

A Missed Opportunity for Transformation? Examining the Greek Educational System's Alignment with the UNESCO Post-Pandemic Education Proposals

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Abstract - This study examines how far the Greek educational system aligned with the nine proposals of UNESCO for post-pandemic education. It draws on policy documents, official reports, and international data to assess areas such as education as a common good, access and digital connectivity, teacher collaboration, student participation, school as a social space, open-source technologies, scientific literacy, public financing, and global solidarity. The analysis reveals a mixed and uneven picture. Only a few proposals were partially addressed, including digital education policies, open educational resources, and international cooperation. Most proposals lacked substantive progress or moved backwards. Education as a common good was weakened by the creation of private universities. Teacher collaboration and student participation remained institutionally stagnant. The school's social function was not adequately protected during digitalization. Scientific literacy declined and public education remained underfunded. The discussion argues that Greece's pandemic response was largely reactive and incremental rather than transformative. Long-standing cultural individualism, structural inertia, fiscal limits, and policy paths favoring digitalization and internationalization over equity restricted change. The case shows that crises do not automatically transform education. They require deliberate collective decisions, which in this instance were largely absent or ineffective.

Key Words: *crisis, education, Greece, pandemic, UNESCO*

1. INTRODUCTION

Every crisis constitutes an opportunity to transform the existing mode of operation of social systems. Under conditions of normality, system weaknesses are overlooked, considered of minor importance, and are often insufficient to mobilize the forces of change. In a crisis, weaknesses become apparent, and people's willingness to transition toward a more sustainable and effective model drives the forces of change [1].

At the heart of the change process, therefore, are people and their decisions. Indeed, it would be incorrect to assume that a crisis deterministically causes change. This reflection was highlighted by Klaus Schwab, who during the COVID-19 pandemic was the Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum. In the book "The Great Reset," co-authored with Thierry Malleret, concerns are expressed regarding whether the pandemic, as a crisis, would drive social systems, including the educational system, toward structural changes. As they pointed out, it was not certain that the pandemic would lead to a fairer model of development, although they expressed optimism in that direction, placing the collective decisions of human societies themselves at the center [2].

Educational systems have always evolved through crises, whether these primarily concerned the educational system itself or society in general. In 1957, the US was defeated in the space race by the Soviet Sputnik. Amidst this situation, the educational system changed rapidly, placing great emphasis on STEM education [3]. In Japan, the Meiji reform took place in 1868, amidst chronic famines and peasant uprisings, as the country realized the need for modernization and the establishment of a centralized national educational system [4]. In the same country, the Fukushima disaster in 2011 led to the integration of natural disaster education into the school curriculum [5]. The crisis thus highlights the weaknesses of an existing operating model and serves as the starting point for change.

During the pandemic, UNESCO [6] envisioned a post-pandemic education that would not return to the previous state, but would be radically redefined with a focus on human interaction, well-being, and global solidarity, utilizing the crisis as an opportunity to build a more just, sustainable, and peaceful future. The nine proposals for public action proposed through the International Commission on the Futures of Education were the following: 1) Commit to strengthen education as a common good, 2) Expand the definition of the right to education so that it addresses the importance of connectivity and access to knowledge and information, 3) Value the teaching profession and teacher collaboration, 4) Promote student, youth and children's participation and rights, 5) Protect the social spaces provided by schools as we transform education, 6) Making free open-source technologies available to teachers and students, 7) Ensuring scientific literacy within

the curriculum, 8) Protect domestic and international financing of public education, and 9) Advance global solidarity to end current levels of inequality.

Table-1: UNESCO proposals for post-pandemic education

Proposal for public action	Description
1. Commit to strengthen education as a common good	Strengthening public commitment to education as a common good, with emphasis on inclusion, solidarity, and individual and collective well-being. Education should be regarded as a fundamental means of reducing inequalities and promoting the common good.
2. Expand the definition of the right to education so that it addresses the importance of connectivity and access to knowledge and information	Expanding the concept of the right to education so that it responds to changing social conditions, lifelong learning and, particularly, the importance of access to knowledge, information, and digital connectivity.
3. Value the teaching profession and teacher collaboration	Recognizing the professional expertise of teachers and creating conditions that provide them with autonomy and flexibility, so that they can collaborate, innovate, and respond creatively to educational needs.
4. Promote student, youth and children's participation and rights	Active participation of students, children, and young people in shaping the changes that concern them. Their participation in decisions about the future of education should be a fundamental element of the democratic process and not an afterthought.
5. Protect the social spaces provided by schools as we transform education	Maintaining the school as a distinct physical and social space, different from the home and other forms of learning. Despite the development of distance and hybrid education, the social relationships, interaction, dialogue, and collective life provided by the school are considered irreplaceable.

6. Make free and open source technologies available to teachers and students	Promoting open educational resources, open platforms, and technologies that can be used at no cost. Public education should not depend on digital platforms of private companies or on ready-made educational content that limits pedagogical autonomy.
7. Ensure scientific literacy within the curriculum	Strengthening scientific literacy and developing a curriculum with strong humanistic objectives. Particular emphasis is placed on addressing misinformation and fake news, as well as developing students' ability to distinguish knowledge, scientific evidence, and information.
8. Protect domestic and international financing of public education	Protecting and strengthening the funding of public education by national governments and international organizations. UNESCO points out the risk that the economic consequences of the pandemic and fiscal austerity may widen educational inequalities, particularly to the detriment of vulnerable populations.
9. Advance global solidarity to end current levels of inequality	Strengthening international cooperation, multilateralism, and global solidarity, with a focus on shared humanity and addressing social, economic, and gender inequalities. The pandemic highlighted the interdependence of societies and the need for collective action to address global problems.

For Greece, the outbreak of the pandemic almost coincided with the transition into a new era, namely the exit from fiscal adjustment programs and the debt crisis. The Pissarides Committee Report [7], a key strategic policy blueprint for post-bailout Greece, emphasized the need to modernize and digitize education. The Greek educational system was therefore in a phase of transformation emerging from the period of the economic crisis, with the pandemic presenting a new challenge for it. Within this context, the objective of the present analysis is to examine the extent to which the Greek educational system aligned with the UNESCO [6] proposals for education in the post-pandemic reality.

2. MAIN BODY

2.1 Commit to Strengthen Education as a Common Good

The first proposal of UNESCO is concerned with strengthening public commitment to education as a common good. In reality, this involves a shift in mindset, specifically changing the belief that education is identical to a mechanism of individual social mobility, a belief that has always been pervasive in the Western world and is found to a very high degree in Greek society as well [8]. In Greece, the individual-centric nature of education continued in the period after the end of the pandemic, and it could not be considered that steps of progress were made toward viewing it as a common good. The class-based possibility of participation in the educational system intensified in the post-pandemic period as a result of the operation of private universities for the first time in Greek history. Specifically, starting from the 2025–2026 academic year, private universities operated for the first time in Greece, which were of course non-profit in character. However, it cannot be overlooked that private universities heighten inequalities of access to education, leading to significant individual opportunities for the wealthy, a fact that certainly distances education from being viewed as a common good.

Education as a common good could be considered to presuppose a society characterized by specific traits. Based on Hofstede's theory [9], a population is classified with respect to its collective psychological characteristics along various axes, one of which is collectivism versus individualism. In Greece, the shift away from collective organization and the move toward an individual-centric structure of society had been occurring progressively for decades, in line with the broader trend observed in Western societies [10]. Therefore, the pandemic as a stimulus alone would not suffice to reverse a broader culturally driven trend, despite the necessity for change.

2.2 Expand the Definition of the Right to Education

The above data concern the broader perception regarding the collective character of education and how this is reflected in public policy. Conversely, expanding the right of access could be considered something more tangible and objective. As mentioned above, private universities constituted a change for the Greek educational system, functioning simultaneously as a factor that both strengthened and restricted the right to education. The right to education was thus strengthened by offering the possibility of choosing more options for higher education studies, but at the same time, it acquired a deeply class-based character.

In lower tiers of education, the issue of equal access remains particularly acute for vulnerable populations, such as the Roma population, whose position in the Greek educational system clearly reflects the limits of expanding the right to education. According to the most recent comparative

study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Roma Survey 2024, which systematically compares data with the previous waves of 2016 and 2021, Greece exhibits, in contrast to the broader European trend of gradual improvement, a worsening or stagnation in key indicators. Specifically, the completion rate of upper secondary education in the 20–24 age group shows a downward trend, while school segregation—namely, Roma students attending schools where the majority or all of their classmates are also Roma—has intensified from 2016 to the present day. At the same time, the rate of young people not in education, employment, or training remains essentially unchanged. The only area in which the study records a positive development for Greece is the reduction of discrimination experienced by Roma during their contact with educational institutions, whereas at the pan-European level, the corresponding percentage increased significantly over the same period [11].

Access to education for refugee and migrant children in Greece followed a sharply undulating, non-linear course in recent years, with the pandemic acting as a turning point. Before the pandemic, in June 2019, 12,867 refugee children were enrolled in public education, a number that collapsed to 8,637 by March 2021 [12], while 86% of children in reception facilities remained entirely out of school during the 2020–21 school year, with only 7 out of 2,100 school-aged children on the islands attending classes [13]. Immediately following the lifting of restrictive measures, a sharp record recovery occurred, with 16,417 enrollments in April 2022—a 35% increase compared to the previous year, mainly due to the integration of refugee children from Ukraine [14]. However, this improvement primarily concerned formal enrollments rather than meaningful attendance, as starting as early as the 2022–23 school year, approximately three-quarters of enrolled children eventually dropped out of school, with only 8.16% of secondary school students advancing normally, a development attributed in part to the closure of the ESTIA housing program and the relocation of families to remote facilities [15]. This deterioration continued at the level of actual attendance as well, given that the percentage of school-aged children living with their families who were regularly attending class dropped sharply from 74% in 2023 to just 57% in 2024 [16], while even in the most recent 2024–25 school year, out of the 17,195 enrolled children, only 15,538 were recorded as actively attending, representing a dropout rate of roughly 10% even among those already enrolled [17]. This picture shows that, in contrast to the formal expansion of the right to access through increased enrollments, meaningful attendance remains structurally fragile and dependent on factors such as housing, transportation, and the operation of reception classes, resulting in the gap between formal and meaningful access to education persisting even years after the end of the pandemic.

In post-pandemic Greece, the expansion of the right to education toward lifelong learning and digital access is reflected primarily at the institutional and programmatic policy level. The Ministry

of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports developed the Action Plan for Digital Education 2021–2027, which explicitly recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted both the opportunities and the challenges of using technology for educational purposes on an unprecedented scale. Through this plan, the Ministry set targets to enhance digital skills from a young age, foster digital literacy—including combating misinformation—and develop high-quality, inclusive digital education [18]. Specific actions fall under this framework, such as the "Digital Care" and "Digital Care II" programs, which were funded through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0" and subsidized over half a million school pupils, university students, and trainees with €200 vouchers for purchasing technological equipment, precisely to ensure access to knowledge and information regardless of financial capacity [19]. Along the same lines is the "Digital School" platform (digitalschool.gov.gr), which provides 15,000 digital learning objects and operates a "Digital Supplementary Tutoring" service with live lessons for 12th-grade students [20]. Concurrently, in the field of lifelong learning, the same Ministry submitted a policy directions document for public consultation entitled "Toward a New Lifelong Learning Policy in Greece," which attempts to ensure quality across the entire spectrum of non-formal adult education, recognizing lifelong learning as a constituent element of the right to education rather than a supplementary activity [21].

However, this official expansion of the right conflicts with a persistent digital divide that restricts meaningful access to information and knowledge for specific social groups. According to a study by the National Centre for Social Research, while internet use among school and university students is almost universal, the rates drop significantly among groups such as individuals engaged in domestic duties (32.8%) or those unable to work (33.3%), indicating that digital inequality is not merely an infrastructure issue, but also one of social standing [22]. Therefore, the right has expanded among students, but not more broadly within Greek society.

2.3 Value the Teaching Profession and Teacher Collaboration

Regarding this specific proposal, it is evident that Greece lags behind to a very large extent. From the outbreak of the economic crisis onward, the country turned to staffing school units largely on the basis of substitute teachers in order to curb costs for the educational system [23]. This situation appears to have become permanent, and no significant changes occurred in the period after the end of the pandemic [24]. In Greece, there are also some initiatives aimed at promoting collaboration among teachers. For example, there are the Environmental Education Centers, staffed by teachers who collaborate with those from schools conducting related visits. However, no new

relevant initiatives can be identified in the post-pandemic period to an extent that could be considered a substantive change.

2.4 Promote Student, Youth and Children's Participation and Rights

Regarding the participation and rights of students, youth, and children, limited or essentially no change has been observed in this field. The institutional mechanism for student participation in Greek secondary education, the "student communities," continues to be governed by the Operating Regulations of 1982/1986, which remain virtually unchanged even after the pandemic. This is an institution with a purely advisory role toward the teachers' council, where the student has the right to express an opinion, vote, and participate in regular assemblies, but without meaningful decision-making authority over issues that affect them [25].

2.5 Protect the Social Spaces Provided by Schools as we Transform Education

In post-pandemic Greece, available data show a picture of reinforcement, at the level of official discourse and psychoeducational practice, regarding the perception of the school as an irreplaceable social space, despite the now permanent presence of digital tools. As early as 2020, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with a team of school psychologists under C. Hatzichristou, published the guide "Return to School," which placed at the center of post-pandemic priorities not academic catch-up, but the psychosocial adjustment and recovery of students—specifically the restoration of those precise elements (social relationships, daily interaction with peers and educators) that distance learning could not replace [26].

Despite the above, it could not be said that these efforts were successful. Besides, already during the pandemic period, the development of a significant confusion between the physical and digital environment had been correctly predicted. That is, a hypothesis was formulated that students of the COVID generation would not be able to clearly distinguish those temporal moments of transition from the digital environment to the physical one in a manner comparable to individuals of previous generations [27]. Today, significant issues exist in Greece, such as intense cyberbullying [28, 29] and student addiction to new technologies. Currently, long-term longitudinal data comparing elements before and after the pandemic are lacking—a situation to be expected given the relatively recent awareness of these problems and the subsequent scientific research. However,

the scale and extent of these issues lead to the conclusion that the digitization of education in Greece constitutes a transitional period where the school as a social space has not been protected, leaving room for violence and addiction on the basis of the very mediums used during the transition process.

2.6 Make Free and Open Source Technologies Available to Teachers and Students

The provision of free and open-source technologies in Greek education appears to have been partially achieved. On the state level, the Ministry of Education has developed—through the CTI Diophantus—"Photodentro," a nationwide digital repository of educational software that collects and provides freely to teachers and students software and educational material developed or adapted within the framework of Ministry projects from 1998 to the present day, with the aim of gathering, uploading, describing, and broadly distributing to schools, teachers, and students educational software and packages that were developed, adapted, or localized within the framework of Ministry of Education projects [30]. Concurrently, the Ministry itself has also proceeded with specialized distributions of open-source software for all school categories in support of teaching with modern educational software across all levels, while civil society organizations, such as the Open Technologies Alliance, complementarily promote open-source educational material and solutions, such as operating systems designed specifically for students [31].

However, in practice, public education has not freed itself from the digital platforms of private companies, as Microsoft extensively and essentially freely provides Office 365 to Greek educational institutions, with many schools, both public and private, adopting it as a core tool for teaching and collaboration [32]. Consequently, although a institutionalized infrastructure for open educational resources exists, the goal of full independence of public education from commercial platforms does not seem to have been achieved, given that open-source solutions function more as a complement to rather than a replacement for private products.

2.7 Ensure Scientific Literacy within the Curriculum

The targeting toward enhancing scientific literacy in the Greek curriculum has not been achieved, as confirmed by the most recent OECD PISA 2025 report [33], a study published on September 8,

2026. Greece's average performance in 2025 remained at roughly the same levels as in 2022 in Mathematics and Science, while it declined in Reading. However, even in Science and Mathematics, performance was lower than in 2018 or in any previous assessment. Particularly alarming is that, compared to 2015, the proportion of low-performing students (below Level 2 proficiency) increased by 8 percentage points in Science, 14 points in Mathematics, and 17 points in Reading, indicating a steadily negative trend over the last decade. Students in Greece scored below the OECD average in all three subjects, as well as in computational problem solving. Specifically in Science, only 59% of students in Greece reached Level 2 or higher, compared to an OECD average of 74%, while only 1% were top performers (Level 5 or 6), compared to 7% in the OECD, meaning that the ability to creatively and autonomously apply scientific knowledge in unfamiliar situations remains extremely rare.

Beyond purely scientific knowledge, the report's data also highlight the system's inability to cultivate critical information assessment skills, which are directly linked to tackling misinformation. In Reading, only 1% of students in Greece reached Level 5 or higher—the level at which students can comprehend lengthy texts, manage abstract concepts, and distinguish fact from opinion based on implicit cues regarding the content or source of information—compared to an OECD average of 6%. Furthermore, in the environmental science component, only 54% of students in Greece reached the baseline level of proficiency, compared to an OECD average of 74%, while it is also worth noting that only 34% of students in Greece reported using AI chatbots for learning at least once a week, compared to 46% in the OECD, suggesting a limited systematic integration of skills for evaluating digital/AI-generated content into teaching practice. Overall, the PISA 2025 data confirm that not only has an enhancement of scientific literacy not been achieved, but the situation is deteriorating over time, while the skills of distinguishing fact from opinion and evaluating information—the core of addressing misinformation—remain among the most underdeveloped pan-Europeans.

2.8 Protect Domestic and International Financing of Public Education

At the end of the pandemic, Greece's spending on education was particularly limited. Based on Eurostat data from 2023 (the most recent data published), the pan-European average expenditure on education amounted to 4.7% of GDP. In Greece, this percentage was merely 3.3%. Greece was therefore the third country from the bottom in terms of budget expenditure percentage, followed only by Croatia (3%) and Romania (3%). Indicatively, expenditure in the most developed states of the European Union, and especially in the Scandinavian countries, was almost double compared to

Greece [34]. It is noteworthy that in Greece, spending on education traditionally hovered around these levels even in the era of "prosperity" prior to the economic crisis [35]. Consequently, with the end of the pandemic, the underfunding of education continued—a worrisome fact during a period when the needs for investment in new technologies and in training students and teachers in them surfaced.

2.9 Advance Global Solidarity to End Current Levels of Inequality

Following the end of the pandemic, the Greek educational system developed significant activity in the field of international cooperation, responding to the need for global solidarity and tackling inequalities. New international school networks were established in the country, such as "SI.MA.-A.E.P.", connecting 1,400 schools from Greece and the Diaspora [36]. In higher education, remarkable developments include the organization of the "Pharos" Summit to strengthen collaborations between Greek universities and 30 top American universities [37], as well as the implementation of the joint master's program "One Health Education for Global Sustainability" by the University of Ioannina in collaboration with the American universities University of Florida and George Mason University [38]. These initiatives, many of which are funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility, demonstrate in practice the country's commitment to promoting international solidarity through education [39].

3. DISCUSSION

The present analysis reveals a mixed and highly uneven picture regarding the alignment of the Greek educational system with the UNESCO [6] proposals for post-pandemic education. Of the nine proposals, only a small number could be considered even partially addressed. Specifically, Proposal 2, concerning the expansion of the right to education with an emphasis on connectivity and access to knowledge, saw movement at the level of official policy through the Action Plan for Digital Education 2021–2027 and programs such as "Digital Care" [18]. Proposal 6, on making free and open-source technologies available, was also partially achieved through the Photodentro repository and civil society initiatives [18, 31]. Proposal 9, on advancing global solidarity, witnessed notable activity through international school networks and university partnerships [36]. However, the majority of the UNESCO proposals were either not covered or saw developments in the opposite direction. Proposals 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8 largely lacked substantive progress, with Proposal 1 even moving backwards due to the establishment of private universities, and Proposal 2 exhibiting a contradictory character, as the formal expansion of access was undermined by a persistent digital divide and class-based stratification.

A central explanation for the failure to strengthen education as a common good (Proposal 1) lies in the deep-seated cultural and structural individualism of Greek society, which predates the pandemic and proved resistant to change. As the analysis notes, the individual-centric nature of education persisted after the pandemic, and the operation of private universities for the first time in Greek history intensified class-based access, distancing education further from being viewed as a common good. This can be attributed to a broader culturally driven trend toward individualism in Western societies [10]. The decision to permit private universities can be interpreted as a policy choice that prioritized market-based expansion over equity, reflecting a political economy of education that favors individual mobility over collective benefit. This suggests that the ideological underpinnings of educational policy in Greece remain anchored in a paradigm that the pandemic did not fundamentally challenge, and the crisis was not utilized as a transformative moment for reimagining education's social purpose.

The partial success of Proposal 2, expanding the right to education, exposes a critical gap between formal access and meaningful participation. While digital education programs and lifelong learning policy documents indicate institutional commitment [20-21], the lived reality for vulnerable populations tells a different story. Roma students continue to face segregation and limited access [11], and refugee children experienced a collapse in enrollment during the pandemic followed by a recovery that was largely formal rather than substantive, with dropout rates remaining high and attendance deteriorating [12, 15]. The digital divide further restricts meaningful access [22]. These failures can be attributed to structural factors such as housing instability, transportation barriers, and the absence of targeted support for marginalized groups. The gap between policy and implementation suggests that the Greek state's capacity to translate formal rights into substantive rights is constrained by fiscal limitations and a lack of integrated social policy. The pandemic highlighted these weaknesses but did not generate sufficient pressure to overcome them.

The stagnation in valuing the teaching profession and teacher collaboration (Proposal 3) and in promoting student participation (Proposal 4) reflects long-standing institutional rigidities that the crisis failed to disrupt. The reliance on substitute teachers as a cost-saving measure, which became permanent, indicates a fiscal rationale that subordinates educational quality to budgetary constraints [23, 24]. The unchanged 1982/1986 regulations governing student communities, with their purely advisory role, reveal a deeply embedded hierarchical culture that resists democratization [25]. The absence of new initiatives in these areas post-pandemic suggests that the crisis did not generate sufficient bottom-up demand or top-down political will for change. This can be attributed to the low priority assigned to these issues by policymakers, who may perceive them as less urgent than infrastructure or digitalization. It may also reflect the weak bargaining

power of teachers and students in the Greek political system, where educational reform is often driven by external pressures rather than internal demands for empowerment.

The failure to protect the school as a social space (Proposal 5) despite official discourse to the contrary illustrates a disconnect between psychoeducational intentions and actual outcomes. The "Return to School" guide prioritized psychosocial adjustment over academic catch-up [26], yet the rise in cyberbullying and technology addiction indicates that the school's social function was not adequately safeguarded during the digital transition [28, 29]. The confusion between physical and digital environments predicted during the pandemic [27] appears to have materialized, with the very mediums used for educational continuity becoming vectors for new forms of violence and dependency. This outcome can be attributed to a lack of long-term planning and longitudinal research, as well as an overreliance on digital tools without sufficient attention to their social consequences. The Greek system appears to have adopted technology rapidly but without the necessary safeguards or pedagogical frameworks to mitigate its risks, leaving students vulnerable and the school's social role diminished.

The underfunding of education (Proposal 8) and the persistent failure to enhance scientific literacy (Proposal 7) are closely intertwined and reflect a systemic neglect of investment in human capital. Greece's expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP remained among the lowest in the EU, even after the pandemic [34, 35], which severely constrained the capacity to implement the ambitious goals of the other proposals. The PISA 2025 results show declining performance and a high proportion of low-performing students, with only a small percentage reaching top proficiency levels [33]. This can be attributed to chronic underfunding that predates the economic crisis, suggesting that education has never been a top fiscal priority in Greece. The pandemic, rather than prompting increased investment, coincided with fiscal austerity and competing demands, further squeezing educational budgets. The lack of scientific literacy and critical thinking skills also reflects curricular and pedagogical shortcomings that funding alone cannot address, indicating a need for deeper systemic reform that the crisis did not catalyze.

The partial achievement of Proposal 6, concerning open-source technologies, reveals a tension between public provision and private sector dominance. While the state developed open educational resources, the pervasive use of Microsoft Office 365 in Greek schools suggests that public education has not achieved independence from commercial platforms [32]. This can be attributed to the convenience, familiarity, and network effects of proprietary software, as well as the limited capacity of open-source alternatives to match their functionality and support. The reliance on private platforms raises concerns about data sovereignty, long-term costs, and pedagogical autonomy, yet it persists because the state has not invested sufficiently in building and

maintaining robust open-source ecosystems. The pandemic accelerated digitalization but did so in a way that entrenched existing dependencies rather than fostering autonomy, reflecting a broader pattern in Greek public policy where short-term pragmatism often outweighs long-term strategic goals.

Finally, the activity surrounding Proposal 9, advancing global solidarity, stands out as an area of relative progress, with international networks and partnerships demonstrating Greece's commitment to cooperation [36-39]. However, this success can be partly attributed to the availability of external funding, particularly from the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which incentivized international engagement. This raises questions about the sustainability of these initiatives beyond the funding cycle. It also highlights a paradox: while Greece can mobilize resources for international solidarity, it struggles to address domestic inequalities, such as those affecting Roma and refugee children. This suggests that global solidarity may be pursued more readily when it aligns with national prestige and external funding opportunities, rather than as part of a coherent strategy to reduce inequality at home. The crisis thus revealed a selective openness to international cooperation that did not translate into a more equitable domestic educational system.

Overall, the discussion suggests that the Greek educational system's response to the pandemic was largely reactive and incremental, rather than transformative. The crisis exposed existing weaknesses but did not generate the collective will or political commitment to address them fundamentally. The proposals that saw progress were those that aligned with pre-existing policy trajectories, such as digitalization and internationalization, or those that could be implemented without challenging entrenched interests or requiring significant new funding. The proposals that languished were those that demanded a rethinking of education's social purpose, greater equity, and increased investment, areas where the pandemic's shock was insufficient to overcome structural inertia, cultural individualism, and fiscal constraints. The Greek case thus illustrates that crises are not automatically transformative; they require deliberate collective decisions to redirect systems toward more just and sustainable models, decisions that in this instance were largely absent or ineffective.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis finds that Greece's post-pandemic educational system aligned only partially with the UNESCO proposals, with progress limited mainly to digital access policies, open-source educational resources, and international cooperation. Most proposals saw little substantive change or moved backwards, particularly regarding education as a common good, teacher valuation, student

participation, scientific literacy, and public financing. These outcomes are explained by deep-rooted cultural individualism, institutional rigidities, fiscal constraints, and a crisis response that was largely reactive rather than transformative. However, the study has limitations: it relies mostly on secondary sources, lacks primary qualitative data from teachers, students, and policymakers, and offers limited longitudinal evidence on long-term effects, especially for vulnerable groups. It is also nationally focused, making systematic comparison difficult, and some recent policy developments remain too new to assess fully. Future research should therefore use mixed methods, track student cohorts over time, compare Greece with other European countries, examine the political economy of reform and external funding, and evaluate digital education programmes, cyberbullying, student well-being, teacher collaboration, and student participation. Such work would clarify why some proposals advanced while others stagnated and help identify more equitable and sustainable policy pathways.

The practical implications are clear for policymakers, educators, and civil society. Crises do not automatically transform education; they require deliberate collective decisions, sustained political commitment, and long-term strategic planning. Digitalisation cannot substitute for substantive investment in human capital, social infrastructure, and equitable access. Targeted support for vulnerable populations, including housing, transportation, and reception classes, is essential to turn formal rights into meaningful participation. Education funding must be increased and allocated strategically toward equity and quality, while public education should reduce its dependence on private digital platforms by strengthening open-source ecosystems and teacher training. The school's social role must be actively protected through safeguards against cyberbullying and technology addiction and through digital literacy that includes critical evaluation of information. Institutional reforms should also empower teachers and students beyond advisory roles, giving them real influence over decisions that affect them. Finally, international cooperation must be integrated with domestic efforts to reduce inequality, ensuring that global solidarity does not remain dependent on external funding cycles while local disparities persist.

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