

Some Effects of the Economic Crisis on Shadow Education in Greece

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Abstract

The ongoing economic crisis in Greece has had dramatic adverse impacts on several aspects of socio-economic and educational conditions and policies. Public expenditures for social programs (education, healthcare, social assistance, etc.) have been deeply cut. Greek households have seen their income decrease by one third between 2010- 2015. Unemployment still hovers around 25 per cent. The size of the traditional middle class has been steadily declining and large numbers of highly-educated people have migrated in search of employment. The need for access to post-secondary education, however, persists for large segments of the population. With the labour market becoming increasingly competitive because of the crisis, this need has now become more imperative than ever. Under these conditions, some effects of the economic crisis on “shadow” or supplementary education (SE) in Greece are explored.

In Greece, thousands of institutionalized, private educational entities offer for-profit educational services (“*frontisteria*”); they “shadow” the official secondary curriculum of education (primarily in Lyceum), and, along with private lessons, prepare students for tertiary education entrance exams. Given the crisis, a new landscape of “shadow” or supplemental education (SE) is emerging. Our research attempts to map out this new landscape by addressing some interrelated questions: whether the phenomenon of SE has moderated during the crisis; if the cost of SE has diminished and what SE providers are doing to maintain student enrollment levels; what the (new) working conditions for *frontisteria* teachers are, and what sacrifices parents make in order to continue to provide SE for their children.

Keywords: Shadow / Supplementary Education; Economic Crisis Effects; Greece; Responses; Implications.

The Phenomenon of Shadow / Supplementary Education (SE)

Since the 1960s, parallel with the free, formal, public secondary educational system (PSES), a well-organized, for profit, private, system of shadow or supplementary education (SE) – *παραπαιδεία* (*para*-education in Greek)- has developed and has become a crucial factor for student access to tertiary education (i.e., universities and higher education technical institutions (HETI or colleges) in Greece. SE is a well-organized, large institution, more flexible, adaptive and arguably more effective than the PSES. It is a complex socio-economic educational mechanism that competes successfully with the public elementary and secondary school systems; it feeds off their dis-functionalities and inefficacies, especially the inability of the PSES to prepare students for success in tertiary education entrance examinations (TEEE). As such, and perhaps more significantly, SE has become the single most important institution in facilitating

upward educational mobility and reproducing educational inequalities in Greece (Liodakis 2010).

The SE phenomenon is not exclusively Greek. In many countries around the world, various SE systems exist and are, in fact, becoming increasingly salient in Asia, Southeast Asia and even in North America, to a lesser extent (Aurini, Davies & Dierkes 2013; Canadian Council on Learning 2007). In Europe, there appears to be a split between the North, where SE intensity is very low, and the South (Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Malta) where SE intensity is the highest. SE is slowly becoming more socially acceptable and necessary because of increased competition for educational credentials both in Eastern and Central Europe (Bray 2011).

There exist several reasons for the world-wide rise in SE. Some are academic¹, such as government policy tendencies for over-loaded curricula in high-schools or the inability of PSES to “deliver the goods,” i.e., provide tangible positive learning outcomes. Therefore, both parents and students often believe that SE enhances student learning, not only for underachievers (Bray 2007). A more decisive factor is, however, the highly competitive, “high-stakes” TEEE taken late in high-school Grade(s) by which future pathways to tertiary education (TE) are determined (Bray 2011). This is why SE “shadows” public curricula in countries with TEEE, taken only in Lyceum Grade C’ in Greece. Generally, in countries where the demand for tertiary education is greater than the available positions, a *numerus clausus* is often used. When the number of candidates for TE is greater than the available positions, TEEE are used. The system becomes

¹ There exist several -primarily economic- reasons for governments (and SE institutions and/or individuals) to actually reproduce the structural conditions that allow SE to flourish in Greece, despite the current crisis. Time and space considerations do not allow us to address them here. In this study, we do not examine any specific government or wider civil society responses to SE changes (e.g., formal public-school enhancement classes; Greek government and/or European vouchers for private *frontisteria*; “social” *frontisteria*, etc.). We are only looking at the responses of private SE institutions and private tutors, parents and SE teachers.

highly competitive and usually leads to the emergence of SE institutions, like *frontisteria*. They are similar to but not identical with *cramming schools* and the institutions of *juku* or *kumon* in Japan (Bray 2009; Pyrgiotakis 2011).

Other factors are socio-economic and/or cultural. In many countries, the price of failure in TEEE is very high, not only in terms of limited or no future access to post-secondary education (PSE) but also in terms of the consequent relationship between PSE and future employment, high income returns (Psacharopoulos & Papakonstantinou 2005, p. 104; Cholezas 2011), social prestige, etc. (e.g., in Southern Europe, South Korea, Japan, China, etc.). In Greece, given the size and scope of SE, it is often reported that SE has become a “cultural obsession” (Liodakis 2010). If culture is understood as sets of practices and individual and/or group responses to ever-changing socio-economic relations and conditions (Satzewich & Liodakis 2013), then SE in Greece has become a *necessary* “cultural obsession” indeed, given its crucial role in TEEE.

Two features make the Greek case of SE special and unique in Europe: a) its “permanent ties” with and its absolute dependence upon the TE’s (universities and HETI) TEEE system, and b) its pervasiveness (very large size) and cost. For example, in 1993 it was estimated that 95% of all Lyceum Grade C’ students participated in SE, up from 64% in 1984 (Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο cited in Polychronaki 2002, p. 73). In a 2005 study of more than 3,000 first year university entrants, 80% reported that they have had some form of *frontisterio*²; 50% reported that they had private tutoring and 33% had attended both private and group tutoring in

² Psacharopoulos & Papakonstantinou refer here to *frontisterio* as the actual *process* of participating in some form of SE, not to the physical space or business establishment where SE is delivered. It is implied that they use the term “group tutoring” to refer to the physical space and the process of SE in a *frontisterio* and the term “private tutoring” to refer to private lessons.

preparation for their TEEE (Psacharopoulos & Papakonstantinou 2005, p. 105). A 2014 study of 534 households showed that 99% of all Lyceum Grade C' students attended either a *frontisterio* (54%), private lessons –PLs- (21%), or both (24%). Only 1% of respondents' children had not resorted to SE for TEEE preparation (SEFA 2014). Today, still in the midst of the devastating economic crisis, a study suggests that approximately 245,000 Lyceum students (Grades A', B' and C') attend some form of SE in Greece. This represents two thirds of all Lyceum students (SEFA 2015). Few other EU countries come close (Bray 2011). In fact, the Greek case may be comparable only to South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and China (Aurini, Davies & Dierkes 2013). Moreover, 97% of students who participate in SE actually write the TEEE; only 66% of those who do not receive SE participate in the TEEE process (SEFA 2014).

In addition, SE is a very expensive proposition, as we will see below, when we analyze costs. Generally, it is estimated that, on average, Greek households spend more than 10,000€ for every child attending SE in all high-school grades (Lyceum A', B' and C'), in preparation for their TEEE, when the annual direct (government) cost of a university spot in Greece does not exceed 4,000€ (Psacharopoulos & Papakonstantinou 2005, p. 103). The Association of Educational Frontisteria Owners of Attica (SEFA) has estimated that household expenditures for *frontisteria* (not for language instruction, music, etc.) reach approximately 420 million € per annum (182,000 students multiplied by an average of 2,293€ for annual fees). Expenditures for PLs fees approach 250 million € (SEFA 2015). Both estimates appear conservative. The Centre for Development of Educational Policy (KANEP) of the GSEE estimated the total *parapedia* expenditures (including SE as defined herein) to total 3.9 billion € in 2013, approximately 2.2% of current nominal GDP; this was almost 80% of the government's annual budget expenditures

(4.9 billion €) for all education in Greece (KANEP/GSEE 2016, pp. 58-60, 110-113, 142-143). SE expenditures alone constitute 75% of all *parapedia* costs (KANEP/GSEE 2016, p. 144).

Examining the New Landscape: SE in Transition

The ongoing economic crisis in Greece has dramatic adverse impacts on the socio-economic conditions of the majority of people. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) has contracted by 25% since 2009. Household income has been steadily declining. It is estimated that between the last quarter of 2009 and the third quarter of 2015, nominal wages have declined by 37.1%; real wages have declined, on average, by 28.1% (GSEE 2016, pp. 74-75). Unfortunately, public funding for education has also declined by an estimated 36% during the crisis (Hellenic Government cited in European Commission 2015, p. 3). Yet, the need for access to TE persists for most. In fact, with the labour market becoming even more competitive because of the crisis (24.5% unemployment), this need may now be more imperative than ever.

In this study, the impacts of the economic crisis on the new SE landscape are explored, under these new uncertain and precarious conditions. Having interviewed *frontisteria* owners, teachers and parents, our research addresses four interrelated questions. We examine: 1) whether the size and scope of the SE phenomenon has been moderated by the economic crisis; 2) the cost of SE and the means by which *frontisteria* owners attempt to sustain SE student enrollment; 3) the new working conditions of SE teachers; and 4) the means by which parents are coping their children's SE opportunities, in light of their declining incomes. First, for theoretical and analytical clarity, we present a brief section on terminology for SE and its types. Second, we provide information on the data and methods of this study. Finally, we summarize the findings of

our study, as they relate to our questions, and provide conclusions and thoughts on future implications for SE in Greece.

Types of SE in Greece

The elementary and secondary Greek educational levels are divided as follows: The *Demotiko* (elementary system or EL) consists of Grades 1-6. The secondary system (SL) is divided into the *Gymnasium* (Grades 7-9) and the *Lyceum* (Grades 10-12). In this study, we are only interested in SE at the Lyceum level (Lyceum Grades A', B' and C').

In Greece, the term used to describe *all* non-official (informal; not state-provided), private and for-profit educational activities is *parapedia*. It includes foreign-language instruction, music lessons, digital learning (computer and information technology courses), as well as SE. SE activities are considered a subcategory of the larger, all-encompassing term of *parapedia*. We use the acronym SE to refer *both* to shadow *and* supplementary education, because it shares aspects of both. SE in Greece is greatly but not completely institutionalized or visible. It is offered by *frontisteria* (private tutoring institutions) as enterprises, often as franchises, but it is also delivered by individuals offering private lessons (PLs or *idietera* in Greek). SE offers for-profit educational services which *supplement* the teaching that takes place in public schools, “shadowing” the official secondary educational curriculum, in order to prepare students for TEEE (primarily in Lyceum). Also, large parts of the SE instruction, especially PLs, are not visible but hidden in the “shadows” (see Bray 2007, 2009, 2011). As such, SE is also part of the underground economy.

The institutionalized SE, visible and government-regulated business entities are called *frontisteria* (plural; *frontisterio* in the singular). The term refers to: a) the physical space in which SE instruction takes place (therefore the businesses); b) the educational process of delivering SE in such spaces. *Frontisteria* as business institutions are regulated by the Greek government. On the other hand, PLs as economic and educational activities are difficult to regulate because they are almost completely hidden. Historically, higher percentages of upper income parents have chosen PLs over *frontisteria*, with most lower-income households opting for the latter. This trend may be changing due to the current crisis, as we observe below. SE in Greece is delivered, then, by *frontisteria* and PLs. In this work, we limit our focus only to the part of SE which is directed at Lyceum students, in preparation for their TEEE. Special attention is paid to students, who take their TEEE in Lyceum Grade C'. We do not examine EL or Gymnasium SE activities.

In terms of SE delivery and participants (SE “consumers”), evidence suggests the following: 1) There exist large regional disparities. There is a clear urban/rural split. SE is more likely to be readily available in medium and large size cities, and less likely to be found in rural areas (Hatzitegas 2008). For example, in urban centres, 55% of students participate in SE (all school levels), whereas in rural areas the percentage drops to 45 (SEFA 2015, p. 2). There is a positive correlation (often strong) between the educational attainment and income of parents and the probability of their children participating in SE (Verdis 2002). The higher the educational level and income of parents, the more likely it is that their children will be placed in SE. For example, in the 2015 SEFA study, 35% of children with elementary education parents participated in SE; the percentage of children with post-secondary education parents rose to 55 (SEFA 2015). In terms of income, only 22% of children in households with monthly incomes

under 500€ participated in SE. This percentage increased steadily as household incomes increased, reaching 72% for households with over 2,000€ monthly incomes (SEFA 2015).

Data and Methods

Our qualitative data were gathered by interviewing subjects from the islands of Crete and Euboea, in the summers of 2014 and 2015. Twenty four (24) semi-structured interviews were conducted, on the condition of anonymity and no harm to participants. Eight (8) interviews were conducted with *frontisteria* owners (FOs), eight (8) with *frontisteria* teachers (FTs) and eight (8) with parents (Ps) whose children attended a *frontisterio* or took PLs. The process of sample selection is explained below.

Frontisteria

We used the list of the *Paratiritirio Didaktron* (*Frontisteria* Fees Monitor or FM) of the General Secretariat of Commerce and Consumer Protection (<http://app.gge.gov.gr/>) of the Hellenic Ministry of the Economy, Development and Tourism for three reasons: a) it is an appropriate sampling frame for the current study since the FM list contains almost all legal *frontisteria* in the country; b) to access and compare the fee schedules reported by *frontisteria* owners (FOs) to the FM; and c) because of the reliability of FM data, given that, by law, FOs are obliged to report their fee schedules annually; penalties are set for non-compliance or false-reporting.

We began with the prefecture of Rethymnon, in Crete, Greece, because of researcher proximity and easy access for personal interviews. In order to construct our FOs sample, we selected randomly 6 out of the 18 *frontisteria* in the Prefecture of Rethymnon, found in the FM

list. Out of the 6 FOs contacted, 3 immediately agreed to answer our research questions. The rest FOs replied that they were “too busy right now, in the middle of the summer session” but were willing to talk to us “at a less busy time.” One of the three FOs, however, offered to introduce us to 2 of her fellow FOs in Herakleion, Crete. The other offered to introduce us to 3 of his fellow FOs in the island of Euboea (Vassiliko, Eretria and Chalkida), in the Region of Central Greece. Both said they knew those fellow FOs from their common participation in the activities of the Federation of Educational Frontisteria Owners of Greece (OEFE). We accepted their offer and contacted their fellow FOs who were “happy to talk to us.” Thus, we conducted a total of eight FOs interviews. Six of our FOs were male and two were female.

Frontisteria Teachers

We used a snowball sampling technique (Bryman & Bell 2016) to create our *frontisteria* teachers’ (FTs) sample. Given the geographical distribution of the FOs informants, we contacted several teachers in Rethymnon, Herakleion and in the island of Euboea. Unfortunately, we did not get any respondents from Herakleion. We selected 5 from Rethymnon and 3 from Euboea. Three FTs were males and five were females. All FTs had university degrees and had been teaching in SE for over seven years.

Parents

We chose to interview parents whose children participated in SE by attending either *frontisteria*, PLs, or both, in order to prepare for the TEEE. Using a snowball sampling technique, we first approached parents in Rethymnon. Two of our six Rethymnon interviewees introduced us to two more parents, one in Herakleion and one in Chania. Six of the parents interviewed were females and two were males. The educational background of parents ranged from elementary to

university education; their occupations varied from private employees, to hair salon owners, civil servants, pensioners and civil engineers. They were parents of one, two, three or four children.

We interviewed FOs first, *frontisteria* teachers next, and parents last. All informants in Rethymnon were interviewed in person. For all others, telephone interviews were conducted. Despite the limitations of our sample, our data seem rich and demonstrate high levels of credibility, dependability and confirmability (Silverman 2001; Shenton 2004), as it will become clear from our discussion below. We do not make any claims of transferability, although research conducted on behalf of FOs shares most of our findings (SEFA 2012, 2014, 2015).

Discussion and Findings

The qualitative analysis of the data gathered indicates that, under the new crisis conditions in Greece, there is a new SE landscape emerging. *Frontisteria* appear to operate under a new scheme. The main characteristics of this new operating scheme are that a) FOs have decreased their fees and reduced teachers' pay; b) *frontisteria* teachers have accepted decreases in hourly wages and experienced an intensification of their labour process, and c) parents are trying hard to save as much as possible in order to continue to enroll their children in *frontisteria*, especially during their preparation for TEEE in Lyceum Grade C'. As one FO exclaimed, referring to all stakeholders, FOs, parents, and teachers "*in general, things have changed for all sides!*" Below we present the main responses and new strategies of SE stakeholders.

***Frontisteria* owners: Fees and enrollment trends**

Some of the *frontisteria* were small businesses in villages and towns (as in Vassiliko and Eretria in Euboea). Other *frontisteria* were larger and well-known businesses in small cities (as in Rethymnon, Crete) and others were large businesses with two or three sites in larger cities (in Herakleion, Crete). One *frontisterio* was a franchise business, member of a large country-wide group of *frontisteria*, in Chalkida, Euboea. Regarding *frontisteria* fees, these varied depending on the year of study and there are variations amongst several *frontisteria* as well. It has to be noted that, due to changes in legislation, the number of subjects on which students are tested for the 2016 TEEE has decreased from 6 (until the year 2015) to 4 from the year 2016 and onwards. Thus, in the school year 2015-2016 students attend *frontisteria* for fewer school subjects and, consequently, parents are charged lower total fees. According to the *frontisteria* owners we interviewed, prior to the economic crisis in Greece the fees charged for Lyceum students (for 6 subjects) were as follows: in Lyceum Grade A' students were charged from 1,530 €/year to 2,250 €/year. In Lyceum Grade B' students were charged from 1,530 €/year to 2,880 €/year and Lyceum Grade C' students were charged from 2,700 €/year to 4,050 €/year. Furthermore, Lyceum Grade C' students' preparation in *frontisteria* for the TEEE usually starts in the summer proceeding Lyceum Grade C', and costs an additional 1,000€. Thus, Lyceum Grade C' preparation for the TEE exams actually costs from around 4,000€ to 5,000 €/year. Finally, *frontisteria* charges varied depending on the year of study and were especially high for the final year of preparation for the TEE examinations.

Since 2010, especially in 2015 when the number of exam subjects decreased by one third (from 6 to 4), *frontisteria* fees have also decreased. On average, Lyceum Grade A' students are now charged between 1,080 €/year and 1,620 €/year. Lyceum Grade B' students are charged

from 1,080 €/year to 1,980 €/year and Lyceum Grade C' students are charged from 1,980 €/year to 3,150 €/year. In addition, approximately 1,000€ is charged for the senior year students' preparation in the previous summer, raising the fees for the Lyceum Grade C' students from 3,000 €/year to approximately 4,150 €/year. According to a *frontisterio* owner interviewed, in the previous years and during the crisis, when students sat for exams in 6 subjects, total fees for Lyceum Grade C' students reached 5,000 €/year. This seems to be consistent with both the FM and the fees suggested by SEFA.

Most *frontisteria* owners reported that, when comparing the student enrollments before the economic crisis and present day, there is a 10% decrease. One owner in Rethymnon, Crete, reported that the student population in his *frontisterio* has decreased by 20%. An owner in Chalkida, Euboea, whose *frontisterio* is a franchise and belongs to a larger group of *frontisteria*, was the only one to report that, although there is decrease in the number of Gymnasium students, there is an increase of Lyceum students in his *frontisterio*. This was attributed to the shift from private tutoring, a wide-spread phenomenon prior to the crisis, to attending *frontisteria* nowadays. This *frontisterio* owner explained that, parents could afford to send their children to PLs before the crisis (which were more costly than *frontisteria* then), but now they have had to switch to the less costly *frontisteria*. As for Gymnasium students, today they either take no supplementary courses or attend very low cost private lessons. Some private tutors (with less teaching experience or greater need for work) have decreased their fees so much that they now cost less than *frontisteria*. More *frontisteria* owners, however, have mentioned that the post crisis Gymnasium student population decrease is of greater extent, although they were not asked about Gymnasias.

The *frontisteria* owners explained that this decrease in their student population is due to the deteriorated economic conditions of parents. A *frontisterio* owner in Herakleion, Crete, noted that the decrease in student population in *frontisteria* is smaller than the decrease of private lessons. With the advent of the economic crisis, private lessons decreased first; *frontisteria* were affected by the crisis at a later stage. There are public education teachers who offer private lessons under the table, and they have also decreased their private tutoring charges considerably. One additional dimension of the matter put by this owner is that there is lack of disposable income so many parents enroll but do not pay for their children's fees. Another owner in Rethymnon, Crete, agreed that the crisis did not affect *frontisteria* immediately, but at a later stage; it began to hurt them financially in 2012. He stated that "*the frontisteria are pressured a lot and are struggling to survive.*" He also agreed that some parents are delaying payment of their children's fees and often FOs have had to offer some additional services free of charge. There have been some parents who haven't paid any fees for the whole year and the FO lets the student attend classes either because he feels sorry for him/her, or because the student's siblings have attended his *frontisterio* in the past.

Efforts to increase student enrollment

In light of the apparent decline in student enrollment, many *frontisteria* owners have resorted to advertising as a means to sustain or increase it. In some franchise *frontisteria*, there was advertising on television as well. Furthermore, they have worked hard to strengthen their relations with parents. In small cities as in Chalkida, Euboea, they worked on developing close relations with parents in their region. Another owner, in his effort to attract more customers

turned to greater and better targeted advertising. He also increased additional services to students. For example, he hands out more free exercise books and routinely organizes educational and professional orientation events for his students free of charge. The handbooks he provides for his students are preparatory for the TEE exams and the teachers in his *frontisterio* work to produce this material. Finally, the teachers in his *frontisterio* are evaluated on their class performance and on students' learning outcomes and exam performance.

In order to maintain the student enrollment, another *frontisterio* owner increased the number of students in tutorial groups, so as to decrease per student fees, which is more attractive to parents. As seen earlier, there is a large variation of fees amongst the *frontisteria*, especially in Lyceum Grade C'. The number of students per group was increased from 5 to 6 or 7, thus increasing the teacher-student ratio. Larger teacher-student ratios have, of course, consequences on the quality of learning and the pedagogy (i.e., teaching methods) used (Lioudaki 1996). In addition, this owner cut the *frontisterio* expenses by decreasing his teachers' pay and stated that this practice was also used by other FO colleagues.

In another case, a *frontisterio* owner in Rethymnon, Crete, claimed that he decreased pre-crisis fees by almost 50% and consequently cut the pay and the hours of his teachers (*frontisteria* teachers are paid by the hour). A 50% reduction is rare, but he also claimed that he cut employee costs by 30-40%; nevertheless, even this has proven inadequate in "saving" his business, since he has experienced a sharp reduction of both his income and profits. All 8 *frontisteria* owners who were interviewed reported that they reduced their fees in their effort to sustain student enrollment. On average, the percentage of fee reductions varied from 15% to 30% (with the 50% being the exception), depending on the *frontisterio*. Some owners reduced fees gradually, every year of the crisis. Two of the owners noted that in spite of a 30% reduction of fees, there exist

parents who are still unable to pay for their children's fees. Consequently, owners end up teaching several students free of charge, or, in other cases, accepting students from large families without charging them.

Frontisteria owners reported that parents try to save from other expenditures in order to continue to send their children to *frontisteria*, despite their declining income. Parents have reduced other expenses and adapted their personal needs in order to allocate potential family savings to their children's SE. One *frontisterio* owner claimed that "*their children's frontisterio would be the last thing they [parents] would have to cut down.*" Two *frontisteria* owners noted that parents will not send their children to a *frontisterio* during Gymnasium and Lyceum Grades A' and B' if they cannot afford it, but they will make every effort to send their children to a *frontisterio* in Lyceum Grade C', for TEEE preparation. Or, youngest siblings will not attend a *frontisterio* in early grades so that the Lyceum Grade C' student could be sent to one. In addition, and contrary to past trends, parents nowadays may send their children to a *frontisterio* for only two or three months instead of the whole school-year, or occasionally only.

Another *frontisterio* owner noted that parents wish to send their children to a *frontisterio* at least in Lyceum Grades B' and C' and in order to achieve this they may cut down on their children's other paid activities (sports, entertainment, other *parapedia* activities, etc.). During the economic crisis though, parents may stop their children from attending a *frontisterio* if they are "*weak students*" (i.e., low achievers), which was not always the case prior to the crisis. This may be a new, emerging trend. This FO added that he personally informs the parents about any weak students so that "*they can act accordingly,*" because he is a "*serious businessman*" who has owned his *frontisterio* for 23 years and keeps close relations with parents. His *frontisterio* is located in a village, thus he is personally related to his clientele and wishes to have relationships

of personal trust with parents. It was reported by a different *frontisterio* owner that parents with high-achieving children agonize over ways of saving, in order to safeguard their children's education.

One FO mentioned that sometimes it is the grandparents who pay for their grandchildren's *frontisterio* (when parents cannot afford it); in other cases, parents have planned savings in previous years; in some cases, both happen. Other parents have cut down the number of subjects their children attend a *frontisterio* for, focusing only on the subjects their children are weaker and need more help. Finally, an FO replied that parents "*continue their sacrifices*" for their children's education and that he was aware of cases where parents have even taken loans in order to send their children to a *frontisterio*, which, often, they conceal from their children.

In terms of FOs' responses, it was stated that parents are reporting to have cut down on their living expenses, such as new clothing or shoes both for themselves and for their children. They have also reduced their everyday expenses, vacation, unnecessary travel, entertainment, even their supermarket and food expenses (by growing their own vegetables), gas consumption and energy (including heating and cooling), in order to save and continue to finance their children's SE. Parents, it was said, now try to work more as well, for the same reason. At the beginning of the crisis parents are said to have cut down on everything else and finally they had to cut down on their children's *frontisterio*, too. Parents who can still afford it (with high incomes), however, continue to finance their children's private lessons, which cost more than *frontisteria* (e.g. a private lesson in Math may cost 18€/hour). In spite of the above, FOs reported that they are facing fee payment delays and increasingly, parents are asking for more 'economic packages' (i.e., lower fees). In some *frontisteria* there are 50% discounts for parents

who are both unemployed (and still wish to send their children to a *frontisterio*), families with 4 children or more and parents with more than one child attending the same *frontisterio*.

One *frontisterio* owner referred to a shift of preference of some parents from *frontisteria* to private lessons because of the economic crisis. This was due to the fact that many young, inexperienced and unemployed teachers dropped their charges to as low as 6-7 €/hour, whereas a *frontisterio* hour costs to parents 3.5-4€/hour. Some parents who can afford it, therefore, preferred to pay the higher (double) charge in order to provide private tutoring for their child at home. *Frontisteria* teachers also referred to this growing trend.

***Frontisteria* teachers**

The *frontisteria* teachers (FTs) interviewed were employees in small, medium or large *frontisteria*. They taught various subjects (Greek, History, Mathematics and Physics). Half of the eight FTs interviewed stated that they were not aware of their *frontisterio* charges to students. Those who were aware of the charges in fact confirmed the fees reported by FOs. One teacher mentioned that in the *frontisterio* she works they are having an increase in student enrollment after the economic crisis and attributed this to the decline of the quality of public education. Due to insufficient teachers' appointments to public schools, the teacher-student ratio in public schools has risen. In addition, many teachers are appointed to public schools late, two to four months after the beginning of the school-year. Consecutively, parents enroll their children to *frontisteria* to ensure better learning conditions and, hopefully, greater exam performance.

Another teacher replied that in the *frontisterio* she works they have experienced a 30-40% decline in students' enrollment after the economic crisis. She added that before the crisis

private tutors charged 25€ per hour whereas now they charge 25€ per two hours and there are now private tutors who charge as low as 8-10€/hour. Another teacher noted that in the *frontisterio* he works there is a sizable decline in students' enrollment in Lyceum Grades A' and B' (30-40%), but in Grade C' the decline is not as great (10%). In Gymnasium, the decline is over 40%. Another teacher agreed that *frontisteria* fees are "*much lower now*" and in the *frontisterio* she works they have had a 60-70% decline in student enrollment after the crisis. According to this teacher, parents are purportedly turning to very inexpensive private lessons costing as low as 3-4€/hour. She added that this decline in student enrollment has led to fewer working hours per week for *frontisteria* teachers in the last 2-3 years. They used to work for 10-15 hours/week and now they are employed for only 4-7 teaching hours/week, which renders their monthly income utterly inadequate. Two other teachers mentioned that in the *frontisteria* they are employed the decline in student enrollment is 10% in Lyceum Grade C'. Finally, a FT mentioned that in the *frontisterio* she works there are few Gymnasium students enrolled, but they are having increased enrollments of Lyceum students who have now turned to *frontisteria* from the more expensive PLs, so they have maintained their overall student population.

According to FTs, FOs have attempted to confront the decrease of student enrollment by a) decreasing teachers' pay; b) decreasing their own fees, and c) increasing the number of students per class (i.e., increasing the teacher-student ratio). Teachers' working hours (thus, income) have decreased due to the decline in student enrollment and the increase of the number of students per class. FTs confirmed that the efforts of FOs to maintain student enrollment include organizing information events, delivering free exercise books to their students and offering students skills tests and educational counseling. All eight teachers responded that their

employers decreased *frontisteria* fees by 5-20%. Despite the reduction of fees and the facilitation of fees payment, some parents often fail to settle their bill.

FTs reported that parents, despite their decreased income, are willing to do without other things and ask for reductions in the *frontisterio* fees in order to support their children's SE. Some parents take up a second or even a third (menial and/or part-time) job and reduce other expenses. They also delay paying off the *frontisterio* fees or do not pay their children's fees at all. A teacher stated that in the *frontisterio* she works there are many enrolled students who do not pay their fees. Before the economic crisis 7/10 of the students in this *frontisterio* paid their fees, but now only 3/10 of the students actually pay their fees. Parents are said to have turned to grandparents and other third parties to finance their children's *frontisterio*. Teachers claimed that parents are now saving on shopping (clothing and similar expenses), cutting entertainment for themselves and their children, excursions, weekend getaways, travelling, nights out, personal expenses (hairdressing and other personal care), their children's allowances etc., in order to support their children's *frontisterio*. First they reduced their own expenses and then their children's. Only parents who are well off send their children to *frontisterio* in Gymnasium nowadays.

According to one teacher who has taught in different *frontisteria* for 15 years, parents in her region (Euboea) have stopped sending their children to PLs (which were more expensive), but have had to send their children to a *frontisterio* because they want them to be "*properly educated.*" Unfortunately, the public school in their region has various deficiencies and is seriously understaffed, so the local *frontisterio* where she works is thriving because public schooling is insufficient. She referred to this *frontisterio* in Vassiliko (a large village) as a "*very good enterprise where good work is done*" and it is preferred by parents despite the fact that fees

are more costly than in the nearby city of Chalkida. She added that the FO evaluates his teachers also. It appears that teacher evaluation by FOs may be another new emerging trend.

Two of eight FTs interviewed answered that the *frontisterio* owner did not cut down teachers' hourly pay after the economic crisis. The remaining six confirmed that their employers reduced their pay as a response to enrollment decline and the overall worsening economic conditions; "*it is an economic domino,*" one teacher reported. One of these six teachers reported that in the *frontisterio* she works, most teachers experienced pay reductions, except those who are reputable because they are either really good or have become well-known, and are thus coveted by parents. These 'sought after teachers' had no decrease (or increase) in their pay, but at the same time the owner has also hired inexperienced teachers with 4€/hour pay. The above six teachers replied that *frontisteria* owners reduced teachers' pay by 10-20%. Teachers who were paid 10€/hour before the crisis are now paid 9 or 8€/hour. Elsewhere, those who were paid 9€/hour are now paid 8 or 7€/hour. Other employers pay their teachers 8€/hour and even 6 or 5€/hour now.

During the crisis, when teachers' income declined, they either reduced their own private lessons charges to attract more customers or tried to work in more than one *frontisteria*. Those who did not have to offer private lessons in the past, in addition to working in a *frontisterio*, have now turned to private lessons, also. All teachers interviewed answered that they reduced their hourly charges for private lessons they offer. When asked about their hourly charges, two teachers replied that charges vary from 10 €/hour to 12 or 15 €/hour, depending on the class and subject. Other teachers reported greater variation in charges, between 15 and 20€/hour to between 25 and 30€/hour, for more experienced teachers. The teachers we interviewed alleged that inexperienced teachers charge 10 €/hour. They also reported that lower charges (10-

15€/hour) are for Gymnasium students, whereas in Lyceum teachers charge 12.5-25€/hour, depending on their reputation and experience. Parents choose a private tutor according to their economic conditions. One teacher mentioned that in her region of Vassiliko, Euboea, there is high unemployment because several factories have now closed down. So, private inexperienced tutors charge 5-7€/hour. Parents prefer them for Gymnasium tutoring and, if they are happy with their work, they keep them for Lyceum tutoring later. One teacher noted that the average charge for private lessons is: 10€/hour for Lyceum Grade A', 13€/hour for Lyceum Grade B' and 15€/hour for Lyceum Grade C'. In Lyceum Grade C' private tutors may organize small groups of two or three students with more appealing charges. Specifically, whereas one student would be charged 15€/hour, a couple of students are charged 20€/hour. Thus, the teacher is paid 20€/hour but parents are charged 10€/hour each. In a small group of three students, the teacher is paid 24€/hour but the three parents are charged only 8€/hour each. This appears to be a new strategy beneficial for all. In conclusion, there is wide variation in private lessons charges, depending on the teachers' financial and work situation, experience, the student's grade and the subject taught.

Teachers were asked whether parents preferred to send their children to *frontisteria* or private lessons during the economic crisis and their answers again varied, indicating that parents made choices according to what they could afford. One teacher responded that parents turned to private lessons in Gymnasium and to *frontisteria* in Lyceum. She added that it is not rare for private tutors not to be paid for their lessons, which has happened to her also. Three teachers responded that parents turned to *frontisteria*, apparently for lower fees charges (they were given offers, packages etc.). The remaining teachers responded that parents turned to private lessons for a few hours a week, which was less costly. They also preferred private lessons with 4€/hour charge, despite a teacher's lack of experience, and associated this to the high unemployment rate

in their region (Euboea) after the factory closures. One of these teachers emphasized that parents “turned to low cost private lessons,” since this was what they could afford: they did not give up the *frontisterio* (which cost 5€/hour) to turn to a private lesson of 25€/hour, but turned to a private lesson of 7-8€/hour, despite the teacher’s lack of experience. Finally, another one of the above teachers said that there were parents who could afford better learning conditions for their children and higher charges, so they took their children from the *frontisterio* and started private tutoring. This was due to the increased teacher-student ratio in the *frontisteria*. As we mentioned above, during the crisis FOs formed classes with larger numbers of students, leading to worsening learning experiences. Parents who could afford it, took their children out of these *frontisteria* and sent them to private lessons instead. According to teachers, the economic situation of parents seemed to determine, in large part, the type of SE sought for their children.

Parents with children in SE

The parents who were interviewed had children who had either attended a *frontisterio* or had both attended a *frontisterio* and taken private lessons, in preparation for their TEE examinations. Two out of the eight parents interviewed had three children who were all university students at the time of the interviews. All parents interviewed had children who entered tertiary education (either a university or a technical education institution) after preparation in a *frontisterio* or having taken private lessons.

Parents were asked how much *frontisteria* or PLs cost them in the three grades of Lyceum. Their answers varied. Not all children attended a *frontisterio* exclusively or continuously. Some took private lessons or attended a *frontisterio* only for one or two school

subjects. So, there were parents who paid 1,000€/year for their child's lessons in Lyceum Grade A' and others who paid from 3,150€/year for *frontisterio* up to 5,400€/year for private lessons in the same grade. In Lyceum Grade B' there were parents who paid 1,000€/year for their child's lessons and from 3,200€/year to 4,050€/year for *frontisterio*. Parents paid even up to 7,200€/year in private lessons in the same grade. In Lyceum Grade C' some parents paid from 1,500€/year to 6,000€/year for their child's *frontisterio*. In the same grade, other parents paid from 2,050€/year to 10,000€/year for their child's private lessons.

The eight parents interviewed reported that their family income decreased by 20% to 50% during the economic crisis. When asked how they dealt with their income decrease in relation to their children's SE, all eight parents replied that they continued to send their child to a *frontisterio*. Two parents answered that they changed nothing with regard to their children's education and they are struggling to cope with the rest of family expenses. One father replied that they "altered" their expenses. They "sacrificed from elsewhere in order to sustain the *frontisterio* expenses." One mother responded that their daughter was a Lyceum Grade B' student when the crisis started, so they could not discontinue their child's *frontisterio* attendance. In order to cover the *frontisterio* expenses, the mother had to work more. Another mother replied that they chose less costly solutions. Before the crisis, three of their four children attended private lessons. During the crisis, the children were sent to *frontisteria* instead. One more mother said that the reason nothing changed with their child's education was that they had saved up before the crisis especially for their child's *frontisteria*. One father responded that they also used their savings for their child's *frontisterio*. Since their savings were insufficient, they had to cut on other expenses. They grew vegetables to cover for their household's needs and save on food expenses.

Four parents replied that the *frontisterio* their children attended cut fees by 5-10%. One mother reported that the *frontisterio* their daughter attended “*made offers and packages*” to parents and gave extra hours of free lessons to students. At the same time, they facilitated parents who were unable to pay off their children’s fees by offering them lower fees. Finally, some owners postponed fee payment until the following August or September, i.e., 3-4 months after the student had taken the TEE exams. One parent reported that their son’s private tutors decreased their charges from 17-18€/hour to 12€/hour. The remaining parents reported that their child’s private tutors did not decrease their charges and one of these parents reported that the private lessons for their son in drawing (a School of Architecture candidate) were particularly costly. Four of the eight parents noted that decreases of the *frontisterio* or private lessons charges were insufficient. All eight parents reported that they had to cut down on other expenses due to their own income decrease, in order to finance their child’s *frontisterio* or private lessons. They cut down on their outings, shopping (clothing and shoes), vacation, personal expenses, entertainment, excessive fuel spending (they reduced car transportation), excessive supermarket expenses, other everyday expenses, bills, “*unnecessary expenses*”, “*expenses which were not of first priority, not first need things*” and “*on everything, really*”. One mother reported that following their income decrease and in view of their third son’s preparation for the TEEE, the two older sons who were university students in Athens had to live in student residence instead of in an apartment. Also, the third son had to choose a university department either in their hometown (to stay at home), or in Athens in order to live with his brothers who lived there. None of the eight parents interviewed cut down on their children’s *frontisterio* or private lessons. They were specifically asked on this and they all answered negatively. What they did was to

send their child to a *frontisterio* or PLs according to what they could afford (varying from 1,500€/year for early grades, to 10,000€/year for Lyceum Grade C’).

One mother of four children noted: “*Health and food come first. Then, frontisterio follows. Our first priority is surviving and our children’s ‘food’ follows*” – by ‘food’ she meant her children’s education, which in Greek “culture” includes SE. One father added that having two sons who studied out of town, in two different cities, they had to ask their daughter to study in their hometown; otherwise they would be unable to support her studies. Another mother wanted to report her experience from both her children. Five years ago, at the beginning of the economic crisis, when her daughter was in Lyceum, only two students (out of 25-30) in her daughter’s class at school attended a *frontisterio*. The large majority of students (80-90%, she says) took private lessons, which were more expensive. Nowadays, when her son is a Lyceum Grade C’ student, the opposite takes place: only two students in a school class take up private lessons and all the rest attend a *frontisterio*. She emphasized that parents have turned to the less costly solution of *frontisterio*. Finally, a father wanted to share with us his view that “*there should be good public education, so there would not be a need for frontisteria.*” He added that a regular practice of the Greek family has been to cut down on its other expenses in order to ensure their children’s education. This practice does not seem to have changed after the economic crisis in Greece.

Conclusions

The analysis of the gathered data indicated that *frontisteria* in crisis-stricken Greece operate under a new scheme. The deteriorating economic conditions of the country have brought about

discernible changes in SE for all the stakeholders involved: *frontisteria* owners, teachers and parents. Our interviewees pointed to several new coping strategies that have emerged. FOs have decreased their fees. Evidence from the FM and from our data from teachers and parents suggest that the FOs claims on the size of this decrease may be exaggerated. Despite the decrease, whatever its size, fees are sometimes not paid off. FOs have taken measures to survive as businesses and cope with the apparent decline in student enrollments. Such decline indicated the emergence of an unprecedented reality for SE in Greece. Since the 1960s, SE enrollments have gone up, only. FOs are now making special offers, offering free extra educational services and are facilitating parents with fee payments. They have also decreased their teachers' pay and hours of work.

Teachers, therefore, reported that they must seek extra work in more than one *frontisteria* and are offering more private lessons in order to sustain their declining income. Most private tutors have also decreased their hourly charges; younger, more inexperienced teachers work at very low hourly wages. The decrease on teachers' hourly charges in private lessons corresponds to their own economic conditions and their need for work. One thing is definite: the labour process, the working conditions and the wages of FTs are worsening. Parents reported that they are doing everything in their power to save so that their declining income will not affect their children's SE. Despite the great challenges and constraints of the economic crisis, their children's education remains a top priority; a necessity. Interviewed parents confirmed what *frontisteria* owners and teachers reported: they have cut down on all other expenses in order to continue to send their children to *frontisteria* or private lessons. They continue to pay in order to provide their children with an opportunity to access tertiary education.

SE as an educational phenomenon is in transition but continues to “persevere” in Greece. It may be temporarily dwindling but it is certainly not fading. Given the inadequacies and shortcomings of the PSES, the competitive nature of the TEEE, the crucial role of post-secondary education in upward social mobility (future employment, income, social status, prestige, etc.), and the pervasiveness of the “SE culture” in Greek society, amply demonstrated by our interviewees, it is almost certain that SE shall continue to persist, even in a more constricted form.

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