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## “... As Long as Power Relations Exist ... Yes, There are Inequalities...”<sup>1</sup> Social and Educational Inequalities in Greece According to the Views of Female and Male Students of Tertiary Education Institutions

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### Abstract

*The issue of social and more specifically educational inequalities in Greek society and education seems to concern the Greek society less and less nowadays. Scientific research and the contemporary sociological theory have focused on specific areas of interest of the phenomenon, neglecting the issue in its macro sociological dimension, without, of course, this meaning that the frames and fields of analysis that have emerged are of minor importance. The main question that concerns this research is, if social and educational inequalities are recognized today by the Greek social body and on which fields they focus. Do social and educational inequalities exist in Greece? Are they recognizable and how are they manifested? Our research was carried out with two research tools: a questionnaire which includes two attitude scales (social and educational inequalities) (N=800) and another one which contains a single question, which concerns the expression of opinion about whether the sample considers that there are inequalities in the Greek education system, and the justification of its views (N=800). The questionnaires were answered by female and male students of Greek Universities and Technological Educational Institutes. We chose the university student status in the sample, in order to record attitudes and opinions of young people who are considered “favored” by the education system. The analysis showed that the sample considers that, indeed, there are inequalities in Greek society as well as in Greek education and it is able to recognize a significant range of indications of the phenomenon. It seems that the experienced inequality prevailed against the “favorable” treatment which the system “reserved” in this specific sample.*

**Keywords:** social inequalities, educational inequalities, university students, attitudes, beliefs

### 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of educational inequality seems to be a timelessly central issue for any educational system in the world, always topical and controversial for the practice of educational policy and in the center of social, political and scientific rhetoric. In other words, it is the issue that concerns every society, its political elites and its scientific community, not only at a local level but also at an international – comparative level. Aspects of school failure such as school dropping out, illiteracy, students’ low performance, and entrance or not to tertiary education institutions have concerned for many years the international organizations (OECD, UNESCO, World Bank, EU) which systematically, for their own reasons, observe and publish data on the phenomenon. And we should note emphatically that the national and international

<sup>1</sup> The specific phrase was mentioned in the students’ written texts.

measurements demonstrate, in the most unequivocal manner, that indicators concerning specific aspects of the phenomenon show its timeless and constant presence. In other words, educational inequality remains an unaltered constant as a key feature of education systems.

Educational inequality is a phenomenon that is measurable, it is easily perceptible and understood, not only for specialists but also for non-specialists -in consequence for almost the entire social body- and in the final analysis it is visible, hence potentially manageable. The fact that it is visible and easily understood, just because it is measurable, gives a comparative advantage in its understanding and apparently its management.

The interesting matter, however, concerning the phenomenon of educational inequality is the way each participant perceives its essence, its dimensions, its aspects and practices. And this issue is related to the ideological framework in which each and every one of us places it, perceives it and interprets it. The most important thing, however, is whether we recognize it as a social pathogenic form or as an inevitable and "logical" effect of social dynamic (Breen, & Jonsson, 2005).

## 2. Educational Inequality and Social Inequality

Educational inequality is an aspect, a partial dimension of the greater pathogenicity of the existing social inequality. It has its source in social inequality and there it eventually discharges. It is known that educational inequality is based on social inequality, that is to say the unequal distribution of resources in a society. When educational systems operate based on the existing social inequality, they reproduce it and boost it (Baker, 2011). Thus, social inequality turns into educational inequality and then it is transformed into social inequality again (Hout & DiPrete, 2006).

In a further view, educational inequality can be seen on the basis of two general approaches: on the one hand, there are the approaches that study it in the framework of the broader cultural differentiation, which is reproduced through school mechanisms and acquires forms of educational differentiation (Bernstein, 1961; Bourdieu, 1973; Lareau, 1997, 2000 & 2006). On the other hand, there are theories that identify the basic dynamic of educational inequality in the socially unequal distribution of resources within the education system (Keller & Zavalloni, 1964; Goldthorpe, 2000; Boudon, 1974). However, the central and "common" intersection point of the two approaches is the role of education as a social superstructure. The superstructure is there to manipulate collective consciousness, in such a way, so that the domination of the means of production by a minor, but dominant, elite as well as the existing social relationships within the production procedure, shall be continued and consolidated.

Besides, according to Marx "(...) in the social production of life, people enter specific social relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, production relations which correspond to certain stages of the development of their productive forces. These production relationships, in total, constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. It is not the consciousness of people that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence is the one that determines their consciousness" (Marx, 1968: 181-185). The oxymoronic forms that capitalism created brought the dominance of the economic base (Gramsci, 1971: 162; Althusser, 1971: 135) on the superstructure, although Engels points out that this is an interaction. The educational system, as a superstructure, maintains and reproduces the production relationships, the unequal distribution of wealth in society, creating the conditions so that the children of the middle class can be equipped with "social skills" that will allow them to maintain their privileges and class position they inherit from their family. The theories of conflict (Marxian and Marxist)<sup>2</sup> recognize in the school the targeted and systematic reproduction of the terms of class stratification and the class and social benefits which result from it (Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Breen & Jonsson, 2005; Erikson & Goldthorpe, 2002; Nash, 2006; Ishida et al. 1995).

T. Parsons and other structural functionalist sociologists believe that what differentiates people each other in achieving their goals, is nothing more than their personal characteristics, among which is their mental capacity which in the school system is formalized with IQ measures. Parsons attributes little value to other factors which constitute the key characteristics of each individual, like the social class in which his family belongs, his cultural heritage, etc. However, it is worth noting that structural functionalist sociologists, like P.M Blau and O.D. Duncan, recognize that the choice of school is influenced not only by meritocratic but also by some racial and social criteria (Blau & Duncan, 1967). The efforts of structural functionalists to identify educational inequality focus on areas within the school mechanisms, such as functional structures and their organization. For example, in America, some efforts are directed towards attributing educational inequality to different community schools (Mayer et al. 2000; Lewis et al. 2000; Kozol, 1991; Greenwald et al. 1996;

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<sup>2</sup> With the first term, we refer to the theories which emanate directly from orthodox Marxism, are composed strictly on the basis of classical texts of Marx-Engels and Lenin, whereas with the second term we refer to secondarily amended neo-Marxist or Marxian theories of modern times.

Oakes, 1985) and different school programs, which apparently favor some or being unfair to others. Also, other approaches investigate teacher–student relationships, for example, how the teacher serves as a model for the student and how he fulfills his educational work according to the expectations and origin of students (Rivkin et al. 1998; Goldhaber & Brewer, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 1987; Boe & Gilford, 1992; Mansfield, 2014). No matter how much these approaches ignored class conflicts and social dynamic, they contributed significantly to the study of educational inequality, given that they investigated two extremely important versions of the phenomenon, as the school organization and the teacher–student relationship. The structural functional theory understands the role of the school as, a century ago, E. Durkheim described it (Durkheim, 1997; Antonopoulou, 2008: 182; Craib, 2012). The school, according to structural functionalists, acts as a counterweight which maintains the social scales in equilibrium, at a level where there are no social conflicts. At school there is no social discrimination and school success is based only on students' individual abilities to assimilate the offered values and knowledge. Those who succeed will cover the best paid social positions of highest prestige.

There is systematic attention of many governments and international organizations on how people perceive and experience social inequality. Research which has been carried out, relates to the role that states and international organizations can assume towards reducing these inequalities. Educational inequalities have not been investigated systematically or individually -they have been investigated only in the wider context of social inequality. That's why the literature does not include any research of attitudes towards educational inequalities in particular (Jowell et al. 1993; Jowell et al. 1989; Becker et al. 1990; Frizzell & Pammett, 1996; Hillard and Phádraig, 2007; Haller et al. 2009).

The post-analysis of studies (General Society Survey) in the US on social policy shows that American citizens recognize that they experience significant inequalities in the USA and see as a containment tool the consolidation of stronger and broader social policies. The increase of funding for education is considered as one of the social policy tools for the reduction of social inequalities although education, traditionally in the US, is not considered a social policy tool (McCall & Kenworthy, 2009; Hicks, 1999; Korpi, 1983; Huber & Stephens, 2001; Wilensky, 1975). Research in the US has shown that, while in general social inequalities are not connected directly in the conscience of citizens with inequalities in education, there were certain periods during which an unexpected interest for educational expenditure was shown and a correlation between education and social inequalities was observed (McCall & Kenworthy, 2009: 468).

In Great Britain it has been shown that, while society is concerned about social inequalities and asks for corrective interventions on behalf of the state through social policies, it does not associate any possible inequalities in health and education with the broader context of economic inequalities (Hills & Stewart, 2005). It is characteristic, of course, the fact that the citizens state that they would be willing to pay more taxes in order the education and health systems to be improved, admitting at the same time that the taxes they pay are high (Orton & Rowlingson, 2007; Sefton, 2003, 2005<sup>a</sup>, 2005<sup>b</sup>; Rowlingson & McKay, 2005; Runciman, 1972).

Research on the way European citizens experience social inequalities showed that they correlate them with educational inequalities, giving an important role to education for the reproduction of social inequalities (Alesina, & Giuliano, 2009; Keller et. al, 2010). It is worthwhile to be noted, that the way Europeans and Americans perceive social inequalities is different, and so is their impact on their daily lives. It seems that for Europeans social inequalities affect more and more systematically their everyday life and happiness (Alesina et al. 2004). However, it is interesting to note that in countries with selective educational systems, the more educated citizens' demand in a stable manner a greater investment in education (Horn, 2009; Marks, 2005). It seems, however, that the way children aged 15 perceive inequalities, is more related to their experiences outside school than to educational inequalities, which they are unable to distinguish (Mostafa, 2009; Green, 2008). The school with the dominant values that it consolidates and the diffusion of the dominant liberal ideology seems to have managed to convince students that the way it functions, is the only objective and meritocratic. Children are convinced that if something happens that is not fair, it happens outside the school.

The way each population experiences, or not, social or educational inequalities, depends on many factors. Obviously, it depends on age, the social group or class that it belongs, its cultural capital. However, another important factor that affects the attitudes of a population towards social inequalities is also the "acceptable level of inequality", that is to say the theoretical or ideological level of inequality that a population considers up to a point acceptable or even inevitable (Lübker, 2004). People could still tolerate social inequality, if this guaranteed their own prosperity or, if the dominant ideology "allowed" something like this (Hirschman, 1973; Suhrcke, 2001; Senik, 2009).

Another important factor that has emerged in the research on the attitudes towards social inequalities is the relationship that exists between the inequality that people have experienced and the attitudes towards inequalities. The greater the inequality they have experienced is, the stronger the negative attitudes towards inequalities are (Osberg & Smeeding, 2006; Gijberts, 2002; Austen, 2002). Indeed, a relevant study on the attitudes of the American population

towards inequalities showed that the attitudes of this population depend on the general level of income and the general level of income by state. The most important factor that determines the attitudes towards inequalities is the way each participant experiences his/her everyday life (Kelly & Moore - Clingenpeel, 2012).

### 3. The Research

The data presented here are part of a broader research effort, which began in February 2014. In this specific research dissertations produced at the School of Early Childhood Education of AUTh were integrated<sup>3</sup>. However, the larger part of the corpus of data (during the time of writing 800 questionnaires were collected) was collected by colleagues in various universities of the country.

In the study two tools were used: A questionnaire which includes (a) demographic and social data, (b) a scale of attitudes towards social inequalities and (c) a scale of attitudes towards educational inequalities. Also, a questionnaire which includes (a) demographic and social data and (b) a topic title, which the subjects of the research are required to develop in writing in a continuous text. The five- point Likert-type scales were used.

Our sample which responded to the attitude scales and to the questionnaire of written development consists of 800 undergraduate students, 380 of which are men (47.5%) and 420 women (52.5%). The students' texts were analyzed using the method of quantitative and qualitative content analysis and, in particular the method of classic thematic analysis (Berelson, 1971; Krippendorff, 1980; De Sola Pool, 1959; Palmquist, 1990; Weber, 1990; Bardin, 1977; Moscovici, 1970; Mucchiali, 1988; Veron, 1981; Grawitz, 1981; Giroux, 1994; Curley, 1990; Chaitidou et al. 2013; Kyridis et al. 2004; Avramidou et al. 2014; Tsioumis et al. 2006; Zagkos et al. 2007).

The validation and reliability check of the two attitude scales and the content analysis gave acceptable indexes (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Validity and reliability control of research tools

Scale...	Cronbach's alpha
of social inequalities	0.79
of educational inequalities	0.81
Total scale	0.83
Cohen's Index Kappa <sup>4</sup> (Content Analysis)	0.94

The demographic and social characteristics of the sample are presented in the following Table 2.

**Table 2.** Demographic and social characteristics of the sample

Gender	f	%	Labor	f	%
Male	380	47.5	Yes	125	15.6
Female	420	52.5	No	675	84.4
Father's profession	f	%	Mother's profession	f	%
Free professional – Scientist	135	16.9	Free professional – Scientist	105	13.1
Civil servant	148	18.5	Civil servant	201	25.1
Private employee	121	15.1	Private employee	101	12.6
Free professional - handyman	103	12.9	Free professional - handyman	54	6.8
Trader	96	12.0	Trader	82	10.3
Worker	77	9.6	Worker	75	9.4
Farmer	69	8.6	Farmer	97	12.1
Housekeeping	51	6.4	Housekeeping	85	10.6

<sup>3</sup> We thank warmly the university students, and today's graduates, Paraskevi Nestoropoulou and Sofia Petridou for their participation in the research, through their dissertations in a limited sample of a quantitative (125 subjects) and qualitative version of the research.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen's Index Kappa is given by the formula  $\kappa = \frac{\text{Pr}(a) - \text{Pr}(e)}{1 - \text{Pr}(e)}$ . See analytically Cohen, J. (1960). A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement* (20)1, 37–46. Scott, W. (1955). Reliability of content analysis: The case of nominal scale coding. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 17, 321-325. Uebersax, J. S. (1987). Diversity of decision-making models and the measurement of interrater agreement. *Psychological Bulletin*, 101, 140-146. Strijbos, J., Martens, R., Prins, F., & Jochems, W. (2006). Content analysis: What are they talking about? *Computers & Education*, 46, 29-48. Smeeton, N. C. (1985). *Early History of the Kappa Statistic. Biometrics*, 41, 795.

Father's education			Mother's education		
Illiterate	f	%	Illiterate	f	%
Primary school graduate	26	3.3	Primary school graduate	40	5.0
Secondary education graduate	56	7.0	Secondary education graduate	87	10.9
Technological educational institute graduate	402	50.3	Technological educational institute graduate	388	48.5
Tertiary education graduate	97	12.1	Tertiary education graduate	75	9.4
Postgraduate diploma Holder	142	17.8	Postgraduate diploma Holder	142	17.8
	77	9.6		68	8.5
Field of studies			Universities/ technological educational institutes		
Humanistic studies	f	%	Universities	f	%
Pedagogical studies	256	32	Technological educational institutes	600	75
Sciences	225	28.1		200	25
Social sciences	198	24.8	Political ideology		
	121	15.1	Extreme right wing (level 1)	f	%
Residence			Right wing (level 2)	45	5.6
Athens- Thessaloniki	f	%	Centre wing (level 3)	174	21.8
Urban area	358	44.8	Left wing (level 4)	258	32.3
Large village	267	33.4	Extreme left wing (level 5)	207	25.9
Rural area	100	12.5	Anarchism (level 6)	74	9.3
	75	9.4		42	5.3
Level of studies			Age		
Undergraduate degree	f	%	18-22	f	%
Postgraduate degree	580	72.5	>23	655	81.9
	220	27.5		145	18.1
			Degree of politicization		
			None (level 1)	f	%
			Some (level 2)	101	12.63
			So-so (level 3)	328	41.00
			Enough (level 4)	94	11.75
			Very much (level 5)	243	30.38
				34	4.25

#### 4. Results

The means of the two scales show that students recognize the existence of social and educational inequalities. The mean for the scale of social inequalities is 3.84 while the mean for the scale of educational inequalities is 3.63 (see Table 3). The difference of 0.21 points, obviously, is also due to the fact that the university students are considered a "favored" social group by the education system, since they managed to enter university. Thus, the educational inequality they have experienced is clearly smaller. On the other hand, even those who managed to be admitted to universities experienced the agony and the difficulties that their families faced against the harsh realities of everyday life and its problems, especially in relation to their children's education.

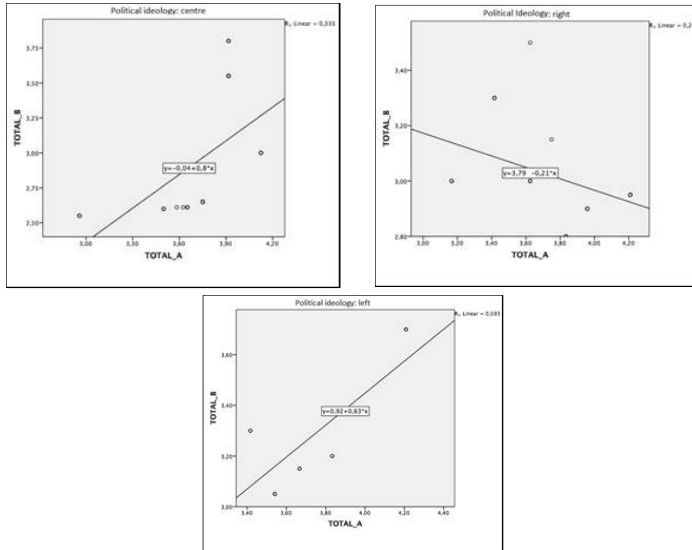
Table 3. Means per scale

Scale...	Mean
of Social Inequalities	3.84
of Educational Inequalities	3.63
Total scale	3.73

By creating two new variables from the mean scores of each scale (Social inequalities scale = TOTAL\_A and Educational Inequalities Scale = TOTAL\_B), we observe that the two scales present a moderate to weak correlation but at a statistically significant level ( $r = 0.257, p=0.04$ ). Indeed, they also present linear regression with the A scale describing the 7% of the variance of B ( $R^2 = 0.066$ ) and the more TOTAL\_A increases the more TOTAL\_B increases.

Examining, also, the sample according to the ideological integration, we find a statistically significant correlation between TOTAL\_A and TOTAL\_B about the ideological integration among the values of "Right to Extreme Left wing" (in the rest it is not found because the sample is too small). In particular, it is interesting that in the case of ideological integration in "Right wing", a negative coefficient of linear regression appears. In other words, as TOTAL\_B increases TOTAL\_A decreases. In the other two levels of ideological integration ("Center wing" and "Left wing") we have positive linear regression. At the ideological level "Centre" we have a very steep slope, while at the ideological level "Left wing"

the slope is smaller, but the proportion of variance of TOTAL\_B which is described by TOTAL\_A is very high (59.3%) (see the following three diagrams ).



The relevant ANOVA criterion shows that the mean of the sample does not differ in relation to the ideological integration of the subjects for scale TOTAL\_A, but it differs significantly from a statistical point of view in scale TOTAL\_B (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Mean differences in relation to the ideological integration for TOTAL\_A and TOTAL\_B scales

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
TOTAL_A	Between Groups	.762	4	.191	1.943	.108
	Within Groups	10.983	112	.098		
	Total	11.745	116			
TOTAL_B	Between Groups	2.692	4	.673	7.112	.000
	Within Groups	10.600	112	.095		
	Total	13.292	116			

More specifically, according to the Post Hoc Tests, the significant mean differences were observed between the ideological integration level 2 and 4 (Mean Difference=-0.26235, Std. Error=0.08105,  $p=0.016 < 0.05$ ), the levels 3 and 4 (Mean Difference=-0.36225, Std. Error=0.07806,  $p=0.0005 < 0.05$ ) and 3 and 6 (Mean Difference=-0.43225, Std. Error=0.14573,  $p=0.037 < 0.05$ ).<sup>5</sup>

As far as politicization is concerned, the ANOVA criterion shows that they differ significantly from a statistic point of view in both scales (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Mean differences in relation to the Degree of Politicization for TOTAL\_A and TOTAL\_B scales

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
TOTAL_A	Between Groups	2.843	4	.711	9.108	.000
	Within Groups	8.895	114	.078		
	Total	11.738	118			
TOTAL_B	Between Groups	1.938	4	.485	4.472	.002
	Within Groups	12.353	114	.108		
	Total	14.291	118			

<sup>5</sup> For the decodification of the ideological integration levels see Table 2 above.

More specifically, according to the Post Hoc Tests in TOTAL\_A scale the significant mean differences were observed between the Degree of Politicization level 1 and 3 (Mean Difference= -0.38591, Std. Error=0.10381, p=0.003<0.05), the level 2 and 4 (Mean Difference=0.24707, Std. Error=0.06132, p=0.001<0.05), level 2 and 5 (Mean Difference=0.37670, Std. Error=0.13114, p=0.049<0.05), level 3 and 4 (Mean Difference=0.40906, Std. Error=0.08798, p=0.0005<0.05), 3 and 5 (Mean Difference=0.53869, Std. Error=0.14553, p=0.003<0.05).

Relatively to the TOTAL\_B scale, significant mean differences were observed between the levels 1 and 3 (Mean Difference=0.35833, Std. Error=0.12233, p=0.041<0.05) and the levels 2 and 3 (Mean Difference=0.32194, Std. Error=0.09976, p=0.016<0.05).<sup>6</sup>

## 5. Content Analysis

The content analysis was done with the “Theme” as a unit of analysis and gave 6362 references, which were classified into eight thematic categories.

**Table 6.** Distribution of references into thematic categories and subcategories.

Thematic categories and subcategories	%	v
<b>1. Definition of inequality (in the education system)</b>	<b>5.27</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>2. Forms of inequality</b>	<b>17.67</b>	<b>1124</b>
2.1 Cultural	4.94	314
2.1.1 Race-Nation	2.62	167
2.1.2 Religious	2.15	137
2.2 Economic	4.21	268
2.3 Political	1.38	88
2.4 Social	4.73	301
2.5 In relation to gender	0.94	60
2.6 Geographical	1.46	93
<b>3. Aim of education</b>	<b>5.93</b>	<b>377</b>
3.1 Socialization of the individual - teacher-student interaction	1.82	116
3.2 Supply of knowledge	3.18	202
3.3 Cultivation of critical thinking, development of intellectual and emotional abilities	0.52	33
3.4 To take into consideration people with special needs	0.41	26
<b>4. The role of the state</b>	<b>10.92</b>	<b>695</b>
4.1 Provision of free education and confrontation of private tutorials	4.75	302
4.2 Material support for schools	3.25	207
4.3 Employment of new teachers and reliable supervision	1.37	87
4.4 Access of students to schools and universities regardless of geographical position	1.56	99
<b>5. Intolerance of the education system</b>	<b>17.65</b>	<b>1123</b>
5.1 Teachers' indifference - ignorance of some issues/prevalence of teacher-centered education	1.68	107
5.2 Execution of examinations, competition	6.26	398
5.3 Unequal opportunities, non tuition fees- free education	5.00	318
5.4 Public # private education, presence of private tutoring schools	4.72	300
<b>6. Role of politics</b>	<b>4.94</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>7. Intolerance of education policy</b>	<b>20.84</b>	<b>1326</b>
7.1 Power relationships	5.77	367
7.2 Corruption	6.88	438
7.3 Maintenance of the system	4.84	308
7.4 Crisis, unemployment	3.35	213
<b>8. Cases of inequalities</b>	<b>16.78</b>	<b>1068</b>
8.1 NO	12.29	782
8.2 YES	4.50	286
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6362</b>

<sup>6</sup> For the decodification of the Politicization Degree levels see Table 2 above.

**Table 7.** Indicative references by thematic category and subcategory (The original syntax and spelling of the answers is followed).

Thematic categories and subcategories	Percentage %
<b>1. Definition of inequality (in the education system)</b>	<b>5.27</b>
	<i>(Outstanding specialization .../ Since there are no equal opportunities for all students, there are inequalities...).</i>
<b>2. Forms of inequality</b>	<b>17.67</b>
2.1 Cultural	<i>(The education system separates the children born "Greek" from the children who came to Greece as immigrants.../ There are inequalities and are particularly directed to children from different countries.../ Since there are stereotypes/ Even the system that was implemented for Muslims in Greece , creates a phenomenon of inequality.../ Finally, racist beliefs have no place in education.../Racism in the education system influences a great deal the treatment of a child or teacher in the school environment...).</i>
2.1.1 Races/Nation	<i>(The Greek education system functions racially towards the children that come from other countries/ We also notice inequality among students of a different racial background).</i>
2.1.2 Religious	<i>(The Greek school is Greek-centered and whoever believes in another religion experiences inequalities)</i>
2.2 Economic	<i>(So, inequality is caused because of the economic situation.../ Economic inequalities are noticed among students and are due to the different economic classes, which have become more evident in the last decade.../As they cannot afford to acquire the education that they want.../The way it is structured and organized, it favors the children who come from middle or higher social levels.../Who cannot meet the requirements of the school units and do not have the finances to request further assistance...) <i>(Halls of residence accommodate a small number of students.../if someone does not have money to pay the rent, he/she will have to commute or drop out.../There is no forethought for children whose standard of living is lower...).</i></i>
2.3 Political	<i>(I believe that even the inclusion of the parties in education and in the field of education in general creates a form of inequality ...).</i>
2.4 Social	<i>(From a social viewpoint, there are inequalities among students.../There are also inequalities towards students who enter universities who come from higher and lower economic and social levels.../are directly related to the social status of each.../Social inequality...).</i>
2.5 In relation to gender	<i>(Sex discrimination... men usually have more chances of studying somewhere.../Mainly the middle-class boys' interests, which are usually expressed through extracurricular activities, define the norm...).</i>
2.6 Geographical	<i>(For example, the level of education which is offered to children in big cities is usually of a higher level than that which is offered in the provinces and especially in the small villages and islands.../Geographical differentiation.../e.g. village and city.../Geographically, inequalities are noticed among provincial, border areas and big cities.../ The geography of Greece does not allow it (wide spreading) but this is no excuse.../Children who live in villages, big villages, remote areas and islands do not have access to libraries or the Internet...).</i>
<b>3. Aim of education</b>	<b>5.93</b>
3.1 Socialization of the individual - teacher-student interaction	<i>(Education, theoretically, is a key element for socialization and so the human from an early age is obliged to receive it.../ As a result the school will become a small society for children.../So as to prepare them for life .../The children will be prepared for society.../The role of education is the socialization and social inclusion of the individual.../In addition, the aim of the education system is to connect the children, to find similarities and not differences, something that does not happen in reality...).</i>
3.2 Provision of knowledge about the world and maintenance of children's innocence	<i>(No faculty prepares you for what you will face in the job market...). <i>(The apparent comfort that the education system should offer is transformed into a "struggle for predominance" .../With the risk of losing the innocence...).</i></i>
3.3 Cultivation of critical thinking, development of intellectual and emotional abilities	<i>(So that these societies are intelligent.../and not enervated).</i>
3.4 To take into consideration people with special needs	<i>(The children with dyslexia or other learning disorders are a very important example of inequality.../It is widely accepted that teachers are not well-informed...).</i>
<b>4. The role of the state</b>	<b>10.92</b>
4.1 Provision of tuition fees-free education and confrontation of private tutorials [frontistirio]	<i>(The phenomenon of private tutorials is, obviously, another factor of inequality in the educational process.../Having as a result the constant boosting of private tutorials in our country.../And the state should offer an amount of money to Greek families with low income, exclusively for private lessons or lessons in tutoring schools for their children ...).</i>
4.2 Material support for schools	<i>(That many times lack basic equipment.../There are inequalities as far as equipment is concerned.../For example, some schools have laboratories, gyms etc, whereas others do not have even the basic facilities.../One more reason that perpetuates inequalities in schools, is that students are obliged to have lessons in ugly school buildings.../But also in buildings inappropriate for schools.../Some schools lack educational material (books, teachers, etc).../The inequalities that exist in the Greek education system are incorporated in material/technical infrastructures ...)</i>
4.3 Employment of new teachers and reliable supervision	<i>(And nowadays there is lack of teachers in comparison with bigger cities.../There should be weekly inspections in schools.../And this happens because a large number of educators are not efficient.../And they are not controlled by anyone, so the situation perpetuates.../An equally important inequality in the Greek education system is created by the non-assessment of teachers ...)</i>



4.4 Access of students to schools and universities regardless of geographical position	(Individuals who live in big cities have more opportunities than those who live in the provinces.../One, that I could mention, is the weakness that children in the provinces have to receive some help e.g. private lessons etc...).
<b>5. Intolerance of the education system</b>	<b>17.65</b>
5.1 Indifference of teachers-ignorance of certain issues/prevalence of teacher-centered education	(With the teacher or the examination-centered procedure as the absolute and flawless judge.../Teachers of secondary education organize their lesson, taking for granted that all students receive tutorial aid.../and offer more opportunities of participation to good students for the fastest execution of the lesson.../Since all children do not receive the same attention from teachers of each level,.../and most of the times, from teachers who are uninformed and with insufficient knowledge.../It is an accepted fact that teachers are not adequately updated ...)
5.2 Execution of examinations, competition,	(Education is based on the accomplishment of goals that can be measured.../It is about an environment that favors competition.../Admission examinations are "prohibitive", without tutorial aid.../Since the system is characterized by grade-orientation ...).
5.3 Unequal opportunities, not tuition fees-free education	(Therefore, there are no equal opportunities towards everyone,.../And parents (those who can afford it) are forced to pay for additional private education.../Since "free education" is a hoax.../Even though the Greek education system is considered to be free, in reality it isn't ...).
5.4 Students' indifference	(Students do not pay enough attention.../But they also do not have the right attitude towards teachers...).
5.5 Public # private education, presence of private tutoring	(On the other hand, because a number of students and parents scorn the public school.../Like the ability to pay tutoring schools, for better results in exams.../So, it drives students-university students to private education to cover the gaps of the public school.../Especially, in public schools where students, because of the quality of teachers, working hours (student takeovers), have to resort to private tutoring).
<b>6. Role of politics</b>	<b>4.94</b>
	(The Greek government and the ministry of education are responsible for this because they do not take the appropriate measures...)
<b>7. Intolerance of educational policy</b>	<b>20.84</b>
7.1 Power relations	(Relations of inequality and exploitation exist everywhere. As long as power relations exist... yes, there are inequalities.../This year the refectory has been sold to an individual who naturally wants to make a profit and not to "take care of" university students.
7.2 Corruption	(As a consequence some people profit from this and others are alienated and ruined...).
7.3 Maintenance of the system	(And the system is responsible for this.../It is good in theory, but what about in practice?.../But it "contributes" to their perpetuation so as to maintain the well-structured, ordered system...).
7.4 Crisis, unemployment	(There are also some university students who, because of the crisis, leave the city where they study, so it is impossible for them to continue with their studies.../Because even if you have a degree, you cannot find a job.../And this happens because there is economic crisis in Greece ).
<b>8. Matters of inequality</b>	<b>16.78</b>
8.1 No	(In Greece, education is public and free in all its levels.../Ensuring, this way, equal rights to university students of every level.../No, I don't believe that there are inequalities in the education system.../Everything is equal in the Greek education system ...)
8.2 Yes	(There are inequalities in the Greek education system, even today.../Of course there are inequalities in the Greek education system.../I believe that the Greek education system is not meritocratic.../When someone hears the word "system", he can immediately realize that it has to do with inequalities...).
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The students focus their answers on three key issues related to educational inequalities: (a) the forms of educational inequalities, (b) the political system and (c) the intolerance of the education system. It is interesting, however, that, in total, 36.15% of the references concern the role of politics and the state. It is clear that educational inequalities are connected cohesively and eventually emerge as a result of politics and not as a clear social phenomenon. It is also encouraging the fact that the university students are able to recognize and comment on the forms and substance of educational inequalities, while at the same time they recognize and describe the intolerance of the education system. Finally, it should be noted that a large number of references, regardless of their thematic classification, focused on the issue of public and free education and its "final cost" for Greek families.

## 6. Discussion

Greece is a country where the dominant neoliberal ideology on meritocracy and equal opportunities has penetrated deeply into the social consciousness and every aspect of everyday social life, from work to education and the dominant culture. One would expect that university students, the "favored" ones of the educational system, through their self-promotion in the educational context, would hardly recognize and highlight social and educational inequality issues. Even more, one would expect them to consider social and educational inequalities as inevitable, since they would occur as a component of meritocracy and of its "unfortunate" manifestations in the educational system and in the Greek social web.

However, the responses on the two scales and the thematic analysis of the texts showed that the sample has realized that the Greek educational system functions selectively, within a society where social inequalities exist.

It is worthwhile, that class distinction between the rich and the poor is the central issue for the recognition of social inequalities and of the eventual educational inequalities. Wealth and poverty constitute for the sample the most important distinction among the population and the element that mainly shapes the matrix of social inequalities. In addition, the social inequalities that students have experienced, as well as the educational, when they exist, seem to affect the sample's answers, especially in the written texts, where the expression of personal experiences is distinct. Even the "successful" of the education system recognize, possibly through their experiences, both the educational and social inequalities. For example, unemployment, declining household income, debts, and tutoring schools, family expenses for complementary and supplementary education (foreign languages, music, sports) are phenomena that have been experienced by almost all Greek families, in one way or another. The students and their families, in their majority, have experienced some of the phenomena mentioned above during the crisis or even before it. It seems that the real cost of education is what determines educational inequalities. Children, today male and female university students, have realized and understood the financial sacrifices made by their families, in order for them to be educated and go to university.

Besides the inequalities that students have experienced, the sample refers to a nexus between social and educational inequalities, which presents a variety of forms of expression. And in this respect, the research results are absolutely encouraging, as they demonstrate that the sample has a social conscience and the ability to think critically, since it resists the dominant ideology of the "excellent" and "meritocracy" (Smith & Knight, 1982; Codd, 1993). The "social destiny" and the "socially inevitable" are not included, at an alarming rate, in the attitudes, nor are they included in the rhetoric of the youth. Thus, the recognition of the social factors and variables that lead and sustain social and especially educational inequality, such as cultural differences (ie. religion, language, particular culture), geographical inequalities, economic inequalities (Kyridis et al. 2011), and even physical disabilities, all together make up the cornerstone of the sensitive social conscience and the prerequisite for the development of negative attitudes towards inequalities.

Furthermore, it's very interesting and encouraging the fact that, as it is reflected in the attitudes and rhetoric of the youth, in their consciousness and thinking there is still inherent the collective responsibility and expression. At the same time that the liberal and neoliberal ideological onslaught is trying to shift the responsibility of everyday life and its pathogens from collectivism to individualism, the sample clearly shows with its choices that civil prosperity remains the responsibility of the organized society and that social policy is exclusively the responsibility of the state. The language of the sample is very dense and most of the times clearly denunciatory, as regards the criminalization of the state for the creation and maintenance of social and educational inequalities, and its statutory obligation to eliminate them.

The sample appears to adopt, though not with particular emphasis, the confrontational theory (Marxian and neomarxist) for the understanding and interpreting of social and educational inequalities. This is easily seen by their degree of agreement in the individual statements of the two scales, which refer to basic principles and "theorems" of the Marxian and Marxist theory, like class reproduction, educational capital of the family, cultural background, etc. At the same time, it stands critically against basic principles of the liberal theory, as it is expressed by basic theorems and principles of functionalism and structural functionalism. However, we should point out that the answers of the sample and the correlations with its demographic characteristics, which indicate its class or social inclusion, do not show a clear framework of class consciousness and this is in agreement with the findings of our earlier research (Bassiou et al. 2012).

Finally, another very interesting element is the attribution of responsibilities for the existence of social and educational inequalities to the political web and its state expression, instead of the society as a whole. It seems that the sample has realized that educational institutions are under the influence of a continuous and intense political administration, which often seems to be cut off or at least in asymptotic orbit in relation to the social web (Kyridis, 1994; Sotiropoulou et al. 2011; Zajda, 2010). Of course, at the same time, the sample seems not to understand that politics is an expression of social will (Kyridis et al. 2012). Politics is responsible for everything that happened and everything that is going to happen as if the society is not responsible for its choices. In our opinion, this is worrying since, in the final analysis, it distinguishes politics from social will, as if they are unconnected and unrelated to each other, and this is a sign of a low political culture. Especially the last ascertainment also results from the degree of political participation of young people in elections of any kind (Karatasos et al. 2007; Kyridis et al. 2011).

The recognition of social and educational inequalities and the attitudes of the sample towards their existence and forms, together with the attribution of important responsibilities to the political system and the state, raise a social cohesion issue (Bernard, 1999; Dickes et al. 2009; Dickes, 2010; Jenson, 1998; Markus, 2010). Social cohesion, as a concept and as a social phenomenon, is directly related to social identity, social values and social norms. It can be

measured through (a) the general trust in anonymous co-participants, (b) the level of transparency and corruption, (c) the trust in social rules and institutions, (d) the tolerance and multiculturalism and (e) the social values and the sense of belonging (Jaeyeol & Dukjin, 2009). Failure to trust teachers and political institutions and references to corruption as well as low political participation of young people, which has been measured in previous researches, are indexes of cohesion problems in Greek society (Kyridis, in press; Kyridis et al. 2011<sup>a</sup>; Kyridis et al. 2011<sup>b</sup>; Kyridis et al. 2006; Karatasos et al. 2007). Besides, social vulnerability, which affects Greek society, is one of the major factors for the disintegration of social cohesion (Kyridis, 2014).

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