



**THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS OF  
GREECE AND GERMANY IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE:  
HOW DO THEY ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF  
EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY?**

**Iakovos Tsiplakides<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract**

The aim of this article is to present an overview and a comparison of the Greek and German educational systems from an educational and sociological perspective. It purports to provide a synopsis of the educational systems pointing to areas of convergence and divergence. It especially emphasizes on two aspects of educational policy: tracking or ability grouping and the teaching of foreign languages. The choice of these features was determined by the fact that they are linked to the issue of equality of educational opportunities and participation in globalized knowledge societies. The article is organized in the following way. First, it presents the educational system in Germany. This is followed by a description of the Greek educational system. Finally, we present a comparison of the educational systems in these two countries, pointing to areas of convergence and divergence and focusing on the potential of the educational systems to address the issue of educational equality.

**Keywords:** educational equality, tracking, foreign languages

**1. Introduction**

One of the main objectives of the educational systems and educational policies in modern information and knowledge societies is to provide a well trained workforce and to equip citizens with skills that will enable them to “participate in an increasingly interconnected global economy, and ultimately convert better jobs into better lives” (OECD, 2013b:3). At the same time, the importance of providing equal educational

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence: email [tsiplakides@hotmail.com](mailto:tsiplakides@hotmail.com)

opportunities for all students, regardless of socioeconomic or ethnic background is paramount (Leicht, 2013). Embedded in the educational systems in all European countries is the need for equality of opportunity so that students can fulfill their potential and become active citizens (Official Journal of the European Union, 2009).

Bearing the above into consideration, in this article, we compare the educational systems of Germany and Greece from an educational and sociological standpoint. We especially focus on the opportunities the school system in these countries provides in relation to the promotion of equality of educational opportunity. In this framework, the analysis we present centers around the issues of early tracking and the teaching of foreign languages, since these features of educational systems, and especially early tracking, are often considered as representative of the level of educational opportunity of educational systems.

This article is organized in the following way. First, the educational system of each country is presented, focusing on parameters related to equality of opportunity. This is followed by a critical comparison and an analysis of the educational system, reaching conclusions regarding their potential for a decrease of social class inequalities.

## **2. The German educational system**

The Federal Republic of Germany consists of sixteen states (Länder). The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung) produces general guidelines for education, while the states can create their own legislation. This degree of autonomy means that there are differences among states in regards to the education system (EP-Nuffic, 2015).

Education is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15. More specifically, “the duration of full-time compulsory education (compulsory general education) is nine years (10 years in five of the Länder) and the subsequent period of part-time compulsory education (compulsory vocational education) is three years” (Kultusminister Konferenz, 2015:3). Education is provided in the following levels in Germany.

### **2.1 Primary education**

Primary education (Primarstufe) is provided at a Grundschule (primary school) for children aged from six to ten years old (EP-Nuffic, 2015). Grundschule is mandatory for children aged from six years old. It comprises four grades, apart from Berlin and Brandenburg where it consists of six grades (Kultusminister Konferenz, 2015).

The allocation of students to primary school is based on the school which is nearest to their place of residence. However, in some länder, such as in Nordrhein-Westfalen and Schleswig-Holstein, parents can enrol their child in a Grundschule “*other than the one nearest their home*” (Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2015:104).

In the next part, we will present the characteristics of primary education in some greater detail. More specifically, the issues of student grouping, time organization, school subjects, teaching methods and certification will be presented.

### **Grouping of students, time organization and school subjects**

Primary school pupils are usually taught in classes according to their age. In the first two grades, there are not different teachers for the different school subjects, but the majority of subjects are taught with the class teacher. The rationale behind choosing not having a different teacher for each subject is that young students who relate to a small number of teachers can adapt to school life easier than by having different teachers for different school subjects (Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2015:104). However, from grade 3 onwards the pupils have subject teachers, that is, different teachers for different school subjects, as it helps them prepare for the transition from primary to secondary education, where there are subject teachers.

In relation to the organization of time, primary school pupils attend lessons for 20 to 29 hours per week. In most Länder the number of hours is restricted to 20 to 22 hours in the first year, but increases to 27 hours in the fourth year of primary school. A school hour usually has a duration of 45 minutes, while lessons take place in the morning, with up to six hours per day.

The school subjects taught in primary education are German, mathematics, general studies, foreign language, art, handicrafts/textile design, music, sports and religion/ethics. The teaching of foreign languages in most Länder is compulsory from grade 3, but in six Länder pupils are taught a foreign language from grade 1 (Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2015). A variety of foreign languages is taught at this level of education. These include English and French, while the languages of neighbouring countries, such as Danish, Dutch, Polish, Czech and languages spoken by many people living in Germany, such as Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish are also taught.

### **Teaching methods, textbooks and certification**

Innovative teaching methods, such as project-based learning is used in primary education in Germany, since it is believed that it has a positive contribution to the teaching process and produces better learning outcomes. Project-based teaching and learning is beneficial to students, as it takes into account students' experiences and can promote collaboration, adopting a holistic approach to teaching and learning. In relation to teaching materials, teachers can choose textbooks from the list of textbooks approved by the Ministry of education. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is becoming more and more widespread and schools usually are provided with equipment to facilitate the use of ICT in the teaching process. Pupils who complete primary school are not normally awarded a leaving certificate.

### **2.2 Secondary education**

In comparison to OECD countries, Germany has one of the highest rates of 25-64 year-old people who have attended at least upper secondary education. The percentage of this age group with upper secondary education qualification is 86%, compared to the OECD average of 75% (OECD, 2013a).

Secondary education is usually divided into Sekundarstufe/Sekundarbereich I (lower secondary education), for pupils aged 10-16, and Sekundarstufe/Sekundarbereich II (upper secondary education), for pupils aged 16-19. Secondary education includes courses that provide general education, a mixture of general and vocational education, or vocational education. In the next part the structure of lower secondary education is described and analysed.

### **2.3 Lower secondary education**

A major goal of lower secondary education is to further *“the overall intellectual, emotional and physical development of pupils, teaching them to be independent, make decisions and bear their share of personal, social and political responsibility”* and to increase *“the degree of specialisation in line with each pupil's abilities and inclinations”* (Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2015:115).

Unlike Greece, in which lower secondary education is comprehensive, in Germany lower secondary education (Sekundarstufe/Sekundarbereich I) is divided into three distinct tracks. In most federal states, these tracks include the following school types: (a) the lower track (Hauptschule), (b) the intermediate track (Realschule), and (c) the academic track (Gymnasium). It is worth mentioning that *“Hauptschule and Realschule only exist in any appreciable numbers in six Länder”* (Kultusminister

Konferenz, 2015:3). Gymnasium is the most prestigious track and the one with a more distinct academic orientation in relation to the three other secondary school tracks, since it is *“the only track that provides direct entry into tertiary education”* (Jürges and Schneider, 2007:371). We then describe the distinct features and orientation of each of these tracks.

The Hauptschule provides basic general education and usually covers grades 5 to 9, but it can also include grade 10. Its aim is to provide students with basic general education, knowledge and qualifications that will enable them to continue their education, mainly in courses leading to a vocational qualification.

At the Realschule, which usually covers grades 5 to 10, students receive more extensive general education. Its aim is to provide students with knowledge that will enable them to continue their education in courses leading to both a vocational qualification and higher education qualifications. Students who attend Realschule usually study German, foreign languages, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, politics, music, art, sport and religious education.

The Gymnasium aims to teach intensified general education and comprises grades 5 to 12 or 13. It provides intensified general education and the main subjects taught are German, two foreign languages (at least), mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, politics, music, art, sport and religious education.

To sum up, students are tracked in the following school types: a) Hauptschule, which prepares pupils for manual jobs, b) Realschule, intermediate secondary school *“which prepares for administrative and lower white-collar jobs”*, and c) Gymnasium, *“which lasts around three years longer than the other tracks, prepares for higher education and allows for direct access to universities”* (Krause and Schüller, 2014:2).

It is important to note that students who attend lower secondary education have the right to switch between these three school types, on the basis of their academic performance. However, downward educational mobility occurs more often than upward mobility. That is, students are more likely to switch from Gymnasium to Realschule and from Realschule to Hauptschule, rather than moving from Hauptschule to Realschule or from Realschule to Gymnasium.

#### **2.4 Teaching methods, assessment, progression and certification**

In almost all Länder, measures have been taken to ensure that all students have equal chances for educational success. Emphasis is placed on helping students from lower socioeconomic and migrant backgrounds to fulfil their potential. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for educational purposes is gaining ground and forms an integral part of the teaching process.

Student assessment is based on all the work students have and on the results on exercises throughout the school year. Oral work, as well as performance in sport, music, and arts and crafts is also part of the assessment process. Each pupil's performance is displayed in a school report twice a year, in the middle and at the end of the school year. Apart from information pertaining to the student's academic performance in the different subjects taught at school, a report may also include comments regarding class participation and behaviour at school (Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2015).

Promotion of students to the next grade depends on their achievement level at the end of the school term. An adequate mark or better is usually required in each of the subjects that have a bearing on promotion. At the same time, very low marks in one subject can be counterbalanced, to a certain extent, by at least satisfactory marks in other subjects.

Students who have not been promoted must repeat class. In general, the percentage of students who have to repeat a year does not exceed 4%. It is also worth noting that if a student has extremely high performance levels, he/she can skip a grade. Parents of students who are at risk of repeating a year due to low performance levels are informed about it in the mid-year report. They may also be sent a written notice. Some Länder have an assistance scheme for students facing low performance levels.

As regards certification, upon completion of the courses of education in lower secondary level, the pupils receive a leaving certificate, provided that they have successfully completed grade 9 or 10. In most of the Länder pupils are required to take central examinations in order to obtain the lower education leaving certificate.

## **2.5 Upper secondary level**

The upper secondary education (Sekundarstufe/Sekundarbereich II) includes encompasses years 5-10 of the *Gymnasium*, as well as the *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* in the older states.

## **2.6 Teaching foreign languages**

The teaching of foreign languages in the German educational system starts from an early age. More specifically, in six Länder, students start learning the first foreign language from the age of 6 (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017).

A second foreign language is obligatory at *Gymnasium* in grades 7 to 10. Since educational policy aims at increasing the teaching of foreign languages in primary education, at the *Gymnasium* students study a second foreign language from grade 6. At

Hauptschule and Realschule students may choose to study a second foreign language, but it is not mandatory.

In general, foreign languages form an integral part of basic general education at all lower secondary level schools from grade 5. On transition to lower secondary level, foreign language learning is linked to knowledge that has been acquired in the primary sector and expands on it.

Teaching of foreign languages in lower secondary education aims at making students independent and autonomous learners, so they can become responsible for their own learning. To achieve this, teaching methods and materials are selected on the basis of students' needs, experiences and preferences.

At this level of education students are expected to acquire knowledge that corresponds to level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is worth mentioning that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages "*provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively*" (Council of Europe, 2001:1).

In accordance with the European objectives for multilingualism, the teaching of foreign languages aims at providing students with opportunities to get fundamental knowledge in at least another foreign language.

## **2.7 Higher education**

Despite widened access in many countries in recent decades, Germany does not have a high percentage of people with higher education attainment. More specifically, 28% of Germans, aged 25 to 34 have attained a higher education, compared to an OECD average of 39% for this age group (OECD, 2013a).

Higher education in Germany is organized on the basis of a binary system. This system distinguishes between academic education and higher professional education. There are also institutions outside the higher education system. Thus, some Länder also have "Berufsakademien", which offer an alternative to higher education in the form of courses qualifying to practise a profession for those who have completed the upper level of secondary education and gained a higher education entrance qualification.

### **Types of Institutions**

Higher education institutions in Germany fall into the following categories: (a) universities and equivalent institutions of higher education (*Technische*

*Hochschulen/Technische Universitäten, Pädagogische Hochschulen, theological colleges et al), (b) colleges of art and music, and (c) Fachhochschulen (Hochschulen für angewandte Wissenschaften).*

Apart from the above, Germany's tertiary sector also includes either state-run or state recognised *Berufsakademien* in some Länder.

### **Admission to higher education institutions**

In some higher education departments and courses of study, in which the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available, there are quotas. This means that not everyone who wishes to attend these departments can secure a place. Some departments with this numerous clauses policy include medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, which are preferred by many higher education applicants.

A percentage of up to 20 per cent of the available places in higher education institutions are allocated in advance. These places are reserved for students coming from countries outside the European Union, or for students who face financial problems. The criteria for the selection of applicants for the remaining places are the applicant's degree of qualification for the given course of study. This is normally the applicant's average mark in the *Abitur*, which is a school-leaving examination. The *abitur* is obtained at upper Gymnasium level (gymnasiale Oberstufe) by passing the *Abitur* examination. Students who obtain the *Abitur* get the "Allgemeine Hochschulreife", which is the general higher education entrance qualification that entitles access to higher education institutions (Kultusminister Konferenz, 2015). This criterion has a bearing of 20%.

Other criteria for entry to higher education include the waiting period between acquiring the entrance qualification for the chosen course of study and applying (20%). An especially important criterion that determines entry to higher education and allocation within it is the result of a selection procedure which is done by the higher education institutions themselves (60%). Higher education institutions can introduce an additional selection criterion, such as the performance in a test to determine the applicant's capability to study a specific subject, the type of vocational education and training or occupation, the result of an interview regarding motivation for the chosen course of study, or a combination of these criteria. In this process, the degree of qualification for the course of study in question is of primary importance (Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2015)



Having presented the general organization of the educational system in Germany, in the next part, the basic characteristics of the Greek educational systems are presented.

### 3. The Greek educational system

Education in Greece is under the jurisdiction of the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. and contains (a) primary education, lasting for six years for children aged 6-12 years, (b) lower secondary education, which lasts for three years, (c) upper secondary education (general and vocational), which lasts for three years, and (d) higher education (Kyriazis and Asderaki, 2008). Higher education is divided into the university and technological sectors and is funded and controlled by the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (Stamelos, Kiprianos, Balias and Kamarianos, 2011), while there are no tuition fees (Kyriazis and Asderaki, 2008), apart from certain postgraduate courses of study.

Since demand for participation in higher education exceeds the places available, especially for high status and prestigious courses of study, there is a “*numerus clausus*” policy (Gouvias, 1998). Admission to higher education institutions depends mainly on performance (grades) in the university entrance examinations. Students are also allocated to the different higher education institutions and departments on the basis of their preference in a special list higher education applicants need to complete.

In recent decades there has been a substantial increase in the number of students participating in higher education (Sianou-Kyrgiou and Tsiplakides, 2009; Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research, 2017). However, widened access has not led to a significant decrease in social class inequalities in higher education. Social class inequalities exist, mainly due to the different allocation within higher education of students from middle and working class backgrounds (Sianou-Kyrgiou and Tsiplakides, 2011). Research findings on choice of studies in higher education in Greece show that the higher education sector in Greece is highly stratified. Greece may have experienced widened higher education participation, “*but students from different social classes attend different higher education departments*”, since students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are overrepresented in lower status courses of study” (Tsiplakides, 2017a:174). In Greece, like in many other countries, students from higher social classes usually attend high status university departments that lead to high-skill occupations with increased material and symbolic benefits (Eurydice, 2014; Tsiplakides, 2017b).

#### **4. The educational systems of Greece and Germany in comparative perspective**

The above description of the educational system in the two countries shows that there are areas of convergence and divergence. In other words, some features of the educational systems are common, while in other areas there are stark differences. The analysis that follows adopts an educational and a sociological perspective. This means that it aims at providing a comparison of the educational systems in these two countries focusing mainly on the equality of educational opportunity provided by the educational systems. It has to be noted that a comparison of all the aspects of the educational systems is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, we focus on two features of the educational systems in Germany and Greece: tracking and ability grouping and the teaching of foreign languages (especially English).

We chose to focus on these aspects of the educational system in these two countries, since they are related to the issue of equality of educational opportunity and participation as active citizens in modern globalized societies. Young people with limited knowledge of foreign languages have difficulties moving from education to the labour market and are therefore more prone to poverty and social exclusion. In addition, tracking in secondary education may limit the educational opportunities of certain students, not allowing them to fulfill their potential or participating in higher education.

##### **Early tracking and educational inequalities**

The German educational system is characterized as a tracked one, in which “*tracking occurs at 10 years of age*” (Marks et al, 2006:108). More specifically, at the end of primary school, usually at the age of ten, “*German pupils are typically given a more or less binding (depending on the state) recommendation which type of secondary school they should visit*” (Jürges and Schneider, 2007:371). This means that in Germany there are “*distinct academic and technical secondary school tracks*” (Jenkins et al, 2007:22).

This recommendation has important implications for the students’ future educational as well as occupational trajectories. Germany is one of the countries in Europe, such as the Netherlands and France, in which tracking starts relatively early (Brunello et al, 2004). It is also worth noting that the German educational system has a vocational orientation and an apprenticeship system that facilitates the transition from school to the labour market (McGinnity and Hillmert, 2004), since there is a combination between school and “*work-place training*” (Hillmert, 2002:680). In this article, in accordance with the relevant literature, we use the term to refer to the practice of dividing students into categories and are assigned to different classes, sometimes having a different curriculum (Oakes, 1985; LeTendre et al, 2003).

The justification for early tracking is based on the creation of homogeneous classrooms that offer a learning environment that takes into account the student's abilities, skills and preferences, thus increasing the quality of instruction (Guill et al, 2013). It is suggested that tracking benefits lower ability and higher ability students alike. By contrast, opponents of tracking argue that it contributes to the maintenance of social class inequalities in education and does not help weaker students improve their academic performance. Research seems to confirm this claim. For instance, research findings indicate that tracking after primary school increases educational inequality and decreases academic performance (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2005). In relation to the allocation of students to the different tracks of lower secondary education, research findings indicate that *"parents from socially privileged backgrounds are more likely than less privileged parents to enroll their children in an academic-track Gymnasium without a corresponding recommendation"* (Max Planck Institute for Human Development, 2010:1-2). In relation to Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, we can see that students from families with high levels of financial, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 2007) adjust easier to the school's culture and have higher school performance than their working class counterparts (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). In general, researchers argue that there is a high level of social class segregation in Germany in relation to secondary education (Jenkins et al, 2007). Similarly, research has established that *"there is a tendency for countries with tracked school systems in which selection occurs at a young age, such as Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Hungary, to show stronger relationships and countries which are not tracked or where tracking occurs at a later age"* (Marks et al, 2006:115).

By contrast, the Greek educational system is not a tracked one, but one which keeps its *"entire secondary-school system comprehensive"* (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2005). Students at all levels of education are taught in heterogeneous classes and there is not tracking according to earlier school performance or other criteria.

The only instance of tracking is in lower secondary education for the teaching of English as a foreign language. Students who have graduated from primary education and are in the first grade of lower secondary education take an English test at the beginning of the school year. This test is designed to assess the students' level of English language knowledge. It is worth noting that this test is not centrally developed by the Ministry of Education. Instead, English teachers devise their test which they administer to their students. Students are allocated to two tracks depending on performance in this test. Students are divided in two groups for the teaching of English as a foreign language. The higher track includes the students with the best results in the test, while the lower track consists of the students with lower performance in the test.

Students in the two tracks have different textbooks for the first two classes of lower secondary school, but the same for the third class. It is expected that by the beginning of grade three, differences among students regarding knowledge of the English language will have been removed. The allocation of students to the two tracks is not flexible. After allocation to a track, students cannot switch between groups, even if their performance in the subject of English has shown improvement.

### **Foreign languages teaching**

In both countries, the teaching of foreign languages is of primary importance. The educational systems in Greece and Germany are influenced by the Barcelona objective, which places emphasis on the knowledge of foreign languages and urges European Union countries to introduce the teaching of foreign languages from an early age at school (Council of the European Union, 2002). The Barcelona objective also states that people “*should learn two or more languages in addition to their first language*” (Eurydice, 2017a:7). In European Union countries in 2014, 83.8 % of primary school students were taught at least one foreign language, while in 2005 the percentage was much lower, 67.3 % (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017). More students are offered a second foreign language in secondary education as well. More specifically, in 2014 59.7 % of secondary school students were taught at least one foreign language, while in 2005 the percentage was much lower, 46.7 % (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017).

In Germany, the teaching of foreign language begins very early. More specifically, it starts in grade 3, but in six Länder students are taught a foreign language from grade 1 ([https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Germany:Teaching\\_and\\_Learning\\_in\\_Primary\\_Education](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Germany:Teaching_and_Learning_in_Primary_Education)).

The foreign languages offered are mainly English and French, while the students are also taught the languages of neighbouring countries, such as Dutch, or the languages spoken by many people living in Germany, such as Italian. In lower secondary education, the curriculum is an extension of what students have learnt in primary education. Students who finish lower secondary education are expected to have acquired level B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001).

In Greece, the teaching of English as a foreign language starts from primary education. Students study English from primary to upper secondary education. Apart from English, other foreign languages which are taught in the Greek educational system include French, German and Italian in some schools. The central position of foreign

languages stems from the fact that educational policy accepts that knowledge of foreign languages can reduce poverty and social exclusion, while at the same time multilingualism promotes the growth of an antagonistic society based on the use of knowledge (European Council of Barcelona, 2002).

Both countries use modern teaching methods, making use of the students' needs and experiences, using authentic material and tasks with the aim of fostering student autonomy with the foreign language. In addition, the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is rapidly gaining ground.

In conclusion, both Germany and Greece promote the teaching of foreign languages, and especially English, as a means toward equipping young people with valuable knowledge that will help them in their professional and personal lives. The educational policies in relation to foreign languages is based on the premise that that multilingualism can safeguard against social exclusion and can bring about equality of opportunity as far as labour market outcomes are concerned. Young people with knowledge of foreign languages can become active European Union citizens, participate in modern information societies and find occupations with high material and symbolic benefits.

## **5. Conclusion**

The above discussion and comparison of the educational systems in Germany and Greece is not an exhaustive one. It does not include all aspects and characteristics of the schooling system in these countries. It focuses on tracking in secondary education and the teaching of foreign languages, especially the English language. The presentation, the analysis and the comparison undertaken adopts an educational and sociological perspective. The aim was to link educational policy in these two areas with the prerogative for equality of educational opportunity and the provision of opportunities for students to become active citizens in modern globalized information societies.

Bearing the above into consideration, the above analysis shows that there are areas of convergence and divergence in the educational systems of Greece and Germany. Concerning the former, an effort to introduce the teaching of foreign languages from an early age is a common element in both countries. The important attached in the knowledge of foreign languages is a result of policies within the European Union that link multilingualism with a host of benefits at personal and national level. From a sociological perspective, the early introduction of foreign languages in the school curriculum can have a positive contribution to the reduction of social class inequalities, since it can provide all students with valuable knowledge.

As far as areas of divergence are concerned, the German educational system has been for a long time a highly tracked one (Hart, 2016). This, according to research may lead to an exacerbation of social class inequalities (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2005). Research has shown that tracking makes stronger the relationship between family background and student achievement, and as a result educational inequalities increase (Schütz et al, 2008; Leicht, 2013).

Students attend different types of lower secondary education on the basis of school performance. By contrast, in Greece tracking or ability grouping, with the exception of the teaching of English as a foreign language does not exist. However, research has shown that in Greece is a relationship between knowledge of the English language, as attested by official certifications, and social class (Tsiplakides, 2014). This means that the above issues in both countries need to be addressed, since they seem to be linked to the maintenance of social class inequalities in education.

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HOW DO THEY ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY?

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