



Apprenticeship in Vocational Education in Greece

Apprenticeship

1.1. Definition

The term “apprenticeship” is used to describe the educational system in which the learning period alternates between workplace and educational structure. The trainee holds an apprenticeship agreement with the employer, receives a pay or allowance and has insurance coverage. The apprenticeship is based on a curriculum allocated both to the workplace and the educational structure. The employer undertakes to provide training, according to a defined program, combined with the learning program in the educational structure. The apprenticeship leads to the certification of the knowledge and skills acquired by the apprentice and eventually leads to a particular profession.

1.2 Aims and objectives

Rapid technological advancements occurring around the world are currently transforming the labor market, creating new learning environments in process. In particular, increased focus on digitalization is modifying traditional employment, rendering certain jobs obsolete and creating new ones. Additionally, lack of skilled staff is proven to be a major problem in many industries. Unfortunately, in the process of finding solutions, businesses often underestimate an alternative on which to build a solid foundation for the future; it is a learning process that combines vocational education and workplace training. Therefore, the emphasis of Formal Education has moved from a theoretical basis to working experience in real working place conditions in society. This model of learning, the stage of apprenticeship, was introduced recently in Greece, at an optional **fourth year** at **Vocational Secondary Schools**, following the policy of many European Countries.

Although, in Greece the apprenticeship system at secondary education is at a very early stage, a similar institution has been implemented for many years at the post secondary level from Technical Universities or the upper secondary level from Technical Schools, where internship programs are mainly applied to technical education graduate-candidates. Thus, learning in a workplace could take the form of practical training. The difference between practical training and the newly introduced apprenticeship at the fourth year of Vocational Secondary Schools, lies on how they are conducted. During the practical training that takes place before graduation from a technical school or a technical university, the student is away from school and his / her duties. On the other hand, apprenticeship at the fourth year of Vocational Secondary School combines school lessons and workplace training, which take place in parallel and in different days within the same week.



1.3 Historical reference at vocational education and apprenticeship

The learning process takes place not only in buildings called schools or educational institutions, but also beyond the confines of these buildings. In European countries, although the term “vocational training” was not clearly defined, evidence suggests it has been understood in a broader sense that may be thought as the formation of a professional experience, which comprised initial training, skills updating and retraining, and addressed both young adult workers and people in supervisory positions.

Until 2016, Vocational Secondary Education in Greece was provided without the provision of apprenticeship. The only system involving technical training, was implemented from the technical schools of OAED. OAED (Greek Manpower Employment Organization), is a public structure of the Ministry Of Labor and operates technical schools (called EPA.S), working under the Apprenticeship system in our country since 1952. Apprenticeship in the EPA.S schools was introduced as an educational system that combines theoretical and laboratory-education with practical training in private and public sector enterprises. Attendance in the EPA.S schools lasts two years (four semesters). The students of the EPA.S schools do their practical training in businesses during the morning hours, while in the afternoon they attend theoretical and laboratory courses in the same specialties. Every year 10.000 – 11.000 students attend the EPA.S schools. Students attending this type of schools acquire professional experience in real working conditions in companies in many technical specialties. The apprentices are trained in small and medium-sized enterprises, freelancers, and the public sector. EPA.S’s job-training system has proven to be effective in practice, as students continue to work at a significant rate in the same businesses where they did their apprenticeship upon completion of their studies. The pay for trainees is 75% of the minimum wage set by the National General Collective Labor Agreement, for the four semesters of practical training, which corresponds to €17.12 per day.

The new institution of the “Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class”

2.1 Introduction

Since 2016, a new law in Greece gives the opportunity to young people to acquire work experience after graduating from the Vocational Secondary School through the introduction of an Apprenticeship Class. The “Apprenticeship Class” is a **dual system** of **theory** and **training**. An apprentice holds an apprenticeship agreement with the employer, receives a pay in accordance with applicable law and has insurance coverage.

The apprenticeship is designed for young people aiming at assimilation of necessary professional knowledge and skills. The apprenticeship is conducted on the basis of a specific curriculum in order to achieve specific learning outcomes and the successful cooperation between educational structure and businesses.



2.2 Legal Framework for Vocational Secondary Education and Apprenticeship

The introduction of the “Apprenticeship Class” from the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs was established by Law **4386/2016**. According to this law, the Vocational Secondary School offers two options to students attending its courses:

- (a) to graduate after attending three years of a “Secondary Cycle of Studies” and leave school with a Level 4 degree, or
- (b) to attend the “Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class”

The latter is a “Postsecondary Cycle of Studies” that lasts one academic year, is optional and belongs to the non-formal education system. Graduates of the “Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class” receive a **Level 5 Vocational Education and Training Degree** after completing their qualification certification procedures.

The “Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class” was implemented for the first time during the academic year 2016-2017. It has a total duration of 9 months and includes a dual system of both apprenticeship training in businesses and specialty lessons at the school unit. Upon completion of the Post-Graduate Year of Apprenticeship and before taking part in a Certification Exam, each apprentice may attend Pre-Qualification Certification Courses, organized under the responsibility of the Ministry. The responsibility for the implementation of the “Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class”, is given to the Vocational Secondary Schools called EPA.L, where the apprentices enroll, in cooperation with the Laboratory Centers of the Secondary Vocational Education (called E.K.), where the students perform the laboratory exercises of their laboratory course (7 hours a week), according to their specialization.

2.3 Structure of “Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class”

The “Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class” is structured in a **dual system** as follows:

- (a) “Specialty laboratory courses” of a total of two hundred and three (203) hours. These courses are taught one (1) day per week, for seven (7) hours, by the teaching staff of the Vocational Secondary Schools (EPA.L) and of the Laboratory Centers of the Secondary Vocational Education (E.K.)
- (b) “Workplace training program” of twenty-eight (28) hours a week, for a period of four (4) days per week for 9 months.

2.4 Specialties & admission criteria of the “Apprenticeship Class”

The Specializations offered at the Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class are the following:

- Administration and Finance Officer
- Technician of Electrical Systems, Installations and Networks
- Vehicle Technician
- Informatics Application Technician
- Designer of Structural Engineering
- Assistant Nurse
- Administrator and Financial Officer



- Electrical Installations
- Technician of Electronics and Computing Systems, Installations, Networks and Telecommunications
- Cooling, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
- Food and Drink Technology Technician
- Plant Production Technician
- Assistant of Medical-Biological Laboratories
- Assistant Nursing Home
- Physiotherapist's assistant
- Graphic Arts

The upper limit in the number of apprentices in each school is **25 students** per specialty. In order for the apprenticeship class of a specific specialty to be formed at least **8 students** are required to enroll. The right to enroll in the “Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class” have students that satisfy cumulatively all three of the following criteria:

1. They hold a degree in the secondary education course of the EPA.L of Law 4186/2013 and Law 3475/2006.
2. They are out of employment, education or training.
3. They do not exceed the age of 24 years.

If the number of candidates fulfilling the above conditions is larger than the offered positions, candidates who have graduated in the most recent school year have priority to those of the previous school years. Among candidates who graduated during the same school year precedence is given to those with the higher Grade Point Average.

2.5 Rights of apprentices

The rate of compensation for students in the Apprenticeship Class is set at seventy-five percent (**75%**) of the statutory minimum wage of the unskilled worker (currently set at €22.83 daily), which amounts to **€17.12** daily compensation. According to the law, **€6.12** of the compensation –as well as statutory insurance contributions– are paid **monthly** by the **company** where the workplace training is carried out. The remaining **€11** of the daily compensation is paid by the **Ministry of Education**. The contributions to the Social Security Institution (IKA), is based according to the current wage and are paid by both the employer and the student. Apprentices are entitled to regular paid leave from the workplace training in accordance with the applicable provisions. On the other hand, the limit of absences from the laboratory's specialty lesson (school based training), may not exceed 10% of the total number of hours in the program (which is set at 203 hours in total).



2.6 Student evaluation and completion of the Apprenticeship Class

The final assessment of each apprentice is composed by two evaluations:

- (a) One evaluation in the school unit. This evaluation is performed by the teacher responsible for the Specialty Laboratory Course, is on a 0-20 score scale and constitutes 50% of the student's final assessment.
- (b) One evaluation at the workplace. The evaluation is held by the responsible trainer of the enterprise. It is again performed on a 0-20 grade scale, and constitutes 50% of the students' final evaluation.

At the completion of the Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class, students receive a Degree of Specialization, Vocational Education and Training Level 5 according to paragraph D, paragraph 14, article 46 of Law 4186 / 2013 (A 193), which was added by the provisions of paragraph 6, article 72, of Law 4310/2014 (A 258).

It is noted that the Postgraduate Classification Certificate is on a pass/fail basis. No resumption of attendance at the Postgraduate Apprentice Class is foreseen.

2.7 Evaluation of the new institution of the Apprenticeship Class

Upon completion of the first year of the implementation of the "Postgraduate Apprenticeship Class", the Ministry of Education has sent an Assessment Form to the schools that took part in the Program. Results have not been yet released, but are eagerly anticipated in order to evaluate the success of the program and give feedback to its implementation.



References

1. "Restructuring of Secondary Education and Other Provisions". Law 4186/2013 (Articles 7 – 14 and 43, 44, 46).
2. "Provisions for research and other provisions". Law 4386/2016 (Article 66).
3. "Measures for accelerating the Government's educational work". Law 4473/2017 (article 4).
4. "Organization and operation of higher education, arrangements for research and other provisions". Law 4485/2017 (Articles 78, 79, 89).
5. "Implementation of the Apprenticeship Pilot Class". Joint Ministerial Decision 20405/373.
6. "Amendment of Joint Ministerial Decree No. 20405/373/2016" Implementation of the Apprenticeship Pilot Class (B '1371)". Joint Ministerial Decision 5743/125.
7. "Implementation of the post-Hellenic Year – Apprentice Class of the Ministry of education" (1st Phase)". Joint Ministerial Decision 26381.
8. "Organization and operation of 'post-graduate year – apprenticeship classes' of EPAL graduates". Ministerial Decision F7 / 179513 / D4.
9. "Apprenticeship Quality Framework". Joint Ministerial Decision 26385.
10. "Amendment of Joint Decision 26385/2017 (B '491) of the Ministers of Economy and Development, Education, Research and Religious Affairs, Labor Social Security and Social Solidarity and Finance Framework of Apprenticeship Quality". Joint Ministerial Decision 60615 / D4.