

Relationships of Trust and Selection Process of Education Executives: Discussing with Primary School Headteachers

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Abstract: This study is part of the discussion on classroom and school unit relationships. In particular, the study focuses on exploring relationships of trust. The actions and the meanings of the headteachers of the school units as identities that operate in a regulatory way in the field of operation and the reason of the institution, constitute an important field of study in the Greek and international bibliography. The study focuses on the question of whether and how the selection process of education executives (school headteachers), as they have been in the last five years, has affected the relationships of trust and, consequently, the culture of the school unit. The trigger for this study was the discussion on the recent processes of assessment and selection of headteachers, as implemented in the framework of Laws 4327/2015 and 4473/2017. Our research was carried out using techniques from the toolbox of the multifaceted approach. The importance of the study of this field is strengthened, especially if we take into account the fact that the social, economic and political context in Greece in recent years is characterized by liquidity, attaching special weight to the term "trust". Indicatively, the results of the research include the link between the liquidity of the legal framework in terms of selecting headteachers and the crisis of relationships of trust, the lack of trust in almost all institutions, and the approach of headteachers that their selection processes are characterised by lack of meritocracy.

Keywords: liquidity, crisis, trust, headteachers, selection process.

1. IN LIEU OF AN INTRODUCTION. LIQUIDITY AND RISK: THE MODERN SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF SCHOOL LIFE

For at least the past two decades, the French intellectual Jean-Manuel de Queiroz, in his study on school and its sociologies, indicates the continuous change of the school as a result of social needs. More specifically, the needs of the urban society of the market, and particularly the need of the urban societies for "objectivization" of interpersonal relationships, the internationalised interdependence of actions in the economic field, the feeling of inadequacy that social subjects experience due to the continuous change that the job market has enforced and the failure of the subjects to understand and interfere in the flow of cultural development, it stands to reason that they would apply formulating pressure and determine to a degree both the quality of the educational structures and the operation of the organisation of the educational mechanism (Queiroz 2000).¹

¹ Jean-Manuel de Queiroz was one of the first scholars of the educational process who disputed the linear relationship of class reproduction between school attendance and parental social class. His thesis on this topic in 1981 constitutes a reference point between education sociologists.

i. *Liquid modernity as context of the educational process*

During the reshaping of the educational process, which was a consequence of the rapid change of the social, cultural and economic organisation, it followed that certain questions would be posed regarding the ways and the possibilities of educational administration. The reasons for the reshaping of education exist both within the environment of organisation and within organisation itself.

Particularly within organisation itself, new powers develop (such as the introduction of new technologies, the introduction and management of difference, the adoption of novel projects, European educational programmes) and new needs become prominent, which diversify both school knowledge and the educational organisational construction and operation which determine the educational relationship.

Furthermore, both the complexity of the environment of the education system and of the school unit, and the operational needs at a micro level and at a macro level of the education system prove to be complex. Thus, internal and external dynamic pressures bring out weaknesses, which now become obvious also through the prism of the developments in the sciences that are concerned with education as organisation, and mostly with the regulatory and operational parameters of educational administration (Gouga & Kamarianos 2006).

The present study aims to contribute to the scientific conversation that pertains to the developments that form and define the prevailing characteristics of the administration of the organisation and of the operation of the school unit.

ii. *Risk as context of the educational process*

The analysis of the consequences of the recent financial crisis is commonly known in the international as well as the European literature. More specifically, the recession of the international and European economy showcased a series of antinomies at the national economy level and in the entire edifice of the European Union (Alexakis 2011; Koniordos 2011).

The processes of retreat of the state from critical fields such as education, and especially the dominance of the Discourse of the Market in the educational field, leads to significant consequences for the political and social cohesion and particularly for the future shaping of the forms of western citizenship.

As the empirical data shows, the degradation of these two basic functions of the welfare state, education and health, stems from the privatisation, the minimisation of investments and the reduction of government funding. Indicatively, we mention that between 2009 and 2013, Greece showed a reduction as high as 15% in public spending per pupil/student (Kamarianos, Kiridis, Fotopoulos & Chalkiotis 2019; Spinthouraki, Gouga & Kamarianos 2014).²

The looming COVID-19 pandemic will challenge the remaining endurance of the structures of the welfare state. The doubtful ability of the structures of the welfare state – because of the financial crisis – to deal with the causes and repercussions of the pandemic renders the pandemic a crisis that, apart from its medical aspect, has very important socio-political consequences. The inability of the existing structures, such as the public care or state school structures, to satisfy the social needs that arose due to the pandemic create space for new organisational forms to emerge and for reconsideration of the existing welfare structures. Therefore, together with the new digital social relationships that develop because of the need for social distancing, a new form of social conscience is also developed, at the core of which the individuality of action is constructed by insecurity and fear of existence. Especially when we place this declaration in the light of Foucauldian bio-political analysis, as analysis of political domination, a series of individual interesting observations arise regarding the characteristics of the modern educational process (Foucault 2012:15-16). Namely, a rationalisation, according to Foucault, of governmental logicity and practice of the phenomenon that is in its turn important for the reference population (Gouga & Kamarianos 2015).

Essentially, Jean-Manuel de Queiroz published a summary of his research, that begins with his thesis in 1981 in his book “l'école et ses sociologies” (éditions Nathan Université - Nathan University editions), the updated edition of which appears in Greek in the publication *Το σχολείο και οι κοινωνιολογίες του* (edited by G. Stamelos, ed. Gutenberg 2000).

² See related KANEP – G.S.E.E. (2016) Centre for the Development of Educational Policy G.S.E.E. (2017). THE BASIC NUMBERS OF EDUCATION 2016. The Greek primary & secondary education Part B: the national framework of reference (2001–2014). Athens: KANEP/GSEE.

2. SCHOOL CULTURE, AUTONOMY, POWER AND TRUST IN THE CREATION OF LIQUID IDENTITIES: QUALITATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HEADTEACHER'S FUNCTION

The school as an important pillar of the welfare state was found in the centre of the consequences both as regards the debt crisis and as regards the COVID-19 crisis. The changes are significant. However, the external changes due to the risk and the liquidity as a result of the crisis, do not determine the final depiction of the operation of the school unit. Conversely, as Iosif Solomon will emphasise, the school unit as an organisation, as every organisation, is depicted as the material institution for the expression of the strategic situation that results from internal clashes and external impositions (Solomon 1992).

More specifically, the culture of the school unit, which constitutes a major characteristic of the educational organisation and is connected with educators, reflects the way of thinking and the effectiveness of educators, as well as the character of the school. In the grid of these relationships, the identity of the headteacher is essentially among the important actors for the creation and management of the school culture (Tzianakopoulou & Manesis 2018). Meanwhile, the problematics of theoreticians like N. Poulantzas place the authoritative-prescriptive process of school administration at the core of school culture. This particular point of view leads us to a revision of school culture as a field and process of production of moral values, which on the one hand pertain to the democratic school culture of the school unit (Mpestias 2019) and on the other hand pertain to the headteacher's logic as foundation of a legalising rationalism, where motives and institutional arrangements are connected with control techniques and constitute the core of the headteacher's orthologism (Gouga & Kamarianos 2006). This educational administrative discourse constitutes the beginning of the formulation of the pedagogical relationship, since, as a regulation, the technique is directly connected with the taught knowledge as well (Bernstein 1989 & 1990; Panagopoulos et al. 2020).

i. From linearity to change as a component of daily life at school

The daily and necessary for the smooth running of the school unit differentiations that are produced both from the structural order (operation of the organisation e.g. legal framework), and also from the relative autonomy³ of the school reality, render the role of the regulator-administrator even more difficult.

The headteacher of the school unit will also find themselves faced with a series of dilemmas, as in the context of the dynamics of the social and economic framework, a lot happens, which the constitutional texts (legislature, texts-instructions pertaining to the instrumental function of the mechanism) are unable to predict. Particularly under the weight of the repercussions of the crisis, the unpredictable and the liquidity constitute a defining element of the educational normality itself, since even prescriptive-legal texts change – as we will subsequently show – dynamically. Thus, the role of the headteacher in a changing context consists of their ability, through formal and informal rules, to regulate the relative autonomy of the organisation (Rousis 1984: 89; Gouga & Kamarianos 2006).

The particular difficulty of the conceptualisation and instrumental definition of the role of the headteacher is produced exactly because of the transition from a stable hierarchical framework to a framework with elements of liquidity. Precisely this frequency of change of institutional processes creates significant feelings of insecurity and potential danger in the conceptions of educators with repercussions on the headteacher's function.

Under the influence of the above, the headteacher's function and the headteacher is called to carve their paths in the educational space alone and develop their strategies, according obviously to their ability, their social network or their social, economic and cultural capital. The short-term individual conventions of choice, and the carving of subjective paths, render the brief and cut-off instrumental subjective strategies, as the dominant narrations of the public sphere (Gouga & Kamarianos 2011; Balias et al. 2016).

³ The relative autonomy of the organisation presupposes the relative autonomy of the school classroom as well, which is ultimately expected and probably legalised by the administrative regulation. Besides, the school classroom is not defined only as the group of pupils that possesses a certain level of knowledge, but the result of the positions of construction and operation of elements which compose this organisation that we call school (Solomon 1992: 10).

In this light, the headteacher's role tends to be redefined as a subjective, instrumental-style micro-narration, which contains the breach with the past. Linearity and fact are replaced by the determinism of fluidity, while differentiation, uncertainty, ambiguity, and mostly the continuous change and alteration, at a subjective as well as a structural level, are made easier.

Here for example, the role of the instability of education policy and the frequent change of the legal-regulatory framework⁴ is indicative particularly insofar as it produces risk for the successful confirmation of the subject's expectations (Giddens 1999).

In conclusion, the retreat of the Welfare State, the change of welfare capitalism towards a liberal capitalist conception of the Market, the negation of security and, most importantly, the consciousness of risk, give meaning to the transition to postmodernism differentiating the role and the identity of the modern function of the headteacher. It is obvious that the modern educational function of the headteacher changes as a function and process in the context of the school unit. From a relatively "closed and stable context", both as regards its material institution and as regards its symbolic importance, in a changing context of actions, with strong elements of risk for the success of the subjective expectations. Thus, the headteacher's function is not only the result of a particular structure of hierarchical positions anymore, as was written in the past several decades by experts on the phenomenon of the headteacher's function, such as N. Mouzelis (1967) and P. Terlexis (1996), but during the era of crises it seems to change and differentiate itself from the traditional stable and permanent context of employment, prioritisation, which requires an escalation of earnings with specific rules for professional development and promotion, with specific allocation of responsibilities and also of authority.

ii. *Liquid identities and headteacher's function*

Consequently, openness, liquidity, risk, constant change and need for direct micromanagement of the limited funds of the school unit, form the role and also the modern professional identities of the headteachers of school units.⁵

More specifically, the professional identities of the subjects are structured based on the personal, social and professional view that they have and on the narrations they use for themselves (whether they correspond to facts or they are consistent with the identity they consider it is "necessary" for them to show they have). As for the personal dimension, we refer to the daily life of the subject, outside of school, which is connected with the family and the social roles. The feedback is given by the family members and close friends. As for the social dimension, it can become distinguishable within a specific school, and it is defined by the conditions that prevail in it (such as the socio-economic level of the pupils and their families for example). This specific dimension is connected with the long-term construction of the headteacher's identity. Thus, the professional dimension reflects the social and political norms or even demands, for a person to be characterised as a good teacher, as well as the ideals it is necessary for them to possess. In this dimension, in all likelihood, the education policy that is implemented (either national or regional), the educator's further training and the responsibilities of the subject will be contained (Crow et al. 2016). According to Giddens (1991), narration is at the centre of the identity of the social subject.

However, the headteacher as a social subject does not carry only one identity, but multiple. Each one offers its own characteristics, has its own weight, and in many cases "restricts" the individual with rights and responsibilities within the community or the social group. In the age of liquidity, the entire process becomes even more complicated (Bauman 2004).

Thus, inside and outside of school the headteacher will be supported and will support the development of networks that will allow them to develop a network of relationships that will replace the institutional gap caused by the liquidity and therefore producing individual and structural – at a school unit level – risk.

iii. *Social networks and headteacher's function*

The development of a network of relationships appears to be important for the headteacher, because they help the subject in the management of the liquidity and the polysemy of daily life at school. A social network is a sum of related social hubs that are connected with each other through one or more relationships. The hubs or, more specifically, the networks

⁴ For this very reason, we will mention, as an example, the investigation of the legal framework for the appointment of headteachers, a characteristic process with particular importance for the role and also the structure of the school unit.

⁵ For education expenses and investments, state and private, see: Kamarianos I., Kiridis A., Fotopoulos N. & Chalkiotis D. (2019). *State school in Greece: Aspects of privatisation*. Athens: DOE-OLME. <http://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/309543/files/3.5.26.pdf>.

of people are the entities that are created through the relationships that are created. These networks usually consist of people or organisations. However, all the networks that can be connected with other networks can be studied as hubs. By hubs we could also be referring to parts of organisations, but also to positions that are included in the hierarchy of a structure (Scott & Carrington 2011). The people within the social networks are tightly connected with invisible bonds, which continuously intertwine (Scott 1988).

The present study focuses on this very detection of the quality of relationships in the school unit with trust at their core. More specifically, we concentrate on the headteachers of primary school units, focusing on the relationships of trust with colleagues and institutions. The school unit can be understood as a hub, since its composition is owed to a series of networks. Let us point out that within the networks it is required to consider that friendships, partnerships, information sharing, as well as everything else that could spring from a network of social subjects, probably exist.

An extension of the social networks is the fact that they can constitute a factor in the formulation of culture. Based on this particular approach, essentially social networks operate as a means of influence on the community regarding the stance, the ideas and the approaches that characterise it. The relationships within the networks serve the “transfusion” of culture from one hub to the next. We highlight that the hubs and networks exist independently from culture, stances or even practices that “are transferred” through them. The hubs and networks do not constitute practices of culture (Scott & Carrington 2011).

In our case, we believe that the approach we just mentioned is especially important, because the culture that characterises the school unit seems to be derived from the units that constitute the networks. For example, we suppose that the headteacher of the school unit is connected with the network of educators, developing relationships, this network in its turn is connected with the network of elected officials and this is connected with the network of people that exercise central administration (Ministry of Education). The relationship of these networks is indicative and is presented so that our mental process is understood by the reader.

iv. Trust: the expectation regarding how others behave

The criterion of the development of these networks is reliability and trust. Besides, according to researchers, trust⁶ is essentially the conception and/or expectation regarding how others behave (Sapienza et al. 2013; Lazzarini et al. 2004).

In recent decades, the issue of trust has been placed at the core of sociological research. To sociologists, daily life would not be able to exist, as we know it, without trust. Trust basically constitutes the driving force for social relationships (Sztompka 2003). But what happens with trust within school units? Trust within the school plays a significant role in its function and at the same time in the “legality” that the headteacher acquires so as to implement their school improvement plans. Meanwhile, it appears the performance of the education workforce and the trust in the attitudes and behaviours of headteachers are related. Educators tend to trust headteachers that embolden them, that encourage them in their participation in decision-making within the school, that push them to broaden their horizons as beings and make them feel they are respected (Balyer 2017). The trust that educators place on headteachers is defined by whether the promises they offer are fulfilled, and at the same time whether they care about obtaining as many privileges as possible for their colleagues in the school unit (Demir 2015).

The greatest willingness to accept the requests and expectations of the headteacher springs from the trust the educators show towards the headteacher’s person. If high levels of trust are there, then the educators are likely to contribute to the achievement of reforms. We note that the educators are essentially co-constructors of trust (Louis 2007).

Trust, being one of the core concerns of the present study, is going to be investigated in a horizontal dimension (namely between headteachers and educators), but also in a vertical dimension (namely the trust bestowed on institutions by headteachers). The culture of the school unit is also going to be emphasised, as is the existence of (or lack of) a relationship between it and the school unit’s leadership. In the modern school, there appears to be a pressing need for the investigation of the issues that were just mentioned, both for headteachers and educators, and for the quality of the education work produced.

⁶ For more on the study of trust in social sciences see: Sokratis M. Koniordos (2005), “Introduction”, in S. M. Koniordos (ed.), *Networks, Trust and Social Capital: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations from Europe*, Aldershot, Ashgate, pp. 3-14.

Therefore, considering the relationships of trust to be important for outlining the modern culture of the school unit, the present study attempts the investigation of the relationships of trust within the school unit, focusing on the headteachers of primary school units. We hypothesised that the fluctuant legal framework that characterises the process for the selection of education executives carries notable significance for the relationships of trust between headteachers and educators. The headteachers will present their points of view regarding the Laws for their selection and assessment in recent years, for the participants in the process, as well as alternative suggestions for the implementation of this particular process. At the same time, an attempt will be made to outline the identity of each headteacher.

More specifically, the legal frameworks related to the selection process for the process for the selection and assessment of headteachers, as they were used during the last five years, were placed at the core of our study. Both the spirit of the laws and the quality of the required processes appear to influence the school culture with the main result being the incorporation of the liquidity of the structural processes and of the risk in the organisational culture of the school unit and in the forming of identities. Furthermore, the influence of the above phenomenon of the variability of the selection processes and the respective legal arrangements on the relationships that exist within the school unit and characterise the organisation is important. The reformulation of the relationships as relationships of reliability-trust or unreliability, cause changes both in the role of the headteacher and also overall in the organisation culture of the school unit, a fact that intensifies the need for the existence of processes for the selection of headteachers, which will not alter the relationships of trust, thus removing to a great degree the “legalising” character that the headteacher can attach to the decisions they make through the trust and the agreement of the faculty members.

Therefore, the aim of the present study was the realisation of the consequences that we suppose were caused by the headteacher selection processes in recent years to relationships of trust. Our research questions are the following: a) What are the levels of vertical and horizontal trust of the headteachers of school units? and b) The processes for assessment and selection of headteachers, as they had been formed with recent Laws, influenced the relationships of trust that exist in the school unit and in the culture that characterises it?

The above questions allow us to investigate regulatory and functional characteristics of the school unit’s administration and form a fertile field of study, because they reveal an important part of the substance of the educational relationship, as it constitutes the critical unit for the construction of the educational process, but also an extension of the social construction. The comprehension and analysis of the characteristics of the administration of the school unit is particularly important, since it forms the nucleus of the educational process, the derivatives of which certainly constitute the levers of the quantitative and qualitative delineation of the social and also overall cultural framework of action of the social subjects.

v. Towards a multi-faceted outlook

For the present study it was thought that the multi-faceted approach was ideal, taking into account the fact that we were going to deal with in-service and aspiring teachers, as well as the fact that the field is characterised by special dynamics. In more detail, the use of a multi-faceted approach includes the completion of a questionnaire within the context of the quantitative approach, as well as content analysis and semi-structured interviews in the context of the qualitative approach. The aim of the utilisation of multiple methods is the control of the quantitative data using the qualitative data (Robson 2010).

As regards the quantitative approach, 268 educators took part (future and in-service educators, as well as school unit headteachers). For the qualitative approach, 10 interviews were carried out with headteachers of school units, which are located in the urban centre of the city of Patras. We note that, during the qualitative approach, content analysis preceded the interviews. The study was carried out between February 2019 and February 2020 and the sampling was convenient (as regards the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews).

3. THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SELECTION OF HEADTEACHERS: TOWARDS A TEXT ANALYSIS

Despite the external pressures that the institution receives, and also despite the external developments, the school unit does not cease to be an administrative institution with bureaucratic characteristics. Especially in its Greek version, the school unit is considered to be a decentralised service of the Ministry of Education, it has a hierarchical system of authority and there is inspection from the Central authority (Kotsikis 2003; Lazaridou & Antoniou 2017). Meanwhile, it is an institution that is in a direct relationship and interacts with the local and wider community (Katsaros 2008).

Despite the demanding character of the process for the effective selection of headteachers of school units (Mademlis 2014), the process itself is characteristic of the liquidity of the framework, since, as we note, the constant change of the respective legal-regulative framework for selection is also characterised by liquidity as destination uncertainty. This uncertainty causes the constant change of legislature itself to be legalised based on the argument that it is necessary as it is implemented in the context of the effort for the biggest possible assurance of objectivity and meritocracy (without there being a definition of meritocracy). The study of the consequences and of the significance of Law 4327/2015, which, as yet another effort that was being legalised and founded on the lack of meritocracy in the selection, established the secret vote of the faculty members as crucial, is characteristic.

More specifically, the big innovation that Law 4327/2015 “Emergency measures for Primary Education, Secondary and Tertiary Education and other provisions” introduced for the selection of headteachers was the elimination of the interview, which was replaced by a secret vote of the faculty members since it was “more democratic for the opinion of the faculty to weigh more in the selection of a headteacher” and the faculty is aware of the problems and particularities of the school unit. The educators that would take up the position of headteacher had to, apart from their qualifications (scientific and pedagogical training, teaching and administrative experience), have “modern pedagogical notions, democratic behaviour, possess management, organisation and leadership skills, communicative skills”, be willing to work meaningfully together with the other members making up the school community, and respect colleagues, pupils and parents. The above characteristics, according to the statement of reasons, cannot be ascertained during a short interview, which in the past was used extensively for the selection of candidates by favoured those in power. The in-service educators of the school unit – permanent and temporary – had the right to vote. In order for the prospective headteacher to continue and complete the process, it was essential for them to win 20% of the valid votes of the faculty members in each school of their preference during the secret vote. The candidate could select up to three schools. The service of the education executives lasted for two years.

The Assembly of the Council of State – after a petition by 57 headteachers of schools and the Panhellenic Association of Headteachers – ruled that this law was illegal and unconstitutional and the administration of school units must be conducted with a transparent and an objective process. Because of the ruling of the Council of State, Law 4473/2017 “Measures for the acceleration of government work in matters of education” passed, according to which the evaluation of the contribution of the candidate to education, their personality, the general constitution would happen through an interview with the Seven-Member Regional Councils. Moreover, the Councils had to take into account the opinion of the permanent teachers of the school unit, through anonymous evaluation sheets, on specific questions. The Selection Councils were able to exclude from the further process, with a unanimous and fully reasoned decision, any candidate, who was found from the interview to be unsuitable to exercise their duties as a headteacher of a school unit. Additionally, in order for transparency to be guaranteed, the interview in front of the selection council was recorded and in the end a report was drawn up, where a summary of the opinions that were formed by the members of the council for each candidate was recorded. The service of the Headteachers was changed to three years, but with the following limitation: the headteachers that had completed two consecutive terms of service in the same headteacher of a school unit position did not have the right to apply to be a candidate for the same position in the same school, but they had this right for any other school.

In the choice of Headteachers of school units with Law 4327/2015 the points awarded to the Scientific-Pedagogical Constitution of the candidate was higher (39.73%) compared to Law 4473/2017, where it was awarded 36.36%. The Educational Experience of the candidate in Law 4327/2015 was receiving 29.73%, while it increased to 30.3% in Law 4473/2017. The Administrative Experience received the same percentage of 8.11%. Remarkably, the Evaluation of the Personality and General Constitution of the candidate in Law 4327/2015 was receiving 32.43% whereas in Law 4473/2017 it was receiving 24.24%. According to Simeni & Tziouma (2017), the change in the legislature that concerns the fluctuation in the amount of required years of educational experience, sometimes gave new educators the chance to choose leadership positions and other times it discouraged them.

Digressing slightly, we would like to mention the fact that the liquidity of the legal framework for the election of headteachers appears to also dominate the current period. As mentioned in publications in the Press and in websites with educational content, the current government and, by extension, the administration of the Ministry of Education seem to have the intention to proceed to a reformulation of the Law for the selection of headteachers of school units, bringing into force a series of changes. Therefore, prospective headteachers of school units will once again need to “adapt” to the newly introduced legal framework, to reframe their goal setting and to take social networks into account.

In conclusion, the legal regulation for the selection of headteachers greatly differentiated both the actions of headteachers as actors in the context of the organisation, and the school unit itself. Especially the change has consequences on the relationships that are formed, and also on the reliability that the subjects – the teachers, the faculty, the headteacher – recognise in the construction of the relationships of trust within the school unit. We attempted to comprehend this quality in relationships of trust and then to present it.

4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Placing the quality of the relationships of trust at the core of the study, initially we attempted to investigate the levels of trust the educators themselves and the headteachers of school units have in their colleagues. As we notice in Figure 1, almost 4 out of 10 (39.2%) state that they “slightly disagree” with the statement “I trust colleagues”.

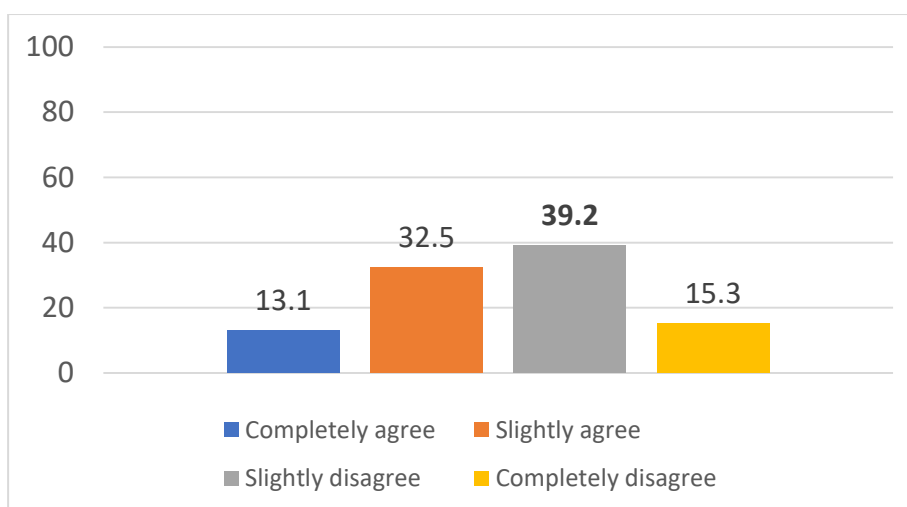


Fig.1

Then, we investigated the trust that future educators, in-service educators and headteachers place in institutions. From Figure 2 it is obvious that almost all participants trust family (98.1%) and, following with high levels of trust, are University (72.8%) and Justice (64%). The lowest percentages of trust are found in Mass Media (19.9%), the President of the Republic (19.3%), and political parties (2.7%).

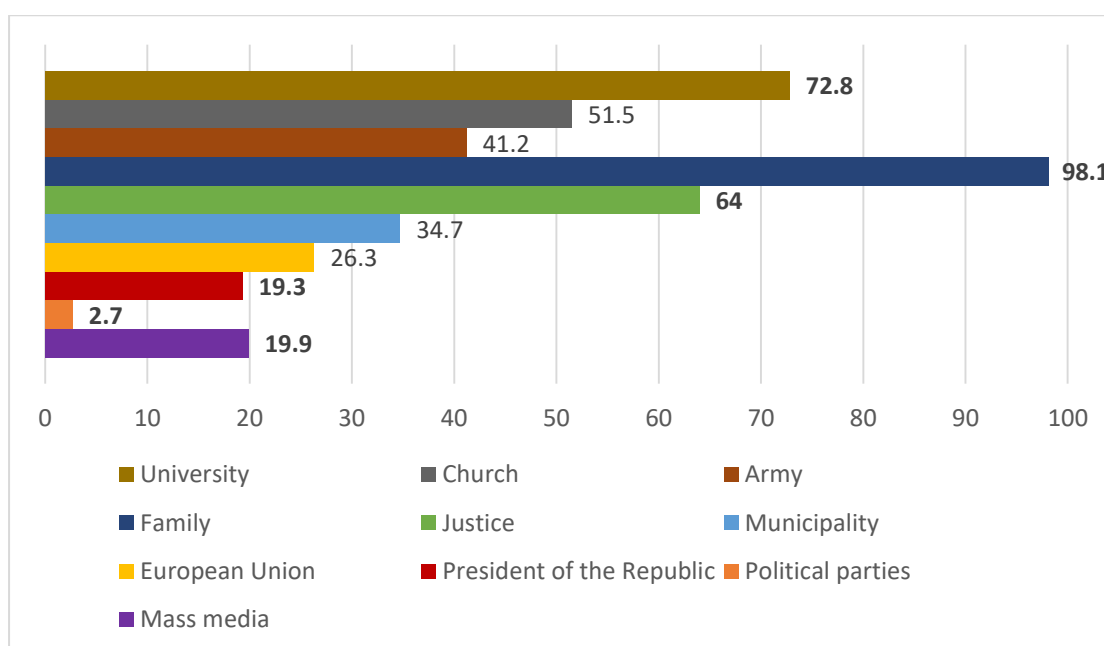


Fig. 2

Aiming to investigate relationships of trust, we conducted a regression analysis, where it became obvious that the variable “I can count on the headteacher of the school unit”, impacts the variable “I trust my colleagues” (Tables I and II). Therefore, as we can conclude, the headteacher plays an important role when it comes to the relationships of trust that exist within the school unit.

TABLE I

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,420 ^a	,176	,167	,97731
a. Predictors: (Constant), I can count on the headteacher of the school unit				

TABLE II

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17,575	1	17,575	18,400	,000^b
	Residual	82,141	86	,955		
	Total	99,716	87			
a. Dependent Variable: I trust my colleagues						
b. Predictors: (Constant), I can count on the headteacher of the school unit						

Another important, we suppose, finding from the data that was collected for the needs of the quantitative approach was that the variable “communication within the school is effective” affects the variable “I trust colleagues” (Table III and IV).

TABLE III

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,576 ^a	,332	,324	,87717
a. Predictors: (Constant), Communication within the school is effective				

It is therefore clear that the communication that “exists” or “is cultivated” within the school unit is important for the levels of trust in colleagues.

TABLE IV

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32,171	1	32,171	41,812	,000^b
	Residual	64,631	84	,769		
	Total	96,802	85			
a. Dependent Variable: I trust colleagues						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Communication within the school is effective						

However, believing that not all the aspects of this specific issue are being revealed, we proceeded to conduct a qualitative approach as well, focusing on the headteacher of the school unit and on relationships of trust.

Studying the legal provisions and the headteacher interviews, we arrived at three main axes to study:

- *Interview – Vote*
- *Security – Risk*
- *Identities*

We will attempt to analyse the perspectives of headteachers of school units for each of these three axes. Focusing on Table V, in which indicative extracts from the interviews are presented, which are connected with the first axis (“Interview – Vote”), we note that the headteachers of primary school units appear to stand against both the vote and the interview. They claim that the vote created factions within each school, broke the unity between educators, and certain candidates were favoured. Apart from that, it seems that there is a rift since 2015 in many school units and there are numerous occasions when the relationships of trust are only found between people who supported the same candidate for the headteacher position, disregarding the other members of the faculty. However, we should point that a share of the headteachers that participated in the interviews claim that it is necessary for the faculty to have a say in the headteacher selection processes, but at the same time it should respond with maturity and, in the case of a vote, to justify their positions sufficiently.

The headteachers of school units appear to attribute to the interview many negatives as well, and quite a few of them classify it as one of the main pathogenies of the headteacher selection system. More specifically, they believe that the interview is often corrupt, political party criteria prevail, and the committee that carries it out “favours” or “cuts” the candidates, depending on the networks which they are a part of. A substantial number of headteachers claimed that the interview is anachronistic and the candidate’s words do not play a role in it, but the points they will be awarded have already been decided. Another important point that requires attention is the fact that headteachers are dissatisfied with the elected officials in the committee, either because there is favouritism or because, according to them, they do not possess the required qualifications to judge them. In fact, many of the interviewees strongly support the dismissal of the elected officials from the committee in question.

TABLE V

<i>Axis A': Interview – Vote</i>		
H1	<i>Interview</i>	<i>“The interview is sometimes corrupt... There is favouritism...”</i>
	<i>Vote</i>	<i>“Forming of cliques within the school... someone belongs somewhere... Relationships of guilty silence, suspicion, professional difficulty...”</i>
H2	<i>Interview</i>	<i>“The selection of headteachers that includes an interview will never be impartial... The political party element strongly prevailed...”</i>
	<i>Vote</i>	<i>“Ridiculous things... Headteachers and educators were divided... Dissolution of the unity of the field... Quite a bit of background was created.... they win the position because of friendship, contacts and maybe future promises... They view the ones who did not vote for them as enemies... They are now their opponents...”</i>
H3	<i>Interview</i>	<i>“There is unfairness in the interview as well... ”</i>
	<i>Vote</i>	<i>“Division... They do not vote for the standard headteacher... Since 2015 there is a rift...”</i>
H6	<i>Interview</i>	<i>“Your points in the interview have nothing to do with what you are worth in the end and with who you are... The interview is there to give points to the favourites... It is the tool with which people in the favour of each Regional Council of Primary Education are cut or favoured ...”</i>
	<i>Vote</i>	<i>“I support the voting process as long as justification is given for each vote...”</i>
H8	<i>Interview</i>	<i>“The interview operates in an examining way...”</i>
	<i>Vote</i>	<i>“They threatened the faculty to vote for them... The faculty’s opinion should count... but we should operate with a certain maturity...”</i>

Table VI contains extracts that are consistent with the second axis (“Security – Risk”). It seems that to a great degree headteachers are characterised by insecurity and are in a process of constant risk. The insecurity, according to them, stems from the non-meritocratic system that exists for the selection of headteachers, both in terms of the voting process as it was carried out (customer relationships between subordinate and candidate), and in terms of the interview process (elected officials, relationships of convenience, political party criteria). Furthermore, the insecurity also springs from the liquid legal framework, where changes for the issue of headteacher selection are constant. Often many points are differentiated

with the change of government or even with the succession of ministers of the same government. The words of Headteacher 5 are characteristic; they mention that “headteachers are pawns depending on the intentions of the government at the time...”. From the interviews we conducted, one more finding lies in the fact that degrees (qualifications) are what people try to obtain, with security of the subject being the final aim.

TABLE VI

Axis B': Security – Risk
H1: “Subjectivity breeds insecurity and uncertainty regarding how meritocratic the system is, there are relationships of dependence... There needs to be a meritocratic system like the Panhellenic exams, impartial... there are vindictive people... it is not certain that they are [meaning the committee members] more trained and more educated scientifically than me...”
H2: “The subordinate who will assess the headteacher will definitely redeem this support, for example with a schedule favourable to them... It is not right for the subordinate to assess the headteacher in order to judge them for this position... Some headteachers then tried to exact some form of revenge...”
H4: “The legal framework is liquid, we never know how the next one will be...”
H5: “We headteachers are pawns depending on the intentions of the government at the time...”
H6: “In Greece, we get the papers [meaning the degrees – the qualifications] to become headteachers... The point system is like a surgical procedure...”

We close the present section of the article with Tables VII and VIII, which include important elements for the study of the third axis (“Identities”). Table VII, which is included in the appendix, contains certain data that is included in the identity of each headteacher. As we can observe, all participating headteachers in our study have more than 20 years of service. Most of the headteachers have been in their current school for 3 to 4 years as headteachers. At the same time, it is especially important to point out that almost all headteachers possess many qualifications.

The analysis of the identity of a subject is an extensive process and clearly it is too complicated to be presented thoroughly in an article. Consequently, in Table VIII we recorded certain extracts, which we suppose carry notable weight for the constitution of the headteachers and it is almost certain that the statements we mention were based on certain experiences that were recorded at some point in the past in their identity. To expand on this, most headteachers appear to be dissatisfied with the Central Government (Ministry of Education) and disappointed with the headteacher selection processes. What we just mentioned is expressed particularly strongly by Headteacher 8, who talks about a very centralist system of administration, as well as by Headteacher 10, who points out that Central Government ostracises them and does not open a dialogue with them. We suppose then that a series of events that took place in their past lead to these viewpoints which they shared with us in the interview.

TABLE VIII

Axis C': Identities
H1: “Administration is hierarchically exercised, vertically from top to bottom, so we are a cogwheel which is forced to exist, has to do certain things that others decide...”
H5: “The headteacher selection processes disappoint you...”
H6: “There should definitely be permanent headteachers, through assessment and through processes with which in the end we will choose highly able headteachers and we can find them for schools, without constantly having choices that in the end prove that we want to make changes related to the political situation that exists in the country...”
H8: “...in our country the system is very-very centralist, namely everything is determined by the central administration...”
H9: “The help of the Ministry of Education to the headteachers of schools is minimal. The Ministry of Education does not help us at all... with anything...”
H10: “...I do not remember the Ministry ever seeking directly, either from the base, from the educators, from the headteachers, I do not know what it has done at a regional level, to ever have asked us for an opinion or some of our worries or some of our suggestions, or when it would seek them, when for example a new bill had to pass and there was a consultation, I do not know if they were reading what some people had the goodwill to write. Because then they did not see some of the suggestions which were almost unanimous to be implemented. Therefore I do not know to what extent the Ministry takes our requests into account...”

5. IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION: ASSESSMENT, LIQUIDITY AND DISLOYALTY

It is not a surprise that statutory texts of the last century seem even today to suggest to us both directly and symbolically, as I. Solomon writes (1992: 159), the regulative characteristics of control, prioritisation and normalisation of the educator through the processes of ‘role expectation’, namely the existence of an already established regulative framework of induction at the basis of the wider social relationships.

Despite the modern strength of the regulative moulds of the past, the modern type of the headteacher-administrator appears to leave behind informal “regulative advice” that have their roots in the early days of today’s educational construction. A modern administration, elements of which we attempted to describe, seems to displace the traditional strictly hierarchical form of administrative function. This new headteacher in the context of the existing organisational arrangement will develop identities with abilities of constant adaptation, in a changing environment beginning with the learning environments and the technical skills. The whole process points to what J. Habermas (1971: 81-122) refers to as ‘obedience to the rules of rationalised actions, as an internalised process’.

This modern administrative logic of action contrasts with the old logic of the linearly hierarchical-mechanistic administration, which draws its legalisations from the strictly hierarchical models and the criteria for the construction of these models. The remaining strength of the structures of the welfare state and specifically of education will be particularly tested by the looming pandemic of COVID-19. It is obvious that the modern educational function of the headteacher changes as a function and process in the context of the school unit. From one relatively “closed and stable framework” both with regard to its material institution and with regard to its symbolic meaning, in a changing context of actions with strong elements of risk for the success of subjective expectations.

More specifically, under the weight of the repercussions of the crisis, the unpredictable and the liquidity constitutes a defining element of the educational normality. Particularly, the role of the instability of the educational policy and the frequent change of the legal-regulatory framework is indicative especially to the degree that it produces risk for the successful confirmation of the subject’s expectations.

Thus, the role of the headteacher in a changing context consists of their ability, through formal and informal rules, to regulate the relative autonomy of the organisation. Under the influence of the above, the headteacher’s function, and the headteacher as identity, is called to carve their path within the educational field alone, to develop their strategies and compose their social network. According to our data, social networks appear to play a crucial role for relationships of trust as well, since the participants in the research point out that relationships of trust are characterised by reciprocity. As a result, taking one step further, we can deduce that a social network is going to have a reciprocal attitude towards another social network. For example, the social network of the educators of a school unit can be divided to “sub-networks”, as it happened in 2015, with supporters of one or another candidate; this “sub-network” with the supporters of a candidate continues until today to place trust in the headteacher they elected.

In the end, the development of a network of relationships seems to be important for the headteacher, because they help the subject manage the liquidity and polysemy of daily life at school. It is a distinctive finding that the participating headteachers declared that the process of selection through interview is characterised by lack of meritocracy and the committee members are personally acquainted with many of the candidates. With a deeper reading, we can observe that headteachers essentially mention how prominent the power of social networks is. The prospective headteacher, always according to the participants’ words, “enlists” social networks associated to them, either on a friendship level or on a political party level. The criterion for the development of these networks is reliability and trust. The question mark that arises concerns the quality of the relationship of trust. The headteachers of the school units that participated in our research appear to be characterised by low levels of trust towards their colleagues (horizontal trust). However, low levels of trust are also detected towards institutions (vertical trust), since most institutions we mentioned to headteachers are placed in the low level of trust, while only three are placed in the high level of trust (Family, University and Justice). This particular conception from the headteachers’ side has overall repercussions on the culture of the school unit.

The headteachers of the school units believe that indeed the liquidity that characterises the legal framework for the election of headteachers of school units is associated with the crisis in the relationships of trust between themselves and

their colleagues, but also between colleagues. Characteristically, it was mentioned by most participants that since 2015 a “rift” was created in educators’ relationships, which in many cases exists until today. It therefore becomes clear that the liquidity of the legal framework as regards the selection of headteachers of school units constitutes one of the main factors for the formulation of relationships characterised by lack of trust within the school units.

In conclusion, the fact that headteachers of school units believe that both the vote and the process of selection through an interview are characterised by fixated views that render them non-meritocratic as processes is important for the culture of the school unit. Most of the headteachers propose headteacher selection processes where the elected officials will not be involved, and a dominant proposal for an alternative process is the establishment of an Independent Authority, which will shoulder the burden for the selection of headteachers of school units. As for the identity of the headteachers, it becomes evident that they carry a series of experiences (also due to the substantial amount of years of service they have in education), which to a great degree determine their perspective on the issues we posed to them. Moreover, headteachers possess a multitude of qualifications, most likely used as guarantees for the acquisition of the headteacher position and of the preservation of security. In the limitations of the research we would like to note that most of them, through their words, outlined their identity with precision, whereas some of them may have preferred to stay within the boundaries with the social image they desire to be mirrored.

In the end, the studies on the administration of the school unit emphasise that the education system is once more at the centre of socio-economic, cultural and political vibrations. The management of the vibrations that crises produce (economic, healthcare-related κλπ.) constitutes a central meaning of the work being done in school. Under this light, the emerging identities and the role of the headteacher is determined and depends on the establishment of reliable relationships in the school unit, as a central function of strategic importance for the preservation not only of the proper operation of the school unit and the school classroom, but also of social cohesion in a metasymbolic era.

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APPENDIX – A

TABLE VII

	Years of service	Years as headteacher	Years as headteacher in this specific school	Studies other than undergraduate degree						
				Retraining	Second undergraduate degree	Master's degree	PhD	Seminars	Computer training	Other
H1	22	2,5	2,5	X	-	X	-	X	X	X
H2	28	6	3	X	-	X	-	X	X	X
H3	34	13	13	X	X	X	-	X	X	X
H4	31	10	9	X	-	X	-	X	X	X
H5	32	2	2	X	-	X	-	-	-	-
H6	39	18	3	X	-	-	-	-	-	X
H7	26	3	3	X	-	X	-	-	X	X
H8	21	5	3	X	-	X	-	-	-	X
H9	34	4	4	-	-	-	-	X	X	X
H10	34	4	3	X	-	X	-	X	X	X