

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRISIS ON GREEK EDUCATION

SYRIZA EDUCATION {by P. Charamis and S. Velissariou}

The Memorandum and education

The Memorandum is the agreement between the Greek Government, the EU, the ECB and the IMF, which describes in details the policy that Greece must follow to confront the crisis. The official policy of the Ministry of Education is that there is no Memorandum for education. Unfortunately, the documents signed by the Greek government with the Troika show otherwise. The government is responsible for setting up an independent task force [the “special policy group on education”] so as to propose the implementation of the most austere management of the meagre funds available for education.

According to the most recent agreement the government ought to submit a report every three months on what it has done or failed to do in the field of education. Everything is under the Troika’s control, as, for example, the Education quality assessment that the Troika itself has suggested and the government will obediently try to introduce as a Bill!

As a result, decisions on the way education functions at all levels will be based on strictly financial criteria. In the **new poor education**, what is expected is cost effectiveness, scale economies and the cheapest possible solutions regardless of the severe educational and social consequences on the country and its survival. The Maastricht declaration that education is a matter of national interest and the EU policies can only be subsidiary to it are simply not true, as a number of EU directives have proved over the years.

Spending on education and practical consequences

Fewer schools and universities =less education [the death of the Greek miracle]

By 2015 public spending on education will have been reduced reaching 2,23 % of the GDP:

School committees

Schoolteachers, parents and pupils have already felt the severe cuts in the daily school operations. Funding of school committees has been reduced by 60% resulting in the financial strangulation of the public school. Parents are increasingly invited to contribute financially to the purchase of the bare essentials required for the school operation. Given the fact that the Government has tripled the price of heating oil, it is certain that schools will not afford to be properly heated in the winter.

The merging and closing down of schools and universities: Less education for all ***The Greek Higher Education is public and free**

The Greek Ministry of Education has announced the merging of **1933** school units in both primary and secondary education, without any prior dialogue with the teachers, parents and the local communities. As a consequence, **1056** schools have been closed down permanently, that is 7.8% in primary education, and **205** out of 6.5% in secondary education.

Reduction in the number of teachers (recruitments, retirements, redundancies): Between 2010 and 2012 there has been a 10% reduction approximately.

Last but not least austerity creates classes with 28-30 students in place of classes of 25.

Tertiary education

The same policies apply to the merging or the complete closing down of various Universities mainly in the periphery of the country, whole Schools, or/and single departments. This measure will be fully implemented until the end of the year. The merging in the tertiary education in combination with the lack of new appointments, the non-replacement of academics, who retire, and the employment of cheap contract labour simply for the teaching and not for research is equal to the devastation of the Greek university. The most important and positive feature of it is the combination of teaching with basic research that has offered much to the country and the international academia, research or business world. **Now, the tertiary education will turn into a post-secondary school education.**

The introduction of fees to the postgraduate studies will spread to the undergraduate studies. The creation of a ruling elite

Books/textbooks

Last school year started without textbooks. Students were obliged to photocopy the books or to read on the Internet. The Government has abolished the public institute responsible for the publication of books. And now pupils are supposed to borrow the books and return them in a perfect state. If they fail to do so they are fined! Same restrictions on the university books that were offered to students for free. Now we are supposed to offer the students only one book.

School administration-University administration

The Ministry is planning to turn Headmasters into Managers who would control and determine almost everything through quality assessment. The Ministry's intention is to abolish democratic decision-making and restrict the school board responsibilities. In the universities for a second time [last year they failed] they try to introduce Institutional Councils [abolition of the democratically elected academic bodies such as the Rectors, the Senates, self-administration with the participation of the students, the staff etc] = Autocracy, market orientation, serving the local capital....

Content of studies

The educational reforms promoted by Government [«New school», «New Lyceum»] aim at providing fragmentary knowledge and develop various skills, based on the “values” of the market. These reforms are in the same vein as the reforms of the “enterprise university” promoted by the recent laws in tertiary education. [By “enterprise” we mean the death of basic research, of theoretical subjects such as the humanities and social studies and the instead the offer of courses in applied areas]

Teacher salaries

Salaries and pensions are slashed while, at the same time, salary is pending on performance, productivity, and evaluation.

Annual net income: 8.500-17.800 €

Monthly net salary: 640 (1st year)– 1400 € (after 35 years)

Salary improvement following harsh evaluation & assessment

Limited positions in the new pyramid pay scale. Only a limited percentage of employees will be part of the Wage development.

The Greek teachers' salary which was 50% of the average Euro zone salary has been reduced to half within two years time. At the same time pensions age limits of teachers have increased from 60 or 65 years to 70 (depending on the years of service). The years of service have increased from 35 to 40 (for full retirement).

At the same time, the academics have lost more than 30% of their salaries.

What is the logic of the Memorandum? Turning the Greeks into Chinese

The restructuring of labour relations at the lowest possible level for the working people. The production of cheap, flexible and obedient labour force

Less in quantity and poor in quality education serves the reproduction of a cheap working force of flexible employees. At the same time, the abolition of education as a public and free good for all abruptly ceases any upward class mobility. Only the children of the elite are entitled to proper and full education. The Memorandum is thus creating a hard-core ruling minority in place of a democratic in its origin governing body. Therefore, we'll be facing an increasing rigidity of class distinctions.

The introduction of fees to the university perpetuates the young people's dependence on their families for all kinds of support, and not only financial. So, this marks a conservative regression of society as a whole.

The shrinking to the point of disappearance of the humanities and social sciences, or to put it differently of, theoretical sciences in favour of applied knowledge or skills is the most drastic measure of the capitalist system against the development of free, critical

and subversive thinking. The lack of Leftist intellectuals of the 20th century type is the result of, among other things, this kind of mechanical, sterile and technocratic education that starts from the primary school. It is the proof of neoliberal ideological triumph at the expense of the Left.

We will fight to combat the effects of this capitalist restructuring at all levels of education. This is the most important task of the class struggle in nowadays.