NEOLIBERALISM AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES OF ALIENATION: A CASE STUDY RESEARCH ON THE INTEGRATED CURRICULUM IN GREEK PRIMARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we present insights from an ethnographic research that investigated the concept of citizenship in primary schools in Greece. We explored children's experiences of citizenship in school approaching citizenship as a set of habits that prescribe what is considered 'legitimate' in the public sphere. We focused on structures and agents inside and outside the school classroom and the way they may interfere with pedagogical practices and relationships. This work reveals a vicious circle of asymmetrical relationships and hierarchical structures between the society and the school that entrap teachers in assessment oriented pedagogical practices. We argue that the emergent loyalty of the educational system to traditional pedagogical approaches premised on competition fosters pupils' incomprehension of the importance of social solidarity. It also contributes to their withdrawal from the public sphere, undermining the transformative potential of education. With the use of a diverse sample, we highlight the shortcomings of the integrated curriculum introduced in 2001, in successfully promoting critical thinking and participatory learner-centred pedagogy, and we discuss the implications for the transformative potential of education arising from the adherence to the implementation of European education policy that is discerned in the text of the newly introduced Curriculum of the 'New School'.

Keywords: neoliberalism, citizenship, critical pedagogy, Greek education, curriculum, ethnography

1. INTRODUCTION

In this research, we sought to investigate the model of citizenship (re)produced through the structures of the Greek primary school. For this purpose by means of an ethnographic multiple case study, we observed systematically the experience pupils acquire within the performance of pedagogical practices in school, and in this article, we discuss its implications. Taken from a poststructuralist perspective, the criticality of the investigation of pupils' everyday experiences for a comprehensive enquiry of the concept of citizenship stems from the importance attributed to contextual factors that define the individual within the limits of neoliberalism.

Drawing on Dewey's theory and on his notion of habit in particular, we examined children's experiences of citizenship in school approaching citizenship as a set of routines that prescribe what is considered 'legitimate' in the public sphere through the institutional authority of schooling. To this end, we focused on pedagogical practices and relationships within and outside the classroom looking at the way school operates as a model for the public space and teachers as adult citizenship models for pupils.

However, the concept of citizenship has been examined taking into account the broader culture of learnification of education in the European Union as defined by Biesta (2013). Biesta treating the issue of increased demand for skills in education coined the term learnification of education describing a process including a number of discursive shifts including 'the tendency to refer to education as "teaching and learning," to refer to students as "learners" and to adults as "adult learners," to see teachers as "facilitators of learning" and to conceive of schools as "learning environments" or "places for learning"[…] because the word school had such a negative connotation with pupils and parents' (Biesta, 2013, p. 62).

Taking into account the efforts of Greek policy makers to align the educational system with the broader European policies for education and the emphasis on individual achievement and performance put forward by the discourses of neoliberalism which holds a hegemonic ideological position regarding the organisation of the contemporary political, social and economic life our research looked at the commitment of the Greek primary schools to the central aim of critical thinking as advocated in the Curriculum.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH
Pedagogy in neoliberal times

Frost (2012), focusing primarily on the characteristics of the neoliberal milieu and its impact on the society, concludes that the relationship between democracy and education has been significantly weakened. She argues that the erosion of this relationship is due to the similarities between the mode of government of the political realm and the one of education as they are both characterised by transformations which stand in a dialectical relationship. More explicitly, in the context of global competition, the logic of ensuring the competitiveness of national economies lies at the heart of policy-making and it is reflected at the conception an education model, which aims to create the entrepreneurial individual. On the other hand, the main objective of contemporary educational systems is to ensure that learning is oriented strictly towards the quantitatively measurable productivity and efficiency of the schools and the students (Westheimer, 2008). Therefore, the public discourse focuses on the promise of education to bring economic development, despite its potential to contribute to the development of democracy. Giroux reporting from the cradle of capitalism argues that in the US '[d]emocratic, governance has been replaced by the sovereignty of the market, paving the way for modes of governance intent on transforming democratic citizens into entrepreneurial agents' (Giroux, 2014, p. 8).

Neoliberal policies in the field of education have resulted to the commercialisation of the latter and attributed a clientelistic character to the relationship between the student and the teacher, as education certificates have become key to the success or survival of the individual in the capitalist system, and, therefore, they have become the object of a transaction in the context of the educational system (Giroux, 2014). This condition fosters competition among students and nurtures an environment of social Darwinism, individualism and the withdrawal of the individual from his/her social nature. Critical Pedagogues argue that in the field of education, the forces of neoliberalism manifest mainly in the form of the subversion of processes that encourage critical thinking (Noula, 2013).

This research sought to identify the possible effects of the neoliberal setting on the Greek educational system drawing on the theoretical principles of Critical Pedagogy and the work of Henry Giroux, in particular. We considered his emphasis on the

importance of critical thinking for the empowerment of young people in the context of educational processes, as well as the importance he attributed on teachers' critical role as public intellectuals 'who combine scholarly reflection and practice in the service of educating students to be thoughtful, active citizens' (Giroux, 2012). Giroux maintains that what produces and sustains neoliberalism in education is the fact that critical learning has been replaced or suppressed by practices, such as rote learning or standardised testing. This is further supported by his argument on the significance of critical reflection concerning the transformative role of teachers and education:

> 'Critical reflection is an essential dimension of justice and is central to civic education, and it is precisely with respect to the keeping justice and democracy alive in the public domain that intellectuals have a responsibility to the global world. […] I am suggesting that educators need a new vocabulary for connecting not only how we read critically but also how we engage in movements for social change. I also believe that simply invoking the relationship between theory and practice, critique and social action will not do. Any attempt to give new life to a substantive democratic politics must address both how people learn to be political agents and, what kind of educational work is necessary within many kinds of public spaces to enable people to use their full intellectual resources to both provide a profound critique of existing institutions and struggle to work towards fulfilling the promise of a radical global democracy. As public intellectuals, educators and other cultural workers need to understand more fully why the tools we used in the past feel awkward in the present, often failing to respond to problems now facing the United States and other parts of the globe' (Giroux, 2006, p. 186).

Since the 1990s, the concept of competence has been particularly prevalent within the Education field also due to the enhanced role of Empirical Pedagogy. It has been used as a key concept for the purposes of defining only quantitatively measurable educational goals (i.e. PISA researches) that aim at shaping the individual to be compatible with and functional within a market economy that prioritises the values of the efficiency and competitiveness and not at holistically developing the identities of the individual. An example of this development would be the White Paper on Education and Vocational Training adopted by the European Union in 1995 entitled «Teaching and LearningTowards the Knowledge Society» (Lederer, 2014). The latter is attributed the notion of a category that aims at the transformation of the reproduction of the labour force in terms of flexible use of human resources. It is evident that the concept of competence is being used for the purposes of the domination of the logic of the theory of human capital in the field of education (Otto and Schrödter, 2010). Based on the above, the concept of competence is falls within the personalisation strategies of neoliberal character aimed at strengthening specific profiles of individual behaviours with considerable economic value (Lederer, 2014). The focus on the individual – including concepts such as self-regulation, self organisation, self-motivation – is not part of a logic of empowerment of the subject via simultaneous strengthening of social ties but of a reasonable increase of her usability in accordance with the terms of neoliberal economies. Within the context of extreme competition in the labour market, these developments in education lead to the disintegration of the links between the individual and her social environment.

The case of Greece and the introduction of the integrated curriculum

The case of the Greek educational system is of particular interest as the introduction of the integrated curriculum (translated as 'Cross-curricular Thematic Framework' and known with the acronym DEPPS[1]) for primary education in 2001 constituted a reconfiguration attempt of the character of the Greek primary school. The main feature of this reform was the 'loosening of the boundaries' among the different school subjects in an attempt to promote an interdisciplinary approach to learning. In the integrated curriculum for Primary education, critical thinking and the development of relevant skills featured as main aims for the development of democratic citizenship (Pedagogical Institute, 2001). The authors of the integrated curriculum argued that critical thinking is promoted mainly by the principle of interdisciplinarity (Pedagogical Institute, 2001)[2] and the introduction of programmes such as the ones of 'Flexible Zone' and 'Social and Political Education' (Alahiotis, 2001).

However, already in its introductory note, the integrated curriculum exhibited a fundamental paradox concerning the positioning of the authors on the role of the pupil and the one of the teacher in the school on the one hand and their perceptions on the role of the school in the society on the other. The main objective of the integrated curriculum was formulated as follows:

> 'Thus, through the proposed DEPPS […] we seek and we hope that the student "will be equipped" with the "educational mantle" necessary to face more successfully the "storms of life," while shaping her own views about the world she shall live in and she should love, and while shaping her own approach to well being. This should be the response of our country to the challenge of the society of knowledge, information and of technical know-how, to the society of quality, and to the challenge of the European project'.

Therefore, the case of Greek primary education was of particular interest to the area of investigation, as the pronouncements of the integrated curriculum have been capturing a highly contradictive educational policy which on the one hand appeared to encourage critical and independent thinking and on the other hand it envisioned a model of schooling that had to fulfil predetermined criteria to which obviously both pupils and teachers should align themselves to, so as to meet a range of challenges in the modern society.

In one of the sparse critiques existing on the text of the integrated curriculum, Noutsos (2003) criticises the authors for the lack of planning and for the abstract character of the concepts employed. He argues that in theory, the cross-curricular themes and the connections between different subjects of the integrated curriculum provide school knowledge with a mantle of neutrality thereby contributing to the de-politicisation of school knowledge and the school as an institution in general.

Grollios and Liampas (2001) have provided another insightful critique on the ideological underpinnings and the pedagogical implications of the trademark programme introduced by the integrated curriculum, the one of the Flexible Zone[3]. They criticize the Flexible Zone as a programme which essentially constitutes a top-down policy designed to improve the effectiveness of the existing educational system rather than challenge inequitable structures. In their analysis, they argue that although in the Instructions of the integrated curriculum, the Flexible Zone Programme is being advertised as a pedagogical innovation that aspires to free pedagogical processes from traditional teaching methods and dissociate teaching from assessment, and it fails to

address the conundrum of the pedagogical relationship which is founded upon teachers' continuous effort to consolidate their hierarchical power.

This analysis foreshadows our empirical findings as Grollios and Liampas further argue that the authors' lack of attention in addressing issues that regard the pedagogical practice per se and the teachers' concerns with reference to the management of the pedagogical relationship involves the risk that serving teachers may reject progressive methods and principles overall if the implementation of such methods ultimately leads to the reproduction of school routine and / or if they are identified with 'hours of rest' without substantial educational results, further reducing the margin for radical criticism to the existing educational system and the influence of alternative proposals for the organisation of the school and the society associated with this criticism.

3. THE RESEARCH
An ethnographic case study

For the purpose of data collection, we documented a range of pedagogical practices including teaching and learning practices, human interactions outside the limits of the classroom and socio spatial parameters that were subsequently studied in light of teachers' interview data, the case selection criteria and the theoretical orientation of the research. More specifically, we conducted observations in a sample of a total of five Year 6 classes in five primary schools in Greece spending five weeks in each school.

The period of observation was enough, so as to allow the researcher's immersion in the school culture and her familiarisation with the school environment, the routines and the people. It was also an adequate amount of time for a satisfactory interpretation of the data and the avoidance biases which may incur as a result of a prolonged stay and naturalisation.

Research strategy: studying citizenship through the systematic observation of the experience pupils acquire within the performance of pedagogical practices

In this work, we follow Dewey's (1954) approach to education and his understanding of the schooling experience premised on the principle of interaction as the foundation of democratic citizenship. In line with Dewey's argument, the school both as an institution, as well as a locus of socialisation, can contribute to the formation of the political self providing experiences of participation to the life of its community, promoting critical thinking and satisfying one's need of belonging. According to this approach, the matrix of processes taking place within the limits of education extends beyond what is prescribed by the official Curriculum. It regards the organisational structure of the school which underpins the ideological function of the latter (Nova-Kaltsouni, 2002). Hence, we have taken interest in pedagogical practices primarily because their scope goes beyond the binary of teaching and learning, including the wider spectrum of relationships in school which constitute the background of civic relationships (Kouzelis, 1998). Accordingly, we examined the relationships that emerge with reference to knowledge, time and space, considering schooling an initial form of social contract, and we also looked at the way stakeholders find themselves in hierarchical relationships in school. This allowed me to see how school is perceived as a public space and to distinguish the differences amongst the five different schools of the sample.

Therefore, the essential issue regarding the investigation of the way pupils understand citizenship is the study of relationships of experiential character in everyday practices as the latter convey specific messages and formulate specific codes of social expectations regarding individual action in the public space.

Critical Pedagogues define Pedagogy as a 'deliberate attempt to influence the how and the what of knowledge and identities are produced within and among particular sets of social relations' (Giroux & Simon, 1989, p. 239), and they emphasise that within its limits, students should be able to acknowledge what is taken for granted through interventions in ritualistic processes that naturalise existing power relationships and the codes of the dominant culture (Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 1995).

For the purpose of exploring the present research question, we have adopted Quantz's approach on rituals. Quantz (2011) defines rituals drawing on Dewey who argues that we can live democratically through interaction with others and through the interpretation of our actions in light of the actions of others. This approach places particular emphasis on the actions and interactions of students, teachers and the community (Attick, 2011).

Quantz also founds his work on McLaren's theory (1999) about rituals in education which emphasises the importance of routine activities for conceptualisation of ritual procedures. In his definition of rituals, Quantz says: '[o]ne rule of ritual is that the more we recognise it as a ritual, the less likely it is to affect us' (Quantz, 2011, p. 3). The problem, however, arises from the fact that usually rituals are equated to great ceremonies and not to daily activities. Thus, the power of the ritual in the classroom is often underestimated and misapprehended (Quantz, 2011).

Finally, emphasising the performative character of ritual Quantz explains that the 'politics' of the real school is performed in the rituals of daily life, and it is these performances that should be clarified in the descriptions of educational practices:

> 'What people say about their performances is important, but how they actually perform their identities and their politics are even more important' (ibid: 44).

The present work is an ethnographic multiple case study, where there has been an attempt to document aspects of everyday school life both inside and outside the classroom. We focused on ritualistic processes within the limits of pedagogy and their importance for the emergence of negotiated identities and power relations. Rituals allowed us to look at the way everyday activities and aspects of school life making up to everyday life (e.g. human relations, infrastructure) affect the way in which pupils construct the concept of citizenship. Furthermore, we sought to investigate the way in which the socioeconomic background and the degree of urbanisation of schools as criteria for their differentiation are critical elements of the school culture.

According to the analysis above, the observation focused on the following aspects of the school life:

- staff room atmosphere
- teachers' professionalism and behaviour
- individual school features and adequacy of infrastructure
- teacher-pupil relationships
- school activities and other collective action
- decoration
- morning assembly, prayer, etc.

These informal processes constitute latent structures in the school influencing citizenship formation in a decisive way (McCowan, 2009). Different theorists (Hinde, 2004; Karakatsani, 2004; Nova-Kaltsouni, 2002) define this context as 'school culture'. More specifically, the term 'school culture' refers to cultural practices and values that reflect social norms and general ideologies in school. Within this context, and with respect to the political socialisation process, special emphasis is given on the importance of power relations, on assessment and, finally, on the concept of authority in general that the student-teacher relationship is founded upon (Giroux, 2011; Nova-Kaltsouni, 2002).

Data were also collected by means of semi-structured interviews with the teachers. The interviews were not very tightly structured, but they were not very open-ended so as to take the form of a discussion either (Blaxter et al., 2006, p. 172). The interviews evolved around the following axes:

(a) citizenship in education,
The axis of 'citizenship in education' regarded the inquiry of teachers' perceptions on citizenship as well as the way it is negotiated in primary education settings.

(b) democracy and Otherness,
This axis involved questions that concern the way teachers conceptualise Otherness and also the way they strategically approach it in their daily practice. Issues regarding democratic schooling and children's rights were also discussed.

(c) teacher training and teachers in education,
This axis included questions regarding the quality of teachers' training (preservice and in-service) and issues concerning their professionalism (i.e. motivation, preparation for classes) and their role in relation to other groups of reference in education (Advisors, parents, head teacher).

Participants

The sampling was purposive because we aimed to examine whether pupils' socioeconomic and ethnic background affects the way they perceive citizenship. Therefore, we selected five schools using the criterion of the urbanisation of the area where they were based, as well as the distinction of schools between public (state funded) and private. The sample comprised of:

i.   an urban area school (parents with high literacy rates, middle or high income, and zero attendance of ethnic minority background pupils)
ii.   an underprivileged urban school (60% of pupils were of Roma origin)
iii.   a semi-urban school
iv.   a rural school
v.   a private school

Opting for a multiple case study ensured a greater heterogeneity to the small sample of the research producing, at the same time, more robust findings and allowing the investigation of the crucial parameter of participants' socioeconomic background.

The sample included five teachers. The variation of the school sample ensured the variation of the teachers' sample too. This is due to the fact that in Greece the appointment of teachers to different schools depends upon to their years in service, as

teachers' rights as civil servants increase on the basis of a point system that favours seniority.

The wide range of years in service covered by the participants reflected changes and inconsistencies in the Greek teacher education system. All four teachers in the public schools of the sample have received a basic two-year training which provided them with a teaching certificate. Later on in their career, they were given the option of equating their certificate to a higher education degree attending a number of modules in one of the Departments of Primary Education, which followed the establishment of the latter in 1983 (Stamelos and Emvalotis, 2001). However, there seems to be a trend even in this small sample. Teachers in the three public schools, who are in their early forties and with an average of 23 years in service, have opted for their certificate equitation. On the other hand, their colleague in the rural area school who has 33 years in service and who is 57 years old did not opt for the training in a higher education department and for the enhancement of his pedagogical background. Like her colleague in the rural area school, the teacher in the private school lacks pedagogical training and she also has significantly less experience than the rest of the participants. She constitutes a representative example of the inconsistencies of the Greek educational system. She is not a qualified primary education teacher. She holds a BA degree in Greek literature and she is therefore a qualified secondary education teacher. Nevertheless, according to a temporary legislative decision, her MA renders her a qualified primary school teacher who can work only in private schools.

Research validity and the concept of authority in education

As Neoliberalism is politically predicated on the concept of authority, employing Critical Pedagogy as a platform to challenge the neoliberal ideological positioning may raise questions about the validity of the research primarily due to the fact that Critical Pedagogy has received criticism for not being able to address the problematic nature of power which it criticises and which at the same time fosters. In a widely known comprehensive analysis, Elizabeth Ellsworth criticises Critical Pedagogy for 'failing to provide a clear statement on its political agenda [and] to launch any meaningful analysis of or programme for reformulating the institutionalised power imbalances between themselves (theorists) and their students or of the essentially paternalistic project of education itself (1989, p. 301 & 306).

However, Giroux has argued in favour of a pedagogical approach that is underpinned by the principle of an emancipatory authority, which thereby requires the teacher to adopt a moral position regarding the consistency of his curriculum choices, and the way the class is conducted (Bizzell, 1991). Bizzell (ibid) contends that Giroux addresses the problem of authority in pedagogical relations arguing that teachers will have to use their authority to establish classroom conditions that will allow students recognise all forms of authority, and they will also enable them to transform these relations in order to create a democratic society. More broadly, Critical Pedagogues focus on the relationship between power and knowledge and in the way this relationship takes shape in the context of the hidden curriculum. They attempt to shed light on the way the 'dedemocratisation' of education takes place, and the way students-citizens are being transformed into subjects of neoliberalism understanding the hidden curriculum as a parameter that defines the limits of conflict and determines the development of critical thinking promoting at the same time the reproduction of dominant ideologies and the formation of subjectivities through processes of symbolic control (Bernstein, 1991).

In an attempt to demonstrate empirically how authority operates in the realm of the classroom, Chouliaraki (1996) developed a hybrid theoretical framework for the study of classroom practices. Chouliaraki focusing on the progressivist classroom, brings together Basil Bernstein's and Michel Foucault's sociological approaches to education and she describes 'some "good habits" of the classroom as primarily covert regulative practices, which aim at subjecting pupils in the social order of the classroom, rather than facilitating pupils' learning'. She, thereby, argues that 'the pedagogic potential of the educational discourse of "progressivism" is subordinated to a regulative discourse of social order, once this educational discourse enters the institutional context of the classroom' (Chouliaraki, 1996, p. 103).

Bernstein's sociology of education is of further interest to the present work as it exhibits additional affinity with the theory of Critical Pedagogy. Bernstein recognises the transformative potential of Pedagogy and it theorises it as a site of interruption and of thinking the 'unthinkable'. This is where he converges with Giroux (2011) who locates the potential of interrupting the reproduction of the positivist paradigm of pedagogy in the teacher's role in the classroom and in particular in her knowledge of the hidden assumptions that regard the practices and the content of knowledge (pp.38–9).

Findings
Emphasis on performance and academic achievement
Although to a different extent in the different schools, the emphasis on performance and the pursuit of achievement in school, emerge as common prevalent features of school life in the participant schools. Data from the observation revealed that teachers do not engage in dialogical relationships with pupils and do not encourage their participation in class, but they rather embrace a teacher centred model of pedagogy which is based on traditional teaching practices including verbalism and rote learning which in turn encourage the hierarchisation of knowledge. It should be noted though that the interviews with the teachers revealed a dichotomy in their sample which suggests that, in spite of their practices, some of the teachers are advocates of modern pedagogical practices and that these teachers share a contextual factor which inhibits their original pedagogical orientation[4].

To highlight this finding, we cite below a number of excerpts from the ethnographic research (observation and interviews), which reflect the different pedagogical orientations that teachers uphold:

> 'What shall I do? I try using group work to instil a spirit of cooperation or using different… ' (teacher in the semi-urban school)

> 'Implementing a project you can achieve many goals can… Both [pupils'] joy and imagination and the most important; You enable them to learn how to learn!' (teacher in the urban school)

> 'If you stay quite, I will bring you chocolates on Monday…' (teacher in the private school)

> 'I will ask you something know and if you don't know the answer, you are doomed!' (teacher in the rural school)

As explained in more depth and detail in a different paper where the focus is on teachers' pedagogical orientation in relation to their training (Noula, 2013), it appears that teachers in public schools (semi-urban and urban school) with the exception of the teacher in the rural school who is in his last year prior to his retirement tend to resist the traditional model of pedagogy. In their interviews, they state that they wish to follow the guidelines proposed by the integrated curriculum and implement innovative methodologies such as group work or project based learning. Nevertheless, they argue that parents' aspirations gravely affect their work and their pedagogical choices:

> 'Parents always expect you to deliver the curriculum content and to strictly follow the textbook.' (teacher in the semi-urban school)

> 'In this school parents really scare me […] When I'm in the class I do not know I have to do with the pupils or someone else behind them.' (teacher in the urban school)

What all teachers claim in their interviews is that often their practices are the mere outcome of pressure they receive from parents who focus on their children's performance, therefore, setting assessment and grades at the heart of the pedagogical process:

> pupils are being examined during the Religious Education class through a process of question and answer process and pupils do not perform well
> teacher: 'If you ever do this again, your grades will drop sharply and the only thing you can do from now on for the rest of this month is to be perfect! This goes for everybody!' (observation in the urban school)

This phenomenon manifests more lucidly in the example of University Entrance Exams. The fact that parents are concerned with the success of their children in University Entrance Exams already from primary school was a commonplace in teachers' accounts. This, however, appears to significantly affect teachers work. The teacher in the semi-urban school developed the most extensive account on the issue:

> teacher: 'I think the University Entrance Exams have catalysing role for the educational system but also for my work.' (teacher in the semi-urban school)

This fact appears to radically shape the character of school life especially in the private school that is concerned with 'student satisfaction':

> During the Greek language class the teacher works with the pupils on Syntax examining the topic of subordinate clauses. When one of the pupils makes a mistake while attempting to give an example the teacher makes the following remark: teacher:
> 'You will pay for such mistakes in High school!'
> (observation in the private school)

The observation often showed that performance-oriented pedagogies contribute to the shift from the principles of the integrated code advocated by the implemented curriculum to the ones of the collection code:

During the history class: teacher:
'I want you to tell me those four things we discussed yesterday!'
Pupils get confused and they try possible answers. The teacher gives them keywords that will help them answer. Pupils begin to answer again. Pupils take their turn to answer the same question verbatim.
Elpida: 'Miss, shall we not elaborate beyond these four things?'
teacher: 'Do not even think about claiming that you don't know how to answer the question about the positive and the negative effects, if it is given to you in the term tests!'
(observation in the private school).

The pursuit of performance and the emphasis on academic achievement as a means for social mobility results to the strong framing[5] of pedagogical relationships with regard to the transmission of knowledge. According to Bernstein, 'the stronger the classification[6] and framing [is], the more the pedagogical relationship tends to be hierarchical and ritualistic. The pupil is considered to be unknowledgeable with little status and few rights' (Bernstein, 1991, p. 83).

School culture and routinisation of school life
The extent of framing in pedagogical relationships is also manifested in a range of parameters documented in the different schools including decoration, compliance of stakeholders with the rules, that is, regarding the rigidity of timetables or the performance of collective activities including religious rituals.

An observation of major importance for the research regards the fact that the framing of pedagogical relationships weakens as we move from the urban to the rural areas and from the private school to the public schools. Physical boundaries such as doors, lines on the floor, railings are used to separate well neat and tidy areas or rooms that constituted allocated spaces for the delivery of the different subjects or designated areas for play and the exhibition of arts and crafts works in the private school. This omnipresence of the 'drawn lines' was just a reflection of the rigid boundaries between the different subjects, while the designated spaces for staff and pupils mirrored the existing power relationships and hierarchies even amongst the staff members. The most lucid example of this emerges from the juxtaposition of the strong framing of the relationships documented in the private primary school to the extraordinary case of democratic governance observed in the underprivileged urban school welcoming Roma pupils (Noula et al., 2015) but also to the loose framings of the pedagogical relationships often impeding the function of the rural school.

To highlight this finding, we have cited below a number of excerpts from the ethnographic research (observation and interviews), which reflect the different versions of everyday life in the schools of the sample.

The teacher walks among pupils' desks to check whether they have done the work assigned the day before. Filio has forgotten to bring her worksheet with her though.
Filio: Sir, I forgot to bring mine. I left it at home.
teacher: This is fine, Filio, don't worry. I will be expecting it tomorrow, though…
(observation in the underprivileged urban area school)

teacher: The title of the essay will be: 'In which way can the school impose perceptions about respect to love and solidarity?'
(observation during essay writing class in the private school during)

teacher: 'I was limited to delivering the curriculum. I never felt that I could take initiative in the classroom or follow some planning. Children have always had so many things to do and my time was very limited!' (teacher in the private school)

The strength of the framing of pedagogical relationships is coupled by an equal emphasis on classification of knowledge content. This fact is starkly manifested in the emergence of binaries in this small sample of schools such as private versus public (state-funded) schools, urban versus rural schools and urban versus underprivileged school. Data from the observation regarding human relationships in school (staff-room atmosphere, teacher-pupil relationships etc.), the routinisation of school life (morning prayer, assemblies, timetables etc.) and the professionalism of teachers (i.e. prompt arrival in the classroom, preparation) reveal that the socioeconomic background of pupils admitted in the school is positively correlated with the strength of framing of pedagogical relationships affecting teachers' attitudes towards their pupils. Parents' socioeconomic background and ensuing understanding of the way school operates appear to determine teachers' attitudes and are positively correlated with their adherence to school regulations. This is explicitly stated in the interview with the teacher in the urban area school who appears to be intimidated by the parents' status and their capacity to interfere with his work influencing the school authorities:

'As far as I am concerned, parents affect me. Thinking back what happened last year once I arrived, and finding out once that this class had "kicked out" three teachers, certainly, that thing did not leave me unaffected. […] How was I supposed to treat the children? What kind of children were they? Is it the parents hiding behind them or you just have to manage the kids? Is it the children as a whole that have behavioural issues? As you have seen yourself it was not the children, there was something else behind.'(teacher in the urban school)

On the other side of the spectrum in the rural, semi-urban and under-privileged area urban school, we would often witness an 'open-door policy' which was revealing of less structured hierarchies:

head teacher: 'The door is open to all and the head teacher is the manager of a system and wishes to produce'. (head teacher in the underprivileged urban school)

School governance and the perception of public space
The way teachers operate inside and outside the classroom constitute another facet of the phenomenon which regards the prevalence of mentalities over rules in the school, particularly with reference to the arbitrariness of the way they carry out their tasks. This arbitrariness, which mainly refers to the inconsistencies in the way teachers perform their role (i.e. timely arrival in the classroom), engenders the emergence of a distorted standard of organisation of the public space. This standard

reflects the rupture of the Social Contract and the emergence of asymmetries within hierarchical relations. It further supports the establishment of a civic model based on citizens' subjection to power having as a long term effect the reproduction of social dynamics that leave vulnerable groups exposed to attitudes of racism and discrimination.

As documented in the observation, a number of practices related to daily life in the school go unquestioned as part of a long tradition in the Greek educational system. Such institutional practices of ritualistic character are the morning prayer, pupils' morning assembly and lining up (girls in the front, boys in the back etc.), annual school functions, flag hoisting or parades on national days. These rituals are common to all schools, but according to the observation data, the degree of their rigidity seems to correspond to the degree of urbanisation of the school.

Taking the morning prayer as an example, it was observed that both the private and the urban area school head teachers and teachers would always be present during the morning assembly, validating this practice with their status and being consistent with what their role entails. However, in the semi-urban and the rural area schools, the teachers in most cases not only they did not participate, but also they would stay inside in order to have a last cigarette before going to class. In the following excerpt from the observation at the semi-urban school, the head teacher's powerlessness to establish a minimum of authority that will enable him to manage his staff and the school is evident:

> head teacher: 'Guys, it's been five minutes since the bell rang… What do you think? Shall we go inside?'

Likewise, the fact that the boundaries within the hierarchy in these schools were not clear constituted an obstacle for their running while strengthening their authoritarian character. Teachers as civil servants and representatives of the state within a public institution (school) set the example for pupils and they cultivate pupils' perceptions on the way public spaces operate.

It was also observed that in public schools mentalities prevail over rules with regard to democratic processes and practices of contractual character. More explicitly, this refers to teachers not abiding by the law which prohibits smoking in public spaces. The framing as regards to compliance to the rules appears to be weakening as we move away from the urban area schools. More explicitly, the practices described above are not observed in the private school and in the urban area school. According to observation data, in contrast to the head teachers of both these schools, who maintain clear distance from the teaching staff, the head teachers of the other three schools of the sample seem to find it difficult to settle issues related to the unobstructed functioning of the institution.

Given the fact that the school constitutes a model and one of the primary experiences of citizenship, it is obvious that the school negates itself because of constant inconsistencies that concern its function and its failure to 'converse' with the society casting aside the strong advantage of its potential to contribute to the society (Nova-Kaltsouni, 2002) (Kouzelis, 1998).

In an artful essay Kouzelis (ibid), sheds light on the impact that the inconsistencies previously discussed have on the Greek society:

> 'the first knowledge that the Greek pupil sinks in is the non-binding nature of the rules. She is being educated for a society where rules are not "always" and

"entirely" applicable for anyone, dominant or dominated. The consequence of this education is not the critical questioning of power, but the encouragement, the tolerance and the reproduction of arbitrariness

4. CONCLUSIONS

The traditional pedagogical practices adopted by teachers in all schools of the sample foster a performance conscience in pupils. We argue that this pedagogical approach promotes competitiveness standards to the detriment of the formation of a collective consciousness, as pupils' personal development is disconnected from its social foundations. This is clearly visible in the context of everyday practice in school where the fact that social relations are conditions of the evolution of the self is being concealed. It can be argued that this model of modus operandi promotes a logic of civic action that subscribes to the neoliberal ideological project which advances the dichotomy between the individual and the society through the intensification of competition and the expansion of phenomena of isolation.

Furthermore, the hierarchisation of knowledge as 'significant' and 'nonsignificant' through the distinction of 'primary' (subjects considered essential for building skills that are considered important in the labour market) and 'secondary' subjects in the context of traditional pedagogical practice contributes to the assumption of the instrumental character of knowledge by students. Therefore, teaching takes on the character of a one-way process, namely this of the external imposition of the syllabus. This process has little to do with pupils' interests or their reality outside the school, and it seems to compromise their critical thinking which could instead be developed through pedagogical practices that involve dialogue, participation and reflection. Furthermore, unlike the Curriculum objectives regarding a holistic approach to learning, the fragmentation of school knowledge which is mainly due to the strong classifications amongst school subjects results to pupils' fragmentary perceptions about knowledge overall.

The documented pedagogical practices create conditions that are likely to lead to the alienation of pupils and their disengagement from the subject of learning within the aforementioned individual work, which presents parallels with the Marxist approach to alienation in work environments.

The concept of alienation does not only apply to workplaces, but it can also describe the disengagement of the members of the civil society from the political sphere. Based on this premise, we argue that the concept of alienation constitutes a useful tool in order to decipher the way Greek primary school operates. Alienation is also a concept that can be employed for the interpretation of the experiences pupils acquire within the limits of the school and the way that these experiences contribute to the establishment of a citizenship paradigm. In more detail, at the core of theories of alienation lies the oppression of human creativity. In the Marxist tradition alienation is understood as a state, wherein human beings are restricted to the animal condition or the one of machines (Hodson, 2009). Marx identifies four key dimensions of alienation in the workplace: a) the alienation of the individual from the product of his/her work, b) the alienation from the process of production, c) the alienation from oneself during the production process and d) the alienation from the other (ibid: pp. 119–120). In this work, we propose parallels between the model of work in the Greek primary classroom model emergent from the findings of this multiple case study and the Marxist approach of alienation in work environments. Following this analysis:

(1) Pupils work alienated from the product of their work because often they do not understand why they have to learn. Besides, the goals set for them are located in the far future and they are of material nature as they are linked to their success in the University Entrance Exams and a potentially successful professional career,

(2) In most cases, pupils are alienated from the pedagogical process, as the pace, the methods and the pedagogical means used are under the control of the teachers or the policy makers,

(3) The work model and the content of knowledge do not invite the pupils to get personally involved leading to self-alienation,

(4) Finally, given that key elements of the pedagogical approach described above include reclusive, competitive and non-cooperative forms of learning, it can be argued that pedagogical practice may result to pupils' alienation from their peers and therefore the other

We argue that this paradigm of classroom work promotes a model of civic engagement that subscribes to the neoliberal project, as it advances the dichotomy between the individual and the society through the generation of competition and isolation. Both the teaching practices and the broader teacher-pupil interactions in school are indicative of the disadvantaged position that pupils find themselves in mainly through the dichotomy subject – knowledge, and the 'subordination' of the pupil to the authority of the teacher and the dominant discourse of the curriculum. Pupils are being subjectified as 'subjects' of knowledge, its mere carriers and not as its co-creators or as participants in the process of its discovery.

The implementation of collection codes situates the pupil in the position of the passive listener, weakening critical thinking and, thus, undermining the project for empowerment and the emergence of 'tomorrow's active citizenship,' as defined in the Guidelines of the Cross-curricular Thematic Framework'.

Although we cannot draw conclusions for the Greek educational system as a whole or for primary education in particular, the use of a highly diverse sample of pupils and teachers allows the formulation of comprehensive arguments on the emergent character of the Greek primary school. We would argue that by means of traditional pedagogical practices implemented within its limits, the Greek primary school appears to be favouring the reproduction of a dichotomic model citizenship. More specifically, by demonstrating the domination of dichotomous relations that lie at the core of citizenship, such as the dichotomy between the individual and the civil society, the one between the self and the other and the dichotomy between the individual (acting with the intent to maximise self-interest) and the political subject (acting in the interest of the common good), it became apparent that already from primary school, pupils experience the dominant logic regarding the formation processes of the social world. This logic promotes and builds on secession practices of the individual from the social space. These perceptions are determined by the individual relations with knowledge, time and space, but also by the ways in which the individual is placed within hierarchical relations.

We further argue that the documented way the primary school operates drastically undermines the role it can hold in the society regarding the processes of transformation of the latter. In particular, the empowering democratic dynamics of pedagogy are compromised by hierarchical processes that cultivate relationships of dependence and asymmetry. These processes emphasise hierarchical structures that

sustain authority and a teaching approach which is oriented towards the ratification of any knowledge prescribed by the Curriculum, undermining pupils' agency. An additional factor that inhibits pupils' empowerment is related to the abstract character of the knowledge provided and its detachment from the real world.   Finally, ousting dialogical forms of teaching based on knowledge sharing and active participation appears to have the effect of preventing the creation of new knowledge and the safeguarding of inclusivity terms that enable pupils and other reference groups to renegotiate their role within the school and the wider community. Thus, the potential of the school to contribute to the transformation of society is being undermined.

5. IMPLICATIONS

In light of a new educational reform and the implementation of the curriculum of the 'New School' in Greece since September 2016 (Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, n.d.), this research remains relevant and its findings are particularly useful for practitioners and those involved in the processes of teacher training and policy making. Fifteen years after the introduction of the promising integrated curriculum reform which 'ex post facto' heralded rather pompous aims including critical thinking, cross-curricular approaches and project based learning what are the lessons learned about transforming our established ideas on the pedagogical relationship and our default assumptions on childhood? Can we break away from tradition? Where does reform really take place? Is it behind the closed doors of expert committee meetings who attempt to untie the Gordian knot of a suffering educational system by introducing new curricula and altering the single textbook provided to the Greek pupil for each subject in an attempt to catch up with the average scores of European indexes?

A careful analysis of the text of the newly introduced curricula does not leave margin for hope or confidence that the new reform can contribute towards the transformative potential of education in stimulating the interest in participatory processes thus enabling them to embrace their social nature and empowering them. Instead the first criticisms on the New School curricula (Grollios, 2010) (Grollios and Gounari, 2015) suggest that its design and objectives rather reinforce the neo-liberal discourses of the integrated curriculum (DEPPS) discerned in theory and documented in this research too. In their analysis of the New School curricula, Grollios and Gounari (2015) argue that the latter aim 'to adapt students to the existing economic, social, political and ideological functions of the Greek social structure and of the EU, and they are based on a detailed description of the knowledge, skills and values to be acquired by students'. According to the authors, who elsewhere (Grollios and Gounari, 2012) draw parallels between the new law 4009 for the New School and the highly criticised for its shortcomings with regard to inclusion and promoting critical thinking No Child Left Behind Act (Westheimer, 2008), the emergent behiaviouristic and technocratic character of the curriculum only serves in perpetuating the status quo. Within the context of a crisis-hit and recession-ravaged society undergoing a media managed lobotomy sponsored by the political and the economical establishment, it is rather futile to expect the healing of the wounds generated by a grossly unjust social and economic system, taking to account the new challenges and inequalities brought upon by the exponential growth of the communication technologies sector, the data revolution and the ensuing unequal distribution of new forms of capital.

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[1] DEPPS is the transliteration for the Greek acronym ΔΕΠΠΣ (Διαθεματικό Ενιαίο Πλαίσιο Προγραμμάτων Σπουδών).

[2] In the integrated curriculum, subjects remain distinct but at the same time, various ways of knowledge correlation are being promoted in two axes: the vertical and the horizontal. In particular, the vertical axis links subjects in a spiral way from stage to stage and from level to level; the horizontal axis brings together themes and processes of individual curricula from a range of angles, contributing to the enhancement of knowledge and its interface with reality. This kind of approach is called [cross-curricular], and the interface between among subjects is achieved through eight [cross-curricular] concepts: interaction, dimension (e.g. space-time), communication, change, system (structure, classification, organisation), similarity and difference, unit and the sum.

[3] 'The Flexible Zone [was] a two hours curricular innovation introduced with the crosscurricular approach where students and teachers can design, develop and implement projects using cooperative, problem-solving and synergistic methodologies with themes, issues and problems of everyday life that interest them. Flexible Zone project was introduced in a pilot phase during the years 2001–2002 in 11 kindergartens, 176 elementary schools and 52 secondary schools. It was experimentally applied for four years and generalised from 2006′ (Spinthourakis et al., 2007).

[4] We define here as 'pedagogical orientation' teachers' expressed ideal pedagogical scenarios and desired pedagogical practices as opposed to their actual pedagogical practices.

[5] 'Frame refers to the strength of the boundary between what may be transmitted and what may not be transmitted, in the pedagogical relationship. Where framing is strong, there is a sharp boundary, where framing is weak, a blurred boundary, between what may and may not be transmitted. Frame refers us to the range of options available to teacher and taught in the control of what is transmitted and received in the context of the pedagogical relationship.

Strong framing entails reduced options; weak framing entails a range of options. Thus, frame refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation and pacing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship' (Bernstein, 2003, p. 159).

[6] 'Classification refers to the nature of the differentiation between contents. Where classification is strong, contents are well insulated from each other by strong boundaries. Where classification is weak, there is reduced insulation between contents, and the boundaries between contents are weak or blurred. Classification thus refers to the degree of boundary maintenance between contents. Classification focuses our attention upon boundary strength as the critical distinguishing feature of the division of labour of educational knowledge. It gives us, as I hope to show, the basic structure of the message system, curriculum' (Bernstein, 2003, p. 158).