The Scene

Greek universities are at a standstill as lecturers and students protest against a government plan to revise the constitution and end the state monopoly in university education. They also oppose abolition of the university sanctuary and the strict period of studies. Students blocked reform attempts in 1991, 1992, 1995, 1998 and 2002.

Times Higher Education Supplement
June 16, 2006
Dear Colleagues,

You are registered to attend the meeting of the OECD Education Committee on Higher Education: Quality, Equality and Efficiency which is to take place in Greece from 27 to 28 June 2006. For reasons of high security and to ensure the comfort and tranquility of delegates away from the possibility of student demonstrations, the Greece authorities have informed us that they have changed the venue of the meeting from Athens to a resort some 40 km from Athens by the sea.

OECD Education Committee Secretariat

At the same time as the Secretary General of the OECD, Angel Gurria, was announcing that the model by which Higher Education is funded exclusively by the state is inappropriate, about 500 university students clash with Special Police Forces demanding free education.

TA NEA newspaper
The Setting

All social movements involve conflicts which are reflected intellectually in controversies. It would not be a sign of health if such an important social interest as education were not also an arena of struggles, practical and theoretical….the practical conflicts and the controversies that are conducted upon the level of these conflicts, only set a problem. It is the business of an intelligent theory of education to ascertain the causes for the conflicts that exist and then, instead of taking one side or the other, to indicate a plan of operations proceeding from a level deeper and more inclusive than is represented by the practices and ideas of the contending parties.

John Dewey (1963)

The Setting

Key changes proposed creating conflict:
To the HE bill
- Limit of university study duration
- University ‘sanctuary’ or ‘asylum’ [Greek]
- Accreditation and quality control
- Election of university governing board
To the Constitution
- Article 16 – permitting establishment of private HEIs.
The Setting

The protest problem which afflicts Athens nine-hundred times every eighteen months, is a characteristic sample of the hang-ups which the post-dictatorship left on the country…. protests are a form of expression that was forbidden by the dictatorship and is being exercised with excess during times of Democracy….However, over times, protests have taken on characteristics of “hard tradition”.

Mandravelis, *KATHIMERINI* newspaper, August 20, 2006

The Setting

What man does and how he acts is determined not by organic structure and physical heredity alone but by the influence of cultural heredity, embedded in traditions, institutions, customs, and the purposes and beliefs they both carry and inspire.

John Dewey

What is over and done with nevertheless persists as a cultural element devoid of content. The panorama of the millennia is like a region of beatific contemplation.

Karl Jaspers
The paradoxical nature of Greece and Greeks:

...a maddening mobile, elusive, paradoxical world, where nothing seems solid enough to grasp save splinters, yet where no part is less then the mystical whole and where past and present, body and soul, ideal and reality blend and struggle and blend again with each other so that the most delicate scalpel can scarcely dissect them.

...Greek identity as a whole is best seen as a constant oscillation between just such opposites as these...the spirit and the flesh, ideal and reality, triumph and despair – you name them and the Greeks suffer or enjoy them as the constant poles of their being, swinging repeatedly from one to the other and back again, often contriving to embrace both poles simultaneously, but above all, never reconciled, never contented, never still. This perennial sense of tension between diametrically opposed forces is the essence of their existence – the one absolutely consistent feature of their identity since Greek history began.

Holden (1972)

The Greek art of dialogue?

Observing Greeks having a dialogue is like watching a battle – a battle of personal opinions being shot out in the air – where all are survivors, all are victors since the end is neither to reach the truth nor to reach a conclusion.
The Setting

- June 1, 2006 – representatives of the opposition party PASOK refuse to participate in the national dialogue
- January 2006 – PASOK launches own dialogue platform
- June 2006 – violent public protests demanding a “public dialogue” on higher education reform

The Setting

Role of the Press:

Greeks easily catch the bug of fanaticism, which is fanned by the press to a degree unheard of in other countries.

Ideals usually play a very small part in choosing sides, although one will rarely hear a Greek admit it. Adherence to a particular party depends more on whether its leaders catch the public’s fancy, on his powers of persuasion and on the effectiveness of his propaganda network, than on his program or his performance. The decisive factor is always the personal benefit one may expect once the party of one’s choice comes to power.

Faida (1994)
The Setting

Social Capital

Other people have bureaucracies, the Greeks have ‘connections’...in any given ministry or public service... These friends can speed things along, sometimes as a favor, other times for a kick-back commensurate with the importance of the service requested... However, those who do not hold a key to the bureaucratic maze find things very different. This is because bureaucracy in Greece has been elevated to a form of art: the art of making enemies of the citizens....Getting entangled in Greek red tape makes Kafka’s ‘Trial’ look like a pleasant walk in the park.

Faida (1994)

The Setting

Paideia and its value in Greek society:

10.9 per 10,000 inhabitants was the enrolment rate in Greek education in the year 1892, and 2.7 per 10,000 inhabitants was the enrolment rate in the presumably more modern country of France in the year 1892 – a robust social demand for education, one obviously rooted in its history and culture.

Professor Bruce Fuller,
Harvard University
The Setting

Demonstrating crowds’ demands of the new regime with the fall of the military junta in 1974:

Psomi! Paideia! Democratia!
(Bread, Education, Democracy)

The Setting

Culture controls behavior in deep and persisting ways, many of which are outside of awareness and therefore beyond conscious control of the individual.

Hall (1973)
The Silent Language
The Tragedy

Wherever the Dionysian prevailed, the Apollonian was checked and destroyed...wherever the first Dionysian onslaught was successfully withstood, the authority and majesty of the Delphic god Apollo exhibited itself as more rigid and menacing than ever.

Nietzsche

The Birth of Tragedy

The Tragedy

Most of the current issues relating to higher education in Greece have been suffered for a number of years. Despite frequent complaints and a voluminous body of research, however no fundamental changes have been made in the root causes of these problems. Nor are changes likely without a shift of the social and political actors who determine the course and nature of higher education.

Professor Noel McGinn,
Harvard University
The more Greeks talk about change, the more the system stays the same.

The Greek education system:

…..extremely centralized and inflexible, bureaucratic and insensitive to changes…in total isolation on the economic, social, and international realities, unable to respond to the needs of society, of youth….

George Papandreou
Former Minister of Education
Greece is a country with deeply entrenched traditions, very limited resources, conflicting ideologies and a history of educational conservatism, as well as frequent political changes.

OECD (1997)

Challenges facing the Greek education system:

- "The first is how to get beyond the dilemmas of our past... For Greece, our educational system is bound up with this past. It has been obscured by a number of social political changes over the years."
- "Another issue that has imposed a mental set on our thinking is our experience with regard to foreign intervention and the influence of new ideas coming from outside. Foreign intervention is alternately seen as the panacea for everything, or a reason for resisting everything foreign. It is in short a false dichotomy, a transfer of responsibility; either all that is "bad" comes from the outside, or all that is "good" comes from outside... we have a tradition of adopting education models form other countries."
- "Of course, there is also the dilemma of Greece's war heritage. Greece experienced a civil war that created a highly polarized political situation, which has in turn led to a very strong desire for central control on our education system and to a very centralized, rigid, bureaucratic and homogenized type of system; centralized in that most control lies in the minister's office or the Ministry of Education, or other central bodies... Our political heritage is characterized by a tradition of "clientelism" — or what we call 'rousfeti' or clientelistic relationships between the politicians and the citizens."
- "One of the major obstacles to the success of educational reform in Greece has been the discontinuity brought about because of political changes, including changes of Ministers of Education even within the same government."
The Tragedy

In the last 15 years, there have been 7 different Ministers of Education:

Kontogiannopoulos 1990-1991
Souflias 1991-1993
Fatouros 1993-1994
Papandreou 1994-1996
Arsenis 1996-2000
Eythimiou 2000-2004
Giannakou 2004-

………………………………..A tragic flaw?

PASOK has shown to be unable to cut the Gordian Knot with the centralization, the clientelistic relationships and bureaucracy, those models that came to us from on the one hand from a dogmatic centralized communistic party and form the other from the logic of a centralized nation with its clientelistic relationships.

"We found ourselves incapable therefore and instead of changing these foundations of governance we used them. And these absorbed us and weakened us.

Instead of freeing public strengths...since 1985 we have enclosed the public within narrow political walls with biases and slogans, consolidating the immobility, the balances of indifference, the power relationships”.

George Papandreou
The Tree and the Forest (1996)
The Tragedy

Meanings must be found in the context of hundreds of years of history... diplomacy and political strategy can be seen as a kind of debate where the words cover years...The language of politics and the language of culture are a long way apart, yet each subsumes the other.

Hall (1973)

The Tragedy

Changing the status quo in any way that risks upsetting loyalty networks – especially in the area of higher education which forms the backbone of Greek society – is as difficult as moving a mountain.

Recycling of characters or perhaps ..... the familiar face syndrome?
The Catharsis

All good tragedies end with a *catharsis*.

In the Aristotelian sense, the purpose of catharsis is to provide balance to the emotions, through meaning and understanding.

The Catharsis

- **WHAT** is the meaning of the higher education reform policy-process within the Greek context?
- **WHY** is the higher education reform policy-process within the Greek context so difficult?
- **HOW** can the higher education reform policy-process within the Greek context be effectively implemented?
The Catharsis

There is no art that hath been more canker’d in her principles, more soyl’d and slubber’d with aphorising pedantry than the art of policie.

John Milton

The Catharsis

Change always carries with it a sense of violation. It thus invites resistance…. Social structures have been created to guard against disturbing changes.

Farmer (1990)
When dealing with deeply ingrained traditions and tempestuous personality traits (such as those possessed by – or possessing – the Greeks), it is not enough to try and enact change by simply re-stating ‘what is’ in terms of ‘what should be’ – as has been the case with regard higher education reform proposals in Greece up to now.

If change is to be effected, either the cultural dimensions need to change (or be changed), or at least the policy-maker must acknowledge the implications of these cultural dimensions within the change strategy.
The Catharsis

Understanding his own actions in terms of his purposes and beliefs, his norms and the ideals he sets for himself, he seeks a parallel understanding of others. The policy-maker concerned to understand people, as indeed he must, needs thus to view them as subjects — active beings whose field of endeavour is structured by their own symbolic systems, their conceptions of world, self and community, their memories of the past, perceptions of the present and hopes for the future. Treating people as carbon copies of oneself, without taking the trouble to enter into their cultural environment, or — worse still — treating them as mere instrumentalities for, or hindrances to, the realization of a preconceived plan is a formula for policy failure.

Israel Scheffler
Of Human Potential (1985)

The Catharsis

The very essence of leadership is [that] you have to have a vision. It’s got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can’t blow and uncertain trumpet.

Father Theodore Hesburgh
Former President
Notre Dame University
What is the *tragic flaw* in the higher education reform process in Greece?

If the Minister of Education had better prepared for leading the higher education reform process in Greece, would she have been driven to withdraw the draft higher education bill at the last minute?

If ‘yes’ –

that is, no matter how much the Minister of Education had prepared for leading the higher education reform process, she still would have been driven to withdraw at the last minute

- then the *tragic flaw* must lie in the democratic process or at least its interpretation.
The Catharsis

...democratic ideas are risky, even dangerous ideas, opening the way to new and more insidious forms of domination.....The totalitarian potential in democratic culture is the other side of the autonomy it institutes, since the society that recognizes no powers outside itself is the one that allows nothing to stand between its organized common force and the lives of its members. Collective autonomy and individual vulnerability to social power are two sides of a single configuration. But the threat to freedom this poses is only realized where the power that stands for the whole aims to reduce individuals to a mass, effacing their differences in the name of some kind of pure sociality

Gauchet and Swain (1999)
Madness and Democracy

What next?

...... the students’ movement of “90-91 which was a grand one in my opinion. It managed to subvert the law of the Minister of Education Kontogiannopoulos, who finally resigned. The right-wing government, in its effort to repress the movement, had mobilized its thugs in order to smash the school occupations, resulting in the murder of a teacher, Nikos Temponeras, inside an occupied school in Patras.

......Responding to the murder of Temponeras there was a demonstration of thousands of people....... There were conflicts with the police, the Polytechnic was occupied once again for two days. Flames, barricades, damage.... There was also another crime those days, on the 10th of January ‘91. During the riots, tear-gas bombs thrown by the police caused a fire in the building of K. Marousi, a shopping-center on Panepistimiou street. Four people died there due to this fire. For this crime nobody has yet paid, nor did “justice” say anything. It was covered up.

Nikos Maziotis (1998)
(self-proclaimed anarchist)
What next?

“If a sound system of nurture and education is maintained, it produces men of a good disposition, and these, in their turn, taking advantage of such education, develop into better men than their forbears.”

Plato, *The Republic*

What next?

Whoever controls the past controls the future. Whoever controls the present controls the past.

George Orwell