

## **Equity and efficiency in Greek higher education policies in the past three decades: a shift of emphasis to the issue of efficiency / “quality assurance” in the 2000s**

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### **Abstract**

*This article argues that, in Greek higher education policies of the 2000s, “equality of educational opportunities” is not given as much importance as in the 1980s and the 1990s, when higher education had been massively expanded. In the 2000s, the issue of equity is giving way to that of efficiency / quality, in accordance with a neoliberal rationale in higher education policies in Greece. The interest of the state is in economic efficiency and the “output” of higher education and thus, the state starts exerting control from a distance, reducing expenditure on higher education, individualising the responsibility for education, and trying to formulate the so-called “entrepreneurial university”. Such developments are directly related to the unwillingness of governments to finance the universities, as public institutions, in the framework of the withdrawal from the welfare state.*

**Keywords:** equity, efficiency, quality, individualisation, entrepreneurial university, funding cuts

### **Introduction**

In the area of higher education policy, the basic aims of social policy (namely social justice and social cohesion) are expressed through the notion of “equality of educational opportunities”, or else, “equity”. Since the 1960s, “equality of educational opportunities” has been pursued through the massification and the expansion of the higher education systems across Europe. Increasing access to higher education, in association with generous state funding, that is, focusing on the inputs to higher education, have been efforts to increase chances for reaching the highly desired goal of social justice and social cohesion, as a large and diverse population of young people would participate in higher education.

However, in our days, higher education policy does not take the old ideal of equality of educational opportunities much into consideration. Much less importance is attached to the

notion of equity compared to the notion of economic efficiency. Economic efficiency concerns cease to go hand in hand with equity concerns, as used to be the case until the 1980s. Ever since, many (mainly western) European governments have emphasised the need that higher education should respond to the needs of the “market”, within the framework of a competitive global environment. Economic efficiency concerns dominate in the era of globalisation, which stresses the creation of "knowledge societies" within the framework of neo-liberal economies and exerts pressures that the university becomes “market-oriented”.

But closely related to the pressures for the creation of the so-called “market-driven” or “entrepreneurial” university has been the imperative for the creation of evaluation and "quality assurance" mechanisms. In their turn, these mechanisms focus on the "outputs" of universities. An important output of the University is considered to be the development of graduates’ skills, which would correspond to the demands of the labour market. Although there has been a rhetoric that this would enhance graduates’ employability and that successful entrance to the labour market would enhance social cohesion, the reason behind the emphasis on skills seems to be “return in human investment”, “flexibility” and “adaptability”.

The surge of private higher education has somehow been a side-effect, as private universities have been considered to be more flexible in responding to the demands of the market and in cultivating the “appropriate” skills of graduates. But indeed, the trend towards the privatisation of higher education has been due to the decline of emphasis on the issue of equality of educational opportunities. Such a decline is largely because of the weakening of the welfare states in many countries, a situation in which governments are increasingly becoming unwilling to spend on public institutions such as the universities are.

Regarding European Union (EU) policies in higher education, these have been basically dominated by economic efficiency concerns, emphasising the necessity that European universities respond efficiently to the demands of today’s knowledge societies. Central to the problem of the Bologna Process has been the creation of an evaluation and quality assurance framework, interlinked with the imperative for mutually (among member states) shared criteria for the creation of a common qualifications’ framework. Although (after students’ interventions in participating in the Bologna Process), EU policies have gradually inserted equity concerns in their declared aims and they have explicitly been supporting the funding of universities by national governments, the creation of an “efficient” and internationally competitive “European Higher Education Area” has dominated their agenda in all the

Communiqués that have followed the Bologna Declaration. In most European societies, policies being initiated by governments have to a great extent been influenced by EU policies. Nevertheless, in some countries, governments also have to face the university traditions and the special role of the social actors (e.g. university teachers and students), but also the wider social formation, in the transformation processes of the universities.

International research on these issues highlights most of the above issues. Henkel (2011) argues that since the 1980s, higher education policies in the UK (a country of the Atlantic region) have been developed within a neoliberal framework, with the aim of reducing the burden of public expenditure, through transferring costs from the state to various national and international beneficiaries. Higher education institutions have been given greater financial freedom but also enhanced financial responsibilities to maximise efficiencies in the use of resources and to generate a larger share of their income through various forms of marketisation. The increasingly close collaborative relationships with business are directly related with the central role of higher education in the maximisation of national market competitiveness in the global knowledge economy. Mechanisms of quality assurance in research and teaching have thus been developed. Policies for widening participation in higher education had taken place in the 1990s because they were seen as a fundamental means of achieving economic aims, but also as an answer to the demand for social integration and inclusion. However inequalities remained in the internally differentiated higher education system. While some forms of discrimination between the institutions were abolished (e.g. abolition of the binary system), other forms of discrimination persisted, mainly as regards the funding of research. Nevertheless, for a great part of the 2000s, official higher education policies in the UK had contained no mention of Europe or of the Bologna process.

Lorenz (2011) has described the case of the Netherlands (a country of the Continental region) and has shown that since the 1980s, the Dutch governments with regard to the universities has been a mix of Anglo-Saxon (market oriented) and German (state oriented) approaches, capable of solving the problem of the "mass University". Such policies have aimed at the financial saving policy of the state and they have also contained very strong (financial) incentives for lowering academic standards, because the quality of the academic 'output' has basically been measured in quantitative terms. Thus, these policies have turned out to be only successful as a saving policy in the *short-term*. However, in the *long run*, they undermine the university *as such*, because they try to replace all incentives specific for the academic system

by general financial incentives. They do so by modelling *homo academicus* after *homo economicus* and thus by totally negating the specificity of the modern university, as developed during the last two centuries.

In referring to the Scandinavian region and more specifically to Denmark, Winther-Jensen (2011) notes that although the ideas of Humboldt have survived until recently, in spite of the fact that the Danish University has undergone several transformations since the beginning of the 19th century, a closer reading of the latest official documents reveals the distance between the Humboldtian ideas and reality. In the 2000s, the Ministry of Science used performance contracts to control studies and research which was gradually being directed to meet the immediate needs of society, business, and the job market, in the context of an increasingly international economic and cultural competition. Time for research has increasingly been dependent on external fund raising, despite the fact that all Danish universities are state universities and to a high degree dependent on public government funds. However, politicians have been given the power to set targets for research and teaching, favouring certain areas through allocation of future public funds, which are associated with university performance contracts. Thus, the main problem today in Danish higher education is not "equality of educational opportunities" but the balance between academic freedom and state control. In fact, the main problem is that of quality control, in which the influences from the Bologna Process can be seen. These influences are identified in the policies of the 2000s and refer to the structure of degree programmes (3+2+3). The three-year bachelor degree courses, on the Anglo-Saxon model, were already introduced in the beginning of the 1990s, after increased costs together with the cutbacks in resources that followed the massification of higher education in the 1960s and the 1970s.

By focusing on the case of Greece, this article will attempt to give answers to a number of questions<sup>1</sup>, such as: a) What have been the efforts towards achieving the goal of equality of opportunities in higher education? b) Have there been certain policies diminishing the concern on equity and placing a special emphasis on economic efficiency (e.g. market responsiveness)? c) Have policies of evaluation and quality assurance been given primary consideration and in what form have they taken place? d) Have certain issues, such as the development of graduates' skills for their employability and the privatisation of higher education, been given particular importance? e) How have all the above issues been interrelated with the social formation and the nature of the welfare state, as well as with the

university tradition? f) To what extent, have influences from the EU (mainly through the Bologna Process) been determining the developments in higher education? g) Finally, beyond the role of governments, what has been the role of the social actors (e.g. academic staff) in the transformation processes of the universities?

### **On the interrelationship of the aims of equity and efficiency in higher education policies in Greece**

In examining higher education policies, starting from the beginning of the 1980s, it has been argued that the emphasis attributed to social justice during the 1980s was associated with efforts for the establishment of a type of a welfare state based on policies of social benefits (Bouzakis, 1992, p. 251). Of course, the Greek welfare state never took the form one could meet in other European countries. Although after 1974 a rudimentary form of a welfare state was introduced, elements such as the low level of the development of the productive process, the restricted concentration of capital, a low percentage of salaried jobs, and an expanded type of family, hindered its development. As a result, the Greek welfare state moved from underdevelopment to a state of crisis (Robolis & Chletsos, 1995, pp. 71-72). It should also be stressed that a peculiar type of social policy, a policy of socio-political inclusion, which had been followed during the whole of the post-war era, was the expansion of employment in the public sector - as a result of the clientelistic characteristics of the Greek state - without a parallel expansion of the activities of the welfare state (Petmesidou-Tsoulouvi, 1992, pp. 146-147).

If we now look at the domain of higher education, at the beginning of the 1980s, the issue of social justice and equality of educational opportunities became an imperative, which meant that the approach to educational planning being followed was that of "social demand" rather than "human resource development". There had been a series of steps taken to support the less advantaged groups of society. These steps were the abolition of the entrance examinations to the lyceums, the foundation of postsecondary preparatory centres (for entrance to higher education), supportive teaching, an increase of the number of students entering higher education etc. (Bouzakis, 1992, p. 252). Among the democratisation steps taken were the enactment of university law no. 1268/1982. This law referred to the rationalisation of the administrative and educational functioning of the universities, the participation of all members of the academic community to the processes of election of the administrative bodies of the University, the abolition of the "Chair" (associated with the

power of the Professor), and the restructuring of the study programmes (Mattheou, 2001, pp. 249–251).

In addition, the emphasis on the economic-developmental role of education (of technical-vocational education, in particular) was evident in a number of official documents related to the reforms being introduced (Bouzakis, 1992, p. 253). At the beginning of the 1980s, the foundation of the Technological Education Institutions (TEIs) by law no. 1404/1983 was justified on the grounds of the response of this non-university type of higher education to the aim of equity, albeit under the rationale of the massification of the higher education system through its diversification, but also to the aim of economic efficiency. In the special case of Greece, the latter aim meant (in rhetoric) the promotion of a process of economic development and modernisation towards the direction of self-dependence and the ability of the Greek economy to compete on equal terms with other states of the EU. It should be noted that in other European countries (e.g. France and Germany), the two aims of equity and efficiency were interrelated: the increase of the numbers of student enrolments to higher education (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) - through the creation of the non-university sectors - had given an answer to both strong social demand and the needs of developed economies for a technologically educated human force. However, the expansion of Greek higher education - through the creation of the TEIs - was not initially driven by the needs of the Greek economy as it *existed* in the early 1980s<sup>2</sup>. In Greece, higher education was expanded and the TEIs were promoted but not in the sense of the satisfaction of *existing* needs of the Greek economy. The latter was characterised by an absence of structural changes, to a great extent due to the nature of the Greek state, which was an obstacle to development. As a result, in the 1980s and the 1990s, the TEIs did not prove to be as successful as similar institutions of other European countries (e.g. the French and the German non-university institutions in the 1960s and the 1970s, and in the following decades), with reference to the issue of efficiency. The Greek non-university institutions of higher education did not respond to the dual aim of equality of educational opportunities and economic efficiency, as this was interpreted in the framework of other countries of (mainly western) Europe. On the contrary, the TEIs responded to the aim of equality of educational opportunities only, in the sense of the expansion of the higher education system to satisfy social demand, as well as to a second aspect of efficiency: the relief of universities from large numbers of students, in front of the particularly strong social demand for access to higher education in Greece (See Prokou 1999, 2006).

With reference to the increase of the total student numbers entering the institutions of higher education (both the universities and the TEIs), a first significant increase was identified in the 1980s and went on, with small variances, until 1994<sup>3</sup>. During this period, the percentage change did not show great differences and it was parallel in the universities and the TEIs. In the TEIs, the number of student enrolments did not exceed the relevant number of student enrolments in the universities (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2005, p. 60). Specifically, in the first half of the 1980s, the data about the total number of student enrolments were as follows: in 1980, the number of student enrolments was 24,122, while in 1987, the number of student enrolments was 42,625. There was also an increase of public expenditure on education (the percentage of the general government budget that was invested in education was 10.29% in 1982).

However, the satisfaction of both aims of economic efficiency and social justice proved to be hard to achieve. The democratisation steps that were taken in the 1980s, to ease access of socially vulnerable groups to higher education, did not help them significantly. Children with fathers who were higher education graduates were more likely to enter universities during the period 1978-1988. Nevertheless, this was not the case for children of fathers who were illiterate or had completed only primary education. In addition, the increase of the numbers of student enrolments (in both the universities and the TEIs) might have permitted to more children (in cardinal numbers) from less advantaged social groups to enter higher education (usually schools of low social status), but their employment in a labour market which did not seem to need more university graduates proved to be much more difficult compared to the employment of children coming from higher social classes (Bouzakis, 1992, pp. 256-260).

At this point, it should be noted that, in Greece, the increase of the numbers of university student enrolments and university graduates in the 1980s, but also during the whole of the 1990s (as we shall see further on), in combination with low paces of economic development and the retardation of the pace of increase of employment, caused a mismatch between supply and demand of university graduates in the Greek labour market. This mismatch could be seen in the high percentages of unemployed graduates, as well as in the data and the indications that their employment was not related to their studies (Karamessini, 2003, p. 69). From the perspective of the economists of education, the law of diminishing returns in education seemed to be the case also in Greece. The increase of "schooling" and the greater competitiveness in higher education led to an increase of the numbers of graduates and, as a consequence, to an increase of their supply in the labour market, which resulted in the

reduction of the rate of return for studies (Papakonstantinou, 2002, p. 57). Nevertheless, what should not be underestimated is that for the period from the 1960s until the end of the 1990s, although the students' population was dramatically increased, university education became a strong mechanism of selection and exclusion of secondary education graduates. The increase of selectivity together with the higher percentages of unemployment for secondary education graduates and for graduates of the non-university sector, compared to the university graduates, made the social pressure for the opening of higher education to greater numbers of students understandable (Karamessini, 2003, p. 81)<sup>4</sup>.

So, the increase of the number of student enrollments went on during the 1990s, while the number of student enrollments did not present significant variances in the 2000s<sup>5</sup>. The increase of the number of student enrollments was dramatic during the period 1995-2000, when student enrollments almost doubled (from 45,356 in 1995, they became 85,531 in 2000) but an increase was not also the case for per capita expenditure on the higher education institutions, namely the universities and the TEIs (Psacharopoulos, 2003, pp. 73-74). Overall, in the last decades, the number of students entering higher education was significantly increased, in particular after the enactment of law no. 2525/1997 under the title “Comprehensive lyceum, access of lyceum leavers to higher education, evaluation of teaching and other arrangements”<sup>6</sup>. In accordance with the aims of employability and social cohesion, which the European education policy set in the 1990s as refers to the role of vocational education and training in the Europe of knowledge, the arguments set in the reform of 1997 for the widening of participation in higher education went on being those of efficiency and equality of educational opportunities. So, after the first half of the 1980s, in the late 1990s, an even more dramatic increase of the number of student enrolments to higher education took place. In 2001, the number of student enrolments became four times larger compared to the relevant number in the 1970s. The percentage increase reached 419%, with the number of student enrollments being 82,150. In the universities, the increase reached 260%, as the number of student enrollments became 40,894 while in 1975 they were 15,642. In the TEIs<sup>7</sup> the increase of the number of student enrollments was even more dramatic, as it went far beyond 1000%: while in 1975 the student enrollments were 4,049, they became 41,592 in 2001 (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2005, pp. 47-60).

It should, however, be noted that in 2001, the TEIs were further upgraded and were characterised by the so-called "academic drift", again under the logic of the contribution of



this type of higher education to the developmental process of the country. According to the relevant law (no. 2916/2001), such an upgrading referred to the qualifications of the teaching staff, the content of the curricula, as well as the possibility given to graduates to continue their studies to doctoral level (Prokou, 2006, pp. 209-210). Nevertheless, the different missions of the universities and the TEIs remained. The latter went on offering a more vocationally oriented type of education, meeting the needs of students with different characteristics. Their functioning in parallel to the universities eased the widening of participation, as they absorbed the greatest number of new student enrollments to higher education. Thus, the model of higher education expansion adopted was that of quantitative expansion and qualitative differentiation. The system of higher education that was created offered more, but unequal opportunities, as it activated indirect forms of discrimination and selection, which preserved social inequalities in access to higher education. The widening of participation referred mainly to the TEIs and some university departments (in the humanities and the social sciences), which are of low demand in general, accept students having achieved low attainment, and offer degrees which often lead to either underemployment or to employment not related to the studies concerned. The widening of participation did not concern the “numerous clauses” university departments, which accept students usually coming from higher social strata (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2005, pp. 59-70). In particular, for the period 1997-2004, Sianou-Kyrgiou’s (2005) research showed that social class exerts a strong influence in the attainments of candidate students and to a great extent sets the framework against which they take decisions when choosing their studies. The indications coming from this research verified the basic hypothesis that access and distribution in the internally differentiated Greek higher education system is defined by class. A subsequent study by Sianou-Kyrgiou (2010b) drew on quantitative data (for two time periods, namely, 2002-2003 and 2006-2007) which provided evidence that, in Greece, choice has been driven largely by the students’ social class. This means that the close relationship between social class and educational opportunities has remained intact. Social inequalities in access and distribution in higher education persist, despite the substantial increase in participation in higher education. Social class is actually a key factor in the interpretation of choice of study, which, along with the performance in the national level examinations that determines entrance into universities, has also led to the increase in the stratification of higher education institutions. Finally, a work by Tsakloglou & Cholezas (2005) has also shown that there is a strong relation between education and inequality in Greece: despite rapid education expansion in the last decades,

inequalities remained evident in all levels of the education system, in particular as refers access to the most rewarding level, that of higher education.

The previously described higher education expansion in Greece, together with the data showing that it went on reproducing social inequalities, were to some extent used as an alibi for the shift of the interest of public debate, from equality of educational opportunities to quality assurance. Thus, while the issue of equality of educational opportunities had dominated in higher education policies at the beginning of the 1980s (and even more strongly towards the end of the 1990s), through the massification of the higher education system, the following part of the article will show that, in the 2000s, the aim of equality of educational opportunities was given much less importance compared to the aim of efficiency, this time being understood as quality assurance of higher education.

### **Policies of efficiency / quality assurance in Greek higher education**

The emphasis on the issue of higher education quality and efficiency had, of course, already started being evident at the beginning of the 1990s, when the need for a better match between education and production, as well as for the foundation of private universities, had been stressed. The findings of the OECD experts' evaluation had shown, among other issues, that the universities should seek resources also from the private sector (Mattheou, 2006, pp. 146-147). In the 1990s, the two stabilising programmes and the significant cuts on expenditure, with the aim being the success of Greece's entrance to the European economic and monetary Union, led to restrictions to the financing of universities from the state budget, despite the fact that higher education was further expanded. Thus, the issue of the privatisation of higher education was put forward by various actors (political, economic and academic). The arguments of the proponents of the privatisation of the higher education system were of a neoliberal origin. They suggested that education is not a public good or (in the most "socially" sensitive aspect of the neoliberal views) that the private sector could take partly the responsibility of university provision through measures, such as, tuition fees paid by the richer strata of the population. In their view, public resources could thus be used for the improvement of quality of public university education, which would also be enhanced by the competitiveness caused by the existence of private universities. On the other hand, proponents of the public University stressed the necessity that the humanitarian character of the University is kept, as this is not to attract investments from the private sector. They also argued that the "market" of university education would be closed to the private sector if the

Greek state spent the percentage of GDP that other European countries spend on their university education. They also pointed to the Greek Constitution which does not allow for the foundation of private universities. A third perspective tried to reconcile the public character of higher education with the proposed abolition of the universal public education provision, as the principle of universality had not managed to reduce inequalities. According to this perspective, free university education provision for all should be substituted by the principle of “generous selectivity”, according to which, wealthy classes should be obliged to pay extra taxes for any “free” state provision, so that with the use of these extra resources a “radical upgrading of education” could be financed (Mattheou, 2001, pp. 258-261).

In the 2000s, the public debate on the privatisation (or not) of higher education became even more intense and the different arguments described above came back to the fore. But as there are various aspects of the issue of privatisation<sup>8</sup>, the solution that seemed predominate – as refers to the problem of state funding on higher education - was that of the retributive function of the public University. According to this solution, state funding is to be supplemented by the economic exploitation of the research product and the educational services of the University.

Seeking private funding was considered to be an incentive and a starting point, and it was thus argued that a new managerial culture could be introduced within the University: waste would be avoided, priorities would be put into order, managerial costs would be minimised, and the practices of effective *management* would be adopted (Mattheou, 2005, pp. 30-31). These policies were, at first, identified, at the relevant legislation. Laws no. 3374/2005 ("Quality assurance in higher education. A system of transfer and accumulation of credits – Diploma Supplement") and no. 3549/2007 ("Reform of the institutional framework for the structure and functioning of higher education institutions") prepared the ground for policies that expressed an interpretation of quality associated with the retributive function of the public University. Such policies became clearer in 2010, within a Consultation Paper of the Greek Ministry of Education, which consisted of a preparation for the enactment of law no. 4009/2011 titled "Structure, function, quality assurance of studies, and internationalisation of higher education institutions".

As to law no. 3549/2007, it has been argued that this would not be able to challenge a number of issues, such as bureaucratisation, lack of creativity and absence of innovation, due to the

"technical regulations" of article 16 of the Greek Constitution. As Greek universities are characterised to be *Legal Bodies of Public Law* by Constitution, it has been estimated that this left little space to the Parliament for a radical intervention towards a real reform of the public University (Alivizatos, 2007, p. 23). It was further argued that due to article 16, with its detailed regulations, the state would not be able to establish new types of universities next to the existing ones (the foundation of the *Grandes Écoles* next to the universities, in the 20th century France, were used as an example), albeit the risk that non-public universities of a dubious level could be established was not underestimated (Ibid, pp. 204-205). In the case of Greece, in the public debate on the establishment (or not) of private universities, the risk that Colleges would be recognised as private universities of equal status to the public ones always arose. Yet, for the time being, they have been recognised (under conditions) as *Centres of Post-secondary Education* (Republic of Greece, 2010a, pp. 1465-1467) and together with the *Laboratories of Liberal Studies* they have been recognised as providers of lifelong learning (Republic of Greece, 2010b, p. 3403). It should, however, be stressed that compared to the issue of the possibility (or not) for the foundation of private universities, the issue of modernisation of public universities – an issue characterised by the logic that public universities should function with private-economic criteria - seems to be dominant until now.

Again, it should be noted that not only the issue of privatisation of higher education, but also the issue of modernisation of public universities had been an imperative under a neoliberal rationale, since the beginning of the 1990s. Among the measures proposed at that time were: restriction of bureaucracy through simplification of the administrative control and through the expansion of the economic initiatives of universities. The first attempts for the introduction of evaluation used the arguments of "social accountability" and the development of a healthy and creative competition among institutions, associated with the distribution of additional funding relevant to the performance of each institution (Mattheou, 2001, pp. 253-255). More specifically, with law no. 2083/92, evaluation would cover university education, research and management, at both institutional and departmental levels. In the framework of evaluation, the state would take into consideration, first, the universities' own planning and, second, the results of evaluation for the distribution of special funding (beyond the fixed one) to the universities (Kladis & Panoussis, 1993, pp. 33 & 51-52).

However, the policies of modernisation of public universities were intensified during the 2000s. At this period, the developments in Greek higher education were closely associated

with the imperative that Greek universities should follow the directives set by the Bologna Process (in which institutional autonomy and quality assurance have been two interrelated issues) and this policy directive was enhanced also by reasons related to the nature of the Greek University and its relation to the State, as strong governmental control had been associated with partisanship in University life. The Greek reforms of the beginning of the 1980s had democratised the University system, with the modes of evaluation remaining of an internalist nature. However, the reforms had not challenged tight governmental control and the involvement of partisanship within the University. The 2000s reforms aspired to increase university autonomy, make the University more responsive to the needs of society and safeguard meritocracy (Prokou, 2010, p. 59). On the part of universities, this was the logic of a movement of academics, the so-called *Initiative for the upgrading and reform of public universities*, which stressed the necessity for social accountability and viewed evaluation - quality assurance as a strategy for upgrading the public University and not as a means of subservience of the University and the academics to the state. They thus proposed a system of evaluation which would take into consideration the international experience, the existing conditions of the Greek University and the particularities of disciplines. The official trade union of Greek academics, the Hellenic Federation of University Teachers' Associations (*POSDEP*) was critical of the reforms and against the implementation of a system of higher education quality assurance, estimating that this would introduce the standardisation of teaching and research, and therefore, the marketisation of education and scientific research. Being critical of external evaluation by experts, *POSDEP* proposed an internal mode of evaluation with publication of its results (Ibid, pp. 64-65). Overall, opponents to laws no. 3374/2005 and no. 3549/2007 criticised the emphasis that these laws were giving to the economic efficiency aspect of higher education institutions, while the supporters of these laws stressed the necessity that Greek higher education should converge, in matters of quality assurance, to relevant developments in European higher education. The previously mentioned laws were not easily enacted (let alone implemented), due to students' protests and the negation of academics, which to a great extent was due to their not having been actively involved in policy formation (Ibid, p. 71). And it should certainly be stressed that a content analysis of these laws showed that, as refers to the relationship between the state and higher education, Greece followed developments similar to those that had appeared in western European countries since the 1980s<sup>9</sup>.

More specifically, in the 2000s, higher education quality assurance policies were passed through laws no. 3374/2005 and no. 3549/2007. So, since the mid-2000s, the Greek state, adhering to the “state supervision” model<sup>10</sup>, has started focusing on the attainment on the part of universities of certain criteria, expressed in quantitative terms (through indicators), so that faculty productivity is measured through quality assurance mechanisms. The emphasis on quality is associated with the special interest of the state in evaluation (both internal and external). Internal evaluation is relevant to self evaluation and it is a phase before external evaluation, which is at the focus of interest. External evaluation is exercised by a committee of independent experts, the so-called *Committee of External Evaluation*. The state supervision model (or else, the “evaluative state”<sup>11</sup>) is expressed through the constitution of an external regulatory agency, the *Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQAAA)* - initially (in the framework of the aforementioned laws) called *Hellenic Quality Assurance Agency (HQAA)* - while at the same time, in every institution, a *Quality Assurance Unit* is established. “Accountability”, “new managerialism” and the development of entrepreneurial behaviour are issues associated with the state supervision model that exerts control from a distance, as every university is called upon to formulate a *4-year academic-developmental programme* (after having taken state funding into consideration and compiled an *Internal Regulation Scheme* for its functioning) to be evaluated by the Minister of Education. On the approval of the programme, the Minister of Education and the University are called upon to sign a *contractual agreement* for the attainment of the objectives of the programme. In case the *4-year academic-developmental programme* is not submitted, consequences are withdrawal of part of state funding. For institutional efficiency, *the Secretary of the Institution* has the role of co-ordinating and administering the work of the financial and administrative departments of the university. The administrative authorities of the Greek universities are obliged to submit a full record of the academic, financial and administrative work of the universities for publication. Additionally, the Minister of Education brings a yearly report on the situation of higher education to Parliament. Accountability thus seems to be used as a regulatory device, supported by the logic of legitimacy and transparency (Prokou, 2008a, pp. 89-95). Besides, the concept of accountability addresses to individuals who have the right to choose educational services, while the state sets the framework for a system that permits a range of options.

The concept of quality itself, as can be seen in the framework of these policies (particularly those expressed by law no. 4009/2011 as we shall see further on), is basically determined by

the extent to which clients (namely, the market, the national economy, business, the individual that seeks employment) of higher education services are satisfied. This is an interpretation of quality which is consistent with policies of privatisation of higher education – in this case, with policies that are pushing public universities to function in an entrepreneurial way – in contrast with an interpretation of quality that points to the degree that the needs of science, and social and humanitarian values and priorities, are served. To the direction of the first interpretation of quality, universities are considered to be efficient as long as operating costs are reduced, and as long as decision making is characterised by flexibility and relevance to the labour market (Mattheou, 2005, pp. 32-33). Such an interpretation of the concept of quality is evident in the most recent Greek higher education policy, which is actually a continuation of past policies, as these were implemented through laws no. 3374/2005 and no. 3549/2007.

In particular, in 2010, to implement a national strategy on higher education, the Ministry of Education presented a Consultation Paper through which, it proposed the establishment of a special service for the collection (with the support of special scientists and institutions) of the necessary data from individual institutions, the negotiation and signing of the contractual agreements, the management and distribution of public funding, the costing of services, the processing of relevant indicators and standards. In this proposed framework of self-government of higher education institutions, the State would distribute part of public funding to the institutions, on the basis of their attainments and a number of quality indicators. Institutions would thus be rewarded for their achievements in certain ways, while some of the indicators (this time being more specific compared to the previous legislation) proposed in the consultation would be the number of graduates / student enrollments, the degree to which institutional resources are utilised, the efficient management of additional income (e.g. general expenses of research and development projects), the number of academics participating (either as partners or as leaders) in competitive programmes of the EU, the number of Centres of Excellence in education and in research, graduates' employability etc. (Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs of Greece, 2010, pp. 15-16). Among the proposed changes in the academic organisation of institutions were: a) the institutionalisation of incentives for the creation of programmes matching effectively with the labour market and the development of entrepreneurship, b) the institutionalisation of the possibility that distance education programmes, as well as short cycle study programmes, are provided, c) the full implementation of the European Credit Transfer System to ease

recognition of studies and students' mobility among programmes of study, d) the institutionalisation of a National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, as a tool of transparency of the processes of learning and of the results of the programmes of study (and this is the reason why the necessity that educational aims and learning outcomes of every educational activity should be explicitly put forward, publicised and evaluated), e) giving more validity in processes of internal and external evaluation through completion of the existing processes of Quality Assurance with the processes of accreditation of the programmes of study and institutions by an independent authority and committees of international experts (Ibid, p. 21). The above proposals have all been included in law no. 4009/2011<sup>12</sup>. It should again be noted that the HQAA has been renamed to the HQAAA, while the *Committee of External Evaluation* appears to be substituted by the *Committee of Accreditation* (consisting of independent experts) for the evaluation of study programmes and the internal systems of quality assurance of institutions. In the case of a negative decision of accreditation of an institution, its funding and the admission of new student enrollments are restricted. The new law repeats quite a number of points already included in law no. 3549/2007, as refers to the contractual planning agreements, and it also introduces the foundation of a *Legal Body of Private Law*, in the form of a corporation, for the management of the property and the research funds of the universities, as well as the foundation of an innovation and liaison office in every institution. Finally, a change in the administrative model of the University is introduced. The decision-making bodies of a university are not only the Rector and the Senate, but also the Council, which has increasing administrative responsibilities. The Council consists of both internal members (university professors and a student) and external members (with the qualifications for the election of an external member being his/her wide recognition in science, literature or the arts, his/her distinction in the social, economic and cultural life at national and international level, and his/her knowledge and experience from a position of responsibility) (For more information see Republic of Greece, 2011).

Through these most recent higher education policies in Greece, efforts for the development of a "market driven" or entrepreneurial university can be identified. Such a model of a university abandons its Humboldtian ideals, develops management techniques, seeks funds from other (outside of government) sources, and effectively communicates with the external environment with new relations and the development of curricula towards developing students' skills (Prokou, 2008b, p. 392). Greek higher education is, thus, called upon to



ensure its quality, in the sense of its responding to the needs of the market. At the same time, governments' interest in the issue of equality of educational opportunities is being weakened, also because of the tremendous expansion of higher education, which to some extent intensified the problem of students' absorption into the labour market, a problem which is quite intense in the case of Greece due to the special nature of its economy and state<sup>13</sup>.

Of course, it should be noted that Greek higher education expansion has offered study opportunities to more students coming from lower social strata or less advantaged social groups. Nevertheless, the expansion has not managed to reduce inequalities (with the exception of more women achieving access to higher education). Also in the 2000s, "mass" higher education has contributed to what has been called a "diploma disease" and has exacerbated social inequalities through complicated processes, which are associated with the internal differentiation of the higher education system, certain conditions in the labour market, and the ways in which students coming from different social classes understand and plan their transition to the labour market (Sianou-Kyrgiou, 2010a, p. 313).

The role of higher education in reproducing inequalities despite its massive expansion has been attributed to inequalities in the economic structure (if seen from a Marxist perspective). This makes the aim of equality of educational opportunities a rhetorical and legitimising term. In Greece, the aim of economic efficiency has changed during the 2000s and has not been interrelated with the aim equity, as used to be the case in earlier periods (although, as already mentioned, this interrelationship was rather rhetorical due to the nature of the Greek economy and state).

In fact, a major shift in policies has been observed. A shift that is similar to the one already seen in a number of western European countries in the 1980s and 1990s. Specifically, the Greek state redefines the mission of higher education, not in relation to the needs of a loosely "planned economy", but in relation to the needs of the "market". There is, thus, a tendency for an increasing "vocationalisation" of higher education, as a response to the needs of "civil society". Moreover, the state begins focusing on the output of higher education and, therefore, on processes of evaluation through "intermediary bodies". The output of higher education is expected to respond to the needs of the market (although the nature of the Greek "market" should have also been taken into consideration) and it is within this logic that greater "autonomy" is attributed to the institutions of higher education. Under a logic

associated with human capital theory, the "individual" is in its turn called upon to make vocationally oriented educational choices in relevance to the needs of the market (Prokou, 2003a). However, with the evaluative state focusing on the output of higher education (e.g. the processes of integration of graduates in employment), funding may be reduced in case higher education institutions are not able to respond to the evaluation criteria which the state poses (often under the influence of international organisations and practices) (Prokou, 2008b, pp. 392-393). And in the case of Greece, there is a "high-stakes" accountability model being promoted, which means that it links performance, as measured by certain predetermined and externally assessed criteria, to future funding and administrative support for all higher education establishments (Gouvias, 2012).

### **Summary and Conclusions**

To sum up, at the beginning of the 1980s, in Greek higher education policies, emphasis was placed upon the concept of equality of educational opportunities, with measures like the increase of the number of student enrollments. An aspect of the expansion of Greek higher education had been the foundation of the TEIs, which were expected to respond to the two objectives of economic efficiency and equality of educational opportunities. Of course, due to the characteristics of Greece as a European semi-periphery, the TEIs did not respond to the first aim but to the second one only, while at the same time they relieved universities from large numbers of students. In fact, towards the end of the 1990s, the number of student enrollments to higher education (the TEIs in particular) was dramatically increased. However, the quantitative expansion of Greek higher education did not hinder its qualitative differentiation and its continuing to reproduce social inequalities.

From the beginning of the 1990s, the issue of quality / efficiency of higher education had already started being discussed, together with issues such as the modernisation of the public University and the foundation of private universities (for which the Greek Constitution had been an obstacle). In the 2000s, public debate on the above issues came forward through laws no. 3374/2005 and no. 3549/2007, and the retributive function of the public University was stressed. Since then, the Greek state has started focusing on the attainment on the part of the University of criteria for the assurance of quality (which is measurable), by activating processes of internal and external evaluation. The evaluative state is expressed through the constitution of the HQAAA, the formulation on part of the institutions of *4-year academic-developmental programmes*, the signing of *contractual agreements* linked to funding, the

publication of the work of universities for reasons of social accountability. With the concept of quality being perceived as the satisfaction of the clients of higher education services, public universities are called upon to function with private-economic criteria, attributing a special emphasis on management. In fact, according to the educational policies of the period 2010-2012, the distribution of part of public funding to higher education institutions depends on their attainment of predetermined indicators of quality (thus, greater validity in the processes of internal and external evaluation is stressed). A further vocationalisation of higher education is encouraged (through study programmes linked to the labour market, lifelong learning, distance education, short cycle studies, constitution of a National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) and the internationalisation of higher education (e.g. creation of international programmes of study) is promoted, as a response to the necessity for building the European Area of Higher Education and Research (explicitly expressed in many parts of law no. 4009/2011).

Therefore, efforts for the development of the market driven University become visible recently also in Greece. While at the same time, the interest in the issue of equality of educational opportunities is weakened, also because of the tremendous expansion of higher education (which, however, has not managed to hinder reproduction of social inequalities).

In conclusion, the shift of the interest of the State, from equality of educational opportunities / social justice to efficiency and quality, is consistent with a neoliberal turn in higher education policies in Greece. Such a shift is expressed through the emphasis on the following priorities: economic efficiency and the output of higher education, individualisation of responsibility for education, cutting expenditure, accountability, exerting control from a distance (with the functioning of the evaluative state), and the creation of the entrepreneurial University which puts emphasis on management. Under this logic, mechanisms of evaluation and quality assurance are developed, which focus on the degree to which Greek higher education can respond to the needs of the market and the demands of a competitive international environment that calls for the creation of a knowledge society<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, the trends of privatisation are an expected outcome of the declining interest in the issue of equality of educational opportunities, in the framework of the withdrawal from the welfare state and the increasing unwillingness of Greek governments to finance public institutions in general, and higher education institutions in particular.

<sup>1</sup> This article draws largely from the problematic developed in Prokou, E., ed., 2011. *Social dimensions of higher education policies: a comparative and international approach*. Athens: Dionicos [in Greek].

<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s, when this new type of higher education was created, the *existing* economy of Greece, as a European “semi-periphery”, was characterised by low investments in industry and agriculture, dependence on foreign capital, and a weak national capital which was oriented mainly towards traditional areas of production. At the same time, there was an inflation of the tertiary sector of the economy and an increase of underground economy. This situation was largely due to the nature of the Greek state. Greece had experienced a “late-late industrialisation” and its only chance to have been integrated into the world capitalist system, in a more independent way, should have come from the state. However, the state was unable to intervene in a flexible way for the modernisation of agriculture, to create strong bonds with industry, but also to create an industrial sector well articulated with the rest of the economy. So, state apparatus was over-expanded and was acquiring clientelistic characteristics (Prokou, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> According to Karamessini (2003, p. 78), although between 1981 and 1985, the most rapid increase of the number of student enrollments (for the whole of the period 1961-1999) took place, as students were almost doubled in a period of four years (an increase of 91,8%), such an increase was lower than the increase of the prospective students for higher education for the same time period (98,5%). In the five years that followed the previously mentioned increase – that is, between 1985 and 1990 – both the number of prospective students and the number of new student enrollments fell by 16,5%.

<sup>4</sup> Also, according to Tsakoglou & Cholezas (2005), many aspects of inequalities in the labour market are associated with education. The latter remains the only and most important factor shaping the overall income distribution and influences the possibility of poverty.

<sup>5</sup> Specifically, the number of student enrollments in all universities fluctuated between 38,670 student enrollments in 2001 and 40,125 in 2010. The number of student enrollments in all TEIs (including the *School of Pedagogical and Technological Education* and *Schools of Tourism*), fluctuated between 41,150 in 2001 and 43,940 in 2010 (Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs of Greece - Administration of Organisation and Conduct of Examinations). In addition, there was a reduction of the number of student enrollments for the academic year 2011-2012: there were 37,745 student enrollments in universities and ecclesiastical academies, and 28,655 in TEIs and the *School of Pedagogical and Technological Education* (if all the specific numbers of entrant-students, beyond the normal number, is included, the relevant numbers of student enrollments were 41,920 and 32,520 respectively) (Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs of Greece, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Among the changes that law 2525/97 introduced was the foundation of the *Comprehensive Lyceum*, the establishment of a new form of access to higher education, the introduction of the *Programme of Selection of Studies* in higher education, the evaluation of the educational work of schools and teachers, the establishment of *Second Chance Schools* etc. The introductory report to law 2525/97 put as a basic aim of the reform (that was introduced), quality improvement of education for the successful response of the country to world changes in the sector of production, to the rapid development of knowledge society and to the spectacular developments in technology. Through the reforms of this period, the vocabulary of neoliberal modernisation of European economy and society was developed. Such a vocabulary included the terms: quality, competitiveness, market, internationalisation, continuous adaptation, flexibility, contracts with companies, skills and lifelong learning (Mattheou, 2006, pp. 147-150).

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that in 1975, the *Centres of Higher Technical and Vocational Education* (the former institutions to TEIs), which did not belong to higher education, were functioning. The TEIs were founded at the beginning of the 1980s and constituted the non university sector of the unified higher education system in Greece (For more information see Prokou 1999, 2003, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> In its purest version, the meaning of “private” (education) refers to the ownership of an (educational) organisation: the latter belongs to an individual or to a group of people, and not to the state, and it functions (in the framework of the market) as an enterprise which aims at profit. Examples of such institutions are the specialised institutions of higher education, which functioned in countries of Eastern Europe after the fall of socialism. Another and more common variation of the concept refers to organisations, which do not belong to the state, although the latter partly funds and supervises them. Examples of such institutions are non-profit universities, supervised by the church, and charitable institutions or other charities, and they are often targeted towards specific population groups on the basis of religious, language, ethnical or other cultural or even socio-economic criteria. The largest number of “private universities” in Europe and in America belong to this category. Finally, a form of “private” higher education is the one, which is a property of the state, while at the same time it functions with private-economic criteria regarding its administration and funding. This is an ideal-type of the entrepreneurial university, in which managers play a decisive role, the status of the academic teacher is subordinated to that of the efficient manager of the organisation, while in the budget of the institution, state funding is restricted compared to tuition fees and the sale of research projects (Mattheou, 2005, pp. 18-19).

<sup>9</sup> For more information see Prokou 2008a, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Van Vught has introduced the concept of the *state supervision model*. This means that the details about the missions and goals of higher education – related to social relevance – as well as the means to achieve them are left to the institutions themselves, while governments set the broad parameters in which these goals are to be pursued (1993, pp. 37–39).

<sup>11</sup> Neave has introduced the concept of the *evaluative state*. He has argued that the so-called *intermediary bodies* derive from the evaluative state, in parallel to bureaucracy, which is not so much at the service of the citizens and the nation as at the service of the market and the consumers. Intermediary bodies, which tend to become semi-private bureaucracies, have the power to define what is going to be evaluated and in what way. Thus, less governmental control means greater autonomy to institutions which, in the end, are however restricted by the evaluation procedures co-ordinated by these independent bodies (Neave, 1998, pp. 278–279).

<sup>12</sup> Law no. 4076/2012, titled "Regulations of matters of higher education institutions and other provisions", was enacted one year later, only with some modifications to law no. 4009/2011. An important regulation of Law no. 4076/2012 was the recognition of the Department (which the previous law had tried to abolish) as the main educational and academic unit of a higher education institution (Republic of Greece, 2012, p. 4123).

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the Greek social formation, see Prokou 1999, 2003b, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Pasiás (2010, pp. 208-209) notes that the imperative that Greek higher education contributes to the creation of a "knowledge society", in accordance with what had been set by the Lisbon Strategy, has characterised the governmental discourse since the mid-2000s.

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