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The Development and Reform of School Administration in Greece

A Primary School Perspective

Anna Saiti

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to present and investigate the current situation in Greece regarding the management of primary schools and to underline the need for reforms in the field of school administration. The coordination of the relationship between the state and schools is an issue vital for both: primarily for schools, as they require a degree of independence to do their work on behalf of society, justly and properly; and for the state, which wishes to assure itself that the schools are adequately serving the needs of society and providing an efficient and comprehensive system of education. This article assesses the Greek primary school system in terms of avoidable bureaucratic processes and recommends strategies for improving the efficiency of school administration.

KEYWORDS *bureaucracy, centralization, decentralization, development in education, educational administration*

Context

Education is a dynamic and productive system that functions through various entities. Each such entity—and hence education itself—is comprised of different kinds of subsystems such as schools and other educational organizations at various levels and of distinct modes, receiving wide-ranging inputs and producing outputs that affect society either directly or indirectly (Cheng et al., 2002). Education administration and management practices in school units are a major factor in determining the quality of schools, in the effective performance of their teaching workforce, and in satisfactorily meeting the goals of an effective school system (Bush, 1999; Crawford et al., 1994).

Primary education in Greece—as in any country—sets the foundation for the educational system and is determined by various legislations and laws that define in detail all aspects of the education system. In accordance with the 1975 Constitution (article 16), amended in 1986, education in Greece is under the

supreme supervision of the State (Ministry of Education) and is conducted at the state's expense. The authority responsible for education policy has established an interdependence between central and local bodies, one in which central government—as the more senior partner—aims to secure action through local authorities. The Ministry also follows up the implementation of these laws and can intervene if necessary to adapt them to regional variations in practice. It also delegates the responsibility of their implementation to its regional authorities, irrespective of their degree of autonomy. With approximately 92.7 per cent of pupils enrolled in public primary schools (National Statistical Service of Greece, 2001), the public sector is clearly the main provider of education in Greece.

Despite the degree of regional autonomy, the Greek Ministry of Education examines and controls all actions taken by the regional educational organizations through administrative supervision. Hence there is a strong regional dependence on the central administration based in Athens (Prefecture of Attiki). This centralization of power creates a number of problems both for the state and for its citizens. The line of authority runs between bureaucratic sectors, often resulting in a fragmented decision-making process. This administrative dependence can be attributed to the fact that most crucial/meaningful activities—such as the setting of school curricula, the establishment of schools, the appointment of teachers, pupil-related issues, financial issues and the school operations concerning each educational unit—require ministerial approval (Athanasoula-Reppa, 1999; Iordanidis, 2002; Poulis, 2001; Saitis, 1995). Thus, although education reforms have taken place in the last three decades in Greece, education administration remains notably centralized and bureaucratic (Andreou and Papakonstadinou, 1994; Iordanidis, 2002; Kazamias and Kassotakis, 1995; Koutouzis, 2001; Saitis, 2002). Indeed, recent studies suggest that the main disadvantages of the Greek education administration system are the excessive number of education reforms, bureaucratic attitudes, inefficient procedures and the lack of continuity (Andreou and Papakonstadinou, 1994; Kazamias and Kassotakis, 1995; Macrydimitris, 1999; Pagakis, 2002; Saitis, 1997, 2002).

Another factor contributing to the current state of the Greek educational system is that Greek governments have sought efficiency through a plethora of legislative acts, which have precipitated an administrative deadlock in schools rather than an increase in productivity (Andreou and Papantonopoulos, 2001; Koutouzis, 2001; Saitis et al., 1996). Since 1950 attempts have indeed been made to improve the Greek administrative system. It seems, however, that consecutive Greek governments have spent more time amending laws and acts than concentrating on an improvement of the education system itself. Adhering to so many laws creates an enormous burden for education staff and prevents government from improving efficiency in education planning and from bringing the administrative system up to date (Fanariotis, 1999; Kourtis, 1964; Pashiardis, 2001; Pasmazoglou, 1987; Zavlanos, 1998).

The Educational Act 1985 'on the organization and operation of primary and secondary education' reflects the policy-making process in Greece. It was introduced in January 1985, prescribing the establishment of pedagogical institutes. However, it does not address (the lack of) planning and management control, non-productive procedures or the transfer of certain powers, responsibilities and functions from central to other levels of the Prefecture or Local Authorities (Andreou and Papantonopoulos, 2001; Pashiardis, 2001; Poulis, 2001; Saitis, 1995). For example, when the law determines that 'the transfer of a school teacher is implemented only with ministerial approval' the responsible officer from the Ministry of Education must follow up the strict implementation of the law, without having the power to adjust or adapt its implementation according to local needs.

More recently, decentralization measures were implemented through Presidential decree No. 45/1993. However, the Ministry of Education remains the main decision-maker in matters of education. Most documentation still requires the minister's signature, leaving little scope for the delegation of power to lower levels of management. A number of researchers (Bush et al., 1999; Fanariotis, 1999; Kontis and Madas, 1993; Rousis, 1984; Saitis, 2000) have recognized the disadvantages of decentralization, such as a lack of specific control and cohesion resulting in higher expenditure, or how adjusting to a continuously changing economic environment creates difficulties of its own. Conversely, greater decentralization would improve the appropriateness and accuracy of information exchange while enhancing local infrastructure through inter-organizational networks.

Given that public provision of schooling constitutes a large proportion of the government's budget allocation, and that the economic climate in Greece (one of high public debt) itself exerts a political pressure on the education budget, there are enough incentives to give higher consideration to the efficiency of school administration. Of course one must consider the significance of administrative issues within education before underlining the need to confront them from a new perspective.

The study reported in this article shows that, in Greece, little attention has been given to the administrative machinery that underpins the superstructure upon which the efficient organization of the complexities of school management rests. The study suggests a number of recommendations which, if pursued, could enable not only the Greek school system (perhaps, also, that of other countries) to leave a more positive and lasting impression on the society it serves, but also other organs of central and local government.

It is known that the educational system of a nation is closely associated with its contemporary social, political and economic conditions. In attempting to appreciate and evaluate such a system, it is necessary to know something about the conditions that have determined its growth. This article identifies the level of unnecessary administration in primary school education and not to draw conclusions on Greek education in general. Recommendations have been

offered based on the professional opinion of those on the frontline of primary school management. Further research would be needed to validate these professional opinions and also to explore more extensively the link between the bureaucracy in and the efficiency of primary education in particular, and perhaps of Greek education in general. The different political, economic and social interests affecting the administrative system of Greece also require further investigation. The study reported in this article provides potentially valuable insights into the current administrative system of primary education in Greece but does not attempt to determine the conditions that affect the whole education system.

Further analysis and exploration of more numerous and diverse examples from the Greek primary education system would be needed if existing methods for solving administrative problems are to be developed, and existing strategies for rational decision-making in primary education refined or re-drafted.

Purpose

Since a school needs administration of a high calibre to provide an efficient and comprehensive service, and given the need for additional information and improvements in Greek education administration, the objectives of this study were:

- To investigate the relationship between current levels of administration.
- To assess the role played by school administration in the effectiveness of school performance through (a) literature analysis and (2) the O and M technique—a management method that can evaluate the process of school administration in primary education.
- To investigate (through actual case studies¹ whether or not the education system operates within a decentralized administrative system. Moreover, to verify the level of bureaucracy in the case studies and, together with feedback from primary school management, to make a strong case for further investigation into the relationship between centralized bureaucracy and the efficiency of local primary schools.
- To assess the Greek education system in terms of primary school administration and to recommend strategies for improving its efficiency in this field.

Recent Development of the Greek Education System

Social pressures for greater access to education, the need for further economic and cultural development, as well as political demands for the organization of the Greek education system and the re-organization of its structure, led to a

sequence of decisions. Since the mid-1970s a number of legislative measures have been taken in order for the Greek education system to meet more closely the ever-growing cultural, scientific and technological demands of the country. During this period, the majority of education reforms have been associated with changes of government. For the sake of simplicity only the changes made in the Greek education system since 1990 will be examined.

During the period 1990–1993 (Laws 1966/1991; 2009 /1992; 2043/1992) legislation was passed that gave more specific criteria for the selection of educational leaders (Law 2043/1992, Presidential Decree No 45/1993). However, the Law did not specify with any accuracy or clarity the legal limits of the head teacher's powers and responsibilities. Nor did it determine clear criteria for objective selection (Bouradas, 2001; Gerou, 1990; Gournaropoulos and Kodakos, 2003; Koutouzis, 2001; Saitis, 2005).

The most significant changes in the Greek education system for the period 1994–2002 were brought about by the introduction of new laws regarding the supply of teaching staff (both primary and secondary) (Law 2525/1997) and administrative levels in education (Law 2817/2000). Up to 1998 graduates from the Pedagogical Department of Greek Universities and Academies were selected from a list of registered names. After 1998, there were changes in the teaching selection process that remain in force today. Under this new selection system, vacancies are filled by applicants who have all the legal documents needed in accordance with Law No 3027/2002 (article 7) and who also passed the entrance exams² set by Higher Council Selection Staff, known as ASEP. Then, in accordance with Presidential decree 144/1997 (article 2), regional executives announce the list of those selected and also determine the post to which the teachers will be allocated, having taken teachers' preferences into consideration. Teachers that have been appointed in primary (and secondary) education should receive in-service training (Presidential decree No. 45/1999). Currently this takes place on an optional basis.³

Through Law 2817/2000 (the second change in education) regional educational authorities of primary (and secondary) education were established. Thus, an extra educational level in the administrative hierarchy was added. While the effects of this law remain to be seen, a previous study exploring the effectiveness of this administrative level concluded that it is more likely to create new problems such as an increase in administrative costs, delays in decision-making, and communication problems between the Ministry of Education and school units (Saitis, 2002). At present, the structure of the school administrative system consists of four levels: (1) national level (Ministry of Education); (2) regional level (Regional Educational Authorities [REAs⁴]); (3) prefectural level (Prefectural Educational Authorities [PEAs]); and (4) school level.

The period 1990–2004 could not be considered as one of reform for education in Greece since the changes were more a replacement of former educational reforms instigated by previous governments and certainly less an attempt at

modernizing the administrative system for education (Fanariotis, 1999; Macrydimitris, 1999; Poulis, 2001; Saiti, 2003; Saitis, 2002, 2005).

Education reforms have been a major goal of public policy in Greece in recent decades. Indeed the main concern of Greek governments continues to be the introduction of new changes for further improvement of the Greek education system. It is true that it requires continuous modification due to its dynamic nature. It is equally true that frequent changes (without a well-defined education policy) in fact confound attempts to modernize the educational system.

A strongly centralized administrative system can be a significant obstacle to the efficiency of a schooling system. A rational yet balanced devolution of power would help overcome some of the drawbacks of heavy centralization. Rational decentralization requires a concurrence of view between central administration, prefectures and schools. In other words, healthy relationships must be fostered between them based upon mutual confidence and trust. Such a confidence from the State would require its organs to accept a reduction in power.

Research Methodology

In order to investigate the efficiency of education services in Greece, the technique of 'organization and methods', better known as 'O and M', is implemented in the present study. According to Oliver (1975: 8) the term 'O and M' is defined as 'management service, the object of which is to increase the administrative efficiency of an organization by improving procedures, methods and systems communications and controls and organization structure'. Anderson (1980: 1) defined the term as 'a specialist function that attempts to improve the efficiency of clerical procedures and the control of operations within a business'. The main aim of O and M is, through objective investigation, to devise the most efficient means of shaping and improving the organization and of conducting business in order to increase productivity (Kontis and Madas, 1993; Shaw, 1984). The focus of the O and M is on increasing productivity through improvement of the structures that govern work effort (Saner, 1999).

'Management technique' is defined as a particular set of skills that deal with individual problems while 'management services' is a broader term embracing more comprehensive aids to management (Mullins, 1996). Confusions are possible since there is no clear distinction between the meanings of the words 'services' and 'techniques'. The similarities of the concepts involved in management development and organizational efficiency may lead to confusion as diverse connotations are being adopted by organizations and appearing in various publications. 'There are also conflicting opinions on the classification of a range of activities and the most appropriate category for them' (Mullins, 1996: 777).

Using the O and M management technique, the primary purpose of the present article is to consider the administration of the Greek education system by examining four representative examples of the present-day reality in Greek schools, in order to identify the level of bureaucracy that exists in the present primary education system. The examples given in this article can be considered as representative since they deal with school issues of lesser importance that need not require ministerial approval and which could potentially be resolved at a prefectural or regional level.

The technique of O and M does not address specific aspects of efficiency such as problems relating to staff selection or the training of middle and junior managers in the field of human relationships. The emphasis is on analysing existing procedures, conducting scientific observations and interviewing education leaders so as to develop an efficient administrative system not only in terms of its bureaucratic process but also with regard to the re-organization of school legislation, the devolution of power and a reduction in the number of existing administrative levels. The O and M study can be characterized as a 'Method Study' that is 'the process of subjecting work to systematic, critical scrutiny in order to make it more efficient' and 'although the linear representation shows the underlying simplicity of the method, in practice the process is much more one of iteration around the steps with each dominating at a different stage of the investigation' (Institute for Management Services, 2003a: 1). Hence, although the O and M study focuses on specific questions (mainly regarding the steps of an administrative procedure), through asking some key questions such as 'how is it done?' or 'how else could it be done?' and through analysing the responses of the interview subjects (education leaders), it does give the researcher the opportunity to investigate the efficacy of the system (Steele, 1987).

In accordance with the O and M technique, the first task is to embark on a critical examination of the system. Satisfactory answers are required for each of the questions included in Table 1.

A satisfactory answer to question 6 leads to the consideration of alternatives which might also be acceptable and finally to a decision as to which, if any, of the alternatives should apply. The analysis of the questions needs complete data and information related to the procedure of administrative work in the

Table 1 The O and M technique—questions that needed to be asked during the examination of the Greek education system

Question	Answer
(1) What is done?	Action
(2) Where is it done?	Place
(3) Why is it done?	Purpose
(4) When is it done?	Sequence
(5) By whom is it done?	Person
(6) How is it done? Or how else could it be done?	Means, significance

Ministry of Education and other agencies. This was obtained in one of two ways: by studying the laws, presidential decrees, ministerial decisions, documents and reports relative to the organization and function of the two administrative levels; or through discussions with teaching and administrative staff of the PEA and staff of the Ministry of Education.⁵ The discussions consisted of questions about the existing procedures of administrative activities, descriptions of these activities, calculations of the time needed and the number of employees at each managerial level, and how the managerial executives view the general function of the education system. 'There are a variety of techniques that can be used for measuring and assessing the work but the basic procedure of any technique commonly consists of three stages: analysis, measurement and synthesis' (Institute for Management Services, 2003b: 1). For the purposes of this study, it is considered that the assessment of work is based on the understanding, delineation and measurement of activities that are most significant for the achievement of the mission and for customer satisfaction (University of Arizona, 2003). Also for this study, statistical information provided by the National Statistical Service of Greece and the Ministry of Education has been analysed.

Once all the necessary data and information had been gathered, closer scrutiny was given to how work is organized and carried out in the Ministry of Education and PEAs. More specifically, activities carried out in the area of organization were examined.

Example One—Greek Schools: The Establishment of a Public Primary School⁶

According to Law No1966/1991 the establishment of a primary (or secondary) school requires a decision of the Minister of Education, which is published by the National Printing House. According to this Law, the PEAs submit their proposals to the Ministry of Education and then the civil servants of the various departments follow a series of administrative procedures. In particular, the establishment of a primary school must go through the stages⁷ outlined in Figure 1.

Based on the O and M technique an educational manager could ask the following questions:

- *What is done?* Plans to create a new public primary school are evaluated.
- *Where is it done?* In the Ministry of Education.
- *Why is it done?* Because it is required by law under the Act of 1985.
- *Is this task necessary?* 'The level of bureaucracy in education is notably more than that experienced by other systems such as the army' (Zavlanos, 1998: 79). The scale of school systems around the world perhaps necessitates a certain degree bureaucracy. At first sight the

Figure 1 Stages of administration to establish a public primary school

Stage One. Activities within the Prefectural Educational Authorities
• The head of the Education Office or of the Education Division estimates the educational needs of its region (by statistical means) to determine the demand for new schools. • If the result is a shortfall in primary schools, in September or October the appropriate clerk draws up a document proposing the establishment of a primary school. • This proposal is typed and then signed by the director. • The proposal is registered and sent to the appropriate Local Committee of Education.
Stage Two. Activities within local government
• The proposal is registered with the President of the Local Education Committee and the secretary of the committee. • The Local Education Committee meets to decide on the establishment of the primary school. • The minutes are typed and ratified. • The formal proposal is drawn up for the appropriate Prefectural Educational Authority and needs the signature of the President of local government. • The proposal is typed, checked and sent to the appropriate Prefecture Education Authority.
Stage Three. Activities within the Prefectural Educational Authorities
• The proposal is registered with the head of directorate and the appropriate clerk. • A new document for this proposal is drawn up for the Prefectural Education Committee. • This document is typed and requires the signature of the head of the Prefectural Education Committee. • This document is then registered and sent to the Prefectural Education Committee.
Stage Four. Activities within the Prefectural Government
• The document is registered with the Prefectural Government and forwarded to the head of the appropriate unit. • The Prefectural Education Committee meets to make a decision. • The minutes are typed, checked and ratified. • The clerk draws up a new document to record the decision of the Prefectural Council. • This document is processed by the appropriate secretary, then forwarded to the President of the Prefectural Council who then fixes a meeting date for the Prefectural Council. • The meeting convenes to decide whether or not to establish the new school. • The minutes are typed, checked and ratified. • The appropriate clerk writes a report with the decision of the Prefectural Council which is sent to the Prefecture Education Authority.
Stage Five. Activities within the Prefecture Education Authority
• The decision is registered with the head via an appropriate clerk. • An official document is drawn up for the Ministry of Education, requiring the signature of the head of the Prefectural Education Committee. • This document is typed, registered and sent to the Ministry of Education.
Stage Six. Activities within the Ministry of Education
• The document is registered by the Ministry of Education and then referred to a clerk. • The document is seen by the director of the appropriate sub-division and by the chief of section, for recommendations. • The clerk compiles a file with recommendations for the Minister. • These recommendations pass up through the Hierarchy of the Ministry of Education for the Minister's approval. • The clerk draws up and types the ministerial decision. • This is also fed through the hierarchy for the Minister's signature. • A clerk at the Ministry of Education registers the document and the approval is sent to the Ministry of Finance (MF).
Stage Seven. Activities within the Ministry of Finance (MF)
• The approval is registered by the MF and passed on to the appropriate sub-division, Section and clerk. • The clerk investigates the expenses involved. • The resulting expense report is fed through the hierarchy for the minister's signature. • The clerk registers the expense report and sends it to Ministry of Education.
Stage Eight. Activities within the Ministry of Education.
• The clerk of the appropriate section receives the report. • The report awaits the signature of the head of the appropriate section. • The signed report is registered by the Ministry of Education and an usher takes it to the National Printing House (NPH).
Stage Nine. Activities within the NPH
• At the appropriate sub-division a clerk registers the report. • The ministerial decision of the Ministry of Education and MF is published in the Official Government Gazette.
Stage Ten. Activities within the Ministry of Education
• The appropriate clerk of the Ministry of Education records the Ministerial decision. • The ministerial decision is brought to the attention of the Prefectural Education Authorities.

Minister's approval could be considered as a necessity in the sense that the Ministry of Education is responsible for national education policy and so it should be in control of and co-ordinate all school activities. However, this administrative work of the Ministry of Education does not seem to contribute to the provision of supervision or the development of education policy. It is simply an 'extension' of the administrative procedure for the establishment of new school institutions. On this point, many education leaders with more than 30 years' experience in education expressed this major concern with regard to administrative centralization:

All governments in our country are talking in favour of administrative decentralisation. However, in practice, most of the administrative procedures are stuck in education Acts of 1834. (Head of an Education Office)⁸

Indeed, ministerial approval was introduced in the 19th century (Law 6/18 February 1834) and was probably suitable for the then-prevailing form of government. However, at the present time, where the functions of State are many and the prefectures are complex organizations, this Act of education administration perhaps is not appropriate. A PEA's functions and goals demand flexible and effective management.

- *Where else should it be done?* There are strong sentiments among experienced education professionals that the prefectures, as self-governing organizations, should be solely responsible for the creation of primary and secondary education schools. They envisage a prefectural government which would not only decide on the founding of new schools but also oversee their foundation. It may be argued that ministerial approval is needed to offset the 'overstepping of one's authority' within the prefectures but there are no specific examples to confirm whether this might have happened. A well-defined devolution of authority and responsibility towards the PEAs, together with an effective control mechanism, could be a safeguard against excessive administration. The Ministry of Education has of course the right to oversee the proper use of all funds. The appropriate agent for the task is prefectural management.

Example Two—Greek Schools: Transfer of a School Teacher

According to law 1824/1988 (articles 5 and 7) the Minister of Education may allow the transfer of a school teacher from one educational sector to another, provided there is a vacancy available. Moreover, the transfer of a school teacher into positions in the public sector is permitted only when there is an agreement of the relevant administration of the central organs in the Ministry of Education, which as a consequence experiences a disproportionate expansion

of service units and a rise in administrative costs. A transfer of a teacher means the permanent re-location of a teacher from an educational unit of one sector to that of another, or to the broader public sector, and is permissible only when a vacant position of the same rank becomes available. Thus if, for example, an educator wants to be transferred from primary education to secondary, they have to pass through the administrative stages outlined in Figure 2.

Based on the O and M technique an educational manager could ask the following questions:

- *What is done?* The transfer of a school teacher from one educational sector to another. For example a primary school teacher with a degree in mathematics to be transferred to a school in secondary education as

Figure 2 Stages of administration for transfer of a school teacher

Stage One. Activities within the school
• The school teacher submits the application. • The document is signed by the school principal and is sent to the appropriate Education Office.
Stage Two. Activities within the Education Office
• The application is registered by the appropriate clerk and signed by the head of the Education Office. • An official document is then drawn up for the Ministry of Education and signed by the head of the Education Office. • This document is then typed, registered and sent to the Ministry of Education.
Stage Three. Activities within the Ministry of Education
• The document is registered by the Ministry of Education. • It then passes to the clerk via the director of the appropriate sub-division and the chief of section for recommendations. • The clerk compiles a case file and forwards it with the report to Central Council of Primary Education, known in Greek as KYSPE. • The document is sent to Central Council of Primary Education where the Prefectural Education Committee convenes for a decision. • The minutes are typed, checked and ratified. • The document is sent to the clerk of the appropriate division. • The clerk draws up and types a new document with the decision, which requires the director's signature. • This document, together with the original proposal, is sent to the appropriate division of secondary education. • The clerk receives the file and forwards it to Central Council of Secondary Education, known in Greek as KYSDE. • There is a meeting of the Central Council of Secondary Education in order to reach a decision. • The minutes are typed, checked and ratified. • The decision is forwarded to the clerk of the appropriate division. • The clerk draws up and types a new document with the decision. • It is then passed through the hierarchy of the Ministry of Education for the Minister's approval and signature. • The document is returned to the appropriate division/department. • The appropriate clerk of the Ministry of Education registers the document. • The school teacher is notified of the ministerial decision, as is the Education Office to which they belong.

a mathematician.

- *Where is it done?* In the Ministry of Education.
- *Why is it done?* Perhaps a teacher has gained further qualifications and wishes to aspire to a new challenge.
- *Is this task necessary?* Again, closer scrutiny of the administrative work of the Ministry of Education shows that ministry employees deal mainly with routine administrative procedures and not with the implementation of educational policy. However, such procedures are required by law 1828/1988 (articles 5 and 7).
- *How else should it be done?* Under a more decentralized system of school administration the transfer of a teacher could be sanctioned simply with the agreement of the regional councils for both primary and secondary education within the same prefecture, thus avoiding the administration described above. Central government could take steps to simplify their administrative procedures and also delegate certain powers to the regional authorities. For, in the words of a number of education leaders with over thirty years' experience in education:

We cannot talk about real administrative decentralisation while all educational matters are solved only at the ministry level . . . (Head of an Education Office)⁹

Example Three—Greek Schools: Temporary Detachment of an Educator

Under certain conditions, and only on special occasions to cover for instances such as ill-health, bereavement or other domestic crises, it is possible for primary (and secondary) teachers to become detached, according to law 1566/1985 (articles 16 and 54), and transferred to another prefecture after good justification by the relevant central council and after the ministerial decision of the minister of education. The 'detachment of an educator' is the temporary displacement of the educator from the school to which he/she was originally allocated by the Ministry of Education to a school of another prefecture or into the broader public sector. In order for the primary or secondary school teacher to be granted a detachment for the reasons mentioned above, they must pass through the administrative steps outlined in Figure 3.

Based on the O and M technique an educational manager could ask the following questions:

- *What is done?* The temporary detachment of an educator from the school of one prefecture to the school of another.
- *Where is it done?* In the Ministry of Education.
- *Why is it done?* It is required by law under Act 1566/1985.
- *Is this task necessary?* The organizational system is based more on the

Figure 3 Administrative stages for the temporary detachment of an educator

Stage One. Activities within the school
• The application is submitted by the school teacher. • The document is signed by the school principal and sent to the appropriate Education Office.
Stage Two. Activities within Education Office
• The application is registered by the appropriate clerk and brought to the head of the Education Office's attention. • An official document is drawn up for the Ministry of Education and signed by the Head of the Education Office. • This document is typed, registered and sent to the Ministry of Education.
Stage Three. Activities within the Ministry of Education
• The document is registered by the Ministry of Education and then referred to a clerk. • The document then passes to the director of the appropriate sub-division, and to the chief of section for recommendations, and then to another clerk. • The clerk compiles a file with recommendations and forwards it to Central Council of Primary Education. • At the Central Council of Primary Education the Prefectural Education Committee convenes for a decision. • The minutes are typed, checked and ratified. • These minutes are forwarded to the clerk of the appropriate division. • The clerk draws up and types the formal decision. • It is then fed through the hierarchy of the Ministry of Education for the Minister's approval and signature. • The document is returned to the appropriate division/department. • The document is processed by the appropriate clerk of the Ministry of Education. • The school teacher is notified of the ministerial decision, as is the Education Office to which they belong.

procedure itself and less on the context of the 'rules'. Hence this administrative work of the Ministry of Education may not contribute to the development of educational policy.

- *How else should it be done?* As self-governing organizations, the prefectures and the regional councils already constitute an appropriate authorising agent for the detachment of teachers. The regional educational councils could examine and decide accordingly whether or not the detachment should take place. Thus central government would be less burdened by mundane tasks and have more resources available to address issues of educational policy itself. Also, the regional administration authorities are naturally more in tune with the needs of their teachers and the problems faced by local school units.

Example Four—Greek Schools: Special Leave of Teachers with a Dual Role

Suppose that a teacher of primary education with a dual role requests special leave from their school for a particular reason. For example, they are also a football referee and are called upon to referee a match either elsewhere in

Greece or abroad. Without a legislative framework for such leave, the teacher must submit an application and all necessary certificates to the Ministry of Education (to the Central Council for Primary Education) through the appropriate school authority. More particularly, this administrative work has to pass through the steps outlined in Figure 4.

Based on the O and M technique an educational manager could ask the following questions:

- *What is done?* A teacher's request for leave is assessed.
- *Where is it done?* In the Ministry of Education.
- *Why is it done?* It is required by law.
- *Is this task necessary?* Although the present Greek educational system includes a number of 'new' features, the system is essentially based on previous systems characterized by a concentration of power and a lack of commitment on the part of educational management at all levels. Indeed, as an education leader has mentioned in example one of the present study, many educational administrative activities are still based on a Law of 1834. Faced with a continually changing society, the Greek education system should be bringing educational and managerial needs closer together. The legislative framework ought to be updated to reflect present needs. Currently the legislator's expectations of education administration go no further than the definitions of managerial activities and do not touch upon the 'real' authority issues

Figure 4 Administrative stages for granting special leave to teachers with a dual role

Stage One. Activities within the school
• The teacher submits the application which is registered by the primary school. • The school principal or a deputy draws up an official document. • This is typed, signed by the school principal and sent to the appropriate Education Office.
Stage Two. Activities within the Education Office
• The document is registered at the Education Office and forwarded to the head of the Education Office. • The appropriate clerk draws up a separate official document for the Ministry of Education. • This document is fed through the hierarchy for the signature of the head of the Education Office. • The formal request is typed and sent to the Ministry of Education together with the teacher's application and all relevant certificates.
Stage Three: Activities within the Ministry of Education
• The application file is registered by a clerk of the Ministry of Education. • It is forwarded to the appropriate division/department. • An appropriate clerk checks all the necessary documents are present and correctly filled. • A clerk draws up and types another formal document recording the decision. • This is fed through the hierarchy for the minister's signature. • The decision is returned to the appropriate division and the appropriate clerk. • The school teacher is notified of the ministerial decision, as is the Education Office to which they belong.

of the various bodies. It is only natural that central government assumes responsibility for executing central directives and for implementing the relevant laws but certain decisions (both routine and substantive), which it currently makes can be determined more locally.

- *How else should it be done?* Given that the educational directors have the power to give permission to school teachers to be absent from school when such leave is just for a few days, clearly the decision to grant such leave to a teacher should be a task for the appropriate educational director. Moreover the procedure would be shorter and the prefectural educational officer would have greater autonomy over their own activities.

It should be noted that the above examples are typical of primary schools adhering to the Greek administrative system and that the same process can be applied to many other school scenarios for analysis, such as appointing school cleaners, appointing school gardeners, late pupil enrolment, sabbatical leave of a teacher, etc.

Conclusion

Analysis of the above case studies from the Greek primary educational system highlighted a number of common administrative features:

- PEAs act as the middle management of the Greek administrative system and not as an independent organization for a specific educational area since many school affairs (including the four examples mentioned above) demand ministerial approval. This seems contrary to the spirit of the declaration in article 101 of the Greek constitution: 'the State administration is organized according to the principle of decentralization'. In view of this, regional and prefectural authorities should be granted the authority necessary to fulfil those aspects of public service better suited to regional/local control.

Developments between central government and local authorities in Greece since the mid-1970s have been leaning towards centralization based on an increasingly autonomous central control and the erosion of the prefectural or local authorities' independent financial base. Indeed, in practice, they need to take permission from the central educational authorities for routine matters such as those described above. Although the centralization of power in the Ministry of Education may secure homogeneity in the implementation of the educational policy and coordinate the local authorities (Bush, 1995; Bush and Bell, 2002; Bush et al., 1999; Fanariotis, 1999) the lack of prefectural or regional independence in school decision-making leaves the educators largely tied up with purely administrative issues, with

less time available to address the more pressing priorities of school management.

- The responsibility for the existing procedures within the Greek administrative system lies with parliament, as such procedures are required by law. Since the above case studies are typical of schools adhering to the Greek administrative system, there is clearly a gap between the expectations of the legislative framework and the reality, in which educational management bodies are solely called upon to ensure the implementation of all relevant laws but decisions (both routine and substantive) are determined by governing bodies and authorities. From one side the educational act creates regional administrative authorities in education so as to promote a radical decentralization, and from the other side almost all educational matters demand ministerial approval. Thus, there is a clash between the present legislative framework and the way administrative procedures in primary education are actually followed.
- The numerous sub-divisions and departments within Greek public administration causes delays in educational affairs, occupying many employees in day-to-day routine duties and creating obstacles that hinder the socio-economic development of the country (Andreou and Papakonstadinou, 1994; Pepelasis, 1999; Poulis, 2000). Moreover, the organizational structure of the Greek school system is hierarchical, with managerial bodies assuming the responsibility for executing central directives and managing the school unit.

In practical terms, the issues raised by the above analysis, which typify the Greek education administrative system, are: centralization, bureaucratization, and the gap between the present (theoretical) legislative framework and its practical implementation.

In Greece, the centralization of education administration establishes an expectation of dependency, of reciprocal activity. This dependence is a source of constraint upon an organization but at the same time an organization can act to loosen those constraints. Among the principal arguments for educational centralization is the establishment of consistent quality in policy, programmes and activities (Hanson, 1998; Weiler, 1993; Winkler, 1993). Decentralization on the other hand is a dynamic process and can be defined as the transfer of power, responsibilities and various functions from a central body to different levels of a prefecture or local authorities—an improved process based on accurate knowledge of local needs and circumstances, giving lower levels of the education system hierarchy substantive authority to participate in local decision-making. The local authorities would only be subject to local political constraints. Despite the advantages of a decentralized system, though, there are inevitable difficulties in fulfilling the above expectations (Cummings, 1995; Grosskopf and Moutray, 2001; Parry, 1997). In reality, there is no educational

system in the world that has adopted true decentralization since in the educational process a balance between degrees of centralization and decentralization must be found. Thus, for the particular case of Greece the question is to what extent central government uses its power and to what extent prefecture or local authorities accept/resist this control. A critical issue of power that facilitates education decentralization is whether or not members of regional or local authorities 'are prepared to put in the time and energy necessary to make the reform work. If the local communities distrust, do not take seriously, do not participate in, or do not want to assume the added responsibility, then the opportunity for successful change through decentralization is seriously limited' (Hanson, 1998: 116). The degree of willingness to accept a central control may vary as not all local authorities resist central intervention. Hence, in order for any decentralization reform to be successful, there must be a mutual acceptance of central and regional or local authorities.

It is evident though that the Greek educational system had significant influences on political and educational policy from the already dominant European powers (e.g. France, Germany) during the early years of the Greek State (Persianis, 1998). The significant influence of Germany on political and educational policy from 1833 to 1862 (which had a highly centralized system) clearly intended to promote a strong central government in Greece. Indeed the Greek State has sought to retain an important place in the education system ever since, establishing a concentration of power and a focus on task achievement as the main features of the Greek school system. In societies where there is a hierarchical authority structure (Greece, South Africa, Slovenia) the devolution of such power through regional or local management is hard to achieve (Dimmock and Walker, 2000, 2003). Despite this, and for a variety of reasons, many countries have made attempts at administrative decentralization and at devolving increasing degrees of decision-making to lower levels of the system (Calabrese and Zepeda, 1999; Grosskopf and Moutray, 2001; Sayed, 2000; Simkins, 2000; Zifcak, 2000). Clearly, successful decentralization requires a balance between responsibilities of central administration and functions given to regional or local education authorities, or in other words, a marginalization of centralization.

A comprehensive review of literature on educational administration revealed that many educational researchers (Bush, 2003; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004; Leithwood, 2001; Lumby, 2003) have discussed the issue of shared leadership by giving emphasis mainly to the participation of educators in the decision-making process. For example, Harris (2004: 14) has argued that: 'in hierarchical systems and structures, distributed leadership is characterized as a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working together'. However, since distributed leadership is more a way of managing an organization and less so a technique or practice (Bennett et al., 2003), such collaboration can be put in a broader context. Within this frame, a collaborative culture is important for: sharing a common vision; the balanced delegation of

responsibilities; allowing people to adopt their own initiatives in response to the needs of the school unit; equal involvement in the decision-making process; instilling confidence and encouragement at all levels; and helping the organization to retain authority and discipline.

With particular reference to bureaucracy, Weber was the first who projected an 'ideal-typical' model of bureaucracy to designate the social institution of a permanent professional corps of officialdom organized in hierarchy and applying impersonal uniform norms to the handling of individual cases under a rule of law. 'Bureaucracy and bureaucrats' are aggressive words not only within a country but also between different countries (Bell and Bush, 2003; Betham, 1996; Serafentinidou, 2003; Tzahili, 2000). The term 'bureaucracy' in Greek public administration and in literature in general is a word employed in a great variety of ways so one must be wary of the context in which it is used. Bureaucracy is a form of structure that can be found in many large-scale organizations. It exists because of the need to solve tangible problems and hence favours the development of the organization (Dugherty and Corse, 1996; Serafentinidou, 2003; Tzahili, 2000). However, the term has attracted common critical connotations of 'red tape' that binds standardization with inefficiency and rigidity.

The formulation of strict authority and the use of non-professional oriented bureaucracy conceal defects in operations, obstruct the flow of information and thus impede effective management (Morrow, 1998; Sayed, 2000; Simkins, 2000, 2005). Tight supervision and control over workers leads to a decline in efficiency since workers tend to resist by reducing their amount of work. Formal control and rules as well as the rigidity of the system will not furnish strong incentives to exert effort and achieve excellent performance (Brewer, 1996; Chubb and Moe, 1990).

Problems that derive from a highly administrative system (such as the Greek one) may have a negative impact on the decision-making process such as delays in decisions and the consumption of human and material resources for the implementation of educational policy. Another problem that perhaps derives from heavy administration lies in network-communication. Too many hierarchical levels in public administration, and hence in education, create problems in the relaying of messages. If we consider that 'decision-making is implemented through a combination of bureaucratic rules and professional discretion and judgement' (Simkins, 2000: 321), then any message will take time to reach its destination and there will be room for misunderstandings between levels. We may further consider that 'traditional command and control organizations such as a hierarchy/bureaucracy are unable to cope with the informational demands of ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty' (Jackson and Stainsby, 2000: 12). Leadership is related to motivation, interpersonal behavior and the process of communication (Jackson and Stainsby, 2000; Saiti, 2003; Simkins, 2000). In the managerial process, school managerial bodies play a key role in the creation of knowledge since their main requirement is to

become effective networking agents 'both to promote the school's interests within the local system and to collaborate productively in a partnership mode with their peers' (Glatter, 2003: 235–6). Localized knowledge increases both efficiency and effectiveness and improves problem-solving. But multiple hierarchical levels have a tendency for formal authoritative relations and certainly do not enjoy an atmosphere of reciprocity and of free-flowing information (Jackson and Stainsby, 2000). Knowledge and the provision of appropriate information, however, are the bridge between the vision of the ideal scenario and the reality. In this way, informed decisions can be made for the proper and effective development of any system.

Successful management demands the clarification of goals and implementation of collaborative solutions. Of course the importance of networking and collaboration is not a new phenomenon in the educational process. 'They alone do not establish authority and accountability regarding performance but both are essential elements for sustained implementation' (Fullan, 2005: 84). Also, a key strategic point for educational managers is the level of organization communication since organizational knowledge has been found to play a significant role in effective communication (Simkins, 2005).

Over the last three decades, due to the increasing complexity of the public sector and the demand for effective administration, bureaucracy in Greece has grown considerably. A lack of attention to informal networks and open communications is the main reason why Greek public organizations are neither flexible nor fluid (Macrydimitris, 1999; Saitis, 1997; Zavlanos, 1982). The latter consideration suggests the need for a reorganization of the strongly centralized Greek civil service—a view being increasingly voiced (Fanariotis, 1999; Hantzipanteli, 1999; Macrydimitris, 1996, 1999; Michopoulos, 1993; Poulis, 2000; Saiti, 2003; Saitis, 2005).

If bureaucracy is used in an efficient way then it has a positive outcome in the organization's performance, such as a uniformity in the performance of every task and in reaching decisions through a consistent system of explicit rules and regulations which enables the co-ordination of activities and responsibilities of each member of the organization (Dougherty and Corse, 1995). But the Greek administrative system of education has become a bureaucracy in the negative sense—one of a narrow hierarchy, centralization and formalization, and not in the sense that links bureaucracy with innovation and competence.

The problem of striking a balance between hierarchical levels and controls is acute for large organizations (Simkins, 2000). Dougherty and Corse (1995: 56) pointed out that 'managers of large bureaucratic organizations are caught in a paradox: they must innovate and maintain bureaucratic efficiency but in theory the two do not mix'. Hence, the question that arises is how to deal with it. The answer is that only by locating the problem in a realistic context can some useful guidelines be formulated. As Eaton Baier et al. (1996: 165) identified:

Many problems in implementation might be avoided if policy makers made less ambiguous policies and designed simple procedures that protected their intentions from the inadequacies and self-interest of administrative agencies. Rather than expecting to change the character of administrative organizations, we might design strategic policies, quasi-price systems, and incentive contracts that are likely to lead to desired ends even when executed by administrative organizations that are neither perfect nor neutral.

Since 1950 many attempts have been made by policy makers to modernize the Greek administrative system. In response to the recent legislative reforms in Greek education, the efforts of the central administration towards the objective and unbiased devolution of power are evident. However, in practical terms the efficiency of these reforms is rather doubtful since the central administration did not allocate substantive activities to the school managerial bodies. As a result, they have not produced initiatives that take the school closer to the security of a dynamic leadership and hence in forming the school as an ongoing organization. Moreover, Greek educational reforms lack the coordination necessary to achieve long-term goals—they are not part of a national strategic management plan but rather the fruit of individual expectations, views and/or values (Pepelasis, 1999; Saiti, 2003; Saitis, 2002). The sheer number of Laws governing education administration creates an enormous burden of work for the officials, and prevents the government from implementing efficient education planning and from modernizing the administrative system. However, there has to be a clear and consistent focus on achieving results both in the short and long term. Short-term results help success to breed success; long-term results are important in creating an enduring culture of continuous improvement in the education system. The two are connected, as Schmoker (1999: 67) points out: 'current organizational habits that avoid focusing on short term measurable gains are the major obstacles impeding not only isolated improvements but also system-wide transformation. Palpable gains are the key to leveraging change in the system . . . '.

Proposals and Implications

Education administration has a critical role for every country as it provides for a competitive advantage and thus is viewed as a strong public benefit, essential to the broader public welfare. Education systems in all parts of the world remain dynamic. Efforts are being made (even in the most developed countries) to design new educational systems in ways that minimize and discourage ineffectiveness. There is a growing recognition in many countries, especially in those with heavily centralized administrations, that alternative forms of educational management are necessary to affect a positive change in performance. The proposals below have been drafted in view of the Greek case studies previously discussed and aim to improve efficacy in education administration. In this context, Greece is encouraged to aspire to the following.

First, a strongly centralized administration is clearly not viable, not only in the Greek system but in any education system, since it creates difficulties in effective leadership. We are currently seeing a shift towards decentralized structures especially in countries that follow the strongly administrative model such as Greece and South Africa. Some consider the appropriateness of centralization or decentralization to be a matter of striking the right balance. 'A decentralized organisation should function as parts of a whole rather than simply independent parts' (Hasnson, 1998: 127). The rational devolution of power to regional or prefecture authorities would facilitate a more efficient and productive implementation of education policy and promote accountability through clearly defined responsibilities and more appropriately prescribed tasks. A strong intersystem of collaboration and alliances, a partnership between schools, prefectural authorities and the state based on mutual confidence and trust and collaborative initiatives are needed to make this sense of balance work in Greece and so move forward with policy development. The emphasis on administrative decentralization is based on the market-led assumption that local governments (and hence prefectures) know and understand their needs better than does central government and they help the public to overcome the physical inaccessibility of central government. 'Put positively, when local leaders do connect with larger system purposes they are much more effective within their own organisations and certainly across organisations when they step out' (Fullan, 2005: 90).

Second, the problem of striking a balance between hierarchical levels and controls remains acute for large systems such as education. Bureaucratic structure can contribute to persistent and effective operation only if it is professionally orientated bureaucracy in the sense that the State plays a recessive role where tangible problems need to be solved. Let us consider that (1) top-heavy bureaucracy is inefficient and focuses on 'process' rather than on 'outcomes', (2) greater accountability interaction is the new dynamic in the school community relations (Harris, 2004; Simkins, 2005), (3) 'the replacement of a bureau-professional organisational order in education by a managerial one is dangerous' (Simkins, 2000: 330), and that (4) for the particular case of education in Greece, a burdensome administration is certainly a drawback of the system. Then, educational planners could gradually change the Greek organizational culture by creating fewer hierarchical levels and a 'marginalized' bureaucracy within specific boundaries. The strong state bureaucracy could gradually be eliminated and automatically the negative outcomes would be reduced and the positives would be reinforced. The policy-making process for a less administrative bureaucracy would give emphasis to information channels and communication to facilitate decision-making policy. The principle 'promotion of good leadership in all levels of the system is certainly better for everyone' and 'what goes around comes around' applies to go good things as well as bad (Fullan, 2005: 96).

Third, in this study, the proposition that heavy administration in Greece has limited instrumentalities in educational organizations and restricts the abilities

of resources, both human and material, is accepted. Any measure of improvement for administrative action 'cannot come only with the passing of laws or signing decrees. Like most types of reform it is built rather than created' (Hanson, 1998: 121). The implementation of the above proposals, though, would be problematic if the policy-makers could not specify clearly their objectives so as to build upon (instead of create) a proper educational administrative system. Many problems in implementation might be avoided if policy-makers strived to link policy and action through a strategic policy with clear, but most of all consistent, objectives and attitudes. The plethora of laws on education related to school affairs should be replaced by a new education reform introducing simpler administrative procedures that protect the system from inadequacies, strengthen the incentives and the capabilities of all groups involved in the education system, and thus ensure better working practices. The education acts must endure for the long-term and certainly not be replaced as soon as there is a change in political power. In terms of time frame, a system cannot be changed immediately but gradually. This is particularly true of a country like Greece, which has a tradition of bureaucracy. It is not going to be instantly responsive to a more fluid and distributed approach to leadership. The existing system must first develop it-self—new roles learned, communication patterns reversed, planning procedure revised, and so forth (Fullan, 2005; Hanson, 1998; Harris, 2004).

This research supports the view that the Greek primary education authorities need to recognize that careful design and planning of organizational structures, greater flexibility, devolution of power and political agreement on the basic issues of implementation are key determinants for the development and growth of a country.

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Notes

1. Although it is impossible to mention and analyse all the schools in Greece, it is suspected that many schools follow a similar bureaucratic process and that this will be reflected by those included in the present study.
2. The written subjects in such exams are determined by the Ministry of Education and by the Ministry of Interior and Decentralisation.
3. There are two types of in-service training: (1) a two-year course offered by teacher training colleges, for nursery and primary school teachers; and (2) seminars of short duration (forty hours) on specific subjects of general interest, which are organized by the regional centres for in-service training, known in Greek as *Periferiaka Ekpaidevtika Kentra* (PEK).
4. This administrative level started functioning only recently and it remains unclear whether it will operate as a centralized organization or as a decentralized

- mechanism of the State (Poulis, 2000). It has been established in order to help, directly or indirectly, the Ministry of Education so as to accomplish its mission. It is the formal channel of communication between the central and prefecture authorities. The degree of their involvement depends on the balance of administrative power.
5. The data for the calculation of the administrative activities, time spent and use of the work force were generated by interviewing Heads of the Education Offices and Directorates of Primary Education. It must be noted that Greek public primary schools function as public services and follow the same administrative procedures.
 6. The same process can be applied to establish a public secondary school.
 7. It should be noted that the REAs are not included in the present administrative process because, as yet, there is no clarification from the government of their duties or their functioning.
 8. This is a statement drawn from the interview with heads of Education Offices.
 9. This is a statement drawn from the interview with heads of Education Offices.

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