
Policy Making, Politics and Administration in Education in Greece

Amalia A. Ifanti

Dr Amalia Ifanti holds a PhD degree of the University of London Institute of Education and has taught at the Department of Education of the University in Patras in Greece. In this paper she examines the extent to which the maintenance, over time, of a strict, centralised, bureaucratised and authoritarian system of control over education in Greece undermines recent attempts to introduce more democratic and localised structures of decision-making and has played a key role in ensuring the continuing survival of a highly traditional type of curriculum.

Introduction

Educational policy-making appears as a process whereby the various pressures for educational change are translated into formal governmental expression. The degree of control over educational practice varies from country to country. On the one hand, power may be concentrated in a central state and, on the other hand, there are countries which have a tradition of local autonomy in education.

The Greek system is highly centralised. Central government, through the Ministry of Education and its departments, formulates and adopts education policy. Formulation of education policies in Greece has been very much affected by tradition. This tradition is connected with patterns of classicism and nationalism over a long period of Greek history. These historical roots of traditional attitudes in the Greek education system have had a strong influence on the curriculum which still contains a classical bias and falls short of harmonising educational with social and economic development aims. The main point of this study will be to identify the style and character of Greek educational politics. In discussing state curriculum planning, this paper will try to provide a systematic analysis of educational administration in Greece as well as the role of politics. More specifically, by examining the politics of curriculum control, the analysis will focus on the role of the state in defending the traditional curriculum or supporting a new one.

The Greek Educational System in Historical Context

Since the establishment of the independent Greek state in 1828, the educational system has adopted the values of Greek humanism, which are based on Christian Orthodox ideas and on the principles of the Ancient Greek civilisation (OECD, 1982, p. 8). Attachment to these traditions was very important for the new state since it wished to preserve links with the nation's glorious past and to develop a cultural conscience and national identity among the Greek people.

The history of the education system, on the other hand, is marked by constant demands for reform. As such, it has accepted severe