Shadow Education And Social Class Inequalities In Secondary Education In Greece: The Case Of Teaching English As A Foreign Language

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Abstract

This article deals with the shadow education system of private tutoring which contributes to the reproduction of social class inequalities, focusing on the Greek public secondary education system. It presents a literature review of the issue and the findings of an empirical qualitative and quantitative research that aimed at examining the causes of the students' massive resort to private supplementary tutoring for learning the English language, despite the fact that English is taught at school. The study also set out to examine the relationship between students' socioeconomic background and resort to private supplementary tutoring and the relationship between socioeconomic background and knowledge of the English language as attested by official certifications. Research findings indicate that the widely spread resort to private supplementary tutoring has a negative impact on the teaching of English in Greek public lower secondary education. Using Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, we argue that private supplementary tutoring makes closer the relationship between social class, familial cultural and economic capital and educational outcomes. Thus, upper and middle-class students are at an advantage, since they can move to the labour market with valued educational qualifications that enhance their occupational prospects. Finally, we discuss educational measures to address the problem.

Keywords: *social class inequalities, learning English, cultural and economic capital, shadow education*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Sociologists of education and educational scholars who study social class inequalities in education are increasingly focusing on the issue of "shadow education", which is defined as "paid private tuition outside of, and additional to, the formal schooling system" (Smyth, 2009, p. 2). Shadow education is a phenomenon that exists in educational systems throughout the world and is growing rapidly in recent decades (Bray, 2011; Manzon & Areepattamannil, 2014; Zhang, 2014). Research has shown that shadow education has grown in popularity in recent decades and that there is a "prodigious growth in out-of-school, private educational activities meant to supplement formal schooling is observed worldwide" (Mori & Baker, 2010). Shadow education has been extensive in East Asia, but in recent decades it has acquired worldwide dimensions (Chan & Bray, 2014). Similarly, research in England indicates that about 25% of students have attended private tuition during primary or secondary education (Ireson Rushforth, 2005), while resort to private tuition is extremely common in Greece, especially in relation to preparing university applicants for the highly competitive university entrance examinations.

Apart from the term "shadow education, in the relevant literature researchers also use the terms "private tuition" or "private supplementary tutoring" which is defined as "tutoring in academic subjects (such as languages and mathematics), and is provided by the tutors for financial gain, and is additional to the provision by mainstream schooling" (Bray, 2003, p. 13). Shadow education is at the heart of empirical research, since it is often seen as an instance of the marketization of educational systems, of the "transformation to a market-based system" (Silova, Budiene & Bray, 2006, p. 7). Researchers have also shown that private tutoring can lead to the maintenance of social inequalities in education. In this article we will use the term private tuition to describe tutoring which is supplementary to what students are taught at school.

Private tuition can take many forms. It usually takes place in the student's home or at centers dedicated to providing tuition (Tanner et al, 2009). It can take place on a one-to-one basis in the home of either the tutor or the students. It can also be provided in organized courses, either in small or in larger groups. In some countries tutoring is provided by mail, via the internet (Ventura & Jang, 2010) or even by telephone (Bray, 2007).

Students and their families resort to shadow education for many reasons. They may feel that the school does not provide them with adequate knowledge, they may wish to improve their school performance and grades. Also, parents who are concerned about their offspring's performance in school examinations are likely to resort to private tuition (Davies 2004). Moreover, as it is common in Greece and Japan, students may want to prepare better for university entrance examinations (Bray, 2007; Heyneman, 2011), especially when the places available at universities is limited. Resort to private tutoring is especially common in educational systems with strict university admission processes, since students and their families want to participate in higher education, and especially in prestigious departments. Apart from resorting to private tuition for preparation in competitive university entrance examinations, researchers argue that private tutoring is part of an "enrichment strategy" (Addi-Raccah & Dana, 2015, p. 184), whereby families wish to equip their offspring with educational qualifications that will help them in their lives, while it also serves to overcome the inadequacies of the educational system. This means that education is often considered as "an investment in human capital" that will positively affect students' future and welfare (Heyneman, 2011, p. 184).

Shadow education concerns sociologists of education because it is linked with the maintenance and exacerbation of social class inequalities in education (Lynch & Moran, 2006; Bray, 2007; Matsuoka, 2015). The shadow education system of private supplementary tutoring is a serious issue with "far-reaching implications for social inequalities and therefore social justice (Bray & Kwo, 2013, p. 480). They argue that since families, regardless of their income, invest heavily in it and spend huge amounts of money. In this way, the free education for all principle, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is seriously undermined (Bray & Kwo, 2013). Thus, it is also linked to the issue of social class inequalities in educational achievement, which

exists in many countries (Hobbs, 2016). Research has indicated that students from families with higher levels of financial capital can afford the cost of shadow education and improve their school performance. By contrast, students from lower social class backgrounds who come from families with lower income cannot attend private supplementary tutoring, so they have less chances to succeed at school (Joynathsing et al, 1988). Indeed, there is evidence that students from families from higher socioeconomic groups receive more private tuition than students from lower socioeconomic groups (Foondun, 1998). Similarly, research on the prevalence and cost of private tuition in England has shown that the same is true for students from families in the highest household income band (Peters et al., 2009) and for students with parents who are university graduates (Ireson & Rushforth, 2005). These findings are not surprising given the fact that the cost of private tutors could be as high as 30 euros per hour (Lynch & Moran, 2006). In summary, private tutoring, leads to the maintenance of social class in education, since students from different social classes have differential levels of access to it. Therefore, students from upper and middle classes, due to their higher levels of economic and cultural capital can benefit from attending private tuition and achieve better results at school.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Private supplementary tutoring is widely spread in Greece. Due to the "numerus clausus" policy in higher education, there is strong competition for the few places available, especially in prestigious higher education departments (Gouvias, 1998). Only applicants with the highest grades will be able to attend higher education, especially prestigious university departments such as the Medical or the Law school. Families invest heavily in higher education, so most families resort to private supplementary tutoring to prepare their offspring for the highly competitive higher education entrance examinations (Giamouridis & Bagley, 2006). Students from families with lower income are at a disadvantage, since they cannot pay for private supplementary tutoring and have fewer opportunities to have high school performance and succeed in the university entrance examinations (Kontogiannopoulou-Polydorides et al., 2000).

School performance is important for the following reasons. First, students from families with higher socioeconomic status have higher school performance, so they have easier access to higher education and can attend the most prestigious university departments (Katsillis & Rubinson, 1990). This is because access and allocation within higher education usually depends on academic performance in university entrance examinations. In this framework, research has shown that students from upper and middle-class backgrounds have higher performance and usually study in prestigious higher education institutions and departments. Empirical data suggest that in Greece social class differentials in relation to school performance can be attributed to students' economic and cultural capital. Students from families with higher levels of cultural and economic capital have high academic performance, since they can afford the cost of costly private supplementary tutoring (Mylonas, 1999). Second, students

with higher school performance in subjects such as foreign languages are at an advantage, since knowledge of foreign languages is an invaluable tool in the labour market.

As far as the teaching and learning of foreign languages, and especially the English language, is concerned, private tutoring is widely spread. At first sight it would seem strange, given the fact that English as a foreign language is taught from the first grade of primary school. Most students and their families choose the less costly organized courses, while a minority the tutoring on a one-to-one basis, which is costlier. It is considered, however, to yield better results, since it can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the students.

Bearing the above discussion into consideration, in this paper we are concerned with a specific aspect of social inequalities in the Greek educational system. More specifically, we are concerned with social class inequalities that arise due to the massive resort to private supplementary tutoring. To examine its impact and its relationship with socioeconomic background, we will focus on the knowledge of the English language of upper secondary school graduates. It is an issue which is at the heart of the public and scholarly discussion in Greece and concerns educators and those who are responsible for the design of educational policy. The increased concern with the issue stems from the fact that in modern society knowledge of the English language is a prerequisite for the transition to the labour market, and participation in the society, which, due to globalization, is not limited in the country's borders. It is also an issue which, as we will see, has to do with social inequalities in education.

In modern societies, in which the use of information plays an important role (Castells, 2000) the knowledge of foreign language is a factor that contributes positively to individual prosperity as well as the general financial development and prosperity of the society (European Council of Barcelona, 2002). According to the official rhetoric that accompanies initiatives for the promotion of learning foreign languages, knowing foreign languages is not simply useful, but necessary in many fields, such as education, labour market and the social life of individuals. In other words, it constitutes a significant parameter for active participation in the knowledge society, individual success, the general financial development and prosperity of the society. Knowledge of the English language in particular, is necessary for active participation in the society and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), since 78% of websites are in the English language (Chen & Wellman, 2005). Knowledge of foreign languages is linked to combating poverty and social exclusion and the development of an antagonistic society based on the use of knowledge (European Council of Barcelona, 2002).

Apart from the importance of English, he problem we discuss in this article stems also from the acknowledgement of continuing inefficiencies of the educational system in relation to the teaching of foreign languages, which is also mentioned in official sources. For instance, in the documents that accompany the National Curriculum for foreign languages it is mentioned that the teaching of foreign languages in the Greek educational system is not effective, while the Pedagogical

Institute argues that the widely spread resort to out-of-school support for learning the English language is indicative of the deficiency of the educational system to provide high quality knowledge of the English language (Pedagogical Institute, 2008).

In Greece public education does not equip students with adequate knowledge of the English language, nor does it offer certification of its knowledge, despite the fact that students study the English language for many years. More specifically, the English language is now taught from the first class of primary school and its teaching is compulsory until graduation from secondary education. In the last decades many initiatives have been undertaken that aimed to increase the quality of teaching in the Greek education system. Despite these initiatives, students still do not receive the knowledge that students and their families wish, so that they do not have to pay in order to learn the English language outside of the school (Pedagogical Institute, 2012).

C. METHOD

The above issues led us to conduct a small-scale research study with the aim of examining the causes of the students' massive resort to private supplementary tutoring for learning the English language, despite the fact that English is taught at school from the first grade of primary education. The research was organized in the following way.

We used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. More specifically, we administered a questionnaire in order to examine the dimensions and the relationships that emerge in relation to the issue under investigation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). We also conducted a small number of semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth data concerning the attitudes and beliefs of the students (Creswell, 2003; Denzin Lincoln, 2011). The sample included an equal gender mix of 15 female and 15 male students. The semi-structured interviews included a list of the issues to be examined with each student, while the interviewer was free to build a conversation focusing on the predetermined research questions described below. The sample of the research study were first year students from the Department of Fine Arts and Art Sciences and the Department of Physics in the University of Ioannina in Greece.

The aim of the research study was twofold. First, to record the extent of the resort to private tutoring for the English language and to examine the reasons for the widely spread resort to the out-of-school support and its influence on the teaching of the English language in the Greek educational system. Second and connectedly, to examine the relationship between social class and knowledge of the English language, since the massive resort to the out-of-school support transforms the certification of the knowledge of the English language from a public to a private good. The empirical data obtained from the research will allow us to suggest measures to address the issue of the widely spread resort to private tuition and recommend educational practices that can increase the level of English language teaching and learning in Greek schools. Bearing the above into consideration, as well as the literature review we presented above, the research questions we posed were:

a) What is the extent of the resort to private supplementary tutoring for the English language?
b) Why do students resort to private supplementary tutoring for the English language, despite the fact that English is a compulsory subject from the first class of primary education?
c) Is there a relationship between socioeconomic background and knowledge of the English language as attested by official certifications?

We decided to measure knowledge of the English language on the basis of official certificates, since it is a reliable measure of knowledge. We have used the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages which is often used in similar research (Council of Europe, 2001). It is useful, since it provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 1).

The issue under investigation is even more significant due to the financial crisis facing Greece. The financial crisis places more burden on the students' families, which cannot afford the extra cost of out-of-school support, given the dramatic decrease in income and the high unemployment rates. In this framework, the inefficiency of public schooling to provide students with adequate knowledge of the English language is especially important, as it is related to the issue of equality of opportunity. If the public school does not guarantee that students can learn the English language, students and their families are forced to seek this knowledge outside of the official educational system, thus increasing social inequalities.

On a theoretical level, we employ the theoretical and practical tools developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron and their cultural reproduction theory in order to explain social inequalities in education and to analyze "how culture and education contribute to social reproduction" (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 153). Their theoretical tools elaborated in the cultural reproduction theory offer deep insights into the processes that enable the students from privileged backgrounds to have better grades in school, have higher performance on standardized tests, and earn degrees with higher value (Kingston, 2001). Their theoretical constructs can provide insights into the ways in which students from families with high resources have high levels of cultural capital, so they can adjust easier to the requirements and the culture of school and have high academic achievement (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Lareau, 1987). It is worth mentioning a limitation of this research study. The fact that it focused on one higher education institution and two university departments means that care should be taken in generalizing the research results. Despite these shortcomings, we believe that the findings from this study shed light into a phenomenon that is widely spread in the Greek educational system, but has not been examined extensively from a sociological lens that focuses on the social implications of the parallel system of shadow education and the impact of the social class.

In this part of the paper we present the findings we collected from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews we conducted with the aim of examining the issue and responding to the research questions. The data we collected allowed us to gain an understanding of the students' decision to attend private tuition and the impact of social class background.

Research findings indicate that most students receive some kind of tuition outside of the school. More specifically, the data we collected show that 95% of the sample have received out-of-school support, in addition to the teaching of English at school. The students who did not receive private supplementary tutoring were those with parents who knew the language well, so they taught their children the English language. The massive resort to private tutoring means that it is a decision that does not to be articulated, since attending private tuition is considered as the normal practice. As a student reported "Everyone participates in it".

This means that no relationship between socioeconomic background and resort to private supplementary tutoring for the English language was found. The data we collected showed that nearly all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, receive private supplementary tutoring, despite the fact that English is a compulsory subject in the Greek higher education system and students spend many hours studying English. This contrasts with research findings in other countries that show an "association between private tuition and parents' socio-economic status" (Ireson & Rushforth, 2005, p. 6). According to a study conducted in Ireland, the likelihood of attended private tuition "is higher among more advantaged social groups, that is, among students from more middle-class backgrounds and those whose parents have tertiary educational qualifications" (Smyth, 2009, p. 17).

The high levels of resort to private tuition, regardless of socioeconomic background, reflects the widely spread held belief of the importance of the knowledge of the English language and the inefficiency of the educational system to provide adequate knowledge. Put simply, most students expressed the view that knowledge of the English language in indispensable for their studies and the transition to the labour market. As a student said "You can't do anything without English". Thus, if the school fails to provide adequate knowledge, it is only logical that they and their families seek this knowledge outside of the formal educational system.

Moreover, although we did not detect social class differences in the rates of resort to private tuition, we did find preliminary data that students from families with higher levels of financial and cultural capital are more likely to attend the costliest one-to-one private tuition, rather than organized language courses. This places them at an advantage in relation to working class students who cannot afford the cost of more effective forms of private tuition. In other words, inequalities do not have to do with resort to private tutoring, since almost all students in the sample reported having attended private tutoring. Rather, inequalities were observed in relation to the type of private tuition, with students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds being more likely to attend the costlier type of private tutoring (one-to-one tuition), which are considered more effective, as can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the students.

More research is needed before reaching definite conclusions, but we found a relationship between socioeconomic background and type of private tuition that needs to be investigated further in order to examine the impact of socioeconomic background.

The second research question we set out to investigate concerned the reasons why students resort to private supplementary tutoring for the English language, even if English as a foreign language is a compulsory subject from the first class of primary education. We wanted to investigate the driving force behind the seemingly paradoxical decision to resort to out-of-school support for a school subject that is taught at school for many years and great effort has been made in making its teaching more efficient. The data we collected provided strong evidence that this massive resort can be attributed to two factors. First, the inefficiency of the Greek education system in relation to the teaching of foreign languages. Despite the fact that students study English for many years, students cannot get a certification of the knowledge of the English language. This means that if students and their families want certification, they are obliged to seek it outside of the public school. As a student said: "It's difficult to learn English at school", while another expressed the opinion that "You need to go to a frontisterion [a kind of private school for foreign languages] to learn English, the school is not enough". An additional factor relates to the fact that knowledge of foreign language is essential in the transition to the labour market. Families invest in the future occupational achievement of their offspring, so they believe that knowing foreign languages is important and are willing to undergo financial sacrifices in order to equip their offspring with useful educational credentials.

In other words, the massive resort to out-of-school support is due to the fact of the widely spread belief in the Greek society that the school does not guarantee the learning of the English language and preparation in examination for the certification of the knowledge of the English language. At the same time, they believe that knowledge of the English language can be secured from sources outside of it. This belief does not only lead to the massive resort to the out-of-school support but also has negative implications for the quality of the teaching of English in public schools. Students often have low interest for the lesson, since they already know, from private tutoring, what is taught at school. In turn, lack of interest for the lesson, as many students reported, led to behavior problems and created a classroom atmosphere that was not always conducive to providing positive educational outcomes. The above discussion, along with the fact that certification of the knowledge of the English language is considered by students and their families as a commodity that can be bought, makes closer the relationship between social class and its knowledge as it is attested by official certificates. Students from families with higher levels of cultural and financial capital have more opportunities to learn the English language. The research data we collected also shed light to an important feature of social inequalities in education. Social inequalities are evident in the data which show the relationship between knowledge of the English language and socioeconomic background. This data is presented below. The statistical analysis of the research data indicates that

there is a relationship between the student families' income and certification of the knowledge of the English language. The research findings provide strong evidence that the familial financial capital impacts strongly on the certification of the knowledge of the English language. More specifically, students from families with higher income are more likely to have higher certification level, C1 or C2, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in relation to students from families with lower income. In relation to the level of parental education, research findings indicate that it is associated with certification of the knowledge of the English language. More specifically, students with parents who have not participated in higher education have relatively low certification of the knowledge of the English language. Most of them have certification at the level of B2, while very few have higher certification levels. By contrast, students with parents who are higher education graduates or holders of postgraduate degrees are much more likely to have higher levels of certification, that is, C1 or C2.

The above research findings are important, since they show clearly the relationship between knowledge of the English language and social background. They seem to confirm Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, according which the unevenly allocated resources among social classes (cultural, social and financial capital) are related to social class differentiated school performance (Bourdieu, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). So far, we have seen the reproductive role of the educational system in Greece. However, we do not adopt a deterministic approach, believing that these inequalities are not inevitable, but can be overcome. We believe that the following measures can increase the level of foreign language education in Greek education and can provide all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, with adequate knowledge of the English language. To begin with, on the basis of the above discussion, we argue that initiatives aiming at improving the teaching and learning of the English language in the Greek educational system are not enough for dealing with the problem. A holistic solution (combining the micro and the macro level) needs to examine the aims of teaching English, reforming the curriculum, using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for educational purposes and providing students with certification of the knowledge of the English language, as a means for reducing the massive resort to private tutoring that impacts negatively to the teaching of teaching English as a foreign language. It is also important to address these issues at depth in order to acquire research findings that can help the dialogue in the educational community, provide policy makers with valuable information and challenge the belief that English cannot be learned at school. Secondly, project work could be introduced in an effort to increase student interest, motivation and performance. In the relevant literature a number of beneficial outcomes of project-based learning have been identified. Project-based learning develops student confidence in using the foreign language (Fried-Booth, 2002), while it helps them acquire a positive attitude towards learning foreign languages (Stoller, 2006). Students who participate in projects have the chance to use the foreign language they are learning in a natural context (Haines, 1989).

Finally, differentiated instruction, which takes into account the fact that each student is unique can be helpful (Reese, 2011). In differentiated classrooms "not every student is doing exactly the same thing in exactly the same way at exactly the same time" (Theisen, 2002, p. 2) and the teacher makes use of "a variety of ways for students to explore curriculum content" (Tomlinson, 1995, p. 1). In this way all students, regardless of socioeconomic background and level of knowledge of the foreign language, are provided with challenging content and activities that motivate them to learn and "make their own sense of the content or input" (Theisen, 2002, p. 2), since the students' needs and experiences are at the heart of the educational process (Tomlinson, 1999). The above suggestions are simply indicative. Teachers who know their students can alter their teaching approaches to meet the needs of their students and help all of them acquire a good knowledge of the English language. We firmly believe that social class inequalities in relation to the teaching of English as a foreign language are not inevitable. They can be overcome provided effective educational measures have been taken and implemented consistently.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this part of the paper we present the findings we collected from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews we conducted with the aim of examining the issue and responding to the research questions. The data we collected allowed us to gain an understanding of the students' decision to attend private tuition and the impact of social class background.

Research findings indicate that most students receive some kind of tuition outside of the school. More specifically, the data we collected show that 95% of the sample have received out-of-school support, in addition to the teaching of English at school. The students who did not receive private supplementary tutoring were those with parents who knew the language well, so they taught their children the English language. The massive resort to private tutoring means that it is a decision that does not to be articulated, since attending private tuition is considered as the normal practice. As a student reported "Everyone participates in it".

This means that no relationship between socioeconomic background and resort to private supplementary tutoring for the English language was found. The data we collected showed that nearly all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, receive private supplementary tutoring, despite the fact that English is a compulsory subject in the Greek higher education system and students spend many hours studying English. This contrasts with research findings in other countries that show an "association between private tuition and parents' socio-economic status" (Ireson & Rushforth, 2005, p. 6). According to a study conducted in Ireland, the likelihood of attended private tuition "is higher among more advantaged social groups, that is, among students from more middle-class backgrounds and those whose parents have tertiary educational qualifications" (Smyth, 2009, p. 17).

The high levels of resort to private tuition, regardless of socioeconomic background, reflects the widely spread held belief of the importance of the knowledge

of the English language and the inefficiency of the educational system to provide adequate knowledge. Put simply, most students expressed the view that knowledge of the English language in indispensable for their studies and the transition to the labour market. As a student said "You can't do anything without English". Thus, if the school fails to provide adequate knowledge, it is only logical that they and their families seek this knowledge outside of the formal educational system.

Moreover, although we did not detect social class differences in the rates of resort to private tuition, we did find preliminary data that students from families with higher levels of financial and cultural capital are more likely to attend the costliest one-to-one private tuition, rather than organized language courses. This places them at an advantage in relation to working class students who cannot afford the cost of more effective forms of private tuition. In other words, inequalities do not have to do with resort to private tutoring, since almost all students in the sample reported having attended private tutoring. Rather, inequalities were observed in relation to the type of private tuition, with students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds being more likely to attend the costlier type of private tutoring (one-to-one tuition), which are considered more effective, as can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the students. More research is needed before reaching definite conclusions, but we found a relationship between socioeconomic background and type of private tuition that needs to be investigated further in order to examine the impact of socioeconomic background.

The second research question we set out to investigate concerned the reasons why students resort to private supplementary tutoring for the English language, even if English as a foreign language is a compulsory subject from the first class of primary education. We wanted to investigate the driving force behind the seemingly paradoxical decision to resort to out-of-school support for a school subject that is taught at school for many years and great effort has been made in making its teaching more efficient. The data we collected provided strong evidence that this massive resort can be attributed to two factors. First, the inefficiency of the Greek education system in relation to the teaching of foreign languages. Despite the fact that students study English for many years, students cannot get a certification of the knowledge of the English language. This means that if students and their families want certification, they are obliged to seek it outside of the public school. As a student said: "It's difficult to learn English at school", while another expressed the opinion that "You need to go to a frontisterion [a kind of private school for foreign languages] to learn English, the school is not enough". An additional factor relates to the fact that knowledge of foreign language is essential in the transition to the labour market. Families invest in the future occupational achievement of their offspring, so they believe that knowing foreign languages is important and are willing to undergo financial sacrifices in order to equip their offspring with useful educational credentials.

In other words, the massive resort to out-of-school support is due to the fact of the widely spread belief in the Greek society that the school does not guarantee the learning of the English language and preparation in examination for the certification

of the knowledge of the English language. At the same time, they believe that knowledge of the English language can be secured from sources outside of it. This belief does not only lead to the massive resort to the out-of-school support but also has negative implications for the quality of the teaching of English in public schools. Students often have low interest for the lesson, since they already know, from private tutoring, what is taught at school. In turn, lack of interest for the lesson, as many students reported, led to behavior problems and created a classroom atmosphere that was not always conducive to providing positive educational outcomes. The above discussion, along with the fact that certification of the knowledge of the English language is considered by students and their families as a commodity that can be bought, makes closer the relationship between social class and its knowledge as it is attested by official certificates. Students from families with higher levels of cultural and financial capital have more opportunities to learn the English language. The research data we collected also shed light to an important feature of social inequalities in education. Social inequalities are evident in the data which show the relationship between knowledge of the English language and socioeconomic background. This data is presented below. The statistical analysis of the research data indicates that there is a relationship between the student families' income and certification of the knowledge of the English language. The research findings provide strong evidence that the familial financial capital impacts strongly on the certification of the knowledge of the English language. More specifically, students from families with higher income are more likely to have higher certification level, C1 or C2, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, in relation to students from families with lower income. In relation to the level of parental education, research findings indicate that it is associated with certification of the knowledge of the English language. More specifically, students with parents who have not participated in higher education have relatively low certification of the knowledge of the English language. Most of them have certification at the level of B2, while very few have higher certification levels. By contrast, students with parents who are higher education graduates or holders of postgraduate degrees are much more likely to have higher levels of certification, that is, C1 or C2.

The above research findings are important, since they show clearly the relationship between knowledge of the English language and social background. They seem to confirm Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, according which the unevenly allocated resources among social classes (cultural, social and financial capital) are related to social class differentiated school performance (Bourdieu, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). So far, we have seen the reproductive role of the educational system in Greece. However, we do not adopt a deterministic approach, believing that these inequalities are not inevitable, but can be overcome. We believe that the following measures can increase the level of foreign language education in Greek education and can provide all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, with adequate knowledge of the English language. To begin with, on the basis of the above discussion, we argue that initiatives aiming at improving the

teaching and learning of the English language in the Greek educational system are not enough for dealing with the problem. A holistic solution (combining the micro and the macro level) needs to examine the aims of teaching English, reforming the curriculum, using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for educational purposes and providing students with certification of the knowledge of the English language, as a means for reducing the massive resort to private tutoring that impacts negatively to the teaching of teaching English as a foreign language. It is also important to address these issues at depth in order to acquire research findings that can help the dialogue in the educational community, provide policy makers with valuable information and challenge the belief that English cannot be learned at school.

Secondly, project work could be introduced in an effort to increase student interest, motivation and performance. In the relevant literature a number of beneficial outcomes of project-based learning have been identified. Project-based learning develops student confidence in using the foreign language (Fried-Booth, 2002), while it helps them acquire a positive attitude towards learning foreign languages (Stoller, 2006). Students who participate in projects have the chance to use the foreign language they are learning in a natural context (Haines, 1989).

Finally, differentiated instruction, which takes into account the fact that each student is unique can be helpful (Reese, 2011). In differentiated classrooms "not every student is doing exactly the same thing in exactly the same way at exactly the same time" (Theisen, 2002, p. 2) and the teacher makes use of "a variety of ways for students to explore curriculum content" (Tomlinson, 1995, p. 1). In this way all students, regardless of socioeconomic background and level of knowledge of the foreign language, are provided with challenging content and activities that motivate them to learn and "make their own sense of the content or input" (Theisen, 2002, p. 2), since the students' needs and experiences are at the heart of the educational process (Tomlinson, 1999). The above suggestions are simply indicative. Teachers who know their students can alter their teaching approaches to meet the needs of their students and help all of them acquire a good knowledge of the English language. We firmly believe that social class inequalities in relation to the teaching of English as a foreign language are not inevitable. They can be overcome provided effective educational measures have been taken and implemented consistently.

The aim of the research study was to answer three interrelated questions that concern the issue of social inequalities in education. It is an important issue, since research has shown that the educational trajectories of working class students are different from those of students from the middle class backgrounds (Reay, 2001; Egerton & Savage 2000). It is a focal point of educational research and educational policies and initiatives in recent years, since at European Union level, since "the growing scale and intensity of private tutoring in the EU has profound economic, social and educational implications. It has strong implications for equity, for the work of mainstream schools, and for the lives of children and families" (Bray, 2011, p. 7). However, there is still a paucity of research studies that examine the extent of the phenomenon and its causes, even though shadow education has "major social and

economic implications" (Bray, 2009, p. 11). In relation to the first research question, the extent of the resort to private supplementary tutoring for the English language we found that the majority of the students in the sample have received private supplementary tutoring. We also found that resort to private supplementary tutoring is not positively linked to socioeconomic status, since most students, regardless of social class origin participate in private supplementary tutoring. Despite the fact that we did not detect social class differences in the percentage of students who attend private tuition, the research data we collected showed that differences exist in relation to the type of private tuition. More specifically, students from upper and middle-class families were more likely to repost that they attended the costliest one-to-one private tuition, rather than organized language courses. By contrast, the majority of students from working class backgrounds reported that they attended the less costly organized language courses, in which they attend lessons in a classroom along with other students. This places students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds at an advantage in relation to working class students who cannot afford the cost of more effective forms of private tuition.

As regards the reasons why do students resort to private supplementary tutoring for the English language, despite the fact that English is a compulsory subject from the first class of primary education, we found that there are two main reasons that contribute to this. First, the inefficiency of the Greek education system to provide students with a certification of the knowledge of the English language. This means that if they want certification, they are obliged to seek it outside of the public school. Second, in the Greek society knowledge of foreign language is considered as essential for future occupational achievement. This is a belief firmly embedded in the Greek society which attaches great importance in the knowledge of foreign languages in general, and the English language in particular. It is interesting to note that such beliefs are in line with the official rhetoric concerning the usefulness of foreign languages. The importance attached to the knowledge of foreign languages is now widely recognized. For instance, in 2002, the Barcelona European Council urged EU countries to take initiative to improve mastery of foreign languages by introducing in their educational systems the teaching of at least two foreign languages from an early age (European Council of Barcelona, 2002; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017). Knowledge of foreign languages is considered an important human competency that can increase human capital and benefit individuals and countries alike (OECD, 2011). As far as the third research question is concerned, that is, whether there a relationship between socioeconomic background and knowledge of the English language as attested by official certifications, the research findings indicate that there is a strong relationship. Students from more privileged socioeconomic backgrounds usually have higher level of certification of the knowledge of the English language. The families of the students are aware of the choices available concerning providing their offspring with high quality education, being "skilled" choosers, with high levels of economic, social and cultural capital (Ball et al, 1996). By contrast, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to have lower level

certification of the knowledge of the English language. We believe that this is a way through which social class inequalities are maintained and reproduced. Social class differentials in the certification of the knowledge of the English language means that upper and middle-class students are at an advantage, since they can move to the labour market with valued educational qualifications that enhance their occupational prospects.

E. CONCLUSION

Apart from the above research findings that relate to the negative social impact of private tutoring, research has shown that private tutoring has negative implications on other levels as well, including the distortion of and the distortion of teacher performance in mainstream schools (Silova et al, 2006), since "teachers may feel that their students have a safety net outside the school and therefore that the teachers do not need to work as diligently as they might when shadow education is not common" (Chan & Bray, 2014, p. 365). The research we collected did not confirm the above research findings, but did show that the resort to private tutoring often leads to a decrease in the interest for the lesson of English as a foreign language and to decreased motivation to participate actively in the teaching process. We argue that the massive resort to the private supplementary tuition undermines the principles of "free" public education in Greece (Giamouridis Bagley, 2006). Private supplementary tuition poses important questions concerning the issue of equity in the Greek education system, since it appears that familial cultural, social and economic capital impact strongly on academic performance. Social class differentials in academic performance constitute an issue that should be dealt with, as they are related to the wider social class inequalities, social exclusion and equity in participation in higher education. Research has shown that it is imperative to "tackle the extent to which working-class children continue to be denied opportunities open to middle-class children on all fronts" (Whitty, 2001, p. 292). Future research should use qualitative methods of data collection for an in-depth analysis of the social factors impacting on private supplementary tutoring and its implications for equality of opportunity within the Greek educational system. At the micro level, research should focus on educational approaches and strategies that can increase the quality of the teaching of foreign languages at school and provide foreign language teachers and policy makers with robust empirical data that can be used in the design of initiatives that aim at promoting multilingualism.

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