



**EUROPEAN AGENCY**  
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education



**RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT**  
OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

# **RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

## **Country Report: Cyprus**



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# CYPRUS COUNTRY REPORT

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Report completed by:

Pavlos Dapolas, project participant, secondary education school inspector;

Kalomira Ioannou, National Co-ordinator, Project Advisory Group member, primary school head teacher.

## **1. What reference is made to raising achievement in national policies? How is raising achievement defined?**

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The Cypriot education system aims to lay the foundations for children's cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development. For this reason, it continually makes improvements and upgrades each level of education. Furthermore, it aims to:

- modernise teaching methods and approaches;
- design and implement modern developmental programmes;
- improve the support programmes implemented in special needs education;
- expand, improve and construct new school buildings.

Overall, it aims to create an infrastructure that will ensure high quality education.

### **Pre-primary education**

Pre-primary education allows for methodical and supportive intervention in the areas of physical, social, emotional and cognitive development, as evidenced internationally by numerous research results. Respect of individual differences, differentiated child-centred approaches and learning processes and continuous monitoring of children's individual developmental rates contribute to:

- the acquisition of life skills and positive character traits;
- socially-acceptable behaviours;
- the overall development of a person with generally accepted values and principles.

### **Primary education**

The fundamental principle defining the objectives of primary education has always been the balanced development of children's personalities. The curricula and syllabi are, therefore, based on three central pillars that function together to achieve this goal. In particular, the first pillar refers to the comprehensive knowledge and skills that pupils are expected to master in each school subject. The second pillar focuses on the values, attitudes and behaviours that pupils should develop as democratic citizens. The third pillar is related to the development of qualities, skills and key competences required by and for 21<sup>st</sup> century society, so that learners can become able to take on responsibilities and be active in the contemporary sociocultural context.



More specifically, the main aim of primary education is to create and ensure the necessary learning opportunities for all children, regardless of age, sex, family and social background or cognitive abilities, in order to:

- achieve balanced development in the cognitive, emotional and psychomotor domains, while making the most of the means offered by modern technology;
- deal successfully with the various problems they may come across, including possible adjustment difficulties to the school and the wider environment, and be prepared for active and constructive participation in social, political, cultural and financial contexts;
- acquire positive attitudes towards learning;
- develop social understanding, belief in human values, respect towards cultural heritage and human rights;
- develop an appreciation of beauty, a disposition to creativity and love for life and nature, in order to develop environmental awareness.

### **Secondary general education**

Public and private secondary general education covers a huge sector of Cyprus's education system. Based on the socio-economic, cultural and national needs of Cyprus, public secondary general education offers equal opportunities for education and aims to promote knowledge focusing on general education and the grading specialisation.

It prepares learners for their academic or professional pursuits. It also:

- promotes and develops healthy mental and moral personalities;
- creates able, democratic and law-abiding citizens;
- strengthens national identity, cultural values and universal ideals for freedom, justice, peace and the fostering of love and respect among people;
- aims to promote mutual understanding and co-operation among people, within the framework of new multicultural conditions existing in Cyprus and worldwide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Annual Report, 2014).

Raising achievement is perceived as the practice to support all learners to overcome their own difficulties in learning, to learn in their own way and at their own pace and achieve more day by day. Thus, differentiation in teaching is considered an effective approach towards this goal.

## **2. What national policies specifically target raising achievement?**

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National policies that target raising achievement are:

- differentiation in teaching approaches;
- the provision of intensive and differentiated programmes for learning Greek as a second language for foreign or repatriated learners, to enable their smooth integration in the public education system;



- all-day compulsory schools in 14 different primary schools and all-day voluntary schools in 117 primary schools, seven special schools and 50 public pre-primary schools;
- the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) has introduced a number of innovations to upgrade pre-primary education over the last few years, as it is widely acknowledged that pre-primary education contributes significantly to the preparation of children for primary school and reduces school failure;
- the MOEC in Cyprus sets out [priority goals for each school year](#). The priority goal for 2016–2017 was ‘Improvement of learning results.’ The MOEC makes recommendations to teachers on practice and activities they can use to achieve improvement;
- programmes for preventing early school leaving and the prevention of school failure (D.R.A.S.E. = School and Social Inclusion Actions) are carried out in schools identified as having a high percentage of school failure or early school leavers (educational priority zones);
- reception classes and support programmes for foreigners that function in parallel with the school;
- [educational support programmes for learners with special needs](#);
- programmes to support learners identified as high risk for functional literacy and numeracy;
- health education programmes;
- programmes for the smooth transition from lower to the higher grades (from pre-primary to primary school and from primary to secondary school) (Annual report, 2014);
- designing of indicators for adequacy and success. Through the reconstruction of the curriculum, the Ministry seeks to raise a functional pre-organiser responding to the curriculum. This would focus on learner development and for the first time, consciously, would turn teachers’ and learners’ attention to what the learner learns (success), not on what material is covered. It would also refine the necessary teaching for each expected learning outcome (adequacy);
- unemployed teachers are sent to work at schools through a programme managed by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA). Their role is to support classes with many learners facing learning difficulties. They act as co-teachers. This is found to be a very effective measure in schools with many problems in learning;
- there is a proposal, which is not yet policy, to have teaching assistants in the first two classes of primary school;
- [Professional learning](#) is one of MOEC’s major policies for upgrading the education system. Professional learning is co-ordinated by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, which is the official training operator. Professional learning is mainly carried out within the school and focuses on the unit’s own developmental/learning needs, the learners’ needs and the general priorities set out by the school itself.



Professional learning aims to research and identify the school's priorities and then set out an action plan to deal with the specific issues and priorities. The actions set out are then evaluated and new goals are set;

- teachers are supported to take part in [professional development courses](#) at the Pedagogical Institute.

### **3. What information/data are collected at national level on attainment and achievement?**

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Through the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE), the Pedagogical Institute prepares tests each year for learners in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> forms in public schools, in order to locate children at high risk for literacy.

CERE was established according to a decision taken by the Council of Ministers in August 2008 and is accountable to the MOEC. CERE's mission/aim is to promote and establish research and set up research infrastructure in the Cyprus education system. CERE's purpose is:

- to conduct scientific research in education-related issues (educational policy, curricula, textbooks, training) across the entire education system;
- the on-going scientific evaluation of the entire education system and the results stemming from each innovation introduced in education;
- to promote and support research in school units.

The main actions taken by CERE are:

- internal evaluations, assigned by and based on the priorities and needs of the MOEC;
- research on general educational issues, at local and international level:
  - through collaborations with external partners and institutions or bodies;
  - always after the submission and evaluation of a related research proposal;
- maintaining a database for the education system, providing valid and reliable information about the education system to the MOEC and appropriate European Union institutions;
- evaluation and indexing of research conducted within the education system;
- developing a research culture and strengthening the research infrastructure in schools.

### **4. What information/data on attainment and achievement (including the wider areas outlined above) are collected at school level?**

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(Same as question 3)



## **5. What information/data are used for school evaluation and quality assurance at national/local level?**

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- School self-evaluation
- Inspection by schools' inspectors
- Data analysis: data is collected, analysed and discussed in pedagogical meetings of teachers.

## **6. Are there any specific initiatives in place to support/enable teachers and/or school leaders to raise the attainment and achievement of all learners?**

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### **Department of Teachers' In-service Training**

The Department of Teachers' In-service Training at the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute aims to provide support to all teachers at all levels in different ways. Support aims to take into consideration the needs of teachers, the priorities set by the MOEC and the current scientific knowledge and practice in the area.

These aims are achieved by organising:

- mandatory recurrent courses for:
  - Newly-promoted secondary school head teachers
  - Newly-promoted primary school head teachers
  - Deputy head teachers in secondary education
  - Newly-appointed teachers at all levels and their mentors (induction programme);
- in-service programme for teachers working with pupils for whom Greek is not the first language (teaching Greek as a Second Language);
- seminars based on the needs/priorities of the MOEC and the objectives that arise. For example, for the last two years, a large-scale in-service training programme on the new, revised curricula has been offered to teachers of all levels;
- optional seminars;
- seminars for parents;
- seminars tailored for different schools and their needs;
- conferences;
- day seminars;
- an in-service training programme for Greek-origin teachers from Eastern Europe.

The above teacher training courses aim to promote creative learning practices and educational innovation, at the same time encouraging critical reflection.



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Beyond offering centralised training, it is emphasised that the Department of Teachers' In-service Training focuses on adopting other ways to support teachers. For example, it offers:

- a combination of central training courses accompanied by classroom implementation;
- e-learning courses;
- development of supporting educational material;
- the implementation of intervention programmes in school units.

## **7. What other policies may influence levels of attainment and achievement for all learners?**

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[Support services from the Department of Educational Psychology.](#)

## **8. Please provide a short commentary/critical reflection on the main policy challenges**

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The policies mentioned in the previous questions help teachers and school leaders to influence learner attainment. Nevertheless, teachers and head teachers broadly agree that there is no clear evaluation of these policies and how much and in what ways they actually promote raising achievement and help learners raise their attainment levels. There is no quantitative evidence of the effectiveness of these policies, as there are no national standardised tests or national level tests.

Nevertheless, the effort to restructure the curriculum and adapt the teaching with indicators of success and sufficiency (adequacy and attainment indicators) is a positive measure.

As far as supporting inclusion is concerned, the fact that there are only pupil assistants in mainstream schools for learners with special educational needs is not considered effective. Teaching assistants would be a very effective measure to support inclusion and raise achievement.



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# **ANNEX 1. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE TO RAISE LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT**

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Example submitted by: Kalomira Ioannou

Contact person: Kalomira Ioannou, head teacher.

## **1. Location of school/learning community and short description of context**

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Alambra Primary School is a rural school, 20 minutes from Nicosia. Alambra is a village with a population of about 2,000. A kindergarten is situated behind the primary school. There is no secondary school in the village. Pupils attend Ayia Varvara Secondary School, in a nearby village.

Alambra Primary School has been running a professional learning programme, with help from the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. The school staff went through the following stages:

1. Diagnosis of the pupils' learning needs
2. Diagnosis of the parents' needs in their child's learning
3. Diagnosis of the teachers' needs in their teaching practice
4. Setting priorities
5. Action Plan
6. Implementation of Action Plan
7. Assessment
8. Redefinition of goals.

After investigating the pupils', parents' and teachers' needs in learning, the school set out its priorities, which were:

- Effective teaching in order to raise achievement of all learners
- Helping pupils to comprehend and face reading difficulties.

## **2. Summary information on school/learning community**

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- Pupil population: 93
- Teachers: 10
- Special needs teacher: 1
- Speech therapist: 1

Pupils come from a medium to low socio-economic background. They come from families who are mainly interested in their child's learning, but the pupils have a lower learning profile compared to pupils in the nearby town of Nicosia.





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### **3. Summary of key feature/strengths of current practice**

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The professional learning programme, which is supported by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, is considered very effective in determining the priorities of each school and emphasising the needs of the school population and teacher development.

Regardless of this, there are no national or standardised tests to evaluate objectively. Teachers keep personal records of their pupils' achievements.

### **4. Data/information available**

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No data available.

### **5. Focus of example/work to raise achievement**

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In order to deal with the school's priorities, an Action Plan was designed. The Action Plan included activities related to:

- everyday teaching strategies;
- setting goals for each class and for each child;
- in-service training for teachers within the school (group and personal training);
- assessment;
- classroom observations;
- teacher meetings;
- exchanging ideas on teaching;
- assessment strategies.

The actions were evaluated by the teachers and goals were redefined.

### **6. Summary information about developments/current work in this area**

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No information available

### **7. Key learning points from this example**

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Effective measures to raise achievement, as derived from the programme that was implemented in the example:

1. Investigating pupils' and teachers' learning needs
2. Focus on priorities at a school-based level and not a national level
3. Action plans – individual action plans
4. Pedagogical teacher meetings to exchange ideas



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5. Differentiation in the classroom
  6. Self-evaluation
  7. Flexibility to redefine goals.

## **8. Supporting materials (web links, papers, presentations, etc.)**

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