

Learning Organizations and Policy Transfer in the EU: Greece's State Scholarships Foundation in a Reform-resistant Context

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Abstract

In the context of policy change in the EU, lifelong-learning has acquired a growing significance due to its promise to foster both professional development and personal fulfillment and thus contribute to the enhancement of social inclusion, active citizenship, competitiveness, and employability. The need for developing a smart and sustainable economy puts greater emphasis on the efficient management of Human Resources in order to produce quality services and improve governance, especially in public administration. Education and training can play a pivotal role towards this objective, as the development of the public servants' skills and competences through an effective competent-based learning platform will contribute to the enhancement of the organization's operational and administrative capacity. Greece is a member-state in need of intensified policy transfer in general and of further developing learning organizations in particular. Focusing on Greece's State Scholarships Foundation (IKY) as a case study encourages us to explore two distinct but closely related aspects: (a) the role of the Foundation in policy transfer and the transnationalisation of policy and (b) the changes which the Foundation itself is undergoing as a learning organization. The paper suggests that viewing the transformation of public organizations into learning organizations as an instrument for policy reform may be a valuable way forward in the attempt to modernize public administration in Greece's reform-resistant context.

Keywords: learning organizations, public administration reform, lifelong learning, education and training

1. Introduction

1.1 EU Strategic Framework for the Transformation of Education Policies into Active Employment Policies

The emergence of global economic and social changes has called for the development of a European Strategy that could strengthen social cohesion, active citizenship, environmental protection, employability, but, most importantly, would assist on reaching the goal for Europe to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". A leading feature towards the achievement of this strategic goal lies on the development of education and training systems to promote growth, competitiveness and employment, as has previously been stressed in the White Paper on *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*, back in 1995. The Lisbon Strategy (2000) *should be understood as a means of transitioning the European economy, from structures in which it essentially caught up with the world's best, to establishing economic structures that will allow it to exercise economic leadership* (Kok Report, 2004, p. 8).

The Lisbon Strategy came to propose an overall strategic framework as a response to the demands of the EU Member States for a highly competitive economy strong enough to achieve innovation and competitiveness (Murphy, 2005) through a Knowledge Society, with main priorities being growth and jobs, lifelong learning as a leading feature and innovation as a vehicle for economic change, through the implementation of research initiatives (Keeling, 2006, p. 206). Said priorities were implemented with the organization of peer learning activities among Member States, experts' groups' consultation and relevant stakeholders (e.g., trade union associations, international organizations such as OECD and UNESCO) in collaboration with the European Commission (EC 2002), and were realized under the Education and Training Programme 2010 that came to

guide any educational reforms at a national level, in a transparent and public context.

Economic and social change led to the need for the development of a new agenda on social integration. The Lifelong Learning Strategy was created as an umbrella policy (in economic, technological, social and employment sectors) to achieve this goal (Aspin & Chapman, 2000). Its strategic goal was the transition towards “*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*”. Education and training has been one of the four pillars of the new Strategy which was realized under the *Education and Training Programme 2010* for the strengthening of employment with the development of ‘skills for competitiveness’ (Papadakis, 2007).

Overall, the implementation of the educational policy, in the decade 2000-2010 was based on the interchange of good practices and the development of quality assurance and accreditation tools in all education stages (Papadakis, 2006). Even though it failed to achieve most of its targets, it set the base for the development of the upcoming post-Lisbon educational strategy for the next decade, envisioned on *Education and Training 2010-2020*.

Furthermore, the adoption and active involvement of the European Union in the Bologna Process, initiated in 1999, put higher education systems at the forefront of this challenge, with higher education becoming the stimulator for economic and social development through research and innovation (Keeling, 2006, p. 206). The reforms proposed by the Bologna Process aimed at the creation of a “European Higher Education Area”, in which, national governments and higher education institutions have been encouraged to implement reform agendas with a main focus on the adoption of common conceptual approaches, in order to create a mutual zone of understanding and via recognizing and comparing academic degrees, as well as establishing common systems of transferable credits, describing qualifications (ECTS), to promoting mobility and creating common standards for quality assurance in education.

The need to develop links between a European Research Area, in the framework of the Lisbon Agenda, and the construction of a *purposeful* European Higher Education, in both economic and social terms (Keeling, 2006, p. 209), has been emphasized on all *Communiqués* of the Ministerial Conferences organized to this effect every two years. More specifically, the latest Communiqué of Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009 has set the priorities for the new decade, stressing the need for the development of equal opportunities in higher education and lifelong learning, the creation of study programmes to promote employability, the internationalization of higher education institutions and the development of “multidimensional transparency tools” that will be able to provide measurable data and indicators to achieve quality assurance.

In this way the reform agenda promoted through the Bologna Process, in the frame of the Lisbon Agenda for growth and jobs, led to the gradual transformation of education policies into active employment policies (Lavdas, Papadakis, Gidarakou, 2006, p. 132), with research being the focus priority. Under this scope, national governments are invited to perform their national reforms with the use of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in policy planning and formation, however, in the context and framework set by European education and research policies. A typical example of the OMC lays on the development of the *Education and Training 2010* work programme which has involved different activities using various working methods depending on the nature of the thematic priority addressed. The tools have involved, for instance, clusters, peer learning activities, networks, university-business partnerships and the activities under the Copenhagen process for an enhancement of the cooperation among all involved actors to create a European dimension in education and training (EC 2010). Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) have been undertaken since 2005, mainly by clusters of countries sharing a common interest in a thematic priority. The aforementioned paradigm shift, due to the supranational initiatives such as the Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna Process, clearly didn’t just concern the policy content. It was related to the policy process- architecture as well. (Papadakis 2009).

1.2 Policy Formation and Policy Transfer

The challenge for the creation of a common policy agenda on Higher Education, as a means to promote economic and social development and sustainability in society is manifested through the dynamic interaction between the EU for policy making on the one hand, and the diversity of the supranational, national and regional environments in which higher institutions are operating, with the relevant stakeholders contributing in the international learning experience through the exchange of information (Lavdas, Papadakis, Gidarakou, 2006, pp. 132-135) as well as lesson drawing, in order to pursue rational policy decisions (James, Lodge, 2003, p. 181). In Dolowitz and Marsh’s words (2000) *policy transfer is the process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangement institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies in another political setting.*

Yet this process does not only involve the voluntary adoption and diffusion of best practices and exchange of learning among Member States, with the OMC belonging to a “negotiated” or “unilaterally facilitated” form of transfer based on a horizontal exchange of knowledge between national actors through benchmarks, guidelines and targets. This process also involves a “coercive” or “hierarchical” dimension (Bulmer and Padgett, 2004, p. 103-4), for a “hard” transfer of policy tools, directives and regulations, as these are induced from the European Union to the Member States, especially in the event there are no national cases to be adopted (Radaelli, 2000, p. 26).

Policy transfer within the EU is materialized through diverse processes of multilevel character with the ultimate goal to obtain convergence among the member states (Stone 2004, p. 13). This mixture of compulsory and voluntary transfer at both supranational and national level allows for the objectives, expectations, priorities and benchmarks to meet towards the implementation of educational reforms and creates a challenge for all stakeholders, but mostly, for administrative organizations engaged in the education and training reform process, to develop and operate in the frame of skills related, flexible and adaptable organizations, or rather, learning organizations.

It is clear that policy formation and policy transfer involve actors from a variety of areas, ranging from elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats/civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs and experts, transnational corporations, think tanks, supra-national governmental and nongovernmental institutions and consultants (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000, p. 10). It is therefore a prerequisite for all components and structures of this effort to be able to develop and benefit from “routines” - those including forms, rules, procedures, conventions, technologies and strategies, as well as beliefs, frameworks and cultures (Levitt and March, 1988, p. 320) - to improve their performance by creating new ways of working and developing the new capacities needed to be able to create effective and efficient results, thus, creating learning organizations (Resnick and Hall, 1998, p. 108).

1.3 The Dimension of Learning Organizations

The concepts integrated in an efficient and innovative learning organization involve the practice of an ensemble of five disciplines, as these are described in *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* of P. Senge (1990, p. 12-13), those including System Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision and Team Learning. For Senge, the ensemble of these disciplines, integrated within the practice of an organization, can lead to the development of a new learning capacity and efficiency. The most important discipline though, and the one that integrates all five of them into a coherent body is the one related to System Thinking, for it allows the organization to become part of the system in which it has to operate and develop in. Cooperation hence, with other learning organizations, in the place of competition and fragmentation, will assist in the evolution and sustainability of the structures, theories and practices built, thus creating learning communities of commitment, having as a main objective the creation of learning environments (Kofman, Senge, 2001, p. 4). The diffusion of the experience of each organization to such a network of organizations can then be transmitted through coercive, mimetic or normative mechanisms, in the process of adapting similar experiences and routines that will allow for the ability to learn how to learn (Levitt and March, 1988, p. 330-2).

A sustainable education reform entails a learning orientation from the part of all actors engaged, from learners, teachers, school principals, and district leaders, at a regional level, to senior administrators and experts, consultants, civil servants and politicians at a national level as well as think tanks and policy makers at a supranational level, for the creation of learning communities that balance between top down and bottom up approaches, thus creating stable educational systems (Resnick, Hall, p. 114). The learning communities developed through the effective interaction among organizations of all levels, with the assistance of education activities at a macro-level, such as the European Lifelong Learning Programme (with ERASMUS for higher education or LdV for vocational training), can provide for the development of a common educational policy agenda for the EU, especially as education and training play a key role in the achievement of the Europe 2020 strategic objectives, for a smart, sustainable and inclusive development.

2. Education and Training Initiatives to Meet Labour Market Challenges

In regard to the importance of education and training as a critical factor for Europe to become “*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*”, the Communication from the Commission on “*Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*” (COM2001, 678), stressed the need for cooperation among the Member States for a transformation of the traditional education and training systems. This need for a European dimension in education and training was underlined at the Copenhagen Declaration in 2002, which also set the

priorities towards this scope. These included the promotion of mobility, transnational initiatives and transparency through the implementation of common tools and networks (Common European framework for reference for languages, Europass), dissemination policies and common credit transfer systems. Further, the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme in 2004 constituted the strategic framework in order to make education and training systems in Europe “A world reference for quality by 2010”.

A series of initiatives have been developed for meeting the challenges set by the labour market needs, through the implementation of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme. An action programme in the field of lifelong learning has been established in 2006, the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, as the successor of the Comett, Erasmus, Petra, Youth for Europe, Lingua, Eurotechnet, FORCE, Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci Programmes which ran from the early 1980's. Further actions included initiatives for vocational education and training such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

Changes in labour markets caused by the socio-economic crisis called for an updated strategic European framework on education and training. Four new strategic objectives have been set for the *New Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training* (ET2020) in the Council Conclusions of May 12, 2009 for a) making lifelong learning and mobility a reality, b) improving the quality and efficiency of education and training, c) promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship and d) enhancing creativity and innovation. The Bruges Communiqué in 2010 came to propose a new set of strategies that will lead Europe to become smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive, with the investment on high level skills through Vocational Education and Training. VET can become an important element in the targets set by “Europe 2020” for the development of a true “Innovation Union”.

The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) was established in 2006 (Decision No 1720/2006/EC), with a period of implementation of 5 years (2007-2013) and a total budget of 7 billion Euros to be allocated in four sub-programmes, which cover all levels of education and training and address all society's demands regarding the need for the development of a knowledge-based society. The LLP's four sub-programmes are: Comenius, Erasmus (*and its successor*; Erasmus for All), Leonardo da Vinci and Grundvig and are complemented by Transversal Actions and the Jean-Monnet actions.

2.1 The Coordination Management of the LLP

The coordination management of the LLP has been assigned to the Member States, at a national level, and to the Directorate General for Education and Culture for centralized actions, such as networks and large-scale projects. As per Decision No 1720/2006/EC for the establishment of an action programme in the field of lifelong learning, the National Agencies of each Member State participating in the Programme shall manage decentralized actions related to i) mobility of individuals, ii) bilateral and multilateral partnerships, iii) unilateral and national projects and iv) multilateral projects in the LLP sub-programmes. The Commission has been assigned with the coordination management of centralized actions related to i) unilateral and national projects, ii) multilateral projects and networks, iii) observation and analysis of lifelong learning policies and systems, iv) the development of material related to LLL (such as publications, statistics, surveys etc).

At a centralized level, EACEA, a public body operating in Brussels since 2006 under the supervision of the Commission, makes part of the DG for Education and Culture. It has been assigned by the European Commission with the coordination management of a number of Community actions in the fields of education and culture. It has been launched with Decision 2009/336/EC in April 20, 2009, following the Council Regulation No 58/2003 for the establishment of European Agencies in the management of certain tasks within European programmes. The assignment of certain tasks to an Agency was considered beneficial in financial and non-financial terms; however, policy-making remained the responsibility of the European Commission.

EACEA has been entrusted with the management of the Lifelong Learning, Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Culture, Youth in Action, Europe for Citizens and Media, and Cooperation Agreements in the field of higher education. Other activities of the EACEA include the coordination of the Eurydice Network for the analysis and data collection on education systems and policies in Europe and the procurement of programmes related to ICT in Education, Multilingualism and Mobility of cultural workers.

Member States have been entrusted with the implementation of the decentralized actions of LLP in their countries. Their objective aim has been to ensure the successful running of the Programme, in respect with the European and national regulations. Each Member State's National Authority responsible for the LLP has to establish or designate an appropriate structure for the implementation of the programme, including its financial procedures, hereinafter the National Agency. The National Agency shall have a legal personality in respect to the

national law. Its staff has to be adequate in number and possess professional, linguistic, ICT, administrative, management, financial and communication capacities, as well as the infrastructure required in order to cope with the Programme's requirements. The responsibilities of the Commission, the National Authorities and the National Agencies in respect to the LLP as well as the relations among them are described in the Decision of the European Commission of 26 April 2007 {EC(2007) 1807 final (non publishable)}.

2.2 Structure and Activities of the National Agency

The structure and activities of the National Agency are described in full detail in a document following as an annex the annual contractual agreement between the Commission and the Agency, namely the *Guide for National Agencies*. The Guide describes the minimum requirements of the Agencies in respect to the implementation of the LLP and it is contractually binding to them. The present analysis makes reference to the Guide for NAs for the year 2012 (LLP/NA/DIR/2011/106). The Guide is divided in seven distinctive chapters which refer to a) Standards for internal control for the Agency, b) Management of projects' lifecycle for the decentralized actions, c) Actions related to the management of centralized actions, d) Use of EU funds, e) Reporting and contractual obligations, f) Detailed role in the implementation, as per sub-programme, g) Model and Standard documents to be used (grant agreements, annexes, quality assessment forms, eligibility checklists, report forms, assessment handbooks, evaluation and assessment roadmaps, financial statements reports etc). The *Standards of internal control* aim to ensure the efficient management of EU funds as well as the Programme's good reputation. For that reason, the Agency shall provide its staff with a set of specific and binding rules on ethics and integrity which shall form the rights and obligations of each staff member towards the Agency and the Commission. Its staff shall be able to provide quality work in the areas of dissemination and exploitation of LLP's results, project evaluation and management, financial management and audit controls, human resources, office and IT management. Further, the staff shall be able to sustain constant communication with the Commission as well as to perform networking activities with National Agencies of other Member States and for that reason possess adequate knowledge on education policies both at a European and international context.

The Agency shall develop and update an organizational chart and inform the Commission on any alterations linked to the management of the LLP, such as changes in the legal representatives, management staff or the Agency's structure. The structure shall be organized in a way that facilitates internal control of the activities performed. To this respect, it is very important that an individual member of staff shall not be assigned with combinations of duties, such as advisory of applicants and evaluation of applications, authorizing of payments and reporting payments to Commission reports, or internal control with any other operational activity. The Agency shall be able to supervise activities at all operational levels and ensure there are sufficient measures to ensure continuity of business, even in the event of major catastrophic situations. All operational procedures performed by the Agency shall be included in a manual developed for this cause.

2.3 The Role of the LLP in Boosting Innovation

The global economic crisis left Europe with no alternative than to urgently try to meet the challenge to '*deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to find the path to create new jobs and to offer a sense of direction to our societies*', in José Manuel Barroso's words.

To meet this challenge, the EU expressed these three priorities in five interrelated measurable targets that need to be achieved at a national level by 2020, and which addressed issues concerning the boost of innovation, the development of quality in education, the effective use of information technologies, the application of renewable energy sources to protect the environment, the support of employability and the enhancement of social cohesion and active citizenship. These require a strong commitment from both the EU and the Member States to develop strategies and policies based on a series of integrated guidelines and country-specific recommendations. The importance of education and training is fundamental towards the achievement of the envisaged EU, for it is the prerequisite for the achievement of a strong and sustainable economy and society.

Educational policy is the scientific field focusing on the analysis of public educational and training policies and their interrelation with other public policies (macro-economic, social and employment policies). Educational policies have to take into account the reform agenda to be realized in respect to society and educational culture, the organizational capacity of the institutions that will implement the actions and probable obstacles deriving from educational practice (Ball, 1994).

In this context, the transformation of Public Organizations into Learning Organizations can support the move towards the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society. The current study will attempt to suggest an education and training plan that could assist a Hellenic State Public Organization towards the achievement of highest operational capacity and efficiency.

An intrinsic case depicting the necessity for organizations and in particular, of public organizations involved in the education and training strategy, to transform into learning organizations in order to achieve higher operational capacity, is the Hellenic State Scholarships Foundation (IKY), who, as an administrator (National Agency) of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme in the Greek area, can/ should act as a mediator between the Hellenic Public Sector and the European Commission in order to create an understanding of how can education and training assist in the achievement of excellence in Public Administration in Greece, through its transformation into a learning organization, thus assisting in the creation of an *Innovation Union*. Via its involvement in LLP management, IKY had to adapt in terms of capacity and institutional building, as well as to learn and change in terms of its own operational habitus. Did it succeed?

3. Transforming Public Administration through a Competence-based Training Plan

The need for transformation in Public Administration has acquired significant importance in respect to the ongoing transitions in economy and society, 'as organizations have been created and used to organize and facilitate human activities and achieve community goals' (Farazmand 2002). Despite the differences in administrative models and structures, there is a common understanding that reforms in Public Administration should be focused on the efficient management of Human Resources to produce high quality services and improve governance. Public servants should constantly develop their skills and competencies to cope with the new demands. To reach this goal, Public Organizations should create professional training strategies based on effective training and human resource management approaches. To this effect, Human Resource Management (HRM) is the design of formal systems in an organization to ensure effective use of employees' knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics to accomplish organizational goals and concerns issues related to recruitment, selection, training, evaluation and promotion of employees. An effective human resource strategic plan in Public Administration lies on the identification of skills needs in regard to economic, social, cultural and technological change in order to develop a long term administrative capacity that will be able to meet the challenges that arise (Papadakis 2010, Pynes 2009).

The Needs-in Skills Assessment and forecasting which will allow for the identification of needs and deficiencies in knowledge and skills has to be developed with the use of a methodological strategy based on two balanced approaches, a top down approach, which will aim at reviewing new public policies, legal framework and research studies and a bottom up approach that should be able to identify the demands in competencies for a Public Organization (Papadakis, Pechlivanides, 2010). The development of a training plan based on these approaches should be capable to lead on the transformation of Public Organizations into Learning Organizations.

To achieve this aim, a strong link between employability and education and training should be developed, which will give the basis for a competence-based learning platform. In line with the EU2020 strategic priorities {COM (2009) 647/3}, where education, research, innovation and creativity are the key features for the development of a smart and sustainable economy, a competence based training plan will provide with a more productive and efficient pattern for human resources updating of job-related skills combined with the development of new competences in order to be able to adapt to changes.

The Recommendation of 18 December 2006 (2006/962/EC) sets the reference framework on eight key competences for lifelong learning including i) communication in mother tongue, ii) communication in foreign languages, iii) mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, iv) digital competence, v) learning to learn, vi) social and civic competences, vii) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and viii) cultural awareness and expression. This set of key competences has become the base for the inquiry and identification of the key competences required from adult learning professionals in the Public Administration context. Danielle Bossaert (2009) has identified the competences of vital importance, as part of an EIPA survey on *Competences in Public Administration*. This framework of competences includes social, personal, professional, strategic and functional competence.

The aforementioned framework, combined with the organization's skills-in-needs assessment and set within a particular timeframe, should be able to develop a set of training activities to update existing skills, develop new skills, consolidate and deepen work related knowledge. Research conducted by EACEA (2010) and RCPAR (2011) support the necessity for continuing education and training through formal, informal and non-formal activities throughout the working life. Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) should implement activities leading to formal qualifications but should be always interacting with informal learning and in-service training to achieve maximum results. The combination of the three learning patterns, in interaction with policy makers and in respect to the economic and social needs should play an important role in the advancement of effectiveness of Public Administration's operational capacity and performance.

3.1 LLP as an Actor towards the Achievement of Reform in the Greek Context

In Greece, the State Scholarships Foundation (IKY) has played a key role in the development of competences that will contribute to the promotion of employability through the LLL framework. IKY was selected by the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs to coordinate and manage the LLP (and its sub-programmes, Erasmus, Leonardo, Grundtvig, Comenius and Leonardo da Vinci). The LLP is considered the most integrated response to address issues related to development, employability and social inclusion.

A study undertaken by IKY in 2010 outlined the benefits deriving from the implementation of the Programme in Greece, but revealed also the main problems and weaknesses reported during individual and focus group interviews. The study proposed a set of grounded action measures and policy initiatives towards the effective resolution of the obstacles observed. The results obtained involved the students, professors, teachers, trainers and learners that participated in the LLP but also gave input on improving IKY's operational capacity and effectiveness.

The present study focuses on the detection and identification of the training needs for the development of the skills and competencies required from IKY's staff members in the pursuit of providing high quality services while at the same time, will attempt to propose an operational plan that will be capable of meeting the ever-growing needs deriving from the implementation of the LLP sub-programmes.

A case study was selected as a tool to support the approach suggesting that Public Organizations should be transformed into Learning Organizations in order to achieve higher operational capacity. The selection of IKY as a critical case for the study was based on the rationale that it is an Organization of the Hellenic Public Sector that could be used as a "typical" case (Yin, 2003, Flyvbjerg, 2006) with the prospect of generalizing findings to other Organizations of a similar nature. This is even more so considering the fact that the Greek context has been considered reform-resistant (Lavdas, 1997) due to its limited reform capacity (Featherstone and Papadimitriou, 2008). At the same time, IKY has been considered an intrinsic case, in Stake's (1995) meaning of the term, for it provided a particular interest as the Organization being the mediator between the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs and the European Commission for the promotion of lifelong learning. This particularity gave the incentive to inquire both its uniqueness (as an Organization of the Hellenic Public Sector operating under European Commission guidelines and operational framework) and commonality, as a typical case of a Hellenic Public Organization for understanding *how* can education and training assist in the achievement of excellence in Public Administration in Greece.

The methodology used involves a composite strategy addressed through a bottom up - top down approach, with a combination of desk research. The study is complemented by a semi-structured interview with the Director of the International Scholarships Unit of IKY.

The top down approach depicts the evolution of the institutional and strategic framework for the implementation of educational policies in Europe which led to the Lifelong Learning Programme initiative. This is followed by a detailed analysis of the progress, scope and structure of the LLP, providing information on its sub-programmes' operation and activities.

The bottom up approach will present the implementation of the LLP in Greece and the specific priorities set by the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious affairs concerning the issue of lifelong learning. The Organization that has been assigned with the execution of the LLP, IKY, will be described in detail, in terms of organizational structure and operational capacity. This analysis will provide with a comprehensive view on the European and national context in which the LLP is developed.

The outcomes allow us to make comparisons with the findings of the previous research (2010) and to propose changes. The main aim is to identify the education and training activities required from IKY's staff members to ensure that it will be able to provide high quality services in the implementation of the LLP. It is envisaged that the results deriving from the current study will be proved effective for the successful operation of the LLP in Greece; however, the main scope of the study is to provide Public Organizations with a useful tool to be implemented for the identification of their staff members' education and training needs. The upskilling or reskilling of public servants could constitute a pivotal factor that could lead on the transformation of Public Organizations into Learning Organizations.

3.2 Policy Background in Greece and IKY's Development

The promotion of lifelong learning as a tool has been a major concern and a challenge for the Hellenic Ministry for Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs. To this effect, a strategic policy orientation framework has been developed, in order to increase participation to lifelong learning activities from all. The objective aim of

this strategic policy lies on the establishment of an integrated framework for the promotion of Lifelong Learning. Law 387 (Official Gazette No 163, 21/10/2010) on the *Development of Lifelong Learning*, sets the base for the foundation of lifelong learning through the recognition of alternative learning pathways, networking among the relevant stakeholders and the provision of quality assurance and transparency, in order to achieve the highest degree of relation between lifelong learning and employability. A series of government institutions have been entrusted with the development of the Lifelong Learning Strategy in Greece. At the implementation level, a National Network has been developed with the participation of Centers and Institutes for vocational education and training as well as trade union associations and relevant actors, having as a main objective the provision of activities related to initial and continuous vocational training and activities for general adult education.

The Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs is implementing the operational programme on education and training “Education and Lifelong Learning”, under the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 and is the National Authority in charge of the LLP in Greece. However, besides the efforts made for the development of an efficient Lifelong Learning Strategy in Greece, little progress has been made, as is reported in the Communication {COM (2009) 640}

IKY was established in 1951, under the scope of providing postgraduate scholarships to young scientists. From then on, IKY has been developing a series of activities aiming at the promotion of education, science and culture in compliance to the needs of the modern society. IKY, the State Scholarships provider, has been planning and implementing a wide range of scholarships programmes in Greece and abroad. Since 1987, IKY has been entrusted with the coordination management of the Erasmus, Lingua, Socrates I and II European Programmes on Education. Since 2006 (Official Gazette No 1718), IKY has been assigned as the National Agency to coordinate, manage and implement the LLP 2007-2013. This Decision provided for the coordination management of the LLP sub-programmes Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo Da Vinci, Grundtvig, the transversal programme and the Jean Monnet actions to IKY for a period of one year. The assignment has been renewed later in the Official Gazette No 1282 of July 2, 2008. The duration of IKY’s appointment as the National Agency implementing the LLP was subject to the establishment of a new public entity to be created to this effect, namely “Solon”. However, in practice, no further progress has been made on the establishment of the new entity.

IKY is supervised by the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs; however, it constitutes a separate, decentralized public entity. It possesses an organizational structure that enables it to accomplish the activities it has been entrusted with. The main decision-making body of IKY is the Board of Directors. The organizational structure of the organization is divided in three major Units, namely, the Unit for Scholarships, the Unit for International Scholarships and the Unit for Administrative and Financial Management. The Department responsible for the coordination management and execution of the LLP is the Department of European Union Programmes, which makes part of the Unit for International Scholarships. The Department of European Union Programmes is structured as per the organogram below:

Table 1. IKY’s organizational structure

STATE SCHOLARSHIPS FOUNDATION HELLENIC NATIONAL AGENCY DEPARTMENT OF EUROPEAN UNION PROGRAMMES-LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME BOARD OF DIRECTORS			
DIRECTOR HEAD OF UNIT			
INTERNAL AUDITOR	COMENIUS	L.D.V.	LEGAL ADVISER
ERASMUS	COMENIUS	L.D.V.	GRUNDTVIG-SV
Coordinator	Coordinator	Coordinator	Coordinator
Staff members	Staff members	Staff members	Staff members
FINANCES	MANAGEMENT FEES – SUPPLIES		ICT - LLP
Coordinator	Coordinator		Coordinator
Staff members	Staff members		Staff members
ADMINISTRATIVE-FINANCIAL SUPPORT			Staff categories
Director, Supervisor, Staff members			Permanent employees, Employee with indefinite contract, Transferred employee, Employee with definitive contract, Contract, Stage
			External collaborator

The organizational structure of IKY is in compliance with the regulations set by the Commission regarding the operational capacity of the National Agency implementing the LLP, as described in the *Guide for National Agencies*.

The organization and procedures of IKY, in respect to the fulfillment of the LLP, are described in detail in the *Operations and Procedures Manual of the National Agency implementing the LLP Programme*, hereinafter called the Manual. The Manual is a concrete guidance tool for the instructions that have to be followed by the organization's staff in order to achieve full accordance with the Programme's objectives and operational guidelines. These are complemented by the a) Guide to NAs, b) European Council Regulation 1605/2002, c) Hellenic Code for Public Servants Conduct N3528/2007, d) Guidelines on Public Servants' Behaviour of the Hellenic Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2007, e) Public Procurement Regulation of 2007, f) Decisions made by the IKY Board of Directors regarding aspects of operation and conduct.

IKY's operational activities are in accordance with the recommendations set by the Commission for the efficient operation of the National Agency, as these have been described in the *Guide for NAs*. As regards the selection and recruitment of staff, this shall have the linguistic, ICT, project management, communication skills and knowledge on the European framework related to education and training issues. There are several categories of personnel with permanent, temporal, contractual and traineeship positions. A number of tasks can be assigned by the Agency to external collaborators.

The Manual also provides a detailed description of the tasks and responsibilities allocated to the main operational and management positions within the organization, and more specifically in respect to the Board of Directors, its Chairman, the Director, the Internal Auditor, the Heads of Unit, the sub-programme's Coordinators (Erasmus, Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig, Transversal programme, Jean Monnet Actions), the Coordinators for Communication and Exploitation of Results, Financial Management, IT and Accountant Coordinator.

4. Assessment

4.1 European Level

A detailed account of the impact and effectiveness deriving from the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme lies on a) the information and assessment provided by the Interim Evaluation Report of the LLP 2007-2013 of February 2010 (Service Contract no 2009-5173-PPMI) which was based on the national reports provided from the 31 participating countries and further research activities conducted by the reporting committee, and b) the Report from the Commission of July 7, 2011 {COM (2011) 413 final}, which discusses the findings deriving from the Interim Report. Both reports propose recommendations on making better use of the results obtained, on enhancing the interaction between sub-programmes and actions and on developing a more efficient and effective management system.

Both reports highlight the importance of the LLP in the development of education and training in Europe but also on the lack of impact it has made in policy making and on the acquisition of skills related to employability and entrepreneurialism.

In regard to its management, it is recognized that there have been difficulties in its first years of implementation; however, progress has been made in this area. Noted is though that there is insufficient use of the electronic management tools LLP and Saykiss. The reports propose a series of recommendations for the improvement of the LLP Programme which lie on the focus that should be given in the context of the ET2020 aims and objectives. These include the integration of the implementation tools and strategies to all sub-programmes while pursuing the involvement of all stakeholders of formal, informal and non-formal learning to achieve high quality performance and key competences for all. Finally, they propose that the cooperation between EACEA and National Agencies should become closer and more concrete, while they stress the need for the administrative simplification of the finances (calculation on the basis of fixed costs). A conclusive remark lays on the development of more effective methods on the dissemination and exploitation of the results obtained and on better monitoring of the impact of LLP in policy making. To this respect, a European observatory, under the auspices of either the Directorate General for Education or EACEA, for the dissemination and exploitation of results is proposed.

4.2 Greece

An evaluation report on the impact of the LLP in the Greek context has also been carried out by IKY in 2010. The research involved individual and focus group interviews with both staff members of IKY and end users (beneficiaries) along with desk research (comprehensive study of EU documents, lifelong learning strategies,

LLP yearly reports and workprogrammes).

The report emphasized on the beneficial effects deriving from the implementation of the LLP, mostly in respect to the elaboration of those skills and competences leading to personal and professional development, thus promoting social integration. Further, the functional input suggested remedies to ameliorate the operational capacity of IKY, such as the use of good practices and the setting up of networks operating as a “pool of knowledge”.

The weaknesses observed focused on the bureaucratic problems deriving from the centralized nature of the Public Administration in Greece. Suggested was that IKY obtains an upgraded role, in institutional and operational level.

4.3 Inside View

The Director of the International Scholarships Unit, Department of European Programmes of IKY, Mr Fotios Athanasopoulos pointed out that IKY is trying to implement a highly demanding project being a Public Organization in Greece that has to operate in terms of a European Organization, which has not always proved an easy task. However, the operational procedures of the LLP are common for all National Agencies and described in detail in the *Guide for NAs* and the *Annual Grant Agreements*, for that reason, a Member State who wishes to participate in the Programme has no alternative but to comply with the requirements necessitated.

Mr Athanasopoulos acknowledged that the skills and competencies of the management personnel play an important role in the implementation of the LLP, however, he pointed out that formal qualifications and experience would not be sufficient for the workflow if the employees did not have increased zeal and love for what they do.

The Organization, realizing the necessity for its staff members' constant upskilling and reskilling is participating or organizing thematic seminars at a regular basis. For 2011 those included the training in the INEP-GSEE (Trade Union Association) and the organization of a seminar on educational policies and structures in Europe. Similar training activities have also been planned for 2012. The development of a systematic training policy, focusing not only on the Organization at a systemic level, but efficient enough to cover tailored needs (a competence-based training system) is considered of outmost importance.

4.4 The Development of a Training Strategy for IKY

The development of a competence based training plan shall have measurable indicators for Human Resource development; be associated with a particular timeframe in which it will be reviewed and updated; have sufficient documentation as to why each training action is provided (Papadakis, Pehlivanides, 2010).

Under this general guideline, the identification of the skills and competencies that need to be upgraded for IKY was based on a) the results deriving from the Interim and Commission Reports for 2007-2009, b) the impact analysis of the LLP in the Greek context, c) the interview with the Director of IKY's International Scholarships Unit and d) the job descriptions, as described in the *Operations and Procedures Manual of the National Agency implementing the LLP Programme* (Manual for IKY).

Based on the above, the tasks and activities performed for the implementation of the LLP from IKY can be divided in four distinct but interrelated categories, in respect to the competences framework suggested by D. Bossaert (2009) and which refers to social-personal-professional-strategic and functional competences:

Coordination, Leadership, which entails the efficient execution of tasks related to evidence-based policy making, strategic planning, evaluation and allocating of staff and necessitates knowledge of business management, legal framework and education policies at a European and National level.

Systematization, Teamwork, involves tasks related to the Organization's scope and procedures, resource management, problem solving, simplification of bureaucratic procedures and collaboration and requires efficient knowledge of administrative and financial procedures, analytical thought and problem solving capacity, communication skills, time management, and language and information technologies competence.

Customer Services, Networking, Communication, is related to the organization of promotion/dissemination/information activities, counseling, communication with the public and networking with National Agencies in other Member States and other stakeholders and requires high level communication skills, in Greek and in foreign languages, social competence and non-discrimination values, organizational skills to meet strict deadlines, and efficient use of information technologies.

Technical and Administrative tasks refer to technical support, both in hardware, software and technical assistance (for meetings, conferences etc), use of accounting software and electronic management tools.

The successful implementation of the tasks described above requires knowledge of information technologies and software, technical skills, competent foreign language use, and organizational skills.

This list of tasks sets a useful guide for the development of a training programme that will update the existing skills but also develop and consolidate related knowledge. Proposed is a training plan that will be reviewed and updated every calendar year and which will focus on the organization of relevant seminars, participation in European Commission information, dissemination activities, and in-service training at a regular basis.

This set of actions can be complemented by the participation in seminars for the development of key competences, such as language and ICT use, and administrative development. In addition, a meeting among each Department's staff members is proposed on a monthly basis. The proposed training plan aims at highlighting the key competences required for the implementation of the LLP by IKY in order to increase its operational capacity and administrative efficiency but also sets the requirements that will be necessitated for the successful management of the future lifelong learning Programme, Erasmus for all, which will start on 2014 and which will demand equally and even increased management efficiency on the part of the National Agencies.

5. Conclusions: Learning Organizations and Policy Transfer in Reform-resistant Contexts

In the context of Europeanization conceived as an interactive process of policy transfer, policy impact, and policy feedback (Lavdas, 1997), the transformation of domestic public organizations has acquired key roles in national context in need of administrative reform. Transforming public organizations into learning organizations in order to achieve excellence in Public Administration has gained popularity in the organization management policies (Maden, 2011). The development of specific education and training programmes towards this scope within each Organization and in respect to its specific operational needs is considered a prerequisite to be accomplished.

Greece has recently acknowledged the need to effectively transform its Public Administration system so that it can adapt to the modern society and labour market needs. Many efforts have been made for reaching this goal; however, the results from this effort have not yet been fully visible. More generally, the Greek context has been considered reform-resistant (Lavdas, 1997) due to its limited reform capacity (Featherstone and Papadimitriou, 2008). Focusing on IKY, we witness a public organization that has to operate within a fully European context; for that reason, one response has been to define clearly and describe in detail its structure and operational procedures in order to guarantee effectiveness. The training plan proposed in this study has taken into account the needs-in skills of its staff members to successfully carry out the Organization's responsibilities not only towards the Commission, but also in respect to the Greek society.

The Organization's success in the implementation of the LLP has been largely based on the expertise and devotion of its staff members, hence the need for upskilling and reskilling has been a priority. Several initiatives are taken towards the achievement of this goal every year, with the organization of thematic seminars or the participation on training activities. However, even though a systematic education and training strategy focusing on IKY's specific needs is considered a key factor for its successful operation, it has yet not been developed, mostly due to the lack of resources required. IKY however has made serious efforts towards the identification of its training needs and is planning to work towards the development and implementation of a sustainable training strategy.

In this regard, it is considered that every Organization of the Hellenic Public Sector should be given the opportunity to make an individual assessment of its operational needs and under this scope develop education and training plans that would be in compliance to its specific objectives. Greece is implementing a centralized governance approach in public administration which is providing the strategic goals, general objectives and framework for the State; it is suggested though that some level of decentralization should be applied within each public sector unit in order to meet its individual needs and goals. A decentralized approach will be allowing for a higher level of adaptability to different tasks and may lead to different approaches and exchange of good practices (Bossaert, 2009).

There has been considerable emphasis in the policy literature on the ways in which Greece's limited reform capacity hinders Europeanization. Featherstone and Papadimitriou (2008) suggest that the systemic nature of the main problems identified in their own case studies is ultimately linked to interest politics and the structural power of key domestic actors. The present paper suggests that viewing the transformation of public organizations into learning organizations as an instrument for policy reform may be a valuable way forward in the attempt to modernize public administration in Greece's reform-resistant context.

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