

Neoliberal Reforms in Higher Education: Market Logic, Inequality, and the Transformation of Academic Institutions



Dionysios Asimiadis

Phd candidate, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Political Science, Thessaloniki, Greece

Over the past four decades, neoliberalism has profoundly reshaped higher education systems across Europe and beyond. By introducing market-oriented reforms such as tuition fees, performance-based funding, privatization of research, and managerial governance models, universities are increasingly pressured to operate according to principles of efficiency, competitiveness, and profitability.

This paper investigates the consequences of neoliberal reforms in higher education, with particular emphasis on their impact on academic freedom, equality of access, and the public mission of universities. Drawing on policy analysis and case studies from European contexts, the paper illustrates how the shift from education as a public good to education as a private investment has widened social inequalities and redefined the role of students as consumers rather than citizens.

Furthermore, the research highlights the ways in which neoliberal governance transforms the academic profession itself: precarious employment, performance metrics, and the prioritization of marketable research outputs erode the traditional ideals of scholarship and critical inquiry. By situating these developments within broader debates in political sociology and cultural studies, the paper argues that neoliberalism in education is not merely an economic trend but a deep cultural and political project that reshapes collective understandings of knowledge, merit, and social responsibility.

Ultimately, the study calls for a re-examination of higher education policies that prioritize inclusivity, democratic values, and the protection of knowledge as a public good.

Biography:

Dionisis Asimiadis is a PhD candidate in Political Science. He was born in 1996 in Thessaloniki. He has worked for a long time as a radio and television producer and on major projects of the European Union. He graduated from the Department of Social Administration and Political Science and Law at Democritus University of Thrace, and he postgraduate studies specialize in European Policies, the design, and management of European Programs. He has been honored with the Second National Prize for Language Essay by the Eleftherios Venizelos Foundation and the Second Prize for Poetry by the Union of Writers of Northern Greece. In 2022, he has been published the book "Aspects of Greek Radicalism in the 19th Century