

# The History of Exclusion in Greek Technical Education: The Downgrading Learning Career and the Identity of Low Expectations

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The evolution of the educational system has been founded on a hierarchical differentiation between vocational and general educations, with vocational one playing an inferior role in the society. Technical/vocational education in Greece has been developed mainly since the beginning of 1950s, and national education policy is used to prompt youths of poor social classes to the low-skilled labour market using technical education as a vehicle. The present paper aims to “unfold” the social history of this educational network and sheds light on the philosophy of its structure and function in the last 50 years. It is rather a history of exclusion of those who emanated from the lower socio-economic classes and attended technical education, within which low educational expectations had been aligned with students’ vocational self-image of low requirements.

*Keywords:* technical education, class determination, exclusion, low expectations

## The Social History of the Technical/Vocational Education

### As Far as Europe Is Concerned...

It is important to note that the traditional norms of curriculum (classic direction of studies), which was bequeathed to Europe after the Second World War, followed the duality of the school system: selective and massive. The curricula of the “selective schools” (lyceum, gymnasium, private school, and grammar school) were designed for the few who were usually selected at the age of 10 or 11 after strict entrance examinations. The content of the exams was mainly theoretical and academic (“humanistic”), and the preparation of the students for their academic career was fundamental (Ryba, 1966, p. 103). At the same time, during the educational reforms, the classical studies and history (particularly, political history) had been considerably diminished in the curriculum since 1950 and on. On the contrary, social sciences which included studies oriented to more technological and vocational interest had observably gained ground. Compulsory education had already begun expanding and local authorities attempted to guide people’s demand for “education for all” enriching the curriculum of secondary education by adding technical and vocational courses. In effect, these courses aimed to protect the “royal route” to academic studies from popular classes attempting to have access to university provided that this “route” was designed for the children of the dominant classes (Charlot, 1992, p. 14).

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The selection policy implemented in secondary education has been supplanted by the Policy of Regulating the Educational Flows. According to selection policy, there was a double outcome: The child could have been acceptable or not acceptable to secondary education. By contrast, the Policy of Regulating the Educational Flows has been socially effective, whereas, the access of all to secondary education could be in harmony with the democratic principles, “at least on the surface” (Charlot, 1992, p. 16). It has also been economically effective, because it could satisfy the needs of the state taking advantage of differentiated and hierarchically based workforce. In parallel, the development of the vocational/technical direction of studies resulted in intensity and instability within the educational system. Although vocational/technical education had been autonomous and constituted a channel of promotion for the better students of popular classes in the past, now, it has become a magnet pole for the students failing in the general/academic educational network: In effect, power of promotion for the better students has been transformed into power of marginalization for all the students who were obliged to attend this educational network (Charlot, 1992, p. 17).

At the same time, since 1960s, prevalence of the “human capital theory” has reinforced the connection between education and economy. In fact, education constituted the cornerstone of economic development while the state increasingly took over education organization and control. Education being highly financed by the state, relevant requirements by left parties, and social movements resulted in expansion of education, which acquired more distinct governmental features (Katsikas & Kabbadias, 1998, p. 20). In the following 20 years, the “logic of economic approach” had been transformed into the “logic of management practice”: “The educational system may be effectively managed by everyone who can effectively manage a business in the same way” (Katsikas & Tsoukalas, 1993, p. 49).

In 1990s, it became obvious that neither the economic effectiveness as a result of management practice nor social justice within a school had been fulfilled. Actually, prevalence of neo-liberalism, either in a conservative or in a social democratic version, prepared the cheap, flexible, and disciplined school with an eye on the transformation of young people into effective contributors to production, cultivating in this way a linear perception of productivity for education. Thus, the possibility of “education for all” was abrogated in practice, as long as many barriers increasingly appeared (Bakalios, 1994; Tsoukalis, 1996).

In parallel, the technical/vocational direction of studies continued serving the capital. Specifically, distribution of jobs rested on a pre-designed hierarchy: The posts that were close to management and central surveillance of production were given to tertiary education graduates, the posts that were closer to direct productive activity were given to mediate technical executives and the posts that were related to technical application were given to inferior technical education graduates (Milios, 1984, pp. 42-44).

### **As Far as Greece Is Concerned...**

**1920-1950.** In the decade 1920-1930, however, serious social, political, and economic events took place in Greece, due to which the orientation of education was differentiated. The Minor Asia catastrophe (in 1922) and the end of the Great Idea, the refugee problem and the emergence of the proletariat, the succession of governments, the appreciable presence of labour movement in the political life of the country, and the foundation of the Communist Party of Greece (in 1924), increase of trade and expansion of industry and commercial shipping (Sboronos, 1984, p. 155 ) led to the necessity of the reconstruction of education in a more realistic and practical way, as the theoretical—classic orientation of the current one—dimensional educational system hindered problem-solving in the social and economic fields. Besides, the secondary technical/vocational

school that was supposed to prepare students for manual jobs of the labour market was first formulated in a draft of law in 1899, followed by other drafts of law in 1913 when a second vocational school network began emerging without class expansion of this particular school network being disregarded during the foundation of urban schools in secondary education (Trilianos, 1990).

However, the important turn to the benefit of more practical education, apart from the theoretical-classic education, appeared at the end of the decade 1920s by virtue of the laws 4373 and 4397 in 1929 and the establishment of technical/vocational education (Trilianos, 1990, p. 50). Certainly, the main introducer of the reform Kakouros, vigorously supported the more practical direction of studies through children's vocational preparation, provided that the horizons of popular education was broadened, and consequently, education of popular masses was strengthened. It is rather a sad fact that up to then the free Greek state had founded many preparatory schools for the socially superior classes only and not for the poorer ones, on the grounds of a diffused contempt for any labourer—mainly after the Turkish occupation (Kakouros, 1932, pp. 11-13).

More specifically, the reform of 1929 (beyond the innovation of the foundation of lower vocational schools) described the aim of the primary school as exclusively practical and social and replaced the term "moral education" with the term "humanistic education" (Fragoudaki, 1983, p. 60). Moreover, the law established two kinds of schools of secondary education: the high school and the practical lyceum. Certainly, the reform of 1929 put an end to a period of indescribable chaos concerning any educational issues, from 1920 and on. However, the government having gained the power faced the orientation of the dead languages studies for 30 consecutive years as the only guarantee for the student's ideological configuration, aiming at maintaining social establishment, as the students could not escape the ideological control of the power (Fragoudaki, 1983, pp. 62-65). Anyway, the issue is that the practical spirit, the turn to the vocational direction, which was strongly related to the linguistic reform, would not probably justify the creation of a second distinguishable school network addressing students from the lower socio-economic classes.

**1950-Today.** The after civil war period of the political life in Greece (by the beginning of 1950) was characterized by a doubtful constitutional legality, while in parallel the Greek right party, which had not accomplished its release from the phobia of communism, organized the state with an eye to control of social beliefs and exclusion of each ideological opponent from the intellectual, social, and political activity (Kremmidas, 1986, p. 262). On the one hand, the flow of foreign private funds began and, on the other hand, economic activities functioned parasitically. In addition, the country's industrialization, the intense flow of urbanism, and the expansion of the tertiary sector led to the growth of suburban classes (Kremmidas, 1986, p. 263). Finally, an ideology which tended to the search of national identity was formed. The tendency of the configuration of a national spirit, the fluidity of the social conscience of the middle classes, and the nationalistic ideology with the anti-Western characteristics are products of the civil war, resistance, dependence, and ideology of the new modulated middle classes, defined new intellectual and ideological orientations (Kremmidas, 1986, p. 277). However, these prevailing conditions did not encourage reforming dynamics, which could lead to important renovating interpositions in the sector of education. Certainly, the state, aiming at ideologically controlling all educational processes and educators, gave priority to the political-ideological element (Bouzakis, 1999, p. 16).

In parallel, from mid-1950s, in the Western societies, the prevailing theories were about the main contribution of education to the development of economy and human capital and modernization. Through education modernization, enhancement of internal effectiveness (concerning knowledge, skills, attitudes, and

orientations of the person) as well as enhancement of exterior effectiveness (concerning regular vocational accession through the vocational orientation) were the main attainment goal (Kazamias, 1983, p. 423).

In Greece, therefore, during this period and the following years, education played a decisive role for the accession of many people to the public sector, which appeared as a shelter of vocational guarantee for the popular classes of the countryside and the urban centres (Tsoukalas, 1986, p. 119). Possession of titles of academic studies (more than education itself) foreboded the “release” from the wage of a labourer, provided that parents’ economic sacrifices in order to educate their children were considered as something given and realistic (Karapostolis, 1984, pp. 248-249). We must note that classic-elitistic education was accountable for the repulsion to any “un-intellectual” work. Besides, this was the main reason that had founded and legalized the “dual circuit” of education, on the strength of legislations and class criteria of the period: separation of the technical/vocational education from the general education, in two forms of unequal rank of the educational system (Kokogiannis, 2005).

In 1959, the government imposed numerous laws on the Parliament, which anticipated various changes. The more important law, 3971/1959, concerned general and technical/vocational education was introduced for first time. At the same time, two schools of assistant engineer foremen were founded in Athens and Thessaloniki as well as six more schools of technical assistants of foremen. However, these schools were not equivalent with the general secondary education, and they did not allow the graduates to have any professional development. It was then that the educational policy was revealed. Popular education, which is the technical one, is a blind alley (“Issues of Education-1, No. 3”, 1980, p. 38). Because of this, the institution of the technical/vocational education from the first moment was legislated accepted intense criticism. Despite the fact that many theoretical discussions had made it known as the basic investment sector for the Greek economic development, it was considered that it functioned “parasitically”, “amateurishly”, and “costless”, as a poor relative of the educational system, with the intention of absorbing the less encouraged social classes and leading them to the more inferior positions of the vocational hierarchy (Christomanos, 1985, p. 105).

On the other hand, if we look over the texts of discussion in the Parliament on the reform of 1959, we will immediately comprehend that, although different opinions were brought forward, the question “Which knowledge is more important?” was not explicitly answered. The new-liberal functional perception concerning the economic role of the school appeared to be undermined or even abated by other relative texts, which was imbued with a conservative spirit, close-knit in the false-classicism and nationalism of a general education, which was always “talking about the past” (Bouzakis, 1999, p. 18).

The assumption of the power of the political party “Union of the Centre” (in the repetitive elections of 1964), which gathered the overwhelming majority, gave birth to the hope that Greece would get into a new normal political and social life. The social policy of the liberal Centrist “break” led to a redistribution of the national income, as well as to the balance of structures (the value of industrial production exceeds the value of agricultural production). More specifically, the government attempted to liberalize the constitution and democratize public education. Lack of cohesion, however, in this coalition and the conservatism of the political groups making up the coalition led to an undecided policy (Sboronos, 1984, pp. 148-149), a feature that dominated over the educational reform of this period. Indeed, we would say that the reform was a mature demand, but the period was absolutely inconvenient (“Issues of Education-1, No. 3”, 1980, p. 39). The issue is that, beyond the efforts of the “renovation” of the educational system, a lot of artificial classic elements remained, while the aristocratic character of the system was broadly distinct with the pyramidal form that the

system had from the base up to the top, a feature that accordingly led to a progressive exclusion of the popular and rural classes.

Thus, the educational reform in 1965 did not face rightly the problem of the technical/vocational education, since no reflection was expressed and the “legal frame” concerning its reformation was not created. The reform accepted technical education without revising anything substantially and the fact that the dictatorship (1967-1974), back then, and the governments of the political changeover which followed it did not change the basic principles on which the construction of technical/vocational education was based. This shows that an autonomous policy does not exist in connection to technical education and this policy seems to be dictated by a “centre” abroad (“Issues of Education-1”, No. 3, 1980, pp. 41-42).

The dictatorship of the Colonels (1967-1974) in 1970 founded 57 new technical schools and set forth new legislative edicts for technical/vocational education. More specifically, the legislative edict 580/70 founded the inferior vocational schools of three-year attendance after the primary school, absorbing students who did not advance at high school and secondary vocational schools (of foremen) (Ministry of Education, 2000, pp. 44-45). By virtue of the law 580/70 “privilege” was given to any child of a worker to attend technical schools (inferior or of foremen) without entrance examinations, and consequently, the child was determined to production, as semi-specialized workforce, whereas the children that were determined to universities took strict examinations at high school and lyceum. Of course, this does not mean that we stress the necessity of examinations, which functions as a “breakwater” in knowledge. We simply underline the fact that the power channelled the children of poor social classes to the “market of cheap workforce” ever since (Barela, & Kordatos, 1991, p. 26).

After the fall of junta, the political life was back to normal and the catalytic effect of the political power upon educational issues started to decrease. Indeed, changes to the educational system had taken place, but inversions and anti-reforms, as they have been noted down in the historical course of the Greek educational system up to 1976, never emerged. “Westernization” of political life and consolidation of urban parliamentary democracy led to a “Westernization” of the process of educational reform (Bouzakis, 1999, pp. 26-27). At the same time, within the new Constitution of 1975 the term “Greek-Christian culture”, which had already foreshortened the disposals of the anti-communism, was erased by the constitutional provision for education on the grounds that the term was accusable because the regime of the dictatorship, which had preceded, peculated the meaning of the term. Two new notions were presented: the “free person” and the “responsible citizen” (Charalabous, 1991, p. 34). In particular, we focus on the first year of the post-junta period (1974 and on), during which an intense anti-Americanism dominated that was connected to the feeling of national independence (the tragedy of Cyprus had taken place a few years before). Apart from that the boom of literature which concerned the fighters against regime came to light and if we simultaneously include the fact that the two statutes on the education in 1976 and 1977 were acceptable for the non-partisans of the controlling party, then, we need to admit that the reform of this period was appositely characterized as “aged newborn” (Iliou, 1984, p. 182).

So, focused on technical education, in 1977, the law 576 was voted (“organisation and administration of secondary and post-secondary technical/vocational education”), which abrogated the inferior and secondary technical vocational schools of (foremen) and established the technical/vocational lyceum (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 46). Despite the efforts the solidified mentality about an education of a “second sorting out” was not eliminated.

Therefore, the main objectives of the educational policy that came up with through the organization and

operation of the secondary technical and vocational education are the following: The first objective is rationalization of the educational system according to the current social and economic conditions, that is to say, adaptation of studies and students to the labour market needs, based on the “logic” of our country’s interest to have an upgraded position (compared with the past) within the international division of labour. The second objective that is internalized by the first one is the afresh place of the power on a more constant social and institutional base (Kottoula, 1990, p. 38).

In Greece, there was neither research nor a technocratic study that would help education with objective productivity of Greek life and self-reliant development—the international organizations had the upper hand to use criteria in the Greek education that served the “logic of power”. Consequently, metropolitan centres carry out superior processes (organization, control, and co-ordination of the various affiliated companies), and scientific research and technology. On the contrary, the states of the region (to which Greece belongs) deal with the implementations of technology. At the same time, the Greek capital continued being used for retailing and the distribution of the capital was not introduced in the industry. Such economic background solidified dependence and influence on the economic sector (even more on ideological) (Kottoula, 1990, p. 39).

Accordingly, dependence on economy ended up into technological dependence and technical education became the vehicle of this technical dependence. Moreover, the quality of studies remained low, because their role was confined to the implementation of readymade programs without any contribution to research. Finally, technological studies of high level were not necessary, as long as a way of the absorption of the corresponding potential had never existed. Lack of means and personnel did not overthrow the function of these schools, as their objective was mass production of workforce of low requirements (Kottoula, 1990, p. 40). Also, the technical lyceum did not give vocational rights to any speciality and it never corresponded to modern needs (Barela & Kordatos, 1991, p. 26).

Next, the educational reform in 1985 had the character of continuity, civic modernization, and democratization of education rather than the character of discontinuity concerning the reform of 1976. We must point out that social class became more obvious in the field of the technical/vocational education. Technical education continued attracting individuals from economically deprived classes and individuals characterized by limited ambitions, which aimed at a rapid vocational consolidation. Besides, the curriculum did not have explicit orientation and did not face the particularities of students by virtue of their expectations and their educational background (Panagiotopoulou, 1987, pp. 80-81). According to relevant researches, the expectations of students in technical lyceum were never reconciled with the unfavourable conditions they had to face. The majority of these students were destitute of the ambition for tertiary education. As a result, suppression of the decreased possibilities of access to higher education institutions was facilitated by the educational system. On the strength of this social proscenium (open education for all) and the corresponding backstage (low expectations), the dominant ideology was maintained and consolidated (Apostolidis, Kasbiki, & Kokkinidou, 1989).

On the other hand, the “quantity” and “quality” of the conveyance of humanities to technical education served the social proscenium (open education for all) and also the functional role of humanities were signified by the corresponding backstage (low expectations of the students and professors via the differentiation at the process of evaluating humanities). This led to an obvious contradiction. Moreover, we must not forget that one third of the students had chosen the technical school as being “easier” (Panagiotopoulou, 1991, p. 51-52).

Besides, the theoretical courses continued driving back the majority of students of the technical lyceum, as

these courses needed reading and memorization, while students were not characterized by the ability to read, memorize, and narrate (Panagiotopoulou, 1991, pp. 52-53). Apart from that, the educators of a technical school used to assess students in a way that lowered the grade base continuously, which led to a lower level of their teaching, in accordance with the lower performance of the students (Ksochelis, Fragos, & Ikonomou, 1986).

The existence and function, however, of this second technical/vocational school network were strongly supported by each government and the possible problems of a contingent malfunction were transcended provided that this network could be “government owned” and relatively “compact” (Institution of Technological Researches, 1990, p. 32). Besides, the statements of the minister of education in the Parliament, in 1990 (according to the proceedings) left no doubt concerning class determination and social unfairness within the education (Noutsos, 1991, p. 52).

Finally, the sanction of the technical/vocational schools, which supplanted the technical lyceum (law 2640/1998) (Encyclical of the Greek Ministry of Education (/Γ2/4537/3-8-1998), 1998), and then, the vocational lyceum, which was established during the educational reform in 2006, sealed the post-modern perception of knowledge and triggered the mechanism of rapid training (Katsikas, 2010, p. 9)

### **The Philosophical Base of Its Structural Function**

It is obvious that this elitist way of the confrontation of education continued to exist through the official practices of the educational policy, and the classic education continued to constitute the cornerstone of the content of humanities and the touchstone of its functional value. However, at the same time, we realise that, in our days, the objective of governments worldwide tends to be the development of continuous vocational training, while domination of the post-modern perception of general education, which is characterized by the split of its united character, tramples over the Greek educational policy in the frames of the EU (European Union).

It is a fact that the capitalistic reconstruction has already imposed a series of reformations since the previous decade, on the social and labour level. The “pre-planned changes” in education and particularly in technical education used to be the keystone of the governmental policy for the “human potential”, as it is usually mentioned within the countries of the EU. In the “White Bible”, which has been adopted by the countries of the EU, we can read “the idea of lifelong learning and continuous vocational training must necessarily be in the epicentre of all initiatives” (Kordatos, 1997, p. 54). Typical education concerning either its general-classic or its technical/vocational direction orientates students to employment taking into consideration the different vocational content and the hierarchical stairs of the social division of labour. “Training”, however, is differentiated from technical/vocational education. First of all, because it does not address the population incorporated economically and professionally (studying youth), but the practitioners, the workers, or the unemployed. In effect, it is provided by institutions which are not objectively included in the formal educational system, but shape a parallel flexible educational network, irrespective of the educational unit of the ministry of education (Kordatos, 1997, p. 55).

Nowadays, the educational demands of the capital cause structural changes to education. These demands trim down segregation between general and technical education and they split the connection of specialization and titles of studies with the right of the employment. The ruling tendencies of the neo-liberal reformation in education can be the following: (1) reinforcement of the companies concerning the school mechanisms as far as the level of the role of institutions is concerned; (2) promotion of “learning of the learning” on the level of

educational priorities; (3) the gradual polymorphism on the level of structures; and (4) the incorporation of rejection and selection on the level of function (Katsikas & Kabbadias, 1994, pp. 134-139).

The prevailing, therefore, educational priority of the neo-liberal reformation for the modulation of the workers, that is, “learning of the learning” is founded on a type of general education, which does not cultivate and develop the synthetic-analytical thought; it does not give the cognitive presuppositions in order to interpret society and the world. It is about a general education whose main characteristic is multiple disintegration of knowledge. Only useful knowledge will be fully stretched in the production. The remaining general knowledge is simply necessary for the development of “learning of the learning”, on the basis of the “utilized” logic and binary thought (Katsikas & Kabbadias, 1994, pp. 140-144).

In addition, technical schools contribute to the production of the technical and administrative knowledge that is required for market expansion, control of production and individuals, realization of technical research for the needs of industry, and creation of false needs in the population. This knowledge, therefore, can be accumulated like the economic capital, first, it can be kept under; and second, it can serve the interests of the dominant social classes (Apple, 1993). Thus, in Greece, we were led to school of the market and economical reciprocity, since everyone who claimed an interdisciplinary and anthropocentric school of needs was impeded.

### Conclusions

Ultimately, which type of school do we prefer? Do we prefer a school that would serve inequality, civic exploitation or, in reverse, a democratic, popular, and multi-purpose differentiated school? In fact, only the democratic school (popular and united), and development of a young person’s critical conscience could provide broad and adequate information for our social environment (“Issues of Education-2, No. 9”, 1980, pp. 137-138, 141-142). So, as a consequence, depending on our primary anti-class purpose we ought to redefine our objectives and renegotiate our educational program.

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