

Biographical Transformations and Educational Practices of Faculty Members at the Hellenic University

Anna Solomou

University of Patras, Patras, Greece

This essay attempts to highlight the interactive relationship between history and poetics in the formation of academic careers. The aim of this research, which utilizes the concepts of “scientific field”, “scientific capital”, “cultural capital”, and “symbolic power” from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory, is to explore faculty members’ views on the impact of their life stories on the way they teach, as well as their perceptions of the impact of the university field on their academic practice. The research data were collected using the biographical narrative interview during the years 2013-2015. The cases that constituted our sample in this research were 12 female and male faculty members of the University of Patras. We selected here interviews on the basis of processing which we analyzed by the biographical narrative analysis method. The selection of the cases was made in order to highlight the different aspects of the biographical significance of educational experiences in academic development and in the structuring of teaching practices. We also tried to highlight how the encapsulation of the educational itinerary and extra-academic work shapes the informants’ perceptions of how the academic field affects the teaching and research dimension of their role.

Keywords: biographical research, biographical narrative interview, biographical narrative analysis, scientific field

Introduction

In this paper, through a biographical narrative interview followed by a biographical narrative analysis, we attempted to explore faculty members’ views on the impact of their life stories on the way they teach as well as their perceptions of the impact of the university field on their teaching and research work. During the research phase, 12 interviews of University of Patras faculty members were conducted. During the main narrative phase of the biographical narrative interview process, we asked the informants to tell their life story by recalling personal experiences, experiences and events in which they had personal involvement in the context of their educational and academic career. Then within the phases of the follow-up questions, we tried to trace the critical factors that influence the structuring and practice of the academic profession. During the period of collecting the interviews and after the collection of the material we systematically processed all the material. On the basis of this processing we selected three interviews for a detailed (line by line) analysis. The selection of cases was made in order to highlight the different aspects of the biographical significance of teaching experiences in academic development and in the structuring of teaching practices. We also tried to highlight how the encapsulation of the educational itinerary and extra-academic work shapes informants’ perceptions of

how the university field affects the teaching and research dimension of their role. In order to move towards the principle of “case reconstruction” in which each narrative “ought to be seen in its entirety, in its complexity and as a crystallization of a dynamic process of production” (Tsiolis, 2006/2013/2014), we analyzed our material through the stages of exposing and analyzing the biographical data in their chronological order, disclosing and examining the textual structure of the biographical narrative, structural description, and analytical abstraction (Schütze, 1978; Oevermann, Tilmann, & Konau, 1980; Rosenthal, 2005; Tsiolis, 2006/2013/2014). The course of the biographical narrative analysis, of the three cases selected, in its individual stages was listed in the following parts.

Reporting and Analysis of Data in Chronological Order

At this stage and for each of the cases, a chronological table was constructed, which included the most important biographical stations of the informants. The examination of the chronological sequence of the biographical events enabled us to make some initial hypotheses both about the social characteristics (social origin, educational path, professional choices) and about the evolutionary process of the life path of the biographer (transition from education to work, professional development, spatial, professional, and social mobility). The chronological juxtaposition of the biographical milestones of the informants’ life path was an axis of correlations in terms of the thematic structure of the biographical reconstruction in later stages of the analysis so that we could assess the biographical data attributed by the narrator and in what order. In this sense, knowledge of the life course is one of the frameworks for interpreting the narrated life story. The narrative highlights the processes of identity development and at the same time reveals the individual’s position in the social structure through the biography (Schütze, 1983, p. 286; Owensby, 1997, p. 109).

Exposure and Examination of the Textual Structure of the Biographical Narrative

The essay is about breaking down the text into sections and subsections. It is the standard textual analysis where the transcribed interview of the informants was segmented into its thematic sections as well as its narrative, argumentative, and descriptive parts. The change of narrative path, chronological perspective, thematic or textual genre was used as clues for the separation of sections and subsections (Tsiolis, 2014, p. 276). The segmentation was based on criteria related to both content (what was said) and form (how it was said) in order to track thematic transitions and changes (Tsiolis, 2014, p. 275). This stage of analysis provided us with the possibility of a supervisory picture of the thematic development of the text as well as the sequence of the elements of the text structure (Tsiolis, 2002, p. 87). Based on the textual structure we made initial assumptions about the internal logic that permeates and shapes the text. These assumptions were transformed during the detailed analysis of the individual parts in the “structural description” stage.

Structural Description

The purpose of structural description, a term proposed by Schütze (1983) for “detailed analysis” (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2002), which is the core of the analytical process, is to explain the essential biographical structural processes, such as biographical patterns of action and other social processes represented in the narrative. The structural description proceeds sequentially (principle of sequentiality) and its aim is to describe and analyse the interview in its structure as well as to reconstruct with a detailed analysis of the sections and subsections of the text where the obvious and latent meaning of the text is analysed line-by-line

(Tsiolis, 2014; Riemann, 2003). Following the suggestion of Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (in Tsiolis, 2006/2014) we utilized the following questions as a heuristic guide for the interpretive approach to the text sections:

- (1) What is presented (content) and how is it presented (form) in the particular passage (content)?
- (2) Why is the particular passage presented and not something else (function in relation to content)?
- (3) Why is it presented at the specific (temporal) point and not at another (function in relation to positioning within the overall narrative)?
- (4) Why is it presented in this way and not in another (function in relation to form)?

In the course of the analysis, our theoretical preconceptions, knowledge from the field of social sciences, and the results of previous research were the “means of awareness”, which guided us in the analysis of the data (Tsiolis, 2014, p. 278). Moreover, as Dausien (2002b) argues in her reflective-reconstructive model of interpretation, three main contexts (Kontexte) should be reflected in the interpretation process: the biography, the interaction process in which a biographical narrative is created, the cultural norms and the social norms that guide biographical narratives. Also in the context of this stage of analysis, we took seriously evidence concerning both the content of what was said and the morphological features of the discourse, such as grammatical and syntactic choices (Tsiolis, 2014, pp. 278-279).

Analytical Removal

In the analytical deduction stage we distanced ourselves from the details of the individual parts in order to make overall assumptions concerning each case. We first attempted to assess the overall form of the biographical self-presentation. Our aim was to decipher the “overall biographical perspective” (Rosenthal, 1995, p. 218), the “latent i.e. the guiding mechanism of form formation” (Rosenthal, 1995 in Tsiolis, 2002, p. 88) in order to demonstrate how each case answers the specific questions. The form of self-presentation was the trigger for the formulation of global hypotheses by summarizing in higher abstraction schemas the categories and hypotheses that had been generated during the analysis of the individual extracts (Tsiolis, 2014, p. 280). Subsequently, we tried to proceed to the overall reconstruction of those elements that in their mutual reference highlight the internal logic of the case under investigation, i.e. its biographical constitution. This stage formed our interpretative background for the formulation of hypotheses about the biographical significance of the educational background in the construction of the academic role and the positioning of informants within the university field. During the analytical abstraction stage we remained at the level of the individual case from which we moved to the last stage involving the comparative analysis of the three cases considered. Through the comparative analysis we attempted to recapitulate and contrast the three different versions of biographical encapsulation of the educational trajectory based on the particular meaning structure as it emerged from each biography. The results of the research showed that social and cultural capital, the historical and educational context, and the university field are critical factors in the formation and practice of the academic profession. Several studies have repeatedly highlighted the issue of the lack of research data and sufficient case studies to facilitate understanding of the circumstances and experiences of those working in the higher education system. On the whole, they argue that, the area relating to academic and professional identity in higher education is lacking in research and is influenced by personal traits, early socialization experiences, and factors related to the initial stages of academics’ entry into the university field (Enders, 2007; Rhoades, 2007; Kerby, 1991; Beijgaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Clarke, Drennan, Hyde, & Politis, 2014). Cultural capital is the primary

material of faculty members' academic identity and practices and within it are contained their tendencies, their perceptions of how they should be as well as how they should perform tasks, their patterns of effectiveness, their patterns of professional interaction, and their social and political status (Becher, 1989; Henkel, 2000). Faculty members are involved in teaching, research, and service delivery in higher education in multiple ways, so it is particularly critical to understand their personal characteristics, career trajectories, sense of identity and commitment, and job satisfaction. These are central to understanding the academic profession in general and, in particular, the factors that influence their participation and productivity in the work of institutions (Galaz-Fontes, Arimoto, Teichler, & Brennan, 2016).

Theoretical Assumptions

The theoretical concepts utilized from Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice provided the framework for the theoretical preconceptions and heuristic schemes of understanding during the data analysis, reinforcing our theoretical sensitivity and scientific discipline, facilitating the processing of the data generated in this study. This work was carried out in the "scientific field" (a concept derived from P. Bourdieu's concept of field) of the University of Patras. The field can be defined as "a network of objective relations between positions". In this perspective, the concept of field contributes to the conception of social reality and the social world in terms of relations. Each field (academic, artistic, political, etc.) is a space of struggles in which social actors (dominant and dominated) try to maintain or change the distribution of the forms of capital accessible to it (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 45). The concept of the "scientific field" marks a social space or world of actions and contestation in which "dominant and dominated" actors try to maintain or change the distribution of the forms of capital predisposed to it (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 45). In other words, a "game" is taking place on the field. All participants in the field must believe in the game they are playing, and its existence and continuation presupposes a total and unconditional "investissement" in it, as well as in its stakes (Bourdieu, 1992, pp. 45-46). The scientific field is a social field with correlations of forces between acting subjects, stakes, benefits, interests, and strategies. It is a site of competition aimed at the "monopoly" of scientific prestige, that is, the ability of the acting subject to speak or act legitimately for science, which is socially recognized in a defined agency (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 86). The right of entry into the "scientific field" for newcomers is the sufficiency of appropriated theoretical resources in the form of "scientific capital" (Bourdieu, 2007a, p. 119). This capital is a particular kind of symbolic capital, founded in acts of knowledge and recognition by the set of peer competitors within the scientific field in which they are involved (Bourdieu, n.d., p. 130). Furthermore, according to Bourdieu, symbolic power is a form of power exercised over bodies: "...directly, and as if by magic, outside any bodily compulsion, as a switch, that is, with a minimum waste of energy" (Bourdieu, 2007b, p. 86). It is an invisible power that requires the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they exercise it (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 238). Scientific-type symbolic power is only exercised on acting subjects (in this case the actors within the scientific field of a Greek University) who possess those perceptual categories that allow them to know and acknowledge it, while it cannot be exercised on the public unless it has been validated by other scientists who tacitly control access to the "general public", mainly through popularization (Bourdieu, 2007b, pp. 128-129).

Research Questions—Methodology

In this paper we attempted to answer the following research questions:

(1) What are faculty members' perceptions of the influence of their life stories in shaping the way they teach?

(2) How do faculty members perceive the influence of the university field on their academic practice?

The cases sampled were 12 women and men, faculty members of the University of Patras in which they had carried out all or part of their studies and were invited to teach without any previous training or training in their pedagogical role and teaching practices. Their posts covered all academic progression levels and during their tenure they undertook non-academic duties and administrative positions. Their educational journey began and ended in the 1950s-1980s, while their professional career was partly or exclusively linked to the university. The sample was selected using the logic of theoretical sampling, which is a sampling process that serves the logic of discovery and the generation of new ideas (Dey, 1999 as cited in Tsiolis, 2014, p. 129). Unlike the quantitative approach, the aim here was not to generalise from a sample to the population. After all, sampling in qualitative research is mainly aimed at information-rich cases, i.e. cases that "lend themselves to in-depth study" and from which "one can learn a great deal about issues central to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). The sample size depended on "what we wanted to know, why we wanted to know it, how the findings would be used, and the resources (including time) available to the study" (Marshall, 1996). The determination of the sample size was not exclusively determined prior to conducting the research, but evolved and was adjusted based on the findings of the research. Following the principle of inductive reasoning, we processed the narrative biographical interview within our conceptual and theoretical framework (P. Bourdieu), which we transformed and extended based on the processing of the data generated. Utilizing the principle of multilevel analysis we focused on the thematic, structural/morphological levels as well as on the level of dialogical analysis and the interaction between the narrators and the interviewer. The process of hermeneutic approach and analysis of the biographical texts was based on the principle of "case reconstruction", "case reconstruction" (Fallrekonstruktion), and the logic of the abductive process (abductive procedure) (Schütze, 1978; Oevermann et al., 1980; Rosenthal, 2005; Tsiolis, 2006/2013/2014; Kotter, 2008). The results of the research showed that social and cultural capital, historical and educational context, and the university context are critical factors in the formation and practice of the academic profession.

Results of the Research

In terms of faculty members' perceptions of the influence of their life stories in shaping the way they teach, it appears that social and cultural capital, historical and educational context, and the university context are critical factors in the formation and practice of the academic profession. Analyzing the discourse of the informants, the main trend recorded leads to the finding that the narratives that emerged in response to the specific questions served as an opportunity to reveal the unique way of subjectifying the objectified structures, the intervention of the acting ego of the informants on the structures, and the way they construct their biographical coherence, exploiting ruptures and discontinuities as elements that build decision making. Through their trajectory, we traced the interaction of the scientific capital they have incorporated with external structures, developing their practices. This capital is a particular kind of symbolic capital, founded on acts of knowledge and recognition by all the peer competitors within the scientific field in which they are involved (Bourdieu, 2007a, p. 130). In relation to the first research question, it can be argued that the importance that narrators attach to the narrative account of their educational journey varies significantly as their perspective is dramatically influenced by the cultural capital they carry at the critical moment they encounter at the beginning

of their educational journey:

I come from a refugee family [...] they mainly had a hope for their children... To learn letters [...] I wanted to learn letters, I wanted, if I could succeed somewhere, it would be like a vindication of these people. As a memorial, so to speak, of these people. That was it for me. S1

It is indeed a school that literally marked me, because among the teachers from about 1965, when I entered this school, until 1971 when I finished, there were people who influenced me very much in my life decisions ... I mean this school has been finished by a lot of people who are professors at the University of Patras today and at other universities. S2

I was born in 1953 in Corfu, a provincial town of 30,000 inhabitants, the aesthetics of the place helped a lot and we didn't seem to be missing anything. We had a solid school, we had good teachers, some of whom were strict, others were not, it went on painlessly, I would say that we attended without having to report any particular problems. S3

Essentially, the way the narrators articulate and transform inclinations into early academic choices stems from the sum of their cultural capital and the social representations of the time. In the implicit version of these influences, high educational capital is linked to political capital and the actions of its agents against the establishment:

...when we were making the computer form it had a..., at the beginning it said the forms that we had to submit and within the forms it also said "certificate of social background"... Well, in the summer when we were doing tutoring the pressure and the fatigue, that is, we did 6 hours of tutoring and another 6 hours of studying... I say I'm going to leave, since they won't give me a certificate anyway. S2

I was probably the best in the class, but it was the time now when different influences were starting to appear in our teachers, in our school teachers. Probably some people came in who were influenced by the political beliefs of our villages and who didn't have me much in, so... In the meantime there had been a dictatorship, in the school things had become very much sharper. We had a miserable philologist... he was with the Junta... And he chased me, he cursed me at school, he said "where are you going to take your exams?" And I would take my bag and leave the classroom. S2

The difficulties they face and their interaction with their professors intertwine for them the importance of the University of Patras as a station of development in the formation of their personality. This value will later be transformed into the performative responsibility that they themselves feel to bear in terms of their formative influence as academic functionaries:

For me, do you remember what I told you? How did I get started? What were my first positives? It's that because they were young professors coming in, in the first few years, I experienced a very warm, professor-student relationship. I wanted that thing to continue, I wanted to do that myself. And that's what characterized my philosophy of education... S1

Primary social capital was essentially the impetus for the structuring of scientific capital, while political-economic conditions reinforced and influenced the social constitution of the narrators, which in this case echoes the scientist being formed at the time. "Appetitus, libido scientifica, illusio, belief not only in the stakes, but also in the game itself, in the fact that the game is worth playing" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 119) seems to activate the newcomers in a constant struggle to defend their position:

But during this period, at least the period when I came to Patras in 1971 and until several years later, that is, the first years after the dictatorship, there was a strong student movement, I insist, which was also aware of the social demands. They knew why they were here, they knew what they could do, what they had to do, but there was a unifying attitude which was then based on very specific demands: Better studies, I mean for the inner university, democracy within the university, that is, the possibility of electing our representatives ... And the consciousness was that we could contribute to this thing and that's why we wanted good studies ... because this was a national demand, but here was also a new university and we wanted, a big university, to contribute and one day to consider that we finished a big university. S1

The initial social capital invented through the family was also what seems to be defined as the correct constitutive norm in the structuring of the academic man:

So we were all there, maybe we were there uncritically because we were told that you are going to study, we had no other thing in mind but to be good students, we did our resistance, whatever everyone did, politically, and we also fell into a city under development, which was Patras at the time because everyone had come from a different culture. But these things over the years that we lived through, let's say, the period of the de-industrialization of the universities slowly, the period of de-industrialization, which was very important for Patras—it started from here, the role of trade unionism—the workers' trade unionism and later the student trade unionism... You have to study these things, you have to observe them... because there were no written things either, to say I'll take from this book... S3

The political context is exploited to unfold their social self, but students remain focused, despite any disagreements, on the relationship with the university field and are driven to build their scholarly capital more efficiently:

We, our generation, were not so critical, because we had mediocre teachers, maybe even bad ones, so to speak, we were not critical at all. We took what happened to come to us from the very good ones and went with it. It was a dowry what we got in fundamental knowledge. We fragmented the fundamental knowledge. If you had good fundamental knowledge you had no reason to train with this system for life. To modernize, of course, that's what is desirable. ...So we had our deficiencies, all of them, from primary school, we had the Junta in the middle, we had these weak but we also had strong teachers, and with this patchwork I think we were very well set up. But no one is very good at everything...So we were sucking up and copying characters. That played a big role too. S3

Through a brief account of the narrators' educational journey, the ways in which they incorporated the resources of their cultural capital and transformed them into ways of structuring, strategies for acquiring their scientific capital and, at the same time, practices for practicing their teaching work are revealed to us. Through their primary habitus they will come into contact with the educational process and will essentially seek out those teachers, professors, academics who will be the models for the constitution of their own teaching practice. The way in which they will choose, embed those from whom they have learned and the corresponding teaching practices, transforming them into their own, are through the unique characteristics of their own cultural capital:

An important element in the structuring of my pedagogical practice, a point I raise as very important, is my attempt to integrate into my pedagogical practice at the basis of my pedagogical practice—interaction and communication... The interaction and communication and directed learning can work piece is a model of work that I have assimilated from my studies during my master's degree ... But I also took input from my teachers, both in primary and secondary school... bringing back memories of teachers and professors who were more in the context of reinforcing and empowering children who understood that they needed it, and it seems that this embodied memory has been transformed into my own movement in the auditorium among my students... Another very important element that I bring and have incorporated in my pedagogical practice has to do with the element of collective participation in the production of knowledge, it has to do with the way that together with the rest of the children in my childhood, we interacted and were present in society and in the production process not only in the society of children but also in the society of adults. So I am referring to the experiential experience, the experiential knowledge, as it came. S2

I liked teaching very much because it was a thing I wanted to give. And maybe I was doing it artificially... I wouldn't want a teacher who would tell me the differential equations of space and then leave. I wanted interaction, I wanted fermentation, because, well, now, dialectics was the be-all and end-all for me, right? So you can't put up barriers, that is. Besides, science has no bulkheads. Everything has to be open. And so the teacher has to be open and the student has to be open. S3

Overall, what we would dare to define as common ground in our informants' narratives is that the driving force structuring their practices lies in the relationship between knowledge, as socially defined within the early

social fields, which helps to determine their choices and preferences. Their professional itinerary within the university field is motivated by their need to remain within it, enhancing their scientific capital.

Following the main narrative phase within the biographical narrative interview and within the side narratives, we asked the informants to talk to us about the influence, if any, that the university field has on their academic career. The focus of their narratives is linked to the paradoxical fact of the lack of importance that the university field seems (through the informants' narratives) to give to the teaching work of professors (Solomou, Asimaki, Tsiolis, & Ravanis, 2016). A phenomenon which the informants, despite the fact that they do not agree, tacitly accept by submitting to the symbolic power of the university field that imposes it since it presupposes the accumulation of scientific capital (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 238; 2007b, p. 128):

Whereas if the strong pillar for judging faculty members and for their development was their teaching work, "bring me the books you've worked on, bring me exams to look at, tell me what your failure grade is." Here we have reached the point where if a teacher has a failure grade above 80% he is considered good and strict and the one who has below 80% is considered a joke when the exact opposite should be the case. Only if you fail as a professor can you have, say, a 90% failure rate in the exams, it means that the students did not understand something. They can't all be idiots or bricks or lazy. In other words, it has translated the teaching task into a burden, a burden, which is the main malady in the university today. S1

The first job of the University is teaching. The second is research. But many do not deign to go to class. They send their assistants. And this is not valued by anyone. Whoever the factions want to develop, does not take a class, has no class, has no homework. And vice versa. And vice versa. So this part, the basic part, of teaching is based on patriotism, my value system and what I have assimilated. It's personal taste that you can have and no one else is involved. For what reasons? Everyone for their own reasons. I mean, I didn't go to denounce the A level teacher who is always absent and never goes to class and does a lesson in the second year and my kids come to me in the third year to do my lesson but that has a prerequisite of the second year. Nothing. I never went to report him because he was going to vote for my advancement. I could have opened more wars, I already had enough. S2

The degree of heteronomy that manifests itself in the direct expression of external problems—mainly political—within the scientific field creates conditions of contingency and high risk for the academic project (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 26):

[...] Reforms upon reforms create disruptive processes, such as those of occupations or strikes by teachers, so that there is fragmented communication between teachers and their students and there is no advantage of a continuity in the relationship, which makes it difficult to relate, to get to know each other, to talk and to have that openness that allows interaction. That is to say, there are constraints exercised by the same governmental process within the university as the laws, the institutions, the institutional framework is not restored in practice for a long period of time, such that it allows the structuring of relationships, the evolution of the course and the study on which the new will be built... S2

Male domination within the university field imposes its dispositions and opposes acts of recognition and development of women faculty members who are socially, scientifically, and professionally constituted within male-dominated scientific and professional fields:

There were difficulties for sure. And I had a dual role, not only as a faculty member but also as a woman. Funny thing [...] I had to be more than more than twice as qualified each time to touch each tier [...]. And which, don't get me wrong, I was getting paid, especially. The least. They all shared it and I got nothing. That is, I did my work on peanuts [...] I liked my science very much [...] But I knew that it was a male-dominated field that whenever you entered, the whenever I refer to conferences, to new meetings, you had to take all eyes off the controversial points and focus on the charismatic way in which you make a presentation, your aesthetics, the newness that you bring and you had to. [...] You had to survive with such terminology... S3

The even partial temporal and qualitative disruption of the symbolic capital that their research dimension carries, combined with the high stakes of administrative positions, causes contingency in the structure of the correlation of forces within the field:

The rector ship has worked dramatically in terms of research work. Four years that I was upstairs [meaning the deanery building], I would come in about an hour in the afternoon. This laboratory is the largest in the Electrical Engineering Department, it was about to be dismantled. The sacrifice was too great. Very great, and along with me were suffering graduate students that I was supervising. Along with me, the other faculty members were almost dissolved because it was a great sacrifice at the research level. A great sacrifice. So there's no way now to go up there if you want to do something, de facto, and have your lab in full ... there's no way. And people have to take that into account. Do you know what it's like to go four years without being able to sit down and write a paper? Do you know what that means? C1

The “thorough occupation” of an administrative position with a high stake for the scientific substance only makes sense as a strategy to improve pedagogical practice. Through this sense of “belonging” to the academic field of the Greek university in question, the narrator justifies his rectorial term as the explicit version of an endeavour where, despite mistakes and failures, it is defined as scientific loyalty, as a selfless interest, and as an interest in selflessness (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 35), since “...to exist scientifically means to have something extra, according to the perceptual categories in force in the field, namely for colleagues (to have contributed something). It means to be (positively) distinguished by some distinguished contribution” (Bourdieu, 2007a, p. 129):

The way you now see, the perspective you see students is, you are obliged to see them differently. You have to see them all, you have to see them not only from the educational and research side, you have to see them from the personal and from the ideological and from the political side... But this moving to another position, viewing, then it works on the teacher who comes back extremely additive... The experiences are tremendous and I think they help a person if he wants to take advantage of them to become better at the level and management of people... Obviously I don't regret it, but not only do I not regret it, and after an amazing life experience, which enabled me to say I tried to do something too, I know where I failed, however I didn't stand by. I tried for the University, to which I grew up, so to speak, and I owe everything, I tried to do something, with whatever strength I had, okay, I know where I failed... but I tried without self-interest. S1

The issue of the increase in the enrolment rate in recent years and the stagnation of resigned students as well as the transformation of teaching work into a pastime are critical parameters as to the performativity of the academic profession:

First of all, there are reasons for this. One reason is that we have many more students than we can train. This is indeed a burden. We have students that the social reality, even though they succeed at university and even with very high performance, pushes them to drop out. Let us say a mistake on the part of students is that, because it is not only on the part of the teaching staff, when you are resigned you have to get up and leave. You don't have to burden yourself and the institution... The university cannot be a theatre of conflict between resigned people etc. But the main issue is that the importance of the educational work has been very much downgraded. Let's say in faculty development, when there is a faculty development, rarely will the electoral college ask, “son, what are you teaching? How many students do you have? What dissertations have you done? What educational accomplishments?” They will only ask how many papers you have, how many citations you have? So it has shifted the educational work as a pastime and we have to deal with the research work, with our funding which is not there to bring in money, and the educational work is a burden and it weighs on us even more when we also have ten times more students than we can educate. This is a pathogenesis in the university, a big one. S1

Evaluation as a constitutive norm of scientific and professional life, embedded in the university's organizational chart, can rewrite the value of educational work in the academic field:

The factors, in relation to progression through the ranks, function in relation to the importance, of teaching and pedagogical practice in a completely deconstructive and invalidating way. And the nice thing is that this is generally diagnosed, as far as I know because I haven't read them all, by the external evaluations of departments. It tells you guys your educational work you can tell us, your research work we see on google citations, ISI etc. Your educational work guys. How about with a lot of students etc.? There is one negative comment from the external evaluators. I think this is very interesting with some colleagues we are still discussing—still, but it will be a big change that may bring conflicts the issue of evaluation of educational work to be put in the university by-laws. To have an institutional role. S2

The academic field through the informants' statements is outlined as a space of conflict between peers mainly at the level of different perceptions regarding the research and teaching dimension of their work:

The other position is what research are we going to do too? For whom will we do the research and why will we do the research.... on the one hand I believe and it is my deep conviction that education can only be student-centered, and on the other hand I believe that of course we need extroversion in research, of course our comparisons will be made with large research groups abroad, but our aim should be to be able to solve problems in Greek society and industry. We have not yet managed to do that... the university has not managed to get very close to society, I mean now the technological side of the university. And this is first of all due to a perception that existed in many people, that I don't want to get into trouble, I have my own laboratory, etc., that I don't want to sit around and get into trouble, stories, and even in the situation that Greek industry is in, that it was in... This is where the other issue comes in. Everyone's research activity makes sense not only for what we have said, but also how it comes back to education. That is, your scientific improvement must return to education, that is, the better you become, the better you must enrich your course, etc. And you have to find ways to do it. S1

The informants' responses move retrospectively by briefly describing those elements of their competitive course and the appreciation of their work by a significant degree of colleagues. After all, to be established within a field, one must establish discourses within it, to triumph within it, one must act so that arguments, proofs, and rejections triumph within it (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 35).

Concluding Remarks

In this paper we have studied, through the biographical accounts of the professors of the University of Patras, modern Greek education in the thirty years 1950-1980 as a lived experience and its biographical significance in the context of the exercise of their academic role. We tried to capture the biographical transformations and educational practices of our narrators through the investigation of their views on the impact of their life stories on the way they teach, as well as their perceptions of the influence of the university field on the exercise of their academic profession. In our research, which was conducted through the biographical narrative approach and pursuing the sociological significance of the meaning of our informants' practice in relation to the central role it plays in their development, two disciplinary levels were crucial: on the one hand, the internal level, which refers to the production of meaning from the perspective of those who produce and experience it ("from within"), and on the other hand, the external level, which refers to the analysis of meaning from the perspective of the researcher who writes and examines it ("from outside"). In this sense we are called upon to formulate, if not reconcile, "the truth that one may call subjective and the truth that one calls objective" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 178). Their biographies were constructed around their academic careers and divided into three central sections:

- the period of the early years of life and education, where some of the structural factors of the associations, of the embedded history that led to the choice of educational and professional path within the academic field, emerge in the stock of biographical experiences,

- university attendance, which traces the difficulties of initiation into scientific practice, the course of construction of the informants' scientific capital and academic habitus within and through the "social formation" of the newly established University of Patras,
- the professional development of the informants and the emergence of the principles governing their scientific practices through the tracing of essentially the system of conscious and non-conscious, transposed generative predispositions as generalized and embedded at a practical level.

Bourdieu urges us to resist the theoretical tendency to abstract human practices from the concrete contexts in which they take place. In order to overcome the pedantic traps of idealism, formalism, and transcendentalism, it is necessary to be aware of the damaging consequences of "ignorance of the social conditions of production and circulation" (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 54). Only to the extent that we take into account the relationally constituted and socially constructed contexts on which every day practices depend is it possible to understand the relative determinacy that pervades all modes of human action.

The critical perceptions of our narrators that seem to emerge through narratives about the University field echoing the discourse that exists in the international scientific community relate to the fact that:

(i) The power relations between the occupants of the university field, the stakes, the benefits, the struggles, and the distribution of the two types of capital (extra-academic and scientific) have a decisive impact on the practice of the academic profession (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 86; 2007a, p. 83).

(ii) The degree of heteronomy that manifests itself in the direct expression of external problems—mainly political—within the scientific field creates conditions of contingency and high risk for the academic project (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 26).

(iii) The strategies that enhance the degree of autonomy of the field, such as that of extroversion of the research, the research project, the enhancement of the teaching process, and the evaluation of academic practices, constitute those constitutive rules that provide the necessary "freedom" for the scientific field to develop its own necessity, its own logic, its own law (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 112).

The University as a historical subject changes its content, evolves and transforms in the historical course of time complemented by the history of its subjects. The contemporary narratives and policies in the field of higher education that favor the professionalization of studies, their shrinking in time in the context of economic competitiveness, and the focus on the acquisition of directly consumable knowledge, seem more contingent and dangerous for the scientific constitution than the deficits and the turbulent political, social, and educational context of their own years of educational and academic career. It is through struggles within the field, as revealed by informants' accounts, that the healthy aspects of conflict can be traced that echo issues of assessment to improve the department, faculty, teaching, and research practices and thus the culture of the university (Waller, 2004, pp. 9-11). In fact, the conditions of possibility of the scientific subject and those of its subject are one and the same. And this is nowhere else seen with such or such clarity than when research acquires as its object the scientific field itself, i.e. the true subject of scientific knowledge (Bourdieu, 2006, pp. 320-321). Usually in relation to other qualitative research methods, the most commonly cited weakness of case studies is that their results do not allow for scientific generalizations and that strong conclusions cannot be supported from a case study alone or facilitate the transferability of practice from one context to another (Yin, 1984). However, in this type of research, generalization is not a central issue. The relevance of a case study is more important than its ability to generalize. When a case study is conducted both systematically and critically and aims to improve understanding, then it is relevant, and any publication of its findings extends or expands

the boundaries of existing knowledge of the subject area, then it is a valid form of research. Nisbet and Watt (1984) argue that case studies can be useful for identifying unique features that may otherwise be lost in larger-scale data and that these unique aspects may in fact be the key to understanding the situation. According to Bourdieu's (1991, p. 131) original view, in biographical research, the story of a life is a "social artifact", since the researcher and the subject of the research/informant accept, due to "common interest", the meaning-making of the narrative, thus speaking of a "biographical illusion". It is also a fact that in a field study in which biographical narrative interviewing is utilized, data collection can be particularly difficult when interviews with "informants" are aimed at recalling events that occurred several years earlier. This raises both the problem of memory and the problem of biographical illusion (Halbwachs, 1994). These views have substantially helped in the methodological self-reflection of biographical research while enabling researchers who adopt the principles of biographical research reconstruction to reflect in principle on the process of biographical narrative interviewing and the autobiographical talk articulated within it. Taking into account the above concerns as they emerge in the scientific debate in relation to the subjectivity of narrative data, we proceeded, before and after the collection and processing stage, to the bibliographical study of issues related to the historical political, educational, and social context of the subjects during the period of the events narrated. After all, as Giddens argues, social structures are both the condition and the result of people's everyday activities and therefore, one cannot exist without the other. Narratives are understood and analysed as polyphonic and multimodal texts. This means that they do not have the character of a reproduction and a linear and coherent narrative of life and thus attempt to contribute to the revision rather than the consolidation of a biographical self-description or identity (Tsiolis & Siouti, 2013, pp. 423-425).

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