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Forms of infringement of the right to education in contemporary Greek educational structures

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The classical philosophical distinction between positive and negative rights poses the question about where education stands and draws an invaluable opportunity to explore the implications of this distinction in the context of modern Greek educational reality. This paper discusses education as touching the sphere of both right categories, by incorporating simultaneously a) prerequisites of state financing obligations (positive dimension), and b) patterns of people's free choice with respect to the received education (negative dimension).

Contrary to these conditions, it is argued that the Greek educational system proves condemnatory for the realisation of education as a fundamental human right for two reasons. First, poor state financing pushes families to extended private expenditures, creating class dichotomies and making education a 'public' good to be 'purchased' on basis of people's social profile and economic ability. Secondly, the overwhelmingly centralised administration of education, in conjunction with the frequent legislative intervention of the state, diminishes liberal possibilities of free choice, since a) parents are unable to decide for the school of their children or get involved in educational planning, and b) young people are not granted entrance to universities in line with their cognitive preferences and inclinations, but rather according to a central allocating system tightly supervised by the Ministry of Education that blindly decides student placement.

Accessibility to tertiary education, state coercion, socio-economic inequities, rights, liberalisation of education

INTRODUCTION

A basic distinction that is classically drawn on rights is between **positive** and **negative** ones[1]. Positive rights are referred to as assertive entitlements that grant access to a good – as rights to the exercise of which others must provide fruitful preconditions. The right to medical care falls into this category, since it calls for practical conditions (doctors, hospitals, insurance policies) that will ensure respectful attention of people's health worries. Negative rights imply freedom from coercive actions of others, in that others must refrain from obstructing the exercise of one's right. Freedom of religion is a typical example of a negative right, since it refers to an individual as an agent free from outside interferences to express his worshipping faith.

[1] The distinction is attributed to Immanuel Kant's influential interpretation of the morality of rights. For him, humanity must always be treated as an end, not merely as a means. To treat a person as a mere means is to use a person to advance one's own interest. But to treat a person as an end is to respect that person's dignity by allowing each the freedom to choose for himself or herself. Kant's principle is often used to justify both a fundamental moral right, the right to freely choose for oneself, and also rights related to this fundamental right.

The right to education is distinctively both a positive and a negative right, requiring helpful state policies and financial investments in human and material infrastructure for its realisation and bringing forward liberal aspects of free choice with respect to people's received education. It occupies a central place in the human rights agenda and is indispensable for the exercise of a myriad other rights and for development. At the home page of its official website, UNESCO states that as an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalised people can fit themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities (http://portal.unesco.org/education/en).

Extensive research shows that education is linked to market-based and other non-market and social returns to individuals. The value of the increase in knowledge, skills, and productivity is reflected in earnings differences between identical individuals with different levels of schooling (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1962; OECD-UNESCO, 2002; Schultz, 1961). One's own education is also proved to affect positively his health status and the efficiency of choices made, as well as helps prevent criminal activity, enhance political participation and empowerment, diminish risks of social exclusion, and lessen economic and psychological costs of job search and turnover (McMahon, 2000; Wolfe and Haveman, 2002). Further to the future success of individuals, education is increasingly considered an investment in the collective future of societies and nations.

Education in Greece is state-provided and constitutionally safeguarded. Article (16) of the Greek Constitution prescribes that "education constitutes a basic mission for the State…", and that "all Greeks are entitled to free education on all levels at State educational institutions…". The state explicitly wraps education in a rights-language, thus assuming the responsibility to treat and respect it in both its positive and negative dimension.

The perception of education as a free of charge and equal provision to all citizens comprises the main political stance upheld by Greece in domestic and international foray. Based on fiscal and demographic research, this paper argues that such perception is largely a lip-service political slogan that lacks practical confirmation and that, contrary to constitutional provisions, the domestic educational system encourages, rather than diminishes, social inequalities. Further, it is explained that the centralist tradition of educational management inherent in the administrative temperament of the Greek state leaves plenty of room to wonder whether people are truly free in exercising unobstructed choices when it comes to the planning of their educational objectives.

PARAMETERS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY

The basic Anglo-Saxon framework of general governmental obligations includes basic steps as to make education available and accessible to citizens on a non-discriminatory basis (Tomasevski, 2001). In terms of participation to education, Greece acquires a favorable (well above European averages) position in international statistics. According to Eurostat, the European Commission and Eurydice (2002), 77.8 per cent of twenty-two year-olds have completed secondary education, while 18 per cent of the population is in tertiary education (Table 1). Similar favorable statistics are documented in OECD studies (2002 and 2003). Beyond the expansion of educational opportunities, however, background problems related to the growth of inequalities do exist.

Funding of Education

Maintaining equitable access to education is inextricably linked to issues of education finance. Having a right to a public good means that the government should subsidise and deliver whatever service is associated with the actualisation of such right. Free public education assumes that the state provides all necessary funds to the educational structure so that families, especially poor ones, do not have to contribute financially at a large scale. Under this view, the state plays a re-distributional role transferring funds from rich to poor families, the offsprings of which would not

have otherwise the chance to go to school and acquire adequate qualifications in the quest of future employment and a better life (Antoninis and Tsakloglou, 2001).

Table 1. Percentage of those aged 22 who have successfully completed secondary education, and students in tertiary education as a percentage of all pupils and students, 2000

Country	Secondary	Tertiary
Belgium	82.9	13
Denmark	75.2	15
Germany	78.5	12
Greece	80.5	21
Spain	69.3	21
France	83.7	14
Ireland	81.3	16
Italy	70.7	17
Portugal	44.7	17
Netherlands	73.1	14
Austria	85.9	16
Finland	89.8	21
Sweden	85.0	14
England	-	13
EU mean	75.5	15

Source: Eurostat, European Commission and Eurydice (2002), Figures E14 and F3.

However, Greece spends only as little as 3.6 per cent of the GDP in education, relative to an average 5.4 per cent of the European Union (Eurostat, European Commission and Eurydice, 2002). More specifically, in the absence of proper private universities, which are constitutionally banned and therefore lack domestic official recognition status as providers of tertiary education, the Greek educational system at the upper secondary level (*lyceum*) is characterised by competition for entry into public universities through the government-controlled Pan-Hellenic National Examinations. The intensity of the competition is being reflected through the small number of entrants, compared to the large body of candidates (Table 2).

Table 2. Upper secondary candidates and total entrants into higher education, 1993-2003

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Candidates	118855	124656	119662	116910	118810	119290	179285	-	-	134565	146700
Entrants	45382	45338	46494	47429	52224	56342	68025	81635	79370	78120	76315

Source: National Statistical Service of Greece (1992/93-1997/98), and Statistical Department of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.
Note: Accurate data missing for candidates of 2000 and 2001.

Traditional high social demand for monopolised state tertiary education, which has increased dramatically during the past decade, forces households into spending vast amounts of money for private and other forms of preparatory courses in cram schools called *frontisteria*, in order to raise their children's possibilities of entry. According to recent estimations of the General Consumers' Federation of Greece (2003; see also Psacharopoulos, 2003a), the total annual top private cost for these courses and other miscellaneous expenses reaches up to 4 millions euro, when the state spends accordingly almost one million less (European Commission, 2002; Ministry of Finance, 2004 - Table 3). No wonder that private expenditure in Greece equals the largest proportion of the family budget (2.4%) compared to other European Union countries (Eurostat, 2001).

Once into a university, families continue bearing most of the financial burdens of their children throughout the whole course of studies. Annual private costs per student are estimated from 6000 to 7000 euros (Katsikas, 2003), when in other European countries costs range from as little as 1830 to 5300 euros (University of Buffalo, 2000-2003). At the same time, the Greek state spends only 1797 to 3951 euros for student purposes, with a tendency to lower funding every subsequent year (as recorded in the state budgets, the overall decline the past five years in 2003 constant

prices has been 21.5 per cent for students in higher education and 47.2 per cent for students in higher technical institutions[2]). It is comic-tragic that for every tertiary education student Greece spends half of what Sweden spends for primary students.

Table 3. Greek public and private expenditures per educational level, 2003 (in thousand euros)

Educational level	Public expenditure[1]	Private expenditure[2]	
		TOP	BOTTOM
Primary	1.363.048	1.349.830	847.955
Secondary	1.669.215	2.720.448	1.948.769
Total	3.032.263	4.070.278	2.796.725

Source: [1] Ministry of Finance (2004); [2] General Consumers' Federation of Greece (2003).

Private expenditure on education is a rather urban phenomenon, associated with more profitable parental professions. While the Greater Athens area represents only 35.6 per cent of the country's households, its share of education spenders is 41.1 per cent. On the other hand, while households of rural areas represent 35.3 per cent of the sample, spenders account for only 26.4 per cent (Kanellopoulos and Psacharopoulos, 1997). Generally, better-off families spend four to five times more compared to poor ones.

The 'free' system clearly privileges better-off families, while leaving poor ones to their unfortunate luck. The obligation of the state to supplement the latter in order to equal the quality and quantity of educational opportunities through generous student-aid schemes is rather debatable. Eurydice statistics (1999) reveal that Greece comes last in providing scholarships, student loans, lodging, and other tax relief to needy students. Overall, public expenditure is judged insufficient to deal with demands of adequate finance and come up to constitutional promises about free education. Despite the steady rise in the number of students over the years, public subsidies remain considerable low and ineffective, calling families upon to fill in the huge financial gaps of the state budget, irrespective of their actual ability to do so (OECD, 1997).

'Social Ingredients' of the Student Population

It is documented that the economically higher layers of society are over-represented in public tertiary education (Psacharopoulos and Kazamias, 1985). As with private expenditure, access to higher education is closely linked to parents' profession and education, as well as to geographical region.

On the one hand, and in relation to the Pan-Hellenic university entrance examinations, the demographic data reveal that candidates coming from urban and major city areas have a 22.6 per cent failure (meaning that three out of four candidates are successful in entering tertiary education). At the same time, the failure proportion is more than double (49.6%) for those originating from rural and smaller city regions (Psacharopoulos and Tasoulas, 2004). This has mainly to do with the proportional difference in private spending intended for pre-university preparatory courses between families of urban (3.11%) and rural (1.61%) areas (ICAP, 2003): given the intense competition of the examinations, it is inevitable that candidates whose parents are in the privileged position to spend more on their preparation have higher success possibilities.

When examining the socio-economic background of the student population in universities (AEI's), on the other hand, we discover that the parents' profession and education is also a determining factor of access to tertiary institutions. According to the latest data of the National Statistical Service of Greece (1999), 55.3 per cent of the total entrants have a father with an

2 Tertiary education in Greece is divided into a) AEI's with a length of study of four+ years, and b) TEI's shorter cycle Technological Institutes of two-three years duration.

executive, white collar, or higher clerical profession, in contrast to the smaller proportion (26.4%) of those whose father is a farmer, manual or technical worker, or simply unemployed. Similarly, 66 per cent of the entrants come from well-educated parents holding graduate and postgraduate qualifications, while students with less-educated fathers (with lower secondary training or no schooling at all) comprise only 25.4 per cent of the total body of entrants.

In these circumstances, the Greek educational system turns out to be considerably selective, allowing university entry not on sole criteria of meritocracy (cognitive proficiency), but on socio-economic origin. Even in the event of failure in the Pan-Hellenic National Examinations, better-off households can still cater for the educational needs of their children by registering them in reputable universities abroad – a far remote choice for poor students who are doomed to low quality education, or no education at all[3].

PARAMETERS OF FREE CHOICE LIMITATIONS

Free choice that affects fulfillment of the personal aspirations of people is considered a fundamental individual right largely embedded in the philosophical tradition of the West. Despite being a declared ideological member of this tradition, the Greek system lacks those mechanisms that could encourage people's autonomous decisions with respect to the received education.

Entry in Higher Education and Implications for Employment

'Proper' (recognised) higher education in Greece is, as already mentioned, a state monopoly. Students enter universities not on basis of their top preferences for specific cognitive areas, but according to a central allocating system tightly supervised by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The fact that universities lack the power to control student entrance relates with their limited administrative autonomy, given the state's tight control over strategic issues of organisational and financial nature. The government's accompanying argument to justify central involvement in the student selection process is that state supervision guarantees an even distribution of the young human capital among universities for the benefit of the country's long-term developmental goals.

Paradoxically, though, the Ministry offers limited spaces in university departments of high student demand and market value (such as Economics, Business Administration, and Informatics), while being big-hearted in allowing entrance to outdated, practically unwanted departments – from both students and the job market (such as Theology, Anthropology, Sociology, and Geography). State financial provisions towards higher institutions are not sufficient to catch up with increasing enrolments, making higher education to suffer from severe austerity (Stamoulas, 2005). Therefore, the reason the Ministry fails to satisfy contemporary market trends and student preferences lies in the different running cost: departments offering purely theoretical studies and demanding very little investments in running laboratory and technology-based courses are cheaper and, therefore, easier to offer. Ultimately, however, the result is that the right of students to orient their studies freely is rather manipulated (Table 4).

[3] Indeed, Greece has a world record of young people studying in universities abroad. Foreign students amount to approximately 60,000 (almost one fifth of all domestic students), leading the country to an annual loss of 1 billion euros in foreign exchange.

Table 4. Indicative cognitive preferences of candidates taking the Pan-Hellenic examinations and offered positions by the Ministry of Education

Subject / higher institution	Student preferences	Offered positions
Economics / University of Piraeus	4734	165
Informatics / Athens University of Economics and Business	2252	145
Business administration / University of Macedonia	1602	275
Social theology / Kapodistrian University of Athens	212	225
Social anthropology / Aegean University	79	160
Geography / Aegean University	29	80

Source: Stamelos (2002).

What is more, in its effort to maintain the myth of free education and satisfy superficially the growing social demand for attainment of tertiary qualifications, the state creates more and more universities around the country, the academic areas of which show little, if any, connection with market demands and student inclinations (Massalas, 2002). This practice has triggered opposition even from the very academic community on grounds of being dually oxymorous: the state enlarges its financial responsibilities in running new universities, when it does so insufficiently for the already existed. Second, enlargement of the area of public tertiary education undermines future rights of graduates in finding a descent and rewarding job, when such education offers anachronistic and non-competitive qualifications in market terms.

At this point, graduates' certainty for a future white collar, high-skilled, well-paid job falls apart in the sight of a non-competitive degree, the acquisition of which has nevertheless drained them both financially and psychologically[4]. On the contrary, Greece has the largest proportion (40%) after Italy (48%) of young graduates who are forced to find employment that has no relevance to their university specialisation (Eurostat, 2003). This has particularly negative implications for their monthly income and their more general integration with a full-time, safe, and satisfactory employment environment.

Centralisation

The tight state control of university entry processes is an exemplification only of the overwhelmingly centralised structure of the Greek educational system, contrary to current international decentralisation trends. These trends pertain to the growing administrative and pedagogical autonomy of institutions, the enhanced participation of social partners (parents, students, teachers, local authorities) in educational planning, the accountability of institutions to society regarding their efficiency, and of course comprehensive evaluation systems that objectively judge their performance. None of these is being satisfactorily performed in Greece. Far from it, the presence of the state is so intense that:

- Due to the lack of long-term educational planning throughout the passing from one government to another, it legislates frequently even to arrange matters that normally should fall within the responsibility of local institutions (for example, which pages from a book must be taught to pupils, or the appointment of a cleaner), instead of occupying the heads of central policy makers.
- Defines administrative aspects of secondary and tertiary institutions. In the case of secondary schools, the state chooses to ignore the historical evolution of administrative patterns that have expanded the managerial role of schoolmasters, setting it free from the coercive infiltration of

[4] According to OECD estimations (2003), Greek 15 year-olds occupational expectations show the highest degree of certainty (72.3%) among OECD countries (62.2%) that by the age of 30 they will be employed in a white collar, high-skilled, well-paid job.

central government, and assigning to it enhanced responsibilities (OECD, 2001). In the case of higher education, the Ministry of Education determines human resource issues, including all human resource policies and management systems, the number of staff posts allocated to individual universities and departments, as well as recruitment regulations, faculty remuneration, staff appointment and promotion. It also exerts catalytic influence on abolishing faculties, departments and post-graduate programs, on internal organisational structures for support services, and on the role, responsibility and functioning of governing bodies and their election (Bourantas et all, 2001).

- Dictates procedures of secondary educational evaluation and arranges centrally promotions of the educational staff, all of which have triggered skepticism about the reliability and meritocracy of the system (Psacharopoulos, 2003b).

Further, as with the zero chance of students to choose their preferred studies in universities, the centralised system in Greece offers limited opportunity for parental involvement in choosing the school of their children throughout the whole spectrum of public primary and secondary education. Such choice is made by the state judging by criteria of the households' geographical proximity to the school. Criteria of a liberal choice of the best educational institution in terms of quality and other personal reasons are simply out of the question, unless parents can afford to 'buy' their way out by turning to private education. Certainly, not all public schools are the same. Some are below average and some are not, depending on their output. School choice on basis of their performance would be an indispensable tool in the hands of the state for maintaining the high quality of the latter and responding appropriately to improve the former.

IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES AND STATE COERCION: THE CALL FOR THE LIBERALISATION OF EDUCATION

The rhetoric of equality of educational opportunity has figured prominently in the Constitution and other discussions in Greece. The substantial increase in participation rates at secondary education and the growing number of entrants into public universities have often been thought to imply progress in pursuit of this target. Despite this optimism, the Greek system as it stands is essentially one that recycles social inequities through its reluctance to satisfy positive conditions for the right to education. This is because university entrance proves to be linked to parents' social profile, educational background and economic ability, rather than on meritocracy and adequate public funding that would benefit all population – especially the poor. Education and other associated rights, such as low risk employment, are practically not an issue for those who lack the enabling socio-economic status in an over-centralised structure for taking decisions and making choices concerning the kind of schooling they wish for their children and themselves. This not only comprises a complete misinterpretation of constitutional prescriptions, but also is inconsistent with a view of education as a public good. Further, it directly opposes recent guidelines of the European Commission (2001) that bind member states to promote equal educational opportunities and strengthen social cohesion by supporting vulnerable groups and individuals, especially those living in rural or remote areas and those faced with problems reconciling their schooling needs with family disadvantages.

In fact, the lurking association between education and socio-economic origin, in conjunction with the prevalence of underlying processes favoring the established social order, appears to be an integral part of the domestic social reproduction mechanism and a perpetuating factor of greater social inequalities. From this perspective, the system in Greece may not be far from Breen's and Goldthorpe's model (1997), which assumes that families from different classes seek to ensure that their children acquire a class position at least as advantageous as that from which they originate or, in other words, that they seek to avoid downward mobility. Historically, this brings up the

concept of education as a means of reproducing country elites – a notion that has been nevertheless questioned and transformed since the end of World War II.

On the other hand, the over-centralised administration of education, itself being a side only of a generally over-protective state that knows what is best for everyone and leaves little room for personal initiative and involvement, is incompatible with any sense of the individual gaining validity through or assuming responsibility for the fulfillment of certain, well-defined courses of personal action[5]. The state forces enrollment to secondary schools on pure geographical criteria that in many cases can be judged inconsistent with the demands of educational 'consumers'. It also decides university attendance irrespective of students' real preferences and professional aspirations. It is as if individuals are considered *a priori* incapable of making correct choices and looking after their educational goals and for that reason they need the 'benevolent' interference of the state. The penetrating tendency of the state to substitute personal choice of school and type of university studies is an essentialisation of a despotic state that openly contrasts the classical concept of Western individualism, as this has been a structural component of the human rights tradition. It also ignores that different people have different educational objectives, depending on their philosophy of life. The arbitrary willingness of the government to assume the responsibility of educating young people runs the danger of undermining the achievement of those objectives, for it equals people's needs without considering the fact of their rich variation.

The combined effects of low public funding, centralised administration and monopolised provision of higher education have been widely accepted to be the culprits of the misinterpretation of constitutional definitions about the human rights dimension of education, as well as of the overall poor performance of the Greek educational system, regarding both its inputs and outputs. The government poses the lack of funds for greater investments on education given the need to diffuse state subsidies for other competing public needs. It also 'sits' conveniently on article 16 of the Constitution, which has long infused Greek society with the propaganda and the alleged benefits of the public system, in order to avoid the political cost (loss of votes from traditionalists who cross their fingers to anything that bears the label "private") of bold reforms.

Events, however, are now on a turning point. The momentum of internationalisation in the globalised age of new information and communication technologies encourages contention within and between educational structures (universities, for example, are increasingly competing for students, research funds and academic staff – both with the private sector and internationally). The emerging scheme of things proposes that the authority of the state and the power of markets are being redefined. Internationally, one can see already that the funding role of governments is losing its strength because of budgetary constraints to devote higher proportions of public expenditure to formal education and the need for introducing higher private contributions in addition to public funding. In Europe, signs of public under-investment have generated a debate around investment policies that will better take into account the new requirements of the knowledge society in the highly competitive international context of today. The conversation focuses especially on the clear deficit in private funding on education and its necessity to increase, given that private sources have always been regarded as an addition to, rather than a substitute for public funding in the European social model. Although in this sense some theorists (those who view education as primarily the flourishing of each individual intellectually to that person's fullest potential) might dislike the treatment of education as a commodity, the truth is that education is a booming business sector driven by globalisation, knowledge expansion and technological change (Middlehurst, 2001). The World Trade Organisation views in fact education as a service that can

[5] The origins of a mighty, over-protective state are rooted back to German political influences brought by King Otto on Greece's liberation from Turkish occupation in 1833. Centralised protrusions of the state have remained considerably unaltered to the present day.

be traded and OECD (2002) estimates this trade to have grown over the last few years into a global market of around $30 billion in 1999.

For opponents of the liberalisation of education, the adoption of denationalised attitudes coupled with market-oriented reforms will do nothing to address the socio-economic inequalities discussed in this paper. They fear that divorcing educational structures from state protection and public funding will cause the gap between rich and poor to grow bigger. This would be a possible scenario only if the state was to withdraw completely from providing a comprehensive social welfare system to alleviate the poor. Liberalisation, however, does not necessarily imply social apathy. No one would reasonably stand for turning society into a bloodthirsty arena, where educational opportunities would be allocated to people in terms of their social and economic bargaining power. In fact, we have seen that the role of the socio-economic outlook of citizens may well be stronger in less liberal educational environments, such as the Greek, where the state appears in theory as guarantor of equal educational opportunity. Talking about liberalisation, the state should clearly refrain from intrusive actions that manipulate the educational choices of citizens, without abolishing its responsibilities to provide financial support for them. In Rawlsian terms (1971), this would mean that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, and inequalities of opportunity are to enhance the opportunities of those with the lesser opportunity. Wrong impressions about the outcomes of a liberal educational system stem from severe misinterpretations or ignorance of the operational targets that we wish to achieve through such system. A few clarifications in the Greek case are, therefore, needed.

At the primary and secondary educational level, withdrawal of the state must be thought as taking place in at least two cases. First, parents must be assigned a more essential role in school choice and in expressing their opinions on the administration and the pedagogical orientation of schools (Martin and Vincent, 1999). Secondly, at the upper secondary level, decentralisation must take the form of allowing complete freedom to candidates of the Pan-Hellenic Examinations to choose their preferred course of studies. It must even be thought as questioning the very existence of an intensely competitive examination-like procedure, in view of the fact that the majority of European and other non-European countries allow either free access to universities or access according to the teaching capacity of academic institutions, which retain rights of final choice. Abolition of the Pan-Hellenic Examinations in this instance would eliminate the need for extended private expenditures for preparatory courses, thus making selection procedures not to be based on economic and parents' social background factors. At the same time, Greek higher institutions would acquire the respected status of autonomous bodies that would be empowered to design course curricula in line with student preferences and market trends, excluding the arrogant role of the state to make such arrangements on behalf of the students.

Financial austerity torturing public universities could be battled by cultivating the appropriateness of tuition fees and by granting status of official recognition to their private counterparts, disburdening the obligation of the state to subsidise a large number of public institutions, which are anyhow under-financed (Stamoulas 2005). The state has long been proved unable to cover the extended financial needs of public higher education, so alternative ways of private funding and of channelling the huge wave of those seeking tertiary qualifications must be considered. To avoid economic injustices at the expense of the poor, ensuring that low-income students are not denied access to tertiary education, tuition fees in public universities should be charged depending on the wealth of students' parents. Poor students could also be assisted through a comprehensive system of scholarships or loans to be repaid in small instalments analogous to the monthly income they will receive from their future employment.

While the application of such measures is widespread in many countries abroad, it remains *terra incognita* for the Greek state. The reluctance to veer off educational reforms towards a liberal direction is based more on narrow-mindedness and a superstitional fear towards the power of markets generated by the propaganda of a status quo public system, rather than on putting forward sustainable arguments to doubt the effective consequences of such reform. In light of the implications described, however, the quest of educational modernisation and liberalisation calls for an enactment of a democratic educational community, modeling the type of democracy that is appropriate for enhancing free choice and transforming the basic causes of inequality in an increasingly diverse society (Callinicos, 2000; Furman and Shields, 2003). In plain words, it calls for an enlightened state that will limit its suffocating control on educational affairs and encourage people's autonomous educational decisions, without abolishing its welfare obligations to provide financial and infrastructural support for them.

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