

GREEK EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: A TWO-STEP CLUSTER ANALYSIS MODEL ON A TEACHERS' SAMPLE

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ABSTRACT

Greek education system's development moved around the conflict between the use of a purist and a colloquial Greek. Specifically, Greece's approach differed from that pursued by other European countries, which followed a shift towards the spoken language, by fulfilling the demand for an education for all based on the national language. Such a scenario, however, has de facto been immobilizing the Greek educational policy, by making it less competitive and appealing internationally. This study tries to capture classical education teachers' view on ancient Greek as a subject in secondary education and its consequences for the country's educational system via a survey, completed by 424 teachers, conducted in 2020. The survey showed a disagreement among the teachers regarding the effectiveness of learning ancient Greek. They are generally dissatisfied with the comments of the textbooks and with the way the textbooks are written. They also do not support the widespread argument of strengthening modern Greek through learning ancient Greek. Moreover, different views were observed in relation to the strengthening of the national consciousness through the learning of ancient Greek, but also to the desire of increasing the teaching hours. Moreover, educational policy should make efforts to modernize the content of the curriculum.

Keywords: Ancient Greek, Philology, Educational System, Ethnocentrism, Archaeocentrism.

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INTRODUCTION

General education, from the founding of the modern Greek state up today, has been characterized by elements of ethnocentrism and archaeocentrism. With the term of archaeocentrism we mean the emphasis on the magnificent Greek past as a means of forming national identity (Tsoukalas 1992). Following this policy, the prevalence of teaching ancient Greek as a main subject in secondary education inevitably implied the degradation of other ones such as informatics and civic education. In fact, an integral part of the evolution of the Greek education has been the language issue. Concretely, it has developed around the conflict between the use of the purist Greek (katharevousa), the "higher value" and the official language of the state, and the marginalized Greek, or the colloquial and "lower value" language among the wider populace (Kelpandis 2009: 27). This policy is firmly related with the Greek language

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issue which plagued the Greek society and the Greek education throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, until the “final – but very late – solution of 1976” (Kelpanidis 2009: 27).

It has preoccupied scientists, researchers, the Greek education system and the Greek society as a whole, before and after the liberation of the Greek nation and the establishment of the Greek state. Stavridi - Patrikiou (1999: 10) argues that “the persistent demand for a single form of language dominates the intellectual activity of the pre-revolutionary period”. In fact, everyone recognizes the need for a single language to promote national consciousness and homogenization of the “national ensemble”. In Greece, after the revolution of 1821, the idea for the establishment of the new Greek state and the pursuit of the “idea of the rebirth of classical Greece” led to the adoption of the purist Greek as the national language of the new nation-state, that is to a “modernized version of the ancient Greeks” (Michael 1992: 50-51).

Greece's approach differed from that of the other European nations that followed a “shift to a spoken language”, by fulfilling the demand for an “education for all based on the national language” (Stavridi - Patrikiou 1999, 10). At the same time, the historical past and the spirit of ancient Hellenism were idealized and functioned as a fundamental basis of modern Greek culture. These circumstances inevitably led to learning the ancient language as a means for “maintaining” the connection with the magnificent past and strengthening, one's own identity and consciousness as a Greek citizen. Such a combination of factors was not pursued in any other country (Varmazis 1992; Kelpanidis 2002). Thus, Greece would again become the center of cultural glory as in the past (Kelpanidis 2002: 408-411). Apart from the reasons mentioned above, Kelpanidis (2002) argues that three key issues determined the course of the Greek language's fate and strengthened the archaeocentric character of compulsory education:

a) the non-existence of a unified language during the founding of the modern Greek state – or even a dominant local dialect (Tsoukalas 1992: 533):

b) the neo-humanism that prevailed in Western Europe and its archaic-oriented path, that is the focus on the importance about the knowledge of an ancient language (i.e, Latin, Greek), and

c) Greek society's lack of industrialization, which consequently did not ask for a modern and technologically- oriented education sustained by a unified spoken language (mother tongue) (Kelpanidis 2002: 405-408).

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Greek society's desire for industrialization was never achieved from the founding of the new Greek state until recently. The combination of the language issue with the three problems here mentioned, led to “immobility” and regression in the Greek educational policy (Kelpandis 2002: 411). The teaching of ancient Greek was imposed on the educational system for about a century and a half. This archaeocentric ideology proved to be sociologically unfounded and detrimental to education as a whole. In the practice, the obsession with ancient standards functioned as a deterrent to modernization. In fact, modern Greek language was not recognized as a means of communication, expression and composition of the modern Greek identity. Also, the impression was that the teaching of ancient Greek in school would have had a positive effect on the students' ability to express themselves. It was believed that the study of ancient texts could contribute to the revival of ancient Greek's greatness.

In concrete, it exacerbated the degree of difficulty among “weak students”, while creating an obstructive environment towards language's and expression's further development. Moreover, it mainly victimized those students who grew up in areas, where ancient Greek was not spoken (Kelpandis and Xochellis 1990, op. cit. by Kelpandis 2002: 413). Practically, it deprived valuable time to other subjects such as foreign languages, physics, mathematics and technological sciences. Shortly, Greece did not follow the western European societies' path and its modernizing effect in the social sector (Kelpandis 2002: 415-417; Kelpandis 2009).

As far as education is concerned, Greece lags behind the Scandinavian countries, the top industrialized countries worldwide, for having recognized upon the introduction of English, as a core subject in the Curriculum, a marginal role (Kelpandis 2002: 417). Due to these circumstances, the side effects of the language issue are still present today. As an additional consequence of the obsession with the archaeocentric ideology, the focus on the teaching of ancient languages has led to a more formalistic approach. Briefly, attention has been shifted more on grammar than on communication (Birbili 2015; Tokatlidou 2003). In the meantime, outdated methods are also used for teaching foreign languages (Sifakis & Sougari 2005; Sifakis 2008) with negative consequences in both teaching and learning (Tokatlidou 2003).

Also, the reinstatement of Latin and the simultaneous abolition of the course of sociology in the Panhellenic examinations reflect outdated perceptions towards education, while at the same time neglecting social research and social behavior. Such a constellation favours on the one hand, those, either teachers and/or students, who are respectively keener to

use outdated methods and attending classical studies. On the other hand, it does not meet the requirements of a modern competitive environment asking for multicultural socialized young people.

The present work seeks to capture the position of philologists on ancient Greek. This group of teachers was preferred, because they teach ancient Greek as their main subject. Their everyday participation in the teaching procedure and their relationship with the students can be an important factor in elucidating the state-of-art as far as the educational policy and its actual implementation in the classroom is concerned.

Questionnaire and Research Methodology

To investigate the above issue the survey was considered the most appropriate tool, because it is viewed as being more advantageous than others for the large number of teachers who participated in the research. Concretely, teachers of classical education of all public schools (secondary education) have been the target of this research. Random proportional stratified sampling was used (Heller & Rosemann 1974). The questionnaire was based on research previously conducted by Michalis Kelpanidis on the archaeocentric orientation of the Greek educational system (Kelpanides & Vrinioti 2002). In all, 424 teachers completed the questionnaires, which were then collected, analyzed and registered into the SPSS system. The questions included the views of philologists regarding the current state of the course of ancient Greek in secondary education. In addition, they were asked about the usefulness of ancient Greek in students' daily lives. Besides that, their opinion on the degree of contribution of the course to the “cultivation” of national consciousness and the degree of satisfaction with the teaching method will also be mentioned. Concretely, 63.2% of the teachers in the sample consider that the course contributes little or not at all to the “cultivation” of the national consciousness of the students. This opinion, though, is intriguing as there is a prevailing view that one of the reasons for the existence of so many hours of ancient Greek in the schools is the glorification of the magnificent past of the ancient Greek culture.

Also, regarding the degree of satisfaction with the teaching of the course, the results are rather disappointing with a percentage of 67.9% not being satisfied, which clearly reflects the magnitude of the problem. Overall, there was a response rate of 44%, which is the final sample. This percentage can be considered, according to international data, quite satisfactory for “field research” questionnaires (Xochellis 1984; Papanauum 2003). This aspect is reinforced by the peculiar Greek conditions, i.e. the fact that Greek teachers have a feeling of distrust for any

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kind of research (Xochellis 1984). In general, however, it can be said that the sample is a random stratified sample (Kelpanidis 2011).

Descriptive Analysis

The independent variables used in the inductive analysis will be presented below. Regarding gender, as expected, the largest percentage (79.3%) were women while only 20.7% were men. Other researchers report that the majority of the educational philological courses (either Greek or foreign language literature) are attended by women, while men dominate in the natural sciences courses (i.e, mathematics, physics, etc.) (Argyropoulos 2009).

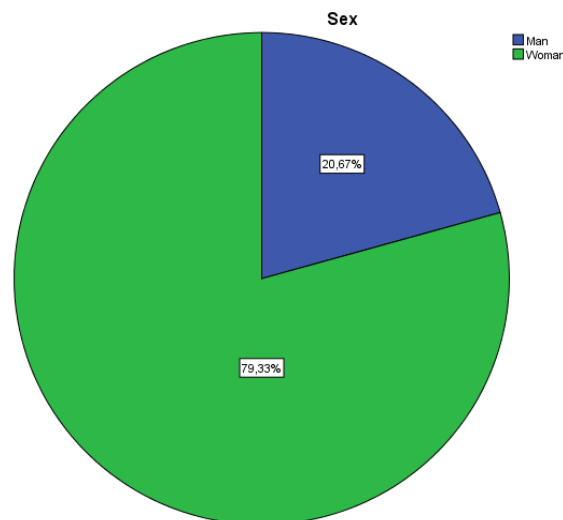


Figure 1. Teachers' sex of the sample of research

Classical education teachers, because of their satisfactory knowledge of ancient Greek, participated in the research. Concretely, the department of history and archaeology, Greek philology and philosophy, as well as pedagogy were target of our study. As shown in the graph below, 108 philologists from the departments of history and archaeology (27.48%), 214 from the departments of philology (54.45%) and 71 from the departments of philosophy and pedagogy (18.07%) participated in this research.

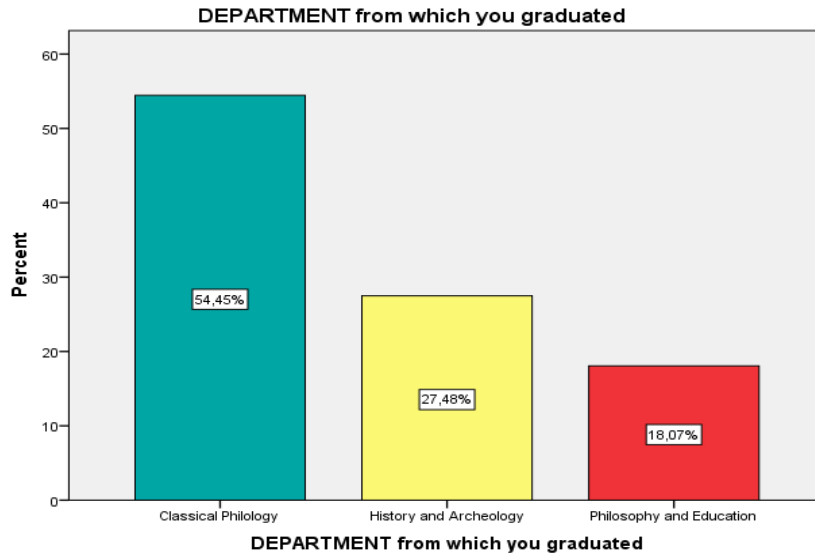


Figure 2. Department of sample teachers

Finally, the average age of the teachers in the sample, with a curve that resembled the normal distribution, was 41. The following graph illustrates the age dispersion of the sample teachers. Based on the data of the electronic information system, there is a slight differentiation from the population since the average age is 51 (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2019).

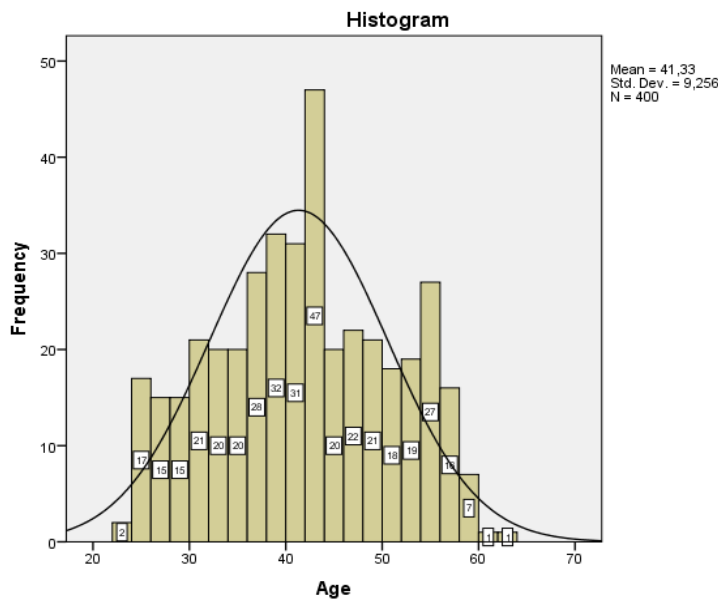


Figure 3. Age of sample teachers

A Two-Step Cluster Analysis Model

Cluster analysis is an exploratory analysis that tries to identify structures within data. It is also called segmentation analysis or taxonomy analysis. More specifically, it tries to identify homogenous groups of cases if the grouping is not previously known. Because it is exploratory,

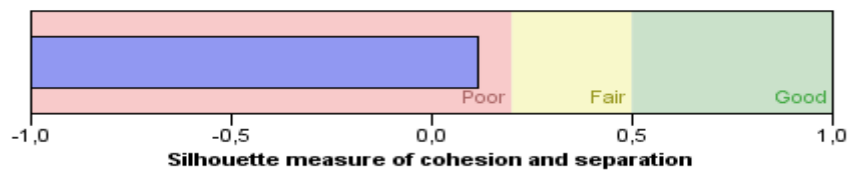
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it does not make any distinction between dependent and independent variables. The different cluster analysis methods that SPSS offers can handle binary, nominal, ordinal, and scale (interval or ratio) data. In our case, because of the existence of categorical and continuous variables, the two-step cluster analysis was used. Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation showed a poor fit of the cluster quality.

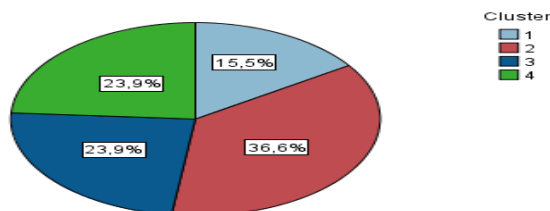
Model Summary

Algorithm	TwoStep
Inputs	21
Clusters	4

Cluster Quality

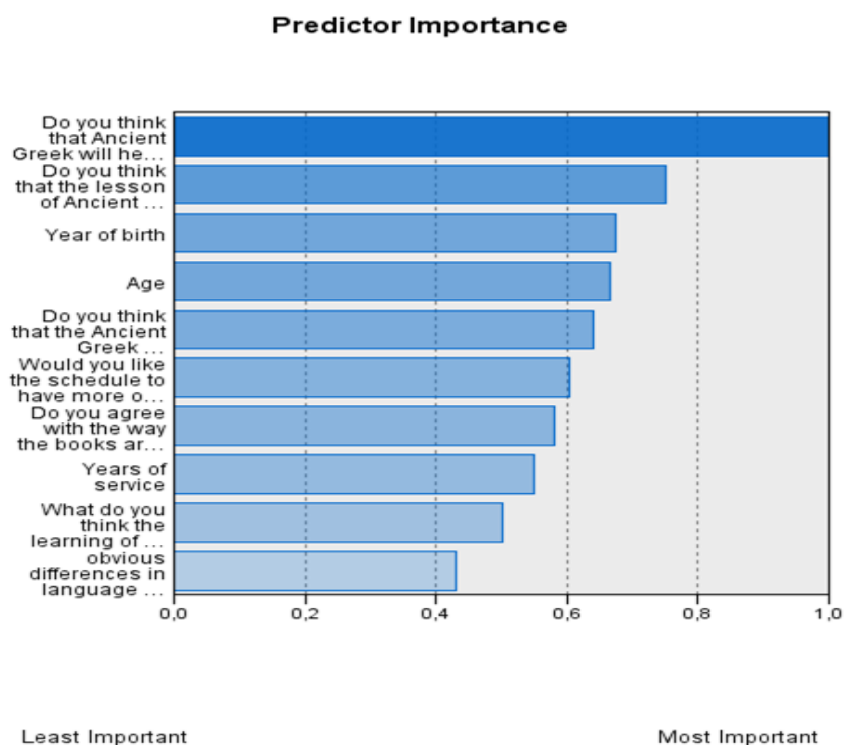


Cluster Sizes



Size of Smallest Cluster	37 (15,5%)
Size of Largest Cluster	87 (36,6%)
Ratio of Sizes: Largest Cluster to Smallest Cluster	2,35

As far as the prediction importance is concerned, as it is displayed in the chart below, the view that ancient Greek will help students improve their modern skills is the most important, whereas the students' specialization and the differences between them and the other courses is the least important.



The following table shows the centroids of the analysis. It can be observed that the first consists of teachers that are older than 40 with 15 years of service. The second is a cluster of younger teachers with 8 years of service. The third cluster is the group with the oldest teachers with the most years of service (19). The fourth cluster consists of quite old teachers with little experience.

		Centroids					
		Year of birth		Age		Years of service	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cluster	1	1965,65	6,647	43,35	6,647	15,32	7,590
	2	1974,00	7,664	35,00	7,664	8,64	6,893
	3	1961,40	7,043	47,42	6,824	19,84	8,468
	4	1971,93	8,315	37,07	8,315	10,00	7,382
	Combined	1969,19	9,106	39,77	9,031	12,69	8,772

The first cluster consists of teachers that do not believe that ancient Greek can help students better understand the modern language (70.3%). Similarly, they disagree with the view that ancient Greek contributes to the “cultivation” of national identity of students (51.4%). On the whole their average age is 44 and they have been serving in public schools for 15 years. The most frequent category of their department of origin is classical philology (59.5%). They mainly believe that ancient Greek is an educational tool and not something that will help students in their professional life. They generally would like fewer hours of ancient Greek in their time

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schedule (81.1%). What is striking is that they totally (97.3%) disagree with the way books are written as far as their purpose is concerned, and with the writers' comments that is their way of explaining the language phenomena. Also, 35.1% of them neither believe that ancient Greek enriches the modern Greek vocabulary, nor provides an awareness of the timelessness of the Greek language in general. Moreover, they disagree with the view that students who follow a specialization focusing on classical studies differ from students of other specializations (89.2%). Another striking finding is the fact that they are completely dissatisfied with the way the subject is dealt with in school (94.6%). They sometimes read translated works from ancient writers. Rarely, they read them in ancient Greek. But they frequently go to theatre to watch ancient tragedies, and 62.2% of them are women.

The two last features of this cluster are about teachers' view on what is needed in Greek public schools: more hours of modern language and literature and translated ancient Greek works (not in the original language). The second cluster consists of the youngest teachers of the sample with an average age of 35. 87.4% of them are women and they have 8,5 years, more or less, of service. For them (54%) ancient Greek helps learning the modern language. Also, they believe that ancient Greek contributes, to a certain extent, to the "cultivation" of national consciousness. They also consider it an educational tool and not a professional one. They do not ask for more ancient Greek hours in the time schedule, thus, agreeing with the previous group's view on the bad way books are written. 75.9% believe that ancient Greek can be a tool for developing the modern language. But, disagreeing with the previous group, they highlighted the differences within the group of classical studies students (57.5%) as far as their understanding of classical thought is concerned. They are also dissatisfied (77%) with the way the lesson is conducted (i.e., formal way of teaching, emphasis on translation and not on the meaning). Moreover, they sometimes read translated ancient Greek works, but rarely in the original language. Similarly, they watch ancient tragedies from time to time. Additionally, they prefer more hours of translated modern Greek and Greek ancient works.

The third cluster consists of the oldest teachers (average age 47) with the longest working experience (20 years). The majority of them graduated from the classical philology department (66%), and it is the group with the fewer women (56.1%). On the one hand, most of them believe (49.1%) that ancient Greek can help their students better understand modern Greek. On the other hand, they do not think that national identity can be "cultivated" through ancient Greek. They also believe that the classical language can only be an educational tool

(70.2%). As far as ancient Greek hours in the time schedule are concerned, they would like the situation remaining unchanged (61.4%). It is the only group of teachers, who agree with the way books and comments are written. They believe that ancient Greek can be both an educational and a professional tool (68.4%), whereas they have noticed differences among students of classical studies and students of other disciplines. Also, they are the only group of teachers who are satisfied with the way the lesson is conducted (63.2%). They sometimes read translated ancient works. Rarely, they read them in the original language and they frequently watch ancient tragedies (59.6%). Agreeing with the other groups, they support the view that more hours of modern Greek are needed (87.7%).

The last group of teachers are of medium age (38 years old) with 10 years working experience. They strongly believe that ancient Greek can help the students better understand modern Greek (82.5%). Also, they strongly support the view that ancient Greek contributes to the “cultivation” of a national identity (75.4%). They believe that ancient Greek can be both an educational and a professional tool for students. Probably, this is the reason why they would like to have more hours of ancient Greek in the school curriculum. They also disagree with the way school books and comments are written. They are aware of the obvious differences between students of classical studies and of other disciplines (91.2%). Still, they are dissatisfied with the way the lesson is carried out (68.4%). They frequently read translated ancient Greek works and sometimes in the original language. Also, they frequently watch ancient tragedies. Further, they believe that what is needed are more hours of modern Greek.

CONCLUSION

This paper displays a survey's analysis, conducted in the fall of 2020, concerned with the views of classical education teachers regarding the subject of ancient Greek and its place in the Greek public schools. The theoretical assumption of this work is that the character of the Greek educational system is, to a large extent, archaeocentric. In other words, it clings to outdated notions of glorifying the magnificent ancient Greek civilization through the learning of the ancient Greek language.

According to the results of the research, even the teachers themselves are divided regarding the effectiveness of learning ancient Greek. They are generally dissatisfied with the comments of the textbooks and with the way the textbooks are written. They also do not support the widespread argument of strengthening modern Greek through learning ancient Greek. Moreover, different views were observed in relation to the strengthening of the national

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consciousness through the learning of ancient Greek, but also to the desire of increasing the teaching hours. Teachers seem to agree with that ancient Greek, through the idealization of the ancient Greek culture, strengthens students' national consciousness. Additionally, graduates of the philosophical and pedagogical departments would like to have more teaching hours of this course.

We have to add this characteristic of the Greek educational system: classical education teachers in private and public education are selected from twenty distinct university departments, that is departments of philology, departments of philosophy and education, departments of history and archeology and departments of ethnology (Michalis 2018). Each department has its own curriculum and its distinct scientific field. It would be inappropriate for example a department specialized in philosophy to have subjects focused on grammar and syntax of ancient Greek language. The consequence is that, future teachers do not have an adequate knowledge of the subject that they are going to teach and they learn it during the teaching process. Maybe this is a reason for the diversified opinions of teachers. Additionally, younger teachers may be more open-minded in relation with national identity formation. Multicultural societies are not considered monolingual by them, and a strict connection between one language and one nation is supposed to be obsolete. This cacophony among different university departments that produce teachers which are by law focused on a specific scientific field in secondary education system, creates all these different opinions about the necessity of ancient Greek in Greek educational system (Nakas 2018).

In the meantime, some governmental policies, such as the Ministry of Education's abolition in 2020 of political education courses in the Lyceum, as well as of the course of sociology which was a major course at the University's admission exams, while reinstating the teaching of Latin, are in direct conflict with the effort to modernize the educational system. It has to be mentioned the fact that teachers' unions have a major contribution to the shaping of educational policy in Greece. In other words, matters that are related with classical education subjects in secondary education curriculum, sometimes are more important than school modernization. In order for politicians not to encroach the more numerous group of school teachers (classical education), they are reluctant to cut hours of classical education subjects and raise political education or ICT. Additionally, even though ancient Greek culture's and language's respective value is indisputable, the emphasis on grammar and the formalistic way of teaching the classical language raises doubts in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

Concretely, students are taught a dead language, while being denied access to other key disciplines (i.e., foreign languages, political education, information technology, etc.). This scenario unavoidably deprives students of coping with a competitive international environment (Birbili 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to review the curricula and redefine educational policies' goals and objectives.

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