

DROPOUT IN GREEK PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

(TIME PERIOD: 2013-2016)

1. Introduction

Student dropout is currently considered one of the most persistent educational problems on a global scale, with negative consequences for economic growth and social cohesion. The phenomenon of Student Dropout is raised, approached and examined in connection with the key concept of equality in education and social exclusion.

From time to time, different definitions and a variety of relevant conditions are used for the dropouts of students, depending on the emphasis on individual parameters of the phenomenon. In the educational language, the term "dropout" often refers to young people who do not complete the education defined as the minimum necessary educational requirement in the society in which they live. A second definition of "dropout" refers to young people who do not complete the training they have started.

But beyond any scientific or technocratic definition, student dropout means depriving the school's integration capability, which is at the heart of educational policy to achieve multiple goals, and still remains the spearhead in effectively tackling the multiple challenges of modern societies.

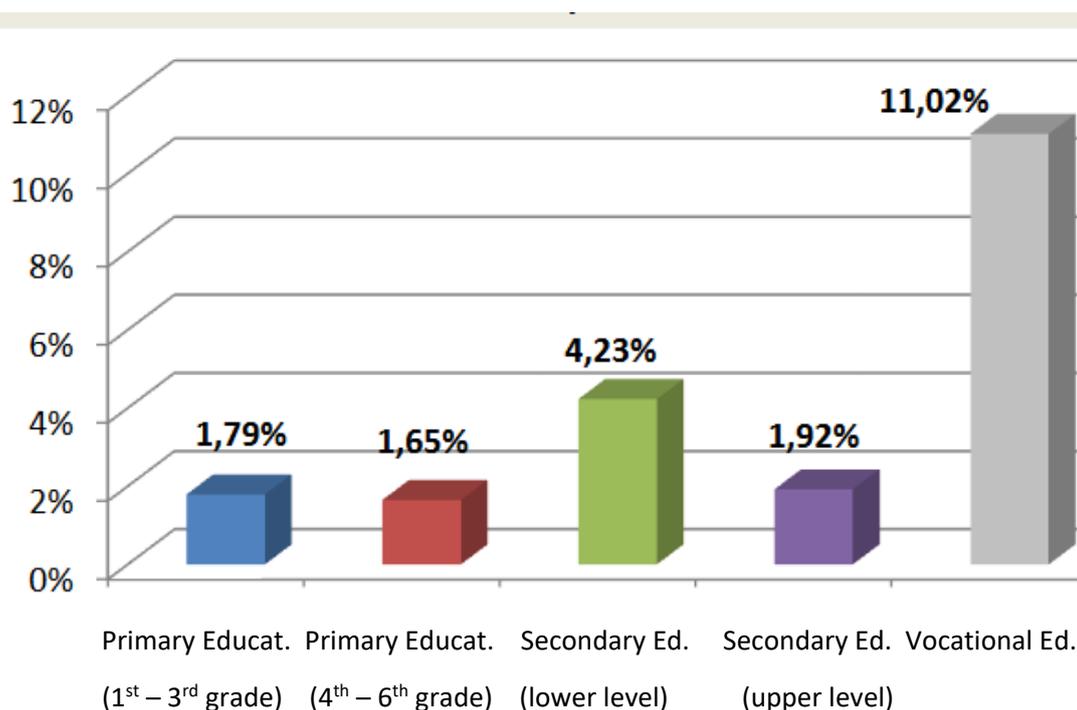
2. Student's dropout: the situation in Greece

This report is based on a study which concerns the processing and analysis of data on school dropout in Greek public primary and secondary education during the reference period 2013-2016. In particular, it is based on an official survey of primary data on student dropout, conducted at the initiative of the Institute for Educational Policy (IEP) Observatory for Student's Dropout. The data came from an online database called 'myschool' where schools registered all the relevant information.

2.1. Student's dropout per education level

The table 1 shows the rates of dropout for each type of school. The percentage is based on the number of students who have not completed attendance to the number of registered students. There is a significant deviation in the dropout rates between school types and grades. The highest percentage is recorded in vocational education (11%), while the highest number of pupils is in the lower secondary education (4,338 pupils) with a significantly higher percentage (4,23%) compared to Primary or upper secondary education

Table 1. Student's Dropout percentage in Greek Primary and Secondary Education (2013-2016)



In the most deepening of the data, the study showed that the dropout rates of each grade considered are mainly due to the first class of each cohort. For example, those who dropout in the lower secondary education, 93% of dropouts from the First grade. This percentage includes those who have not attended lower secondary education at all. On the other hand, only 1.8% leave school at the 3rd grade of lower secondary education. Correspondingly, 3 out of 4 pupils entering the upper secondary education

(Lyceum) leave the 1st Lyceum, while the same dropout rate (3 out of 4) from the first class appears in the primary school for both studied cohorts.

The longitudinal evolution of school dropout in lower secondary education (Gymnasium), which measured the largest number of dropouts students, and for which more complete data from longitudinal studies is available, is shown in the following table 2.

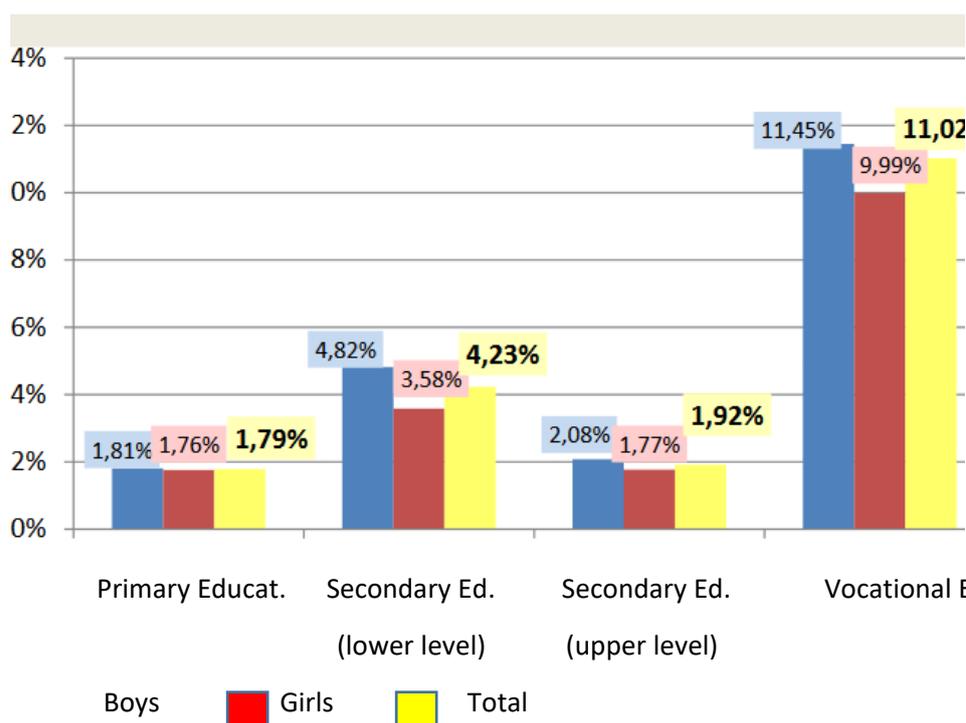
Table 2 Longitudinal Evolution of student’s dropout in Public High School in Greece



2.2. Student dropout and gender by grade

The table 3 shows pupil dropout rates based on the gender dimension and for each type of school separately. It is noted that **boys show consistently higher rates of dropout** than girls (median, 3.3% vs. 2.5%) at all educational levels and types of schools. Greater deviation of individual percentages occurs in lower secondary education (Gymnasium) where the boys dropout 35% more than girls (4.82% and 3.58% respectively). There is no remarkable differentiation in Primary, while both upper secondary education (Lyceum) and Vocational education (EPAL) boys are "forerun" by about 15% in dropout towards girls

Table 3. Student's Dropout percentage per educational level and gender (2013-2016)



2.3. Regional dimension of student dropout by grade of education

As far as the regional dimension of education is concerned, the administrative region showing the largest dropout rates is Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. There is the greatest dropout in primary education, Gymnasium (lower Secondary Education) and Vocational Education (EPAL). The upper Secondary Education (GEL) in the highest position shows the region of Crete, which in all categories is close to or above the corresponding total indicators. A similar picture of the percentages is reported by Western Greece and Central Greece. Western Macedonia shows the lowest dropout rates in all categories, with a significant difference from the next region that is Epirus.

Of course, because the student dropout involves persons, it is worth pointing out that the largest number of pupils that run in absolute numbers is in Attica, then in Central Macedonia and thirdly in East Macedonia and Thrace. The three regions make up almost 60% of school drop-outs. The conclusion for Attica and Central Macedonia is expected, as these regions in absolute numbers also bring together the largest student population. This has, to a certain extent, a particular value in designing measures to prevent and respond to school leakage in the sense that targeted interventions in these areas can yield more drastic results to the reduction of the general indicator.

3. Causal and Aggravating Factors of Student's Dropout

The phenomenon of student's dropout due to many factors and "abandonment" is a long-term process of "disengagement" from school and schooling that begins already very early in the first few grades of primary education. In the international literature there are several theoretical approaches to the categorization of causal factors

of the phenomenon. Often there are three groups of student' dropout factors that concern students who run the risk of dropout:

- The factors associated with the family and characterized social / family. These include: the low socioeconomic level of the family, the different race and ethnic origin, the under-performance of the siblings, family mobility, the lack of parental support, the reduced educational expectations of the parents, the negative attitude or indifference of the parents, the instability of the family environment, the single parent family, the difficulty of finding a job.
- The factors related to the school and the experience of the young and are characterized as "school risk factors", such as: under-performance, many absences (the so-called truancy), discipline and behavior problems, penalties, clashes with peers / or poor relations with teachers, previous poor school performance, frequent school change, lack of interest and involvement of the pupil in the educational process, repetition of class.
- The subjective / individual factors of the "dropout" that arise either as a consequence of intrapersonal deficits that relate to the development of individual competences and interests, and the particular "profile" and learning styles of each learner, or as a result of inter-individual conflicts faced by man at various stages of his life.

From the summary of the causal and aggravating factors of the dropout phenomenon, which appear more frequently in the relevant literature, it becomes clear that potential or de facto students are likely to be those who come from families with characteristics of social exclusion or social vulnerability ("vulnerable social groups"), especially those with particular ethno-cultural characteristics. In addition, educational research finds these pupils to display "special educational needs" but in an unusual sense of the term. These are pupils with "complex cognitive, emotional and social difficulties, offending behavior due to abuse, parental neglect and abandonment, or domestic violence". These pupils, while claiming equal opportunities for full participation and contribution to society, independent living, financial self-sufficiency and autonomy, are more likely to be dropout of the education system. There are, therefore, vulnerable populations with a greater or lesser risk of being excluded from collective, professional and social life or, according to another traditional concept of sociology, marginalized, and not by personal choice.

4. Consequences of student's dropout

The consequences of student's dropout can be categorized into three levels:

Personal level: The possibilities of entering the labor market of the young people's dropout are greatly reduced, while the prospect of improving their quality of life in the future is suspended.

Social level: Unemployed young people are the cause of rising unemployment. Positive aspects of the potential of these young people remain unexploited and untapped

by society, and the risk of adopting antisocial or criminal behavior on their part is increased.

Economic level: These impacts are felt both in individuals and in society. Student's dropout reduces in many cases the opportunities for earning income, and even if it is possible, it is lower compared to that of a skilled workforce or graduates.

There is also a need for additional costs for society (unemployment benefits, school reintegration allowances, welfare allowances, etc.) The problem of student's dropout, whether interpreted, either as a social or individual phenomenon or as a manifestation of its weaknesses education system is characterized by complexity and is influenced by a number of individual, social and educational factors. Both the causes that lead to the occurrence of this phenomenon and their effects must be sought at many different levels

5. Policies implemented at national level to support students and combat student's dropout: Greece

Student's dropout is a destabilizing factor that hinders and prevents the achievement of the strategic goal of social inclusion set by education policy. Throughout Europe, as in Greece, the "process of exclusion "of particular more sensitive social groups of the population is at the heart of reflection in the pursuit of educational policy.

In the Greek educational system and in the context of general education, care is taken over time and constantly to provide education to young people with educational, social, or cultural specificities through the implementation of educational policy. For example, in the classrooms of the general school, compensatory institutions are sometimes introduced and operated to support educational pupils who are facing particular difficulties in the process of school adaptation and learning. At the same time, specific types of schools and educational institutions have been set up and operated, the purpose of which is linked to phenomena such as student dropout, low access to tertiary education, and low socio-economic indicators.

In particular, whether it is the general school population or the children of returnees or third-country nationals or pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, there are institutions such as the reception classes or the teaching departments, the integration sections of pupils with learning disabilities, the schools of intercultural education, the Educational Priority Zones, as well as, more recently, reception structures for the education of refugees (ADI) within the General Education Schools or the compensatory education schools, particularly in the field of Reinforcement Teaching.

The concept of "Compensatory Education", as introduced in the recent Law 4368/2016 (article 26, Government Gazette 21 / A / 21-2-2016), refers, among other things, to the teaching aiming at "the reintegration of pupils in the learning process and improving their performance in order to complete compulsory education, to reduce school dropout and early abandonment of school. These types of compensatory

education are specialized according to the type of the educational institution (e.g. additional teaching support) and refer either to the increase of access levels in the upper secondary education or stay vulnerable groups within educational processes.

Also, in the recent proposals of the Constant Committee on Educational Affairs of the Parliament, it is underlined that the upgrading of the Technical –Professional Education is a one-way street for "attracting, integrating, preserving and empowering students from vulnerable social groups and to the dropout of the school environment (school leakage) ".

In the same text, a special reference is also made to the reorganization and upgrading of Special Education and Education, which aims to help "remove barriers to learning, discrimination and exclusion and marginalization of such pupils and thus to reduce or even eliminate the phenomenon of school dropout/ early school leaving ".

At the same time, the national objectives in the field of education were specialized in the Operational Program Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning, which contributes decisively to their achievement. Especially for Greece, the price - target for early school leaving (ESL) rate in Greece is set at 9.7%. The base-reference value was 11.4%, the rate at which the ESR was measured in 2012. This percentage is significantly lower than the EU average. For 2011 and 2010, ESR rates in Greece were 13.1% and 13.7% respectively. This means that in recent years, in spite of the crisis and financial adjustment measures, the ESL rate tends to decline, which in the negative economic conjuncture proves to be positive. It is noted that the above percentages were calculated on the basis of the Early School Abandonment Index and according to the measurement methodology of the ESL by Eurostat and the Hellenic Statistical Authority - ELSTAT.

The Institute for Educational Policy and its Observatory on School Dropout will analyze data and indicators. The aim is to take corrective, compensatory and supportive measures at regional and national level (Greek government 2016) ". The Ministry of Education also aims to complete (through Diofantos programme) the implementation of the ‘myschool’ computer system and will modernize the data collection process. For the achievement of the above goals in Greece there are the following institutions

- **K.E.D.D.Y.: Identification, Evaluation and Support Centre**, to which pupils with learning difficulties such as dyslexia and possible intellectual deprivation may turn, for formal acknowledgement of the problem and its assessment.
- At each Secondary School Education Directorate, there is a **Youth Counselling Station**, offering assistance in dealing with learning, psychological and social problems of pupils.
- **KESYP: Centre for Counselling Support** which deals with issues of vocational orientation counselling of the pupils.
- Foundation of **Observatory for the Prevention of School Violence and Bullying** under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

Different types of schools that function in Greece besides regular schools

- **Second Opportunity Schools and Evening Schools** have been established giving the chance to young people who abandoned their schooling at an early stage to return to school.
- **“Multi-cultural Schools” and “Induction Classes”** are in operation for the inclusion of foreign pupils.
- **Experimental Schools, Art Schools and Music Schools** cater for the needs of “gifted” and talented students.

Bibliography

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