



## BOOK REVIEW

### **Crisis, austerity, and new frameworks for teaching and learning: A pedagogy of hope for contemporary Greek education**

Maria Chalari

New York: Routledge (2020), pp139, hardback £120, e-book £40.49

ISBN: 978-0-367-02860-2

Nantia Chatzitheodorou, [r01nc18@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:r01nc18@abdn.ac.uk)

University of Aberdeen, Scotland

**DOI Number:** <https://doi.org/10.26203/pxtb-mt48>

**Copyright:** © 2020 Chatzitheodorou

**To cite this book review:** Chatzitheodorou, N. (2020). Crisis, austerity, and new frameworks for teaching and learning: A pedagogy of hope for contemporary Greek education. *Education in the North*, 27(2) pp. 267-268.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Crisis, austerity, and new frameworks for teaching and learning: A pedagogy of hope for contemporary Greek education**

Maria Chalari

New York: Routledge (2020), pp139, hardback £120, e-book £40.49

ISBN: 978-0-367-02860-2

Nantia Chatzitheodorou, [r01nc18@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:r01nc18@abdn.ac.uk)

University of Aberdeen, Scotland

In this book, Chalari presents her work conducted during her PhD studies, aiming to communicate Greek teachers' perceptions around the impact of the economic crisis on Greek citizens in general and on the education system in particular. At the same time, she attempts to turn away from the negative climate which has currently taken over Greece to consider beneficial outcomes of the crisis; suggesting that through a mindset of hope, positive change can take place.

Being Greek and a preschool teacher before making my first steps in academia, the title of this book immediately sparked my interest. I belong to the unlucky educators who started their degree at the outburst of the crisis of 2008 and graduated facing the insecurity of unemployability and low wages. Considering how the crisis is still ongoing after more than 10 years, a mindset of hope could be valuable for both change and a way of coping. This makes the context of the book familiar and relevant as an educator as well as an individual. It is an opportunity to understand how other teachers experience and view an ongoing economic crisis, but more importantly, to be inspired by 'a pedagogy of hope' for an Education system.

In the first half of the book, the author draws a comprehensive picture of the context of her study. The book then provides an extensive account in terms of experiences associated with the socio-economic crisis through the analysis of teacher interviews. It was disappointing that pre-school teachers were not included considering they too belong in the Greek Education system, and that any change should occur across the whole educational structure.

While Chalari provides a meaningful account of teachers' perceptions around the impact of the crisis on the Greeks and the Greek Education system, it was hard to see the relationship between teacher's narratives and the proposed 'pedagogy of hope'. Firstly, according to the teacher narratives presented in the book, only two of them briefly referred to the education system as needing to promote hope. Even

then however, it is not clear whether teachers' ideas of hope align with the authors. While Chalari conceptualizes hope as a road to action, teachers may view hope as a means of coping and comfort.

Furthermore, Chalari mentions that 'hope should recognise the difficulties of the present situation before being able to come to an alternative positive vision; it should be located between wishing and planning' (p.7). While teachers suggested ways by which the education system could address problems behind the crisis such as spending more money on education, having fewer students in the classrooms, altering the curriculum etc., a considerable number of the means proposed are not dependent on the teachers themselves but in the highly centralized and corrupted Greek Ministry of Education. It is relevant then to question how teachers are planning to face the Ministry in order to bring about those changes. Since no teacher proposed a way of overcoming this problem however, hope seems to be closer to wishful thinking, as there are not suggestions or 'planning' on moving from what should be done to how it will be done. In order to overcome the issue, teachers have to start thinking about ways to be heard and involved in decision-making around education. In the study, teachers themselves reported that they can take steps in ameliorating the situation but they cannot change it by themselves. While taking steps towards the right direction can only be beneficial, for the pedagogy of hope to eventually have the desirable impact, measures must be considered in order to overcome significant barriers. According to the narratives however, teachers in the particular study have not thought that far.

Another issue with the 'pedagogy of hope' is how to keep hope alive in families and students who according to teachers could not afford to buy notebooks or even food. While the majority of Greeks were undeniably severely affected by the crisis, it was detrimental for a number of people. Hence, it can be quite challenging to make people who struggle to afford covering theirs and their children's basic needs for a course of more than 10 years now to stay positive. Again here, there seems to be a gap between what would ideally be the case and how the ideal will become a reality.

In summary, this book provides a valuable insight into the impact the socio-economic crisis had on Greek citizens and the Greek Education system. However, whilst the 'pedagogy of hope' could be a valuable framework for education, the element of 'planning' is lacking in the extent of the teacher's narratives but also in the author's recommendations on how this pedagogy could be made possible in the given context.