

Comparative Educational Considerations in Special Secondary Education in Greece (2015 – 2019)

Abstract

Our article examines policies for Special Vocational Secondary Education in Greece. Emphasis is placed on the presentation of legislation with references to the organization and operation of schools and education structures. The aim is to highlight either the different policies for Special Education compared to previous periods, or the evolution of previous policies. As can be seen from our study, the period 2015 – 2019 is considered to be decisive in the evolution of policies for Special Secondary Education. Gradually, Greece is harmonizing with policies of the European Union and International Organizations for the performance of the policy of the rights of people with disabilities. Especially the organization of Secondary Vocational Education changes the model of Education of people with disabilities with emphasis on the acquisition of skills, in order to integrate into the labour market. Thus, in the expanded study framework, the policies of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (O.E.C.D.) are also examined in order to highlight the particular scientific – economic capital that is being formed and evolving on the role of education in the labour market. The increased attendance of people with disabilities in public educational structures is related to their right to education, quality of life and social integration, so that they can be integrated into social and professional life without discrimination, avoiding social exclusion and marginalization.

Keywords: Secondary Vocational Education, People with Disabilities, Educational Policy 2015 – 2019, Rights Policy, Social Integration, Professional role.

1. Introduction

In Greece, at the beginning of the 1980s, educational policies were formulated that gradually aimed at inclusive education, with the creation of schools aimed at educating children with disabilities. As early as the twentieth century, new expectations are formed regarding the interest

in the education of people with disabilities, aimed at inclusive education. Different political, social and cultural contexts redefine the concept of progress, highlighting the issues of social inequality, with new defining principles.

¹New technologies and the evolution of Science in relation to research, standardize a discourse for reading and understanding phenomena and at the same time justifying decisions. Research produced in European Union countries on issues related to Special Education for people with disabilities, their education and sociovocational integration, as well as the educational policies formulated in European Union countries, systematize the presentation and emergence of issues to be supported. Any remarks made by the European Union to mitigate social inequalities, are not about overturning social political models, but about " internal - corrective " moves, which, in liberal terms, express the policy of the conservative redistribution of rights (Rawls, 1999).

In this discourse on social equality and especially on the right to education, as we will see, is also included the right to education for people with disabilities, an issue that will settle the extension of policies for the education of persons with disabilities, by incorporating scientific research, which is about inclusion. Any reference to inclusion raises issues in contemporary consideration of the elements of inclusive education. According to Kyriazopoulou and Weber (2009) as subsequently used by the Loreman et al. (2014) and Watkins & Ebersold (2016), the first element (inputs) includes financial resources, teacher training, teacher qualification upgrading, structural functions and legislative regulations (infrastructure issues). The second element (implementation plan) includes educational activities and practices of transforming inputs into outputs and here includes everything that takes place within a school environment, from teaching methods to supporting practices. The third element combines the first and second, emphasizing the evaluation of inputs and outputs, based on education and specializing in issues of evaluation of education, student-teacher participation, achievements, academic outcomes, educational opportunities, the possibility of obtaining a profession and adapting to society (Hollenweger, 2014).

In the same period, scientific economic discourse, produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (O.E.C.D.) and the World Bank, is also intensifying. A characteristic element of the involvement of the O.E.C.D. is the Programme for International Student Assessment. (P.I.S.A, 2000) contest, which is essentially its formal involvement in

education, in which the organization itself now normalizes knowledge, defines its content and evaluates it in different states, creating a categorization of states, their citizens and their educational systems on the basis of this knowledge. It is no coincidence that these reports are of concern to states and scientific associations. Different scientific communities criticize (positive or negative) the P.I.S.A., so the intervention of the O.E.C.D. "legalized", as an educational event¹ and at the same time it is gradually recognized as an organization, experts, technocrats, managing scientific truth and being disengaged from the political interests of states.

In this way, the "neutrality" of the organization is projected and its policies acquire prestige, in order to be included in the arguments of selected state policies. Therefore, since 2000, O.E.C.D. interventions have also been systematized, which will culminate in the following period, in order to emerge during the period of the memoranda as the pre-eminent special body for the rational organization of education, with the justification of education policies, in direct relevance to expenditure. It is no coincidence that O.E.C.D. report (2011) will define policies for the coming years and expenditure that will also affect the organization of education for people with disabilities, especially on the issue of logistics and recruitment, as we will see in detail, in subsequent chapters. At the same time, Greece is obliged to reduce its expenditure on education for people with disabilities, since the O.E.C.D., in its reports, has highlighted the need to increase the number of years in education for people with disabilities, by strengthening policies for integration in higher education and the labour market, with enhanced qualifications.

In the same period, as mentioned above, the work of the European Union's education committees is also being strengthened and they are now being formed in another field of elaboration and enforcement of educational measures. From the Maastricht Treaty on European integration (1992) to the Salamanca World Conference¹ (UNESCO 1994) and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), the political intention for the school and social integration of people with disabilities is being formed at a preliminary stage. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2001), Article 26, identifies the issue of integration of people with disabilities in direct reference to their autonomy, self-determination and self-dominance¹.

At the beginning of 21st century, in Greece, educational policies, through the establishment of expert committees, contribute to the formation of appropriate conditions for people with

disabilities. The first committee was established in 1994 and led to the adoption of Law No. 2817/2000 "Education of people with special educational needs and other provisions"¹.

It should be noted that the memorandum in Greece lasted for about ten years, from 2008 to 2019 and despite the memorandum commitments and the constant negotiations with the institutions, policy interventions concerning the education of people with disabilities are being formed. Specifically, the 2016 committee (National and Social Dialogue Committee on Education)¹ will directly produce legislative work and will also proceed to the level of elaboration of programs and educational materials (I.E.P., 2019)¹.

As already mentioned, the decisive legislative regulations include Law No. 4368/2016, regarding issues of Special Education. In the relevant legislation, it is observed that the internal regulations determine the elements of the formation of an educational culture for inclusive education and inclusion. The teachers in inclusion departments do not provide educational work "isolated" with the student, but collaborate with classroom teachers and may implement adaptive educational work, based on the needs of the student. Although there is provision for the maintenance of the private classrooms, the teachers in inclusion departments always aim to integrate into the general classroom environment and support the educational work within the school environment. It is observed that Law No. 4368/2016 socializes individuals at the classroom level, students, in this way, become familiar with the dynamic role of education, where the different stages of knowledge are not an obstacle, but on the contrary broaden goals and contribute to the understanding of educational changes that are unfolding within the school environment.

Inclusive education functions as a pre-condition for inclusion, with its double meaning, deriving from all individuals involved in inclusive education, that is, the adaptation of individuals to the new school environment and the defense of children's rights¹. The reality of social life with diversity as a norm is also represented in education. With Law No. 4368/2016 the focus on the education of people with disabilities within the school environment is observed and highlights the attribution of rights also to parents – guardians of people with disabilities, whose children can attend formal education schools.

¹ D'Alessio, S., & Cowan, S. (2013). Cross-cultural approaches to the study of "inclusive" and "special needs" education. In A. W. Wiseman (Ed.), *Annual Review of Forum for International Research in Education Comparative and International Education 2013* (pp. 227-261). Emerald Group Publishing Limited

The teachers training in inclusion departments, as well as of all teachers, is considered necessary for the implementation of inclusion programs, so that teachers of formal education can interact with teachers of the inclusion departments, as well as with students with disabilities, contributing to their school integration. It is also necessary to recruit teaching staff, which is associated with the provision of financial resources. The financial issue is therefore important, especially in the midst of a memorandum that has lasted for almost ten years.

2. Theoretical Approaches to Vocational Special Education in Greece (2015-2019).

From 2015 to 2019, we can observe an educational policy that focuses particularly on a differentiated policy for people with disabilities, focusing on the issues of people with disabilities, within the general theoretical framework of social and educational inequality, emphasizing that these people are not a separate category. In this way, people with disabilities are given the same rights they are now "visible", through the regularity of the projection of their skills, ideas, feelings and social fullness (Maragoudakis et al., 2021).

The development of scientific discourse, as well as the declaration of human rights, have also focused on people with disabilities, as well as other forms of social inequality, social class, race, gender, language and religion. At the present time, laws are being enacted that meet the conditions of a comprehensive legislation that seeks both to eliminate the social stigma of people with disabilities and to promote policies that advocate personal fulfillment, through individual autonomy (Fylling et al., 2019 ; Wehmeyer et al., 2022). In this case, the autonomy of people with disabilities is defined as the dynamics of self-development, personality, projection of ideas and emotions, so that people with disabilities, given their own personal fulfillment, can harmoniously integrate into society, claiming rights in other collectives, based on other qualities, that the status of "person with disabilities", will not differentiate them².

² See. Indicatively, theoretical issues for the promotion of the sexuality of people with disabilities. Ratcliff, A. (2019).

Special issues of gender-woman, as a person with a disability. Arstein-Kerslake, A. (2021).

Special gender identity issues Toft, A. & Franklin, A. (2021).

Special subjects of citizenship Altermark, N. (2017),

Among the key issues that Greek policy has to resolve, especially after 2015, the education of people with disabilities in the perspective of autonomy comes first. Therefore, the welfare and education for people with disabilities is no longer sole responsibility for private care institutions and their families, but the state is responsible for the formulation of policies for people with disabilities. There is a gradual move towards a comprehensive plan for the integration of people with disabilities, on equal terms in society, while at the same time controlling all the complementary structures, services and individuals, dealing with people with disabilities.

At this stage, which is a combination of scientific capital and political projects, the compulsory education of people with disabilities, as well as the vocational education structures, help both people with disabilities and their family environment, contribute to the socio-professional integration of people with disabilities³, recognizing that the families of people with disabilities have limited opportunities for their socialization and the main work should be undertaken by education. In other words, the implementation of a policy for people with disabilities must be assessed, evaluated, planned and implemented in the institution of Education⁴, which has a dual mission, which is to socialize people with disabilities to new values, as well as to socialize the "normal" to a new normality, in which the "normal" include people with disabilities. It becomes necessary, therefore, to broaden the field of understanding of the educational institution, considering education, as a complex system, with internal and social interdependencies and overdeterminations (Fleischer & Zames, 2011).

The tendency of a piecemeal legislative proposal, without a thorough political-educational study, accelerates the enactment of another law, which is probably part of the educational historical memory. In the years 2015-2019, the enactment of laws took into account the international

³ The issue of family functioning and the special social, psychological and interpersonal problems is of concern to the Greek state that legislated, in 2016, The Family Support Centers (FSC), staffed by psychologists, sociologists and social workers, were legislated. From our research it seems that limited centers operated and the work of the FSC of the municipality of Chalandri is mentioned on the internet.

⁴ Of interest at this time is the work of Watkins & Meijer (2016) and Watkins & Ebersold (2016), who identify the difficulties of implementing inclusive education policies, insisting that bridging policy and practice should be an end in itself and ultimately the effectiveness for inclusion should be evaluated in its implementation in the educational environment. This consideration, especially in the field of implementation, will be reapointed by Schuelka (2018).

environment, such as UN, UNICEF and the European Parliament, referring to the democratisation of education and the rights policy for people with disabilities.

3. The role of the O.E.C.D. and the state in the development of educational policy issues for Greece 2011-2015

In particular, in 2011 the O.E.C.D. report on education in Greece (Education and policy advice for Greece) is published⁵, our country is under a memorandum commitment. The neoliberal guidelines provide for specific themes for the organization of Education, which in economic terms corresponds to a Business Management model. In particular, within the framework of the report 1.2 "Professional development of teachers in the Flemish community in Belgium", it promotes the "successful" model of the Flemish community in Belgium, characterized by flexible recruitment – redundancy, expenditure and evaluation options. In detail, specific themes are listed on the objectives of education, the professional profile of teachers and the role of principals. Emphasis is placed on the evaluation process and especially the individual evaluation, which with vague criteria strengthens the dismissal policies. Therefore, the O.E.C.D. advocates an idiosyncratic form of public education, with operating conditions, corresponding to private education. This proposed education structure also affects special education because it brings the debate back to private initiative.

The above-mentioned report of the O.E.C.D. and certainly the supplementary annual reports⁶ will be the basis for dialogue with the institutions in 2015. With the July 2015 memorandum⁷,

⁵ These are the detailed reports of OECD, which are drawn up every decade and define basic institutional and operational issues of Education, which are presented as recommendations. Minister Of Education: A. Diamantopoulou (7/10/2009 – 7/3/2012) in the governments G. Papandreou (6/10/2009 – 11/11/2011) and L. Papademou (11/11/2011 – 17/5/2012). She was replaced on 7 March 2012 by Georgios Babiniotis. Diamantopoulou's role was important because she had already served as commissioner (1/1/1999-7/3/2004 and promoted neoliberal ideas on the organization of Education. Typical legislation linked to her policy are Law No. 4009/2011 and P.D. (Presidential Decree) 152/2013.

⁶ These are the annual Education at a glance reports. From 2011 to 2015, presenting general comparative data with other countries, with a focus on proposals-positions.

⁷ See https://ac.europa.eu/info/sites/files/01_mou_20150811_en1.pdf (Retrieved 5/12/2021). As can be seen, the 2015 commitments based on the OECD report (2011), were of particular concern to the SY.RIZ.A government,

the institutions mandate the implementation of the 2011 report. Especially for education, the "rationalization" of its operation is envisaged, which is interpreted as the liberalization of the system and in essence, privatization. Based on the negotiations with the institutions and essentially the opposition of the SY.RIZ.A government to the policies of O.E.C.D., the legislative framework was formulated for all levels of general and special education⁸.

In essence, the O.E.C.D., based on the memorandum commitments, will reintroduce the educational proposals for Greece, which are now educational commitments, based on the evaluation of the educational system, prepared by O.E.C.D., in 2011⁹. The timetable foresees that after the exploratory phase of 2015, in 2016 (July 2016) the procedures for voting bills will have been completed and in the school year 2016-2017 the adopted laws will be implemented. The theoretical framework highlights the urgent and structural change in education, focusing on four themes: a) development and use of human resources, B) rationalization of the school network C) evaluation and assessment of the work and D) governance and management of the educational system.

In particular, the new government is bound by the explicit reference of alignment with the policies approved in 2013 and incorporated in Law No. 4186/2013¹⁰. It is important that this law

through different committees, with discussions between the Minister of Education N. Filis (23/9/2015-5/11/2016), the Deputy Minister of Education S. Anagnostopoulou, the Secretary General D. Hasapi, the Director of the Minister's Office P. Katsaros and the Chairman of the Committee on Educational Affairs of the Parliament K. Gavroglou, later Minister of Education (5/11/2016 – 8/7/2019). In the historical part of these meetings, the government's opposition to OECD's positions is evident. A series of meetings in Paris and then the last meeting on 3/2/2016 should be mentioned. All the meetings were attended by Eu. Tsakalotos, who in his book "In the red backpack: political diary and other texts, 2022, Polis publications", describes procedures between different committees, which are now historical evidence.

⁸ Interesting are the remarks of K. Gavroglou, but also the assessments of the staff of the SY.RIZ.A government on education, with special references to the planning of educational policy, in the midst of memorandum commitments (2015-2018) (Gavroglou, 2021)

⁹ See for the content of the OECD report (2011): https://www.oecd.org/regreform/regulatory-policy/Greece_administrative_burdens_overview_report_GR.pdf (Retrieved: 7/3/2022)

¹⁰ Law No. 4186/2013 was passed by government A. Samaras (21/6/2012 – 26/6/2015), with Minister of Education K. Arvanitopoulos (25/6/2013 – 9/6/2014). During the term of K. Arvanitopoulos, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports (2012 - 2013), was renamed the Ministry of Education and Religious

was considered as a key "deliverable" to the institutions, which was included into the identified policy for the "modernization and expansion of Vocational Education and Training". Therefore, as we will see, the model of Vocational Education is also based on the planning imposed by O.E.C.D., by legislating new educational measures to ensure " a downward path for public spending on gross domestic product - GDP.", in the period 2016-2019.

After the conclusion of the negotiations, the government, set up committees that undertook specific work, based on the following themes. In particular: a) Procedures for the preparation of education budgets B) interconnection of research institutes of universities and technical institutes C) autonomy of educational institutions D) development and training of school leadership E) ways to monitor educational reforms and F) development of the All-Day School¹¹.

Therefore, the O.E.C.D. policies oppose the policies of other international organizations, because the emphasis is on reducing expenditure in the vague evaluation scheme and do not include theoretical and practical references to the right to education and especially for people with disabilities, to their right to quality education, to increase the number of years of education and their integration on the equal terms in economic and social life. The terms "modernization " and" rationalization", which, according to O.E.C.D. require "structured strategy" are not in line with the general framework of UN, UNICEF, the European Parliament for the orientation of education towards political humanism. At this point it should be pointed out that even the interventions of O.E.C.D., as memorandum commitments, are also contrary to the Treaty of

Affairs (2013 - 2015). This law abolishes the Vocational Schools (EPAS) under the Ministry of Education and maintains only the Vocational Schools under the Manpower Employment Organization (OAED)(operating under the apprenticeship system), as well as the Vocational Schools of the Ministry of Rural Development. Thus, the Vocational High School (EPAL) it is the only type of Vocational School in Secondary Education.

¹¹ In particular, the following were responsible by sector: (a) Ways of establishing budgets, N. Theocharakis, President of the Centre of Planning and Economic Research (KEPE) B) All-Day School, C. Kouzelis, President of the Institute of Educational Policy C) Autonomy of school-university units, D. Makriniotis, University professor-sociologist d) Training of education managers, If. Kamsidou, President of the National School of Public Administration e) Monitoring of Reforms D. Kladis (Secretary General at the Ministry of Education under G. Arseni (26/9/1996 - 13/4/2000, G. Panandreu (8/7/1994 – 25/9/1996 and P. Efthymiou 13/4/2000-10/3/2004 F) Unified education and research area K. Gavroglou, S. Georgatos and P. Katsanevas G) Experts for all committees were appointed F. Asderaki, S. Zacharaki and G. Rousakis.

Lisbon (no. 156)¹², which explicitly mentions the possibility of elaborating educational policies by the nation – state.

National education policy should be the result of convergences and choices. Therefore, although quite modified, the 2018 O.E.C.D. report compared to the 2011 report, reflects the memorandum environment of the economic settlement, even if the SY.RIZ.A. government is making operational arrangements¹³. We observe that from one field, negotiating strategies for education are evolving, which clearly affect Special Education, while policies of other international organizations are evolving for the education of people with disabilities and the general institutionalization of political practices aimed at the implementation of the principles of the social model.

In particular, the 2015-2030 goals (Sustainable Development Goals (S.D.G.), environmental, economic and social goals), as set by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, include disability¹⁴. The goals are specialized in issues referred to education, Growth-Employment, inequality and accessibility. In particular, the goals are specialized in five areas: a) mitigating social inequalities, including people with disabilities, focusing on improving educational opportunities and perhaps for the first time making visible people with disabilities and other gender-related attributes etc.B) promoting sustainable economic development, by choosing the right job for people with disabilities, with the same salary to provide the same work c) balancing policies in all states to reduce inequality of people with disabilities both within states and between states d) accessibility to all structures (buildings, public transport), (e)

¹² See in detail "In order to achieve the objectives in Article 151 and without prejudice to the other provisions of the Treaties, the Commission shall promote cooperation between the Member States and facilitate the Coordination of their action in all areas of social policy covered by this chapter, in particular on matters relating to: [...] - Vocational Education and Training [...]. To this end, the Commission, acting in constant consultation with the Member States, shall carry out studies, deliver opinions and organise consultations, both on problems arising at national level and on problems of interest to international organisations, [...]" (Ioakimidis, 2010)

¹³ In this openness to other policies, possibly differentiated from OECD's original intentions, the role of Mario Lopez Roldan, K. Panagiotopoulos, Beatrice Pont (members of OECD), P. Kyprianos, Professor, H. Magoula, Professor, K. Trimi, Secondary Education philologist, was important.

¹⁴ See in detail the 2015-2030 goals in the United Nations and Disability: 70 years of the work towards a more inclusive world, January 2018, New York: United Nations.

evaluation of policies, through the modelling of national disability policies, by collecting comparable data.

Therefore, the new element is the inclusion of the rights of people with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the creation of realistic applicable goals, the policy of readjustments is integrated by utilizing comparative data from different states, so that the national cause of each state is integrated into the collective international rights policy.

Conclusions

Based on the above, the professional integration of people with disabilities is not limited only to the financial support of people with disabilities, through welfare benefits, but focuses on their professional training at the level of secondary education, aiming at their integration into the workplace. In particular, the investment includes expenditure in educational structures, staff, in order to mobilize educational mechanisms for the development – cultivation of skills – knowledge of the disabled people on the one hand and their attitudes and behavior on the other, in order to identify themselves as social subjects - citizens. Education will be linked to work through policies that seek to readjust the basic objectives of knowledge-skills, as well as their socialization to new values, with a view to their dynamic presence in society.

The first objective presupposes educational structures, curricula, evaluation of educational objectives, readjustments and an appropriate educational potential. The second objective presupposes the relationship between the individual and the social environment. Therefore, the educational space must be transformed into a dynamic social space, with a flow of emotions, social practices, so that the person with disabilities can interact with social subjects, understand the difficulties and gradually move to higher and higher levels of social integration.

The aforementioned objectives define broader educational practices of organization, methodology, teaching, etc., which will also contribute to the strengthening of social capital, so that people with disabilities can be integrated into professional spaces. At the same time, many issues arise, for the private and public sector, regarding the assessment of people with disabilities for their recruitment, as well as for the evaluation of their performance. The social model, in its expanded form, places particular emphasis on the social and professional integration of people with disabilities. These issues concern the education of people with disabilities, which

increasingly covers more and more areas, in order to overcome social segregation and exclusion, with a view to establishing legislative regulations, as well as the establishment of appropriate educational practices. The relevant legislative regulations, while seemingly fragmentary, should be defined in the context of a historical time frame that encompasses economic, social and cultural issues. Furthermore, the very interconnection of states with international organizations, such as the European Union¹⁵, creates another environment for interpretations and proposals on the identity of the "person with a disability", as well as for the position of the person with a disability within the society as a whole.

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¹⁵ See. For example European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (2014a). Inclusive education in Europe: Putting theory into practice. International Conference, 18 November 2013. Reflections from researchers. Odense, Denmark: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.

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