

RESTRUCTURING TEACHERS' LABOUR PROCESS: THE CASE OF GREECE

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Abstract – *This paper focuses on teachers' labour process in upper secondary education in Greece in the 1980s, as this was restructured by the introduction of prescribed curricula. The adopted theoretical approach is critical to the labour process theory approach and its development of the proletarianisation thesis. The labour process theory, we argue, studies teachers' labour process by focusing on the introduction of standardised curricula which, as is argued, result in teachers' proletarianisation, that is to say teachers' autonomy is restricted and they are not able to exercise any control on their labour process. We argue that labour process theory does not conceive teachers' labour process as a production process and consequently does not take into consideration the relations in production. Hence, we argue, that teachers' labour process is shaped, apart from the curriculum, by the parameter 'students' and, more specifically, by 'students' cultural capital' and habitus towards knowledge.*

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to critically discuss the labour process theory in education. More specifically, this paper focuses on teachers' labour processes in Greek upper secondary education (Lyceum). It theorises teachers' labour process as shaped and restructured after the introduction in the 1980s, by the Socialist party (PA.SO.K¹) in government, of a system of selection for entrance to higher education known as *Desmes*². The introduction of that system, we argue, resulted in restricting teachers' autonomy and increasing control by the educational authorities over their labour process.

Labour process theory: a critique

The reasons for adopting the labour process theory in studying teachers' work has to do with the way teachers' work is defined and contextualised here. The labour process theory, by approaching 'work' in capitalist social formations as a labour process³ which needs to be controlled by the capital, provides us with an appropriate conceptual matrix within which teachers' work, as this is organised in the classroom, can be located, grasped and understood. Thus, teachers are viewed as workers and

the tendencies towards proletarianisation are explored (Acker, 1995/6, p. 107). What distinguishes this⁴ from the other⁵ approaches is that it focuses on the broader socio-historical context within which teachers' work takes place, namely, the capitalistic one. The general argument which dominates this research perspective stems from Braverman's (1974) theory which claims that the imperative of accumulation in capitalism has been responsible for the continual restructuring of jobs, whether blue or white collar, so as to separate the principle of conception from that of execution (Tipton, 1985, p. 48). This process is called 'deskilling'. Apple (see Apple & Teitelbaum, 1986; Apple & Jungck, 1992) develops a version of this approach in which he argues that the reality of many teachers' daily lives in classrooms is becoming controlled and subject to administrative control.

This approach to teachers' work takes capitalism as its main concern. Capitalism is conceptualised as a structural framework within which teachers' work is carried out. Specifically, the imperative for accumulation of capital is considered as the driving force of the restructuring of teachers' work. In short, the scholars of the labour process theory in education focus mainly on factors of economic production that could determine and shape teachers' work. There is no argumentation on other factors such as the political ones and, more specifically, the state which plays a role of integrating the unity of a social formation; this total role is a political one (Poulantzas, 1968, p. 65).

However, by focusing exclusively on capitalism and, more specifically, on its economic demands – the law of accumulation – economy becomes the instrument for analysing every social phenomenon and the whole society is reduced to the laws of economy. Yet society is not only economy. There are also political institutions, such as the state, which intervene and shape a social order. Therefore, by overemphasising the structural limitations caused by the capitalistic imperative of accumulation, this form of the 'critical' perspective leaves no room for possible resistances by the social subjects. This approach fails to conceive and conceptualise human agency. This criticism does not in any case imply that human agency can always make the difference, but simply that social reality is much more complex and that it is simplistic to reduce it to the needs of economy.

Our focus on the way teachers' work is performed in the classroom is contextualised within the capitalist state, where the concept of 'control'⁶ of education and teachers' work is of central importance for the reproduction of the dominant social order. Teachers' work has to be supervised and controlled, since the school has to 'produce' concrete outcomes – just like products for the market in the case of commodity production. In other words, 'control'⁷ is a vital part of teachers' work. Control is exercised either by teachers on students as part of their work (discipline and surveillance) or by the state on teachers (control of their labour process).

Although teachers' work takes place in the narrow setting of the classroom, there are also external social structures, such as the state, which creep into the classroom and shape teachers' work perceptions. For example, a prescribed and standardised curriculum shapes a structural context of limitations which, in turn, shapes teachers' perceptions and work experiences.

We argue that although this line of reasoning might be true in general, it nevertheless seems to focus exclusively on the concrete structural constraints imposed on teachers' daily lives in a deterministic way which undermines the role teachers themselves play in shaping their daily lives. Possible variations in the way teachers perceive and make sense of the control exercised on their work do not seem to be taken into consideration. If the pressures and controls of the state are to be understood, they should be contextualised within concrete social and historical contexts, otherwise there is the danger of the term 'control' becoming an omnipresent – a *passe partout* – category with no reference to or grounding, in this case, on the specific social conditions of teachers' work. In other words, we need to locate 'control' within two social frameworks: (i) a general one, such as, for example, a particular form of 'capitalism'; and (ii) a specific, concrete one, such as teachers' work within a specific educational site, the classroom.

The labour process theory⁸ does not seem to take into consideration features which have to do with teachers' labour power, such as, for instance, gender, specialisation and seniority, or with students' social-cultural background – the teachers' 'object' of work. Since differentiations among teachers are not considered, then it follows that it is impossible to develop any theorisation of possible forms of teachers' resistance to the structural constraints. It is assumed that they are all subject to exactly the same process of 'degradation' of their work due to the pressures and controls exercised by the capitalist state. Instead of assuming this, we need to conceptualise teachers as a body of working people, mediated by variations⁹ in the way they perceive pressures and controls by the state.

Teaching as a labour process

According to the *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, the term 'labour process' means:

'... at its simplest labour process is the process whereby labour is materialized or objectified in USE VALUES. Labour is here an interaction between the person who works and the natural world such that elements of the latter are consciously altered in a purposive manner.' (Bottomore, 1983, p. 267)

Thus, the labour process is concerned with the qualitative movement in production, a process with a definite purpose and content, producing a particular kind of product (i.e., a commodity for the capitalist) (Bottomore, 1983, p. 267)¹⁰.

The above definitions point to the fact that there is something a little mysterious at the heart of the business of teaching as a productive activity within a labour process framework. In more formal terms, as characteristically described by Connell (1985):

‘Teaching is a labour process without an object. At best, it has an object so intangible – the minds of the kids, or their capacity to learn – that it cannot be specified in any but vague and metaphorical ways. A great deal of work is done in schools, day in and day out, but this work does not produce any *things*.’ (p. 70)

Hence, if we wanted to outline the pattern of teaching as a labour process, this could be described as follows: Teaching consists of a process of transformation of students from a given condition of recognised knowing to a new one. The labour of teaching is an interaction between teacher and student, in order for the latter to be altered in a purposive manner. This leads us to Connell’s (1985) recognition that ‘Teachers are workers, teaching is work, and the school is a workplace’ (p. 69).

The first element of teaching as a labour process is teachers’ labour power: Labour power is a general term and it refers to the teachers’ capacity to work which is bought and employed by the state, local authorities or owners of private schools. In short, labour power can be defined as teachers’ capacity to perform educational activities. The general term of labour power is specified and concretised through the notion of ‘skill’. Skill defines the specific aspects of teachers’ labour power needed in order to perform the purposive productive activity, which constitutes one of the three elements of labour process¹¹. Hence, in the teachers’ case, an example of skill could be their ability to plan and organise their daily teaching with regards to issues of pace and sequence.

However, skill should not only be described in ‘technicist’ terms. It is also a social term. This means that its content is not given and static, but is defined and determined within the concrete socio-historical context within which it operates. Within the conceptual context of the labour process theory, ‘skill’ refers to the unity of conception and execution in the labour process. Consequently, deskilling essentially means the loss of conceptual mastery, and not task simplification or fragmentation of the tasks. These tend to follow as consequences of deskilling (Armstrong, 1992; cited in Watkins, 1992, p. 118).

Another element of teaching as a labour process is the purposive productive activity of teachers. This can be seen as the *process of transformation* of students

from a given stage of knowledge, values and attitudes to a new one. The second element comprises the ‘objects’ on which the work is performed. This refers to the *students* – the active human agents that come from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds¹² – that are ‘owned’ by their parents and the state or the local authorities, in the sense that they are the future citizens.

The third element relates to the instruments which facilitate the process of work/teaching. As instruments, we may identify several components: firstly, the indirectly involved elements such as infrastructure (buildings, laboratories, equipment and teaching resources) which are owned by the state; secondly, the *curriculum* can be seen as an instrument of teachers’ work. According to Bernstein (1975, p. 85), the curriculum defines what counts as valid knowledge. The ‘object’ of teaching – namely, the students’ minds and behaviours – together with what is described above as ‘instruments’ of teaching, comprise the ‘means of production’. The relationships developed between teachers and students constitute the ‘relations in production’¹³.

In the teachers’ case, the term production signifies a process of transformation of students into ‘new social subjects’, capable ‘for social practice’ which is realised through the transmission and transformation of knowledge (curriculum). The form of transmission of knowledge is determined by the structure of the context – what Bernstein calls the ‘frame’ – in which knowledge is transmitted and received. Thus, the ‘frame refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship’ (Bernstein, 1975, p. 89). By ‘relations in production’ we mean who controls what is to be transmitted. Is it the teachers, the students, the state or others?

As far as the issues of the selection, organisation, pacing and timing of knowledge are concerned, the above signification of the context within which the transmission of knowledge takes place might be translated into the following three types of control. In the first case, the issues of selection, organisation, pacing and timing of knowledge could be controlled by teachers. In the second case, these could be controlled by pupils. There could also be a third case where neither the teachers nor the pupils control these issues. In this third and last case, the control could be exercised by the state or by local authorities, essentially by any agent other than teachers and pupils. These three types of control describe three types of relations in production.

The third type of control could refer to the case of the introduction by the state of predetermined and standardised curricula where the control of selection, organisation, pacing and timing is mainly exercised by the state. In this case, the state/educational authorities could be seen as performing the function of the ‘conception’ of the way knowledge is going to be selected, organised and

‘delivered’ to students. Teachers could be seen as accomplishing the function of ‘execution’. Students, in turn, could be seen as acting as the ‘executors’ of their teachers’ directions and guidelines. Thus, teachers here seem unable to exercise control over their labour process in the classroom, as a consequence of the separation – in Braverman’s terminology – of the processes of ‘conception’ from ‘execution’.

This type of control of teachers’ labour process is the focus of the labour process theory in education. To be more specific, the theory conceives teachers’ labour process as a terrain where pressures and controls are exercised by the state and indirectly by the capital, which, under the spirit of a rationalisation process, will contribute to the ensuring of concrete outcomes and the fulfilment of specific education targets. However, although the labour process theory locates teachers’ work within the capitalist state, it does not contextualise this within the classroom. To approach teachers’ work within the capitalist state is a necessary condition in order to analyse and study it. Yet, we argue, it is not a sufficient one, because it is exactly within the classroom that this labour process is specified and realised. Failure to contextualise teachers’ work within classrooms, where production takes place and the relationships between teachers and students (relations in production) are developed, means that the labour process theory fails to see teachers’ labour process as a relationship which needs two aspects in order to be developed. Teachers’ labour process and the education production process are not separated processes; they constitute an entity. The production process is realised through the concrete shaping of the labour process.

In other words, the labour process theory typically fails to conceptualise students as vital participants in teachers’ labour process. More specifically, the means of production – the ‘object’ (students’ cultural capital) and *habitus* towards knowledge and the ‘instrument’ (curriculum) – could be seen, each one separately, as structural determinants which are characterised by a duality. This means that the ‘object’ (students) can be seen as a disabling and, at the same time, as an enabling structure¹⁴. The same can be said of the ‘curriculum’; it can be seen as an enabling and disabling structural context. Thus structures should not be seen *a priori* as only restrictive to human action, and human agency should not be assumed *a fortiori* as omnipotent in relation to the restrictions of structures.

It may be argued that in the teachers’ labour process, the key element seems to be the formal curriculum. The curriculum can be seen as the ‘key’ element to the extent that it constitutes the framework which teachers have to follow in order to achieve the predetermined (by the state or educational authorities) targets, in short, the production targets. The formal curriculum is accompanied by a hidden curriculum¹⁵ where the teachers’ role – just as in the case of the formal one – is

also active through their practices (such as, for example, the classroom reward structures and classroom rules and procedures). Hence, the aim of both curricula is to ensure the ‘production of new social beings’, the production of concrete outcomes. Given the extent to which the curriculum, as described above, contributes to the ‘production of new social beings’ which lies at the centre of teachers’ labour process, then as Smyth (2000) argues:

‘... the main specification of the labour process of teaching, and the nature of this specification is political and therefore contested.’ (p. 37)

The political nature of the curriculum follows from the very fact that it is a product and outcome of politics. This means that the views on what kind of knowledge schools should ‘deliver’ through the formal curriculum vary¹⁶.

Given the role education plays in capitalist societies, as well as the fact that teachers are expected to implement a specific curriculum irrespective of whether or not they agree with and accept the outcome of this process, then the state can develop a range of controls in order to ensure that teachers will work in such ways that the predetermined outcomes will be achieved. In other words, any possibilities and attempts by teachers to resist the state’s demands must, so far as the state is concerned, be discouraged and neutralised while still maintaining a sense of ‘professional’¹⁷ legitimacy.

Since the object of the labour process of teaching is the development of students’ ‘capacities for social practice’, it might therefore be expected that control will be located in the way knowledge is defined (curriculum) to be then transmitted to students (pedagogy). Control does not solely have to do with the curriculum and pedagogy; it could also be related to teachers’ recruitment practices and the methods of their assessment.

Hence, teaching means and presupposes *relationships* between teachers and students that arise while the process of transformation of students takes place in the classroom. It is exactly, we argue, this parameter – namely, the ‘students’ – that the labour process theory fails to take into consideration in the development of the proletarianisation thesis.

Teachers’ labour process: the Greek case

In this section we aim to demonstrate the changes which took place in Greece in 1980s with the introduction of the *Desmes* system, which should be seen as a factor that contributed to a restriction of teachers’ autonomy and control over their labour process.

The introduction of Desmes university entrance examinations

In education, one of the changes which took place under PA.SO.K was the modification of the selection system for the entrance to higher education institutions (see 1351/1983 Law). The previous system – that of Panhellenic examinations – was considered by the government as problematic. Consequently, ‘the government decided to abolish it because its implementation had many serious deficiencies/disadvantages, such as the increase of para-education (*frontesteria*¹⁸), the degradation of the role of the state school ...’ (Prefatory Memorandum of the 1351/83 Law).

It thus seems that, according to the government, the problem of the Lyceum’s dysfunction was related to the amount of years devoted to the preparation for the entrance examinations. Instead of two years, which was the case under New Democracy¹⁹, it became one year.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that the degradation of the role of the state school and the enhanced role of *frontesteria*, which were the reasons why the PA.SO.K government proposed a change in the selection system for entrance to higher education, ultimately became the major problems caused by the newly introduced *Desmes* system.

The government seemed to believe that with the new selection system, they would offer proper preparation and a fair assessment of the candidates who would be prepared, at any time, for their entrance into higher education. The 1351/83 Law introduced the General examinations system (or the *Desmes* system, as it is known) as the new system of selection for higher education. The *Desmes* system (groups of specialised subjects) in practice replaced the Panhellenic examinations. According to this system, the subjects of the third class of Lyceum were categorised into two groups: subjects of general education (core subjects) and the preparatory subjects for higher education, which were divided into four groups or *Desmes*. Students had to choose one group at the beginning of the academic year in order to sit for the General examinations. Each group of subjects (*Desmi*) gave the opportunity of entering a specific category of Higher Schools of University status²⁰.

The distinctiveness of the *Desmes* system lies in the fact that the work done in Lyceum is directly related and connected to the requirements of the higher education entrance examinations. First of all, we have to make it clear that the relationship between secondary and tertiary education is not a recent phenomenon. Before *Desmes*, there was also a connection between the two, but this was very indirect and loose, whereas the introduction of the *Desmes* system meant that it became direct, concrete and tight. This closer connection between Lyceum and tertiary education started with New Democracy’s policy of selection

for higher education, which defined that what was examined in the Panhellenic examinations derived from the syllabus taught in the last two years of Lyceum. Before New Democracy's policy (1979-80), the secondary and tertiary education sectors were also connected, but this relationship was not the same as that of *Desmes*. Before the Panhellenic examinations system, the syllabus tested was drawn from all (three) years of Lyceum. In other words, it was not located in a specific year, so the aim was not the preparation for university entrance examinations. Consequently, teachers' work in Lyceum was then not inscribed within the needs and requirements of university entrance examinations. We argue that those teachers could feel more autonomous in comparison to those who teach *Desmes*.

As a result, the effects that this close connection had on the function of Lyceum in general and on teachers' work in particular are not the same. It is the *Desmes* system, we argue, that moulds and structures teachers' work almost exclusively in order to meet the requirements of university entrance examinations.

More specifically, with the last two education reforms, namely those by New Democracy and PA.SO.K., there has developed a direct and strong association between secondary and tertiary education. This can be inferred from the fact that the Lyceum has been adjusted to the requirements of the entrance examinations (Panhellenic or General). *Indeed, what is required by the General examinations is exactly what is taught in Lyceum.* This situation is highly problematical because all the emphasis is placed on the examinations, and the teachers' as well as the students' interest is confined to and exhausted in the preparation for them. Students are interested only in the subjects in which they will take examinations and tend to neglect others. As it is only *Desmes*-subjects and only a specified syllabus of the third year which is examined in the entrance examinations (Genikes/General), the selective preparatory function of Lyceum is very clearly defined. This, we argue, makes the connection between Lyceum and higher education tighter, accompanied by tighter forms of control by the educational authorities, and has created restrictions on teachers' autonomy on issues such as the pace and sequence of teaching. In short, teachers' labour process is now governed by the requirements of the university entrance examinations.

Thus, in the case of *Desmes*, almost all the work done in the third year has to do with the entrance examinations. In the case of the 1980 Law, this was carried out within the last two classes of Lyceum, while in PA.SO.K.'s case only within the last year. Thus, we have a concentration of the process of preparation since this is restricted within one year. Consequently, teachers' work is being intensified.

To sum up, before 1980 the Lyceum had a very loose relationship to tertiary education and this was reflected on the structure of the curriculum which did not have any direct relationship to the requirements of the entrance examinations.

Hence, by transferring the preparation for the entrance examinations from *frontesteria* to the Lyceum and by identifying the syllabus of the examinations with that taught in schools, the Ministry of Education aimed at making the whole process of selection accessible to all students, regardless of their economic and cultural capital²¹. Now, let us try to describe the specificities of the teachers' labour process in Greece.

The implications of the Desmes system to teachers' labour process

In this context, we argue that the *Desmes* system has had serious effects on teachers' labour process. In particular, it has resulted in changes in their work related to increasing restrictions of their autonomy on issues such as pace and sequence, and in the control of their work by educational authorities. It should be stressed at this point that our intention is not to argue that there was a 'golden age' before the introduction of *Desmes* as far as the issue of teachers' autonomy is concerned. In fact, what we will try to argue is that with the *Desmes* system, teachers' autonomy was restricted as far as the issues of organisation, pacing and timing of their teaching are concerned. This is because their teaching work is subject to control and restrictions which are related to the particular aim of *Desmes*, namely, the preparation for the higher education examinations. This was not the case before, because the objective 'preparation for entrance to higher education examinations' did not form part of the Lyceum's focus. Thus, what needs to be shown empirically is the transformation process which took place during that period as far as teachers' autonomy and the control of their labour process are concerned.

In the *Desmes* system, teaching aims at the provision of knowledge which will be exchanged with a place at university. Thus, students are mainly interested in getting the knowledge required for the university entrance examinations; otherwise, knowledge is of no immediate interest to them. In short, knowledge for them counts only insofar as it has an exchange value and not a use value.

Having in mind the theoretical approach developed above, teachers' labour process is structured as following: *Desmes* (the curriculum) along with students (the 'object') constitute the means of teachers' production. As for the curricular aspects of selection, organisation, pacing and timing, these are determined first by the state educational authorities (Ministry of Education) and then by the needs and requirements of the entrance examinations. Such decisions concern what has to be taught and the period of time within which a specific part of the syllabus has to be taught. Given the above restrictions, teachers are unable to control their labour process. In short, 'what' has to be produced and 'when' it might be produced are predetermined. Within this educational context, and given the previously referred

to primacy of *Desmes*-subjects together with the fact that the *Desmes* syllabus is examined in the entrance examinations, students may only be interested in the specific syllabus and nothing more. In this case, the teachers' efforts to go beyond the examinations' requirements may be dependent on the students' dispositions to knowledge. In other words, the success of any effort to transcend the imposed determinations might be dependent on the students' 'cultural capital' and *habitus* towards knowledge.

The relations between teachers and their object of work (namely, the students) which constitute, along with the relationships between teachers and the curriculum/*Desmes*, the relations in production, can be described as follows: the nature of these relationships is determined by 'who' controls the frame of teaching. Is the teachers, students or educational authorities? Framing refers to the strength of the boundary between what may be transmitted and what may not. In the case of *Desmes*, framing is controlled by the educational authorities (the Ministry of Education) and its logic concerning the requirements of the General examinations. This means that everything that is not part of and may not serve the requirements of the entrance examinations cannot be easily transmitted. The above-discussed structure of the Lyceum seems to favour its preparatory function. Consequently, it might be the case that students are mostly interested in getting only the kind and the amount of knowledge which will be useful and helpful for their examinations.

Therefore, teachers' autonomy may be restricted to the degree that they have to focus on the needs and requirements of university entrance examinations and on the related preparation of students, that is, to give them only the knowledge which is useful and helpful for the examinations²². All this means that teachers have to design and plan their work in such a way that the university entrance examinations requirements can be fulfilled, irrespective of students' capability to follow their teaching. They have to organise their work in such a way that they will be able to perform it within the time limitations defined by the authorities²³.

Hence, preparing for examinations demands that a more technical style of teaching should be developed, in that it is the 'technicalities' of the examinations – such as, the questions which may be considered as very probable to be asked, the spirit of the examinations, the way the questions are posed etc. – that have to be taught. This focus undermines in general a more reflective style of teaching and work, and shapes an alienating form of teaching/learning.

Thus, it might be inferred that the process of conception is separated from that of execution in a very clear way. The educational authorities (Ministry/Directorate) define the 'conception' process; teachers carry out the 'execution' process²⁴.

However, in the above processes, the factor ‘students’ has to be taken into consideration. Students do not form a homogeneous group of people, but come from families belonging to different socio-economic strata and they carry, in Bourdieu’s terminology, a variety of forms of ‘cultural capital’. This might result in differentiated working understandings of teachers. It might mean that teachers working with students from privileged socio-cultural strata may not perceive the restrictions on autonomy imposed by the *Desmes* system in the same way as teachers working with students from working class strata. This is because middle class students are geared to learn almost anything²⁵. Teachers may consequently easily overcome the restrictions and go beyond the requirements of *Desmes*, because they have an attentive and willing audience.

However, with the introduction of the *Desmes* system, this preparatory role is now attributed by the state to schools (Lycea). It is now clear that both sectors – state/schools and private/*frontesteria* – do share a common aim, namely, that of preparing students for the General examinations. The above thoughts lead us to argue that we are dealing here with the phenomenon of the *quasi market*²⁶. This means that students ‘buy’ preparation for the General examinations from two sectors: the state school (public) and the *frontesteria* (private). Yet, at this point, we have to say that *frontesteria’s raison d’etre* has always been the same, namely, they specialise in preparing students for examinations. This might mean that in the students’ minds *frontesteria* are the best places for preparation in that they are the ‘specialists’ and ‘experts’ in this area. Consequently, students may pay more attention to *frontesteria* than to teachers’ work at schools.

We thus argue that all this signifies a kind of *deskilling* of teachers’ work in schools. Deskilling here means that since teachers’ work at schools is controlled by the two mentioned agents (state educational authorities and students via their comparisons made to *frontesteria*), it may then be almost impossible for teachers to have any form of control over their work process. Teachers at schools may be seen as deskilled in that the students take *frontesteria* and the teachers there to be more skilled as far as the examination domain is concerned.

In sum, there are two forms of control upon teachers’ work. These are an explicit form by the state and an implicit one by *frontesteria*, both of which undermine, reduce and hinder teachers’ control over their labour process.

The focus of the Lyceum is now identified with that of *frontesteria*. But this, in essence, results in favouring and empowering *frontesteria* – the private sector – since the work done in state schools, that is the preparation for the General examinations, constitutes *by definition* the domain of *frontesteria*. In short, it can be said, that a process of ‘frontesterisation’ of state schools is taking place.

This situation is being identified now, some time after the abolition of the *Desmes* system. In fact, in 1998, when PA.SO.K was still in power, a new

educational reform took place²⁷. According to this reform, the entrance to higher education was again channelled through Panhellenic exams. More specifically, students had to sit for Panhellenic examinations in all subjects of the second and third year of Lyceum. This resulted in further restriction of Lyceum's autonomy and in further upgrading and strengthening of the role of *frontesteria*.

In 2001, the new Minister of Education modified the system of the Panhellenic examinations. This resulted in students having to sit for examinations in nine subjects instead of all the subjects, as was the case before. In 2004, when New Democracy came back to power, the Minister of Education abolished the Panhellenic exams in the second year of Lyceum and announced that, as from the following year, students would be taking examinations in six subjects instead of nine.

The situation presented above shows that teachers' professional autonomy is being restricted by the Lyceum's *preparatory* role. In addition, the focus of Lyceum on the higher education entrance examinations strengthens the role of the market, namely *frontesteria*.

Since the 1990s, there have been a number of studies on teachers' work (see Mavrogiorgos, 1992; Giannakaki, 1997; Papanaoim-Tzika, 2003; Koronaiou & Tiktapanidou, 2004; Thoma, 2004). Issues of stress, depression and burnout are at the centre of their findings. In particular, Koronaiou & Tiktapanidou (2004) report that 57% of teachers experience a feeling of exhaustion during their work process. Other reported symptoms include depression, insomnia and moodiness.

Conclusion

It follows from the above theoretical discussion on teachers' labour process that teachers' work should be reconsidered after a reconceptualisation of teachers' labour process. In particular, the theoretical tools for approaching and investigating teachers' labour process should be enriched by introducing a new parameter, namely, 'the students' and more specifically 'the students' cultural capital' and *habitus* towards knowledge. Teachers' labour process should be seen as a production process. In this process, the 'object' of teachers' work – that is, the 'students' – should be taken into consideration, as this might shape teaching as a labour process, and affect teachers' working experiences. Hence, when the theoretical discussion of the labour process theory does not take 'students' into consideration, we have to do with a production process/ labour process without any 'object'. This is an oxymoron, namely, a scheme of production, and denotes a labour process in need of an object upon which it will take place.

Notes

1. PA.SO.K stands for Panhellenic Socialist Movement.
2. *Desmes*, in Greek, refers to the 'bunch' of subjects with predetermined curricula on which students were examined in order to enter higher education (i.e., the equivalent of A-levels). *Desmes* can therefore be seen as 'groups' of subjects.
3. For a discussion on what the term 'labour process' signifies, see next section.
4. This perspective is reflected in the works of Ozga & Lawn (1981), Harris (1982), White (1983), Apple (1986), Lawn & Ozga (1988), Carlson (1992), Watkins (1992), and Smyth (2000). Reid's (2003) work on teachers' labour process, we argue, is characterised by the same deficiencies as those of the established labour process theory. He argues that the labour process theory in education needs renovation. Reid uses the concept of 'control' in order to examine and reconsider the labour process theory in education, but he does not offer us a detailed conceptual pattern of teachers' labour process.
5. These are: Functionalist approaches, Ethnographic approaches informed by an interactionist perspective, and Critical approaches. Perspectives within the latter category comprise feminist studies in education, the postmodernist perspective to education, and the labour process theory inspired by a Marxist perspective. The functionalist approach was mainly dominant in American sociology of the 1950s and 1960s. Teaching as work was analysed in relation to its contribution to stability and persistence, and those features which were considered questionable were seen as potentially 'dysfunctional' (Lortie, 1973; Dreeben, 1973).
6. In this paper, the term 'control' is used as developed by Edwards (1979, p. 17) for the workers' case. That is, the ability of the state to obtain desired behaviour from teachers.
7. In ethnographic studies the 'control' exercised by the state, as a structure, is not conceptualised and problematised. In short, it does not become the focus of analysis. 'Control' remains a descriptive rather than an analytical category in these kinds of studies and, as a result, they are unable to grasp and locate teachers' work within the specific socio-historical context. By this we mean that 'control' is not adequately theorised or contextualised.
8. As exhibited in the works of Ozga & Lawn (1981), Harris (1982), White (1983), Apple (1986), Lawn & Ozga (1988), Carlson (1992), and Watkins (1992).
9. Concerning their labour power: gender, specialisation and seniority, and their 'object' of work, namely, the students' socio-cultural background.
10. Marx (1976, p. 284; cited in Knights & Willmott, 1990, p. 77), from whom the term originally derived, outlined the basic components of the labour process as follows: first, the work itself, a purposive productive *activity*; second, the *object(s)* on which that work is performed; and third, the *instruments* which facilitate the process of work. The objects of work and the instruments of work together are called the 'means of production'. The alteration in the object of work affected by labour is the creation of use value. However, in capitalism the products are use values for the capitalist only insofar as they are bearers of exchange value.
11. *Macmillan Student Encyclopaedia* (1983, p. 356) describes 'skill' as a slippery concept, usually defined in 'technicist' terms by reference to a combination of learnt expertise in a repertoire of actions or activities, together with the mental ability to apply them effectively and resourcefully.
12. By differences in their cultural background we mean, for example, differences in their dispositions towards knowledge, what Bourdieu refers to as *habitus*, and educational resources. In short, they are carriers, as Bourdieu (1986, p. 243) argues, of different '*cultural capital*'.
13. We use the term 'relations in production' and not the Marxist 'relations of production' because the latter refers to issues of ownership and control of the means of production, which would be impossible to apply in the teachers' case. For example, who is the owner of 'students' minds'? Is it the state, their parents, the teachers, or the students themselves? This is, however, a philosophical issue which, we think, is beyond the scope of this paper.

14. The concept of the *duality of structure* leads us to Giddens' (1984) structuration theory. For a discussion of the relationship between structure and agency see Thoma (2004, section 2.4).
15. 'Hidden curriculum' refers to the organisational arrangements and practices which establish the 'right way' to function in classrooms, schools and educational systems (Smyth, 2000, p. 26).
16. Employers, for example, seem to see education as a 'producer' of skilled labour power. On the other hand, parents may have specific expectations from education, such as enhancing the life opportunities of their children or inculcating a particular set of values and beliefs.
17. There is a contradiction here. On one hand, the state buys teachers' labour power because they, as professionals, know how to do the specific kind of job required. But, on the other hand, the state discourages teachers from developing their views as professionals and from resisting its demands.
18. *Frontesteria* refers to the commercial firms that specialise in preparing students for examinations.
19. New Democracy is the Liberal party which was in power before the socialist party PA.SO.K (i.e., 1974-1981).
20. The first group of subjects (*Desmi*) – consisting of Composition, Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry – led to the university Departments of Science and Technology, and Higher Technological Institutes. The second group – Composition, Physics, Chemistry and Biology – led to university Medical and Biology Schools. The third group – Composition, Ancient Greek, Latin and History – led to the university Departments of Philosophy, Law, Modern/Ancient Literature and Education. The fourth group – Composition, Mathematics, History and Sociology (this was replaced by Political Economy in 1994) – led to the university Departments of Social and Political Sciences, Business, Economics, Administration and Mass Media. In addition, there was, until 1988, a fifth group that enabled those students not interested in going to university to get the school-leaving certificate. Students were not obliged to sit for the examinations in order to graduate.
21. The economic burden of *frontesteria* on poor people was supposed to be lifted, because the preparation for the entrance examinations would take place within Lycea. This policy could be justified by the fact that PA.SO.K, as a socialist movement, at that time wanted to satisfy the great demand for higher education by making the dream of the less privileged for higher education possible and achievable.
22. To give an example, let us suppose that most students in a classroom cannot assimilate a unit within the pre-specified period of time. This means that their teacher has to spend more time on it until the students are in a position to follow him/her. But this can hardly be achieved, as the teacher has to teach and complete his/her work within a pre-specified period of time.
23. The educational authorities exert control, at regular intervals, by sending teachers a form and asking them to specify the number of pages already taught. This results in a process of *intensification* and feelings of stress, as teachers must always keep in mind the concrete deadlines set by the authorities. In practice, the teaching of the specific *quantity* of the syllabus must be finished within a strictly predetermined period of time.
24. In the execution of their work, teachers have guidance and support by School Advisors whose role is to provide scientific-pedagogic guidance, to contribute to teachers' in-service training and in general to help teachers face school problems. They visit the schools of their educational area and get information from head teachers and teachers about the school's educational work (Tsountas & Xronopoulou, 1995, pp. 40-43).
25. According to Bernstein (1975), 'The middle-class child is oriented to learning almost anything ... for middle-class child is geared to learn; he may not like, or indeed approve of, what he learns, but he learns ...' (p. 113).
26. We characterise the market as 'quasi' because students do not really have the choice of attending ('buying') either the public school or *frontesteria*.
27. Known as Arsenis' Reform, after the surname of the then Minister of Education.

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