



## NEOLIBERAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN GREECE: PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS BY SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS AND TEACHING WORK

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of our research is to examine the impact of the pursuit of academic qualifications, imposed by neoliberal policy, by substitute primary school teachers in Greece on their daily teaching work within school classrooms. Our research was based on data derived from the content of 12 semi-structured interviews with an equal number of substitute primary school teachers working in schools in Greece. A qualitative analysis was carried out on the content of the interviews. The results showed that the participating substitute primary school teachers pursue participation in lifelong learning processes that will lead to the acquisition of academic qualifications, in order to meet the requirements of the recruitment system, which rewards the possession of such qualifications. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of the data suggests that their participation in lifelong learning programmes for the acquisition certified of academic qualifications has negative consequences on their teaching work.

**Keywords:** academic qualifications, lifelong learning, teaching work, neoliberalism, neoliberal educational policy, teachers' precarity

### **1. Introduction**

In Greece, primary and secondary education teachers are categorized according to their employment status into permanent and substitute teachers. Permanent teachers have an employment contract with the Ministry of Education, which potentially allows them to remain in this position until their retirement. On the contrary, according to the current legal framework, substitute teachers have fixed-term employment contracts with the Ministry of Education, which may have a maximum duration of one school year, i.e. from September to June of each school year (see Official Government Gazette, 2019). Based on

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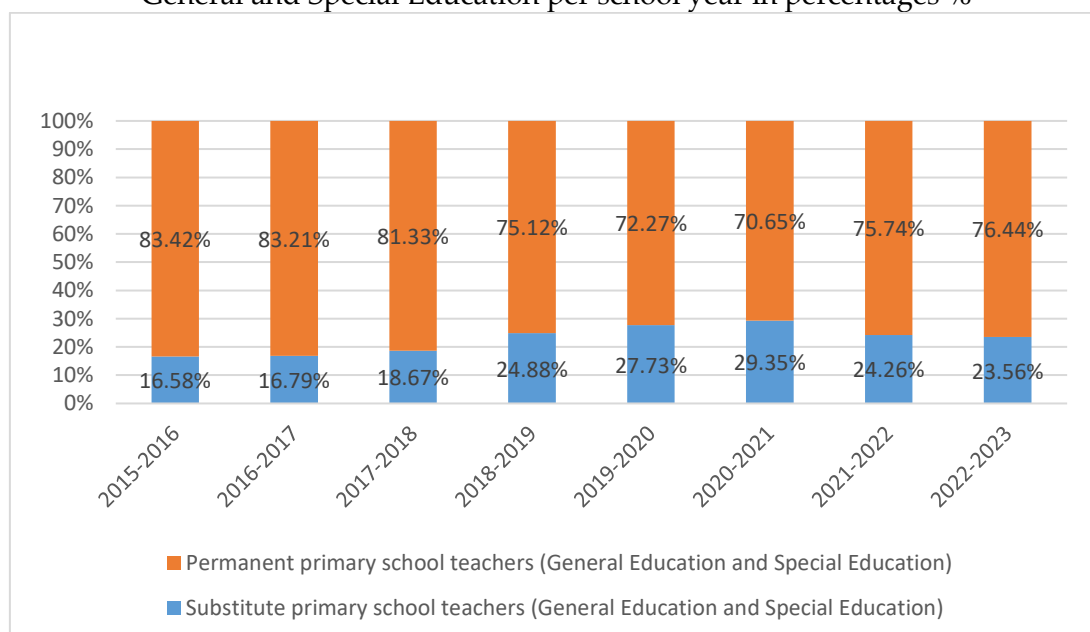
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this distinction, substitute teachers do not enjoy the same labour rights as their permanent colleagues, as is the case, for example, with the duration of their leaves. Indeed, this fact triggered the intervention of the European Commission, which called on Greece to immediately eliminate these discriminations (European Commission, 2025).

From the emergence of the institution of substitute teachers in the late 1920s until the 1970s, the population of substitute teachers was much smaller compared to the number of permanent teachers (Andreou & Koutouzis, 2002). However, from the 1980s onwards, the number of substitute teachers began to gradually increase, reaching an initial peak in the 1992-1993 school year, when substitute teachers accounted for approximately 20% of the total number of teachers (Andreou & Koutouzis, 2002). The primary cause of this phenomenon appears to be the implementation of neoliberal educational policies in the country (Vergidis, 1993a), which advocate for the reduction of public education spending and, consequently, the promotion of flexible forms of employment within it. This market-oriented perception of education was further intensified during the economic crisis in Greece, particularly from 2010 to 2018, when lenders demanded and achieved the shrinking of public expenditures. A characteristic of this situation is that after 2008, when the last recruitment process for permanent teachers took place, the next similar process occurred in 2019.

As our research focuses on the case of substitute primary school teachers, regardless of whether they work in general or special education, it could be said that this group follows the general upward trend of the broader population of substitute teachers. Specifically, in the following diagram, we observe that over the last nearly ten school years (2015-16 to 2022-23), substitute primary school teachers represent on average approximately 1 in 4 active primary school teachers.

**Figure 1:** Permanent and substitute primary school teachers of General and Special Education per school year in percentages %



Source: Nikolakakos, 2024.

Regarding the recruitment method of substitute primary school teachers, the same recruitment system has been followed from 2019 to the present. More specifically, candidate substitute primary school teachers are ranked every two years according to their specialisation (General Education and/or Special Education) in a national list based on their score, which results from the aggregation of their previous service in education, the social criteria they meet (e.g. parents of minor children or degree of disability) and their academic qualifications (e.g. doctorate, master's degree, computer literacy, knowledge of foreign languages, seminars). For the first time in the recruitment method of substitute primary school teachers in Greece, there is such a system that places so much emphasis on the possession of academic qualifications, resulting in an ever-increasing number of substitute primary school teachers participating in lifelong learning processes with the motivation of maintaining their employment (Nikolakakos, 2024; Nikolakakos & Vergidis, 2024a).

Substitute primary school teachers constitute a sizeable professional group that deserves to be researched separately from both permanent primary school teachers and other substitute teachers. An interesting research aspect of the professional group of substitute primary school teachers is the effect of their recruitment system on their relationship with lifelong learning. Specifically, as we have seen, their participation in lifelong learning processes leading to the acquisition of academic qualifications enhances their chances of working in the following school years. In short, the more academic qualifications a substitute primary school teacher acquires through lifelong learning, the more likely they are to continue working, while someone who worked as a substitute primary school teacher in previous years but has not gathered enough academic qualifications is not likely to be hired as a substitute primary school teacher in the following years. From this perspective, lifelong learning is transformed into an arena of competition among colleagues for the acquisition of academic qualifications, which will ensure their professional survival (Nikolakakos, 2024). As we found in our previous research (see: Nikolakakos & Vergidis, 2024b), the competition of the pursuit of academic qualifications has multiple impacts on the daily lives of substitute primary school teachers. The purpose of the present research is to investigate the impact of the competition created by the pursuit of academic qualifications on the teaching work of substitute primary school teachers.

## 2. Lifelong Learning and Neoliberalism

Learning throughout the lifespan has occupied people since ancient times. The phrase of the ancient Greek legislator, Solon, *"I grow old, always learning"* is representative. In the contemporary era, the first institutional reference was made by the UNESCO *"Edgar Faure"* commission in 1972, which, describing the needs of future education, used the term *"lifelong education"* (Vergidis, 2001, 2005). Subsequently, in 1976, UNESCO presented the definition for *"lifelong education and learning"* (UNESCO, 1976). According to this, lifelong education and learning implied that the educational system had to be

restructured, and also that education and learning should not be limited to the years of school attendance (UNESCO, 1976). For about two decades (1970 – 1990), the terms lifelong education and lifelong learning were used almost interchangeably (Karalis, 2026). However, in 1995, through the *“White Paper on Education and Training”* of the European Commission, the term lifelong learning was placed at the heart of European educational policy (Commission of the European Communities, 1995).

According to the European Commission (2001), lifelong learning could be defined as *“all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective”* (p. 9). Lifelong learning includes three forms of learning: formal, non-formal and informal (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Specifically, according to the European Commission (2001), formal learning has a specific structure, leads to certification and is provided by educational or training institutions. On the other hand, non-formal learning, despite also having a specific structure, is not provided by these institutions, and most of the time does not lead to certification. Finally, informal learning most often occurs randomly through daily activities, is not structured and usually does not lead to certification.

At this point, it should be noted that the shift of European educational policy interest from the term lifelong education to that of lifelong learning created certain results. With the term lifelong learning, an attempt is made to transition to a broader learning environment throughout human life, compared to what the term lifelong education includes. Specifically, learning within the framework of lifelong learning does not take place exclusively through the provision of educational work by corresponding bodies but also acquires substance through informal processes in the individual's daily life (Lionarakis, 2009). Under this view, learning is not treated so much as a result of an organised educational process but rather as an individual matter. For its part, the European Union sees lifelong learning as the best way for its citizens to respond to the social, economic and technological changes of the contemporary era (Commission of the European Communities, 1995). However, there are cases where, in this effort, the educational policy of lifelong learning displays neoliberal aspects, which, instead of addressing modern challenges, intensify economic competition and social inequalities. Also, several studies have shown that lifelong learning programmes reinforce educational inequalities (see Karalis, 2013; Vergidis, 2014, 2016).

Neoliberalism could be said to constitute a theory that includes political and economic practices, promoting the entrepreneurial thinking and action of the individual within an institutionally guaranteed free market framework, in order for the individual to be led to prosperity (Harvey, 2005). Its application within the framework of lifelong learning policy brings about an entrepreneurial perception of education and learning processes, which are treated as investments that must yield in the labour market (see Lorenzini, 2018; Mikelatou & Arvanitis, 2018; Simons, 2006). Furthermore, the exclusive consideration of learning as an investment process for securing employment intensifies competition in the labour market (see Brine, 2006; Englund & Gerdin, 2019). Thus, interest

shifts from the learning outcome to the acquisition of certification of the individual's knowledge and skills. Additionally, the prevalence of the neoliberal perspective of lifelong learning in the European Union's educational policy has led to the gradual withdrawal of states from the obligation to provide education and, simultaneously, to the emergence of citizens' individual responsibility for their educational and professional path (Nikolakakos & Vergidis, 2022). In this way, public discussion emphasizes the finding and exploitation of learning opportunities by citizens over the universal possibility of citizens' access to them, an approach with a clear neoliberal sign (Karalis, 2026).

### 3. Literature Review

In this section, we will present a series of research studies related to the subject under investigation, with the aim of understanding specific parameters contained within it.

Starting with the research of Easthope and Easthope (2000), it focuses on investigating the impact that the work intensification of Tasmanian teachers during the decade 1984-1994 had on their perceptions of their work and its practice. The authors present the work intensification of Tasmanian teachers as a result of government economic rationalism policies imposed on education. The research data came from the responses of four teachers in in-depth interviews and sixteen teachers in focus group interviews. All teachers worked during the period 1984-1994 in secondary schools in Tasmania, Australia. The analysis of the research data was based on the grounded theory method. The results of the analysis showed that government measures for education created a complex working situation for teachers, which was perceived by participants not only as an increase in their workload and professional duties but also simultaneously as an attack on their professional ideology. Specifically, the teachers stated that while they graduated from university having been nurtured with the professional ideology of caring for their students, a contrary, new ideology was now being introduced into education: the administrative ideology of economic rationalism. Generally, all participants perceived by the end of the research process that they could not continue to perform their duties based on the professional ideology in which they were trained, a fact they experienced as a major blow. Some of them presented high levels of stress, while others resigned. However, those who remained in their positions were forced to make choices that downgraded their teaching work in order to respond to the new framework of their obligations.

Next, the study by Lawrence, Loi, and Gudex (2018) investigates through teachers' work experiences the way their work intensification affects their personal well-being. Specifically, the relationship between work intensification, satisfaction with workload, perceived organisational support and burnout was investigated. The framework of the research was the Job Demands-Resources model. The research sample consisted of 215 high school teachers in Australia, who were asked to complete an anonymous online survey. Statistical analysis of the collected data followed. The results of the analysis

showed that non-teaching workload, such as administrative tasks, is more likely to lead to professional burnout compared to the workload derived from teaching. At the same time, it appeared that non-teaching workload presents a high degree of correlation with the creation of emotional exhaustion and a sense of deprofessionalisation. Additionally, perceived organisational support seems to contribute to the mitigation of the relationship between work intensification and emotional exhaustion, i.e., significant factors of professional burnout.

The research by Baranska and Zambrowska (2021) deals with the phenomenon observed in Poland, where teachers of various school subjects undertake postgraduate studies to acquire the necessary qualifications to be able to teach mathematics as a second subject. The researchers' goal is to determine the impact of these studies on the lives and functioning of teachers. The research data were collected through an electronic questionnaire, which was answered by 160 teachers who had completed relevant postgraduate studies. The analysis of the research data showed, among other things, that the teachers in the sample had to exert great effort to combine the learning of the new subject with their professional obligations. However, the research concludes that postgraduate studies offer much less knowledge of the subject concerned compared to undergraduate studies. For this reason, these individuals need to devote much more time and individual work to feel cognitively adequate. Nevertheless, the participants state that postgraduate studies offer them better job prospects, such as finding a job, maintaining a job, but also choosing the place of work.

The work of Madigan and Kim (2021) aims to investigate the effect of teacher burnout on students' academic progress. According to the authors, numerous studies show that burnout is particularly prevalent among teachers due to the multidimensional demands of the profession and the consequent stress created by them. To answer how teacher burnout affects their students, Madigan and Kim (2021) conducted a systematic review of relevant studies. Thus, the research data came from 14 empirical studies selected based on specific criteria set by the researchers. The research sample consisted of 5,311 teachers and their 50,616 students. Subsequently, analysis and categorisation were performed on the content of the research. The analysis highlighted four types of results related to the performance, motivation, wellbeing and social outcomes of the students. The research concludes that teacher burnout is associated with lower academic performance of students and also lower quality in their learning motivation. Also, to a lesser extent, it emerged that the phenomenon of teacher burnout is related to the wellbeing and social profile of students. Finally, the authors state that despite the need for more research on the subject, data so far show that addressing teacher burnout could be associated with higher-quality educational services to students.

The subject of Pacaol's (2021) research is the investigation of the impact of teacher work intensification on the quality of teaching and performance of a public elementary school in the Philippines. From a methodological point of view, the research was an instrumental case study. The research sample consisted of one female teacher in a public elementary school in the Philippines, who was selected through purposive sampling. To

collect the research data, she first completed a questionnaire regarding her professional and teaching experience, followed by a semi-structured interview and, a few days later, an informal interview, the content of which was related to the research topic. Subsequently, thematic content analysis was performed on the research material. The analysis showed that teacher work intensification originates mainly from educational authorities and educational leadership. Furthermore, teacher workload does not seem to negatively affect all aspects of teaching quality. Specifically, it emerged that the negative effects mainly concern the learning supervision of students and the preparation of educational material. However, according to the author, more investigation of the subject is needed, as it appears that the degree of influence of teacher work intensification depends more on the way each teacher manages their workload and also on their work practices.

The purpose of the research by Creagh, Thompson, Mockler, Stacey and Hogan (2023) is to investigate the impact of workload, its intensification and time poverty on the work of teachers and school principals. Methodologically, it is a research synthesis of the literature related to the experiences of teachers and school principals on issues of workload, its intensification and time poverty. According to the researchers, the use of research synthesis allows for a review of the literature in great breadth and depth. Based on the criteria set, 40 relevant research papers were identified, from which the research data were derived. The analysis process showed that increased workload and the intensification of the work of teachers and school principals have negative consequences on various areas of their daily lives. Specifically, these developments affect the health and well-being of a large number of teachers, in whom intense stress, mental fatigue, domestic conflicts and professional burnout are observed, leading some of them to abandon the profession. Furthermore, the negative consequences of the increase in teachers' non-teaching obligations undermine their efforts to support the learning of all students. Additionally, research data show that teachers, despite perceiving that the conflict between their teaching duties and the non-teaching workload brought about by modern educational policies has negative consequences for themselves and their students, are nevertheless forced to comply with this reality. Consequently, a shift is identified in the way teachers perceive their role compared to the past.

Based on the above research, it appears that economic rationalism policies, directly linked to the ideology of neoliberalism, which have been implemented for several decades in the contemporary world, have brought about a series of changes in the professional daily life of teachers, which undermine their teaching work. These changes are related to the intensification and increase of teachers' workload through non-teaching duties. This situation often results in teachers' mental and physical exhaustion. Furthermore, it often leads to their reducing their teaching preparation time in order to save time for their non-teaching obligations. This development creates psychological pressure on teachers, as while they recognise that the core of their profession is the provision of pedagogical services to their students, they are forced to prioritise obligations outside their pedagogical work. The result of this is the creation of a sense of

deprofessionalisation, as they are burdened with a multitude of obligations and activities outside their pedagogical work towards their students.

#### 4. Material and Methods

The present research examines the impact of the pursuit of academic qualifications by substitute primary school teachers on their teaching work. Consequently, the question that occupied our research was formulated as follows: What are the impacts of the pursuit of academic qualifications by substitute primary school teachers on their teaching work? Methodologically, our research is qualitative in nature and constitutes a cross-case study. The case study is “*the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)*” (Gerring, 2007, p. 20). However, when the intensive study is conducted in several cases, then we are talking about a cross-case study (Gerring, 2007). Focusing on our research, through the study of various cases of substitute primary school teachers, we attempted to shed light on the impact that the pursuit of academic qualifications has on the teaching work of the total population of substitute primary school teachers. Our purpose was not the production of generalisable conclusions but the tracing and highlighting of certain aspects of the subject under research.

To collect the research data, we chose to use the tool of the semi-structured interview (see Robson, 2002). The interview is a popular technique for collecting research data among qualitative researchers, as it presents a series of advantages for qualitative research (King & Horrocks, 2010). The sample of our research consisted of 12 substitute primary school teachers (8 women and 4 men) from various public primary schools in Greece, who believe that the pursuit of academic qualifications by substitute primary school teachers has impacts on their teaching work. Sampling was carried out using the snowball technique (see Cohen, Mannion, & Morrison, 2000). The participants were aged 28 to 34, while their previous service as substitute primary school teachers ranged between 13 and 92 months (see Table 1).

The interviews were conducted from January to April 2022 and were carried out remotely using digital communication platforms. Following the consent of the participants, the interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Then, a qualitative content analysis oriented towards the purpose of the research was carried out on the research data (see Creswell, 2012).

**Table 1: Demographic data**

Interviewees	Sex	Age	Year of graduation	Year of first recruitment	Months of previous service
Int <sup>1</sup> . 1	M <sup>2</sup>	33	2012	2018	23
Int. 2	F <sup>3</sup>	30	2014	2018	26
Int. 3	F	31	2013	2018	23
Int. 4	F	34	2010	2010	92
Int. 5	M	34	2010	2012	78
Int. 6	F	32	2012	2016	26
Int. 7	F	31	2012	2018	20
Int. 8	M	34	2010	2011	92
Int. 9	F	31	2013	2018	25
Int. 10	F	30	2014	2018	36
Int. 11	M	28	2016	2020	19
Int. 12	F	29	2015	2021	13

**Notes:** 1= Interviewee, 2= Male, 3= Female

## 5. Presentation and Analysis of the Research Findings

From the responses of the participants in our research, it appears that their indirect coercion by the institutional framework towards the acquisition of academic qualifications, in order to respond to the competition among substitute primary school teachers, has a negative impact on their work as teachers. Specifically, our research data show that many substitute primary school teachers focus on the fact that participation in lifelong learning processes requires time, which could well be devoted to their preparation for the next day at school. Characteristic is the case of a female substitute primary school teacher, who mentions that the time pressure she undergoes to complete her master's degree leads her to give greater emphasis to her master's assignments, rather than to the preparation of the lessons she will teach the next day. Specifically, she states:

*"[...]ii I get terribly stressed about what to do first, what to prepare first. Should I give priority to the activity I have to prepare for tomorrow for school, or deal with my assignment in the master's, because my professor sent an email with a deadline for me to submit it? So I decided that I will not give emphasis to the activity for school, but I will give emphasis to the assignment because I have to get the master's degree." (Int. 9)*

In fact, she adds with emphasis that obtaining the master's degree before the process of forming a new ranking list of substitute primary school teachers opens is of vital importance for maintaining her professional status. As she mentions:

*"I cannot delay the master's, because if the list opens and I don't have it, I'm done." (Int. 9)*

<sup>ii</sup> [...]: Content from the interviewee's words is omitted.

Of similar opinion is the opinion of another female participant, according to whom, substitute primary school teachers give greater value to the acquisition of certified qualifications to enhance their score, devoting much time to this purpose, which could be utilised to strengthen the learning path of the students, something that according to her, constitutes the essence of the teacher's profession. As she states:

*"[...] I consider that we are losing the essence and we are looking for the scoring. And maybe the time we could devote to something more substantial for the students, our class, for the needs that arise, we lose it on some subject we are studying to get the respective certification."* (Int. 7)

In addition, another substitute primary school teacher gives a similar answer regarding the negative effect that devoting many hours of their daily lives to studying for the acquisition of qualifications has on the teaching work of substitute primary school teachers. The participant mentions that:

*"[...] You have to devote hours to studying for the acquisition of qualifications and this goes without saying that this can negatively affect your teaching work. Generally, you will have less time for school preparation. [...]"* (Int. 11)

According to the participants in our research, physical and mental exhaustion is another derivative of the competitive situation shaped by the pursuit of academic qualifications, which negatively affects the teaching work of substitute primary school teachers who participate in such processes. The little time that substitutes primary school teachers often have until the process of declaring qualifications opens again, so that they can be ranked based on their score in the lists on which it will depend, whether they are re-employed, creates in several cases physical and mental exhaustion with clear negative consequences on their teaching work. As one substitute primary school teacher points out:

*"[...] the speed with which you constantly need to follow the seminars, the master's, the doctorates is very high in order to be able to catch the opening of the lists, so that you can submit your qualifications, it creates an exhausting situation. You cannot have the class, after school, have a master's or a seminar, study for the next day, all this is exhausting for you. [...]"* (Int. 8)

Similar is the answer given by another female participant, who refers to the impact that the fatigue caused by the pursuit of a master's degree has on her teaching work. She characteristically mentions:

*"It affects it [my teaching work], because when I am chasing to get my master's and until I get my master's, this creates an additional tiredness for me during the day [...]"* (Int. 3)

One more impact of the pursuit of academic qualifications by substitute primary school teachers through their participation in lifelong learning processes is that it disrupts their dedication to the work provided to students. According to a participant, his simultaneous participation in lifelong learning processes, aimed at responding to labour competition, does not allow him to dedicate himself entirely to his professional duties. He specifically mentions that:

*"[...] when you are involved in so many things, you cannot, in my opinion, dedicate yourself 100% to your work. When you are studying, you have a thousand things in your head, you cannot dedicate yourself 100% to your work."* (Int. 10)

In the same context are the words of another female participant. According to her, despite the fact that the recruitment system pushes them to acquire qualifications which could help their work, this does not function in the right way, but creates an anxiety of acquiring qualifications to secure employment. Consequently, the pursuit of qualifications turns their interest from their teaching duties to the search for acquiring them. As she herself mentions:

*"[...] I consider that while this system could have potential and strengthen primary school teachers both in terms of psycho-emotional and teaching issues, at the present stage, it does not help them. That is, it is not possible to start our year as primary school teachers and instead of focusing on the class we are in, to focus on which seminar we will do next year."* (Int. 2)

## 6. Discussion and Conclusions

As presented in another part of this paper, the neoliberal institutional framework governing the recruitment of substitute primary school teachers in Greece places particular weight on the academic qualifications held by candidate primary school substitute teachers. Through a process that takes place every two years, candidate substitute primary school teachers submit their academic qualifications, each of which is graded with specific points. Subsequently, the sum they gather from these is added to the sum of other points from criteria they may possess (previous service and social criteria), and based on the total score they gather, they are ranked in a list. From this list, the Ministry of Education hires substitute primary school teachers, starting from the top of the list and proceeding downwards.

From the analysis of our research data, it emerges that the substitute primary school teachers who participated in our research feel driven by the existence of this specific institutional recruitment framework into a pursuit of academic qualifications, in order to respond as effectively as possible to the competition created by the formation of the ranking list every two years. From this perspective, this development is perceived by substitute primary school teachers essentially as a non-teaching obligation, as if they do

not acquire further academic qualifications, and indeed, within a specific timeframe, they risk being overtaken by other colleagues in the ranking during the next list formation process, and potentially not working again. Thus, under the pressure of precarity, they take part in lifelong learning processes in order to acquire academic qualifications, such as doctorates, master's degrees, seminars, and certifications of foreign language proficiency and computer literacy.

However, according to the analysis of the participants' responses, they consider that the pursuit of academic qualifications has an impact on their teaching work. The participants describe three instances in which their participation in lifelong learning processes for the acquisition of academic qualifications negatively affects their teaching work. More specifically, in the first instance, substitute primary school teachers choose to devote the largest part of their daily time to the processes of acquiring academic qualifications, rather than to the preparation of the next day's lessons. In the second instance, substitute primary school teachers present intense physical and mental exhaustion from the intensive effort to acquire academic qualifications in a short period of time, a fact that negatively affects their teaching performance. Finally, in the third instance, it is observed that the combination of the requirement to participate in processes for acquiring academic qualifications with their teaching work disrupts the dedication of substitute primary school teachers to it, and consequently has a negative impact on the work provided within the classroom.

Our conclusions are in agreement with the findings of other research (see Creagh, Thompson, Mockler, Stacey & Hogan, 2023; Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Madigan & Kim, 2021) according to which neoliberal competitive policies in education in recent decades have created a huge volume of non-teaching demands on primary school teachers, which has direct consequences for themselves and consequently for their teaching work. Especially in Greece, the population of substitute primary school teachers appears to be particularly affected, as the implementation of the recruitment system with particular weight on academic qualifications is perceived by them as an additional non-teaching "obligation"—that of acquiring academic qualifications through lifelong learning—in order to continue maintaining their professional status. Consequently, they are led into a pursuit of academic qualifications to respond to labour competition, something that has consequences for their teaching work, but also for their daily lives, as we had highlighted in our previous research (see Nikolakakos & Vergidis, 2024a).

Additionally, the present research highlights the existence of a distortion in which it is observed that substitute primary school teachers devote most of their daily time to lifelong learning processes that will bring them academic qualifications and, consequently, more chances of re-employment, rather than to their pedagogical role. They appear to be indirectly coerced into this choice by the current institutional recruitment framework. However, at this point, the risk of the deprofessionalisation of teachers lurks, as has been touched upon by other studies (see Lawrence, Loi & Gudex, 2018), which in our case is based on the fact that substitute primary school teachers seem to be treated by educational leadership in terms of a precariat (see Standing, 2011), which

must constantly prove its adequacy in a competitive work framework, rather than as experts in pedagogical science. Consequently, we judge that there is fertile ground for further investigation of this phenomenon in the case of substitute primary school teachers in Greece.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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