

## Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

# Cyprus case study report 1 Education Priority Zones (ZEP)

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# Education Priority Zones (ZEP)

## Introduction

The policy of Educational Priority Zones was proposed in 1999 by the *Interdepartmental Team of Work for the Confrontation of School Failure and Functional Illiteracy* within the frames of *Planning Single Interdepartmental Policy for the Prevention and Confrontation of School Failure and Functional Illiteracy*. The *Permanent Team of Work for the Promotion of Literacy and School Success* undertook the planning of ZEP, which began to function in 2000 (Papadopoulos 2000).

The policy of Educational Priority Zones constitutes a strategic choice of certain European states in order to fight functional illiteracy and school failure. The importance and the contribution of this policy in the reduction of school failure are underlined in reports of experts of the OECD, European Union and also in very recent evaluations of the Ministry of National Education of Research and Technology of France, which is the first country where ZEP were applied at a national level (Papadopoulos 2000).

In Educational Priority Zones the selected school complex should consist of the main Elementary Schools, a High school and the main Kindergartens. The schools should be located in downgraded areas and the majority of the student body should come from families with low socio-economic and education level. Criteria for the designation of a region as a ZEP are as follows: 1) high rate of school failure and functional illiteracy, 2) high percentage of foreigners or students, 3) large number of drop outs and incidents of violence and delinquent behaviour (Cypriot Minister of Education and Culture).

According to the Annual Report (2006) of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus, some of the basic principles for the establishment of Education Priority Zones are:

- Usage of practices based on modern pedagogical research.
- Ensuring educational continuity between the three levels of education through a Network of Education Priority.
- Development of cooperative skills.
- Decrease of the number of students per class.
- Advancing oral and writing skills as a major education priority.
- A guidance team which will provide information and support to educational groups at schools and will act as coordinator between the schools at all levels.
- Development of systematic cooperation with the parents.
- Development of cultural and athletic activities.

The basic principles of ZEP operation in Cyprus (Papadopoulos 2000) are the following:

1. Function of bodies: *Guidance Team* and *Networking Council* to assist in providing a guarantee of educational continuity between the three educational levels (Kindergarten - Primary - high school)
2. Promotion of the cooperation between the school units and the local institutions and authorities.
3. Reduction of number of students per class.
4. The guarantee of possession of oral and written skills constitutes the first and sovereign educational priority, with the attendance of all teachers, independent from the course that teaches.

5. The methodology of work in the schools of ZEP is that of action planning. Each ZEP works out a three-year plan of action and then analyzes particular local needs. Each school unit inside the ZEP shapes its own plan of action which is consistent with the general designing of work of ZEP.
6. The pedagogical practices are supported by the conclusions of modern pedagogical research: 1) they are child-centred, 2) they use the co operational learning, 3) in the daily instructive practice teachers take into consideration the social - cultural and individual uniqueness of each child.
7. Particular focus on the development of cultural and athletic activities, as well as on actions that promote the bodily expression.
8. Particular focus on the development of *Library - Centre of Information, Documentation*, through a co-operational model according to which the Centre functions all day and in which the parents have also access to.
9. Creation of a *Committee of Education, Health and Citizenship*.
10. Aid to schools of ZEP is providing services of Educational Psychology.

Within the aforementioned frames, the ZEP innovation was first applied in a pilot phase during school year 2003-2004, in two school complexes, *Faneromenis* in Nicosia and *Saint Antoniou* in Limassol. In school year 2004-2005 it was extended with the operation of ZEP in *Theoskepasti* in Paphos. All the above ZEP functioned in school year 2005-2006 (Minister of Education and Culture).

## **1. Internal Evaluation of ZEP Saint Antoniou in Limassol <sup>1</sup>**

### ***1.1. Criteria of determination of region of Saint Antoniou Limassol as ZEP***

The region of Saint Antoniou in Limassol was determined as an Educational Priority Zone during school year 2003-2004 because of:

1. The presence of a large number of Turkish - Cypriots, children with different linguistic background and foreign students.
2. The low socio-economic and education level of families of the region.
3. The characteristics of the region in which the schools are located (downgraded for decades, near the centre of city, and a former Turkish - Cypriot's district).
4. The large number of students with familial and learning problems.

### ***1.2. Action taken in ZEP Elementary School of Saint Antoniou in Limassol***

#### *School year 2003-2004*

- Conducting of research, whose purpose was the identification, notation and study of social-demographic characteristics of the six (6) schools of the complex.
- Form an image of schools which are located in the region of Saint Antoniou, concerning the characteristics of students, families, but also the function conditions that prevailed in the schools.
- Organisation of informative discussions with the educational personnel of Kindergartens, Elementary schools and High School of region, aiming at briefing them on the philosophy and the objectives of all programmes of ZEP.
- Providing information to parents on the philosophy and the objectives of ZEP.

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<sup>1</sup> All the information presented in this case study is from the "Report of Internal Evaluation of Pilot Operation of Education Priority Zones 2003 – 2006".

- In the framework of the objective of collaboration with the local institutions and the opening of ZEP in the local community meetings were organised for the creation of Network of ZEP which is comprised of the total of members in cooperation.

#### *School years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006*

- Implementation of efforts for reducing the number of students in each class in high school and Elementary school of Saint Antoniou.
- Construction of 3 new teaching rooms in High School.
- Construction of new teaching rooms in Elementary School.
- Staffing of elementary schools and high school of ZEP according to the special needs of schools (increase of Assistant Headmasters number, placement of experienced personnel).
- Introduction of 10 periods of aid in the elementary school.
- Application of all-day school in all grades of elementary school.
- Organisation of educational seminars, addressed to the in collaboration with the Service of Educational Psychology in all the schools of area.
- Attendance of elementary school students in the school conference of High School on the subject "Democratic Citizenship".
- Organisation of educational activity in high school on the subject of the pedagogical practices concerning the evaluation of children with learning difficulties.
- Attendance of High School in the research programme Mera of High on the subject of the effective confrontation of adjustment problems that children with different linguistic background.
- Formation of green space in central point of the High School by children attending the school's supporting programme.
- Providing breakfast in all the children of kindergartens and elementary schools of the area.
- Providing free dinner in Turkish – Cypriot students of all-day school.
- Employing a teacher of Turkish Studies in the Elementary school.
- Employing a teacher of Turkish Language in the Elementary school for the teaching of Turkish language in Turkish – Cypriot students.
- Employing a teacher of Turkish Studies in the high school for Greek language courses to Turkish – Cypriot students.
- Employing a teacher of Turkish Language for teaching Greek language to Turkish – Cypriot mothers.
- Collaboration with the Institution of Social Services of Metropolis in Limassol for providing choices of creative afternoon employment to the youths of Z.E.P of Saint Antoniou.
- Educational activities for Turkish – Cypriot mothers.
- Nominating two Turkish – Cypriot schoolteachers for teaching Turkish to Turkish – Cypriot students.
- Application of the programme "Free Creative Study" in the Elementary School. Enrichment of libraries of schools.
- Funding of 3 educational excursions of elementary schools from the Organisation of Youth.
- Funding purchase of educational equipment from the Organisation of Youth of ZEP schools.
- Subsidy from the Committee of Prosperity and Love of Child for the provision of food for the students of elementary school during their excursion in Paphos.
- Organising a cultural month in the elementary school of Saint Antoniou.

#### ***1.3. Indicators of Evaluation***

- Acceptance of operation of ZEP and the recognition of results from the parents and the community
- Reduction of students' failure

## High School of Saint Antoniou

School Year	Taking exams in September <sup>2</sup>			Stay in the same class	
	Escape	Absences	Grades	Absences	Grades
2003-2004	1	13	82	7	-
2004-2005	1	16	45	3	-
2005-2006	1				

- Reduction of students' drop out / transcriptions in other schools.

## Elementary School of Saint Antoniou in Limassol

Year	Dropouts	
2002-2003	13	The number of drop outs is presented (transcriptions of students, abandonment of school) by the school every year. We see that the number of drop outs decreased rapidly during school year 2005-2006.
2003-2004	10	
2004-2005	15	
2005-2006	1	

- Organising successful Summer School.
- Increase of the percentage of registrations of Roma students.

## 2. Internal Evaluation of Panagia Theoskepasti in Paphos<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1. Criteria of determination of Panagia Theoskepasti in Paphos as ZEP

The region of Panagia Theoskepasti in Paphos was designated as Education Priority Zone because:

- The big number of students with different linguistic background.

Origin	Number of Students
Greek - Cypriots	486 (44%)
Students with language other than Greek	620 (56%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1106</b>

- The low socio-economic and educative level of families of region.
- The high rate of school failure and school escape.

### 2.2. Action taken in ZEP of Panagia Theoskepasti in Paphos

**Research.** The aim of research was to record the problems with regard to the relations between the students, the relations between family and school, equipment of schools, building lacks, educational needs, needs of auxiliary personnel and other problems. The conclusions of the research were presented and were discussed in the first general assembly of council of network.

<sup>2</sup> Students who takes exams in September do this either because they have supplemented the determined number of absences from the school or because their grades in the quarters was under the base - ten

<sup>3</sup> All the information presented in this chapter is from the "Report of Internal Evaluation of Pilot Operation of Education Priority Zones 2003 – 2006".

**Operation of School Clubs.** The aims of the second action were: 1) the prevention of violence and delinquent behaviour, 2) the creative service of students the afternoon hours, 3) the growth of friendship and comprehension between children with different linguistic background and indigenous children, 4) the opening of school in the society, 5) the acquaintance of Cyprus culture and the culture of students with different linguistic background, 6) the acceptance of "other" and the smooth coexistence and 7) the healthy employment of students and the prevention of dependences.

**Courses of learning of Greek language.** The objectives of the third action were: 1) Greek language courses for students with different linguistic background, as well as for their parents, in order to communicate in various circumstances, 2) student's successful school performance, 3) enabling the work finding for the parents, 4) better communication between school and family, 5) student's socialisation through visits in various places and contact with various circumstances of communication.

**Academies of football.** The objectives of the fourth action were: 1) the healthy employment of students in the afternoon and the prevention of substance's dependence, violence and delinquent behaviour and 2) the contact of natives and alien students outside the school environment.

**Publication of timetables.** The aims of the fifth action were: 1) the acquaintance with other cultures and 2) the sensitivity to the diversity.

**Common Christmas feast.** The aims of the sixth action were: 1) the contact of students of all levels of education and 2) the acquaintance with a traditional Christmas' way and customs from the students' countries of origin.

**Room of entertainment and creative employment.** The aims of the seventh action were: 1) the opening of school to society, 2) the creative employment of students, 3) the prevention of violence and delinquent behaviour with special programmes and 4) the contact with the modern technology.

**Operation of Library.** The aims of the eighth action were: 1) the prevention of functional illiteracy, 2) the love for the book, 3) the creative employment and 4) the entanglement of students in various projects.

**Seminar of Cross-cultural education for the teachers of Area.** The aim of this action was the contact with new pedagogic in the sector of cross-cultural education and the presentation of alternative ways of teaching in schools with big number of students with different linguistic background.

**Cultural month April 2005.** The aims of this action were: 1) the acceptance of diversity, 2) the cultivation of friendship and understanding between children, 3) the acquaintance and respect of other cultures, 4) the growth of collaboration between student with different linguistic background and indigenous students, 5) the growth of collaboration between school and family and 6) the creative employment of students and their entanglement in various competitions.

**I know my place.** This action aims to: 1) enhance the realisation of common excursions between the schools of the Zone, 2) increase the acquaintance of students with different linguistic background and native students with Cyprus cultural heritage and 3) make possible the growth of friendship and comprehension between the students of schools of the Zone.

***Cross-cultural Festival.*** The objectives of this action were: 1) the acquaintance and the growth of understanding between the populations, 2) the promotion of peace, collaboration and friendship and 3) the obliteration of biases and racist behaviours.

***Publication of book.*** The aims of this action were: 1) the presentation of methods and activities of cross-cultural education and 2) the publication of book on the subject “Cross-cultural education in the kindergarten”.

***Small journalists in the prevention.*** The aims of this action were: 1) the creation of a journalistic team that would be constituted by students, 2) the contact with the local society and the effort of small journalists to influence positively their public and more specifically their peers for various subjects and 3) students’ more active and more effective entanglement in publics and the effort of contribution with regard to subjects of prevention.

***Small directors.*** The aims of this action were: 1) the acquaintance of young persons with the technology, 2) the creative expression and communication that aims in the collaboration and the reflection on subjects that concern the young persons, 3) the creative employment of students and the creation of alternative ways of amusement and 4) the creation of films that show the reflections of current youth.

***Acceptance of difference through fairy tales.*** The aims of this action were: 1) the enhancement of students’ self – evaluation for the picture that they have for the “other”, 2) the familiarisation with persons with different colour and origin, from different races, nationalities, cultures and religions, 3) the reinforcing of students’ understanding of the extended world and 4) the acceptance of the “other” and the peacefully coexistence.

***Cultural months March - April 2006.*** The proposed activities for this action were: 1) common event for resurgence of traditional Easter customs from various cultures, 2) educational seminar of cross-cultural education with speakers from the University of Cyprus, 3) music – dance night (songs and dances from the students’ countries of origin), 4) experiential laboratories in collaboration with *The Service of Educational Psychology*, 5) lecture for all the parents, 6) report of book of Pontou and report of photograph of Pontou.

***Business dexterity in the education: Small businessmen*** The aims of this action were: 1) the increase of initiative, responsibility and collaboration of students, 2) the undertaking of responsibilities and roles in a common work and the effort for materialisation of objectives and 3) the activities for the proving that students can perform very well in certain activities, that are not includes in their school grades.

***Lectures for parents.*** This action aims to: 1) enhance the relation between parents and school, 2) make a contribution in the creation of right and pleasant familial environment in the psychological growth of child and adolescent and 3) prevent the violence, the delinquent behaviour and the use of substances.

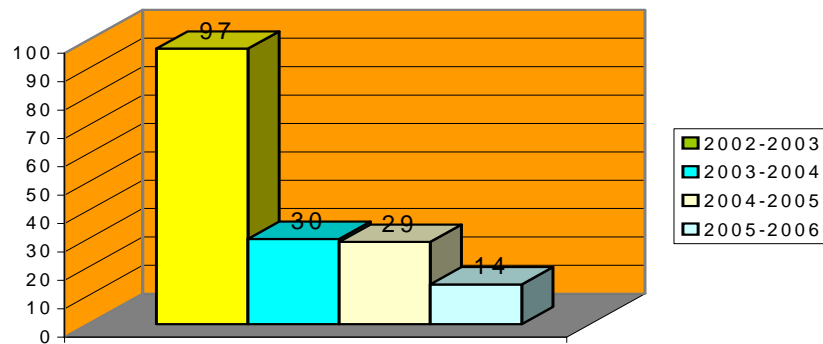
***Programme of smooth integration from Kindergarten to Elementary school and from the Elementary school to High school.*** This action aims to make smoother the integration of students from one level of education to the other.

***Amateur Radio Operators.*** This action: 1) gives the opportunity to students and parents to pass pleasantly and creatively their free hours, 2) combine the scientific research and the experimentation in the telecommunications and electronic and 3) prepare the participants for social offer.

### 2.3. Indicators of Evaluation

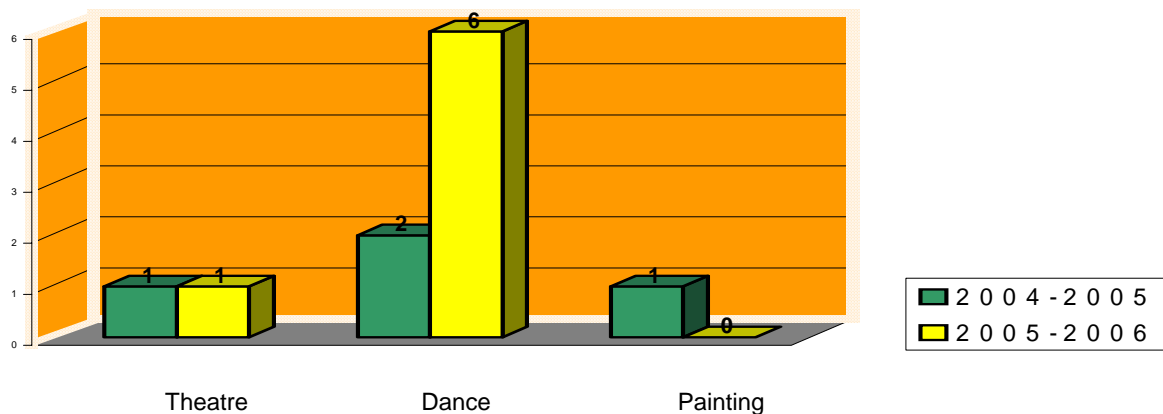
One of the objectives of Educational Priority Zones is the elimination of the phenomenon of school drop - outs, particularly at the nine year of obligatory education. In the below graphic it appears evidently that in Panagia Theoskepasti High School the school drop - outs have decreased. Specifically, in the school year 2002-2003 the number of students that left from High School was 97, while at school years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 the number was decreased to 29 and 14 students, respectively.

#### Student Drop - Outs



At the first year (2004 -2005) of operation of ZEP in Paphos functioned in total four clubs (1 theatre, 2 dances and 1 painting). The clubs functioned with success and thus in the school year 2005-2006 their number was increase. The action of school clubs is considered the more important action in Paphos ZEP because of the big number of students that occupied creatively the afternoon hours.

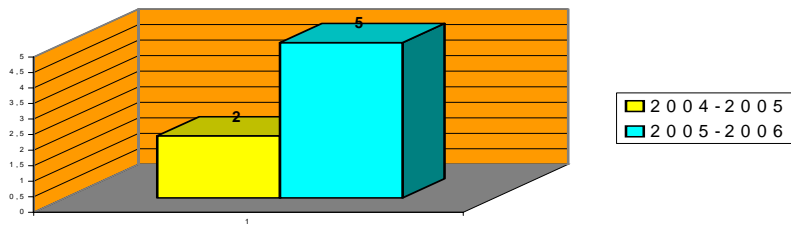
#### Students Clubs



The offer of reinforcing courses for learning Greek for students is very important for the drastic reduction of school failure and the smoother social integration. The offer of reinforcing courses for learning the Greek language from the parents is very important for the better communication between school and family, their professional re-establishment and their smoother social integration. In school year 2004-2005 two departments were functioned, while in school year 2005-2006 their number was increased to five.

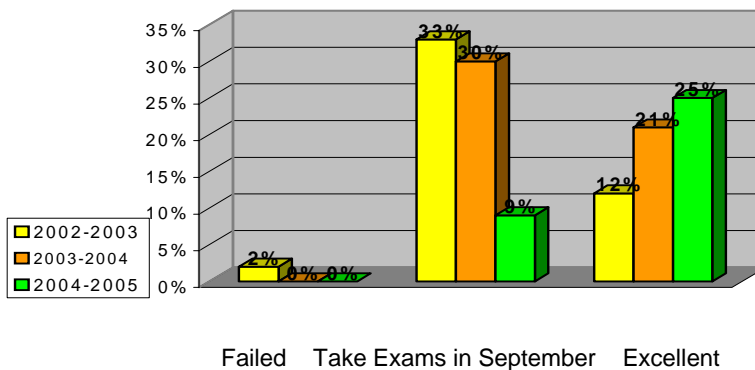


## Classes of Greek Language for Children



One of the objectives of ZEP is the reduction of school failure and the growth of high level of literacy through the systematic cultivation of positive attitude for reading, books and knowledge.

## Percentages of Failed and Excellent students and students who have to take exams in September

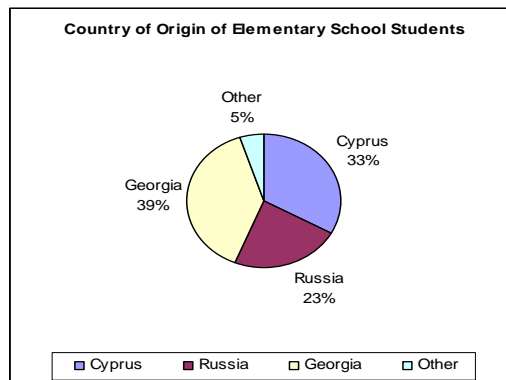
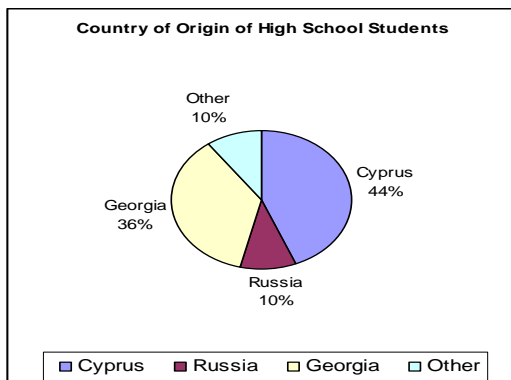


## 3. Internal Evaluation of Faneromenis in Nicosia

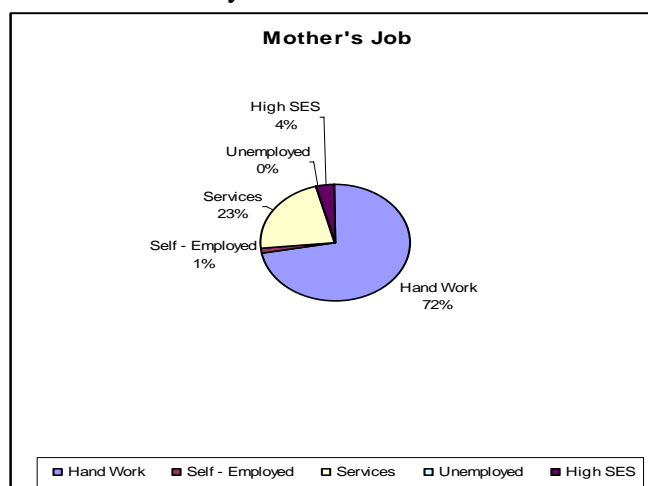
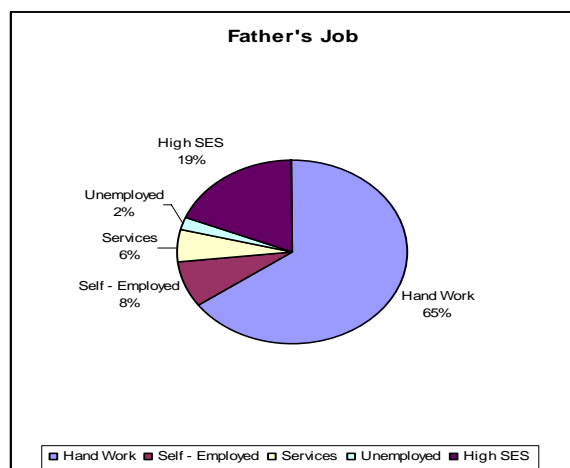
### 3.1. Criteria for the Designation of Faneromenis in Nicosia as a ZEP

The school complex of Faneromenis in Nicosia was selected as an Educational Priority Zone from the school year 2003 – 2004 because:

1. The presence of students with different linguistic background.



## 2. The low socioeconomic and educational level of students' family in the area



## 3. High percentage of School Failure and Drop - outs

### 3.2. Actions in Faneromenis in Nicosia

*School Year 2003 -2004*

**Students' smooth integration in the first year of High School.** For the students' smooth integration from elementary school to High School the High School Advisor has the following competence: 1) talking with the students, 2) conducted tour in High School, 3) discussion about the difference between Elementary and High School and 4) personal interviews with all the students that ask for it in June and September.

**Health Education and Citizenship.** This action concludes four activities on the subject the confrontation of drugs.

**Creative Expression and Artistic Events.** This action concluded theatre, cultural events and some specific events about the Olympic Games.

**Knowing Cyprus.** Specifically, journeys in Cyprus and Greece were organised for the students of Elementary and High School.

**Cooperation with Olympiako (Football Team) in Nicosia.** This action aims to give the opportunity to students of Elementary School and High School to participate to the activities of the football team.

**Solar Car.** The aim of this action was the co operation with a high school in Limassol for the construction of a small model of solar car.

*School Year 2004 – 2005 and 2005 – 2006*

1. Teaching Greek language to students with different linguistic background.
2. Introduction of all – day school in Elementary School.
3. Co operation with School Hearth of Intellectual Fraternity of Greeks Cyprus.
4. Participation in the European Programme Comenius (Elementary and High School).
5. Development of Self-esteem Programme – 4<sup>th</sup> grade of Elementary School.
6. A series of laboratories on the subject “Diversity” - 3rd grade of High School.
7. Programme for the enhancement and support of literacy.

8. Research programme for the decoration of buildings in Nicosia.
9. Construction of a web page about the Education Priority Zones and “Faneromenis” schools.
10. Knowing Cyprus. Journeys in Cyprus and Greece were organised for the students of Elementary and High School.
11. Artistic Events with specific attention at: 1) Mother language day, 2) European day of language and 3) immigrant Hellenism – Pontos and Cyprus.
12. Co operation with Municipality of Nicosia: 1) protection of Environment, 2) attendance in the programme “Awarding schools”, 3) architecture of Old Nicosia.
13. Collaboration with the “Organism of Youth”.
14. Journalistic/Cinematographic Laboratory (“Ifanoturgio”)
15. Operation of Journalistic Group for the Publication of a newspaper

### 3.3. Indicators of Evaluation

Faneromenis High School

School Year	Foreigner Students	Stay in the same class
1998-99	16%	5%
1999-2000	21%	8.5%
2000-01	29%	18.5%
2001-02	41%	17%
2003-04	53%	19.5%
2004-05	57%	6.7%

## 4. Conclusion

The application of Education Priority Zones has been in general successful and received awards (Government of the Republic of Cyprus, 2007; Commonwealth.org, 2006). The main objective of ZEP, the reduction of school failure and the growth of high level of literacy through the systematic cultivation of positive attitude for reading, books and knowledge, was accomplish in all three ZEP that function in Limassol, Paphos and Nicosia. The operation of ZEP was highly accepted from the parents and the overall community and the positive results from their application continue to be recognised.

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