



Espacio, Tiempo y Educación

E-ISSN: 2340-7263

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Espacio, Tiempo y Educación, vol. 2, núm. 2, julio-diciembre, 2015, pp. 33-48

FahrenHouse

Salamanca, España

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## ***From the fall of the «junta» to «Change»: the «timid» transition of higher education in Greece (1974-1982)***

### ***De la caída de la «junta» al «Cambio»: la «tímida» transición de la educación superior en Grecia (1974-1982)***

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on Greek higher education and the transition from dictatorship to democracy, between the fall of the *junta* in 1974 and the ascent to power of the socialist government of Andreas Papandreou in 1981. It analyzes the developments, recording them in the history of tertiary education in Greece and considering them in the context of the political and social conjuncture. Main sources for writing this article were legal provisions, the press and the few relevant studies that deal with the topic. The basic working hypothesis of the paper is that the fall of the dictatorship and the participation of the student movement in the fight against the dictatorship unleashed forces within university institutions –that had already acquired a mass character since the 1960s– which claimed a more substantial role in their administration and operation. The purging of academic staff of *junta* elements provided an initial sample of this change. The challenging of university hierarchies, the quest for equality and democratization, and the dissolution of hitherto «sacrosanct» areas were demands put forward both by the student movement and auxiliary teaching staff, which faced the hostility of professors and the suspicion of executive power. The organized, unprecedented in intensity and methods and successful response of the bodies that claimed a new role vis-à-vis the government's attempt to discipline the students and meet only a part of the demands of auxiliary staff were good indications of events and, at the same time, laid the groundwork for the important changes that would be effected in the following decade by a new political authority.

**Key words:** Greece; university; transition; democracy; student movement; university staff.

**Resumen:** El presente artículo se centra en la educación superior griega y la transición de la dictadura a la democracia, entre la caída de la *junta* en 1974 y el ascenso al poder del gobierno socialista de Andreas Papandreou en 1981. Se estudian los avances y evolución, registrándolos en la historia de la educación terciaria en Grecia, y considerándolos en el contexto de la coyuntura política y social. Las principales fuentes para escribir este artículo son disposiciones legales, prensa y los pocos estudios relevantes que tienen que ver con el tema. La hipótesis de trabajo fundamental de este artículo es que la caída de la dictadura y la participación del movimiento estudiantil en la lucha contra esa dictadura desataron fuerzas dentro de las instituciones universitarias –que ya habían adquirido un carácter de masas desde la década de los 60's– que clamaban por adquirir un papel más relevante en su administración y funcionamiento. La purga de personal académico de los elementos de la *junta* proporciona una muestra inicial de este cambio. El cuestionamiento de las jerarquías universitarias, la búsqueda de la igualdad y la democratización, y la disolución de las áreas hasta ahora

«sacrosantas» eran demandas presentadas tanto por parte del movimiento estudiantil como por parte del personal docente auxiliar, que se enfrentaron a la hostilidad de los profesores y la sospecha del poder ejecutivo. El resultado fue una respuesta positiva, sin precedentes, organizada por intensidad y métodos, por parte de grupos que estaban reclamando un nuevo papel frente a los intentos del gobierno de imponer controles sobre los estudiantes y interceptar sólo una parte de las reivindicaciones propuestas de los del personal docente auxiliar; esto proporcionó una valiosa orientación sobre los hechos y, al mismo tiempo, puso los fundamentos para cambios importantes que habrían dado sus frutos en la década siguiente por una nueva autoridad política.

**Palabras clave:** Grecia; universidad; transición; democracia; movimiento estudiantil; personal de la universidad.

Recibido / Received: 23/03/2015

Aceptado / Accepted: 03/05/2015

Since July 1974 modern Greece experienced its longest period of parliamentary democracy and peaceful political life<sup>1</sup>. However, it also saw the denial of many of the dreams born during the military dictatorship of 1967, particularly among those who actively resisted it. The day after was different for everyone. Some were released from prison, many returned home from abroad and others were restituted to their previous jobs. Some lived to mourn their dead and to count the losses, the incapacitations and the scars of torture. Whether beginning a new life or continuing the old one, everyone carried a painful but crucial experience, vividly depicted on their conscience and redrawing the bounds of their world, creating new behaviors and attitudes. Few of those who had backed the dictatorship were punished for their crimes. As the crime of the dissolution of democracy was deemed momentary, only the chief perpetrators, or those that had participated in torture and violent abuses, were tried and sentenced.

The period of the dictatorship was a watershed for Greek society. It marked the end of the post-Civil War era<sup>2</sup> that began in 1949, turning a new page in the history of the country. The period of military rule was a relevant workshop for all Greek political forces, a laboratory for the assimilation and processing of new ideas, a meeting point of people who had run different, even opposing political trajectories determined by the traumatic 1940's decade, but who came together in the fight against the *junta*. The fall of the military regime as a result of the dramatic events in Cyprus in July 1974 raised a number of issues regarding the establishment of a new regime, the punishment of the culprits, the cleansing and democratization of public life. These were demands voiced by thousands of people during the first days after the collapse of the dictatorship, in streets and squares, with demonstrations, gatherings and concerts. Any event, such as the funeral of the left-wing poet Costas Varnalis in December 1974, could turn into a mass gathering, a popular eruption. All the while, political developments proliferated. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) was legalized in Septem-

<sup>1</sup> For contemporary Greek political history, see indicatively Clogg (2013).

<sup>2</sup> For the Greek Civil War, see Margaritis (2001). See among others: Close (1995). For the postwar situation in Greece, see Mazower (2000).

ber 1974 –27 years after being outlawed– formally sealing the cleavage opened by the Civil War (1946-1949) and clearing the way for the participation in the general election of November 17, 1974 of a coalition of left-wing parties under the banner of United Left.

The big winner of the election was Constantinos Karamanlis, whose conservative New Democracy party gathered about 54% of the vote. The Center Union was placed second with 20.42%, Andreas Papandreou's newcomer, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) was third with 13.58%, followed by the United Left with 9.47%. Approximately a month later, a referendum settled the last outstanding question, which had divided Greek society since 1915, by abolishing the monarchy and establishing the republican character of the political system. After a trial lasting many months, the leaders of the 1967 coup were sentenced to death in August 1975 –a sentence which was converted to life terms.

During this period, the student movement and its leaders enjoyed unprecedented kudos. This was no coincidence. The struggle against the dictatorship had produced a new collective hero for Greek society: the student movement. Youth's energetic opposition to the dictatorial regime in the 1971-1973 period and, especially, the uprising of the Athens Polytechnic in November 1973 and its heroic end<sup>3</sup> bestowed upon the student movement a prominent role in political and social developments, particularly inside the universities themselves. Thousands of students flocked to general assemblies in their faculties, demanding that universities be cleansed of the academics that had served the dictatorship. The main component of the political forces that represented the student movement was the communist Left, as the youth sections of the two communist parties (the pro-Soviet KKE and the Euro-Communist KKE of the Interior) accounted for nearly 50% of participation in student elections. At the same time, the forces of the extra-parliamentary Left also had a significant presence. For some of these forces, the Karamanlis government was no more than a veiled continuation of the military regime. In the new realities that had emerged after the fall of the *junta*, the common fight with the workers for the democratization of the country, the struggle against imperialism and even the revolutionary socialist transformation

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<sup>3</sup> On November 14, 1973 hundreds of students from all university schools in Athens gathered in the complex of the National Technical University (Polytechnic) in the center of the city and decided to occupy it. They were soon followed by their colleagues in the Polytechnic of Thessaloniki and the universities of Patra and Ioannina. The event in Athens drew thousands of other citizens, turning the student occupation into a revolt against the *junta*. The clashes with police spread to nearby streets, with tens of dead and injured. The *junta* responded on the night of November 17, when a tank and commando units smashed through the front gate of the Polytechnic, causing more deaths and casualties. Hundreds were arrested and martial law was imposed. See Karamanolakis (2010, pp. 161-174). See also Kornetis (2013).

of the country figured high among the prominent goals of the student movement. These broad goals were seen as intertwined with the need for a modernization of syllabi and the democratization of the student movement.

On the day after the fall of the *junta* the most prominent tertiary education establishments in the country were the four universities (Athens, Thessaloniki, Patra and Ioannina), the National Technical University of Athens, the Agricultural School and the Athens School of Economics and Business. The dictatorial regime had a history of drastic interventions in tertiary education, screening both teaching staff and the student body. From the moment it usurped power, it appointed in each university a government commissioner who exercised full control. It also proceeded to purge academic staff, with dismissals and early retirements, while at the same time creating a very large number of new professorial chairs. In contrast to the previous organizational provisions, instituted in 1932, the dictatorship legislated the direct appointment of academic staff in universities in cases where many chairs remained vacant or where formal procedures in the faculties themselves faced considerable delays. Nevertheless, the colonels did not proceed to a radical overhaul of tertiary education, retaining the old regime (see Krimpas, 1998).

In the days following the collapse of the dictatorial regime, the issue of purging academic staff and of reforming the educational system at all levels was a central theme of public debate. The unremitting social interest in education over time became even broader, focused on higher education in particular due to the anti-dictatorial student movement and the rise of youth to a prominent role in political events.

The removal of the *junta*'s henchmen from tertiary education was effected by the constitutional act of September 3, 1974, regarding the restoration of legitimacy in the Higher Educational Institutions (AEI). In the government of national unity that was formed in August 1974, the helm of the Education Ministry was assigned to personalities that had taken part in the fight against the dictatorship. Their first measure was to restore to their removed former positions members of the academic staff that had been expelled by the *junta*. It was followed by the dismissal of those that had been illegally appointed to such positions during the dictatorship by a circumvention of the law regarding universities. The measure concerned 35 academics in seven tertiary institutions.

By the constitutional act, a Special Disciplinary Council was set up to consider complaints against any other academics that had exhibited antidemocratic behavior and had helped the military regime in many ways. This special body, set up for the first time, comprised four judges and four academics picked by the government. They had all been persecuted by the dictatorship.

The constitutional act provided for disciplinary sanctions against those that had collaborated with the regime beyond their legal duties. The referral to the Special Disciplinary Council of those that had assumed public office (such as members of the government, senior state-controlled bank executives, prefects, etc.) was considered proper in its own right. Over and above such instances, the council was empowered to consider as a misdeed meriting disciplinary sanction any action that might have contributed to the erosion of the autonomy of universities and academic freedoms.

The deposition of evidence could have been made by any citizen but most testimonies were gathered and submitted by students, and they were either data cited in newspaper reports or personal depositions related to attempts at intimidation. The evidence would be submitted to one of the members of the disciplinary council who would decide whether the case was strong enough to merit referral for sanctions. A total of 84 professors and nine assistant professors were charged in two groups, the first in October and November 1974 and the second in February 1975<sup>4</sup>.

The sanctions envisaged were the permanent and temporary dismissals –the latter for a maximum of three years. The usual decision for those professors that had assumed positions in the government was permanent expulsion. The temporary dismissal was imposed in a wide range of cases that concerned relations with the regime and the presence of the professors inside the university community. These included, for instance, praising the regime either through the press or in a university speech, communicating with the authorities on issues of selection and appointment of colleagues, participation in associations set up by the *junta*, collaborating with the security forces against students and threats against students for their anti-dictatorial activity.

In the end, 40 professors were expelled permanently, twenty-eight were dismissed for periods between one and three years, 10 were dismissed for two to six months and 15 were acquitted. In total, the number of professors and assistant professors removed permanently from tertiary institutions came to 75, including 35 professors who were shown the exit due to their illegal appointment during the dictatorship.

Two points deserve attention regarding this specific purge –one of many in the history of Greek universities. The first was the strong presence of judges –connected with the express desire of the government that justice be seen to be done. I may also note the strong presence of professors picked by the government. As the records of the proceedings of the disciplinary council show, these

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<sup>4</sup> The decisions of the Special Disciplinary Council were published in Government Gazette and the information that follow come from there.

professors called for the most stringent penalties on the accused. The second particularly important point is the strong presence of the student body, which was involved for the first time in the cleansing process in the University. The students gathered the evidence which they submitted to the pertinent officials, while their testimonies –as one may see from the records– were seriously taken into account. The power of the student movement after the Polytechnic uprising appears especially heightened, with students staging a strong claim to participation in the administration of the universities. This increased power also explains why the cleansing of universities of *junta* collaborators –about 10% of academic staff were permanently dismissed– was the deepest in all public administration. The purge, however, did not touch the rest of public education and a significant number of those appointed during the dictatorship retained their posts.

Besides the dismissals, the issue of restructuring education in its entirety, particularly of the tertiary sector, was raised early on after the fall of the *junta*. It was dominated by a broad public discussion on the nature of university studies, after a decade in which it had become widely accessible to the masses –particularly after the abolition of tuition fees by the Center Union government of George Papandreou in 1963-1965– and major epistemological changes related mainly to the rise of Britain and the United States as new centers of science<sup>5</sup>.

The new Constitution of republican Greece was enacted in June 1975. The new charter consolidated a ban on the founding of private universities, freedom in teaching, the non-intervention of security forces on university campuses and free education. The professors of tertiary education institutions were given the status of public functionaries –in contrast to junior staff like assistants, readers and technicians<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, a series of other issues, such as the amalgamation of faculties, the retirement age of professors and the operation of student associations came under the jurisdiction of common law.

Following the enactment of the Constitution, the conservative Karamanlis government (which renewed its popular mandate with elections on November 20, 1977) engaged in continuous deliberations with a view to drawing up a new legal framework for tertiary education.

In August 1974, the Education Ministry set up a committee to review the legal framework, with the participation of Greek academics working abroad who had opposed the military regime<sup>7</sup>. In December of the same year, the new minister

<sup>5</sup> To a large extent, especially until the *Metapoliteusi*, most of the Greek scholars had studied abroad. Until WW I, Germany was the favorite place of study for Greek scientists. After the war and until the 1980s France became equally popular, but then Great Britain and USA attracted most of the Greek academia.

<sup>6</sup> Φύλλο Εφημερίδος της Κυβερνήσεως [Government Gazette], Athens, Greece. Issue A, no. 111 (1975, June 9).

<sup>7</sup> Philosopher Nikos Poulantzas was one of them. See Krimpas (2003).



of education, Panagiotis Zeppos, set up a new committee, headed by deputy minister prof. Dimitris Evrygenis. The two committees posed as main issues of reform the abolition of the Chair<sup>8</sup> and its replacement by the Department (it was ultimately name as Sector) on one hand, and the participation of special teaching staff and students in the administration of the university. Their proposals met the reaction of university professors, who considered that their authority within the institutions was thus cast in doubt.

In 1976 the Ministry of Education created a special committee for the introduction –for the first time– of organized graduate studies in Greece<sup>9</sup>. In the same year, a new committee was created –with Deputy Education Minister Athanassios Taliadouros as chairman and academics as members– which worked on drafting a new law on higher education, as many government members considered previous plans too radical. This draft law provided again for the introduction of the Sector and the participation –to a smaller degree– of students in the collective administrative bodies of universities.

The plans for education reform were of concern not only to the government or political parties.

Immediately after the fall of the *junta* small circles of intellectuals, Greek academics abroad and others were considering plans for changes in the structure and operation of tertiary educational institutions, with a view to their modernization and democratization. Most of them brought home experiences acquired during their university studies or academic careers abroad, chiefly in Western Europe.

During this period the student movement was organized anew. The first Post-Dictatorship General Student Conference was held in May 1976, focusing on the issues of cleansing universities of pro-*junta* elements, the improvement of studies and living conditions. Already, as shown in student elections, the groupings affiliated to the Left –notably Communist Party-linked Panspoudastiki (PSK) and PASOK-linked PASP– enjoyed very broad support in the student body<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Between 1837 –when the country’s first university, that of Athens, was founded– and 1982 the institution of the Chair and the professor who filled the post reigned supreme in Greek university education. According to the university’s charter, the professor wielded the full right to decide on anything concerning examinations, the syllabus and the subordinate staff that he would use.

<sup>9</sup> Krimpas (2003, p. 148); Krimpas (1993).

<sup>10</sup> In the student elections of 1978, PSK topped the poll with 30.62%, PASP was second with 27.62% and the Communist Party of the Interior-affiliated Demokratikos Agonas (DA) was placed third. DAP-NDFK, the group affiliated to New Democracy –the party which governed in the period 1974-1981– made a poor showing with a mere 10.3% (see newspaper *Rizospastis*, February 2, 1979). This electoral balance in the student body –the majority presence of the Left, the practical non-existence of the Center and the low polling of conservative forces– will remain throughout the 1970’s, only to be overturned after 1980, when the assumption of the government by PASOK will make inroads into the forces of the Left.



The students were carriers of an intense politicization, focused around the polarized notions of «progressive» and «reactionary» which dominated the entire spectrum of their public and private lives. Music, theater, cinema and entertainment were intimately linked with politics, which composed a behavioral code permeating their everyday life. The demands for changes in the University were linked with a broader claim for a change of the capitalist system<sup>11</sup>.

But if students were becoming increasingly active, both inside and outside universities, as a vanguard movement that connected student demands with political goals, a new protagonist appeared on stage. This was the Scientific Teaching Staff (EDP) –as assistants and readers were named. The conducting of a significant volume of the Chair's administrative work and a sum of academic activities depended –largely or wholly– on this staff category: the marking of written examinations, laboratory and tutorial exercises, the analyses in various laboratories, the safekeeping and maintenance of various collections, the multiple hospital tasks, the scientific, academic and social recognition of many professors was based on the work and dedication of a large number of assistants. It was an –up to that point in time– «invisible» category of university staff which, after the fall of the dictatorship, began organizing itself and claiming the recognition of its teaching work. In November 1975, for the first time in the history of the Greek University, they hold a conference and resolve to proceed to an organized campaign in support of their demands.

The demands of this numerous group of auxiliary staff, which had been under the full control of the professors, concerned gaining permanent status as public sector employees, the abolition of the Chair and the creation of a Unified Body of Teaching Staff, with the participation of all those that contributed to the university's teaching tasks. Such demands, inspired by the climate created by the fall of the dictatorship, were viewed with suspicion by the government, for one thing. But mainly, they met an adamant rejection by most professors, who feared being sidelined by the new academics that filled the ranks of EDP. These were a new generation of academics who possessed high-caliber training, usually from foreign universities. The initial result of these claims was the assignment for the first time of teaching responsibilities to the readers who held doctorates. The participation of one representative of EDP and two student representatives in faculty and Senate meetings –but without voting rights– was introduced in 1977. Participation in meetings for the election of academic staff was exempted from this provision.

The dynamic mobilizations of assistants and readers continued throughout the period in question, culminating in the «100-day strike», lasting from February

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<sup>11</sup> For the left-wing youth of this period, see Papadogiannis (2010).

to May 1978. It was the longest to date strike of academic staff and it was supported by the political parties of the Left and the student movement. The government, largely defending the privileges of professors, refused to meet the strikers' demands.

The «100-day strike» brought to the fore the problem of the structure of university staff, highlighting for the first time the presence of a hitherto latent body of professionals and their substantial role in the general operation of universities. The strike projected the demand for democratization as a broader field of consensus among teaching staff and the student movement, with the common goal of restricting the power of professors. After lengthy negotiations, the strikers called off their action, receiving in return permanent employment status from the government. The law also provided for the abolition of the position of assistant and instituted the hiring of scientific aides on a private-contract basis, with a possibility of an annual renewal of their term. The response of the professors was immediate: the Senate of the University of Athens, the oldest and largest in the country, resigned in unison and the professors threatened with the loss of the academic year. Amidst this climate, a draft law on tertiary education was finally tabled in September 1978. It was passed by Parliament's summer session as Law 815, «On issues regarding the organization and operation of tertiary education institutions», incorporating the plan for solving the issue of the status of assistants and readers<sup>12</sup>. The law, which, avowedly at least, targeted the modernization of education and the transition to a new period, envisaged the creation of sectors in the newly-set up University and Polytechnic of Crete, as well as in all the universities that would be founded thereafter. However, the Chair was retained in the existing universities –with the parallel institution of the sector. The law also introduced a number of arrangements concerning the years of study: the third examination period was abolished and a maximum number of years was set for the completion of studies ( $n+n/2$ , where  $n$  was the normal time for completion).

It was clear that the new law did not meet the demands that had arisen during the initial period after the fall of the dictatorship, and that its provisions lacked boldness and were conservative in relation to the prevailing dynamics inside and outside the University. Indeed, it was also much more conservative in relation to the proposals made by similar committees set up by the government itself in previous years.

The law met a negative reaction on the part of political forces, of the Center and especially of the Left, which walked out of Parliament when it was voted through. Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) leader Andreas Papandreou described it as «dynamite in the foundations of social and political normalcy»,

<sup>12</sup> Krimpas (2003, pp. 150-151); Vryhea, A., Gavroglou, C. (1982, pp. 78-83).

while the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) denounced it as aiming to dampen «the fight and struggle of university agencies»<sup>13</sup>. Student organizations affiliated to political parties also reacted vehemently, accusing the government of attempting to overcharge the curricula of studies, besides retaining the Chair and excluding assistants, readers and students from the administration of the institutions.

The reactions to the law caused rifts in the ranks of the student movement. Despite the universal opposition, there were differentiations as to the strategy that ought to be followed. In contrast to the stance of the «official» student political organizations, which insisted on the adoption of familiar forms of struggle –such as demonstrations and abstinence from lectures– formations controlled by groups of the extra-parliamentary Left adopted stronger forms of mobilizations –the most characteristic of which was the occupation of university departments–. The pro-occupation rhetoric linked the student fight with the Polytechnic uprising in November 1973 and with the big factory strikes that were characteristic of the post-dictatorship period. The occupations met with the disapproval of the parties of the parliamentary Left –the student organizations of which had a majority in the National Student Union of Greece (EFEE), the top federation of student associations–, creating a tense climate within the schools that occasionally reached the point of brawls. An even stronger rejection of the occupations came from the conservative political parties and their supporting press, which warned of a risk of anarchy<sup>14</sup>. Despite the denunciation the occupations continued, creating two different blocks –which was also shown in the annual march on the anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising, on November 17<sup>15</sup>. In December 1979, the intransigence of the government and its decision to shut universities earlier than any other year for the Christmas holidays in order to prevent further mobilizations produced the opposite result. EFEE resolved to occupy all of the country's universities until the final abolition of Law 815, eventually forcing the government to recall it.

But deliberations for the drafting of a new University organizational plan continued after the recall of the controversial law. For this purpose, the Karamanlis

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<sup>13</sup> See Bouzakis (2006, pp. 48-49).

<sup>14</sup> Characteristic criticism from conservative voices came from within the universities: in an article in the newspaper «Kathimerini» Sociology professor Ioannis Xyrotiris argued that the university had evolved from a center of freedom into a center of party politics, where students, organized into shock troops, dictated their desires on their teachers. They thus ended up denigrating the gains of modern society and being unable to discern the distance between anarchy and democracy, while the right of university asylum abetted the lack of accountability. Xyrotiris, I. (1979, Nov. 24).

<sup>15</sup> The annual march, which is still held, starts at the Polytechnic and ends at the U.S. embassy in Athens. In the initial years after the fall of the *junta*, hundreds of thousands of citizens demonstrated, chanting slogans first heard during the days of the rebellion in 1973 –the most characteristic one being, «bread, education, freedom».

government set up a committee comprising the rectors of the universities, as well as a committee comprising representatives of the professors, the assistant professors, EDP and administrative staff.

The new draft law was prepared, including several of the measures hitherto proposed concerning the creation of a unitary body of academic staff and student participation in administration. The deliberations continued after Constantinos Karamanlis moved to the presidency of the Republic and the former Minister of Education Georgios Rallis assumed the post of prime minister in May 1980. The draft law on higher education was submitted to Parliament in May 1981 but was never passed, due to PASOK's triumphant victory in the general election in October of the same year<sup>16</sup>. In the frame of «Change» which the new socialist government had annunciated, the upgrading and democratization of public education, as well as the more energetic participation of youth in public affairs were priorities of government policy. In the year following the election of Andreas Papandreou's government, the enactment of Law 1268 –the so-called «framework law»– largely constituted the watershed in higher education after the fall of the dictatorship eight years earlier. It abolished the «one-man rule» of the Chair in universities which was replaced with collective sectors, it gave assistants and readers (EDP) the conditional right of hierarchical advancement to professorial posts, and provided for student participation in the administration and operation of the University<sup>17</sup>.

In the period 1974-1981 there was a measured increase in the indices relating to university education. Along with the pre-existing higher educational institutions, two more universities began admitting students, the University of Crete and the Democritus University of Thrace, which had been founded by the *junta* in 1973 in two outlying regions of the country but had not begun operating before the fall of the dictatorship. The Technical University (Polytechnic) of Crete was founded in 1977 but first admitted students in the 1984-1985 academic year. There was an increase in the number of faculties (four new medical schools in the country as a whole, one for philosophy and one for physics/mathematics in Crete) and departments (chemistry, German language, pharmacy, geology, etc.). Individual graduate programs were also launched in disciplines such as forestry, veterinary science, information technology and agriculture. The general broadening of interest in education was reflected in a steady rise in the small segment of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) devoted to the sector, from 2.45% in 1974 to 3.3% in 1981 (Taliadouros, 1982, pp. 181, 271). A significant increase in the numbers of academic staff was also noted, linked to the creation

<sup>16</sup> Krimpas (2003, p. 151); Vryhea-Gavroglou (1982, pp. 83-85).

<sup>17</sup> See Kladis, Panousis (1984).

or expansion of new schools and departments as much as to a large number of scientists who had returned from abroad.

In 1974 it was estimated that in all Greek tertiary institutions served 707 professors, 114 readers, 124 special academic staff and 720 assistants. By 1980 the numbers had risen to 954 professors, 206 readers, 156 special scientists and 1168 assistants (Taliadouros, 1982, p. 181). Many of them were appointed in the new schools and faculties, particularly at the University of Crete.

The rise in the numbers of academic staff was evidently linked to the broadening of the student body which followed a steady pace from the 1960's to the end of the period in question. The number of registered students in higher education nearly tripled from 25,658 in the 1960-1961 academic year to 72,269 a decade later (1970-1971). The clear upward trend continued in the following years, albeit at a slower pace. In 1978-1979 the number of registered students had reached 95,899. However, these figures included a large number of «eternal», so-called, students, who remained registered but had long ceased to attend –for decades in certain cases. Characteristically, when the Education Ministry attempted a «clean-up» of sorts in the student register in 1979-1980, the number fell from 95,899 to 83,841 (Taliadouros, 1982, pp. 257, 265). Another parameter that ought to be taken into account is the sizeable Greek student emigration abroad. Thousands of young people attended undergraduate and graduate studies in foreign universities during this period, particularly in Western Europe.

The diachronic dependence of the Greek education system on central authority has been particularly marked at all levels and dimensions –ideological orientation, structure and operation. To a large extent, the periodization of its development, especially during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was determined by the watersheds in the country's political history<sup>18</sup>. Each time, educational reforms were linked to the more general government policy, leading to continuous changes, or attempts at changes. This link partly arose from the important role of education in Greek society. Despite its class character, the education system functioned without overt barriers between its separate levels<sup>19</sup>, allowing for social mobility and securing the advancement of the economically weaker classes through employment in the state apparatus. Admission to higher education was a major pursuit of the offspring of the lower social strata. This was a meeting point of, on one hand, epistemological developments –the broadening and individualization of scientific fields, the creation of new specializations– and growing requirements for social services such as health care and education, and, on the other, of the

<sup>18</sup> For a history of the Greek education system see Dimaras (2013).

<sup>19</sup> Until 1926 anyone with a school-leaving certificate could have enrolled at the University of Athens –the only one in the country– without sitting any other examination.

desire of those in power to expand higher education so as to elicit the support mainly of the younger voters and their families. The result, especially after 1981, was the creation of a multitude of new universities, faculties and departments throughout the country, as the creation of institutions such as university schools was deemed conducive to the growth of local economies.

In the diachronic development of Greek society, education held a particularly important role as one of the founding ingredients of the national identity, as a symbol of unity and continuity, as a political and democratic imperative, as a social good and as a factor of economic development. Education, as a promoting force of science and research, was considered a lever for national regeneration or rebound after crises, a formative factor of the horizon of expectations for a (hopeful) future. This multifaceted conceptualization of education was particularly depicted on higher education and the University as an institution<sup>20</sup>.

University education constituted a ground for compromises, bargaining or conflict, an institution whose development reflected the continuities and the changes, the inertias and the bold moves in education in general and its key role within Greek society. Education was seen as the springboard par excellence in all sectors of public life and the University became the central institution for testing reform policy at the political and social level.

The fall of the dictatorship in 1974 provided the fuse for higher education reform. This was a sector which, beyond the meddling of the military regime, had been formed in the period following the Greek Civil War, when the logic of the nationalist ideology and anticommunism reigned supreme. The absolute authority of the Chair was linked to the cleansing of curricula of any Marxist elements and to authoritarianism vis-à-vis the growing and increasingly radical –since the 1960's– student movement. The acquisition of a mass character by the student movement since the 1960's, combined with the dynamic resistance against the dictatorship, upset its internal balances and brought new forces to the fore. The purging of academic staff and the University of the *junta* elements was largely the result of the mobilization and pressures exercised by the student movement, with the tacit consent of the rectors and the toleration of the government. This process, unprecedented in the Greek universities, constituted the first step of a dynamic appearance of the student movement in the new era, where it now claimed its institutional participation in the administration and operation of the institutions. There were, at the same time, a series of particular demands, concerning the curricula, the introduction of new cognitive fields and the modernization of teaching. These demands were raised in multiple ways with

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<sup>20</sup> For a history of Greek tertiary education and issues about its history see Gavroglou, Karamanolakis, Barkoula (2014).



central authority. The government at first discussed these issues and adopted several of them, in the framework of the initial anti-dictatorial thrust and the reform plans introduced by liberal bourgeois intellectuals and politicians involved in the governance of the country. Later on, however, and as political forces reshaped their physiognomies, the then ruling party opted for more conservative political stances for fear of losing its political hegemony and of an erosion in its electoral strength. The aim, as pursued via Law 815, was to discipline youth by restricting examination periods and instituting a limit on the maximum years of study. The demise of the law and the retreat of the government proved both the students' resolve and the more general change in political and social conditions.

The dynamic mobilization of assistants and readers (EDP) was one more consequence of the transition to democracy. The raising of demands and their dynamic pursuit by a hitherto voiceless group of teaching staff was also the result of the end of an era –as this was signaled by the collapse of the dictatorship. The challenging of university hierarchies, the quest for equality and democratization, and the dissolution of «sacrosanct» compartments were demands that came to upset decades-old balances and meet, again, the hostility of the professorial establishment. The difference with previous instances was that this time the body of professors no longer had the power to cancel out such demands.

In a summary overview of the 1974-1981 period, one would say that there was a timid transition, as the resistance and hesitations exhibited mainly on the part of the ruling conservative New Democracy party did not permit the fulfillment of the demands of the forces that had sprang from the seven-year dictatorship and had made a dynamic claim for changes. The change in political power in 1981 brought about the most important reforms and allowed the realization of a series of demands by the new political subjects that had emerged in the 1960's and 1970's. The broadening of higher education, democratization and the active participation of the student movement in the administration of the universities were the standout features of the new era. These features, however, came under strong criticism in the context of the economic crisis and what has been described as «the end of the post-dictatorship era». But this is a different process of transition –one for a future historian to consider.

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