

Adult Education in Greece

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Abstract *The General Secretariat for Adult Education is the executive, public body responsible for adult education and training. Its mission is to design, coordinate and support measures which relate to supplementation of basic education and life-long learning and training both for the adult workforce of Greece and for persons threatened with social exclusion. Its main fields of action relate to basic education supplementation programmes and illiteracy programmes, continuing training courses, measures to combat exclusion from the labour market and Community Initiatives financed by the European Union (European Social Fund), social - cultural education courses, continuing training and repeat education measures for the adult workforce. The General Secretariat for Adult Education has developed a website about life-long learning prospects in Greece. Interested parties can participate in on-line debate using the site. Moreover, the General Secretariat for Adult Education is the information centre for the ELECTRA portal for adult education and life-long learning in Europe. Information provided by the centre relates to six European countries -France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Scotland/Great Britain and Sweden- while its range is expected to be extended soon to cover other E.U. countries.*

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Distance Learning

People find themselves in environments of increasing demands and speeds in information flow, which urges them to seek ways to update their knowledge, re-educate and re-train themselves. Traditional forms of education are no longer sufficient to cover the needs of modern economy. Consequently, systems of education must turn to innovation in order to keep up with the times.

One such innovative method that is becoming popular around the world is Distance Learning, often referred to as Teleducation. This is a new concept involving the transmission of knowledge from distance and has a direct connection to another concept, that of life-long learning. Making use of modern technology, distance learning breaks all barriers inherent to conventional teaching. This way it meets educational needs arising both before, but mainly after one's inclusion to the labour market. Furthermore, distance learning offers adults more opportunities for education allowing them greater flexibility in terms of time and space.

In Greece distance learning is offered by the Hellenic Open University. In addition, the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens offers a range of distance learning modules. What is more, the Pedagogical Institute operates a Centre for Distance Learning for teachers employed in Primary and Secondary Education.

New facilities for teleducation are in progress at each higher education institute in order to support both horizontal educational actions for higher education and other educational needs. This is taking place in the context of the Information Society programme (call 7) and in compliance with the Ministry of National Education & Religious Affairs' relevant policies. In addition to the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, teleducation centres operate in three more higher education institutes: the Athens University of Economics & Business, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and the National Technical University of Athens, University of Patras <http://hyperion.math.upatras.gr/tea/>, University of Thessaly, University of Ioannina, University of Crete, University of Macedonia, and Higher Technological Education of Pireaus. However, to this day, the network of centers is available only to teaching staff, students, agencies and organizations. Open education modules and certification of studies are not yet available to the general public.

The Hellenic Open University (H.O.U.)

The Hellenic Open University is established in Patras and has been in operation since 1998. It is a legal entity of public law, an independent and self-governed institute among the 20 higher, state owned universities in Greece. The H.O.U. offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses, vocational training or post-training on the basis of distance learning. Certification takes place at five (5) different levels ranging from post-secondary education to doctoral degrees. In particular, the following academic titles are offered: Bachelors, Masters, PhDs, in addition to certificates of education, post-graduate training and attendance to modules.

Thematic units (modules) are an innovation and a basic functional unit at H.O.U. A thematic unit covers a specific undergraduate or postgraduate level of education with subjects corresponding to three semesters of Higher Education Institutes (A.E.I.). H.O.U. students are handed over the materials per each thematic unit (in printed, audio-visual and/or electronic form) for home study. During the academic year students communicate with the teaching staff and occasionally meet in person for Group Consultation Meetings with the instructors.

For the current academic year, 2003-2004, there are 6 undergraduate, 12 post-graduate and 5 post-degree training courses. Candidates to H.O.U. are not subject to examinations. Selection of candidates involves an open electronic "drawing by lot" procedure. Priority is given to individuals over 23 years of age. In addition, people with special needs pursuing undergraduate studies and T.E.I. teaching staff pursuing postgraduate studies are allocated 3% and 10% of vacancies available, respectively. H.O.U. students are subject to fees and the costs of the teaching materials (study-guides).

The National & Kapodistrian University of Athens

Adult education modules based on the Distance Learning model are available at the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens. These modules were designed in response to increased education requirements in various job environments. They spin around 5 thematic units in the field of finance and last from 5 to 9 months. Upon successful completion of the academic requirements, adult students receive a Certificate of Studies. In particular, the University awards Certificates of Training and Certificates of Specialisation, each reflecting specific programme choices by the students. Eligible candidates to the University's adult education programme are University and T.E.I. graduates and secondary education graduates with previous experience. Candidates are selected on the following criteria: Grade Point Average of Degree or Graduation Diploma (Apolyterio) and priority with respect to application filed. Candidates are required to have access to a personal computer and the Internet. Fees vary with respect to the thematic unit selected.

A Case Study of an E-learning Program

The Department of Banking and Financial Management of the University of Piraeus is announcing the launching of the E-learning Program of Banking and Financial Management using distance-learning products based on web technology.

Advances in technology have allowed for the growth of collaborative web-based learning opportunities. E-learning is an approach to facilitate and enhance learning through based on both computer and communications technology. The department is wishing to take advantage of its top experienced professors either from the academic or professional environment and its material and technical infrastructure in order to create quality online courses and educate all candidates on issues relevant to banking and financial analysis. The software is an educational platform that provides a user-friendly electronic environment and enables anytime, anywhere access for all participants. It allows the classroom to extend onto the web by posting electronic journals and resources or assigning and collecting assignments. Moreover, the computer-based

training incorporates technologies that support interactivity and achieve ease of access and attendance using on line education tools and non-synchronous activities such as blogs and discussion forums.

Thus, the program is giving the opportunity, through the educational process, to all trainees to come in contact with the latest developments and innovative methods applied in the sectors of money markets and banking systems and, therefore, either to acquire for the first time relevant knowledge that will allow them to have better access in the job market or extend their knowledge in the frames of their profession.

The curriculum consists of 6 Educational Categories and a separate category of English courses. The Topics (and sub-sections) of the program are being outlined below, while it is clear that the Department retains the flexibility to adjust (by adding or removing or changing) the units offered subject to availability of faculty members and international developments in areas as described below:

Topic 1: Using Economic Indicators to Better Investment Decisions

Loans and Investments, Inflation, deflation, deflation - Risks and Opportunities for Banks, Investors, Enterprises and Households Macroeconomics - With Emphasis on credit cycles and the banking crisis Money and Banking

Topic 2: Financial System: Economic Analysis and Legal Framework

Financial Management for Business Executives

Topic 3: Financing SMEs

Mergers and Acquisitions

Principles of Microeconomics Theory

Topic 4: International Trade & Investment

Topic 5: Asset / Liability Management of Banks

Topic 6: Accounting and Auditing

Financial Statement Analysis

International Accounting Standards

Accounting for Banks and Enterprises

Accounting for Lawyers

English courses

Preparation for the TOEIC Test

A1-B1 (Beginners)

B2-C1 (Advanced)

Preparation for the TOEFL Test

Other courses

MS Word

MS Excel

MS PowerPoint

The Pedagogical Institute (P.I.)

The Pedagogical Institute operates a Distance Learning Centre which provides distance training to educators of Primary and Secondary Education who access the P.I. server either from their schools or home. The relevant services offered spin around the following axes:

- **Self-education:** access to (search & retrieve) training material and information on a wide range of subjects that may be of interest to educators, pupils and parents.
- **Co-operative learning:** on-line participation in various discussion groups and joint projects.
- **Virtual classrooms:** interactive, real-time classroom sessions using dedicated ISDN connections.

Second Chance Schools

The institution of **Second Chance Schools** has been developed as an effort to combat the social exclusion of adults who have not finished basic education and do not have the necessary qualifications and skills to adapt to modern vocational requirements. Young people aged between 18 and 30 who have dropped out of school are now able to complete their compulsory 9-year education.

Special, intensive primary and lower secondary school courses are run at Second Chance Schools and graduates are issued with a leaving certificate equivalent to that of the Primary and Lower Secondary School leaving certificate. This entitles them to register with the Unified Lyceum, Technical Vocational Educational Institutes and post-gymnasium IEK and to attend certain vocational training courses.

The course lasts 18 months with 20 hours of class per week held in the evening. A necessary condition is that candidates reside in prefectures where Second Chance Schools operate.

Today there are 5 Second Chance Schools in operation, in Athens (Peristeri, Menidi), Patra, Thessaloniki and Heraklion-Crete, and in the future there are plans to establish other similar schools. Second Chance Schools are established following a recommendation from the Institute of Continuing Adult Education (IDEKE) in collaboration with the competent local government authorities in order to ensure the proper conditions for running such schools.

Summary

Although adult education in Greece has some history especially in terms of developing adult literacy programmes, it was with Greece's accession to the EEC in 1981 that interest in adult education really began. Until 1993 there were a series of important developments and changes in the field. Financing from Structural Funds –principally the European Social Fund (ESF) – resulted in the expansion of related activities. The socialist government of that time created favourable conditions for the development of adult education public bodies. ESF financing was largely channelled to what is called Popular Education (ΛαϊκήΕπιμόρφωση). The Popular Education public network consisted of more than 300 centres operating throughout Greece. There is no exact data for programme allocation in this crucial period (1981-1993), and many researchers note: the proliferation of vocational training activities without adequate planning about the type and volume of activities provided; the allocation of a number of programmes to organisations that did not possess the necessary infrastructure and know-how to deliver them; and the absence of a co-ordinating body to plan and supervise related activities, which led to inefficient working and a waste of resources.

The situation has improved slightly over recent years especially from 2000 onwards, with the introduction of some landmark policies and initiatives that should support further development of the field. However it is as yet difficult to draw any conclusions about the effectiveness of these policies, as many of them were adopted under the pressure of losing financing from the European Union.

References

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