education, democratic education, education characterised by social sensibilities, and competitive education constituted the principles for the function of our educational system, but they did not respond to today's objective, namely the quality, the meritocracy, the complete organisation on the basis of the demands

deriving from the educational European Community, I would say, and not only from the Greek one. (I. Anthopoulos, PP, 1997, p. 1026)

The necessity for the Greek educational system to adapt is also given emphasis by the opposition that nevertheless suggests a different starting point. More specifically, the authoritative opposition deputies V. Kontogiannopoulos and A. Karamarios stress that any changes made should be oriented not to the overwhelming of the traditional ideological structures of the Greek educational system but to combining them with contemporary needs and demands. A. Tasoulas, representative of the Communist party, expresses his opinion, which differs from that of the Right (N.D.) since he believes that school should be open to everyone as well as more oriented to the needs of the labour market. Moreover, school, according to the speaker above, should, on the one hand, provide students with the opportunity to develop their personality and, on the other hand, prepare them so that they can get incorporated without any problem into the production field.

A. Papariga, the General Secretary of the Communist party, disagrees with the philosophy of the sought-after reform, since she believes that it will lead to an undesirable dependence on the European Union.

Society, Economy, Production and Education

The deputies representing both the Government and the opposition, except for those of the Communist party, point out the need for the Greek educational system to get adapted to the new international socio-economic system that is being formed.

More specifically, the conservative deputy V. Kontogiannopoulos claims that those countries that will invest in human capital will prevail in the future. More advanced statements are made by the Government deputies P. Kouroubilis and E. Vlassopoulos, who believe that Greek education will be influenced by the data of the contemporary international reality and they also emphasise the necessity of upgrading its quality so that Greek society becomes competitive internationally.

As the 20th century closes and the 21st century begins, our educational system needs to make the qualitative progress that is necessary for it to be able, on the one hand, to respond successfully to the international changes brought about in the production field, to the development of the 'knowledge society', to 'spectacular technological achievements, and, on the other hand, to enable Greek society to get competitive on an international level in the Balkans as well as in the Mediterranean. (E. Vlassopoulos, PP, 1997, p. 968)

As for the achievement of the target of Greece's adaptation to the international setting leader of the Coalition, N. Konstantopoulos, maintains that 'change' of the Greek educational system is obligatory:

The Minister of Education has also stressed the importance of education so that Greece accesses the international terrain as well as the labour distribution. Nevertheless, an educational reform, although being the basic prerequisite for the materialisation of the above mentioned goal has never been attempted in this country. It is, no doubt, only through a change of the educational system that education will function as an investment process as well as a crucial factor for both the adaptation and incorporation of Greece into the international field and labour market. (PP, 1997, p. 1003)

On the side of the Communist party, the General Secretary A. Papariga and the deputy

A. Tasoulas in their speeches oppose the sought-after educational reform, since according to them the proposals in the law are 'class based'; they draw from the country's need to respond to the demands presented by the 'neo-liberal international centres of multinational capital'; and, finally, they serve the undesirable dependence of Greece on the world's powerful financial sources:

You are talking about new types of learning as well as about new professions. We, in turn, pose the following question to you: Do the new emerging professions generate from a developmental evolution which is beneficial-for the-people in our country? Or do they derive from the crisis, the recession, the reduction, the marginalisation, the further subjection of the country's productive basis and its shrinking into the framework of multinational capital? (A. Pappariga, PP, 1997, p. 996)

Educational Costs

The deputy of the authoritative opposition A. Bratakos evaluates Greece negatively regarding this issue, since he argues that investment in education in Greece is the lowest compared to that made by other OECD countries. The officials of the Ministry of Education, though, maintain that in 1997 educational expenditure increased, and they also note that the European Union's contribution through the Community Support framework proved to be positive. The deputies of the authoritative opposition, V. Kontogiannopoulos and A. Karamarios, both accept that the European Union provided financial support for Greek educational programmes: 'The under-secretary was right to remind us of the fact that this system is being financed by the European Union.' (V. Kontogiannopoulos, PP, 1998, p. 1036).

Nevertheless, both K. Mitsotakis (ND) and P. Kounalakis (Coalition) express their concern about the way the financial resources needed for the educational reform will be covered in the long run, that is, when the funds provided out of the Community budget end:

Where will be found, on a permanent as well as on a long term basis, the resources needed in order for the reform to materialise? There is no doubt that some of the needs above will, temporarily, be satisfied by means of the Community Support framework. Nevertheless, what is going to happen after two or three years? (P. Kounalakis, PP, 1997, p. 950)

Evaluation of the Educational System

The relevant comparative argumentation is mainly located in issues concerning the way educators are appointed and of their performance and evaluation.

The Education Minister, Gerasimos Arsenis, considers the institutionalisation of the educators' appointment through a competitive examination as being necessary, since this measure is being applied in many countries and, in his opinion, it secures the appointment of the best candidates. He also points out that Cyprus, Greece and Turkey form a negative example regarding appointment of the educators, since in these countries such appointments are made by means of an enrolment list composed on the basis of the time at which educators received their degrees. The authoritative opposition seems to agree with the governmental statements above. More specifically, the conservative deputy V. Kontogiannopoulos notes:

The enrolment list is not compatible with quality. Our country is the only country in the world that up to now has assigned educators, taking into consideration no criterion other than when they obtained their degrees, without having either further

evaluated them or given them refresher training, without having even checked on their performance. (V. Kontogiannopoulos, PP, 1997, p. 992)

Expressing the view of the party he represents, he also considers the United States' educational system, and the educational reforms in Britain regarding evaluation, as positive:

As a matter of fact, the Right (ND) is not discovering America today. She just expresses her satisfaction with the fact that relatively correct attitudes are, at last, being both acknowledged and approved. We leave to the representatives of the Socialist party the satisfaction of discovering America today. (PP, 1998, p. 1068)

I would like to remind you what was written in the Greek Press, a few days ago, about the plans of Mr Blair's Labour Government with which, as you claim, you mostly relate both ideologically and politically. The Minister of Education, David Blunkett, although being blind, changes the evaluation system in such a way that those of the teachers who are good can achieve promotions as well as salary increases, whereas the bad ones get dismissed and become unemployed. (PP, 1998, p. 1069)

On the other hand, the Coalition deputy, P. Kounalakis, notices that in a few countries of the European Union educators get assigned after having successfully taken a national examination. He regards France positively, since, as he maintains, the changes made there were imposed by the society's base, namely the youth as well as the working class, and not by the politicians, as occurs in Greece.

The deputy of the Democratic Social Movement, G. Tsafoulias, makes the following remarks:

Last year's report of the OECD stresses, as does the White Book, that the enrolment list is an obstacle to the modernisation of education and the withdrawal of permanency. (PP, 1997, p. 954)

The draft of law refers to an educational reform that has been adapted to foreign models, without taking into account Greek reality. (PP, 1997, p. 955)

Furthermore, the General Secretary of the Communist party, A.Papariga, stresses that neither in Greece, nor in Europe more generally, can a really objective system of evaluation of educators be detected.

'We' and the 'Others': national particularities and the relative ideological framework

Both the Government and the authoritative opposition agree on the application of educational ideas from other countries:

We should study, observe and estimate the course of those relevant or similar proposals and policies taking place in other countries. (A.Bratakos (ND), PP, 1997, p. 1021)

Certainly, we do not copy them. We just evaluate and use fruitfully those systems that have proved to be successful in some developed countries not only in Europe but all over the world. (I. Anthopoulos, (PSM), PP, 1997, p. 1026)

The cultural factor as an element attesting to the Greek nation's superiority is stressed by the Panhellenic Socialistic Movement deputy A. Kouroublis. He maintains that Greeks will manage to stand vis-à-vis in Europe when both the cultivation and the development of the Greek civilization through the country's educational system becomes a reality. Furthermore, the deputies K. Mitsotakis (ND) and D. Georgakopoulos (PSM) underline the existence

of the rigorous origins of the Greek nation, that resulted in the educational success of Greek immigrants in America.

Mr Mitsotakis said earlier that the biggest percentage, in terms of the national groups being educated in America, is that of the Greeks. Do you know why? Because Greeks carry with them, deep in their consciousness their origins. (D. Georgakopoulos, PP, 1997, p. 1008)

Conclusions

Through a thorough analysis of our research material we have reached the following conclusions:

- Comparative argument is being used by the deputies of all the parties represented in the Greek Parliament.
- The comparative references made by all the opposition deputies are mainly general. By contrast, in the speeches of the Government's deputies, comparisons with particular countries prevail.
- The most substantial component of Comparative argumentation's general orientation focuses on the educational reality of Europe, and more specifically, on that of the European Union. This is due to the fact that, especially since the middle of the 1990s, Greek educational policy has been closely related to the European Community's Support Framework's funds. Moreover, the Greek educational system is gradually getting Europeanised, since it constitutes part of a plan pertaining to the establishment of a comprehensive European educational policy. Consequently, since references both to Europe and the European Union are often made by speakers, it is expected that, by the same token, references made to specific European countries decrease. However, many specific references are made to the educational systems of the USA and Canada.
- In attempting to locate both positive and negative examples concerning the educational realities abroad, the speakers concentrate, in particular, on the institution of the comprehensive school, as well as on the issues of the appointment of educators and the system used for the evaluation of educational quality. Interestingly, the need for both the transformation of the Greek educational system and a change in its educational philosophy is remarked upon by almost all the political forces in Parliament. Thus, the consensus derives from the fact that common sense suggests that the Greek situation not only needs modernisation but also needs to be adapted to the current demands of the new international socio-economic environment.
- An increase in educational expenditure is necessary if the Greek educational system is to be modernised, and the sought-after changes are to be implemented. This money is given to Greece out of the European Union's Community budget. The financial support provided by the European Community to Greek education is well accepted by all the political parties, except for the Communists who object that by this means Greece will be forced to adapt to the demands of 'neo-liberal international capital', Greece's dependence on it will remain and social inequity will be reinforced.

Thus in this article we have shown how a detailed textual analysis of politicians' use of comparative references can document the way in which comparative data can influence the formation of national education policy. Much more remains to be done to develop the quantitative and qualitative elements of this methodology in order to trace the different ways in which comparative educational data is significant as a policy making tool more generally and of the potential significance of such practices.

NOTES

- [1] The terms 'comparative argument' and 'comparative argumentation' signify both the synchronic and diachronic references that specific personalities (scientists, intellectuals, politicians) have made on the educational issues of other countries, in order to present their own aspects and/or to support/promote their views/arguments.
- [2] For these views of Jullien de Paris see Noah & Eckstein (1969).
- [3] For comparison and transfer, see Kaelble & Schriewer (2001).
- [4] Phillips considers the term 'borrowing', which has prevailed among the scientific community, to be pointless from a linguistic point of view since: 'it clearly implies temporariness, and temporary solutions to educational problems are more often than not unsatisfactory'. For this reason, he notes that the term 'borrowing' could be better represented through the use of the concepts 'copying', 'reproduction' and 'appropriation'. See Phillips (2000, p. 299).
- [5] See, for example, National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983); Stevenson (1993); Huelscamp (1993); Berliner (1993); Hodgkinson (1993); Layten (1994); Hamilton & Hurrelmann (1994); Ram (1995); Daggett (1996).
- [6] See, for instance, Phillips (1989); Cooper (1992); Osborn & Broadfoot (1992); Brown & Evans (1994).
- [7] Regarding the method of content analysis see, for instance, Berelson (1952); Holsti (1969); Grawitz (1979); Krippendorff (1980).

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