

THE GREEK EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: A Brief Description

COMPULSORY EDUCATION

In Greece, compulsory education lasts for nine years, from ages 6 to 15. The first six years are spent in Primary School and the last three years in Junior High School. Pupils may also attend state or private kindergarten schools prior to starting formal education.

1. Primary Education

The Primary Schools are either state or private schools and they operate five days a week, with 5 - 6 teaching hours per day according to the grade the pupil attends. At the end of the school year, pupils in Grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are given a progress certificate and pupils in the 6th Grade are awarded a school-leaving certificate for use when enrolling in Junior High School. There are Primary Schools for pupils with special needs and 'all day' schools, which offer 'lunch' and cater for the needs of pupils whose parents are at work throughout the day.

2. Lower Secondary Education

Junior High Schools provide students with general education in all three grades. They operate five days a week, with 6 to 7 teaching hours per day. There are also intercultural schools with a special curriculum adapted to the needs of pupils of Greek origin returning from abroad and to the needs of foreign pupils living in Greece, whose parents are mainly economic immigrants.

Some Junior High Schools have been established exclusively for specialised studies (e.g., Music, Sports and Theology). In addition there are experimental schools where advanced pedagogical teaching methods are planned, implemented and evaluated. Children with special needs attend classes in ordinary schools. Finally there are 'second chance' schools for adults who did not have the chance to complete their compulsory education.

Students leaving the Junior High School are awarded a School Leaving Certificate. This certificate enables them to enrol in the Senior High Schools (either at a Lyceum or at a Technical Vocational School).

3. UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

In Greece, there are **Senior High Schools (Lycea)** and **Technical Vocational Schools (TEE)**, which are either state or private. Referring to state schools, there are day and night schools and in general there is no

age limit; as a rule, students between 15 and 18 years old attend day schools and those between 18 and 25 years old attend night schools.

3.1 Senior High Schools (Lycea)

The course of study in Senior High School lasts for three years, except in night schools where it lasts four years. Grades 1 and 2 of the Lyceum includes subjects which offer general knowledge, while Grade 3 includes subjects which offer general knowledge and specific orientation towards theoretical, scientific and technological branches.

In the Senior High School, students' assessment is an integral part of the educational process. The forms of assessment applied in the Senior High School include:

- (a) procedural assessment which is based on the student's participation and performance in the subject each term;
- (b) final assessment which is based on exams at the end of the year in each school subject.

For students in Grades 1 and 2, the exams in different school subjects are set by the school teachers at school level. For students in Grade 3, the subjects are set by a special nation-wide examination board. Students in Grades 1 and 2 are promoted to the next class and those in Grade 3 leave school, provided they have an overall grade average of 9.5 (on a scale from 1 to 20) in all subjects. On leaving Senior High School (Lyceum) students receive a certificate which enables them to follow one of these options:

- (a) to enrol in higher education (through nation wide exams);
- (b) to attend classes in an Institute of Vocational Training (IEK) in order to improve their skills and gain a specialization in a specific area (e.g., airhostesses, tour guides, travel agents, etc);
- (c) to be employed in the job market.

3.2 Technical Vocational Schools (TEE)

The Technical Vocational Schools are included in Upper Secondary Education and they provide education to those who have completed their compulsory secondary education (i.e. Junior High School).

Attendance at TEE is divided into two cycles. The first cycle lasts two years and the second cycle lasts one year. The subjects of both cycles deal with general knowledge as well as with special skills that students need to acquire according to the specialization they follow.

Students who complete the first cycle of TEE successfully receive a "Level 2" certificate after taking examinations held in their school. Students who complete the second cycle of the TEE receive a "Level 3" certificate after taking examinations held on a nation-wide basis.

Certificate holders from the first cycle of TEE have the following options:

1. to obtain a license to practice a profession
2. to enrol for a corresponding specialization in the 2nd cycle of TEE, or
3. to enrol in Grade 2 of Senior High School (Lyceum).

Certificate holders from the second cycle of TEE are able to obtain a license to practice a profession. They also have the option of applying for a limited number of places in the Technological Educational Institutions (TEI).

INSTITUTES OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING (IEK)

The Institutes of Vocational Training (IEK) aim to provide every type of vocational training, with a view to facilitating students' occupational integration into society. They were established in 1992. There are state and private Institutes of Vocational Training, which provide a total of approximately 145 specializations in different occupational and scientific areas. The training in IEK lasts up to four semesters and the trainees attend compulsory theoretical and practical subjects according to their specialization. Trainees are accepted on the basis of certain educational and social conditions e.g., their grades in secondary education, knowledge of foreign languages, etc.

4. HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is provided in **Technological Education Institutions and Universities**. An alternative type of higher education is the **Hellenic Open University (HOU)**, which offers education through distance learning.

4.1 Technological Education Institutions (TEI)

There are 14 TEI in operation in various towns in Greece and some TEI also have branches in other towns. Currently however, the status of TEI is under debate for a reform by the Greek government.

4.2 Universities

There are 20 Greek universities throughout the country, which consist of various faculties covering a complete range of related disciplines.

5. FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN GREECE

5.1 Foreign languages in the Greek educational system

Primary Education: English is taught from Grade 3 onwards

Secondary Education: English, French and German are taught

Tertiary Education: English is the compulsory foreign language in all Universities and TEI, followed by a variety of optional foreign languages like French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, etc, according to the curriculum of each TEI or University. Except for the foreign languages included in the curricula, there are also courses of neighbouring languages such as Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian and Turkish on offer in TEI or Universities.

5.2 The teaching of Foreign Languages in a multilingual, multicultural environment

In Greece, 26 Intercultural Schools have been established, offering general education to children of Greek origin whose parents have returned from abroad and foreign children of various nationalities whose parents are mainly economic immigrants. The number of Intercultural Schools is expected to increase significantly over the coming years.

5.3 Historical background of Foreign Language Teaching in Greece

Until the introduction of English in the curricula of Junior High Schools nation-wide in 1961, only one foreign language, that is to say French, was taught in secondary schools. English as a foreign language started in some Primary Schools in Greece in 1987/88. The course book used was '*Funway*'. In 1992/93, English as a foreign language was included in the curriculum of all Primary Schools from Grade 4. The 'Comprehensive 6-year Curriculum' for the teaching of English as a foreign language was published in 1996 and English became compulsory in Primary and Secondary Schools. French and German were introduced in the Junior High School in 1993. In 1996/97, German and French were introduced in Senior High Schools (Lyceum). In 1998/99, a foreign language, chosen among the three on offer (English, French, or German) became a compulsory option in the curriculum of the Senior High Schools. In 2003-2004 English was introduced in the 3rd Grade of Primary Education.

5.4 The Methodology of Teaching Foreign Languages at school

In 1983, the series of English language course books '*Taskway*' was published by a committee of experts under the supervision of Professor B. Dendrinos. It adopted the increasingly popular communicative approach. In 1996 the new curriculum for English language teaching in

Primary and Secondary Education incorporated an eclectic teaching approach which emphasised the personal development of each pupil. Specific activities were designed in order to draw on pupils' personal experiences during the learning process.

Recently, the Pedagogical Institute published the revised unified curricula (Government Gazette 303-304/13-3-2003) which introduces the Cross-curricular Approach to the teaching of foreign languages. The Cross-curricular Approach promotes experiential and holistic learning and encourages school teachers of different school subjects to cooperate for the benefit of the students. The project method has a dominant position in the revised unified curriculum. According to the principles and philosophy of the revised unified curricula which abide with the descriptors and the criteria set by the Common European Framework of Reference (2001), new course books for all school subjects in compulsory education are to be published by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs by 2006-7.

5.5 Time allocated to the teaching of Foreign Languages at School

Primary Education

In Primary Schools, English is the compulsory foreign language. In 2003-2004, it started to be taught from Grade 3 for three hours per week.

Lower Secondary Education

The teaching of foreign languages (English, French and German) is integrated in the curriculum. English is compulsory for all pupils in all three Grades, while pupils are obliged to choose between French and German, as a second compulsory option. In the 1st Grade of the Junior High School, English is taught for three hours per week. In the 2nd and the 3rd Grades English is taught for two hours per week. French or German is taught in all three grades in Junior High Schools, for three hours per week. Remedial teaching is provided in the afternoons through attendance of a special course in foreign languages.

Upper Secondary Education

a. Senior High Schools (Lycea)

English is one of the subjects taught as part of the general education in the three grades of the Senior High School. In the 1st Grade, English is taught for three hours per week and in the 2nd and 3rd Grades, English is taught for two hours per week. French or German is an optional subject in the curriculum. They are taught two hours per week, in all three grades.

b. Technical Vocational Schools (TEE)

In the 1st and 2nd grades of the first cycle of TEE, English is taught for two hours per week in all specializations, except for the specializations of Applied Arts and of Beauty and Hairdressing, in which French is taught for two hours per week.

English for Specific Purposes, in accordance with the individual specialization, is also taught in the second cycle of TEE, for two hours per week, except for the specializations of Applied Arts and of Beauty and Hairdressing, in which French for Specific Purposes is taught for two hours per week.

6. COURSE BOOKS

Primary Schools

'*Funway*' a series of English course books which was produced by a team of experts is assigned to all Primary Schools by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The course books are offered to pupils free of charge.

Junior High Schools

In the Junior High School, teachers of foreign languages can select the course book of their choice from an approved list of course books available. Each year, this list is approved by a group of experts in the Ministry of Education. The approved course books are assessed according to their suitability in terms of their compliance with the curriculum and the needs and level of students. The course books are purchased by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and offered to all pupils free of charge.

Senior High Schools

In the Senior High School teachers of foreign languages decide which course book is to be used in their class. They make their choice from the approved list provided.

Institutes of Vocational Training (IEK)

Students are accepted in IEK on the basis of certain conditions. Students in IEK attend compulsory English for Specific Purposes, according to the specialization they follow.

Higher Education (TEI, Universities)

In general, English is the compulsory foreign language in Higher Education, followed by a variety of foreign languages including French,

German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, etc, according to the curriculum.

General English is taught in the first year of each University and English for Specific Purposes in the following years. Except for the foreign languages included in the curricula of Higher Education, there are also courses of neighbouring languages on offer in TEE and Universities.

7. TEACHERS AND TEACHER TRAINING

In Greece, an important reform has recently modified the recruitment of teaching staff. Until 1977, the recruitment of foreign language teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools was exclusively based on a 'waiting' list. This meant that teachers were recruited on the basis of the date of their application for appointment in state schools. From 1998, national examinations (ASEP) have been organized for the purpose of selecting teachers. The new rate of teacher employment in schools is 60% (for those successful in the ASEP exams) and 40% (for those on the 'waiting' list).

Initial training of Foreign Language Teachers

Foreign language teachers, in Greece, are university graduates. Literature, language, psychology, pedagogy, methodology and ICT are some of the compulsory subjects in the initial training of Primary and Secondary school teachers at Universities. As regards the qualifications of foreign language teachers to be employed in Higher Education, a post-graduate course in language teaching is required too.

Pre-service training of Foreign Language Teachers

Foreign language teachers, when employed and before starting to work in Primary / Secondary Schools, are obliged to undertake a pre-service course of 100 hours in education / methodology in the 16 Regional Educational Centres (PEK). The course is usually offered by PEK in co-operation with the School Advisers of Foreign Languages.

In-service training of Foreign Language Teachers

In Greece, the in-service training of language teachers is organized by the Regional Training Centres (PEK) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, the Pedagogical Institute (PI) and the Educational Research Centre (KEE). Foreign language teachers can also attend summer courses in the UK through the Socrates II programmes.

8. THE PRIVATE SECTOR

In the private sector, there are more than 8000 private schools (tuition centres) all over Greece, where foreign languages are taught. This

demand for foreign language teaching is a consequence of the development and progress in Greece since the Second World War.

More information:

www.ypepth.gr

www.pi-schools.gr

By: Joseph Chryshochoos (Educational Consultant, the Pedagogical Institute) and Roy Chourdaki (Head of Section, International Organizations), The Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (January 2005)