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THESIS

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Education in the midst of Greece's socio-economic crisis.

Is there room for new stories, another way of thinking and a notion of hope?

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Acknowledgements

I have always wanted to do something with my life that would make a difference to my country and to the world in general. As a student, I was constantly aware of the power of education systems for creating (and indeed, for restricting) truly transformative experiences for students; this undoubtedly influenced my decision to enter the field of education and become an educator myself. In those days, my purpose was noble and valiant – I have tried to hold this purpose in the forefront of my mind, no matter the challenges before me.

For me, being an educator means that my work truly does have positive or negative ramifications for my students, their families, and their future; for me, being a good educator means being a key promoter of human rights, striving to prevent injustice, oppression and discrimination, and preparing students to think more critically and creatively about their future. For me, people working with children, teenagers and young adults, both in formal and informal education, possess tremendous power to make a difference in society. This sense of responsibility was behind my decision to continue my studies at the IOE in Education and Human Rights, and then to carry on with my doctoral studies in Education.

Two years ago, I gave birth to a bright little boy, named Fotis. His name means *light (φως)* in Greek, and this is exactly what he brought to my life: as mother to Fotis, a new light entered my life. I began to reappraise everything that I had done up until then from a different perspective; I became more compassionate in my aims and my dreams, and I felt a greater responsibility for the well-being of my family, my students, and of the rest of the world. My son brought not only light but hope into my life, and made me realise the importance of bringing hope into schools and into our society in general. Therefore, I would first like to thank my son, Fotis, for being an important source of hope, both in my life and in my work.

Secondly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Stephen Ball, for his continuous support of my studies and related research, and for his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. I am truly grateful for his time, energy and scholarly expertise; this study would not have

Abstract

The current social and economic situation in Greece has contributed to the generation of an increasingly complex society, uncertainty among Greek people, and a sense of the unpredictability of the future. However, it has also revealed new tendencies and possibilities in society. We may succeed in becoming aware of these new tendencies and possibilities if we manage to sidestep the negative implications of the crisis, and try to find room for new stories, another way of thinking, and a notion of hope. It can be argued that the education system is well placed to offer both this new way of thinking and a notion of hope.

Despite the vast number of studies that focus on the current crisis in Greece, little is known about the role of teachers and education in addressing some of the devastating consequences of the socio-economic crisis in Greece. My thesis, based on a series of qualitative interviews conducted in October 2014, gives sixteen teachers the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of the impact of the crisis on Greek society and education, and the possibilities for the future.

My study concentrates on understanding what is happening now: How did Greek society get to this place? Where does it seem to be going? What might Greek people want to do about this? What role should education play in preparing young people for such a social, cultural and economic transition? What is education and what is its purpose? My study also explores ways through which we can build on the strengths of the present education system in order to create a system better suited to facing the current major societal changes and challenging circumstances. Thus, it goes beyond the limits of an empirical analytic study to explore how things might be different. In doing so, the thesis rejects a stance of despair and instead seeks to articulate a possibility of hope.

In periods of great transition, threat and possibility, all of which affect the lives of young people, education systems must develop robust and urgent responses, and prepare students to think more critically and creatively about the future. Through my study, I attempt to convey a positive message, to help

educators understand the issues of teaching and learning and the purpose of education itself, and to encourage the generation of practical and hopeful strategies for an alternative and better future.

Declaration and word length

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Approximate word length (exclusive of the 2,000 word statement, the list of references and appendices, but including footnotes and tables): 44,500.

CONTENTS

2,000-word statement

In October 2010, I started my doctoral studies at the Institute of Education (IOE) as part of the Doctor in Education (EdD) International Programme. During the first year of my studies, I took part in three intensive one-week blocks of taught classes for courses from the programme, and I completed two assignments. Specifically, I submitted assignments for the 'Foundations of Professionalism in Education' and the 'Methods of Enquiry 1' courses.

In the first assignment, I engaged with issues around teacher professionalism in Greece. In the second assignment, I designed a small-scale qualitative research study which focused on 'teachers' voices'. My purpose in this study was to explore how teachers viewed their roles as professionals at that time, and whether they perceived themselves to be agents or victims of change. Although I was not able to obtain fully satisfactory answers to my research questions, I drew on my findings to obtain a better understanding of teacher professionalism in Greece.

My participation in the taught courses, as well as the completion of the aforementioned assignments, gave me many opportunities to develop my abilities. I learnt to work in interdisciplinary groups and exchange views and ideas for the production of knowledge; work in groups effectively and under stressful conditions; construct clear and accurate arguments both in written and oral speech, and write papers with academic structure and content; and critically understand theory and research methods appropriate for dealing with specific issues. I further developed my skills for applying theories and research methods so as to conduct research, apply educational theories and concepts to issues of research, policy and practice, and develop epistemological contexts and methods of research in order to explore problems of policy and practice.

In the summer of 2011, the Institute of Education, in partnership with the University of Nizwa, offered me an internship to work in Oman. During this internship, I had the chance to work with a leading scholar from my field at a one-week intensive study school at the University of Nizwa, as part of the

Diploma Programme 'Early Intervention for Children with Disability'. Afterwards, I took part in a three-week study period, providing support and guidance to diploma students in the development of their coursework from the study school. I was also invited by the University of Nizwa to present my work at a Gulf-wide Regional Academic Seminar Series.

While in Oman, I travelled a great deal and experienced a culture totally different from European cultures. Although I sometimes encountered difficulties (mostly gender-related), I tried to approach these experiences with humility and a keen sense of social justice. I tried to remain aware of the need to explore issues in their own particular contexts and with considered evidence. The internship allowed me to act independently at a professional level, and helped me become more sensitive of cultural and gender differences, making me more capable of working in multicultural or multi-ethnic environments with respect for diversity. Furthermore, the opportunity to present my own work at the Gulf-wide Regional Academic Seminar Series offered me a real international platform through which I could showcase and discuss my research ideas.

In the second year of my studies, I completed an assignment for the 'Specialist Course in Education' and I took part in a fourth intensive one-week block of taught classes for the course 'Methods of Enquiry 2', and in two Research Weeks. For the 'Specialist Course in Education', I wrote an essay that engaged with issues around Greek national identity. In this essay, I tried to demonstrate how Greek national identity has responded to global pressures, and how it has been fractured by an era of economic and humanitarian crisis. My purpose in this essay was not simply to present the crisis of the Greek national identity, but to explore the tensions and the competing relationships between national, European, cosmopolitan, religious and racial identities in contemporary Greece at a time of rapid socio-economic change and in the face of the declining authority and legitimacy of the state.

For the taught course 'Methods of Enquiry 2', I conducted a small-scale qualitative research study that focused on the evolution and nature of the challenges that teachers in Greece faced as a result of the socio-economic

crisis. I then wrote a summary report that referred to the Greek educational and social context, integrating relevant theoretical insights. I also presented the methods of empirical enquiry that were used, an analysis of 'teachers' voices', and put forward conclusions.

During the taught courses and the research weeks, I remained in constant communication with my supervisor and with my tutors. With them, I discussed my progress and the work I was preparing for my taught courses. The tutorial support they provided greatly helped me to improve my work. In addition, the feedback and comments on my coursework from the internal markers were constructive, helped me sharpen my theoretical and conceptual focus, and showed me how my assignments could act as a preparation for my Institution Focused Study (IFS).

In November 2011, I had the relatively unique opportunity to be part of a group of fifteen IOE research students travelling to Japan. We were offered scholarships from Waseda University to work in Tokyo with scholars interested in a range of issues in education and globalisation. During my stay in Tokyo, I had the chance to further my research and deepen my understanding of education in Japan by attending lectures on the Japanese education system, by visiting Japanese schools, and by conducting interviews with Japanese school teachers. As a group, we also participated in graduate seminars at Waseda University, where we were able to present our work after individual supervision from Waseda faculty members.

While I was in Japan, I tried to explore the ways in which Japanese teachers responded to the Fukushima accident, one of the most serious and complex disasters which humanity has ever experienced, and how they viewed their roles in the post-Fukushima era in relation to the new challenges that derived from it. This international experience afforded comparable sensibilities – Greece and Japan have both experienced (albeit dissimilar) crises – which helped me illuminate and ground ideas and concepts about crises, education, and the roles of teachers.

The seminars and the workshops I attended at the IOE and at Waseda

University contributed to my comprehension of philosophical and sociological conceptions of knowledge, and to my critical awareness of the main theories, concepts and research methods concerning education through different scientific views. I was also able to further develop my skills in research, evaluation and reflection on practice.

The third year of my studies started with the publication of a research note in *Educate ~ The Journal of Doctoral Research in Education* (September, 2012). In this research note, I presented the research design of my IFS. I also presented this research design in October 2012, at the 4th BNU-IOE International Conference in Education, 'Equity and Quality in Education', at Beijing Normal University in China. The comments from those who attended my presentation helped me review my data collection methods and successfully conduct my fieldwork in January 2013.

In my IFS, aiming to further my understanding of the relationship between education, cultural diversity and economic development within the periphery of Europe, I used semi-structured interviews to explore the ways Greek teachers rethought the Greek national identity, fractured as it was in the wake of the Greek socio-economic crisis. I also attempted to examine teachers' perceptions of the wider issues of discrimination, racism and immigration.

In March 2013, I took part in the Research Week at the IOE, and I presented a poster at the Doctoral School Poster Conference. At this conference, I had the chance to engage in a range of stimulating presentations and to participate in informal discussions and debates with other doctoral students, as well as with academic staff. In May 2013, I attended the '16th Annual International Conference on Education' in Athens, where I presented the preliminary findings of my IFS. In July 2013, I completed and submitted my IFS, and then presented it at the '6th Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2013 Conference' which was held at the Athens University of Economics and Business. Both presentations were well-received, and feedback was both positive and constructive. At the '6th Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2013 Conference', I was awarded 'Best Paper' at the doctoral colloquium.

My participation in the seminars and workshops of the Research Week, as well as my contributions to the aforementioned conferences, enhanced my ability to write research reports and made me more adept at acknowledging and taking advantage of research data in specific contexts. They also augmented my skills in preparing and delivering presentations for conferences, and in writing articles for publication.

As a result of the feedback on my IFS which I received from my supervisor, my tutors and from other research students, I realised that my research questions, though interesting and original, were very ambitious. In particular, they required an examination of many complex issues which could not feasibly be covered in sufficient depth. Therefore, when I moved on to the preparation of my thesis proposal, keeping in mind these good points and the limitations of my IFS, I tried to leave out many of the complex issues I had engaged with in my previous assignments. I endeavoured to take into consideration the new insights and understandings I had gained, and to focus on the issues that were most important to me and to my professional development and learning.

In the fourth year of my studies I submitted my thesis proposal. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend any of the Research Weeks at the IOE because I became a mother – and travelling with or without my baby proved to be very difficult. In March 2014, I published an article in the *Bulletin of Educational Resources and Research*, issued by the National Academy for Educational Research in China. The title of the article was 'Greek National Identity and the Greek Education System in the Age of Austerity: How do Teachers Experience and Understand the Current Situation?' This article was a shorter version of my IFS.

In April 2014, I was accepted as a participant at the European Educational Research Summer School 'Educational Research as Craft – Data, Theory and Analyses', run by the European Educational Research Association (EERA) and held at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to family difficulties. Nevertheless, I took advantage of this opportunity and became a member of

the EERA's Emerging Researchers' Group. This group afforded me membership to a European research community, with important networking opportunities, support and guidance.

My fifth academic year started with my participation in September in the 'BERA Conference 2014' in London. At this conference, I presented the rationale of my thesis, my research questions and the methodology. My participation in this conference was a valuable experience; I had the opportunity to discuss my work, and to meet up with and listen to numerous interesting and important academics. During my stay in London, I also had the opportunity to visit the IOE library, and to meet my supervisor and several other tutors from my course.

Upon my return to Athens, I revised my research design and, in October 2014, I started the fieldwork for my research study. My thesis is based on a series of sixteen qualitative interviews with primary and secondary school teachers, and concentrates on providing those teachers with the space to share their experiences and responses to the recent political and economical changes in Greece and to the new challenges that stem from them. My thesis also aims to explore how education systems can prepare students to think more critically and creatively about a different future.

Once the fieldwork for my study was completed, I began to write my thesis. Again, I did not manage to attend any of the Research Weeks at the IOE. This, combined with the fact that I was located in Athens, isolated from the IOE community, made things very difficult for me, and hindered my progress somewhat. Fortunately, I was in regular email communication with my supervisor throughout the year, and we were able to discuss my progress and the work I was preparing for my thesis.

The fifth year of my studies concluded with my participation in the ECER 2015 conference, 'Education and Transition. Contributions from Educational Research', that took place in September 2015 at the Corvinus University of Budapest. At this conference, I presented the conceptual-theoretical framework of my thesis, as well as the preliminary findings. At this conference, I was honoured with the 'ECER Conference Bursary' by the European

Educational Research Association. After the ECER 2015 conference in Budapest, I completed and submitted my thesis.

In May 2016, I presented part of my thesis at the '2nd National Conference in Sociology of Education - Society and Education in Times of Crisis' at the University of the Aegean in Rhodes, Greece. Specifically, my presentation concentrated on the role that education could play in preparing young people for social, cultural and economic transitions. At this conference, I also had the opportunity to discuss my work with important Greek academics. At the end of the same month, I became involved with the Joint MA Programme 'Education and Human Rights' (University of Athens, UCL Institute of Education). At a postgraduate research seminar, I discussed with students the progression of my thesis, from conception to completion. The aim of this presentation was to help these students in the composition of their own dissertations.

All the elements of the Doctor in Education International Programme contributed to the progressive development of my consideration, analysis, reflection and understanding of professional enquiry, and to the formation of the basis of my final thesis. Overall, it was a great journey and I am very happy that I managed to reach my 'Ithaca'. 'Ithaca' is a Greek island and the title of one of my favourite Greek poems, composed by C. Cavafy (1910).

As you set out for Ithaca
hope the voyage is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon — don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon — you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.[1]

My 'Ithaca' is not just the culmination of my thesis, but the commencement of a personal quest to rediscover who I really am, and what

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1 Please see the entire poem in Appendix C.

kind of teacher I want to be. At the same time, it is also a celebration of my human nature and of my capability to achieve my goals, despite the difficulties and often unexpected obstacles I had to overcome to reach them.

List of abbreviations

ASEP	Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BNU - IOE	Beijing Normal University – Institute of Education
G7	The Group of 7 is a group consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
ECER	European Conference on Educational Research
EdD	Doctor in Education
EERA	European Educational Research Association
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFS	Institution Focused Study
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ND	New Democracy (liberal-conservative political party)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PASOK	Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (social-democratic political party)
SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left (left-wing political party)

List of illustrations

Table 1	Unemployment among 15-64-year-olds in Greece, 2008-2014 (%)	p. 36
Figure 1	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP in Greece	p. 43
Table 2	Examples of questions translated into English	pp. 65-66
Table 3	Thank-you letter	p. 143

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The structure of the thesis

My thesis consists of six chapters. It is organized in a traditional format and structure, but it exceeds the bounds of orthodox epistemology, as I explain later. In chapter one, the introductory chapter, I refer to the rationale and the context of the study. I also present the conceptual-theoretical framework of my study and my main research questions. In chapter two, I integrate relevant literature and theoretical insights, and I try to provide a synthesis of the work which has been done in the area of social crisis and educational research within the last few years and draw out conceptual and professional aspects.

In chapter three, I briefly discuss the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my study, and I describe the methodology that I used for my empirical work. I also include sections on methods of data collection, sampling and ethical issues. In chapter four, I continue by presenting the analysis of the data. In chapter five, I discuss my findings and I relate them to the findings of other relevant studies (which are presented in chapter two), and to the methodology I used.

Lastly, in chapter six, I concisely summarise the contribution of my work to knowledge, methodology, policy and practice, and I draw my own conclusions. I also include the possible implications that the project might have for future professional practice and research, the dissemination of my findings (how, to whom and for what purpose), and several proposals for different tools and frameworks for future research.

1.2 Rationale and context of the study

In the last few years, major political and economic changes have swept through Greece. The country is facing a severe economic crisis and is being driven deeper and deeper into recession with every passing day. It is also facing a serious xenophobic crisis, a crisis of values, and an identity crisis. All of these have contributed to the generation of an increasingly complex

society, uncertainty among Greek people and a sense of the unpredictability of the future.

Aside from the huge difficulties and severe problems that it has created, the current social and economic situation has also revealed new tendencies and possibilities in society. We may succeed in becoming aware of these, but only if we manage to sidestep the situation's negative implications, and try to embrace a different way of thinking. That is what is different about my thesis. I take a deliberate and systematic stance of hopefulness. I am not here primarily reporting a set of findings or conclusions but rather I sift and explore my data for traces, glimpses, and possibilities of hope. As I explain later (p. 57) I take up a position of standpoint epistemology; a standpoint of hope, over and against the dire and self-defeating discourse of despair which dominates the current context of Greek education and public life.

I believe that this crisis is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to redefine our life goals. As Romer (2004) stated: 'A crisis is a terrible thing to waste'[2]. We are living in crucial times, and we need to replace the ethos of survival that we have adopted over the past years with the belief in the possibility of a decent life and the promise of a real democracy. To survive crises, financial or otherwise, new stories must emerge (Bussey, 2012); one can postulate that the education system is well placed to offer such stories.

My main area of interest is education, particularly the Greek education system and its need to respond to the challenging and ever-changing circumstances of Greece's socio-economic crisis. Greece, at this present time of financial crisis and its accompanying social uncertainty, is a fascinating place in which to study the evolution and nature of the challenges faced by

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2 Romer made this remark during a venture-capitalist meeting in California in November 2004. Although he was referring to the rapidly rising education levels in other countries versus the United States, the quotation became a sounding horn for economists and consultants looking for a positive takeaway from the economic downturn of 2007–2009.

the education system and its teachers. It is also an important context in which to rethink education as a process of self-awareness and empowerment.

I uphold the view that it is not only necessary to explore thoroughly and insightfully the negative implications of the socio-economic crisis; it is also vital that we learn to recognise the core values of the current era and the crucial issues that may become opportunities, as well as driving forces, for reflection and change. If we are able to consider the crisis from the bottom up, to see the gaps rather than the closures (Ball, 2012), and to closely examine the breaks and rupture points through which new tendencies in society are disclosed and made apparent (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984), then we can deploy and utliise education as a means of framing an imperative for insights and indications of what is to be done.

As Rogoff (2008) suggests, if education could displace our energies from what needs to be opposed to what can be imagined, or could at least perform some kind of negotiation of their relation, then perhaps we would have an education that is reconstructive rather than reproductive. This socio-economic crisis may show us how to proceed, both in opening up new understandings of pedagogy, education, and politics, and in establishing a notion of hope that is dynamic while being, at the same time, realistic. 'It is the very depth of the crisis that may force the shedding of the most deeply entrenched (mis)beliefs about education, enabling thereby a new space for innovation and growth' (Ball, 2012, p. ix).

Halpin (2003) argues that, within narratives of decline and hopelessness, the seeds of change and a vision of what life should be like become apparent. Hopelessness does not merely form a useful starting point; it can even encourage creative and imaginative strategies for engagement, inclusion and social justice (te Riele, 2010, p. 41).

The aforementioned ideas, combined with an approach built on the concept of hope, underpin my study. Hope, as Halpin (2003) suggests, has a creative role in encouraging the development of imaginative solutions to difficulties that give the impression of being uncontrollable – and it can be a vital resource and a theoretical tool for education. The philosophy of hope is a

promising theoretical approach that has the potential to become a productive conceptual tool (te Riele, 2010) for exploring a politics of possibility (Giroux, 2003) in education.

In accordance with these considerations, my study attempts to examine the consequences of the crisis at the time of the research, while also exploring the possibilities of a better world beyond the crisis. Not wanting this study to be another text of despair, I do not simply concern myself with how bad things are; I try to avoid the voice of endless complaint, to disrupt the predominant messages of doom and gloom. I strive instead to think about the principles which teachers, policy makers and educational researchers cherish in the education process (Ball, 2012), and to focus on the new stories that are about to emerge. The premise for my study is not to ignore the negative implications of the economic crisis in Greece, but to take the analysis of these as a point from which to begin, rather than one on which to finish.

In troubled times, it is very important to stand back in order to get a better perspective of the bigger picture. Although increased awareness of what is happening may have the potential to give way to feelings of hopelessness and desperation, another likely prospect is that understanding will not make us weaker; on the contrary, it will make us stronger. For this reason, my study begins by looking at how educational issues are currently experienced, concentrating on understanding what is happening now and on attempting to identify the paths ahead. How did we get to where we are now? What does the future look like? How might our future be different? What role should education play in preparing young people for such a different social, cultural and economic future? What is education for? What is its purpose? To put it another way: if, as Giroux (2008) argues, education always presupposes a vision for the future, what is this vision today (Fielding & Moss, 2011)?

In periods of great transition, when times are stormy and uncertain, and young people are threatened by the possibility of transformations – or alternatively, the possibility of missing the opportunities for such transformations – education systems have to develop robust and urgent responses to prepare students to think more critically and creatively about the

23

future. Through my study, I attempt to send a positive message which will help educators understand the issues of teaching and learning, the purpose of education, and encourage them to think of practical and hopeful strategies for shaping alternative and better futures.

1.3 Conceptual-theoretical framework

Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of Hope*, writes:

While I certainly cannot ignore hopelessness as a concrete entity, nor turn a blind eye to the historical, economic and social reasons that explain that hopelessness – I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream. Hope is an ontological need. Hopelessness is but hope that has lost its bearings, and become a distortion of that ontological need... Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope.

(Freire, 1994, pp. 2-3)

The starting point of my study is this ontological need for hope. Therefore, I put forward that we need to move beyond the narrative of 'doom and gloom' toward more hopeful narratives grounded in flexibility, well-being, happiness and health (Kelsey & Armstrong, 2012). Through my study I attempt to suggest that, rather than merely critiquing existing practices, we should try to imagine an alternative future. Hence, I enter the field of my research adopting hope as my main conceptual basis, the framework that informs my study, as well as a tool for exploring a politics of possibility in education (Giroux, 2003).

Within the social sciences, conceptions of hope have only recently gained significant attention. In education, they have been used in many variations, from 'hope theory' in psychology (Snyder, 2002) to social transformative pedagogy (Freire, 1994; McInerney, 2007) via pragmatist (Shade, 2006) and critical (Biesta, 2006; Giroux, 2003; Halpin, 2003) philosophy (te Riele, 2009).

Rorty addresses the use of the concept of hope for social change through reform, suggesting that we replace naïve utopias with realistic but

radical politics of hope (Halpin, 2003, pp. 5-6). Beyond Rorty's contributions, however, we find a more critical approach to hope. As seen above, Freire argues that, while it is ontologically necessary to hope, hope needs to come together with political struggle. McInerney, like Freire, focuses on hope in terms of social transformation for equity. He argues that hope allows critical theory to take a step further, from merely understanding injustices to offering alternatives for action based on 'a robust vision of hope that focuses on what is possible' (2007, p. 263). Giroux (2003) similarly connects his 'critical pedagogy of educated hope' to political action (te Riele, 2009).

Considering these insights into the use of the concept of hope in the social sciences, I would say that the concept employed in my study is closer to the critical approach to hope that focuses on social transformation. I agree with the conceptualisation of hope proposed by Kitty te Riele (2009): that, for hope to be a practical and critical conceptual tool in the social sciences, it needs to be robust, attainable and sound. Hope should recognise the difficulties of the present situation before being able to come to an alternative positive vision; it should be located between wishing and planning, it should assume that the difficulties can be overcome, and it should be ethically evaluated (Biesta, 2006) and questioned in terms of its 'soundness'.

As Halpin (2003, p. 16) suggests: 'Hope has a creative role in encouraging the development of imaginative solutions to seemingly intractable difficulties'. Hope for the future can enhance motivation in the present and drive positive action for change (Hicks, 2014). In periods of rapid social change, hope, anticipation and adaptability, foresight and flexibility, as well as innovation and intuition, become increasingly essential tools for survival (ibid). As such, I argue that the philosophy of hope has much to offer when researching education in Greece today.

Greece has entered a long period of challenging transition, during which the economic and humanitarian crisis is reshaping the way we think about our society and ourselves – and the role of education could not be more pivotal. The role of education can be understood differently, depending on each individual's ideological and political perspectives. In stark and simple terms

there are two rival positions with very different understandings of the role of education: the academic movement known as critical pedagogy, embodied by such names as Freire, Giroux, Apple and MacLaren, and the neo-liberal ideology. Critical pedagogy sees education as central to overcoming dogmatism and to thinking critically about the social transformations of human society. In neo-liberal ideology, the role of education is focused on technical training for work and the maintenance of previously established social values (Arriazu & Solari, 2015). My thesis is firmly rooted within a stance of critical pedagogy, which asks what education might look like in these new times. My data and my analysis of it create a space in which it is possible to think differently about schools and about teaching and learning.

As Apple argues in his book *Can Education Change Society?*, schools can be sites for and participants in substantive social change (2013, p. 163). Schools can be the public spaces where projects are undertaken in response to the needs and the desires of the community (Fielding & Moss, 2014). They can be the places where young people grow to become more adaptable to change and learn to be proactive, developing skills that will help them face challenges, and explore their own hopes and fears for the future and learn to work creatively with them (Fielding & Moss, 2011).

Therefore, we need to recognise the importance of the agency of education, and seriously assess the complex barriers created by existing social and institutional structures; in regard to the latter, I propose that the concept of hope can be of help to us. In contrast to optimism or despair, hope is both a noun and a verb that demands direct action. The role of teachers, as David Hicks (2014) explains, is to set out an innovative pedagogy – a pedagogy of hope – which will fortify hope and give young people the wherewithal to act with competence, imagination and courage. A pedagogy of hope needs to involve both students and teachers, and to be based on four resources: a positive culture of learning, a focus on possibility, the establishment of a community of hope, and critical reflection (te Riele, 2009, p. 67). This involves rethinking most of the basic building blocks of modern and neoliberal education. With troubled times ahead, there is no reason to believe in quick victories; there is, however, every reason to work towards a

better world and look towards the far horizon (David Orr, cited in Hicks, 2014, p. xiii).

1.4 Research questions

The main objective of my study is to seek to recover the 'subjugated knowledges' of teachers, as well as to look for 'lines of flight' – namely, ways out of the crisis. 'Subjugated knowledges' is a term invented by Michel Foucault to describe knowledge and ways of knowing that are left out, opposed or ignored by the mainstreams of a dominant culture, and which are often located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity (Foucault, 2003). 'Line of flight' is a term coined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), and designates a possibility of escape; it is that elusive moment in which change happens.

Specifically, the purpose of my research project is to learn more about teachers' experiences of the recent political and economical changes in Greece and the new challenges that stem from these, as well as teachers' perceptions of the possibilities for the future. My intention in undertaking this study is to explore how we can build on the strengths of the present education system in order to transform it and create a different system that will suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances. Given this, at times below my tone is critical and imperative – I begin from crisis and try to think about what might be done and what must not be done if we are to be able to think education differently.

Thus, the aim of my research project is not simply to analyse and report but to deliberately seek out possibilities of hope, particularly those possibilities which are articulated by teachers. Throughout my research project, I do not assume that teachers have solutions, nor that they are solely responsible for reconstruction, but rather that they have a worthwhile contribution that may offer possibilities, and which should be heard. As a result, my research study endeavours to give voice to teachers' concerns, anxieties, commitments, and their hopes: as such, it focuses on the following questions:

- How do teachers experience the consequences of the socio-economic crisis in their everyday life and their work?

- What do teachers think are the social and political problems which underlie the current crisis?

- According to the teachers, does the Greek education system have a part to play in the reconstruction of society and political life in post-crisis Greece? If yes, what would be the most important features of this?

- According to the teachers, are there any strengths in the present education system that we can build on in order to create a system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging new circumstances?

In order to explore the above issues, I first conduct a review of the literature. Moreover, in this thesis, I present several relevant studies that have taken place within the last few years (that is, studies of education systems during periods of social crisis, and studies of the Greek education system today). This understanding of the relevant conceptual and empirical work is intended to help me combine theory and previous research with my research interests and my findings, in order to answer my research questions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter two reflects and supports the aims of my research study: to explore how teachers experience the political and economical changes in Greece and the new challenges that stem from them; to learn more about how we can build on the strengths of the present education system in order to create a system better suited to the current major societal changes and the challenging circumstances to which they give rise. This chapter also aims to underscore the roles which the school and its teachers play in pioneering alternative and better futures.

This chapter mainly identifies and reviews relevant literature and theoretical insights documenting research activity in the areas of social crisis and educational research. My purpose in this chapter is first to discuss literature which addresses the socio-economic crisis and its relation to and impact on education, in terms of my thesis, and then to consider some recent studies of Greek education. Finally, I intend to indicate the research gap that my research study aims to redress.

The chapter is organised into four sections. In section one, I begin with the conceptualisation of crisis. I briefly discuss what the term 'crisis' suggests, and continue by considering a crisis as an opportunity for the opening of a 'policy window'. I then discuss the crisis of 2008 specifically. In section two, I focus on the impact of the crisis of 2008 on education in Europe and in Greece. In section three, I start by trying to define education and to shed light on its purpose; I then attempt to rethink education and its fundamental values and content in the political and social era that we live in today. I then consider the kind of teacher that might be sought in this context. Finally, in section four, I present an overview of the relevant research, and close with a summary of the main conclusions that drive this discussion forward.

2.1 Crisis

2.1.1 Conceptualisation of crisis

Crisis, as Gamble (2009, p. 38) states, is a social phenomenon, not a natural one and, as such, it is 'socially constructed and highly political'. The naming of a crisis, therefore, is a significant political act. Within the world of critical political economy, there are competing narratives of crisis involving different views (Clarke & Newman, 2012). The term 'crisis', by itself, suggests that there is a critical situation, a political emergency or a moment of danger, or that an impasse of some kind has been reached. This critical situation comprises more than just an economic or financial problem; it has multifaceted economic, political or social effects. In either case, extraordinary actions may be required to overcome it (Gamble, 2009, p. 65).

Crises, according to Gamble (2009), are inherently political because they force economic and political leaders to think and act in new ways, to follow new visions and to form new narratives. They 'create the conditions for new forms of politics' and for the 'rebalancing of power' between and/or within states. Only through a painful and usually long process of reconstruction, both ideological and practical, can crises be resolved.

Gamble argues that crises are different from crashes. Crashes can be extremely painful for those affected by them, but they do not last and they have few long-term consequences. The system eventually picks itself up and proceeds, without consideration for the consequences, on its pre-crash route. The history of capitalism is dotted with many such crashes. Crises, by contrast, are rare. In the 100 years before the autumn of 2008, Gamble (2009) notes, there were only two: the Great Depression of the 1930s and the crisis of 'stagflation' in the 1970s.

Despite their rarity, crises are fundamental to capitalism and form an inherent part of the disciplinary processes of markets (De Angelis, 2007). Marx's extensive works illustrate that entering into crisis is part of the constituent life process of capital, in the same way that moments of breathing in and breathing out are both constituents of the act of breathing for living beings. De Angelis (2007, p. 39) labels crises as 'disequilibrium' crises, and suggests that we can understand them as part of the embedded regulatory function of capitalism in relation to social conflict.

Another useful way of thinking about financial and political crises is to think of them as conjunctures (Hall & Massey, 2010). A conjuncture is a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape. As Hall and Massey (2010) explain, the flow of history is not evolutionary but moves from one conjuncture to another – and what drives it forward is usually a crisis. Crises have been part of the global financial landscape for hundreds of years, and they are likely to continue to be part of our future. Consequently, governments should try not to reduce the risk of recurrence but to limit the extent, severity and duration of the economic fallout (Marthinsen, 2010).

2.1.2 The socio-economic crisis with a policy window in its wake

As mentioned above, a period of deep economic crisis may provide an 'opportunity' for governments to introduce important changes and reforms to the existing status quo, as well as new policy proposals – progressive or regressive. As Hartley (2012, p. 23) explains, 'crises bring into sharp focus the anomalies which had hitherto gone unnoticed; or even if they had been noticed, they were ignored'. Gamble (2009) considers the dynamic of the crisis to be vital for change, and adds that crises may be seen as major turning points which can lead to new institutions, new alignments, new policies, new initiatives and new ideologies.

Looking back over the history of crises, we see that such periods are frequently followed by major reforms. In England, for example, as a response to a period of severe economic crisis and mass unemployment, a series of neo-liberal governments between the years of 1976 and 1997 brought about the end of professional autonomy for teachers and schools, introduced choice and competition, marginalised local authorities and began to introduce new actors into education service delivery (Ball, 2008). This is not to say that these reforms would not have taken place were it not for this period of crisis; it is possible, and also quite probable, that certain reforms had been designed and scheduled before the outbreak of the crisis. However, even were that the case, the crisis played the central role of defining the timing and enabling their

introduction – particularly by reducing the likelihood of opposition based upon defense of the status quo.

A complementary way of thinking about a crisis is to consider it as the opening of a 'policy window' (Kingdon, 1984). Policy windows are temporary opportunities, during which the possibility of adopting new policy or legislative proposals is greater than usual. Policy windows do not open frequently; when they do, it is usually for one of four reasons. The first reason for their occurrence is a change in the political debate resulting from a change in administration or a shift in the legislative balance or national mood. The second is that the emergence of new problems can attract the attention of government officials and people who are close to the issue. The third reason is that problems can become more pressing. Finally, an event such as a disaster may draw greater attention to an issue (ibid).

Researchers have identified policy windows where events such as a change in government, the emergence of a new issue, or ongoing policy processes come together to create the opportunity for new policy development. The accepted wisdom is that crises serve as focusing events that generate policy windows in their wake (Kingdon, 1984). Economic crises, for example, can open such policy windows by drawing attention to economic, political and social issues and mobilising political will; by changing the conditions of discursive possibility, things may be thought and said which might previously have seemed beyond sensible consideration.

However, even if policy windows open, they may not result in effective policy development. The institutional setting in which such policies are developed also plays a key role. Although some policy reform may be introduced, policy makers must address the question of whether more fundamental changes would be required in order to fully redress the problems of the crisis (Kingdon, 1984). However, as policy windows open, so too do they eventually close. Kingdon (1984) gives five reasons as to why policy windows close: they close if participants fail to get notable results, if the crisis is only of short duration, if new personnel decide to close the issue, and if no

available solution exists to solve the problem, causing the importance of the issue to fade as a result.

2.1.3 The crisis of 2008

The most recent global economic crisis began in 2008. As Gamble (2009) points out, we can judge this crisis as the product of deep flaws in the global governing philosophy that followed the crisis of the 1970s and underpinned the neo-liberal hegemony of the past 30 years. This crisis, due to the current globalised economy, influenced economies across the world; its impact since has been so strong that it has even superseded the Great Depression of the 1930s in terms of severity (ibid).

Ball, Maquire and Goodson (2012) explain that, in autumn 2008, the financial system appeared to be on the point of collapse, threatening potentially huge disruption to the international economy, to public order and to political stability. In Europe today, the financial crisis has evolved into the eurozone crisis, a multi-year debt crisis that has taken place in several eurozone member states since the end of 2009.

The countries hit by the crisis responded by borrowing under harsh terms (with the backing of the European Central Bank and the European Commission), and by turning to austerity, namely the economic policy of cutting the state's budget. After years of this crisis, it has become apparent that borrowing under such harsh terms was not a rational policy. The countries in crisis have been and are spending most of their money repaying their creditors instead of supporting their economies and expediting recovery (George, 2010).

Moreover, the developments of recent years have shown that accepting austerity measures as a route to growth is not a correct response in the aftermath of a financial crisis; such measures do not work in practice, as they rely on the poor to pay for the mistakes of the rich, and 'rest upon the absence of a rather large fallacy of composition that is all too present in the modern world' (Blyth, 2013, p. 10). What Blyth points out in the above quotation is that what is true for any one individual is not always true for the whole.

Subsequently, cutting spending in a recession is exactly the opposite of what is needed, since one person's spending cut is another's drop in income, which only increases the need to cut spending further, creating a vicious downward spiral. As Blyth (2013) argues, austerity is a dangerous idea, which remains prevalent largely because of ideological and material reasons.

It is worth pointing out that the crisis that began in 2008 is not simply a financial crisis but a multiple and plural crisis. Beyond the concerns of finance, we should recognise that democracy is under siege and citizens are gradually being impoverished: 'inequality within and between countries and citizens has reached unsustainable levels in both developed and developing countries, poverty is spreading and deepening, food and water scarcities are worsening, conflicts thrive in increasingly stressed societies, and catastrophic climate change — advancing much faster than experts predicted — looms over the whole' (George, 2010, p. 17).

The above quotation details only a sample of the innumerable relations between the components of this multiple crisis, yet the impacts of these remain largely in disguise. The financial sector, already completely separated from the real economy of real people, has moved even further away, and is once again creating bubbles which are guaranteed to eventually burst, one by one. When stock markets rose, we were told that the crisis was over – but 'how can one even imagine fixing the economy when millions have less money in their pockets and have been hard-hit by the financial and job meltdown?' (George, 2010, p. 18)

The extreme events of the past several years should encourage us to carefully examine our own countries and to consider what would alter them for the better. There are both negative and positive possibilities. This multiple crisis can give rise to fear, but it can also be received positively, as an opening towards rational solutions, providing the foundation for an alternative scenario, for remedies and for hope (George, 2010). The combination of an alternative scenario and hope could ripen into reality if popular forces were to begin to organise into alliances with political weight and clear purpose (ibid).

2.1.4 The crisis of 2008 in Greece

When the global financial crash of 2008 struck, Greece was ill-prepared to deal with it. Years of profligacy, unrestrained spending and cheap lending, combined with the cost of hosting the expensive Olympic Games in 2004, as well as a persistent failure to implement financial reforms had weakened the country's economy. By the end of 2009, the Greek economy faced the highest budget deficit and government debt to GDP ratio in the European Union, which led to rising borrowing costs. This ultimately resulted in a severe economic crisis, one of the worst in the country's history (Romanias, 2009). The major sources of deficiency were identified as the serious structural weaknesses in the Greek public administration, economy, and society, which lead to bureaucracy, corruption, low quality of services, and high costs (Oikonomou & Tountas, 2011).

The government, in order to avoid a downward spiral, requested and agreed to rescue packages from the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank. The conditionalities of these rescue packages involved severe austerity measures that aimed to reduce the deficit. As a result, the Greek government applied tough tax evasion regulations, raised the retirement age by two years, imposed public sector pay cuts, and closed schools and public hospitals (Vayanos, Meghir & Vettas, 2010).

The draconian austerity measures adopted by the Parliament caused anger among the Greek population and led them to distrust of the political system and to show their dissatisfaction through public unrest. Street clashes and protests, as well as mass rallies took place by Greek people in central Athens to denounce politicians, bankers and tax dodgers. These protests sometimes became quite violent, fortified by the belief held by many Greeks that the crisis was being manipulated by foreign forces such as European central bankers and other financial speculators (Pappas, 2010). The savage measures, combined with severe budget cuts, led Greek workers nationwide to stage strikes, closing airports, government offices and schools (Pappas, 2010).

Greece's fiscal and economic problems left the country straining to pay its bills and struggling with high levels of unemployment (see Table 1), especially among young people (Malkoutzis, 2011), job insecurity, income reduction, poverty, and an increase in mental disorders (Ifanti, Argyriou, Kalofonou & Kalofonos, 2013). In 2012, with the economic downturn entering its fifth year, Greece faced an unemployment rate of over 21%, almost triple that of 2008, with over half of those aged 15-24 unable to find work in the country (see Table 1). In 2013, Greece entered the sixth consecutive year of economic contraction, with its economy shrinking by 20%. Unemployment reached a rate of over 26% for all job-seekers and of 60.4% for those aged 15-24 (ELSTAT, 2014).

Age group	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
15-24	23.0	25.9	30.3	37.8	52.7	60.4	56.8
25-34	11.2	11.6	14.2	21.4	29.4	34.3	35.5
35-44	6.0	6.9	9.1	12.3	18.2	23.8	23.7
45-54	4.3	5.3	7.3	10.2	15.6	20.5	20.5
55-64	3.3	4.1	5.3	7.2	11.6	16.9	18.2
National	8.0	8.9	10.9	14.9	21.7	26.5	26.7

Table 1: Unemployment among 15-64-year-olds in Greece, 2008-2014 (%)

Source: ELSTAT

Today, many years into the crisis, Greece is still in social and political turmoil, and it is still struggling to handle its fiscal problems, deal with recession, and continue as a social welfare state (Oikonomou & Tountas, 2011). Greece is still facing new budgets cuts which further impoverish ordinary Greeks. Although economic indicators tend to present an improvement in Greece's economy, unemployment remains at very high

levels (ELSTAT, 2014) and there are no signs of the situation improving for Greek families, individuals and businesses.

It is evident that Greece has been affected more than any other European country by the financial crisis (Zambeta, 2014; Kentikelenis et al, 2011). Whereas other countries in Europe, such as France and Germany, now show signs of economic recovery, the crisis in Greece continues not only to evolve, but to grow deeper and deeper – a fact that has caused global concern owing to its side effects and the risks involved for both the eurozone and the global economic community.

The depth of the socio-economic crisis can be seen in the large number of Greek people that have abandoned the country and have emigrated, in search of better working and living conditions, to the USA, Australia and other parts of Europe (Pappas, 2010). It is also apparent from the extent of the impact felt by health services, both in specialist and in primary care. The depth of the political crisis can be clearly seen in the huge loss of support for the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and the centre-right New Democracy (ND) party, and in the rise of political forces on the left (SYRIZA) and the emergence of the extreme-right Golden Dawn party (Traianou, 2013).

2.2 Crisis and education

2.2.1 Education in Europe in times of crisis

The crisis of 2008 shaped both the national and the global context within which educational change takes place. In a short period of time, the crisis affected the educational domain in both direct and indirect ways. This was unavoidable, as the educational system is not exempt from the consequences of the crisis; it is constrained and threatened by it.

In Europe, the financial crisis of 2008 shaped the relationship between neo-liberalism and educational practice by accelerating the processes of marketisation and privatization. At the same time, it restricted educational resources and increased social inequalities especially for those already at higher risk of social exclusion (Arriazu & Solari, 2015). Institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the G7 used domestic debt in democratic countries

to control the mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of neo-liberal economic policies (ibid).

The 'troika' of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund imposed structural reforms on the education systems of national states such as Greece, Portugal, Spain, France or Italy (Jones, 2013). A brief review of the results of these structural reforms for schools and teachers in some of these European states may subsequently be helpful in exploring the effects of the socio-economic crisis on the education system of Greece.

In France, for more than 20 years, education policy has been established in terms of its connection to objectives set by economic policy and the requirements of the labour market. Reforms at a school level have usually been formed and justified with reference to their contribution to strategies for economic development, designed within the Lisbon framework. This was the case before the crisis of 2008 and remains the case today (Dreux, 2013). Education policy in France continues to coincide with the dogma of the European Commission, even though it produces no positive effects, and neo-liberal policies still flourish, even though their outcomes are negative. The crisis has served neither as an opportunity for a new round of reform in education policy, nor as a brake upon it (ibid).

The main change since 2008 relates to the ideological environment of education, in the general ideological context of the period. As the economic crisis underscored a long-standing crisis of education, in which the conditions of both student life and teachers' work had been worsening, public opinion critiqued and contested neo-liberalism. However, even though neo-liberalism has been disgraced, judged as an aggravator of social problems and condemned by its failure to reach the very goals that were supposed to legitimise it, it continues to be put into practice, and remains strong enough to survive (Dreux, 2013). As Dreux (2013) argues, it may be an illusion to think that neo-liberalism will vanish from the scene, thanks to no more than the failure of the policies it has initiated. We have to keep in mind that neo-

liberalism is not simply an ideology, in the sense of a set of ideas that would disappear if its believers stopped believing in it. It is rather 'a technical-practical ensemble, which structures representations and collective imaginaries, and gives rise to particular kinds of conduct' (ibid, p. 36), and it also responds to very powerful economic interests that explain its persistence.

In Spain, according to Canadell (2013), the 'bewildered and terrified' populace is witnessing the destruction of public education.

> 'Budget cuts mean financial constraints on the daily functioning of the schools, a freeze on new building, and increased class sizes. There are longer school hours for teachers, successive reductions in pay and freezing of exams for teacher promotion. The excuse for all this is the famous 'crisis' and the alleged lack of public money, which prevents the State from fulfilling its obligation to its most vulnerable citizens: pupils, children and young people at a formative stage' (ibid, p. 39).

In Canadell's view (2013), the measures applied since the beginning of this crisis were totally useless in overcoming the crisis or mitigating the deficit, but were ideal for deconstructing all public services, forcing extortion on workers and the lower classes and increasing the rate of profit for capital. This strategy, she suggests, was not just about reducing public funding for health, education and social services; it served other objectives that were part of a neo-liberal doctrine that had been on the cards for some time, and for the implementation of which the crisis acted as a perfect excuse. Canadell goes so far as to say that, behind all the cuts, proposals and counterproposals, hides a discussion which is much deeper, much more ideological and much more fundamental for the future of education in general and for the future of Spanish society.

In Italy, the economic crisis of 2008 was the nadir of a long process of decline rather than a sudden and entirely unforeseen event, as it may have been experienced elsewhere. As Innes (2013) notes: 'at the centre of the Italian crisis we find precarity. Precarity is the term used to name 'a generation which is locked into a state of always/already contingency, without a future and not much of a present when the lack of a system of universal welfare presents the alternatives of family dependency or underpaid and often illegal labor' (Innes, 2013, p. 77). Precarity also describes the economic and

social insecurity of many workers and it has become symptomatic of an entire social order in decay (Standing, 2011).

The impact of the socio-economic crisis of 2008 on education in Italy has been extensive. The troika imposed educational austerity as measures to be met with sacrifice and common endeavour (Innes, 2013). The policies of the current austerity paradigm have resulted in spending on education in Italy becoming the lowest in Europe – except for in Greece – and further cuts have since been announced. As a result, classes are bigger, there has been a reduction in welfare regarding meals and transport, and students suffer from shortages of materials, reduced class time, a reduced choice of texts, impoverished curricula, and a reduction in laboratory activities etc (ibid). At this current time, the aforementioned policies have not been seen to have had any positive effects; instead they seem to have caused negative outcomes. Problematic issues, such as the persistent historical lags between Italy and its comparators around indicators such as graduation rates and lack of social mobility, which have emerged over time in the Italy of neo-liberalism, have become worse, and inequality also has accelerated (Innes, 2013).

To conclude, in all the aforementioned countries, the impact of the crisis on education has been immense. The neo-liberal policies of enclosure applied since the beginning of this crisis, as well as the serious cuts to public social protection systems, adopted as a way of overcoming the economic and social crisis – what we now call 'austerity' –, have generated tensions throughout the European population; public services have been reduced, the coverage of the social state has worsened, and levels of poverty, inequality, and social cohesion have been profoundly affected (De Angelis, 2007).

2.2.2 Education in Greece in times of crisis

2.2.2.1 The Greek education system

Education in Greece is compulsory for all children between the ages of six and fifteen years, and it is composed of three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary education. Primary level education is divided into pre-school education, which is offered by nurseries or kindergartens, and compulsory

primary education, which is offered by primary schools (*Dimotika*[3]) that are made up of six 'years', and which students attend between the ages of six and twelve. Secondary level education consists of two cycles: the compulsory lower level secondary three-year education provided by *Gymnasiums*, and a non-compulsory, upper secondary education, which is offered by the Unified Lyceums and Technical Vocational Educational Institutes. Tertiary education is divided into university education, available at universities, and non-university education, which is offered by higher technological educational institutes and higher education institutes. Admission to tertiary education is based on a student's performance in nationwide examinations which take place at the end of the third year of upper secondary education (ekep, 2014).

The Greek education system is under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, and it is highly centralised. The Ministry of Education oversees all levels of education, and exercises centralised control over state schools by mandating the curriculum, appointing staff and controlling the distribution of funds. The ministry also exercises supervisory control over private schools in Greece (Poulis, 2001; Saiti, 2000; Saiti, 2005a; Saiti, 2005b).

2.2.2.2 The 'modernisation' of the Greek education system

With the entry of Greece into the European Union in 1981, along with a moderate shift in the direction of neo-liberalism, the discourse of 'modernisation' became linked with ideas about the marketisation of education and with efforts to make the Greek education system more 'effective' by introducing structures and forms of accountability similar to those in other Western countries (Traianou, 2013, p. 87).

The 'modernisation' of Greek education and the implementation of neo-liberal education policies was extensively opposed and, subsequently, delayed. Greece is perhaps one of the few European countries that resisted compliance with neo-liberal European Union policies. This resistance, it can

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3 (demotic, meaning municipal) a carry-over term from a time when such schools were run by local communities. The name remains, although this system has been obsolete for decades.

be argued, was more likely a result, at least in part, of the political and educational clientelism, one of the core mechanisms through which governments have taken and retained power since the establishment of the modern Greek state in the 1830s (Bratsis, 2010), rather than of a commitment to a common goal for education (Traianou, 2013).

Unlike in many other countries, where the change in social policy was put on the political agenda by pressure groups belonging to the political right (Jones, 2003), the change in Greek social policy was associated with the adoption of a neo-liberal orientation by the socialist party. After the 1996 elections, the shift of PASOK's policies towards a neo-liberal direction was epitomised by their Government's clear support for the gradual privatisation of Greece's large public sector, and by its decision to enter the Economic and Monetary Union of Europe (Traianou, 2013). The electorate endorsed the 'neo-liberal turn' twice, once in 1996 and again in 2000. When New Democracy came into office after the 2004 general election, their Government not only retained some of the basic principles of PASOK's education policy, but also stressed even further the need to improve links between education and the market (Charamis & Kotsifakis, 2015).

The neo-liberal agenda has thus been taking shape for some time in Greece. However, very little of it has yet been implemented in practice. One of the major obstacles to the success of neo-liberal educational reform in Greece has been the discontinuity brought about by frequent political changes. Within recent years, there has been a regular turnover of Ministers of Education and each one has had a tendency to amend the work of his or her predecessors (Traianou, 2013).

2.2.2.3 Education reform in the years of the troika

The current economic and political situation in Greece has made its mark on every aspect of Greek society, and education is no exception to the rule. The education system, in a context of financial crisis, rapid socio-economic change, multiple political restructurings and uncertainty, and severe austerity measures has been affected, and more problems have been added to its chronic inefficiencies (Paraskevopoulos & Morgan, 2011).

In 2010, and according to Law 3833/2010 ('Protection of Greek economy – urgent measures for the treatment of fiscal crisis'), the government reduced the annual budget of all ministries, including the Ministry of Education, by 10%. From 2011 onwards, this resulted in the closure of more than 1000 schools, forcing teachers out of work, pushing students into overcrowded classrooms and requiring them to travel further to school (Education in crisis, 2014). It also created many other problems, including but not restricted to huge cuts in teachers' salaries, a reduction in the already limited resources of individual schools, and the abatement of intervention programmes for schools with large number of students from migrant families (Christodoulakis, Leventi, Matsaganis & Monastiriotis, 2011; Paraskevopoulos & Morgan, 2011).

By 2013, educational spending had decreased by 33%. An additional 14% cut was implemented in the years that followed, and predictions for coming years, based on the troika's indicators, are even more inauspicious (Figure 1). If these predictions come true, there will be no funding available to cover basic costs such as heating educational facilities, restocking libraries, building new technology infrastructure and appointing teaching staff (Charamis & Kotsifakis, 2015).

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP in Greece

YEAR	2013	2015	2018*Expectation
GREECE	2,74	2,47	1,99
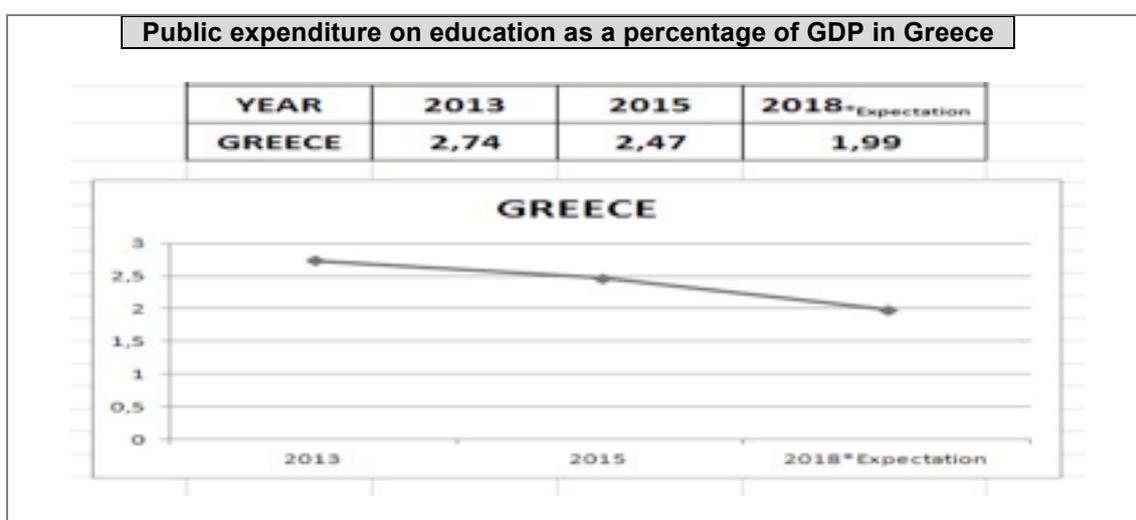
Figure 1: Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP in Greece
(Charamis & Kotsifakis, 2015)

From 2008 to the present day, the crisis has become the dominant component of the political rhetoric of reform in Greece. The government has enforced social spending cuts and has scheduled reforms, using the impact of the crisis as justification. In this context, the Greek education system is seen by some as central to solving the current socio-economic crisis. Anna Diamantopoulou (2011), Minister of Education (PASOK) in 2011, made this point clear:

> The multifaceted and multi-layered crisis that we are experiencing can become the catalyst for change [to solve] our enduring problems. I am deeply convinced that the time has come. The Prime Minister [George Papandreou] has put education as the dominant priority of the national plan for the regeneration of the country. We change education, we change Greece.

Politicians in Greece, in their attempt to 'treat' the socio-economic crisis (and using the depth of the difficulties experienced by young people in the labour market as an excuse), have passed emergency measures and educational reforms that were 'delayed' for many years prior to the crisis because of both the political hesitation of the two main political parties and the resistance of students, teachers and academics. Most of these reforms were prompted by the troika and the OECD, and aimed to accelerate the rate of neo-liberal change (Traianou, 2013).

Since 2010, there have been changes in regulation and management, and rapid and extreme changes in the working conditions of teachers. Apart from the aforementioned reductions in teachers' salaries and the rise in the sizes of classes (which now contain up to thirty pupils), the government has 'frozen' the appointment of new teachers and closed a number of local primary and secondary education authorities in order to 'release' teachers and relocate them to schools where there is a perceived shortage of teaching staff (Traianou, 2013). It has also reduced the weekly teaching hours of subjects such as Modern Greek, and it has removed subjects such as Music and the Arts from the curriculum for students in the second and third years of

Gymnasium. The overall aim of these changes was to create a 'reserve pool' of teachers who can be reallocated to other schools or to administrative posts.

The above changes have caused teachers, parents and students to feel anxiety and fear about the future. As Traianou (2013, p. 109) puts forward: 'the wave of reforms is endless, unpredictable and uncontrollable. The present is uncertain and the future unpredictable.' This is especially true today, as seen by the rise of new political parties: SYRIZA on the political left, and Golden Dawn on the far right.

2.2.3 From crisis to change

In this context, some politicians, policy makers and stakeholders consider education a necessary response to the crisis. Education, it is argued, can develop human resources, provide skills, and make the nation state more globally competitive, thereby allowing it to overcome the effects of crisis more rapidly and with fewer side effects (Brown et al, 2008). This belief that education could play a critical role in lifting a nation out of the global crisis resulted in many governments from 2008 onwards attempting, as already mentioned, to reform their education systems in radical ways, with the aim of increasing efficiency and effectiveness (Van Damme, 2011), and the intention of addressing the challenges arising from the global economic crisis (Turner & Yolcu, 2014; Ball et al, 2012; Hargreaves et al, 2010).

This view of education may be part of the 'pedagogisation' or 'educationalisation' of social problems that is so often encountered in contemporary literature. It usually refers to the phenomenon of an immoderate burden of social issues – that schools are expected to address – combined with a concomitant withdrawal of the state from policies that could responsibly solve those problems (Bridges, 2008). For example, effects of crisis such as increases in unemployment or poverty are addressed not as structural phenomena that result from the failures of capital in global economies, but are presented as the consequences of 'miseducation'; of the lack of a proper relationship between the outputs of schooling and the demands of the job market (Szkudlarek, 2014). As a consequence, the unemployed and the poor

are perceived not as those who need income, but rather as those who need 'additional learning' (Simons & Masschelein, 2008, p. 405); the education system is perceived as the institution which will solve this problem.

Education does have a very important role to play in changing the current precarious economic and political context, but it is not that which is described above. Drawing on Fielding & Moss (2011), I argue that education and schools are a necessary but 'not sufficient condition for a good society' (p. 36). We have to accept and recognise what education can and cannot achieve – and what must, therefore, be dealt with by other means (Ball, 2013). Schools must be sites where social problems such as social and economic inequalities are addressed, but not ones where they should be solved, as current thinking about social mobility naïvely seems to suggest (ibid). Schools cannot do it alone; they cannot 'solve the problems of a society unwilling to bear its burdens where they should properly be shouldered' (Noddings, 2005, p. 42). Schools must be part of a more general set of responses to social problems (Bell, 2013).

Moreover, it can be argued that schools are necessary for society, not only for training engineers or stonemasons, physicians or nurses, dentists or machinists, educators or mechanics, farmers or philosophers, but also as a means of empowering people to understand themselves as historical, political, social and cultural beings, and teaching them to comprehend the workings of society (Freire, 1998). If we want education to address some of the consequences of the crisis, we need first to understand that this crisis is not an accident along the path of progress of an economy that is fundamentally in good health (Hirtt, 2013, p. 116). This crisis is the symptom of a system that is profoundly 'sick'; it is a symptom – that is, the visible product – of the deep and turbulent contradictions of the capitalist economy (ibid).

If education is to address the structural, social and economic problems that led to the crisis, it cannot not be placed solely at the service of business. We have to question whether companies should be able to dictate, directly or indirectly, what is taught in the classroom, and the implementation of goals and values which serve a neo-liberal ideology need to be opened up for

debate, as it is precisely these issues which have led to the current crisis of inequality, poverty and lack of democracy (Canadell, 2013). Education policy has become *de-politised* and is now

> typically presented by politicians and policymakers as matters of technical efficiency rather than normative choices. As a consequence, their political nature, including the deep implication of these discourses with issues of socio-political power, is effectively backgrounded (Clarke, 2012, p. 298).

If education is to have an active role in overcoming the crisis, we need to think seriously about the definition of education, its meaning and purpose, and our own interpretation of knowledge and learning, and of the child and the school – that is, *repoliticise* it. We need to consider the fundamental values of education, its aims, and its content in the current historical, political and social era in which we live.

2.3 Rethinking education

2.3.1 Conceptualisation of education

In my attempt to rethink today's system of education, I begin by trying to define education itself. There are hundreds of definitions and conceptualisations from philosophers, poets, educators, and politicians, ranging from the 5th century BC to the present day. Many of these describe the essence of education in a simple way. Hicks, for example, notes that 'education is an essential function of civilization. Its essence is simple: to equip the young for the many tasks of preserving and advancing the hard-won gains of humankind in the arts, sciences and humanities' (2014, p. xi).

However, beneath most simple definitions of education lies endless complexity and controversy. Who is qualified to teach? What should the young be taught? How should they learn? Should the young be taught critical thinking or obedience to authority? What is the proper role of classroom learning relative to experiential learning? Should education be aimed at teaching specific skills (Hicks, 2014)?

In this study, following the ideas expressed by Fielding and Moss (2012), I consider education as being first and foremost about how we learn to lead lives that enable us to survive and flourish, both individually and collectively. I am also in agreement with Bassey (2011), who notes that 'education is: first, the experience and nurture of personal and social development towards worthwhile living; second, the acquisition, development, transmission, discovery, conversation, and renewal of worthwhile culture; and third, the acquisition, development, transmission, conservation, discovery, and renewal of skills for worthwhile survival' (p. 27).

The ideas about education expressed by Fielding and Moss (2012), as well as the framework definition presented by Bassey (2011), include education in nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, universities, the home lives of families, and the workplace. In short, they embrace all of an individual's lifelong learning, from birth to death. I agree with this interpretation; education contains every individual and social experience throughout our lives and takes place through a variety of modes of learning. However, for the purposes of my study and in accordance with my research questions, when I use the word 'education' I am focusing mainly on primary and secondary education and not referring to the home lives of families or the workplace.

2.3.2 Thinking 'differently' about education

In order to rethink education in relation to our real social needs and economic problems while keeping detached from 'uneducational' economic approaches, we must return to basics and seriously consider the purpose of education – what it means to be educated, what schools are for, and who should decide these things (Ball, 2013). Such a complex rethinking needs to move beyond the views of self-proclaimed 'experts', policy entrepreneurs and those with established interests (ibid). We need to embrace a more human-centered, more democratic approach to education, and hear what teachers, students and parents have to say about what education should be for, and what it might be, rather than what it has become (Coffield & Williamson, 2011).

To do this, we need to release the innovative potential of schools, teachers and communities, build and exploit a proper sense of 'democratic fellowship' (Fielding & Moss, 2011), and rebuild trust in students and teachers. We need to give teachers opportunities to speak, and develop the capabilities of students, parents and other local stakeholders to participate, to discuss, to challenge and critique (Ball, 2013). We need, as Evers and Kneyber (2016) argue, to 'flip the system', by placing teachers exactly where they need to be – at the steering wheel of educational systems worldwide. We also need to put students at the center, rather than treating them like 'products on an assemply line', and create schools that honour the individual strengths and abilities of both teachers and students (Nazareno, 2016). Moreover, we need to build a new democratic professionalism based on the fundamental values of social justice and democracy, with teachers' professional agency at its core (Stevenson & Gilliland, 2015).

As Kneyber (2014) and Stevenson & Gilliland (2016) argue, the 'voices' of teachers should be given a meaningful place. That is why, in my attempt to rethink education in relation to Greece's social needs and economic problems, I start by drawing upon writings about teacher professionalism, and continue by giving teachers the space to share their beliefs about what education encompasses, how they understand knowledge and learning, and about what the fundamental values of education in the midst of the Greek socio-economic crisis should be.

2.3.3 Teacher professionalism in times of crisis

2.3.3.1 Teaching as a profession

Under the influence of the neo-liberal shift in reform, as well as the impact of the global crisis and the political and social changes that followed, the teaching profession has been transformed (Evers & Kneyber, 2016). Biesta (2013) states that the aforementioned factors have led to the 'death of the teacher'; the death of the idea that a teacher has something to contribute, or constitutes a significant voice in regard to his/her work. To understand how teacher professionalism has changed over time, it is useful to start with the

definition of professions in general, and with the definition of teaching as a profession.

With the rise of the professional over time, some concern has been expressed about whether particular occupations are professions or not (Crook, 2008). Profession is an 'essential contested concept' (Hoyle & John, 1995, p. 1) which is, in most countries, defined by the state. The characteristics of a profession and its status are dependent on the sort of bargain an occupation has agreed on with the state (Whitty, 2008).

As Hoyle and John (1995) argue, a profession is an occupation which performs an important social function, the exercise of which requires a significant degree of skill. Profession is also about status, which is why occupations try to be recognised as professions; they hope that this will increase their esteem in the eyes of others, and consequently increase their salary and bring about a range of other additional benefits (Hoyle & John, 1995). Professionals share a common body of specialised knowledge and self-regulation, and use shared standards of practice in exercising that knowledge on behalf of their clients (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988).

The concept of professionalism has always been problematic when applied to teachers as an occupational group (Stevenson & Gilliland, 2016). Some have suggested that the concept of teacher professionalism is 'beset with conceptual difficulties and ambiguities' (McCulloch et al, 2000, p. 14) to the point where the question arises of whether it has any meaningful intellectual value. Others have noted that teaching, as a profession, is a socially constructed concept which means different things to different people (McCulloch, Helsby and Knight, 2000). In many countries, the nature of teaching as a profession has become a crucial policy issue for governments, sometimes as part of a wider effort to redefine professionalism, especially in the public sector, and sometimes as a particular feature of education reform (Whitty, 2008).

Conceptions of teacher professionalism cannot be detached from much broader questions about how society identifies teaching and what it means to be a 'good teacher'. Notions of the 'good teacher' are not fixed (Connell, 2009), and are successively tied in with existing discourse and arguments

about the nature and purposes of education. I personally agree with McCulloch, Helsby and Knight (2000), who argue that teacher professionalism embraces knowledge and skills but also complex political characteristics, values, beliefs and attitudes.

Central to the conceptions of teacher professionalism is autonomy. Although there is no society which leaves its teachers wholly free to determine their own goals (Hoyle & John, 1995), a high degree of classroom autonomy is assumed (McCulloch, Helsby & Knight, 2000), and this represents the freedom to establish a personal pedagogy which involves a balance between personality, training, experience and the needs of a specific educational context (Hoyle & John, 1995).

The school curriculum and the role of teachers in its domain have also been viewed as a key source and a definition of teacher professionalism (Helsby & McCulloch, 1996; McCulloch, Helsby & Knight, 2000; McCulloch, 2000). This is because the school curriculum refers to ways in which 'teachers develop, negotiate, use and control their own knowledge' (Whitty, 2008, p. 28), and because it is the primary method through which teacher professionalism is re-established periodically by the state (Halpin & Moore, 2006).

The ways in which the school curriculum is organised affects the exercise of teacher professionalism and acts as a constraint upon teacher autonomy and freedom (Helsby, 2000; McCulloch, Helsby & Knight, 2000). The curriculum is about more than syllabus documentation; it refers to all teaching and learning activities that take place in learning institutions. It contains the aims and objectives of the education system, as well as the specific goals of learning institutions: the content and its organisation; the underlying values; the skills and processes included; the strategies of teaching and learning; the forms of evaluation and assessment used (McCulloch, Helsby & Knight, 2000; Steiner, 1996).

During the last couple of decades, many countries have become involved in educational reforms that follow a neo-liberal perspective in which teachers are no longer viewed as professionals, and in which their identities are monopolised by aspects of managerial professionalism (Evers & Kneyber,

2016). The aforementioned reforms have led to the transformation of the teaching profession: teachers are no longer regarded with trust, they have lost their autonomy, they make no decisions on matters of curriculum, they have to justify any decisions or learning outcomes, and their struggle over the meaning of their profession is even more intense (Stevenson & Gilliland, 2015).

As an antidote to this neo-liberal transformation or 'death' (Biesta, 2013) of the teaching profession, there is a strong need for a new kind of teacher. What is needed is a teacher who connects with students and parents, reflects on the purposes of education, and thinks and acts cohesively in terms of their teaching methods (Evers & Kneyber, 2016). However, it will be very difficult for teachers to exercise these new identities and subjectivities in the current context of direction, prescription and distrust, where the sole focus is on outcomes.

2.3.3.2 Teachers as professionals in Greece

The different role typologies of teaching as a profession reflect different cultural notions of what it means to be a teaching professional, and suggest that what counts as professional knowledge or professional action is a matter of interpretation, depending on the particular cultural discourse. For the Greek government, teachers are civil servants and their professionalism is connected with their professional knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. Teachers in Greece are degree holders from a four-year university-level course, and they are given access to teaching posts in the state sector after passing examinations administered by the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (ASEP) (Eurydice, 2010).

Greek schoolteachers follow the national curriculum and textbook guidelines, and have practically no control over the content of either (Coulby, 2000). At the beginning of each school year, the Pedagogical Institute[4] issues directions for teachers on teaching approaches and aims (Eurydice, 2010). Teachers must teach each subject from the Pedagogical Institute's

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4 The Pedagogical Institute, as a representative of the government, determines the national curriculum and the textbooks. The Institute takes advice from academics and teachers when compiling particular textbooks, but the last word on content remains with the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.

textbooks exclusively. 'For every child at each level throughout Greece, from the islands of the Aegean to the mountains of upper Epirus, there are the same textbooks to be covered every term' (Coulby, 2000, pp. 15-16).

The public regulation of teaching in Greece controls both what is taught and how it is taught, reducing teachers' professional responsibility and autonomy (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988). However, although the government determines the professional identity of teachers, this identity is also mediated by teachers' own experiences in and outside of school, as well as by their values and beliefs about what it means to be a teacher (Sachs, 2001). For this reason, the 'planned' curriculum, as articulated in formal discourses and documentation, generally differs from the 'delivered' curriculum; it is restructured by teachers in their own classrooms.

As mentioned before, the neo-liberal reform of education in Greece was postponed for many years because of the political hesitation of the two main political parties, and the resistance of students, teachers and academics. In recent years, however, politicians have, in an attempt to 'treat' the socio-economic crisis and at the prompting of the troika and the OECD, passed emergency measures and educational reforms that aim to accelerate the rate of neo-liberal change (Traianou, 2013).

Today, teachers in Greece live and work in an era of intense and rapid social change, struggling against neo-liberal reform, and endeavouring against the odds to meet the challenge of educating the next generation in a way that prepares them for modern life and gives them a chance at a better future. The complexity of the current period in Greece underlines the need for a new kind of teacher, as mentioned before, who is able to reflect, make judgments, and act upon that which is educationally desirable (Biesta, 2013).

2.4 Relevant studies

In my attempt to frame the area of my research interest, I came across a vast number of research studies that focused on the implications of the current socio-economic crisis. However, such work mostly concentrated on the impact of the Greek socio-economic crisis on health, and medical and primary care (Economou, Kaitelidou, Kentikelenis, Sissouras, Maresso, 2014;

Kentikelenis, Karanikolos, Reeves, McKee, Stuckler, 2014; Mallianou & Sarafis, 2012; Ifanti, Argyriou, Kalofonou, Kalofonos, 2013; Lionis, Petelos, 2013; Baranouski, 2013; Kondilis, Giannakopoulos, Gavana, Ierodiakonou, Waitzkin, Benos, 2013; Kentikelenis, Karanikolos, Papanicolas, Basu, McKee, Stuckler, 2011; Oikonomou & Tountas, 2011; Kiriopoulos & Tsiantou, 2010 etc).

There are several studies that touch upon the impact of the crisis on the quality of life of Greek people (Frangos, Sotiropoulos, Orfanos, Toudas, Gkika, 2012; Miller, 2012; Dimoschakis & Kouthouris, 2013; Economou, Madianos, Peppou, Patelakis, Stefanis, 2011; Maltezou, Pomerou, 2011; Matsaganis, 2011; Matsaganis & Leventi, 2011a; Matsaganis & Leventi, 2011b), and the subjective experiences of Greek people during the crisis (Chalari, 2014; Chalari, 2015), as well as others that concentrate on the implications for employment opportunities among Greek people, especially the young, and on the increased 'brain drain' as a result of unemployment (Papadopoulos, 2014; Pelliccia, 2013; Mokos, 2012; Labrianidis, 2011; Palmer, 2011; Livanos, 2010; Holezas & Tsakoglou, 2008). I also came across studies on the effects of the socio-economic crisis on Greek entrepreneurship (Pantirma, 2012; Malli, 2014), and on schools and young people (Charamis & Kotsifakis, 2015; Greek Ombudsman for Children's Rights, 2013). The study by Charamis & Kotsifakis (2015) was particularly relevant, because it focused on analysing the impact of Greek policy during the age of austerity on the educational institutions and on children between the ages of childhood and adolescence.

Research on how Greek teachers experience and practically respond to the impact of the current socio-economic crisis on Greek education is still new and underdeveloped. In the literature I reviewed, I came across only one postgraduate thesis that examined the global crisis and its effects on education in Greece (Nika, 2014). This study focused on teachers, and attempted to shed light on the implications of the crisis through questionnaires. The picture that emerged from reviewing the findings of this study showed that the crisis has affected the quality of life of students, their families and teachers. Students have lost their carefree childhood and their

dreams; parents and teachers have lost their hopes for a better future in Greece. One positive finding of this study was that Greek people, despite their difficulties, continue to support schools and strive to educate their children (ibid).

The pervasiveness of the impact of the socio-economic crisis on the Greek education system and on teachers' work appears to have received little attention. After reviewing the existing literature, I argue that there is a more general gap in existing research: teacher's perceptions of how we can build on the strengths of the present education system in order to create a system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances. Moreover, the roles which schools and teachers play in the reconstruction of social and political life in post-crisis Greece have not yet been adequately researched. As a result, we are currently in the dark about many issues pivotal to the understanding of the current situation in Greece.

Perhaps, given the proximity of the event, it is still too early to speak of a lack of existing research. Nonetheless, my intention in undertaking this research is to attempt to redress this lack. Although my study is an initial endeavour, I hope that it will uncover and contribute new knowledge, bridge several issues identified in the literature review, and perhaps fill in some of the aforementioned research gaps.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the methods of empirical enquiry that I employed in order to shed light upon the negative and positive consequences of the socio-economic crisis according to the teachers, the social and political problems that are behind the current crisis, and the strengths in the present education system that we may build on in order to create a system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances. This chapter is divided into eight sections. In section one, I start by presenting the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my study. In section two, I discuss the research approach of the study. In sections three and four I describe the methodology and the methods of data collection. In section five I focus on sampling, my access to the field of research and the procedures of the fieldwork itself. In section six, I present some basic information about the schools under study. In section seven, I give consideration to the ethical issues that arose during this research. Lastly, in section eight, I discuss the methods of data analysis.

3.1 Ontological and epistemological assumptions

The research design of a study is determined by paradigms or viewpoints on two vital matters. The first of these is ontological, and refers to relationships, structures, mechanisms, events or behaviours in the world which have an objective existence, and on which the researchers focus their attention. The second matter is epistemological, and refers to how the researchers can know or come to understand the above (Scott, 2012).

The different paradigms reflect different views on the nature of reality and on how we can know this reality. Ontology revolves around questions concerning basic assumptions about the world, the existence of the world and reality itself; epistemology is concerned with the question of basic assumptions about how we can know reality (Andersen, 2003).

The core ontological assumption of my work is that social meaning is not fixed but fluid, and is involved in an ongoing process of creation and recreation, either to maintain or change it. As Mead (1936) said, 'Meaning does not inhere in things; nor is it ordained by God; rather it is a cultural product of historically situated individuals' (Shalin, 1991). My epistemological position is that we can only see the world through a specific lens, formed and developed in society. There are no facts about the world which are not, in some way, socially produced or dependent upon social conventions.

Theoretically, the hermeneutic/interpretive perspective informs the methodology and the research process of my study. The hermeneutic/interpretive perspective in social and educational research places the focus on social practices, on interpreting the meanings and perspectives of cultural members, and on how these meanings are negotiated (Creswell, 1998). This perspective assumes that all human action is meaningful and should hence be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices (Charmaz, 2006; Usher, 1996).

Symbolic interactionism is another theoretical perspective that informs my methodology. It is an approach to understanding and explaining society and the human world that puts emphasis on human agency as a complete part of objective reality (Shalin, 1991) and deals directly with issues such as language, communication, interrelationships and community. It is a humanistic movement in sociology which places the classical notion of social reality as a given and inherently structured close to the generative view of society as an emergent process continuously produced by human beings (Shalin, 1991). Symbolic interactionism is concerned with the basic social interactions whereby we enter into the perceptions, attitudes and values of a community, becoming persons in the process (Crotty, 1998).

Finally, in my study, I followed epistemological perspectives informed by the standpoint theory. Standpoint theory was first used by North American critical feminist researchers, who wanted to give voice to experiences of marginalised groups or groups whose voices were not dominant (Collins, 2008). Standpoint research and its various underlying epistemologies may be

understood simply as a move towards local, contextualised, situated knowledge that draws upon the viewpoints and experiences of subordinate groups, away from universalised, value-neutral knowledge. Standpoint epistemology provides ways in which researchers can think about questions, raise awareness, find new ways of knowing (Skeggs, 1994), and perhaps bring about change.

In my study, I chose to move away from an orthodox research report and to take up a position of standpoint epistemology in relation to my research; a standpoint of hope, over and against the dire and self-defeating discourse of despair which dominates the current context of Greek education and public life. Through this strategic stance, I intended to look for 'ways out' of the crisis by giving voice to teachers' concerns, anxieties, commitments and hopes.

3.2 Research approach

My intention in undertaking my research was not to make generalisations but to attempt to shed light upon the perceptions and beliefs of some teachers and to produce possible explanations and arguments. I aimed to focus on the subjugated and marginalised voices of teachers and listen to their insights into the current restructuring and reform processes in education (Goodson, 2000). The nature of my research problem and my purpose suggests an emphasis on the investigation of ways in which individuals interpret their social world – a purpose that led me to select the methodology of qualitative research (Gillborn, 2010; Scott, 1996).

Quality refers to the what, how, when, and where of an entity, its essence and ambience. Qualitative research, therefore, refers to meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions, and also to patterns of behaviour (Mason, 2002; Berg, 2001; Denscombe, 2000). It is a system of inquiry, which seeks to build a holistic, primarily narrative, description which informs the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. It usually comes from constructivist epistemological understandings of the world, where knowledge is created using an interpretivist ontological position.

Qualitative research covers a variety of styles of social research and it is orientated towards 'analyzing concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity starting from people's expressions and activities in their local contexts' (Flick, 2009, p. 21). Qualitative researchers, rather than theorising from a distance, enter and work within the natural setting, employing a combination of observations, interviews, and document reviews (Malone, 2003; Silverman, 2001; Bryman, 2004).

Qualitative research is better able to work with ambiguities and contradictions and to deal with complex social situations implicated in social reality, because it allows researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives (Berg, 2001). Qualitative methods can be used to explore areas about which 'little is known or about which much is known to gain novel understandings' (Stern, 1980 – cited in Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 11). They can also be used to obtain information about feelings, thoughts and emotions that are difficult to derive from more conventional research methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

3.3 Methodology

Methodology is the plan of action, the research design that guides our choice of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998). The methodology of my study could be described as phenomenology. As the term suggests, at the heart of this approach is the attempt to understand a particular phenomenon (Robson, 2002). Phenomenology explores individual or group perceptions of reality as it is constructed. These realities may be expressed as events, programmes, relationships, emotions, etc (Leedy, 1997).

Choosing phenomenology as the methodology of a study brings with it implications of theory, epistemology and ontology. Generally, phenomenological research focuses on the subjective experiences of the individuals studied, and examines how human beings construct and give meaning to their actions in concrete social situations. Phenomenologists reject scientific realism and the accompanying view that the empirical sciences have a privileged position in identifying and explaining features of a

mind-independent world. In order to grasp the meanings of human behaviour, they view this behaviour as a product of how people interpret the world (Bryman, 2004).

Phenomenology indicates the engagement of the researcher in the world under study. Phenomenological approaches to qualitative research stress the importance of reflexivity – that is, an awareness of the ways in which the researcher, as an individual with a particular social identity and background, has an impact on the research process. In such situations, 'the ability to put aside personal feelings and preconceptions is more a function of how reflexive one is rather than how objective one is because it is not possible for researchers to set aside things about which they are not aware' (Robson, 2002, p. 174).

Phenomenologist researchers often have a significant personal interest in the phenomenon under study, and they attempt to develop an understanding of a subject's or subjects' 'reality', as perceived by the person or people in question (Leedy, 1997). Research of this nature involves key questions: What are the experiences of these people like? How can one understand and describe what happens to these people from their point of view? Such a method requires careful description of the ordinary conscious experiences of everyday life, including elements such as perception, belief, memory, decision-making, emotion, judgment, evaluation, and all the experiences of bodily action (Schwandt, 2001). For all of the above reasons, but primarily because my aim was to understand teachers' own world views, I selected phenomenology as the methodology of my study.

3.4 Methods for data collection

Methods are research techniques for gathering data. The choice between different research methods for data collection can be contingent on pragmatic matters (Silverman, 2001). To determine the criteria involved in selecting the appropriate methods, the purpose of the research and the research questions should be taken into account; different methods generate different kinds of data, which correspond to different research questions (Mason, 2002; Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). Qualitative studies often use semi-

structured interviews and observation as their main data-gathering techniques. These methods make it possible to gather data that would be otherwise difficult to access, and ensure that the information gathered is comprehensive and meticulous (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Tooley & Darby, 1998).

When trying to understand social processes and work in a field about which we have little knowledge, it is advisable to select methods which approach the field in a very open way (Flick, 2009). As my area of study is relatively new, at the strategic level of my research design – in conformity with my epistemological and ontological perspectives – I chose to conduct individual interviews with a small number of teachers so as to approach my area in an open way and instigate in-depth conversations. Specifically, I chose semi-structured interviews with questions open enough to permit amplification and expansion by teachers, in order to better explore their world views.

The decision to use the semi-structured interview as a method was made partly due to the fact that this method seemed most viable and appropriate for my project as it offers a means of exploring the ways in which teachers interpret the world and their place within it (Warren, 2002; Dingwall, 1997; Kvale, 1996). These interpretations are often extremely complex, and it would be difficult to access them through less open and flexible methods of data collection (Rapley, 2004; Johnson, 2002). Moreover, this decision was also made due to familiarity and experience (I have used this method in previous research projects).

Although the method of semi-structured interviews tends to be the one most favoured by educational researchers, we should not rely on it exclusively or automatically without careful criticism and consideration of the analytical status given to accounts produced in this way. This method is both enabling and limiting – a fact that researchers need to keep in mind in order to use it to its full effect (Rapley, 2001).

There are two requirements that must be fulfilled for an interview to generate useful data. The first of these is that interviewees should have

insight into what researchers are asking – that is, the motivations of the study should be apparent to them. Secondly, interview subjects must be willing to give an honest account. This, however, raises another question: is there any such thing as an honest account?

Interviews are fundamentally social encounters, determined by local interactional contingencies, in which the speakers deduce and co-construct broader social norms (Rapley, 2001). Interviews also involve power relations (Mills, 2001). As Foucault has argued, power is always present in any attempt to acquire knowledge (Usher, 1996). Gender, race, class and other types of power relations are transferred by the researcher and form an essential backdrop to the answers that respondents provide (Scott, 2012; Ball, 1990).

Interviews may well 'manufacture' data (Back, 2010) but, as Silverman argues, even 'manufactured' interview data can be useful if understood as an 'activity awaiting analysis and not as a picture awaiting commentary' (Silverman, 2007, p. 56). This means that, if we let go of the idea that we can 'capture' the actuality of a person through an interview, we may gain the opportunity to acquire a different kind of social understanding, and a different means of assessing the value of information gathered through interviews. (Back, 2010; Rapley, 2004).

For this research study, I asked interviewees about relatively sensitive issues, some of which may have been 'politically incorrect' or with a stigma attached. I tried, therefore, to consider the many aspects of the interview context and to take into account variables concerning location, relationships and the assumptions brought into the process.

Accepting the imperatives of symbolic interactionism, I kept in mind that data obtained from interviews are determined by the specific local interactional context, which is produced in and through the interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Rapley, 2001). Social actors 'present' themselves differently in different settings (Ball, 1990). Thus, the setting in which an interview takes place is like a warehouse, full of available meanings which the interviewees draw on when giving their answers (Scott, 2012).

Furthermore, I strove to take into account the fact that all participants of an interview, including the interviewer, are engaged in the mutual construction of meaning (Mills, 2001), and work together to present themselves as certain types of people in relation to the topic of the interview and, reflexively, within the interview itself (Rapley, 2001). For this reason, I decided to view interviewees' statements as personalised accounts or versions, not as authentic reports of attitudes or perceptions, nor as genuine reflections of life outside the interview context (Back, 2010).

3.5 Sampling – access and procedures

The key issue for qualitative sampling is 'how to focus, strategically and meaningfully, rather than how to represent' (Mason, 2002, p. 136). A qualitative study needs a sample that serves to shed light on the issues under analysis (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). The suitability of the sampling can only be judged with respect to the research question of the study and the degree of generalisation that is sought (Flick, 2009).

For the study in question, in order to ensure access to a sufficient number of interviewees for the purposes of exploring my research questions and classifying key issues for future development within this thesis, I employed the 'purposeful sample' technique (Patton, 2002). Usually known as 'purposive sampling', this method of sampling is also termed 'snowball sampling' or 'opportunity sampling'. To clarify: it is a non-probability method that relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects (Robson, 2002).

I started my fieldwork by approaching several teachers who happened to be acquaintances of mine. With their help, I located four schools in Athens: two *dimotika*, one *gymnasio* and one *lykeion*[5] which constituted suitable venues for my research study. The schools I chose for my study were typical inner-city schools; two were located in an area very close to the city centre and contained large percentages of students from immigrant and working-class Greek families and two were in a southern suburb of Athens, and

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5 The levels of the Greek education system are discussed in detail in Chapter 2, pp. 39-40.

catered mostly to students from middle-class Greek families, with a small percentage of immigrant students.

I first made contact with their respective head teachers who, in turn, identified for me potential participants for my study from among their colleagues. They also provided me with names and contact details. I purposively sampled teachers from these schools on bases of gender and teaching experience (in years of teaching), and I finally chose sixteen participants (eight women and eight men) who had between them a considerable diversity of experience[6] (see Appendix B).

Although my sampling technique afforded me easy access to the schools and the teachers, this access came at the expense of introducing bias. The technique in question reduces the possibility that the sample will represent an effective cross section of the population (Robson, 2002). Moreover, this technique introduces a strong possibility of bias; if initial subjects recommend additional subjects on the grounds that they are 'like-minded' individuals, diverse perspectives are thus excluded. Therefore, the possibility stands that the people with whom my friends put me in contact held points of view similar to both my friends' and to mine own. I tried to keep this in mind throughout the whole process of my research, and especially during the analysis and related presentation of the data. I have attempted to address this issue in my work by acknowledging the limitations of my claims and the contextual nature of my findings.

To proceed with my research, I sent a letter to all potential participants, informing them of the study in advance and explaining the method of sampling which would be used. I followed this up with a telephone call and then a face-to-face meeting, in order to gain their informed consent. At the beginning of the interview, I presented myself to the participants as a doctoral student and fellow teacher, and I thanked them for agreeing to participate. I continued by putting forward a set of questions that had been guided by a review of the literature.

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6 Some of the teachers had worked in the Greek education system for around twenty-five years, others for around eight.

I tried to create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere between the interviewees and myself, built on mutual trust and support. At the same time, I attempted to be alert and to observe as many things as I could. I made an effort to reinforce signals of rapport, such as increased eye contact, attentive body posture, smiling, nodding in agreement, etc, and I also avoided glancing at my watch.

All the interviews were conducted at the schools, after lessons had finished for the day, by mutual agreement. A small portable tape recorder was used, which was fairly unobtrusive and noiseless; easy to place on a desk, it possessed a relatively sensitive built-in microphone and a tape counter. Each interview lasted between 25 and 35 minutes. There was some extra dialogue beforehand and afterwards, which I did not transcribe, but of which written notes have been made.

The interviews were conducted in Greek, as it is the native language of the teachers I interviewed. I took great care over the selection and phrasing of the questions, to ensure that their meaning was both purposeful and clear and to be certain that my objectives were comprehensible (see Table 2).

- How can we respond to the social and political problems which underlie the crisis?

- Could a system of schooling be a way to respond to the social and political problems behind the crisis?

- If yes, what would be the most important features of this system?

- Using examples from your school and your own teaching experience, describe some of the challenges faced by teachers in the Greek education system in the midst of Greece's socioeconomic crisis.

- Do you think the Greek education system should change in order to meet the new challenges that have been created by the current political and economic changes in Greece? [If so] In what ways?

- Which skills, attitudes and values do you think you should teach students in order to help them deal with their future in the present rapidly changing social and economic context?

- Are there any strengths in the present education system that we can build on in order to create a system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances?

Table 2: Examples of questions translated into English

I also tried to keep in mind that, as a researcher, I had brought with me considerable 'conscious and unconscious baggage' (Mills, 2001, p. 286); that, as the primary research tool, my presence, my bias, and the selections I had made would have serious effects on the research process. For example, I tried to recognise and take into account the fact that my approach built on hope might subconsciously direct the interviewees' answers, somehow nudging them towards a specific interpretation of the crisis.

3.6 Ethical considerations

There is no universal agreement on ethical standards for research. However, there are three main issues that are frequently raised in any discourse on the topic of ethical research: 'codes and consent', 'confidentiality' and 'trust' (Ryen, 2004, p. 231). 'Codes and consent' have to do with the research subjects' right to know that they are being researched, their right to be informed about the nature of the research, and the right to withdraw from the project if they want. 'Confidentiality' refers to the researcher's obligation to protect the participants' identities. 'Trust' concerns the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Ryen, 2004; Bryman, 2004; Silverman, 2000).

In the question of ethical research, my thesis was guided by BERA – The Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) and The Statement of Ethical Practice of the British Sociological Association (2002). I chose these particular ethical guidelines because they seemed best suited to enable me to weigh up all aspects of the process of conducting educational research and to reach an ethically acceptable position in which my actions would be considered valid and reliable.

My dual role within the research constituted a particularly ethically

sensitive aspect (Smyth & Holian, 2008). I was the researcher, but also a teacher myself. As the researcher, my interest was in understanding and analysing the Greek education system and its need to respond to the challenging and changing circumstances of Greece's socio-economic crisis – and in evaluating Greek teachers' experiences of austerity within the school environment. As a teacher, my interest was in incorporating this knowledge into my own personal career, in order to enhance my professional teaching abilities and deepen my understanding of the situation.

Keeping this dual role in mind, I tried to build a relationship of trust between the participants and myself. I believe that my insider perspective helped me to accomplish this; being a teacher myself, I am familiar with the language of teaching – with its particular jargon and meanings – and my use of it encouraged participants to see me as part of 'their world' (Sikes & Potts, 2008). I believe that, as a consequence, they were more willing to discuss personal matters with me.

I also tried to achieve a reflexive approach to my study. This involved stepping back from time to time, thinking critically about my purpose, intention, stance and claims, and reflecting on what I was doing, what kinds of knowledge were being produced, which concepts were too rigid and which frameworks hid more than they revealed (Delanty, 2005; Bourdieu, 2004; Gray, 2003).

I took the necessary steps to ensure that all participants understood the purposes and the process of the research study in which they were to be engaged, including why their participation was necessary, how the study would be used, and how and to whom it would be reported (BERA, 2011). I gained voluntary informed consent from all teachers involved, and informed them of their right to withdraw at any stage of the process for any reason, at any time.

Furthermore, I explained to them how I would protect their confidentiality when writing by offering them pseudonyms for their identities and keeping the exact locations of the schools undisclosed. As I collected some data which could, under the definition of the Data Protection Act 1998, be considered 'sensitive' (data concerning racial/ethnic origin, political opinions, religious (or similar) beliefs), I assured my participants that only data, sensitive or

otherwise, which was essential to the research would be used, and that the participants themselves would be anonymous. I also informed them that the interviews would be tape-recorded, and I assured them that I would be the only person to hear the recording.

However, I kept in mind that it was difficult to obtain fully informed consent because I wasn't able to anticipate the events that would emerge in the field and fully inform the participants of these. For this reason, I tried to take a critical look at the processes through which I sought the informed consent of my subjects and the forces that would work against their being able to give it (Malone, 2003).

3.7 Methods of data analysis

The process of data analysis is not the last phase of a research process, nor is it a separate stage. Data analysis should be seen as part of the research design and as a reflexive activity that informs data collection, writing, further data collection, and so forth. The research process – of which analysis is one aspect – is a cyclical one, and the separation of data collection from data analysis is artificial and ill-advised (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). 'Methods of data collection and analysis do not make sense when treated in an intellectual vacuum and divorced from more general and fundamental disciplinary frameworks' (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 153).

Qualitative data analysis is related to the tasks of coding, indexing, sorting and retrieving data, as well as to the creative work of interpretation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Qualitative data analysis is not simply a matter of classifying, categorising, coding, or collating data, nor is it a question of identifying forms of speech or regularities of action. It is about the representation or reconstruction of social phenomena (ibid). Qualitative data, if followed by sensitive and insightful analysis, are capable of providing insights and glimpses of reality available in no other way.

In the study in question, the analysis was begun early in the research process and was subject to continuous review and revision. The process of analysis was reflective and cyclical in that it was directed to reveal particular themes as they emerged from the original research questions (Rapley, 2001). I started the analysis by transcribing the data and reading the transcripts

several times. I continued by locating 'meaningful units' – small bits of text which were independently able to convey meaning (Leedy, 1997). After further background reading, I searched for themes and patterns by logically linking these 'meaningful units'. These themes were then categorised and grouped together into major and subordinate themes for each set of transcripts, using a tree diagram.

Next, I sought for examples of these key themes in the transcript data, and I highlighted them using different coloured pens. I continued by selecting the core themes and systematically relating them to the secondary themes, validating the relationships between them (Bryman, 2004; Rapley, 2001). In addition, I attempted to examine the interview data as a genre, particularly in so far as it showcased characteristics of conversation and narrative and aspects related to the themes of discourse, power and identity (Rapley, 2001).

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter I present the analysis of the data elicited from the interviews I conducted with sixteen Greek teachers, and I provide answers to my research questions, integrating relevant literature and theoretical insights. Of course, the data in question does not allow us to make claims about the majority of individuals within the teaching profession, since the project findings only relate to a very small sample. Nonetheless, the findings do offer important insights into the profound implications of the Greek socio-economic crisis for both society and the education system in Greece, especially for teachers and students; they also provide some interesting indications of teachers' thoughts on the social and political problems that underlie the current crisis, the role of the Greek education system in the reconstruction of society and political life in post-crisis Greece, as well as on the strengths of the present education system that can be built upon in order to create a system better suited to handling the current major societal changes and able to face the challenging circumstances.

The chapter is organised into six sections. In the first section, I present the impact of the socio-economic crisis for Greek society, as the teachers perceive it. In particular, I introduce two narratives, two versions of the impact: one with an absence of future, the second with a possibility of a different and better future. In section two, I continue with the impact of the socio-economic crisis on Greek education. Specifically, I report the challenges Greek schools face in the age of austerity, and the impact of the crisis on teachers' and students' work and well-being. In the third section, I focus on the social and political problems – pertaining to governments, the Greek people and global capitalism – which the teachers identify as being at the root of the crisis. In section four, I move on to discuss the possible responses that the teachers believe necessary to address and counter the aforementioned social and political problems. In the fifth section, I examine teachers' projections for the role and possibilities of the Greek education system in addressing some of the devastating consequences of the socio-economic crisis. Moreover, I present

the changes to the Greek education system that teachers consider necessary in order to meet the new challenges that have arisen from the rapidly changing social and economic context, and the skills, attitudes and values that they feel students need to be taught in response to these changes. In section six, the final section, I discuss teachers' understanding of the strengths of the Greek education system, and how teachers and professional educators in general (tutors, lecturers, assessors, curriculum developers, mentors, counsellors, administrators, technical and support staff, vocational and academic specialists) can build on these to create a system better able to deal with the major cultural changes and challenging prospects that Greek society faces.

4.1 The impact of the socio-economic crisis on Greek society

A crisis of endings and an absence of future and hope

In their attempts to discuss the impact of the crisis on Greek society, the teachers interviewed offered a vivid narration of a version of a crisis of endings and an absence of future and hope. They outlined their despair over the breakdown of the fundamental economic, moral and social bases of society, of social relations, and of basic human relationships and ways of being.

Greece is currently in the seventh year of a deep recession, and the impact of the crisis and the government's austerity measures, as teachers perceived it, has materialised as huge economic difficulties, changes to individual lifestyles, and a dramatic fall in living standards. In particular, teachers highlighted high levels of unemployment, job insecurity, income reduction, increased poverty, the restriction of democratic freedoms and the deterioration of institutional solidarity constructed in welfare state policies.

> There have been too many changes in our society, in the education system, in hospitals, in the mass media, everywhere (...) the most common topic of discussion everywhere is the crisis and the economic difficulties that it has caused, the new measures, the taxes, how and if people will manage to pay their bills (...) this is a sign of crisis in itself.

(Alexandros)

Things have changed for the worse, for sure (…) I'm not one of those people who believes that some of the things they see have changed for the better (…) Greek households struggle to survive and they have many problems. Unfortunately, these problems are visible everywhere, in our work, in our behaviour.

(Amalia)

Teachers explained anxiously that there was no room for dreams anymore, that they saw only dead ends ahead of them, and that they felt trapped in a tunnel with no light at the end. These strong images of their despair illustrate the breakdown of their ways of being.

The changes are so numerous and so difficult; people suffer from unemployment and low wages. No one is in the mood for anything; there are difficulties everywhere and there is no room for dreams. And now what? What will happen next?

(Kostas)

We don't smile anymore, our attitudes and the ways we think have changed. We are so pessimistic; we don't know what is happening around us, we don't know when and if it will stop, we see dead ends everywhere.

(Anna)

Unemployment, as teachers mentioned, has been one of the most vicious consequences of the crisis in Greece; it has risen to record heights, leaving almost two-thirds of young people without a job. At the same time, there are no collective labour agreements, and workers feel that not only does the government not support them, but that most of the time it is actively working against them.

Our lives and our behaviour have turned 180 degrees since 2008 (…) we see so many people, mostly young people, without jobs.

Bankruptcy, medieval working conditions, there are no collective labour agreements, there is massive unemployment, youth unemployment, a restriction of democratic freedoms (…) the strikes are considered illegal, the government doesn't support workers or people in need.

Indeed, the negative impact of the socio-economic crisis and the austerity measures on the real economy has been immense (Varoufakis, 2011; Tsakalotos 2012). The economy in Greece, as has already been mentioned in chapter two, has contracted by 22% within the last few years, and unemployment has risen drastically to very high levels, leaving almost 26% of all job-seekers, and 60% of the young people in Greece unemployed (ELSTAT, 2014; Zambeta, 2014; Matsaganis, 2013).

The majority of the teachers considered Greece to be in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. They claimed that Greece has become a country in serious poverty, and that this was getting worse every day. They noted that many people had lost access to key social welfare services, including primary health services, medical examinations, hospital care and available medication.

The whole structure of our society has changed. Education, health services… there are problems everywhere (…) I see problems and difficulties everywhere.

The consequences are huge, especially for institutions for education or health (…) if you have a health problem and you are not rich – or you don't have at least some money in the bank – you will be left to die like a dog. (…) My father and my uncle have got health problems, and they can't do anything. They run from one hospital to the next, but they can't find anyone to help them (…) a friend of mine who lives in Germany had health problems, and he wanted to come back to Greece to be close to

his family. The nurse told him not to do so; she told him that if he came back to Greece he would be left to die like a dog. 'Stay here and die like a man,' she told him.

(Aris)

There have been so many implications on so many levels (…) in hospitals there are no doctors, nurses, or drugs (…) One member of my family has got a serious health problem and we see these difficulties first-hand, every day (…) in schools there are no supplies, there is no money (…) in every workplace, people are under pressure (…) work-related stress (…) sometimes we cannot even cover our basic needs; we cannot pay our rent, our bills.

(Litsa)

What teachers describe here is not only the threat that the crisis poses to the quality and depth of public provision of social services such as primary health services and education, but also a threat to social cohesion as a whole (Zambeta, 2014). The entire structure of society has changed, and people feel insecure and see themselves as casualties of the situation and its difficulties.

Several teachers reported families suffering from material deprivation and poor diets, as well as a partial or total inability to meet emergency expenses or payments for rent and bills. Statistically, a large proportion of Greek households are currently living without sufficient heating or electricity, and many lack basic conveniences such as the use of a car or a telephone. The number of homeless people has risen to unprecedented levels for a European country, and there has been a rapid increase in food distribution. However, these effects, as the teachers suggested, are not merely economic; they constitute the destruction of a whole way of being.

There are many people who haven't got what they need for a decent life. Many families live in serious poverty without heating, electricity (…) it's the first time in my life that I frequently encounter people searching for food in the bins, people who sleep outside, children who faint because they haven't eaten for days (…) A great many Greek people have

reduced their expenses to a minimum; they don't buy anything (…) the country's retail sector is experiencing its worst crisis in decades; that is why more than 65,000 shops have been forced to close their doors.

(Sofia)

The situation is dramatic, to say the least. Our lives today bear no resemblance to the lives we had ten years ago. There have been negative consequences for all sectors: education, health, public services, taxation, everything (…) I was listening to a radio programme from Crete and they were saying that kids there are fainting from hunger! In Athens, the same thing is happening.

(John)

Clarke and Newman (2012) claim that economic crises are, by necessity, crises of ideas and values. Most of the teachers noted that, aside from the humanitarian crisis, the socio-economic crisis has also caused a serious 'crisis of values' – and that hardly a day goes by without apparent indications of this. According to the teachers I interviewed, a brief look at Greek society shows it to be facing a crisis of values, a crisis of the structure of the Greek family institution, and an identity crisis. These parallel crises, this erosion of social, moral, cultural, economic and political values at all levels has led to corruption, violence, abuses of human rights, general frustration, anxiety for the future, general disappointment, pessimism and crises of character, as well as a populace suffering from poor physical and mental health.

For me, the crisis is not only economic but also social, political and, above all, moral (…) we have lost our principles, our values and we can see this easily by looking at the children (…) by looking at them we can understand the values of their families, how they have grown up, the issues they have at home, whether their parents spend enough time with them (…) parents run around all day, trying to find solutions, trying to bring home enough money to save their families, and most of the time they are so exhausted and so stressed by the end of the day that they

can't spend time with their kids. Even if they do spend time with them, this time is not quality time.

(George)

Dissolution, degradation, deconstruction (…) There are still some people who live just fine, but there are people – many people – who have lost everything and rely entirely on help from others.

(George)

The teachers expressed the view that the cohesion of the Greek family unit is also under threat because of the socio-economic crisis. The idea was put forward that many families undergo a structural crisis when individual members experience difficulties. As a consequence, families become disorganised and experience stress. Moreover, according to some teachers, marriage rates have fallen dramatically in Greece over the past decade because of austerity. Many teachers voiced concerns as to whether young people could get married and have a family when so many were unemployed or working for extremely low pay.

The economic circumstances have greatly affected the social structure of the family, especially that of young people (…) young people do not marry anymore; they prefer to have a relationship without getting married (…) having a family and taking care of it seems very difficult to them because of the levels of unemployment and the low salaries – and I understand their perspective… how could they have a family on a salary of 300-400 euros [a month]? Most of the time, they have to live with their parents, who help them by giving them money and paying their bills.

(Aris)

The majority of the teachers pointed out that the socio-economic crisis has brought not only economic problems but also their concomitant negative psychological effects. Insecurity and precarity are now commonplace. They described the social space today as being infused with misery, fear, tension,

violence and an increasing sense of insecurity, created in part by the psychological terrorism of fear-focused news broadcasting

> There is a lot of anger and tension; we are trying to find someone to blame for this situation (…) we are anxious, and insecure about our future (…) children are also full of tension. They carry around with them the tension they feel in their homes (…) most of the parents need to work all day and, as a result, their children feel abandoned (…) people feel insecure. They don't trust anyone anymore, and they don't know what the next day will bring (…) there is no trust at all, and fear is everywhere.
>
> (Maria)

> The socio-economic crisis has changed our lifestyle, but mostly it has changed our behaviour and our psychology (…) we are not the way we used to be anymore; we are sad, full of tension and full of fear.
>
> (Helen)

> The social and economic structures of our society have changed so much, and our behaviour has also changed (…) we have a great many problems, and we can't find relief anywhere (…) this crisis is not only economic; it is a crisis that affects people's behaviour and their relationships with others.
>
> (Dimitris)

According to many teachers, ever-expanding sections of Greek society are experiencing extreme hardship, psychological trauma, desperation and severe stress, all of which are compromising their critical judgment and producing a breakdown in social relations.

> I think we have become alienated from each other; we feel lonely and isolated (…) In the beginning, I thought that we would be brought closer to one another but, unfortunately, I see that we are so frightened by what is happening around us that we prefer to stay away from everyone else (…) I am not optimistic; I can't see any light at the end of the tunnel.

Most of the Greek people are in a state of panic. They don't smile anymore, and they discuss their economic problems constantly (…) this crisis affects their psychology, their relationships, and their behaviour. They have become more reluctant to do new things, they fight with each other all the time, and they are much more tense and violent.

(Dimitris)

Some teachers noted that the cost-cutting austerity measures have fuelled a serious rise in suicides in Greece – a rise that prompts greater concern about the physical and mental health impacts of the socio-economic crisis.

We are very sad and anxious about our future (…) that is why the number of suicides has risen so much in the last few years.

(John)

What teachers describe here is a condition of existence without predictability or security, and without a future – a condition of existence which is full of fears and which affects people's material and psychological welfare. People in Greece, according to the teachers interviewed, feel a sense of constant change and its concomitant anxiety, insecurity and increasing precarity – what Lazarrato (2009) calls the 'micro-politics of little fears' (Ball, 2015, p. 11). According to Lazarrato (2009), our emotions are linked to the economy through our anxieties; in recent years, people in Greece have become fearful, and precarity has become their fundamental condition. A similar situation can be found in Italy where, at the centre of the country's crisis, we find the *Precariat* (Standing, 2011): a generation without a future or other alternatives, formed from this precariousness.

A crisis of of new beginnings, possibilities for a different future, and hope

To my question of whether Greece's socio-economic crisis has had any positive impact on Greek society, half of the teachers replied in the negative. For them the crisis hasn't brought anything good into our lives.

I haven't seen anything positive (...) I don't believe that there are any positive consequences (…) we live in a black cloud, and we strive every day to find solutions to our problems.

(Litsa)

Positive consequences from the crisis? For whom? Do you mean for the banks or for the Greek people? There are positive consequences for the banks but not for us; banks prosper at the expense of Greek people. The crisis is artificial, and the banks have managed to make a lot of profit from Greek people – and I'm not just saying that because I'm a communist!

(Aris)

Most of the consequences of the crisis are negative (…) there are very few positive.

(George)

The other half of the teachers replied that, notwithstanding the aforementioned difficulties, they have not given up hope and try to remain optimistic. They presented a different version of the crisis, one which is composed of new beginnings, possibilities for a different future, and which includes the existence of hope. These teachers believe that the crisis has brought an impetus for reflection and change, and that it constitutes an opportunity to redefine life goals, 'normality' and behaviour, as well as approaches to personal economics. Indeed, many teachers argued that this era of crisis could become a time of reform and opportunity for the whole country.

Whatever doesn't kill us makes us stronger. In that sense, the crisis has certainly had some positive consequences. It has made us redefine our priorities, our lives. I think it's a good thing that we have cut some expenses and we have stopped spending recklessly. We used to use our credit cards to spend money that we didn't have. We couldn't afford

to go on holiday, but we used to borrow money in order to do so. All of this has stopped (…) every cloud has a silver lining.

(Alexandros)

For me, the crisis is an opportunity, a great opportunity, that we need to make the most of. If we do not seize this opportunity and move on to something different, then we will lose everything (…) it is an opportunity to realise what our real needs are, and to gain something good from all this (...) we have built our lives on false needs (…) when you walk through the streets of Athens you can see many shops that have closed because of the crisis. I was wondering the other day, do we really need 30 shops selling women's clothing on one street? Do we really have the purchasing power to shop so much? I don't think we do, so maybe this will change. Maybe things will change for the better.

(George)

The crisis has helped us reorganise our homes and ourselves (…) the bad thing is that the crisis is so intense and has gone on for so long that we can't be sure about its future consequences.

(Amalia)

The responses of many teachers suggest that, regardless of the severe distress this crisis has caused, there is a possibility of something good emerging from the ruins of Greece. Although the majority of Greek people feel that there is no future in Greece, there are some who have, in a sense, been made more serious and mature by the difficulties of the crisis; they have learnt how to cut down on expenses and live with less, and they have started to hope for a different, better, and more secure future. These teachers' views are consistent with Christodoulou's (2010) view of crises as situations of difficulty that, despite causing chaos and constraints, also offer opportunities for criticism, reflection, new narratives and change.

Some teachers spoke about 'reorganising' themselves and their lives – rethinking who or, as Foucault would say, 'what' they are (Ball, 2015), and

how they act and relate to others. Some claimed, that even though they had not seen any positive changes from the crisis as yet, they were optimistic for the future.

> We try to be optimistic, we don't want to grumble all the time (…) I'm sure there are some positive consequences, but we will see them after the crisis has ended. At the moment we are in the middle of the crisis and we cannot appreciate them.

> (Anna)

Most encouragingly, some teachers believed that the crisis has prompted a new spirit of humanitarianism among Greek people, over and against the rise in violence and discrimination. Many philanthropical networks have been created all over Greece by people wanting to offer help. They described how, even though things were difficult for the majority of people in Greece, there were many who offered goods (used clothes, books etc), food, and heating oil to people in extreme need.

> This situation has had some positive effects (…) there are more people now who want to help people in need (…) before the crisis, we didn't see that very often.

> (Sofia)

> One good thing is the greater solidarity between Greek people (…) we don't throw out clothes or toys or food anymore, we try to give them to people in need (…) [the notion of] family is stronger now. Of course, this has happened because we need our family; it's not choice, it's necessity (…) we need our grandparents and parents to help us pay our bills and take care of our families.

> (Maria)

Some teachers remarked that, in the context of the socio-economic crisis and alongside its devastating effects, family ties have, in some cases, strengthened, and new forms of solidarity have emerged. As Zambeta and

Kolofousi (2014) argue, this crisis may have some creative effect towards the development of new solidarities and 'new spaces of hybrid social practices' (p. 69). When institutional solidarity is inadequate and traditional solidarity is eradicated, civil society supposedly emerges, introducing new social practices of solidarity based on social activism and volunteerism (ibid).

> Family ties are becoming stronger, people are growing closer and helping each other more, there is cooperation between parents (…) Parents respond more positively to the things we do at school. We had an art exhibition with things made from recyclable materials; in the past they wouldn't have cared at all, but now they show interest because they themselves are trying to find ways to control their over-consumption and avoid unnecessary spending.

(Nikos)

These views are in contrast to those of some of the teachers quoted above, many of whom talked about the destruction of the family and family ties, marriage, etc.

One very positive effect of the crisis, as one teacher suggested, is the job evaluation that has arisen in many sectors. Job evaluation is a new practice in Greece, and this teacher believed that, if done appropriately, it could bring only good results.

> People have cut unnecessary spending (...) there is job evaluation in many sectors now, which I think is the most positive thing of all. We need evaluation everywhere, in the public and in the private sector (...) things change; it will be difficult but, in the end, it will be for our own good.

(Dimitris)

This view comes in agreement with the findings of Georgas' (2016) study on Greek teachers' views on evaluation. Until now, considerable research had revealed teachers as resistant to state interventions into classroom practice through evaluation and assessment. Georgas' study has

identified a new trend among teachers: a dynamic force of teachers who were favourably disposed towards job evaluation and teacher assessment.

One teacher reported that the economic crisis had caused more people to switch from imported goods to Greek products, which are now in demand as never before. The crisis, according to this teacher, has made Greek people come together.

> Every cloud has a silver lining. Even this current cloud, the crisis, has a silver lining full of pure solidarity, volunteering, and hope for a better future (…) another good thing I see is a shift to Greek products, which is very positive (...) we are all trying to make our country stronger.

(Efie)

Teachers' answers suggest that, to some extent and for some people, a kind of a destructive creativity, a possibility of something good, has begun to emerge from the ruins of what was there before. As the teacher quoted above said, this crisis has indeed got 'a silver lining of solidarity, volunteering, and hope for a better future'. This image of the silver lining relates to the way Gamble (2009) considers the crisis: a major turning point which can lead to new institutions, new alignments, new policies, new initiatives and new ideologies. According to some teachers, there are both negative and positive possibilities coming from this multiple crisis: these possibilities may give rise to fear or may be received positively, as George (2010) argues, as an opening towards alternative scenarios or remedies, or as the opening of a policy window (Kingdon, 1984).

Today, in Greece, we live and work in a historic moment of intense and rapid social change, which offers many possibilities. Any historic moment offers opportunities for change (Levin, 2012); a crisis is a historic moment of contestation, 'in which the reordering of social arrangements becomes a possibility' (Jones, 2010, p. 793). Crises, apart from amplifying disorientation and increasing the sense of flux, force people into a bewildering array of new contexts that release creativity, energy and new possibilities (Bussey, 2012).

Many teachers argued that the current social and economic situation has revealed new tendencies in society. Teachers may use these new tendencies and possibilities to come together, break the limitations that have been set up for them, and design a new path for future education (Cole, 2012). However, the view of the crisis as an opportunity for improvement concerns only some of the teachers interviewed; for the rest, as was already discussed at the beginning of the analysis, the idea of hope seems alien in the current state of despair and exhaustion, and their views are negative and pessimistic.

4.2 The impact of the socio-economic crisis on Greek education

A material crisis with devastating implications for Greek schools

Since the socio-economic crisis broke out in Greece, and since the implementation of the policies of the memorandum, there have been drastic cuts in the public sector and the entire education system. In the view of the teachers interviewed, Greek schools have been hit hard by these cuts. It is important to understand that the crisis of education I am addressing here is not simply one of perspective and perception but also, and in some ways fundamentally, a material crisis of poverty, hunger, homelessness and psychological damage.

In particular, the crisis has had a devastating impact on school funding at all levels and in all sectors. The current education budget is insufficient and, as a result, there is not only a serious shortage of teaching materials, but also a lack of funding available for basic requirements such as heating educational facilities, maintaining libraries, or even hiring teachers. Under these circumstances, teachers reported, many schools have become scarcely able to function, and have consequently closed or merged with others resulting in a huge rise in the number of students per class.

> The education system – and Greek teachers in particular – have been affected by the crisis in the worst of ways (…) there have been massive cuts to the education budget; we now get one-fifteenth of the money we used to get before the crisis (…) schools can't function properly, and some of them can't even meet the basic requirements to operate (…) all

members of staff are in a permanent state of stress thanks to this situation.

(Nikos)

Arbitrariness, insecurity, gaps everywhere, no funds, no teaching materials (…) we buy our own markers, paper for the photocopying machine, pens and notebooks for our students (…) the children are the first victims of the crisis.

(Alexandros)

Implications for teachers in practical (health, income, employment) and moral (hopelessness, anxiety, belief, despair, instability) terms

Additionally, all the teachers interviewed declared that the economic crisis was having a dramatic impact on their daily lives. They expressed disappointment that they no longer felt able to provide their families with a decent quality of life. They reiterated the idea that things were getting worse and worse every day, and that it was becoming very hard for them to make ends meet; their salaries have been cut by a total of 40%, and they have very little to live on each month.

We face many economic difficulties, and sometimes it is very difficult for us to cover our everyday expenses; on the other hand, we try to help our students, many of whom are in even more difficult situations than we are.

(Nikos)

Teachers mentioned cutting down on everyday things that, until now, had been a part of their lives: luxuries such as summer holidays, trips by car, entertainment and many others. Some of the teachers described losing their house, others a family business; all of them felt that they had suffered a loss of quality of life.

In our profession, it was always like this: misery and low salaries (…) but now that our problems are even more serious, we are becoming more and more miserable, we cut down on everything.

(Amalia)

Since 2010, changes in regulation and management have led to rapid and extreme changes in teachers' working conditions. Appointments of new teachers have been frozen and many teachers have been forced out of work. Teachers described seeing an increase in workload and working hours, an increase in their obligations, and a huge rise in the sizes of the classes they teach, while their salaries took swingeing cuts.

Schools merge, classes merge, schools close, too much pressure is put on teachers (…) some teachers have to work in two or even three schools to make up for staff shortages, so they have to change schools during the day by bus or by car. This costs them a lot of money and, now that the salaries are very low, they sometimes can't afford to do this.

(John)

According to the teachers, the socio-economic crisis has caused them serious personal hardship and mental distress such as burnout. It has also impacted their physical health.

Every day, we have to deal with many things that have nothing to do with the teaching profession. As a result, we run out of energy; we often feel very tired and unable to do our jobs properly.

(Litsa)

What is more, some teachers noted that the endless bureaucracy of school administration and the innumerable wave of reforms and changes to school regulations seen in recent years posed a serious challenge. Curriculum and regulations change continually, and the reforms have been endless, unpredictable and uncontrollable.

The Ministry of Education has made some effort to deal with the situation, but their efforts have not been enough; more things need to be done. The biggest problem for me is that the instructions and the laws are changing all the time, and there is no stability. For example, last year we had a new law regarding students with learning difficulties. According to this law, for every student with serious learning difficulties, we could reduce the size of our class by three students. If, for example, I had a class of 27 students, and one had a serious learning difficulty, I could reduce the class size to 24. It was a very useful law, but then they changed it again. Now the class size is back to 27, no matter what.

(Maria)

The bureaucracy is so endless that we waste time every day replying to 50 emails, instead of spending our time discussing ways to improve our teaching with our colleagues (…) we have new reforms all the time – changes, changes – we are going crazy, and our students are going crazy too; every day we are asked to do something different.

(Kostas)

I believe that, when you really want to change something, you need to make that change and then wait quite a few years; then judge it, and take it back if you think that it is no good. You cannot make changes all the time without evaluating them. If you change the education system and its regulations all the time, the students feel insecure, and they become stressed because of the unpredictability of tomorrow.

(George)

In fact, teachers believe that the lack of stability and the constant changes are responsible for the unpredictability of tomorrow, and the anxiety and insecurity felt by the majority of schoolteachers, parents and students.

First of all, there is no policy for education. We change governments often, and each new government just wants to propose reforms and changes without having an overall plan behind them (...) there is no

organised framework for education (...) we have to do so many things that have nothing to do with the teaching profession. For example, a few days ago, they told us that we have to talk to students about obesity and eating disorders – but we are not experts. I am not a nutritionist or a psychologist – how can I discuss eating disorders with my students? Ok, I can give them my opinion, but they need an expert to help them understand these issues (...) I understand that we have to cut expenses but, by cutting so much from the education budget, we are destroying education itself (...) cutting expenses is good in principle, but they should be cut from places that need them cutting, not from education.

(George)

Teachers presume that there is no stable policy for education. In recent years, governments have changed frequently, and with them have changed the instructions for the operation of the schools. The reforms and changes are so frequent that they compound rather than solve the problems of the Greek education system, contributing to uncertainty, practical difficulties, insecurity and anxiety.

Moreover, many teachers reported that the economic crisis dominated their discussions at school. They claimed that conversations, not only during breaks but also in staff meetings, were monopolised by discussions about the economic problems that they face due to the crisis.

We have lost our smiles; when we are among colleagues, the only topic of discussion is our economic problems.

(Anna)

Furthermore, teachers pointed out that that their role could, at times, be very stressful, and they felt neglected by the state and relegated to positions of second-class citizens by those in authority, by parents and by the general public. Teachers felt that parents do not show enough trust in state education and are not appreciative of their work.

Parents should trust us and appreciate our work. If they don't appreciate our work how can a student appreciate us? If students feel that the 'frontistiria' are more important, how can they appreciate school?

(Amalia)

As Zambeta (2014) argues, the main reason that Greek families turn to 'frontistiria'[7] – private preparatory schools, designed especially for those students who plan on taking the national higher education entrance examinations (Traianou, 2013), but also for students who want to learn a foreign language or practice arts and other extra-curricular activities – is that they do not trust formal education to equip students with the crucial skills needed for university entrance examinations. According to the teachers, 'frontistiria' should be abolished. This suggestion comes despite the fact that many teachers made unemployed by the crisis have since found jobs in 'frontistiria' (Traianou, 2013).

Overall, the teachers interviewed consider the situation in Greece nowadays to be very complex, and most of them are extremely worried about their future – and about the future of Greece in general. They feel that they have no control over or understanding of the forces being brought to bear upon them, and they fear that the immediate future will be even tougher. They are afraid of losing their jobs, and they believe that they will need to manage their money wisely in order to avoid becoming penniless and homeless in the future. Teachers feel very under-rewarded, not least because of the severe cuts to their salaries, and they discussed a need for support from trained professionals, such as psychologists, as well as for moral rewards from society. They also proposed further training and teaching seminars.

All of these factors have led to a lack of work security and stability and a sense of the unpredictability of tomorrow, as well as increased levels of anxiety, insecurity, and precariousness. As a consequence of the current circumstances in many schools, some teachers have even begun to question their commitment to teaching.

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7 Most students in primary and secondary education in Greece attend a frontistirio (if their families can afford the significant fees). An even more expensive alternative is to hire private tutors to instruct students at home (usually a separate teacher for each subject).

Last year, two university students came to work as teaching assistants at our school. I asked them, 'Why do you want to become teachers? Can't you see how difficult the situation is in schools?' 'We want to become teachers because we love children,' they answered. Ok, I agree that you need to love children in order to be a good teacher, but your love is not enough. Since the crisis, the situation has become awful for us. The salaries are very low, you have to work at multiple schools, you are stressed because you don't know what you will be doing in a month's or even in a week's time.

(Alexandros)

Teachers argued that the lack of support and resources had made it impossible for them to teach effectively and to be a proper teacher; sometimes, they claimed, they even felt as though they were merely pretending to be teachers.

How can you teach in a classroom with so many students? You simply can't; you are pretending that you are a teacher, because you can't really be one.

(Aris)

Why don't they [the politicians] cut their salaries too? They make cuts to the education and health sectors. These sectors are the most important; they shouldn't cut money from education and health. We have many economic problems, and I wonder – how can we be expected to work and try for something better when we are paid such a small amount of money, and when we feel this constant insecurity about our future.

(Aris)

Teachers wondered why the government made cuts to the education and health sectors and not to other sectors, for example the church or even the political sector. Cuts to the education and health sectors have placed the burden on those sections of Greek society already troubled and oppressed.

For most of the teachers interviewed, there was an increasing sense of ontological insecurity – what Ball (2015, p. 11) notes as 'a loss of a sense of meaning in what they do and of what is important in what they do'.

Implications for students' lives and well-being

In addition to the issues mentioned above, the majority of the teachers argued that the socio-economic crisis and the implementation of the memorandum policies had affected students' lives and well-being in many ways. There had been, they declared, a whole range of collateral effects on students' behaviour and their conduct in the classroom.

> I see kids whose parents face many economic problems because of the crisis. I ask them to bring in materials such as notebooks or books and they are unable to do so; it took one student a month to be able to afford the notebooks he needed, and I ended up buying notebooks for another student, because I know his parents are in a wretched situation.

> (Litsa)

The rift in Greek society between the privileged rich and the working and middle classes is getting deeper and deeper. The latter groups face serious economic problems since the recession; of all sections of society, they have been most affected by the austerity measures, the high unemployment rates and the dramatic salary reductions. Today, the average working or middle-class family is not able to fulfil its traditional role in welfare provision, a fact that deeply demolishes social cohesion (Zambeta, 2014).

Teachers described how the frequent changes to the school curriculum and the inconsistencies in the teaching programme, mostly compounded by changes in government and ministers, have left students feeling insecure and uncertain.

> The recruitment of teaching staff is never fully complete at the beginning of the school year, and this causes great uncertainty among the students. Sometimes teaching positions remain empty for two or even three months and, as a result, students see different teachers every day

(…) Who will be there tomorrow? What will happen? (…) Another thing that makes students feel insecure is the inconsistency of the teaching programme and the curriculum. Even school policies are constantly changing. For example, in September, we were asked to tell all students [who had been off ill] to bring in a paper from the doctor's. Two weeks later, the ministry changed its mind and said, it's ok, we don't need this paper. Yesterday, they changed their mind again, and said that all students have to bring in a paper. The whole situation is insane, and this is a result of the economic crisis (…) they want this paper, but then they consider that some parents can't afford to pay for a visit to the doctor's. So, they take it back – but then the doctors complain, and they decide that they have to ask for it again (…) every time the government changes, the regulations change. All these changes affect students and their parents; they feel insecure and uncertain about their future.

(Nikos)

Teachers gave accounts of students suffering from personal anxiety, lack of confidence and pessimism, and an awareness that their future would be very difficult. They reported that older students frequently discussed the levels of unemployment among young people, and many were seriously considering the possibility of moving to another country.

Of course there have been many consequences which affect students' lives! The economic crisis has affected their behaviour, their mood (…) Unemployment is so high among young people that, when students finish their studies, they find they can't do anything here. They are forced to leave the country in order to find a job. If this were their choice, that would be ok, but it's not. I mean, they don't have any other option.

(Dimitris)

Furthermore, teachers feel that the younger generation has been ruined, and has become a lost generation that doesn't have much to dream about apart from a future of austerity and anxiety – a generation that can't really believe in anything concrete. Teachers noted that, for many students, their

only real hope was to leave Greece to go somewhere better.

> Many students contemplate leaving Greece when they finish school. It's not that they want to leave – nobody wants to leave such a dreamy place – but it's their only chance to find a job and live in better conditions (…) I said to my son the other day that his first priority should be to learn English; that's the only way he will be able to move to another country. I also told him that if he goes somewhere better than here, he should stay there and never come back. Can you imagine a mother saying something like that to her only child? No! But no matter how much it hurts I want him to be happy – and here in Greece, he won't be.

> (Maria)

> Students are very pessimistic because they don't see any future for themselves in Greece. We need to change that; we need positive thinking and possibilities.

> (Helen)

A few teachers commented that, lately, students have been much more aware of the situation in Greece; they worry about the future and they are increasingly interested in understanding what brought the country to this situation. They watch the news, they discuss the socio-economic crisis with their parents, their teachers and their classmates – a fact that teachers perceive as particularly positive and hopeful. If one good thing has come of this, the teachers declared, it is that students have become more mature and more aware of the situation and its difficulties. The drawback is that they are very worried and find it difficult to concentrate on their lessons or enjoy their childhood.

> First of all, they are aware of what is going on. They watch the news, they discuss politicians and the economic situation in our country, and they are very down to earth.

> (Kostas)

Teachers are observing, as they said, the erosion of Greek future; they cannot help but notice how many students worry about their future, because they do not see any indication of improvement in the near future. Even the younger students in primary education discuss the difficulties of both their families and their country. According to the teachers, the fact that even young students have become more involved in important issues that concern their lives is very hopeful. Teachers also made the point that their role was to educate their students from early childhood to become clear-thinking and enlightened citizens, able to think about and discuss the problems of their society and participate in decisions concerning them.

Some teachers pointed out that they were beginning to face many issues with their students in the classroom. According to them, students' behaviour has changed a great deal because of the socio-economic crisis. They described how, lately, students have become much more aggressive and restless, and have started to show signs of tension and stress.

> There is tension in all families and this tension is transferred to the students; parents are very frustrated and they get angry about things that previously wouldn't have mattered to them (…) sometimes they don't have the patience to explain to their children the problems that the crisis has caused them.

> (Nikos)

According to the teachers, the students in their classrooms are a reflection of their families' financial problems. They explained that students are losing a large part of their childhood through exposure to their parents' problems. As a result, they bring their family tensions and problems into the classroom, trying to let off steam; they neglect their schoolwork, and they disrespect their teachers.

> The first thing to mention is that most of the children are dealing with serious economic problems at home, and they bring these problems into the classroom. They try to let off steam in the classroom; they neglect their schoolwork, and they disrespect their teachers.

There are children whose parents are unemployed, you can see it. If you give them food, they eat it as though they haven't eaten anything since the night before; of course this affects their behaviour in the classroom (…) There is disdain for education. Students feel that, even if they try hard, nothing good will happen. They become restless, and they start to show disrespect to those around them.

(Kostas)

Several teachers noted that the behaviour of students' parents had also changed; parents are increasingly nervous, irritable, anxious and uncooperative with teachers.

Greek families face huge problems, and they certainly affect students' behaviour (…) One thing I notice a lot is that parents are more nervous, more irritable, and more anxious, and the majority of them do not cooperate with us.

(Elpida)

One teacher argued that he faced many issues with immigrant students who were in an even more difficult economic situation than Greek students.

During the crisis, I have faced many issues with immigrant students who are in economic difficulty. Imagine – there are families who left behind war in their own country and came to Greece for a better future, only to find the country in this situation. There are children who tell me that they can't study because they don't have electricity at home. Some families can't cover their basic needs. Immigrant students and their families struggle to deal with all the problems that the economic crisis has caused, and we struggle in the classroom to help them.

(Dimitris)

Another teacher suggested that students with learning difficulties have increased because of the crisis, and the reason for this rise may be the fact that students feel insecure and unhappy.

The economic challenges are the most difficult, but there are other challenges. There are many students with learning difficulties. I think this has to do with the way children are being raised, and with the fact that families today have so many economic problems. It has been scientifically proven that some difficulties, such as speech difficulties, are linked to nutrition and diet, or the use of a pacifier. Consider this: I have ten students in my classroom who need speech therapy (…) the number of learning difficulties has increased because of the crisis. Students feel insecure and unhappy, and maybe this is the reason for the rise.

(Amalia)

Teachers also reported observing many differences in the ways that students dressed and in the ways they acted when asked to pay for something. Many students, they said, were not able to participate in school activities because they could not afford to pay for tickets for sports, school excursions, visits to museums, or extra-curricular activities such as music. The school tries to help them by paying for them. Similarly, they mentioned that some students are unable to do their homework because they have no suitable study space at home; they have no computer and no access to either the Internet or to reference books.

Today we had a rehearsal for an event that we are preparing, and a student of mine came and told me that she would not be taking part in the event because her family couldn't afford to buy her the costume (…) many students can't afford to take part in tours or visits to museums, some can't even buy their notebooks and pens; we buy them for them (…) you frequently see depressed students who can no longer bear the situation at home.

(Amalia)

Some teachers stated that they had noticed problems with students' ability to work as a team. They attributed this to the fact that many students have been pushed into overflowing classrooms and forced to travel further to school. Overcrowding in classrooms (more than 25 students) is, they believe, making teamwork and cooperation very difficult for the students.

Students find it very difficult to work with each other (…) In a classroom with so many students, how can they work as a team?

(Helen)

Almost all the teachers declared that they had noticed big differences in their students' diets. Most students now bring food from home – a positive development, as most teachers pointed out, meaning they eat homemade food rather than buying crisps, chocolate or refreshments from the school canteen.

I have seen changes in students' diets (…) The students bring food from home rather than buy food from the school canteen (…) the sad thing is that some students haven't got anything to eat.

(George)

Unfortunately, they also commented that there were students who brought inadequate food with them or, in some cases, no food at all. They reported cases of students who went hungry at home, and relied on the school to provide them with breakfast and lunch.

To conclude, according to the teachers interviewed, the socio-economic crisis has had a severe and destructive impact on the access to free quality education for all, and on the quality of education. Moreover, just as in Italy (Innes, 2013) or Spain (Canadell, 2013), the crisis in Greece has contributed to a dramatic deterioration in the personal and professional well-being of thousands of teachers and students, and to a serious rise in educational inequalities. The aforementioned impact of the crisis on Greek education poses a serious threat to teachers, students and their families, and to the future of Greek society (Zambeta & Kolofousi, 2014).

4.3 The social and political problems behind the socio-economic crisis in Greece

Corruption in the Greek political system and in a large proportion of ordinary Greek citizens

Most of the teachers communicated feelings of shame, disappointment and discontentment with both the state and society. For them, the Greek socio-economic crisis is a failure of society as a moral and civil institution, which successive governments are primarily responsible for. In the view of most of the teachers, Greek politicians are corrupt – and indeed, in recent decades, many prominent political figures have been brought to justice on charges of corruption and fraud, mostly relating to the mal-administration of state funds. It is no coincidence that Greece is ranked as the most corrupt state within the European Union (Bratsis, 2003).

> Greek politicians should disappear from the face of the earth. They are the main problem (…) it's a shame we don't have another Plastiras[8].

> (Aris)

Furthermore, teachers admit that the culture of corruption is not limited to state and party officials; it also spreads to encompass municipal workers, doctors, tax inspectors, and a large proportion of ordinary Greek citizens. Although it was hoped that, after so many years of austerity, old mentalities would change and Greece would rid itself of its culture of deceit, rising poverty and runaway unemployment have meant that malfeasance and mistrust remain widespread.

> I think that our politicians bear the greatest responsibility for the Greek socio-economic crisis. By saying this, I'm not saying that we don't share any responsibility – of course, we share responsibility – but I think that politicians lead people by example (...) the politicians started the culture of tax evasion, and the people followed their example.

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8 Nikolaos Plastiras was a Greek general, politician and thrice-time Prime Minister of Greece. A distinguished soldier who was renowned for his personal bravery, he was known as 'The Black Rider' during the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922.

In the view of the teachers interviewed, the biggest problems with recent Greek governments have been nepotism, clientelism, and the absence of meritocracy. These, according to them, are the main mechanisms through which Greek governments take and hold on to power.

I would begin with the relationships that existed between politicians and voters; the problem starts there. To satisfy their voters, the politicians used to appoint them to jobs in the public sector; even if they didn't have the necessary qualifications (…) there was no evaluation, no inspection.

(Dimitris)

Clientelism and nepotism are enduring features of Greek society. Through these features, as Zambeta and Kolofousi (2014) state, the political system in Greece and its agents satisfy the interests of individual citizens in order to integrate them into their political strategy as electorate. This process has its origins in the 19th century Greek political system but, as the teachers indicated, it persists to the present day. It has undermined the development of a transparent public sphere in Greece, and put another brick in the 'crisis wall'.

Some teachers declared that governments formed from the parties of New Democracy and PASOK racked up enormous debts by wasting money in the public sector. These debts quickly became unmanageable, and their mishandling of the Greek economy led to a dramatic loss of the country's competitiveness. This ultimately caused the socio-economic crisis which came to a head in 2008.

I believe that this crisis is mainly the fault of our politicians. They brought us to this situation with their improper management and their corruption (…) and, of course, we ourselves have also been guilty of corruption.

(Amalia)

Global capitalism

According to some teachers, the socio-economic crisis was not an accident but the calculated result of global capitalism. In their view, the entire capitalist system is 'sick', and will be the downfall of many countries – with Greece being the first to fall, because it owes so much money that it will never be able to pay off its debt. One teacher asserted that Greek people have been placed in perpetual slavery to the banking cabal, and will never be free to live their lives without banks exploiting them.

> Do you think that the crisis is just an accident? Oh my god, what happened to us? No! It's not an accident; it's a calculated result! The crisis is global because the whole capitalist system is in crisis. Why? Because it is sick, it is a sick system (…) Greek people have become slaves to the banks; they owe so much money that they will never manage to get out of the crisis.

> (Alexandros)

This response is congruent with the conceptualisation of crisis as fundamental to capitalism and as an inherent part of the disciplinary processes of markets (De Angelis, 2007). The finance capital, as George (2010) argues, is the enemy of all: of working people, pensioners, trade unions, small businesses, environmentalists, public service employees and users. The finance capital is situated far from the concerns and activities of real people, and it damages their lives.

Foreign powers

Foreign powers are also behind the current situation in Greece, in the view of many teachers. They see Greek governments as subservient to the European Union, especially to Germany, and believe they have lost power over the country's economy. They also consider the current crisis to be a product of Germany's exploitation.

> The European Union – and especially Germany, who wants to exploit Greece – and, of course, our politicians, who are the worst.

> (Litsa)

This position is in agreement with the declinist thesis for nations, which postulates that nation states have lost power over their own economies and have become simple transmitters of global market discipline to the domestic market (Hoogvelt, 2001). De Angelis (2007), on the other hand, argues that nation states have not seen their power declining; they have been and still are active and influential in creating global market discipline. What has changed is the fact that 'the exercise of their many powers is now subject to their rearticulation into a process of global governance and the constitution of a global sovereignty that regards the rules of the global markets as the benchmark criteria for government intervention' (ibid, p. 113).

A general decline in the values, moral principles and traditions of the Greek people

Many teachers pointed out that it was not just the state of the Greek political system that led to the socio-economic crisis in Greece. No political system can develop in a vacuum; it is the entire social system that is responsible. Several teachers suggested that merely assigning blame to a particular sphere would not solve the problem, nor would accusing specific individuals or groups get them very far.

> We have lost our faith in God; we have lost our moral principles, our traditions, the importance of the meaning of our homeland, our values, our identity.
>
> (George)

> I think that the most important problem behind the crisis is the decline in our moral values. The institution of family has developed serious problems, and so has the education system (…) without moral values, a strong institution of family and a strong education system our society will never prosper.
>
> (Efie)

Teachers put forward the idea that a general decline in the values, moral principles and traditions of the Greek people laid at the root of the socio-

economic crisis. As noted in the first section of this chapter, a general decline of values is also one of the consequences of the socio-economic crisis. It seems, as the teachers noted, that the crisis has intensified and sharpened the already existing decline of values in Greek people.

A few teachers pointed out that one of the biggest underlying causes of the current socio-economic crisis in Greece was the unrestrained consumerism exhibited by a large proportion of Greek people. As Stavrakakis (2006) states, consumerism constitutes one of the most central aspects of social life in late modernity. We live in a postmodern world in which consumerism is a powerful symbol of capitalist society. In Greece consumerism has become central to the meaningful practice of people's everyday life.

> Everyone wanted to make money quickly. Who could resist? They were selling plots of land in order to buy shares on the stock market; then the bubble burst, people lost a lot of money (…) In the past, when we didn't have money, we didn't go on holiday. When we didn't have money, we didn't buy clothes or go out. That changed. We created a fake society, with fake needs and fake money. This fake money drowned us. People who had taken out loans to send their children to school lost their jobs, even their houses.

(Maria)

In these teachers' opinions, the Greek middle class, in particular, was enticed to consume imported (usually European-manufactured) goods and food. As a result, Greek manufacturing declined, unable to compete in either product price or quality. Retailing, once dominated by independent family businesses, was overtaken by large wholesale companies, many of which were European chains. As the availability of many goods increased and prices dropped, credit card use spiralled out of control and personal debts multiplied.

Hence, the teachers' views on the social and political problems behind the socio-economic crisis in Greece could be summed up as the following:

successive governments, nepotism, clientelism, the absence of meritocracy, the corruption of both the Greek political system and a large proportion of ordinary Greek citizens, the decline in the values, moral principles and traditions of Greek people, and, finally, global capitalism and the exploitation of Greece by foreign powers.

The fact that teachers do not assign blame to a particular sphere, do not accuse specific individuals or groups, but see in the crisis a complex reality with a large number of interacting components (agents, processes, etc) whose aggregate activity is non-linear, is very positive; it is another way of thinking, and one that might enable them to develop an in-depth understanding of this reality, acknowledge the problems behind it, and work towards overcoming them (Jörg, 2011). Moreover, another encouraging outcome can be taken from the teachers' responses: teachers do not only see themselves as victims of the crisis; they admit that they are also agents of it. Teachers as interactive agents may become more capable of creating new possibilities and initiating change.

4.4 Proposed responses to the social and political problems behind the crisis

A political change

In many teachers' opinions, a political change is needed in Greece. Greece needs fresh faces in politics to fight the problems that led the country into the current socio-economic crisis.

I don't know how we could respond to the problems that brought us to this situation. Maybe if we had elections and a new government that could bring real change.

(Litsa)

We try to do our best to survive. The point is, I don't know whether we can do anything. Ok, we can do something; we can collect food and clothes and give them to students and families in need, or we can open a new business and give jobs to jobless people (…) I think that the state should change – the government. Only with a different government

might we see something different, and then maybe we will manage to respond to the problems that lie behind this crisis.

<div align="right">(Kostas)</div>

As a matter of fact, in January 2015, two months after the interviews were conducted, the left-wing party SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) won the general election with the motto 'Hope is on the way'. They thus removed the two parties, PASOK and New Democracy, that had been in power for the last four decades. This political change gave many people hope for a different future.

Changes in the behaviour, values and mentality of Greek people

Aside from the political change, several teachers noted that solidarity, conscientiousness, community spirit and mutual support would help Greek people to address the problems that underlie the socio-economic crisis. According to them, Greek people have to change the ways they think; they should become more cooperative and more supportive, rather than thinking only about themselves.

I think that each of us must stand in solidarity with people who are suffering; we are all in a very difficult situation, but some are in a devastating situation, and we should be there for them (…) as far as the politics are concerned, even though people are disinterested, it may be the right time to rethink how we can all act together; we need a new form of collectivity so we can get out of this nightmare (…) for me, this crisis is artificial, it is not real, and it is apparent that some people want to earn money from the situation.

<div align="right">(John)</div>

We must respond to these problems as a whole community, collectively; we should feel that and behave as though we are not alone. We should stand up for the people who have problems; I may not have a problem today, but tomorrow I may be the one with the problem who

needs help (…) the state should try to inspire collectivity and solidarity in its people through education.

<div align="right">(George)</div>

As has already been mentioned, the outbreak of the crisis coupled with austerity measures and their explosive effects on levels of unemployment and poverty have deteriorated the already-weak institutional solidarity constructed in welfare state policies. At the same time, there has been an emergence of new forms of social solidarity, community spirit and mutual support that are based on social activism and volunteerism (Zambeta, 2014). Many teachers put forward the idea that these new forms of solidarity could help Greek society to overcome its embedded individualism, as well as the rest of the problems that were behind the socio-economic crisis.

In the view of one teacher, ethos will support Greek people in their attempts to respond to the underlying causes of the socio-economic crisis. Ethos means character, and it is the characteristic spirit of Greek culture. It is an appeal to individual authority or credibility, and it is used to describe the guiding beliefs or ideals that characterise a community, nation, or ideology. According to this teacher, ethos is the medicine for our sick society. This same teacher also argued that young people should stand up, leave their TVs and social media, and fight for a better future.

> I'm sure we can respond to these problems with ethos, culture, conscientiousness and hard work; ethos is the medicine our sick society needs (…) this crisis is mostly a moral crisis; that is why we have to ensure that the next generations do not make the same mistakes that we did; we have to ensure that young people will stand up, leave their TVs and their social media sites, and fight for a better future and a more democratic society.

<div align="right">(Efie)</div>

According to two teachers, if we want to respond to the social problems that lie behind the social crisis, hard and honest work is the answer. They

emphasised that, society can only be transformed by striving for an alternative and better future.

> I will make a wish, even though you don't change things with wishes (…) I wish for the Greek people to follow the exhortation of a very old teacher, Kriaras, a professor at the University of Thessaloniki, who recently passed away. He urged doctors and teachers to work more and be on strike less (…) we should also stop the private lessons, which pay in black money.

(Efie)

One teacher argued that, if we want a better future, we need to change our behaviour and our mentality. He claimed that people need to have more patience, greater presence of mind, and should learn to help one another and work as a team.

> It is very important to change our behaviour; we need to have patience, we need to change our mentality, we need solidarity. We became accustomed to easy money and to a life without sacrifices. This has to change (…) As a society, we should try to be calm, to help each other and to work as a team; only in this way can we respond to the problems that caused the crisis.

(Dimitris)

The view that Greek society is sick is now a common metaphor in both poetic and political discourse. This metaphor, however, as Perezous argues, was also common during the Pre-Classical and Classical Ages, as well as in later times of Greek antiquity (Stavrakakis, 2014). According to this metaphor, a sick society needs to see a doctor and take some medicine. According to the teachers interviewed, ethos, hard and honest work, and a change of behaviour and mentality could be the medicine that Greek society needs – not the harsh austerity measures imposed by the IMF.

Struggle and resistance against the policies of the recession

Moreover, even more important to the teachers is the fight for a better future. Greek people should stand up and fight for a more decent life. In the view of the teachers, each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and all of these small changes together can bring about the bigger change that Greece needs.

> Each of us can change little things in his life in order to improve the situation of our country. Take myself, for example – as the director of a school and a teacher, I should try to do my best for my school; I should try to help my students and their parents, and to solve the problems we face every day because of the crisis (…) Individually and together, we can change Greece.

> (Nikos)

> We have to resist, to organise protests; we should not grovel to foreign patrons.

> (Amalia)

These views are in line with something that Apple (2013) reminds us (educators, students, citizens) of in his book 'Can education change society?': social movements often emerge from moments of crisis. In moments like these, no place is too small, no person or policy too insignificant to be the site of change. Moreover, Apple demonstrates that both struggle and resistance can be present and active in schools, and can strengthen a school's role and participation in substantive social changes (2013, p. 163).

According to the teachers, we should not listen to the economists – at least, not to those who have the ear of the European Commission and the European Council of Ministers. Economists persist with austerity, despite widespread opposition (Jones, 2013), and as though they have not learnt anything from the many years of crisis (George, 2010). In Greece, reasonable doubts have been raised regarding the sustainability of public debt (Varoufakis, 2011; Tsakalotos 2012), but still nothing has changed in the implementation of austerity policies. Many teachers believe that austerity will not lift Greece out of the crisis. Instead, if we want an alternative future, we

need to change our behaviour and our mentality, and we need to resist, protest and fight against austerity measures.

I think that we have to work as a team; we have to get the situation in hand and vigorously oppose all who try to impose severe austerity measures on us.

(John)

Greek society and the Greek economy need not austerity but entrepreneurship and new and innovative ideas (Blyth, 2013). It is now more important than ever, as indeed the teachers stressed, for Greek people – especially Greek youth – to generate new and innovative ideas and to develop the skills needed to pursue their designs successfully.

We need critical thinking, for sure. We have to filter and analyse what we hear, what we believe and what we do not believe; we need to move out of our comfort zones and try to find new, innovative things to do; ok, it may be risky to start something new, but it is the only way out of this crisis. Entrepreneurship is the only solution, no matter how risky it may be. Besides, nothing is certain or safe nowadays; my salary has decreased by 50%.

(Maria)

Several teachers suggested that Greece might also need to renounce its eurozone membership in order to recover from the socio-economic crisis. They believe that Greece's eurozone membership was a terrible mistake and that, as a price of this membership, Greek people have been placed in perpetual slavery to the banking cabal, and will never again be free to live their lives without banks exploiting them.

Our politicians can respond to the problems we face, but only if they lead the country out of this memorandum – even if this means that we have to leave the eurozone. Otherwise, we cannot do much (…) Greece's eurozone membership was a mistake.

(Sofia)

The political change that took place in January 2015 was supposed to have signalled the beginning of the process of disengagement from the recession policies that the 'troika' had systematically imposed upon Greece and the Greek education system (Charamis & Kotsifakis, 2015; Symeonidis, 2015). Indeed, the new government withdrew several measures and practices adopted by memorandum governments in the context of the constitutional diversion.

Nevertheless, the implementation of harsh austerity policies and long-term cuts which has shaped the situation in Greece since 2008 has not started to reverse. This comes despite the resounding 'no' given by the majority of the Greek people (61%) to the bailout conditions proposed by the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank in the referendum that took place in Greece on the 5th of July 2015 (Themelis, 2015).

Not only have the harsh austerity policies not started to reverse but, in the days following the 'no' result, the SYRIZA-led government accepted a bailout package that contained larger pension cuts and greater tax increases than the one rejected by Greek voters in the referendum (Themelis, 2015). Austerity measures (and with them the dominant ideology of neo-liberalism) have thriven in the crisis mode and, although they have been rejected by the majority of the Greek people, in a move that stunned the eurozone and shook financial markets, they have remained prevalent as the only route to growth, and neo-liberalism continues to contain a vision of a society in which inequality is the natural order of things (Dreux, 2013; Jones, 2013).

4.5 The role of education in the reconstruction of Greek society

In many teachers' points of view, in the current historical, political and social era in which we live, education could surely play an important role in the reconstruction of Greek society, and many believe that it could certainly redress the problems behind the crisis. However, the way individual schools function, their management and financing, the content of the curriculum and the textbooks, as well as, the overall learning system and its objectives, need

to undergo serious change in order to meet the new challenges that have arisen in recent years.

Changes to the management, financing and function of schools

Specifically, as far as the ways in which schools function are concerned, teachers suggested that schools should have fewer students in the classrooms. They should also be open for fewer hours, especially in the warm months, and active and meaningful learning should replace rote learning.

We need bigger schools, more classrooms, and fewer students in each class. We would be able to work better with fewer students in the classroom.

(Helen)

Our teaching methods should aim to encourage critical thinking and cooperation, and we need to teach democratic values and fair practices.

(Litsa)

It is very important to the teachers that the national education system incorporate teaching methods which encourage the development of astute critical thinking skills, peer-to-peer cooperation, and which instill in students democratic values and the virtue of fair practice. In general, they believe that the learning system should become more flexible and adaptive to students' capabilities and interests, and that there should be vocational guidance and counselling for students.

The learning system should be more flexible (…) you cannot do the same things with everyone (…) some students are at different levels, and they have different interests, so we should have the flexibility to change our programme to accommodate different students.

(Alexandros)

The education system should bring out the potential in every student. Some students may be good at Greek [language] or Maths, others at Art or Physical Education; we should give them the chance to bloom (...) We

should try to support students in finding their talent and making it bloom; everyone has a talent for something, and we should value every kind of talent – not just the ones that relate to academic knowledge.

(George)

The aforementioned teachers' views about what needs to be done in Greek schools come in agreement with what Fielding and Moss call 'the common school and the school of diversity'. That is: schools committed to 'a recognition of singularity, a resistance to working with pre-defined categories and outcomes, support for the construction of identities and solidarities, and a desire to experiment in learning and other projects' (Ball, 2013, p. 29); schools committed to finding new ways of valuing diversity and building inspirational and reflective identities within a pedagogic community (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

Teachers also explained that the school year schedule should become more organised. If there were a fixed schedule from the beginning of the year, they reasoned, then both teachers and students would feel less uncertain and would find it easier to prepare their work. Instead, if the school schedule continues to change constantly during the school year, then teachers and students will continue to feel instability, anxiety and insecurity.

We need a fixed schedule; we need to be aware of what our school programme will be from June – not find out at the last minute. If we know it from the beginning, we can prepare our work and our lesson plans. This year, I only found out which school I would be working at, what level of students I would be teaching, etc, a few days before the beginning of the school year. I couldn't prepare anything.

(Anna)

A few teachers posited that an increase in the government's annual education budget was needed. The Greek education system, they explained, needed better buildings and libraries, better books, new technology and equipment, and more teaching staff.

The government's annual budget for education needs to be increased. It has been reduced so much; we need more schools, more resources and more teachers.

(Kostas)

The state should give more money to the education sector. I don't think that this will happen anytime soon, even though some attempts are being made; maybe because of the upcoming elections[9].

(Sofia)

Last year the Ministry of Education decided to abolish some specialisations at the Technical Professional/Vocational Lyceum. They said that they [the specialisations] were dead-end subjects. In my opinion, if something is not working properly, you should not abolish it but try to improve it. These abolitions happen all the time, because of the repeated cuts to the annual budget. It has to change.

(George)

Public education expenditure in Greece has always been particularly low compared to other EU countries (between 3-3.6% of GDP in the last two decades). In the last few years, spending on education has been reduced even more, placing Greece third from bottom in education spending in the European Union (Zambeta & Kolofousi, 2014). The many cuts to public education funding, according to the teachers, have caused serious problems and gravely hindered the ability of the Greek education system to function. The funding deficit has even led to the abolition of some specialisations at the Technical Professional/Vocational Lyceum and the teachers believe that this, along with many other problems, needs to be rectified.

Furthermore, teachers recommended that students should have more free time to play, get bored and become creative. For this to happen, they should not spend all their time at school, at 'frontistiria' (schools offering a

9 These interviews were conducted in October 2014. The 'upcoming elections' that the teacher was referring to were scheduled for January 2015.

form of private group tuition which are prevalent in Greece), or at language schools.

> The school system should be changed at all levels, from nursery school to secondary school (…) For example: in the all-day schools, where students stay till 16:15 in the afternoon, they should do their homework at school. Then, when they go back home, they can rest and do other activities, like play or chat with their parents. You can't have students staying at school till 16:15, then doing homework, going to 'frontistiria', language schools etc. Kids need free time to play and get bored.

> (Nikos)

> The syllabus must change; there is no time to cover everything in it, and it is very stressful for us and for our students. It is too demanding, and this does not help students develop. Students need quality time with their family and friends, not just knowledge. If they spend all their time at school and then at the 'frontistiria', they lose the best years of their lives running around for no reason (…) The 'frontistiria' should be abolished; they cause families unnecessary expense, and they steal precious time from their students (…) In addition, I think that it is very important for teachers to attend training seminars.

> (Amalia)

While students lose their precious free time to the 'frontistiria', their families lose large amounts of money. Private spending in the sector of shadow education ('frontistiria', lessons in foreign languages, art education and extra-curricular activities) is unusually high in Greece (3.3% of the average household budget) compared to in other EU countries (Zambeta, 2014). This 'shadow market' absorbs more than a billion euros yearly, and corresponds to 0.5% of Greece's 2010 GDP (Educational Policy Development Centre 2011, p. 473), at a cost to not only Greek families but also the Greek economy. According to the teachers, this happens because of the deficits in public spending on education and the problems that these deficits have caused.

Teachers also suggested that the education system should promote hard work, while at the same time allocating more time for teachers and students to discuss school issues. They also recommended letting students take the initiative more, and further encouraging teamwork and promoting different values.

Furthermore, they explained, the changes in the Greek education system should be designed by people who are competent and understand the value of education – not by bureaucrats – and by people who are experts in Greek education and Greek society. Copying programmes from abroad, from countries that have nothing to do with Greece, should stop.

> They copy programmes from abroad, from countries that have nothing to do with Greece; different societies, different people, and different needs (…) new people should come forward; people who are experts in Greek education. These people need to stay in their positions for longer, not change after just half a year as they do now. We need stability and long-term strategies.

(John)

In teachers' opinions, Greece needs a fundamental shift from a system of education driven by economic and other necessities, and designed by people who are not experts in education, to one which gives priority to social and political necessities. This might also result in society turning away from scientism and economism and towards the recognition that education is, above all, a political and democratic issue (Ball, 2013).

Changes in the content of the curriculum and textbooks

As far as the curriculum and the textbooks are concerned, teachers argued that, although their content is better now than in previous years, they are still outdated, and are in need of review and change[10]. According to the teachers, the curriculum should become more independent from state control,

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10 The textbooks in question were published in 2006-2007.

and should aim to create free and well-rounded men and women, who will go on to become responsible citizens.

> I believe that the new books are much better than the old ones, but they are still a bit outdated (...) they should be updated; they need to be adapted to fit the current needs of Greek society.

> (Maria)

Teachers raised concerns that the textbooks, as well as the curriculum, did not include any content relating to contemporary issues; topics which could help students in their understanding of the economic crisis or the crisis of the Greek family today. Instead, they explained, the current books only dealt with issues of general knowledge. In the view of many teachers, the curriculum and the textbooks needed to be adapted to fit the new-found needs of Greek society and to give a new perspective – perhaps a sense of hope that Greece will overcome its problems.

> The textbooks and the curriculum did not foresee the economic crisis or the crises of Greek families (...) I think they should include texts about the current situation in Greece and – why not? – present a new perspective, a new sense of hope.

> (John)

Of course, we cannot assume that the content of the curriculum and the textbooks is the same as the content of the lesson (Brindle, 1996). Even in Greece, where the education system is highly centralised, teachers could be active in responding to the content of the curriculum and textbooks (McCulloch, Helsby & Knight, 2000) and change it in ways that comply with their thoughts and aims.

Changes to schools' learning systems and objectives

Moreover, teachers argued that the Greek education system should move away from the neo-liberal paradigm as soon as possible.

> Schools should be changed radically if we want them to act as a remedy for the crisis, but I don't know which government will do that, I don't

know which government will dare to turn its back on the neo-liberal paradigm.

<div align="right">(John)</div>

Although, as mentioned in the literature review, the implementation of neo-liberal education policies has been opposed and delayed in Greece, politicians in recent years, in an attempt to 'treat' the socio-economic crisis, have passed emergency measures and educational reforms that accelerate the rate of neo-liberal change (Traianou, 2013). This, according to some teachers, has to change if we want to reconstruct Greek society and Greek political life.

According to many teachers, the fundamental values and objectives of education, and the purpose of the school system overall, constitute the most important elements of the education sector – and those which, if fostered, could form a remedy to the crisis. Particularly, almost all the teachers agreed that it was imperative to consider the purpose of education, and change it in order to fit Greece's real social needs and economic problems.

In the view of the teachers interviewed, the purpose of education should be versatile. They believe that education should be about knowledge, language, identity, culture, socialisation and ethos but, mostly, that it should promote social development, cultivate respect, and teach students to be responsible and active citizens who participate in the wider social context, and are sensitive to environmental issues. It should produce perceptive individuals who can think, discover, hope and strive for a better future.

> School is a miniature society; it is like a government. Each classroom is a community, and the students have to comply with the norms of that society (…) I think that the most crucial purpose of education is to cultivate respect; respect for ourselves, as well as respect for others: our neighbours, our friends, our society in general (…) Students spend more time with their classmates and teachers than with their parents, so I think that one of the most serious responsibilities of the school is to teach

students to be good citizens, to be interested in common welfare, and to respect each other.

(Maria)

Most of the teachers suggested that the education system should encourage equality and promote human rights and democratic values. They also believed that it should teach students respect for others and themselves, solidarity, conciliation and peace, and promote an understanding of identity and diversity.

The purpose of education is clearly to educate and nurture students, to teach them our national and cultural identity, to make them responsible and active citizens who can be decisive and express an opinion without fear, who respect others, show dignity and tolerance towards diversity (…) our schools have got many immigrant students, and we have to teach our students to live peacefully with them.

(Nikos)

Sterile knowledge will not change the world. We need informed individuals who think, who discover, who hope and who strive for a better future. That should be the purpose of education.

(Aris)

What teachers say here is that schools should become sites of, as Fielding and Moss (2011) call it, 'prefigurative practice'. Through their processes, the experiences they offer, and their expectations, schools should aim to prefigure, in microcosm, an equal, just and fulfilling society. Schools should become responsible for ensuring that they are sites of anti-racist, -sexist, -homophobic and -transphobic practice, and that they tackle bullying of all kinds and do not tolerate practices that exclude students with disabilities (Ball, 2013, pp. 31-32).

Teachers continued by suggesting that Greek education should aim to broaden students' horizons, help them build well-rounded personalities and

characters, and learn how to behave. For most of the teachers interviewed, knowledge should come second after personality and character.

> We need to start by building students' characters, and then move on to knowledge; our students first need to learn how to behave, how to cooperate with other students. Then they can learn History, languages and Maths.

> (Efie)

Some teachers expressed the view that, in order to fit Greece's real social needs and economic problems, the main objectives of the Greek education system needed to become more humanistic. The system should also aim to provide equal opportunities for all.

> Of course the system should change; we must change its objectives and aims. The objectives of the Greek education system should become humanistic, and they should include developing children's self-esteem and their abilities to set and achieve appropriate goals, and their development towards their full potential.

> (Dimitris)

Teachers' vision of a new education system for Greece involves a reworking of the relationship between education and opportunity, equity, and well-being (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). This vision could be enacted from the simple basic argument that education policy and the arrangements of schooling should be aimed at ensuring all children remain in the system, learning, flourishing and growing in self-esteem and confidence for as long as possible (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013).

Furthermore, teachers stated that the purpose of education in the current era of crisis should be to equip students with the basic principles and skills that they need to survive, flourish, and cope with the rapid social changes. Education should teach students how to learn, how to love and seek knowledge, how to behave, cooperate, and debate and, above all, how to be strong and prepared for any difficulties they may face in their life in the future.

The purpose of education is to transfer to students the basic principles and skills that a person needs in order to survive and flourish.

(Sofia)

The purpose of education should be to make students happy, to teach them to pursue happiness, to be calm, to listen to their hearts and to follow their desires, their passions, their dreams.

(Amalia)

Several teachers emphasised the importance of teaching students how to learn, how to express themselves, their emotions, how to manage their time, how to take care of their bodies, and how to behave. They also highlighted the need to teach them to believe in their abilities, to fight for a better future, and to continue even if they fail.

We have to teach students to listen to their emotions and teach them how to express them – this is very important. Academic knowledge is important too, but it comes second (…) social behaviour is, I think, key (…) Whenever I have the chance, I try to discuss different social issues with my students.

(John)

In addition, what teachers believe that Greece needs today is an education system of hope, happiness, optimism and social renewal. One of the critical aims of the Greek education system should be the provision of hope; a hope that is not naïve or based on unrealistic goals, but rooted in an understanding of what is possible (Sawyer et al, 2007; Inglis, 2004).

Optimism, self-confidence, to believe in their abilities, to continue even if they fail; to fight for a better future, to learn how to learn.

(Litsa)

We should try to inspire optimism for the future, positive thinking and hope.

(Helen)

It is also very important for students to learn how to be good listeners and how to communicate with one another. This is something that, as Noddings (2003) maintains, creates and sustains democracy and hope, and is essential for ensuring a socially just education for all.

> How to learn, how to become good listeners, how to work in teams, to take the initiative, to manage their time properly.

(Anna)

Teachers argued that their role was very important in the transformation of the Greek education system, and considered that the quality of their teaching had a great impact on their students. Therefore, as they suggested, they should start by changing and improving themselves with training seminars, after which, the other changes would follow. As they stated, good teachers can transform a bad education system; hence, the government should focus its resources and efforts on improving teachers. The government should also seriously reconsider the criteria involved in becoming a teacher. A degree should not be the only criterion.

> If a teacher works in the best way they can, then they can transform a bad education system (…) of course, many things have to change – but first we should start with ourselves and see what WE can do to improve the situation.

(Amalia)

The aforementioned views take us back to chapter two and to Evers and Kneyber's 'flip the system' pyramid (2016), which places teachers at the steering wheel of educational systems, at the core. The role of the teacher is very important, and continuous professional development should surely be one of the aims of the Greek education system.

Finally, teachers argued that education could play an important role in addressing some of the problems behind the crisis, and in addressing some of the devastating consequences of the socio-economic crisis in Greece. They

added, however, that education could not do everything on its own; the state should help.

> Schools cannot do everything alone, even if teachers have the best intentions; the state should help them.

<div align="right">(Maria)</div>

Even if education clearly has a role to play in equipping future generations with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to contribute to a more sustainable future (Barth, 2015), it cannot solve all of society's problems on its own. Greek society should also be willing to bear its burdens and respond to its social problems (Bell, 2013; Noddings, 2005).

4.6 The strengths in the Greek education system

If we want to create a system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances, it would make sense if, rather than starting from scratch, we were to design thoughtful and radical reforms which build on the strengths of the present education system (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Almost all the teachers reckoned that there were strengths inherent in the present education system in Greece. Only one teacher argued that there were no positive elements of the education system and that, no matter how hard she tried, she could not see a light at the end of the tunnel.

> For me, unfortunately, there are no strengths in our education system (...) there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

<div align="right">(Anna)</div>

The character of the Greek education system and its programmes

An important strength of the Greek education system, according to one teacher, is its free and public character; Greece has public-financed primary, secondary, and higher education, which is available free to all residents. State-run schools and universities do not charge tuition fees, and textbooks are provided free-of-charge to all students. The fact that education in Greece

is compulsory for all children between the ages of six and fifteen is also of great significance in the view of the same teacher.

> Of course there are strengths in the Greek education system, and these strengths might be the only ones that are holding our society in cohesion. First of all, its public nature; everyone has access to education at all levels (…) it is also compulsory for nine years, which is very important; maybe it should be extended to twelve years.

> (John)

In the opinions of two teachers, attempts are being made within the educational system to implement programmes to strengthen both teachers and the system in general, and prepare it to face the new challenges of today. According to them, one method in particular – the experiential communication method, or project method of teaching – could be considered one of the most important strengths of the Greek education system, as it promotes cooperation and teamwork between students.

> In our education system there are many seminars and other opportunities for teacher training, and most of them are free (…) the experiential communication method, the project method, is one of the strengths of the Greek education system; it promotes cooperation and teamwork between students, which are what we need more of today.

> (Kostas)

According to one teacher, the fact that teachers in Greece have become subject to a new system of evaluation and assessment, after nearly two decades of freedom from evaluation, is a positive development, and can be considered a new strength of the Greek education system. This teacher stipulated, however, that the aim of this evaluation and assessment system should be to train teachers and help them improve their work, not to punish them for their mistakes by cutting their salaries.

> I agree with the new evaluation and assessment system – it was about time! I think that it should have been implemented many years ago. If

they had put it in effect – let's say, two decades ago – then we would have accepted it more readily, and we wouldn't have viewed it as a threat. I believe that the evaluation system should help teachers improve their work, not punish them for their mistakes; that should be its aim.

(Maria)

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, evaluation is seen by some teachers as something positive and necessary for the improvement of the Greek education system. For the teacher quoted above, the previous complete lack of teacher assessment or school evaluation was inexcusable. However, while this teacher agreed with the general concept of evaluation, she did not agree with this particular evaluation, introduced under the existing conditions. For her, evaluation should have an aim different from the one it has now been given; evaluation should be transparent and it should not strengthen teachers' fears of redundancies. This view comes in total agreement with the results of Georgas' study (2016) on teachers' views on evaluation.

The quality of Greek students

One of the most important strengths of the Greek education system, in the view of another teacher, is the high quality of its students. Greek students have great minds, and could be the catalysts needed to create a better future.

There are students with great minds who can go on and fight for a better future (...) it is no coincidence that Greek students who study abroad end up working and teaching at the best universities around the world (…) we have great minds, but we need to keep them here in Greece, in our universities.

(John)

This teacher highlighted one of the most serious effects of the socio-economic crisis in Greece: the brain drain. Due to poor employment opportunities and the strong austerity measures taken by Greek governments, which have depressed the level of living standards, there has been a serious

increase in the number of graduates leaving Greece for a better future in another country. Holezas and Tsakloglou (2008) estimate that the emigration of graduates includes nearly all the scientific fields, while more than 3,000 Greeks work as university professors and about 5,000 as professors or researchers in universities of EU countries. Labrianidis' survey (2011), in which 2,734 Greek graduates participated, showed that, among the young people who have studied and worked abroad, only 15.9% returned to Greece, while 84% preferred to stay out of their country. Without a solution to the socio-economic crisis, this brain drain could accelerate and make it even harder for the country, having lost its 'great minds', to recover from years of recession.

The quality of the teaching staff

What constitutes, however, the most significant strength of the Greek education system, in the view of the teachers, is the teaching staff itself. Greek teachers are generally very well-educated, and have a good knowledge of their respective subjects; they are conscientious, careful, thoughtful and decent people, who try to do the right thing, despite being poorly paid.

There are certainly some good elements in our education system; the teaching staff is one of them. There are many teachers who are willing to spend extra time with their students, just to make sure they're learning (…) teachers are so important; they are the ones who will make the most significant changes, not the programmes or the curriculum. Without good teachers, nothing can be done.

(Dimitris)

There are many conscientious teachers who hope for a better future and try hard every day to create it. There is always hope; hope dies last.

(Helen)

There are many teachers who work with pride and keep the educational process at a sufficiently high level (…) teachers do much more than people believe, even though their salaries are so low. But teachers

cannot do everything on their own; they need more support from the state.

(John)

Teachers remarked that, although highly-educated and strong-willed, they needed support from the state; they cannot change the education system on their own. What is more important for them, is for the state to become meritocratic; great minds should rise to the top, not the opposite.

I think that the teaching staff in our education system is very good; most of the teachers are highly-educated, with master's degrees, PhDs, or two bachelor's. All teachers, and especially primary school teachers, continue to train and attend seminars (…) I have had experience of working abroad, and I would say that Greek teachers are very well-trained and flexible to change. I think that we have a very rich collection of teachers, and that the Ministry of Education should listen to them and try to work with them to improve the education system. I also believe that we have brilliant minds in the wrong positions; the ministry should let the bright minds rise to the top; the system should, at long last, become meritocratic.

(Nikos)

As already mentioned, modern Greek reality has been carved out by clientelism, nepotism and the lack of meritocracy. The education system, as a miniature of society as a whole (Zambeta, 2014), also displays these characteristics. According to the teachers, these features must be abolished if we want to create a better and more democratic system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances.

According to some teachers, solidarity, altruism, personal initiative, pride and hope are some of the values that characterise Greek teachers and Greek society in general. These teachers believe that the above values could help in the transformation of Greek education and the wider society.

There is solidarity and hope; these can help us make changes and create a better system and then a better society.

(Litsa)

These views are in total contrast with the views of some of the teachers mentioned at the beginning of the analysis; several teachers described how the crisis had led to an erosion of solidarity and hope, the end of pride, and had given rise to hopelessness and helplessness. Clearly, there are two different groups of respondents. The first group saw an erosion of values caused by the crisis and could not envisage how these values could be recovered and drawn upon for the transformation of education and the wider society; the second group saw hope as still alive behind the problems, and these might be the individuals who call for hope to be drawn upon.

The aforementioned values, and especially *philotimo,* or 'love of honour', are considered by a few teachers to be among the most important strengths of the Greek education system. Philotimo is regarded as the highest of all Greek virtues. It is mostly about doing the right thing, about personal pride, respect, courage, generosity, dignity, loyalty, a sense of duty, and a willingness to make sacrifices without expecting anything in return (Philotimo Foundation, 2014). According to several teachers, their colleagues show generosity and make sacrifices without expecting anything in return. This spirit of generosity and sacrifice, combined with honour and pride, is a very important element, which could become the springboard for a transformation of the Greek education system – and of Greek society as a whole.

The Greek philotimo is one of the strengths of our system. Many teachers have philotimo – that is, pride and honour – and we can build on this element and move on to create a better education system and a better society.

(George)

The only good I see – and I am not referring to the majority of the teachers – is the philotimo of some teachers. They pull their weight, they struggle, and they try to do their best without expecting anything in

126

return. These teachers should be the catalyst for a better and different education system that would help transform society.

(Amalia)

According to the teachers, pride, personal initiative, altruism and even philotimo are not enough to transform the education system in Greece and subsequently the Greek society. What the education system and the society in Greece need is teamwork, cooperation and a proper sense of 'democratic fellowship' (Fielding & Moss, 2011). In the view of the teachers, only through teamwork, unity, collaboration and democracy will Greek society manage to overcome its individualism, separation and division, address the serious inequalities that exist in it, dream for a better future for all, and work to realise it. Greek people should come together and fight for a common goal.

However, apart from the conscientious teachers who hope for a better future and try hard every day to create it, there are those teachers 'who don't care'. These teachers are perhaps those who did not really want to become teachers, but chose to follow that path because the entry requirements for admission to the pedagogical universities were more feasible for them[11]. By choosing this career, they could at least secure a permanent post, while enjoying the benefits of being employed by the state.

> There are teachers that try hard to change things for the better in the education system, but there are, of course, some teachers who don't care. They only care about having a permanent job with a permanent salary, and they don't make any effort to build a better education system or a better society. I understand them; when they make just 800 euros and have to work in the afternoons to provide their families with the basic necessities, then they can't care (…) The state should recognise

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11 In Greece, the criterion for university admission is how well students do in a series of university admission exams called the Panhellenic National Examinations. When Greek students apply to university, they submit a ranked list of university departments they would like to be admitted to; their admission depends on their grades in the admission exams.

the importance of our profession and give us more money; we need to feel more secure, we need to feel that they appreciate us.

(Maria)

Of course, due to the crisis, the security that teachers used to feel and the benefits that they used to enjoy have vanished. According to the OECD (2013, p. 3), since 2010, several reductions in benefits and allowances have diminished teachers' salaries. In addition, Greek teachers have seen their net salaries shrink due to the creation of a solidarity tax, which increased the level of taxation. Apart from the aforementioned, 2,000 state teachers were amongst the 15,000 public servants discharged in 2013 (Associated Press in Athens, 2013), an act that led to many teachers becoming unsatisfied with their jobs, and caused many to lose their interest in and eagerness for building a better education system or a better society.

To sum up, according to the teachers, the Greek education system has got a great many strengths, including a number of programmes and seminars, its free and public character and, most importantly, the quality of its students and its teaching staff. As Tyack and Cuban (1995) state, schooling is being recreating all the time, but not inevitably in ways imagined in macro planning. Good teachers recreate the world every day for the students in their classrooms. Therefore, it may be possible to transform the education system in Greece, using its aforementioned strengths as a basis, and harnessing and strengthening the determined and reliable efforts of its teachers.

It is a positive and optimistic sign for the Greek education system and society in general that some teachers, despite being faced daily with the difficulties of resource shortages, 'troublesome' students, increased workloads and diminished salaries, can still maintain a sense of hope, and see that the education system in Greece has got many strengths. If hope is able to replace naïve and unattainable 'wishful thinking' and the all-too-common negative perceptions of a large proportion of teachers, it may prove to be a positive resource and a crucial asset to teachers in these difficult times (Goleman, 1998; Rotry, 1999; te Riele, 2009). If Greek teachers, rather than admitting defeat in the face of such difficult conditions, manage instead to follow a

pedagogy of hope, grounded in an analysis of these conditions, then they will become able to engage with the possibilities of change (Halpin, 2003), and learn to work towards a better future based on pragmatic appraisal of the current conditions (Shade, 2006). The pedagogy of hope is not about putting on rose-tinted glasses and ignoring difficulties; it is about seeing those difficulties as a starting point rather than a concluding one (te Riele, 2009).

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter, I attempt to discuss several other aspects of the analysis undertaken in chapter four, and to explore some of the possibilities that might emerge from the different version of education articulated, more or less clearly, in the data. The chapter is organised into two sections. In section one, I discuss the findings, relating them to the relevant studies reviewed in chapter two and the methodology of the study. In section two, based on the second narrative of the crisis seen in the teachers' responses – the one which is composed of new beginnings, the existence of hope, and possibilities for a different future – and on a review of the literature, I attempt to re-imagine Greek education. Using the teachers' views as a basis, I outline a different kind of pedagogy, with an emphasis on humanitarianism, care of the self and others, social awareness, critical citizenship etc.

5.1 Findings with regard to the relevant studies, the literature review and the methodology

Regarding the consequences of the socio-economic crisis on Greek society and Greek education, the findings of my study are congruent with the findings of much of the relevant research and literature on the Greek socio-economic crisis. Thus, I could say that my research extends knowledge by reinforcing current thinking and that which is already known. There are, however, some aspects of my study findings which are new, in relation to the findings of previous relevant research: the conceptualisation of the Greek socio-economic crisis as an opportunity and impetus for reflection and change, and the sense of hope that some teachers seem to maintain despite the difficulties they face. In Nika's (2014) study on the global crisis and its effects on education in Greece, for example, the picture that emerges from a review of the findings is that teachers have lost hope in a better future for Greece.

In contrast, what I am suggesting, and deliberately highlighting here is a conceptualisation of the crisis as an opportunity for change that recognises in teachers the existence of a sense of hope. My conceptualisation of the crisis, as well as the fact that my approach was built on a presumption of hope, obviously had an impact on the research process: they informed my research questions, the questions asked in the interviews, and the way I posed these questions.

My questions, and the way I posed them, were intended to facilitate teachers' answers. By this, I do not mean that the teachers' replies did not express their positions; rather, their positions may not have been expressed had I not formed the proper questions. I was not seeking to elicit the truth of their experience in any straightforward sense but to give them the opportunity to speak about their experience and their sense, where they had one, of something beyond that experience, something different, positive, and hopeful. For example, in my attempt to find out teachers' perceptions of the consequences of the crisis for Greek society, I started with the general question: *What are the consequences of the socio-economic crisis?* Most of the teachers replied with consequences which, afterwards, they described as being negative. Only after I asked them whether there were any positive consequences did some of the teachers reply in the affirmative, and only then did they start to describe some of these positive implications of the crisis. If I had not asked this question, it is possible that they would have mentioned only the negative consequences of the crisis.

My choice, as explained above, was to take up a standpoint of hope in my enquiry and, through this, to look for 'ways out' of the crisis by giving voices to teachers. This, combined with my conscious subjectivity (Harding, 2004), may cause epistemological predicaments and come under attack from some quarters. Although standpoint theory is proposed as an epistemology that, by linking the subjectivity of the knowledge-producers to the knowledge produced, overcomes issues such as the ethical problem and the impact of speaking for others, the epistemic privilege of 'subjugated knowledges' has

been discredited as being able to provide only limited knowledge (Collins, 1991). Nonetheless, I agree with Stanley and Wise (1993), who counter-argue that studies informed by standpoint epistemologies should not be evaluated in terms of their authenticity or relativism, but rather in terms of their ability to produce knowledge specific and local to the researcher (Wickramasinghe, 2010).

Another explanation as to why my research study identifies the aforementioned conceptualisation of the crisis and the existence of hope in teachers' responses may also have to do with the method I selected in order to explore teachers' world views. Goodson (2000) argues that the way we study teachers indicates the value we place on them. In my view, it is crucial to give teachers space to think, discuss and share their experiences and make their responses in a way that allows them to amplify and expand upon their answers. That is why, unlike the many other research studies in this area, which used questionnaires for data collection, I chose to conduct individual semi-structured interviews with a small number of teachers, and specifically formulated open questions. This method gave me the opportunity to instigate in-depth conversations and approach teachers in an open way, which probably contributed to the aforementioned differences between my findings and the findings of other research studies.

Although the primary concern of my study was to focus on a conceptual rather than a categorical analysis, I attempted to consider the possible roles that gender, age and years of experience could play in affecting teachers' approaches and understanding of the crisis. From reading the teachers' responses, it might be claimed that the women tended to be more optimistic and hopeful than the men; however, the patterns of variation that emerge are of little significance. If we want to take this possible difference into account then another study would be needed, with different aims and different research questions, focusing on the role that a teacher's gender plays in their interpretations and experiences of the crisis.

What struck me about the teachers' responses was the fact that the younger teachers from my sample tended to be more pessimistic than the

older teachers. The younger teachers, who are also the ones with the least experience, did not see any positive consequences of the socio-economic crisis; they spoke at great length about their students' problems, and especially about their having no future in the country. Most of the time, they share these same problems with their students; younger teachers see no future for themselves in Greece, and are very disappointed and anxious. Younger teachers' pessimism contrasts with the idea that young people are, in general, instinctively more optimistic about their future than older people (Hicks, 2014). This contrast may have to do with the hard reality that young people experience in Greece. As Chalari (2014) argues in her research into how Greeks as individuals experience the ways society changes, the younger generation in Greece is undeniably feeling the harmful effects of the crisis to a greater extent, and this may be at the heart of this age group's concern and pessimism regarding the future.

The fact that some Greek teachers can still perceive strengths in the Greek education system and maintain a sense of hope, despite being faced daily with huge difficulties, reminded me of the ways in which some Japanese teachers decided to respond to the Fukushima accident and how they viewed their roles in the post-Fukushima era in relation to the challenges that derived from it[12]. Some of the teachers I interviewed in Japan were very worried about their students because they were in the throes of despair and their futures were unclear. This concern led them not to grieve over what they could not do, but to try to find something, however small, that they could do and then to wait 'for spring to come'. Some of the teachers I met in Japan felt that their role was very important; they were the ones who could attempt to plant seeds of kindness and hope in the hearts of their students. These are precisely the seeds we need in Greece in the midst of the socio-economic crisis.

5.2 Re-imagining Greek education

In Greece, we have entered a long period of rapidly changing reality and challenging transition, and we need more than ever to develop a more just,

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12 See p. 12 for further detail.

creative and sustainable democratic society. In this broader programme of social renewal, a different kind of pedagogy is needed, one that may lead to an education system able to serve the Greek people, tackle the problems of Greek society with sufficient breadth, and prepare young people for the future.

According to the teachers interviewed, one of the most important challenges for the Greek government and its policy makers is the organisation of an education system that will address the full implications of the recent political and economic changes in its policy and curriculum documentation. Such a system would meet the needs of teachers, learners, parents and the community (Bigelow, 2006), would inspire conciliation and peace and promote an understanding of identity and diversity, and would eventually construct a more tolerant conception of Greek national identity (Held, 2005; McKinnon, 2005; Tan, 2005).

Perhaps we could adhere to Giroux (2004), and work towards an education system for 'dangerous times', which would continually change to meet the needs of a society in flux, forming an alternative vision of 'democratic education with its emphasis on social justice, respect for others, critical inquiry, equality, freedom, civic courage, and concern for the collective good' (p. 102). Perhaps we could aim for an open, democratic education, which would stimulate students to think critically, to question, to have a passion for knowledge and a healthy curiosity; to feel the joy of creating, and the pleasure of risk (Freire, 1994).

All of these suggestions could be possible, in the view of the teachers, if education were to become detached from the distortions of measurement and comparison, converting its institutions 'from exam factories to communities of discovery' (Coffield & Williamson, 2011). By re-connecting education with the lives, hopes and aspirations of children and parents (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013), and by re-establishing local democratic control of education and educational planning in ways that recognise diversity and local needs, reconnecting schools to their communities in direct and practical ways, much could be achieved. The education system could, in this way, be transformed into a

democratic system where teachers would be trusted to exercise their professional judgment, working not individually but collegially in response to the perceived needs of their pupils (Ball, 2013).

Additionally, schools could become both centres of civic responsibility and educative institutions (Ball, 2013) by stopping the passionless transmission of inert information, and choosing instead to study both the crucial problems faced by our culture and potential procedures for considering and dealing with them (Thomas, 2012). Students need to understand real-world problems and learn to act collectively in order to find solutions through innovation (Ball, 2013). This would require the design of a curriculum or, rather, a means for curriculum design, based on the position that knowledge awakens for both students and teachers only when it can be related to something serious (Coffield & Williamson, 2011).

Teachers' vision of a new education system for Greece also involves the provision of hope. Therefore, based on this vision, we could argue that the new Greek education system should rest on a pedagogy of hope, involving both teachers and students, and clarifying both hopes for the future and the ownership of these hopes (te Riele, 2009). As Hicks (2014) explains, clarifying hopes for the future can enhance motivation in the present and instigate positive action for change. Students need to explore their own hopes and fears for the future and learn to work creatively with them. While teachers cannot bring about all this on their own, they can apply their agency through learnt hopefulness. 'Hope can be mediated – perhaps even taught – within the educational context via the adoption of cultures of learning that accentuate the positive rather than the negative' (Halpin, 2003, p. 27).

An education of hope and social renewal would also require a new kind of teacher. Most of the teachers interviewed stressed the fact that teachers themselves need to change. The role of the teacher is a very decisive and influential factor in social change (van Driel et al, 2001), and no radical change in any education system can be realised without the involvement of its teachers (Johnson & Hallgarten, 2002). As Fullan (2001) states, any attempted change in society is strongly hinged on education and on what

teachers think and do about it (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988), and this is exactly what the teachers interviewed believe.

Based on teachers' responses, what we need in Greece today is a teacher who can integrate a global perspective into the curriculum and teach in ways that encourage cooperation, critical thinking and democratic values and practices; a teacher who can help students deal with prejudice and value diversity; a teacher who can best engage young people for active citizenship in a changing world (Down & Smyth, 2012; Whitty, 2002; Steiner, 1996). Greece needs a critical educator who is committed to human rights, actively seeks to keep informed, uses a range of teaching styles, and encourages students to be active participants in the wider societal context (Kiwan, 2008; Bigelow, 2006).

Now more than ever, we need teachers who are not only creative and adventurous but also passionate and committed. We need teachers who are well informed about education and society, and about children and the different ways in which they develop, as well as being aware of their diverse needs and capabilities. We need teachers who can help students make connections between the abstract knowledge associated with subjects and their own experiences in everyday life; we need teachers who can develop self-esteem, and who have a commitment to justice and sustainable development; teachers who make judgments in relation to principles rather than in relation to performance indicators. We need teachers who listen to both students and parents and take them seriously (Ball, 2013). We need teachers who have confidence in their own abilities, as well as high morale, self-esteem, positive energy and the motivation to innovate and develop practices that improve learning (Johnson & Hallgarten, 2002).

The need for an education of hope and social renewal requires a move towards forms of a new kind of professionalism (Sachs, 2001). It calls for a democratic professionalism that seeks to build alliances and meaningful collaborations between teachers and other members of the school workforce,

such as teaching assistants, as well as with external partners, including students, parents and members of the wider community (Ball, 2013; Thomas, 2012; Bangs & Frost, 2012; Whitty, 2006).

All of these suggestions are options and possibilities, and form an agenda for discussion and an exchange of views. They are not single-use solutions, nor would they solve all problems. 'Democracy is not a terminus; it is something that will always need to be struggled towards and fought for. There are many risks and costs to be borne, and there will be failures and dead ends, but the risks of not struggling for educational change and democracy are greater' (Ball, 2013, p. 40).

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of my thesis was to give sixteen teachers the space to share their experiences of and responses to the recent political and economical changes in Greece and the new challenges that have stemmed from these. My study has concentrated on understanding how we arrived at the current situation, where we seem to be going, and what we might want to do about this, as well as on discussing the purpose of education and the role it should play in preparing young people for this social, cultural and economic transition. It has also explored how we can build on the strengths of the present education system in order to create a system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances.

Throughout my study, I have attempted to examine the consequences of the crisis at the time of the research, while also exploring the possibilities of a better world beyond the crisis. I have endeavoured to send a positive message, by helping educators understand the issues of teaching and learning and the purpose of education, and by encouraging them to think of practical and hopeful strategies for shaping alternative and better futures.

My thesis begins with a discussion of the rationale and context of my study, and continues with a presentation of the conceptual-theoretical framework and my main research questions. Subsequently, I have integrated relevant literature and theoretical insights, and I have tried to provide a synthesis of the work which has already been done in the area of social crisis and educational research and to draw out conceptual and professional aspects. Following this, I have briefly discussed the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my study, and I described the methodology that I used for my empirical work. I continued with an analysis of the data and a discussion of the main findings.

This concluding section brings my thesis to an end with a summary of the main conclusions, a reference to the possible implications that my study

might have for future professional practice and research, and a presentation of the dissemination of my findings (how, to whom and for what purposes). It also includes several proposals for different tools and frameworks for future research.

6.1 Conclusions

In this study, I did not want to make a case against the socio-economic crisis in Greece, focusing only on its effects or impacts on Greek society and the Greek education system; there is a well-documented abundance of literature on these issues, which needs no supplementation from me. In this study, I assumed a level of reader-awareness of these effects or impacts of the crisis, and moved instead to focus on the problems of overcoming them. Focusing only on the impact of the socio-economic crisis would portray us purely as victims, whereas focusing also on the problems of overcoming both the consequences of crisis and the crisis itself constructs us as 'agents' or struggling subjects.

The findings of this study gave an insight into how teaching in schools might be of great importance to the process of promoting democratic values and creating democratic societies. As a result of my research, I contend that we might consider that the Greek education system could help Greek society redress the problems that have led to the country's crisis– but only if the system itself were to undergo significant change. By change, I do not mean looking at schools through a different lens, nor do I mean the mere changes in the organisation of schools, in the professional development of teachers, or in the curriculum which mainstream approaches in policy and practice set out to implement. Reforms and reorganisations in these domains would only succeed in refreshing and refining the processes of alienation and subjection that led to the current crisis. By change, I mean a radical change that would start from the very roots of the education system, from its basic meaning and purpose (Montgomery, Karagianni, Androutsou, 2016; De Lissovoy, 2010). If we change the purpose of a school then we allow everything else to change (Montgomery, Karagianni, Androutsou, 2016).

Within the purpose of education today, as teachers have stated, it might be important to 'include dedication to building character, community, humanitarianism, and democracy in young people; to help them think and act above and beyond the seductions and demands of the knowledge economy' (ibid, p. 60). This might become possible if teachers manage to serve as 'brave counterpoints' (Hargreaves, 2003), and if they are able to recognise themselves in the place they expect to be, and are able to express themselves and their practice as public intellectuals (Fraser et al, 2007; Guskey, 2000; Sachs, 2000).

Throughout this study, what teachers have suggested about the role and the purpose of education is in some ways nothing new; there is a huge body of literature on these issues. I could argue, however, that it is encouragingly optimistic and hopeful that teachers in Greece still have the urge to consider and suggest possibilities for a different and better education system, despite the fact that they themselves face a very difficult material crisis, with implications in both practical (health, income, employment) and moral (hopelessness, anxiety, belief, despair, instability) terms.

What we need to explore now is whether the change in the purpose of education that teachers suggest is possible. The authors of the 2016 book *Reimagining the Purpose of Schools and Educational Organisations* detail the considerable challenge of re-imagining schools today somewhat pessimistically. Ultimately, they argue that we will have to re-imagine ourselves in order to re-imagine the purpose of schools (Montgomery, Karagianni, Androutsou, 2016). Through my study, I have tried to bring together the pessimistic and the optimistic voices, and to begin an important conversation about how we can improve the Greek education system and bring our society out of crisis. This conversation could possibly act as a basis for further research.

6.2 Significance of the study and possible future uses

My intention in undertaking this research study was to redress the lack of existing research into the impact of the socio-economic crisis on the Greek education system and on the work of teachers in that environment. Through my study, I also aimed to look for possibilities of escape or 'lines of flight'

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), and to recover 'subjugated knowledges' - teacher knowledges that are hidden behind more dominant knowledges (Foucault, 2003). That is why I focused on exploring teachers' perceptions of how we can build on the strengths of the present education system in order to create a system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances.

Although my study was an initial endeavour, I believe that, throughout its course, I have managed to contribute new knowledge, to address some of the issues identified in the literature review, and to fill in a few of the aforementioned research gaps. Specifically, I am of the opinion that my study has provided a closer insight into the impact of the Greek socio-economic crisis on the education system and on the work of its teachers. It has also managed to effectively discuss the role of education in preparing young people for the future, and the role of teachers in fortifying hope and in giving young people 'the wherewithal to act with competence, imagination and courage' (David Orr, cited in Hicks, 2014, p. xiii).

My thesis offers not conclusions or solutions but possibilities; possible ways of thinking about education that are different from what has been presented before, rooted in a different ontology – one of hope. My thesis did not provide clear outcomes but described new problems, tensions and insights. Thus it can be argued that it is not a final account but rather a set of starting points and openings, a set of partial views and temporary possibilities for thought and action.

This study comes at a time of increasing anxiety about the future. The potential contribution of research is greater in times when old verities are being questioned (Levin, 2012). The present time clearly offers new possibilities and I hope that, through my study, I have managed to shed light on some of these. I have attempted to suggest a new beginning, a new sense of struggle, and a new sense of hope, because I consider all of these to be valuable assets for both teachers and policy makers in rethinking their crucial roles as part of the struggle for democracy in uncertain times.

This study may widen understanding of the pedagogy of hope, and encourage teachers to take it up themselves, seeing it not as another burden to their work, but as a tool that can help them deal with challenging circumstances. Moreover, this study may help to clarify the ruptures within the Greek education system, as well as its strengths, and it may also provide food for thought for any attempts to deconstruct and initiate radical change in the education system.

I venture that the findings of this study will contribute to the improvement of educational policy and practice for future professional development by informing pedagogic, curricular and other educational judgments and decisions. Furthermore, I submit that it will serve as an indication of the need for further research.

6.3 Dissemination

The goal and the objective of my dissemination effort is to provide those people most affected by and most interested in the findings of this research – that is, teachers, educational and social researchers, stakeholders, policy-makers, etc – with a summary of the key findings. To do this, I intend to use different channels and various methods, including written media and person-to-person contact, which target different types of people with different levels of specialisation. I will try to select the most effective tools available to help me reach my dissemination goals with each specific group within my target audience.

My first priority in my dissemination effort will be to return my results to my research participants, as well as to other individuals in the institutions where I conducted my research. Hence, I am planning to send letters to all study participants (see Table 3), thanking them for their involvement and giving them my contact details. I will then organise a dissemination event, at which I will present the main findings of the study. I will try to make myself accessible to all members of the intended audience, and allow requests for information through multiple means, for example, by telephone, email, and other modes upon request.

Dear (name of the participant),

I would like to thank you for your participation in my research study. The information you shared with me will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of the socio-economic crisis on Greek education, and of Greek teachers' experiences of and practical responses to the recent political and economical changes in Greece and to the new challenges that stem from them. Please remember that any data pertaining to you, as an individual participant, will be kept confidential.

Once all the data for this project has been collected and analysed, I plan to share this information through journal articles, newspaper articles, seminars, conferences, and presentations. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at maria.chalari.14@ucl.ac.uk. In particular, if you would like a summary of the results, please let me know by providing your email address or alternative contact information.

Sincerely,

Maria Chalari

Table 3: Thank-you letter

Furthermore, I will attempt to engage interested key people through journal articles or reports and announcements in printed and electronic publications, and I will promote awareness of my study and its key issues among the different target groups by organising workshops and participating in thematic conferences and meetings. I will also aim to increase visibility and to develop common initiatives with other European projects working on similar themes – for example, by participating in conferences organised by the European Educational Research Association.

I will also seek to present my findings in the form of a policy brief, focusing on the possible implications of my results for education policy, and outlining the rationale behind my proposals for particular policy alternatives, potential solutions or courses of policy action for education. This information

may be utilised by advocacy groups and legislators to advocate for legislative and policy change at local and state levels.

Finally, I will make an effort to share my findings with an audience wider than that of teachers, researchers and policy makers. I consider my topic to be one of interest to the broader community, and may reach out to this audience by writing an article for a general journal or even a national newspaper. My dissemination plan will occur after the examination of my thesis, and I myself will be responsible for all dissemination activities.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

The work that I undertook for the literature review of this thesis highlighted several areas where information was lacking. Whilst some of these areas were addressed by the research detailed in this thesis, others did not receive enough attention and remain unexplored; these areas would benefit from further research. I am of the opinion that a great deal of research needs to be done in order to map some of the broader social, political and even emotional dimensions of what is taking place nowadays in Greece. A start has been made, but additional investigation is needed; perhaps the following suggestions could form a basis for further research.

The findings of the analysis of the interviews provide an insight into the effects of the socio-economic crisis on Greek students' lives and on what goes on in classrooms. This insight, however, originated from teachers' perceptions and not from the students themselves. Hence, it would be worthwhile to interview Greek students in order to have a more complete picture of the impact of the Greek socio-economic crisis on their lives. As McLaren (1995) states, educators need to be extremely careful in any attempt to speak on behalf of students.

One aspect that did not receive much attention in this study was parents' perceptions of and attitudes towards the consequences of the socio-economic crisis for Greek society and the Greek education system. It would be interesting to look at these, as such a study could offer greater insight and provide a more in-depth exploration of the current situation in Greece.

In addition, aside from individual interviews with teachers, students and parents, it would be worthwhile conducting focus group interviews with teachers, students and parents together. This data collection strategy would promote a comfortable atmosphere of disclosure, in which teachers, students and parents could share their experiences, beliefs, attitudes and emotional reactions in relation to the socio-economic crisis in Greece. This would provide an opportunity to tap into the multiple realities of their perceptions and feelings (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Moreover, this strategy could generate rich data on the role of the Greek education system in the reconstruction of social and political life in post-crisis Greece, as well as new ideas about the radical changes that Greek education needs.

One issue which was raised in this study – that of younger teachers' pessimism – was discussed briefly, and was not explored in full. In my view, this issue requires additional clarification; I hope that the possibility for further research into this topic will arise in the future. Perhaps a new study, with research questions focusing on young teachers' perceptions, would be constructive. Young teachers are the future of the teaching profession and their voices need to be heard and taken into account.

A further area that did not receive sufficient attention in this study concerns teachers' practical responses to the recent political and economical changes in Greece and to the new challenges that stem from these. The data collection strategy of observation could be used here to explore how teachers respond in practice in their classrooms, and to highlight new aspects of their teaching and their professional role.

In general, there is a shortage of observational studies of the Greek education system in this time of crisis. It would be very fruitful, in my view, to conduct some such studies in order to investigate any changes in Greek classrooms that might have occurred in recent years due to the impact of the socio-economic crisis, or any existing practices that could be beneficial in adequately preparing young people for the future.

My study asks for education to be recognised as a political and democratic issue, to be re-politicised, and for schools to turn into 'centres of civic responsibility'. However, it does not fully explore whether or indeed

where teachers see space for this, or whether this is already happening somewhere. Teachers spoke hypothetically about what education should be, and they re-imagined the Greek education system without talking about the mechanisms that could lead to an education system able to serve Greek people, tackle the problems of Greek society, provide hope, and prepare young people for the future. Thus, further research questions, which would be essential to an exploration of the above issues in Greece nowadays, could be:

- What are the mechanisms that could turn schools into 'centres of civic responsibility'? Where and how can teachers and students do this?

- Are there any schools in Greece that demonstrate different methods of schooling as a response to the social and political problems that underlie the current crisis? If yes, what is their existing practice?

- How could teachers apply an education plan of hope inside their classrooms?

Answers to the above research questions could help us envision a different future for education and construct viable arguments for the role of the Greek education system in the current situation of crisis in regard to the following aspects: individual cases, practice and experience.

Moreover, I consider that, in another research study, further conceptual backing to the theoretical framework of hope could strengthen the exploration of hope in the Greek education system and in Greek society, and in the imagination of a better future for Greece. Santo's 'sociology of emergences' (2014), for instance, which adopts a 'Not Yet' attitude in order to think about reality as something emergent rather than existent, and which pays special attention to signs from the present that can be read as trends or harbingers of factors which could be decisive in the future (ibid, pp. 182-183), could help us investigate how, by means of activities of care that include sociological imagination and hope, we could construct a different future for Greece.

Additionally, a different set of conceptual tools and techniques for thinking about education and teachers' roles in the reconstruction of social and political life in post-crisis Greece could help us investigate and shed light on several aspects of my research questions. In another project, for example, the

tools and concepts of 'policy sociology' (Ball, 1997) could be brought to bear on these issues. In the current climate of innumerable reforms and changes to school regulations, and amid the endless bureaucracy of school administration, perhaps an analysis of education policy and practice could also offer powerful insights.

Further studies could also be informed by the methods of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005). Although Bourdieu did not write anything explicitly about education policy (van Zanten, 2005), his theoretical concepts such as social field, habitus, capital, and his methodological approaches could be of great use in researching and making sense of the emergent world of education policy in Greece in the context of the socio-economic crisis (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008). Foucault's notion of 'the care of the self' might also help us, in another study, to think about education differently, to explore the new kinds of teaching subjects and the new forms of subjectivity (Ball & Olmedo, 2013) that have been produced in the age of austerity in Greece, and to investigate the uncertainties, the discomforts and the refusals that teachers bring to their every day practice.

Additionally, research could be conducted using a mixture of sociological and psycho-sociological frameworks applied to questions about the role of teachers; alternatively, a set of metaphors provided by psychoanalytic frameworks (Bibby, 2011) could be applied. Although it may take time to design and demonstrate conceptual tools and techniques such as those mentioned above, such approaches would perhaps enable teachers to say the 'unsayable' (Bibby, 2011), allowing researchers to explore the oft-hidden processes that shape the situation in the Greek education system, to assess different experiences, and to consider the practices and understandings developed by teachers in relation to the roles of education and teacher professionalism in an era of economic and humanitarian crisis.

In the time between the commencement of the fieldwork and the composition of this thesis, many social and political developments have taken place in Greece. The country has seen fresh elections, a new government, and a national referendum. Re-evaluating the conceptual framework of this study and its findings, in light of these new developments, would be an

obvious source for future research, and one that I recommend be undertaken in the near future.

6.5 Final comment

Following the political development of January 2015 in Greece, with the victory of the left-wing party SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left), the climate in the Greek education system started to change significantly. The new government promised a number of both long- and short-term goals for education, all of which were aimed at the provision of free, democratic, and high-quality public education for all. Improving teachers' status was also considered essential for the future, implying that any reform should provide state support, build trust, and create a strong network of continuous professional development for teachers. Moreover, democratic restructuring was envisaged for the administration of schools, in which associations of teachers, school boards (teachers, parents, students) and education unions would play a crucial role (Symeonidis, 2015).

The events in Greece at the beginning of 2015 (new government, the result of the referendum) were thought to mark a major turning point or the opening of a policy window. However, thus far, this policy window has not resulted in any effective policy developments (although perhaps it is still too early to judge this). Austerity measures (and with them the dominant ideology of neo-liberalism) thrived in crisis mode and, despite being rejected by the majority of the Greek people in a move that stunned the eurozone and shook financial markets, they remain prevalent as the only route to growth; neo-liberalism continues to contain a vision of a society in which inequality is the natural order of things (Dreux, 2013; Jones, 2013).

In September 2015, following the announcement of the resignation of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras the previous month, a legislative election was held in Greece. The elections resulted in an unexpectedly large victory for Alexis Tsipras' Coalition of the Radical left (SYRIZA). This leads me to wonder whether the policy window is still open – or if it has closed, because of the government's failure to achieve notable results. It remains to be seen whether anything will change in Greece's severely damaged society,

particularly within its education system, which has faced an unprecedented assault from austerity. One thing is certain: the current situation is untenable, and change is a necessity. Given the historic changes that have taken place on the political scene, perhaps it is not too implausible to hope for a change in Greek society and the Greek education system as well (Symeonidis, 2015).

This study has provided food for thought when deconstructing the Greek education system. It has also clarified many strengths of the education system, which may be built upon to make it capable of playing an important role in the reconstruction of social and political life in post-crisis Greece. The starting point of my study was an ontological need for hope. This ontological need for hope informed my approach, my methodology, and the perspective from which I wanted to explore both the Greek education system and my role as a teacher in this time of crisis. Now that I have reached the end of my study, I feel that in Greece today there is room for new stories, another way of thinking and a notion of hope. However, these are timid, tempered by reality and beset with practical difficulties and complexities arising from both individual and government failings.

Although my ontological need for hope is strong, I often find myself drowning in a stormy sea of despair, much like the refugees who drown trying to reach Greece, pursuing their hopes for a better future. Hope demands action, change and courage. Will any of us manage to find hope in the current situation in Greece and in Europe in general? Furthermore, if any of us do manage to find hope, will we have the courage to struggle to see it realised?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Part A

1. Gender: ………………

2. Age (or birth date): ....

3. Ethnicity (or race): ……………….

4. Place of birth: ……………………

5. Marital status: ....

6. Highest level of education: ....

7. Years spent working as a teacher: …………………….

Part B

New social context and consequences

1. How has Greek society changed in recent years?

2. What social and political problems underlie the current socio-economic crisis?

3. What are the consequences of the socio-economic crisis?

4. Are these consequences negative or positive, and why?

5. [If negative] Are there any positive consequences?

6. Are there any consequences for schooling and young people? [If so] What kind of consequences?

7. How can we respond to the social and political problems which underlie the crisis?

8. Could a system of schooling be a way to respond to the social and political problems behind the crisis?

9. If yes, which would be the most important features of this system?

Challenges for the education system

10. Using examples from your school and your own teaching, describe some of the challenges faced by teachers in the Greek education system in the midst of Greece's socio-economic crisis.

11. Do you think the Greek education system should change in order to meet the new challenges that have been created by the current political and economic changes in Greece? [If so] In what ways?

12. Which skills, attitudes and values do you think you should teach to students in order to help them deal with their future in the present rapidly changing social and economic context?

13. Are there any strengths in the present education system that we can build on in order to create a system to suit the current major societal changes and face the challenging circumstances?

14. What is education for?

Other

15. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for participating in this research.

Maria Chalari

Appendix B

Profile of interviewees				
Pseudonyms	Primary/Secondary school teacher	Gender	Age	Years in the profession
Kostas	Secondary school teacher (Gymnasium[13])	Male	38	12
George	Secondary school teacher (Gymnasium)	Male	45	9
Nikos	Primary school teacher	Male	50	28
John	Primary school teacher	Male	50	24
Vassilis	Secondary school teacher (Lyceum[14])	Male	61	34
Aris	Secondary school teacher (Lyceum)	Male	51	26
Dimitris	Primary school teacher	Male	36	10
Alexandros	Primary school teacher	Male	53	28
Anna	Secondary school teacher	Female	51	30

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13 Age of students: 12-15
14 Age of students: 15-18

	(Gymnasium)			
Maria	Secondary school teacher (Gymnasium)	Female	46	25
Amalia	Primary school teacher	Female	50	27
Elpida	Primary school teacher	Female	49	20
Efie	Secondary school Teacher (Lyceum)	Female	49	30
Helen	Secondary school teacher (Lyceum)	Female	54	27
Litsa	Primary school teacher	Female	39	12
Sofia	Primary school teacher	Female	54	27

Key to transcripts	
Italics	Fragments of data
(…)	Data edited out

Appendix C

Ithaca

As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbors seen for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

Translated by Edmund Keeley/Philip Sherrard