

Dear Professor, Michael Sandel

On behalf of the Executive Board of the *Greek Primary Teachers' Federation (DOE)*, the only trade union which represents all of the approximately 70,000 teachers serving in public kindergartens and primary schools in Greece (ages 4 to 12 years old), I would like to invite you, as the sole presenter, to an online event that we will organize and I refer to in detail below.

We are a national federation, with 132 active Teachers' Unions as our members operating locally. In total, as I've already mentioned, in this way, we represent over 70,000 teachers who are our active members, that is 80% of all teachers working in primary education.

2022 is a milestone for the DOE as we celebrate 100 years since our foundation in May 1922.

Education in our country has always been underfunded. Teachers' salaries have been drastically reduced over the last decade (the average annual salary is €14,000), and are among the lowest ones in the European Union in purchasing power units. We are experiencing a chronic lack of meaningful dialogue on the part of the State.

In recent years we have experienced an unprecedented attack through a series of laws leading to the deconstruction of public education and its commercialization.

Specifically, with the latest laws and especially with Law 4823/2021, which has the false title "Upgrading the school, empowerment of teachers and other provisions", the following measures are introduced:

- Public Schools will be graded: (a) based on the performance of their students in a system of national examinations; (b) by external evaluators who will have both educational and administrative authority, subject to a complicated hierarchical system of Counsellors - Supervisors - Regional Supervisors - National Supervisor, which parallels the administrative hierarchical scale; (c) by the "self-evaluation" of the school units themselves, which is imposed on 9 axes and 43 (?) different scoring indicators.
- Schools will be looking for sponsors for their additional funding, at the same time as our country in terms of education funding is ranked very low, both in the EU and in the OECD.
- The so-called "Standard - Experimental" schools are tripling (with the aim to be ten folded by 2025) In these schools pupils are admitted with examinations of increased requirements and teachers are subject to a differentiated legal and employment status. This situation is a direct counterpart to charter schools in the US.
- Measures are foreseen to strengthen private educational structures at all levels of education (private schools, private vocational institutes, private colleges).
- There will be a 20% reduction in enrollment in higher education.

- Increased requirements, through a complicated subject based digital system, for the national upper secondary education examinations are established.
- State funding for technological equipment for students is replaced with low-funding vouchers.
- Curricula are rearranged in order to serve an ever-expanding education industry, which ruthlessly profits.
- The de-democratisation of school governing institutions is promoted, drastically reducing the powers of the Teachers' body of the school unit and strengthening the role of a Headmaster - manager, making in this way a one- person decision-making body for the school.

We believe that the above measures:

Will undermine Public Education as a whole, as well as its uniform, public and gratuitous nature that is mandated by the Constitution of our country.

They will create cultural and class-based gradation of schools.

They will be to the detriment of our students, especially to those from vulnerable social and economic backgrounds, instilling into them low expectations for their future.

They will gradually remove the state from its constitutional obligation to adequately and equitably fund public education for all students.

They will lead to a ~~value-shift~~ profound structural change in the social conception of education, from a public good for all, to an individual product acquired through fierce individual competition and corresponding economic power.

We are therefore fighting a struggle for Public Education, for the defense of the Public School, and for the defense of our students.

We know some of your work which has been translated into Greek, ("Liberalism and the Limits of Justice", "Justice: what's the Right Thing to Do?", "What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets", "The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?"), from which we understand that :

- Increasingly, the "market economy is turning into a market society", while at the same time social inequalities are becoming excessively acute.
- Through this process, aspects/sectors of social goods such as education and health are being commercialised or privatised.
- The purpose of social institutions which should be addressed to the whole of society is being transformed, but unfortunately they are being transformed by operating according to private economic criteria.
- The prevalence of neoliberal practices of a 'market society' transfers the responsibility for inequality to the individual who suffers it. This raises serious moral

and social issues, at the same time burdening individuals with psychological burden and pressure.

- Through a process of meritocracy, the need for social justice and total human worth is negated, which is now measured by 'success indicators' to which not everyone has equal access.

That is why we ask for your help and contribution with your knowledge, wit, experience and global scientific reach.

To enable us to bring our views and demands to the wider social debate, we want to organise an Online Event - with you as the sole presenter - to share with us the richness of your thoughts, the insightfulness of your questions and the depth of your views and positions. Anastasiou Dimitris, Professor at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, will moderate the online event and there will be simultaneous interpretation from Greek to English and vice versa.

We would like to organize the Web Event in early March 2023 (indicatively, we suggest Sunday, March 5, 2023), but our invitation is open to any date (earlier or later) that you are able and kind enough to contribute to our Public Education effort.