

## Social Cohesion and Development

Vol 11, No 1 (2016)



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doi: [10.12681/scad.10854](https://doi.org/10.12681/scad.10854)

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### To cite this article:

Kantzara, V. (2016). Education in Conditions of Crisis in Greece: An Empirical Exploration (2000-2013). *Social Cohesion and Development*, 11(1), 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.12681/scad.10854>

# Education in Conditions of Crisis in Greece: An Empirical Exploration (2000-2013)

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## Η εκπαίδευση σε συνθήκες κρίσης στην Ελλάδα: Μια εμπειρική διερεύνηση (2000-2013)

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### ABSTRACT

The article aims at exploring the ramification of the crisis on education in terms of access to education, educational attainment of the population, funding, schools, teachers and students. These and other aspects of education are examined on basis of statistical data that has been collected and published by international agencies and Greek sources. In order to analyse fluctuations and trends, the data examined covers a period before and after the onset of the crisis (in 2009), namely from 2000 to 2013. In addition, socio-political developments and educational policy are taken into consideration, for they form the context in which education operates. The concept guiding this endeavour is equity; it is defined normatively as equality of opportunity and meritocracy, the two principles upon which social institutions function in a democratic society. The results point to differences in the ways education has been affected by the crisis: at micro and meso level, for example, the funding, the school units and the education personnel have been reduced; at macro level, access to education and education attainment continues to rise, but to a lesser degree than before the onset of the crisis.

**KEY WORDS:** Greece, crisis, education, statistical data, funding, school units, education personnel, pupils, access to education, education attainment.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο αυτό αποσκοπεί στη διερεύνηση των επιπτώσεων της κρίσης στην εκπαίδευση, εξετάζοντας την πρόσβαση, την αποφοίτηση, τη χρηματοδότηση, τα σχολεία, τους εκπαιδευτικούς και τους σπουδαστές. Αυτές και άλλες πλευρές της εκπαίδευσης εξετάζονται στη βάση στατιστικών δεδομένων, τα οποία συλλέγονται και εκδίδονται από διεθνείς οργανισμούς και Ελληνικές πηγές. Προκειμένου να διερευνηθούν διακυμάνσεις και τάσεις, τα δεδομένα που εξετάζονται καλύπτουν τη χρονική περίοδο πριν και μετά την εκδήλωση της κρίσης από το 2000-2013. Επιπρόσθετα εξετάζονται σε γενικές γραμμές, οι κοινωνικοπολιτικές εξελίξεις και η εκπαιδευτική πολιτική, καθώς αποτελούν το πλαίσιο στο οποίο η εκπαίδευση επιτελεί το έργο της. Έχοντας ως αφετηρία την έννοια της ισότητας, οριζόμενης κανονιστικά, ως ισότητα των ευκαιριών και αξιοκρατία, τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας δείχνουν τους διαφορετικούς τρόπους με τους οποίους η εκπαίδευση έχει επηρεαστεί από την κρίση.: σε μικρό και μεσαίο επίπεδο ανάλυσης, η χρηματοδότηση, τα σχολικά κτίρια και οι εκπαιδευτικοί έχουν υποστεί μείωση. Σε ένα μακροεπίπεδο ανάλυσης, η εκπαίδευση με όρους πρόσβασης και απόκτησης τίτλων σπουδών συνεχίζει να αυξάνεται, αλλά σε βραδύτερο ρυθμό απ' ό,τι πριν την εκδήλωση της κρίσης.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ελλάδα, κρίση, εκπαίδευση, στατιστικά, πρόσβαση, αποφοίτηση, χρηματοδότηση, σχολεία, εκπαιδευτικοί, σπουδαστές.

## Introduction\*

This article aims at exploring the ramifications of the crisis on education in terms of access education, education attainment, funding, schools, teachers, and students. These and other aspects of education are examined on basis of statistical data that has been collected and published by international agencies and Greek sources. In order to analyse fluctuations and trends, the data examined covers a period before and after the onset of the crisis (in 2009), namely from 2000 to 2013<sup>1</sup>. In addition, socio-political developments and educational policy are taken into consideration, for they form the context in which education operates.

The international financial crisis followed the bankruptcy of the private bank Lehman Brothers, in the United States of America, in 2008 and started having an effect in Greece a year later in 2009. Since then, Greece has entered a phase of continuous economic recession, characterised by massive unemployment (27,5% in 2013 according to Eurostat) and rising poverty for millions of people (more than 23% in 2013). Rising existential insecurity, the continuous economic instability, and not only a feeling but a condition of powerlessness for millions of people, characterise social life having various consequences that have to be studied.

The institution of education, as other institutions, has been affected by the crisis, both in direct and indirect ways. The government's main strategy to deal with the crisis was adopting 'austerity' measures<sup>2</sup>, meaning severe 'cuts' in public spending. This together with the rising level of unemployment, the enormous 'cuts' in salaries and pensions and the increased taxation have had stark effects on people's conditions of life. This, in turn, has affected many children, as it has been reported that they suffer from lack of sufficient nutrition, clothing, and may miss school books and materials, to name only a few of the effects. It is worth noting here that civil society has reacted immediately, especially after 2011, by setting up extensive solidarity networks in order to provide help and relief both to children and their families (see Kantzara, 2014, 2015; Tziantzi, 2015).

Except from a few reports based on data, research and study on the ramifications of the crisis on education are, to my knowledge at the moment of writing, rudimentary. There is, in general, a hesitation to deal with a phenomenon that takes place at macro, meso and micro-level of society at the same time. Concepts and theoretical frameworks even in the existing publications seem to centre on the notion of 'lack', 'austerity', impoverishment and their effects on people's life.

The starting theoretical point of this research is that the relation of education to society, the subject matter of sociology of education, is multifaceted and complex. This text forms an attempt to exploring the ways as well as the degree to which education has been affected by the crisis in terms of indicators for which there is statistical information. The data is selected on the basis of having a direct relation with aspects of education, including data that bear on the socio-political context.

In this endeavour, the concept employed, mostly in a latent sense, is equity. Equity is a complex concept; it is usually employed in terms of *equality of opportunity and meritocracy* (see also Callinicos, 2000); these connotations, especially the term equality of opportunity is further defined as access to and success in education. Access to education can be measured, for example, by the number of student enrolment and drop-out. Success in education is concluded by the number of students, who completed their studies and have acquired an educational title; this process is denoted by the term educational attainment. The idea behind 'access to and success in

education' that is promoted by international organisations, including the European Union (and handled thus in the collection of data by Eurostat) is that the higher the educational attainment, especially in tertiary education, the higher level of equity in a country for the various categories of the people comprising the population. The data collected and published contains in the same table two distinct population categories, age and gender; in our presentation we shall take them into consideration.

The question that often arises in such endeavours is whether an education system retains its equity characteristics, when it operates in conditions of crisis. The question is difficult to answer without taking into account the human factor, that is, the combined efforts of people in education (teachers, students, parents), civil society organisations, the government and others and examine effects separately and combined. I return to this point below in the concluding section of the article.

The text that follows is structured as follow: the next section refers to the socioeconomic and political context, followed by population indicators related to education attainment; the discussion of main measures of the educational policy comes next followed by the examination of educational indicators related to the education system and its people; the article closes with notes and conclusions.

## 1. Greece: Socioeconomic and Political Context

**T**he onset of the crisis had an impact on political life. At least three different governments, mostly conservative, were formed between 2009 and 2012; the fourth government that was formed after the election in January 2015 was for the first time in the Greek history, a coalition of left to centrum political parties.

From 2009 and onwards, the Greek governments dealt with the crisis and its effects by adopting 'austerity' measures and by attempting to reform both public and private institutions, from labour to pensions, and from education to local government. Both financial measures and institutional reforms were to a large degree imposed by the 'money lenders', that is, the international organisations involved in the 'bail out' of Greece, the so-called 'troika', consisting of representatives from the International Monetary Funds (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Commission (EC).

Greece received billions of euros from the troika as 'bail out' after signing two agreements (Memorandum of Understanding). The bailing out of Greece, however, constitutes strictly speaking a loan to be paid back with interest. The bailing out means that Greece buys expensive time in order to 'restore' healthy institutions and market relations. It should also be added that most of the loan-money coming into the country is going immediately out, as it is been used to paying back previous loans. In this way, the debt is being actually renewed, increased and its burden transferred to future generations.

Austerity measures, lack of trust and other factors have affected economic activity. The General Domestic Product (GDP) has decreased, described characteristically as 'shrunked', from 237,431 in 2009 to 182,438 billion euros in 2013. During the same period the public debt (i.e. the "Central Government budgetary debt") increased from 301,002 (in 2009) to 319,133 (in 2013) billion euros and the prognosis is that the coming years it shall continue increasing (see Public Debt Management Agency, 2015).

In addition, during 2009-13, the unemployment rate rose acute from 9,6% (*in 2009*) to 27,5% (*in 2013*), while in the other 27 European Union (EU) countries, the same rate rose by 2,5% (from 9,5% in 2009 to 12,0% in 2013).

Furthermore, the poverty rate has risen for adults and children alike. The poverty rate for adults rose *by more than 3%* (from 20% in 2000 to 23,1% in 2012); women being relatively poorer than men (23,6% and 22,5% respectively). In the other EU 27 countries, the poverty rate in 2012 was 17,1%. Moreover, the child poverty rate *has risen by 7,5%* (from 19% in 2000 to 26,5% in 2012) for children under 16 years old; while the 27 European Union countries saw an increase too, though not so acute, by less than 2% (from 19,6% in 2005 to 21% in 2011).

In addition, according to the UNICEF reports published in Greek: in one year only the poverty rate increased by 3,3% (from 23,6% in 2011 to 26,9% in 2012) for children under 18 years old (UNICEF 2014: 26). Children's "risk of poverty and/or social exclusion" rate has also increased by 9% (from 26,5% in 2005 to 35,4% in 2012) (UNICEF 2014: 32).

From the above data, we could conclude that poverty rates has risen considerably and affected adult women and children more than adult men. In my opinion poverty rate both for adults and children under 18 years old is considerable high not only in Greece, but also in the other European Union countries.

## 2. Educational Attainment (Qualifications) and Funding of Education

**I**n general lines, the educational qualifications of the population, aged 25-64, are increased from 2000 to 2013. Eurostat employs the classification of the education system, known as *International Standard Classification of Education* (ISCED).

In 2013, the population, aged 25-64, according to the Eurostat data had acquired the following educational qualifications:

- 33,1% of the population was qualified at *compulsory* education level (ISCED 0-2);
- 39% in upper secondary education and *vocational-technical* education (ISCED 3-4);
- 27% had reached tertiary education (*including masters and doctoral thesis*) (ISCED 5-6).

In short, the majority of the population (aged 25-64) has graduated from upper secondary education level.

More particularly, attaining educational qualifications has increased in the last decade in the general population; *women particularly caught up with men at all levels*: for example, in ISCED level 0-2 (compulsory level education), women's attainment declined from 50,3% in 2000 to 31,5% (in 2013), while men's respective attainment declined from 46,4% to 34% during the same period. Most impressive is the increase of holding a tertiary education qualification: *women's attainment increased from 15,5% in 2000 to 27,1% in 2013*.

The average of education attainment in tertiary education in Greece is considered positive and in the direction of the target posed by OECD and European Union. According to the latter, by 2020 the target is that 'at least' 40% of the population, aged 30-34, should have acquired a tertiary education qualification (Eurostat, 2015).

However, while the trend could be judged on the whole as positive, a closer look reveals that the pace varies in different years. *During the years 2003-04 and 2010-11 at educational level 5-6*

(higher education), there is an increase of 2%; in more recent years, especially between 2012 and 2013, the increase in education attainment is less than 1%.

In 2004 the Olympic Games took place in Greece and one would expect a general optimism, while in 2010 and 2011 after the onset of the crisis and the first serious signs of enduring economic recession, a number of young people who became unemployed very possibly returned to education to complete their studies, in order to increase their chances to find employment or graduate before they migrate abroad. To my knowledge there is no particular study addressing the above mentioned developments; my interpretation here is based on discussions with (older) students, and comments and reports made by colleagues from other Universities in Greece and abroad. Ethnographic research indicates that during the crisis, students tend to be more focused on their studies and want to complete it on time (Thanos, 2014).

In 2012, at educational level 5-6 (tertiary education), *women aged 25-34 outnumbered men by almost 10%* (39,8% and 39,0% respectively) and this analogy is almost reversed in the age category of 55-64, in *which men outnumber women by 8,3%*. It is worth adding that people of this age category were students during the late seventies and eighties, when the total of students was under the 100.000, while today it is more than 330.000 denoting a massive development in tertiary education (information on previous periods, see Psacharopoulos, 2004).

Noteworthy: in 2012, the majority (44,9%) of those aged 25-34 have attained a secondary education level (level 3-4), 34,2% of them has studied at tertiary education (level 5-6) and 20,9% of them completed the compulsory education (level 0-2). The increase of those attaining a tertiary degree qualification between 2000 and 2012 is 11,4%, which increase is the highest of all educational levels.

Table A.1.

	Greece From 25-64 years													
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Educational levels 0-2	48,4	47,9	46,1	44,3	41	40	41	40,2	38,9	38,8	37,5	35,5	34,3	33,1
Educational levels 0-2	46,4	46,3	44,6	42,9	39,7	39	41,7	41,1	40,1	40,2	39,2	37,3	36	34,7
Educational levels 0-2	50,3	49,5	47,6	45,7	42,2	41,1	40,3	39,2	37,8	37,3	35,7	33,8	32,5	31,5
Educational levels 3-4	34,6	34,8	35,9	37,2	38,5	39,4	37,5	37,8	38,4	38,4	38,6	39,1	39,7	39,9
Educational levels 3-4	34,6	34,8	35,9	37,2	38,5	39,4	37,5	37,8	38,4	38,4	38,6	39,1	39,7	39,9
Educational levels 3-4	35	35,1	36,4	37,5	38,5	39,7	36	36	36,9	37	37	37,5	38,3	38,5
Educational levels 5-6	17	17,3	18	18,5	20,5	20,6	21,5	22	22,6	22,8	23,9	25,4	26,1	27
Educational levels 5-6	18,6	18,6	19,1	19,6	21,7	21,3	22,2	22,8	23	22,7	23,7	25,2	25,7	26,8
Educational levels 5-6	15,5	16,1	16,9	17,5	19,3	19,8	20,8	21,2	22,3	22,9	24,1	25,6	26,4	27,1

Source Eurostat, (ISCED 97)<sup>3</sup>

The social demand for more education has an impact on government policy that tried to respond by expanding and providing more opportunities to study, especially in tertiary education throughout Greece (see also the historical study of Tsoukalas, 1992). It is a trend similar to other countries in Europe. After the military dictatorship (1967-74) the demand for more education has led to an expansion of tertiary education at an unprecedented level, including studies at post-graduate level (see also Prokou, 2013).

## 2.1 Funding of Education

In relation to funding of education, as one would expect, it is decreased, though statistical data is hard to find. Data from the Eurostat stop in the year 2005, that is, four years before the onset of the crisis.

Accidentally I came across an analysis of funding and budgeting of education made by Syriza, when in major opposition; the funding went as follow: in 2009 public expenditure on education was 3,13% of GDP, while in 2013 dropped to 2,78% (estimated in billion euro: in 2009 it was more than 7 billion while in 2012 dropped to 5 billions). The General Domestic Product at the same period dropped: in 2009 it was approximately 231 billion and in 2013 approximately 183 billion euro (EEKE 2012: 5).

These findings are supported by Eurydice reports (2014) according to which the budget spent on education was in 2013 a little less than 6 billion euro. Also in another Eurydice publication (2013), it is argued that in 2011 and 2012, Greece was among the countries that cut their budget on education by more than 5% (Eurydice 2013: 11).

At the same time, the well-known PSI (Private Sector Involvement – in deals over sovereign debt restructuring – commonly named as ‘haircut’) was carried out in 2012 and left higher education (especially universities) without any deposits (an estimate of 44 million euro), because they were ordered by the Ministry of Education to transfer them to the Bank of Greece that carried out the PSI. The PSI was meant for the private sector, not the public one, and this raises serious questions of legal nature.

Every year, since 2011, budgetary cuts take place in Universities that today amount to 30% and in some cases 50% of the budget they had before 2009 (information from colleagues in other universities, media coverages and communication of the Dean to personnel at Panteion University, where I teach, in 2012, 2013, and 2014). At the internet site of Panteion University, for example, information on the budget is displayed as follow: in 2012, 4.100.000 million; in 2011 4.633.838 million; and in 2010, 6.685.329 million euro<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.2 Private Expenditure on Education

According to the Eurostat data, private expenditure on education has risen between 2000-2005 (from 0,24% to 0,26%). Unfortunately, data stops that year (2005).

Taking into consideration another indicator, namely ‘private expenditure of households on education’, the data shows that the percentage in Greece has risen by 0,5% (from 1,9% in 2000 to 2,4% in 2011); while the European Union 27 countries average remains around 1,0%. Though Greece has not issued any tuition fees at all levels of education, it seems that on average Greeks spend more money on education than other European countries citizens. The report published by KANEP/GSEE in 2011, shows that the percentage of EU 27 countries on education as part of consumption in 2008 was 1,05%; Greece was first on the list with 3,23%, followed by Cyprus (2,96%) and Letland (2,36%) (KANEP/GSEE 2012: 75).



*In short:* the population attaining educational qualification has increased and it seems unaffected by the crisis, as one would expect a decline. However, the pace of attainment has slowed down though it should be added that women caught up with men at every educational level. In relation to funding of education: statistical data that depict public funding on education in Greece is hard to find; some analysts talk about a dramatic decrease in public spending on education. At the same time the more the government cuts on educational budget it seems the more the relevant expenditure has to be counterbalanced by families; the latter seem to invest more on the schooling of their offsprings even in conditions of crisis.

### 3. Educational policy and measures before and after the onset of the crisis: an overview

**B**efore the onset of the crisis, education is characterised by expansion at all levels and in terms of departments, personnel and student enrolment. At the beginning of 2000 up to 2007, educational measures dealt with a number of long standing issues on basis of equality of opportunity and meritocracy, such as: *drop-out* (at compulsory education level), *'low' level quality of technical-vocational education* (at secondary education level); and the *'difficult' entrance exams to tertiary education*; aspects of the Bologna process (1999) are being introduced in tertiary education; and *teachers' recruitment* has altered as well.

On the whole, the Greek education system with *its free of tuition fee attendance has a strong equalitarian orientation*; in practice though those who are equipped with the necessary economic and cultural capital from home tend to have better educational results and unhindered school career. Moreover, research shows that inequalities related to social class, gender, migration, and other student categories still persist (see Kantzara, 2006b, Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2006, 2010a, 2010b).

After the onset of the crisis in 2009, *educational policy is characterised by strategies, such as extensive budgetary cuts, lay-offs of administration and educational personnel, and thirdly, extensive educational reforms.*

A main target of educational measures in the first place is the downsizing of education, of 'shrinking' it in a way. In primary and secondary education, schools have merged, and about 1500 school buildings have been shut down (for more information, see next section). The same procedure was followed for tertiary education as well. The idea behind it was to make the education system 'more efficient' by dividing it into larger units, which ideally are less costly to control and to manage. This is more apparent at tertiary education where the merging of departments and universities have created larger units, also because university departments have been forced to form faculties, which at the same time meant extra management and academic positions. The final target has been the control of education system and this is to be seen by the implementation of evaluation as an instrument of quality assurance which actually is interpreted as enforcing compliance at all levels of education.

Regarding tertiary/higher education: the law number 4009/2011 has been important as it attempts to implement many aspects of the Bologna process (1999) and Lisbon strategy (2001) in education in Greece. Main changes refer to management structure, the introduction of evaluation at all levels and the attempt to bring university studying closer to the labour market 'needs'. Terms such as 'innovation', 'excellence', and 'prosperity promised for all', if they help

that Europe becomes competitive in the world economy, has entered Greece as well. It seems that the academic university is losing gradually ground from the rhetoric on the 'market needs' and 'student's employability'.

A critique addressed to the aforementioned measures is that public education has been gradually 'dismantled', and at the same time it is being indirectly privatised: for example, a large number of post-graduate study programmes started charging tuition fees, while most were free of tuition fees before 2011. However the education law passed in 2011 deemed such practices legal and urged universities to 'find their own funds'.

The management and the administration of education have been subject to change, but the study programmes, so far have not been changed, at least not directly. This has been touched upon by a law in 2013 that refers to upper secondary education (called Lyceum – 3 years of study): this law tries to regulate entrance to tertiary education from the first class of Lyceum. Until 2013 university entrance exams are taken at the end of the third year of Lyceum. According to the new law, courses have been diminished and exams taken every year to pass the class also count (by 50%) for the university entrance. That meant issuing a data bank for the exam questions, which actually gave rise to students' reactions in 2014, for they massively did not do well in these exams.

It is, to my opinion, too early to evaluate the aforementioned measures; critique however shows that many more students will be now obliged to follow extra courses at the 'phrontistirio', a private preparatory school helping students with school and exams. Those who cannot afford it they shall be less well prepared for the University entrance (Panhellenic) exams.

In addition, a long term effect is the migration of young people abroad to study or to find employment, a phenomenon called 'brain drain'. Extensive budgetary cuts and lack of perspectives for a suitable career have driven prospective students, either out of the country or away from public education institution to private ones. Migration of out of Greece has been increased and affected students of all the other two levels of education. Additionally, massive unemployment meant that many highly educated individuals migrated to other countries seeking employment, and less precarious conditions of life. Estimations vary and some of them mention that between 2008 and 2013 more than 200.000 young well educated Greeks, migrated for employment reasons outside of Greece (Bank of Greece, 2016: 74; see also Smith, 2015).

In short: before the onset of the crisis, education is characterised by expansion, and by attempts to deal with long standing problems or issues, as for instance drop out, technical-vocational training, lifelong learning and intercultural education. After the onset of the crisis, education is being 'shrunked' as closing and merging of schools and departments is considered as the answer to aspired 'effectivity', while educational personnel is being evaluated under worsened working conditions and a heavy work load. The quick pace of the changes that are introduced orient the education system to align more to market demands, while changing nothing to the better to some of the standing problems, such as quality of technical vocational training, facilitating transition to the labour market and financing research, to name only a few.

To my view, educational reforms gear the system towards conservative orientations that include intensification of control and establishing new managerial structures: the introduction of evaluation at all educational levels denote a definite turn from an education oriented to academic education to an education oriented to acquiring skills in order to continuously feed and sustain a person's, so-called, employability. This is a trend prevalent in many European countries, and it seems that Greece finally is catching up, but to many authors this development constitutes a negative record.

## 4. The Greek Education System and Its People

**I**n this section, the indicators refer to students, adult participation in education, teachers' corps and schools (see notes 2 and 3).

### 4.1 Students

On the whole, the number of students has increased between 2000 and 2011, by 147.000 (from 2.031.340 in 2000 to 2.178.296 in 2011). It is interesting to note that the increase is not steady and gradual; while between 2010 and 2011 there is a decrease (see table below). Moreover, in two consecutive years 2005 and 2006, student population was higher than in 2011 by 15.000 and 6.000 respectively (2.194.230 in 2005 and 2.184.995 in 2006).

**Table B.1**

	<b>Totals /All levels</b>											
<b>Grecia</b>	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
2000												
<b>Total</b>	2.031.340	2.052.743	2.118.898	2.123.181	2.194.230	2.184.995	2.107.099	2.157.590	2.183.041	2.178.295		
2000												
2000	1.032.741	1.035.792	1.073.800	1.074.876	1.115.739	1.112.728	1.079.311	1.102.397	1.121.608	1.119.795		
<b>Males</b>												
2000	998.599	1.016.951	1.045.098	1.048.305	1.078.491	1.072.267	1.027.788	1.055.193	1.061.433	1.058.500		
<b>Females</b>												
2000												
2000												

Source: Eurostat (ISCED 97).

From the student population, more than a million is men (peak year 2011, they were 1.121.608), while women students amounted to under a million in 2000 and reached just over a million in 2011 (peak year 2005, women students amounted to 1.078.441). The fluctuation is related to demographic reasons and could not be solely related to the crisis. To my opinion, the Olympic Games in 2004 played a role, as the population was 'warmed up' to follow a study, as it promised a better way out to employment.

Furthermore, the total numbers of youth studying has increased but looking at specific age categories then there is also a decline: between aged 6 and 14 there is a decline culminating between 0,2% to 1,5%. In the age of '14 and less' there is a decrease of students that is more than 5% (from 56,7% in 2000 to 51,1% in 2011); the age category 15-19 has a decline of more than 11% (from 30% in 2000 to 21,7% in 2011).

Adult students have decreased as well by 1% (from 13,3% in 2000 to 12,3% in 2011) while between 2006 and 2010 they had reached a percentage of about 25%. Students' numbers under 20 years old are decreased – steadily – during the same period by about 14% (from 86,7% in 2000 to 72,8% in 2011).

The age category of students that has remarkably increased is, the age of '25 or older', who amounted 30.047 in 2000 and reached a total of 307.184 in 2010; in addition the age category of '25 to 29 years old' among whom students were 30.198 (in 2000) and reached up to 289.222 (in 2010) made sure that the total of students seems to have increased. The most remarkable fluctuation is also to be seen in the age category of '30 to 34 years old', whose numbers increased from about 1.918 in 2000 to 17.962 in 2010, but in between they reached numbers that exceeded the 100.000 (in 2005, 2007, and 2008-in this year more than 146.000).

In relation to gender: men students increased by 0,6% (from 50,8% in 2000 to 51,4% in 2011, and women students decreased by 0,6% (from 49,2% in 2000 to 48,6% in 2011).

In relation to nationality: in 2011, foreign students were 5% of the total population and this percentage is higher than other OECD countries in the region and followed by Italy (4%) (OECD 2013).

In relation to participation of children with disabilities: the data from ELSTAT (Hellenic Statistical Authority) covers the period of 2001 to 2006, during which there is an increase of students, school units and teaching personnel. In 2001, at primary and secondary education, in public education: there were 4.441 students, and 201 schools; in private education there were 2.724 students and 51 schools.

In 2006, in public education (both at primary and secondary education), there were 5.840 students and 287 schools; and in private education there were 2.789 students and 53 school units<sup>5</sup>.

From the above data, one can see a clear increase of school unit reserved for students with disabilities. The Greek statistical service provides on its internet site no other statistical information; in other words, data about the development of schools and students after the onset of the crisis is lacking. From personal information I know that schools have closed down or merged.

The second issue here is that there is no information about whether the existing schools suffice to house and facilitate enrolment of all children with disabilities. In other words, it is very probable that not all children in Greece with disabilities attend school at the compulsory level of education.

### *Students from Ethnic Minority Background, and Immigrants*

At primary and secondary education the available data comes from ELSTAT and it is worth noting that information on repatriates, that is Greek nationals, is collected together and subsumed under the same category with 'foreigners'.

According to the data, there is an increase of foreign pupils/students in schools between 2007 and 2011. More particularly, in 2007, the foreign and repatriate pupils were 70.594 (5.239 repatriates, and 31.018 of them girls).

In 2011, the foreign and repatriate pupils were 79.057 (3.642 repatriates, and from them the girls amounted to 35.973)<sup>6</sup>. Between 2007 and 2011, foreign students are increased, boys outnumber girls, but there is a decline of repatriate Greek nationals.

At tertiary education level, as it is mentioned above, 5% of students are foreigners, which according to OECD is the highest in the region (OECD 2013).

### **4.2 Early School Leaving (drop-out)**

In general, early School Leaving (ESL) has been reduced by 7% (from 18,2% in 2000 to 10,2% in 2013). For boys, ESL has been declined by about 10% and for girls about 6%. Employment plays a role, by men ESL is at 6% and by women at 1,4% (decreased rates).

Additionally, the category, 'not employed men' on the contrary have increased their early school leaving by almost 4% (from 3,9% to 7,7% (in 8 years)) and by women it has been reduced by more than 1% (from 6,3% to 5,8%).

### **4.3 Retention Rate**

According to the Eurydice report, retention in primary education is in Greece very low in relation to the EU 27 countries; at primary education retention rate is estimated to be below 5%, (in 2007-08), when in France, for instance, is almost 20% and in Germany more than 15%; at the threshold from pre-school to enrolment to primary education retention is also very low in relation to other EU countries (below 1%); while at the lower secondary education level, (in 2009) Greek pupils have a 4,2% retention rate, when the average in the EU27 countries is 10,4% (Eurydice 2011: 35, 54).

It seems that the retention rate is in Greece very low, and this is worthy a further examination that exceeds the scope of this text.

### **4.4 Percentage of Adults in Education and in Vocational Training**

The percentage of adults 25-64 years old studying in the education system *has been increasing* during 2000 - 2013 by 1,9% (from 1,0% in 2000 to 2,9% in 2013). Exception to the rule is to be seen in the years 2009 and 2010 during which the percentage was higher than or equal to 3,0% and started declining in 2010 and decreased further in 2011 (2,4%).

The age category 25-34 seems attempting to increase its educational credentials more than any other age category: their increase is 4,5% (from 2,9% in 2000 to 7,4% in 2013) (the increase is similar to both men and women). The age category of 35 to 44 is the second in participation in the education system: their percentage rose by 1,9% (from 0,4% in 2000 to 2,3% in 2013).

The above trend could be also explained by an educational measure in 2011 that prompted the so called 'eternity students' (i.e. those that had not completed their studies within the

allocated time of 6 or 8 years) to enrol again and take exams in order to complete their studies otherwise their right to study would be terminated.

Here I also noticed that in 2011 the respective percentage of adult participation had declined to resume again in 2012. The same process takes place for the other age categories. The year 2011 was relatively the worst in terms of adult participation in education. Accidentally it was the worst year of economic recession.

Generally, the trend is that the *older the generation the less its members participate* in the education system.

#### **4.5 Adult Education at Compulsory Education Level**

Adult education at compulsory education level was set up in 1997 and the schools are named "Schools of Second Chance". At the moment of writing there are 58 such schools all over Greece, but these do not cover all areas of the country as they are situated only in cities. The law 3879/2010 attempts to design an 'atlas' of institutions for adult education throughout Greece and in this direction has set up a General secretariat of life-long learning, indicating that the issue is high on the educational agenda (see also Prokou, 2014b)<sup>7</sup>. The attempts to set up more schools have rather stopped due to the budgetary cuts in education.

In addition, there are not any particular schools for adults at upper secondary education; and there is not any special entrance university exams designed for adults either (Prokou 2014a). That means, adults have to sit the same Panhellenic exams as newly Lyceum (upper secondary education) graduates in order to enter tertiary education.

#### **4.6 Teachers**

In relation to teachers' corps: from the available information teachers' corps before the onset of the crisis was steadily increasing, but after 2010 it has decreased. The available statistical information are detailed for the period that the teachers' corps was increased but the information is rudimentary, when it started decreasing. I examine first the increase.

*Between 2002 - 2007, teachers' corps including the academic staff was increased by 13.000, in total numbers, according to the Eurostat statistics (from 189.128 in 2004 to 202.014 in 2007). The increase is taking place gradually every year and at every educational level, with the exception of pre-primary education, in which only a 100 more kindergarten teachers were employed between 2004 and 2007.*

More specifically, pre-primary education teachers (level 0) were about 12.000, primary education teachers (level 1) were about 62.000, secondary education teachers (level 2-3) were about 86.000, post-secondary teachers (level 4) about 12.000, and *tertiary education teachers and academic staff* (level 5-6) were about 28.000 (see note 2 and 3).

*After 2010, teachers' corps is decreased however by 27,3%, including all categories of teachers at secondary education (level 2-3) according to the Secondary Education Teachers' Union (called OLME) and announced during a Press Conference on 10-9-2014; the press conference was published, in online news services (e.g. see [www.news.gr](http://www.news.gr), [www.esos.gr](http://www.esos.gr)).*

The following tables are based on the information on the aforementioned sites.

**Table B.2 Reduction of Secondary education teachers' corps, per category of employment (2010-2014 (June))**

Teachers/employment category	2010	2014	change	in %
Permanent	94.264	71.346	-22.198	-24,3%
Substitutes	3.829	2.091	-1.783	-45,4%
Part-time	5.950	2.156	-3.794	-63,7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104.043</b>	<b>75.593</b>	<b>-28.450</b>	<b>-27.3%</b>

Source: OLME 2014 in [www.esos.gr](http://www.esos.gr) (10-9-2014)

More particularly, according to the table above there are three categories of teachers employed, *permanent*, *substitute* and *part-time*: the permanent teachers' corps decreased by 24,3% (in total numbers by 22.918, i.e. from 94.264 in 2010 to 71.346 in 2014 (June)). The decrease of *substitute teachers at secondary education* was 45,4% (from 3.829 in June 2010 to 2.091 in June 2014); and the *part-time employed teachers* decreased by 63,8% in the same period (from 5.950 teachers in June 2010 to 2.156 in June 2014)<sup>8</sup>. In addition, there is a decrease of teachers at the other educational levels due for instance to pensions. An article by an education researcher published in a newspaper, mentions that according to his statistical information, the percentage of primary education teachers decreased by 8,43% between school year 2009/10 and 2014/15 (in total numbers respectively from 74.518 to 68.235) (Katsikas, 2015). Other statistical information is difficult to obtain.

#### 4.7 Teachers' Salaries

In public and private schools basic statutory salary is calculated using the same method (Eurydice 2013/14: 6). Teacher's salaries in primary and secondary education are similar and between 2010 and 2013 were reduced more than once: the reduction of the salaries and pensions was introduced by the law 3833 in 2010 and by the law 4024 in 2011 (Eurydice 2012: 40). In the law of 2010 there was a reduction of 12% in allowances and salaries and 30% reduction in other 'regular' payments (ibid.: 40). Thus, in 2013-14, the minimum teachers' statutory basic salary was 13.134 euro per year and the maximum 24.756 euro (Eurydice 2013/14: 46). The reduction is estimated as being between 35-38%, while taxation, both direct and indirect (e.g. VAT) has risen considerably. OECD estimates the reduction as follow: "gross salaries fell by 17%" (OECD 2013).

Admittedly, Greek teachers are lower paid than their colleagues in the EU 27 countries, whose average salary was 24.205 euro per year (lower secondary education) and 25.404 euro per year (upper secondary education) (Fryktooria 2012: 1, based on Eurydice 2011/12 report).

#### 4.8 Schools

After 2010 the number of schools has been decreasing. More particularly: between 2001– 2010, the number of schools decreased by 71 units; the following years, 2010 – 2014, the number of schools decreased even further by 1.590 units.



**Table B.3a Number of schools 2001-2010 per educational level**

Nr. schools/level	2001	2010	Change
Kindergarten	5.624	6.064	440
Primary schools	6.094	5.440	-654
Gymnasium (lower secondary education)	1.870	1.965	95
Gen. Lyceum (upper secondary education)	1.289	1.361	72
Vocational education	640	616	-24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.517</b>	<b>15.446</b>	<b>-71</b>

Source: KANEP/GSEE 2013a, pp. 4-8 (based on statistical data from Hellenic Statistical Authority-ELSTAT).

The number of school units *decreased* in ten years' time, primarily, because primary schools and vocational schools merged or closed down; the schools at other educational levels increased slightly, with the exception of the kindergarten that increased by 440 units.

The explanation that is given for the increase of the kindergartens is that it is related to the law application in 2006 that decreed attendance to the kindergarten as compulsory (KANEP/GSEE 2013b: 16).

Statistical information for the following years has not seen the light of publication yet. Estimates appear in media reports and there it is mentioned that there is a *decrease of 1.590 school units after 2010*. According to the education researcher Katsikas (2015), the details are as follow:

**Table B.3b Number of schools 2010-2014**

Nr. schools/level	2009/10	2013/14	Change
Kindergarten	5.700	5.151	-549
Primary schools	5.098	4.331	-767
Gymnasium (lower secondary education)	1.873	1.656	-217
Gen. Lyceum (upper secondary education)	1.265	1.209	-56
Vocational Lyceum	389	388	-1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14.325</b>	<b>12.735</b>	<b>-1.590</b>

Source: Katsikas 2015 (based on statistics from the Hellenic Statistical Authority-ELSTAT)

Here I should note that there is a small discrepancy between the aforementioned tables as to the number of school units referring to vocational education and affecting the total of school units. In table B.3a, vocational training includes all schools (private and public) that offer technical-vocational training, which amounted to 616 units in 2010 (KANEP/GSEE 2013b:32). In the following table, above, B.3b, the vocational lyceum refers only to the public school units (389 units in 2009/10).

## 4.9 Higher Education

During the same period, 2001-2010, tertiary education consisted of 24 Universities and 16 Higher Technological Institutes (*TEI*). Downsizing of tertiary education started in 2013. The ministry of education conceived of a plan called "*Plan Athena*" and attempted to implement it, starting in 2013. The plan was to reduce departments by 66 (from 480 to 384) (Ministry of Education, 2013: 36). When implemented, it meant that one University was closed down (instead of 3 as it was planned) and a few departments. From the planned 384 departments, 134 in TEI and 250 departments at the Universities, we see that in the beginning of the academic year 2013-14 there were 261 University departments according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT); the TEI however lacks at the aforementioned data base.

Thus, merging and closing of departments was not implemented to the degree that it was planned also due to the vehement reaction of students and faculty at universities and TEI.

*In short:* the data points to an increase of student population even in conditions of crisis, but closer look reveals a decline in younger ages and differences in pace also in regard to adult participation in education. Furthermore, there lacks statistical information on special needs education, schools at compulsory level for adults, and student with disabilities after 2005. In addition, data shows that educational measures affected school units that have closed down; information on the press also mention that students are not able to be transferred to another school because for example of lack of means of transportation; next, teachers are driven away, while of those remaining in education, the remuneration has been considerably reduced; work load has been increased and to my knowledge this is not depicted in any statistical information yet.

Last but not least, there is no indication however about the quality of education being touched upon, for as it happens in other countries, citizens' resilient capacity has already become apparent, as other studies show. By this I mean the '*social phrontistiaría*' (private preparatory school) and the thousands of volunteer help actions that are geared towards pupils and their families who are 'in need' (see also Kantzara, 2015).

## 5. Final Notes and Conclusions

**T**he overall impact of the crisis on education is examined in several aspects of education, for which there is available statistical data. The ramifications are visible in terms of funding and school units, administration and education personnel, but it is not so visible, if one examines the data in terms of equity. A reason for this is that we need a larger span in years to view the changes in education and those especially attributed to the crisis. The second reason is that one needs statistical data on subjects that are not readily available, for instance changes in the 'infrastructure' of education, that is not only buildings and facilities, but for instance retention and delay rates, access to education for adults, students with disabilities, migrants and various ethnic minorities.

The Greek education system seems to have an egalitarian character on two dimensions, *access to education and success*, in terms of acquiring educational qualifications. Student selection throughout primary and secondary education is on the whole minimal while the policy of tuition free attendance and rudimentary financial help to students form conditions that contribute to equity. However, a certain cultural capital in the family and a good financial

condition help the offsprings to enter university and to pursue post-graduate studies. It is not coincidence that the bulk of the students in higher education come from a higher middle and an upper class background. In other words, students coming from less privileged environments, cultural or economic, do not access higher education in equivalent numbers as their counterparts of other social classes (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2006, 2010b). This also holds true for the descendants of immigrants, minorities, as for example the Muslim minority, Roma, migrants, students with disabilities, and adults. Specific data on these students is not readily available, but students from these categories, who are affected by the financial cuts in education (and also in health) that refer to infrastructure facilities and compensatory education. Additionally, students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds lack the means to find hired help or attend a 'phrontistirio', the private preparatory school. It should be noted here that teachers with the help of local authorities have set up 'social phrontistirio' centres where students are able to attend for free. The effects of these centres on success in education are worthy to be studied.

*The most evident and direct effect of the crisis on education includes budgetary cuts, and educational reforms.*

*In regard to budgetary cuts:* it denotes reducing public funding on education. Students as well as foreign students and migrants, may find obstacles in their studies: for example financing transport may be stopped because of lack of funds; schools in poor areas may have no heating in the winter; foreign language text books are not readily available, and compensatory education has been stopped; at university level, the right to free textbooks and other study material has been curtailed.

A second effect related to budgetary cuts is the diminishing of the education personnel, as well as the severe salary cuts these underwent. A third less known impact is that almost no new teachers are appointed at all levels of education; a fourth, again less known effect is that places available for pre-kindergarten education are severely limited; a fourth, the workload on teachers has been enormously increased in terms of teaching hours and administration. In addition, the administrative personnel has been also reduced (see also Kantzara, 2014, Prokou, 2014a).

A third effect is related to policy *measures and reforms*: two waves of reorganising ('shrinking') education took place. One part of measures referred to primary and secondary education and one to tertiary. After 2011, the reforms referred to buildings, school units, university departments and personnel, especially in primary but mostly in secondary education.

Before the onset of the crisis, the Greek education was characterised by expansion at all levels and in many aspects. After the onset of the crisis education system is being downsized, control and management mechanism alter and this affects the relation of the central government to education. Education is being all the more governed from 'a distance' (Kantzara 2011b).

In general, the Greek education system seems to support equity, *favouring those who are more equal socially than those who are not*. The latter categories rely on civil society's organisations and volunteer's work in order to continue receiving an education and have success during the crisis.

The above mentioned effects of the crisis may have *implications for learning and for the quality of education provided* (Kantzara 2011a); this subject exceeds however the focus of the present text.

In conclusion, one could argue that the ramifications of the crisis on education are manifold, and the study of these has just started. The *main conclusions point to the varied effects social conditions posed by a phenomenon called crisis on education*. At micro and meso level, education

has been affected, as changes took place regarding funding, school organisation, management of tertiary education, administration and education personnel. At a macro level, access to and success in education seem less affected, the rate continues to rise but the pace is much slower than before the onset of the crisis. In addition, if we look closer at the data, the age category '25 and above' is responsible for the increase in the educational attainment after the onset of the crisis. Taken together with statistics on employment, this age category was severely affected by a high unemployment and it is very probable that either they migrate abroad or has gone back to school to start or to continue their previously interrupted studies. This means that data from different areas of life have to be studied in order to ascertain the degree and level of the ramifications of the crisis on education.

In addition, the resilience of the Greek society, the education system and its people, whose continuous efforts are geared towards keeping kids at school and students at higher education institutions, may explain some of the effects. The resilience of the education personnel, students and their families together with solidarity organisations of civil society ensured that education as far as possible retained an equity character, perhaps not the one closest to one's ideals and dreams, but at least close to the levels before the onset of the crisis in 2009. The study on this subject is worthy to continue and poses a challenge both theoretically and empirically.

## Notes

- \*. This article is based on the Greek National Research Report I completed in 2015 as part of the research project titled "*Educational Challenges in Southern Europe. Equity and Efficiency in a Time of Crisis*". The project was developed, hosted and run by the *CIES-Instituto Universitário de Lisboa* (University Institute of Lisbon) in 2013-2015. From here, I would like to thank *Dr. João Sebastião*, Diretor do Centro de Investigação e Estudos de Sociologia, and his colleagues members of the research team of the project at the ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon.
1. The statistical data was provided to me by the Portuguese research team of the project (see note 1) and comes mainly from Eurostat, unless otherwise stated. The exact online address has changed, for Eurostat has recently altered its database. The data comes from the theme now called 'Education and Training'; the data was at [epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/database](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/database)
2. Austerity measures are criticised for their impoverishing effects on millions of people. Bauman (and other sociologists) argued in an interview that these measures constitute an income redistribution that favours the privileged.
3. As mentioned before (see note 2), the Eurostat online database has changed address, but also the collection and calculations of statistical information has altered. The data I checked was according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) of 1997, while the current one (in 2016) in the Eurostat database is according to ISCED of 2011. The differences and the implications exceed the scope of this article.
4. [www.panteion.gr/index.php?p=content&section=17&id=148&lang=el](http://www.panteion.gr/index.php?p=content&section=17&id=148&lang=el) [in Greek] (accessed on 15-2-15).
5. See [www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGE-themes?p\\_param=A1404](http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGE-themes?p_param=A1404).
6. [www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGE-themes?p\\_param=A1401](http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/PAGE-themes?p_param=A1401).
7. The site of the institute responsible for the 'Schools of Second Chance' is at [www.inedivim.gr](http://www.inedivim.gr).

8. According to the Press conference of OLME (Secondary Education Teachers' Union) in [www.esos.gr/arhra/defterovathmia-ekpaidefsi/eidisis-defterovathmia-ekpaidefsi/pinakes-me-th-meivsh-ekpaideytikvn-kata-eidikothta-thn-teleytaia-tetraetia](http://www.esos.gr/arhra/defterovathmia-ekpaidefsi/eidisis-defterovathmia-ekpaidefsi/pinakes-me-th-meivsh-ekpaideytikvn-kata-eidikothta-thn-teleytaia-tetraetia); see also Kalogiros, 2014.

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