

THE INTEGRATION OF EUROPEAN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN THE GREEK EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Katerina Papaioannou

University of Patras, GREECE, papaioannou.kat@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to examine the integration of intercultural education in the context of the European Union, and to explore through major Treaties and Resolutions the creation of a social, economic, political and educational strategy within a general framework, in order to avoid the exclusion of social groups entering the European Union from third countries. Also, the aim of this study is to focus on the Greek area and on the strategies for the integration of the European Union proposals into the national educational system in order to assimilate and develop respect and a spirit of cooperation among the student population, as well as on the role of the teacher in the classroom.

In this context, an analysis is presented on Greece and the strategies for the integration of the European Union proposals into the national educational system in order to assimilate and develop respect and a spirit of cooperation among the student population through laws, decrees and decisions, as well as the role of the teacher in the classroom. The present study aims to draw conclusions which are derived from the attitude of the European Union in combination with the legislative framework of Greece in the field of intercultural policy.

Keywords: Education, Policy, European Union, Greece, Primary education.

1 INTRODUCTION

The staggering changes that took place in all areas of life in the twentieth century with the rapid development of technology and scientific knowledge caused social transformations that confronted the ideological basis on which nation-state building had been based, thus defining a new era. The trend towards globalization that prevailed on the international scene also affected the structure of nation-states within them, which gradually began to change because of the complexity that began to characterize societies. These raised the issue of diversity, both as a characteristic of the modern era and as an urgent need to recognize, protect and preserve the cultural identities that constituted modern societies.

In this context, and in the effort to manage diversity, the education sector has become a dominant social component as it is a key space for the formation of cultural identities. Intercultural education emerged in the school education process as states were becoming multicultural entities. National educational traditions began to be transformed to reflect the multicultural pluralism of 21st century European societies. Intercultural education was necessary in order to respond to the need for mobility of the European family. However, the whole new project had to be adapted to the specific characteristics of each State, rather than being applied as a standard method in all European States. Of particular interest is the way in which the management of multiculturalism in the field of education is carried out, as well as the relevant policies that have been developed in the European Union and their integration in the Greek educational system.

2 INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Until 1990, education was not at the heart of European Community policy and was the exclusive responsibility of national governments. After 2000, with the Lisbon Treaty, education became a key element in fulfilling the objectives of the European Union in order to achieve the Union's broader objective of 'peoples united in diversity'. However, even before that, the field of education had begun to attract the attention of the Community, with institutional texts referring to education issues.

The first institutional text worth looking at is the Single European Act (1986) which ushered in a new era. Although the Single European Act did not directly refer to education and culture, it can be described as a major milestone for educational issues, among others, as it laid the foundations for the free movement of persons, services and capital between Member States. The Single European Act aimed to achieve European integration through the abolition of physical borders, i.e. controls on the movement of citizens, the abolition of technical borders, i.e. the free establishment of persons exercising freely chosen professions, the mutual recognition of qualifications, etc. and through the abolition of tax frontiers, such as the harmonization of certain tax rates). In this context, and with the ultimate aim of eliminating obstacles to the free movement of persons, services and capital between Member States, specific institutional measures have been taken (Single European Act, No L 169/2, 29.06.87).

Particularly important was the Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Education of 24 May 1988 (88/177/02) on the European dimension in education and the launching of exchange programmes such as Erasmus etc. This Resolution set specific objectives such as preparing young people for active participation in the economic and social development of the Community, making them aware of the benefits of European integration, exploring their historical, cultural, economic and social knowledge of the Community and raising their awareness of the importance of cooperation between Member States and with third countries. The main characteristic of the Resolution was Eurocentrism, while the ultimate goal was to create a European identity which had to be reinforced for future generations. The main objectives of this Resolution were to strengthen the European dimension in education and this was to be achieved through a series of coordinated measures to prepare young people for active participation in the economic and social development of the Community, to make them aware of the advantages of European integration, to broaden their historical, cultural, economic and social knowledge of the Community and to raise their awareness of the European dimension. The Member States would ensure, *inter alia*, the training of teachers through continuous training, the provision of appropriate pedagogical material, the promotion of measures to stimulate contacts between pupils and teachers in the Member States, the organization of conferences and seminars to introduce the European dimension in education, etc., while the European Community would make every effort to support the actions of the Member States (Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Education Meeting within the Council on the European dimension in Education, 88/C177/02, 06.07.88).

In the course of unification it became clear that in order to complete the prospect of a united Europe it was necessary, beyond the economic and monetary union and the convergence of national economies, to develop a sense of a common destination among the citizens of the Union themselves. Thus in 1992 the Maastricht Treaty was signed, which was to attempt for the first time to create a European citizenship and a European cultural identity based on the harmonious coexistence and cooperation of people from different national, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The Maastricht Treaty reinforced the focus on education policy and introduced new competences for the Community in the field of education. For the first time, a legal framework was created to allow the Community to propose cooperation actions in the field of education. It is worth recalling Article 126 of the Treaty, which dealt with education, Article 127, which dealt with vocational training, and Article 128, which dealt with culture. With these articles, the Community is attempting to develop the national and European dimension in the field of education and culture, while fully respecting the autonomy and competence of the Member States to manage issues relating to the organization of the education system and cultural and linguistic diversity. In essence, it seeks to create new models of coexistence through the free and equal interaction of all the civilizations that exist in a multicultural society. In the field of education, it was still a national responsibility to design and implement education policies, while at the same time cooperation and interaction should be developed by the Member States. This would be achieved through the development of intercultural education, the mobility of students and teachers, the development of cooperation between educational institutions, the exchange of information, knowledge of European languages and the development of distance learning. The Maastricht Treaty sought to promote coexistence and cooperation between the peoples of Europe through their cultural diversity (Treaty on European Union, 92/C191/01, 29.07.92).

It is then worth mentioning the Treaty of Amsterdam, which effectively ratified the importance and recognition that the education and training sector had acquired under the Treaty on European Union. However, it is

worth noting that Article 2 of the Treaty of Amsterdam added the following paragraph to the preamble of the EC Treaty, after the eighth paragraph: 'Determined to promote the development of the highest possible level of knowledge for their peoples through broad access to education and through its continuous updating'. The significance of the preambular paragraph could be found in two points. Firstly, it recognized the prospect and validated the process of building a 'Europe of knowledge' and secondly, it legitimized 'lifelong education and training' as a fundamental dimension of Community policy, which was absent from the Maastricht Treaty. This addition influenced subsequent Commission texts referring to the guidelines for Community education policy.

Also after the Maastricht Treaty, a number of key Commission documents were adopted which highlighted the crucial role that education and training were to play in the pursuit of economic growth and social cohesion in the Community. One such document was the White Paper on the economy 'Growth, Competitiveness, Employment', which was adopted by the Commission in 1994 (White Paper, Growth, Competitiveness, Employment, The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century, Brussels, 1994). According to the White Paper, training is the "catalyst for a changing society" and "adapting education and training systems is expected to solve the problems of business competitiveness, the employment crisis and the tragedy of social exclusion". The book underlines the importance of education and training for achieving economic and social cohesion in the Community and links the level of knowledge acquisition to unemployment and social exclusion. It considers it necessary to rethink the role of education and training and their relationship and links with economic and social activities, and proposes a reform of education and training systems. In its proposals for action by the Member States and the Commission, it points to (a) the development of the European dimension of education, (b) the introduction of measures to link training systems to changes in the world of work and (c) support for lifelong education and training. It is also worth noting that in the same year, an 'Opinion adopted by the Commission on the Green Paper on the European dimension of education'(Opinion on the Green Paper on the European dimension of education, 1994) specified a number of specific objectives such as contributing to the creation of a European citizenship, providing opportunities to improve the quality of education and preparing young people for better social and professional integration.

Next, the "Action Programme 2000"(Agenda 2000, vol I and II, COM/97/2000, Brussels, 15/07/1997) was an important document which set out the guidelines and perspectives for the promotion of European integration and the development of the Union's policies in the light of the enlarged Union. Education and training occupied a special place in Agenda 2000, as they were one of the four areas to which the Community's internal policies were to be directed. The four areas were: (a) sustainable development and employment, (b) the promotion of knowledge policies, (c) the modernization of employment systems and (d) the improvement of living conditions. According to the Commission, "technological research, innovation, education and training, or knowledge policies, were essential investments and became crucial for Europe's future".

In 2008, the Commission, in an effort to better address the challenges posed by migration in the field of education, adopted the Green Paper "Migration and mobility: Challenges and opportunities for education systems in the European Union", calling on Member States to make combined efforts to prevent and combat marginalization, intolerance and racism, while maintaining a framework of equal opportunities for all. This Green Paper refers to the issue of education policy for children from migrant families and the role of the European Union in this matter.¹ The number of children from immigrant families who were facing linguistic and cultural differences and were in a weaker socio-economic position was increasing. Education systems had to continue to provide high quality and equitable education while meeting the needs of a diverse population. The potential failure of systems to meet these challenges would lead to deeper social differences, cultural segregation and inter-ethnic conflict. The challenges for education were many as more mother tongues, cultural perspectives, adapting teaching skills and building connections between migrants and the community had to be covered.

The above was reinforced by the funding of a large number of educational programmes by the European Union, which aimed at strengthening intercultural dialogue, intercultural training of teachers, student and educational mobility and education for democracy and human rights. In 1997 the Commission adopted the 'Action Programme 2000' (Agenda 2000, vol I and II, COM/97/2000, Brussels, 15/07/1997), which set out the guidelines and perspectives for promoting European integration and developing the Union's policies in the context of an enlarged Union. Education and training had a special place in Agenda 2000 as one of the four areas to which the Community's internal policies should be directed. The four areas were: (a) sustainable

¹ In this Green Paper, the term 'children of migrant families' referred to all persons living in a Member State of the European Union other than the one in which they were born. That is to say, it included citizens of the European Union as well as third-country nationals.

development and employment, (b) the promotion of knowledge policies, (c) the modernization of employment systems and (d) the improvement of living conditions. According to the Commission, 'technological research, innovation, education and training, or knowledge policies, were essential investments and were becoming crucial to Europe's future'.

The first framework programme "Culture 2000" for the four-year period 2000-2004, among other things, encouraged transnational cooperation and promoted cultural diversity and the common identity of the peoples of the EU. In the next period, the "Culture"(Decision No 508/2000/EC of 14 February 2000 establishing the Culture 2000 programme), "Lifelong education and training (2007-2013)"(Decision No 1720/2006/EC of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning), "Youth Action Programme 2000-2006" (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Ac11603>) and "Youth in action 2007-2013"(<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Ac11080>) programmes are being implemented to improve non-formal education for people aged 13-30 years with a view to their active participation in the European world, as well as to strengthen the social cohesion of the Union. At the same time, the "European Agenda for Culture 2007-2013" mainly promoted transnational mobility of cultural actors, artistic and cultural works and products, intercultural dialogue and exchanges. One of its objectives was the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, for the promotion of which it was proposed that all EU member states implement a Lifelong Learning Programme consisting of four sub-programmes, Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig for all levels of education. The Comenius programme addressed the teaching and learning needs of pre-school and school education, up to the level of postgraduate and doctoral studies, as well as the institutions and organizations responsible for providing such education. Its aim was to increase the quality of school education by encouraging transnational cooperation through the funding of school activities and transnational mobility partnerships for pupils and teaching staff, together with the improvement of the professional qualifications of people working in the education sector. It also contributed to the acquisition by young people of intercultural awareness, awareness of the diversity and difference of European cultures. Finally, a key concern of the programme was also the acquisition of knowledge and skills that were considered necessary both for the personal development of the students and for their future employment, so that they could become active citizens in the near future (e.g. learning languages from the countries of origin for the children of immigrants). Erasmus was then targeted at higher education, with the main objective of increasing the mobility of students and teaching staff across Europe. It also aimed to recognize qualifications across Europe, to increase cooperation between higher education institutions within the EU and to develop innovative content for lifelong learning and intercultural education. At the same time, the "Leonardo Da Vinci programme"(Decision 1999/382/EC of 26 April 1999 establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme Leonardo da Vinci) was revived, focusing on the teaching and learning needs of vocational education and training taking place outside higher education but in related organizations and educational institutions. The aim of the programme was to provide young people with experience in enterprises, to increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training and the mobility of employers and individuals within the Member States of the European Union. The Grundtvig action then addressed the teaching and learning needs of all non-vocational forms of adult education with a focus on lifelong learning. The aim was to respond to the educational challenge of Europe's adult population and to provide solutions for adult people both for improving their knowledge and skills and for training opportunities.

In conclusion, the European Union's strategic objectives were to improve the quality and efficiency of education systems, to improve access to education and training for all and to open up education and training to the wider world. More generally, Europe has entered a debate about its future. EU leaders are well aware that if they want to build a stronger Europe, policies on youth, culture, education and training must play an important role in the European project. Building the Europe of the future requires the support and involvement of young people. More attention must be paid to education, training and culture to enable them to develop their full potential to support the European project. More generally, it is necessary to strengthen the education and culture dimension within the Union in order to address the many challenges facing Europe today.

3 THE INTRODUCTION OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE GREEK EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Greece, as a country fully aligned with the policy of the European Union, tried to give a new dimension to its educational system and to introduce the European dimension in education as well as to streamline its educational system in order to be able to respond to the needs of a new era characterized by the presence of a large percentage of immigrants in the country. Greece has gradually become a host country for immigrants since the early 1990s at a pace that has changed the demographic composition of the country. In this context, Greek governments were forced to take specific educational measures that would give a

European and intercultural dimension to education. Although the effort to address the multicultural and multilingual situation began to be felt from the mid-1970s, a key point was the passing of Law 2413/96 entitled 'Greek education abroad, intercultural education and other provisions' (Law No 2413/1996, Government Gazette No 124/A/17-06-1996).

The period before the adoption of Law 2413/96 could be divided into two sub-periods, the period from 1970 to 1980 and the period from 1980 to 1995. In the first sub-period, expatriate and foreign students were treated with special "leniency" and by a relative reduction of requirements especially in language courses during the first and second year of study. In other words, there may well be talk of an attitude of 'positive discrimination' towards them. However, with the beginning of the 1980s, Greek educational policy entered a new second phase. In a sense, the logic of reducing requirements was complemented by the logic of taking compensatory measures, and in 1980 a Ministerial Decision (Ministerial Decision Φ 818-2/Z/4139/20.10.80) inaugurated the institution of Reception Classes and in 1983 both Reception Classes and the new institution of Tutorial Departments were legislated (Law 1404/83, Art. 45.). The aim of the Reception Classes and the Tutorial Departments was the smooth adaptation to the educational system of the country of returning students, children of Greek immigrants (Law 1404/83, Art. 45) or children of repatriated Greeks (Law 1894/90, Art. 2). The aim of the above regulations was the adaptation of the students to the Greek educational system through the provision of special assistance within the framework of the Reception Classes and the Tutorial Departments.

An overall evaluation of the institutional framework and educational practice up to the early 1990s reveals that both the institutional framework and the educational practice are far from the spirit of the intercultural approach. The numerous deadlocks led in the first half of the 1990s to an intense reflection which led to the introduction of new measures. Law 2413/96 defined the purpose of intercultural education for returning and foreign students and established the establishment of Intercultural Education Schools. Article 34 of the Law stipulated that: "The purpose of intercultural education is the organization and operation of primary and secondary school units for the provision of education to young people with educational, social, cultural or educational particularities". Also, according to Article 35 of the same Law, "Schools of intercultural education are established by a joint decision of the Ministers of National Education and Religious Affairs and Finance and other public schools may be converted into public schools of intercultural education. The establishment of intercultural education schools by local government bodies, ecclesiastical institutions and other charitable associations of a non-profit nature may also be approved. These schools may be subsidized by the Private Education Account (Law 2413, Art. 35.). However, it is worth noting that the spirit behind this law operates close to an assimilationist model as it is addressed exclusively to students with a "language deficit", despite the fact that in some places it recognizes the right - at least at a theoretical level - to be taught their mother tongue and culture. Moreover, in this Law, when the Greek State speaks of intercultural education, it refers only to the needs of different pupils, while it does not consider, at least initially, that the intercultural approach to education should be addressed to all pupils. Thus, one can easily conclude that the theoretical starting point of the Law, regardless of the title, is more related to the educational approaches of "assimilation" and not to intercultural education, since the intercultural approach that is called upon to deal with heterogeneity does not only concern the minority groups but equally concerns the members of the dominant group. Finally, in relation to this Law, it is worth highlighting its inconsistency with the European directives which stipulated that Intercultural Education was defined on the basis of four elements: That the majority of societies are multicultural; that each culture has its own characteristics that must be recognized and respected; that multiculturalism is a privilege under certain circumstances; and finally, that in order to make use of the privilege of multiculturalism, interaction between cultures must be ensured without the disappearance of identity of any one person. In conclusion, the Greek legal framework, at a theoretical level, guarantees the right to public education for all children aged 6-15 years, regardless of their nationality and ethnicity. It also provides for the existence of structures and institutions aimed at providing support to foreign students (Intercultural Education Schools, Reception Classes, Tutoring Departments), thus showing the school's effort to adapt to the principles of Intercultural Education. However, in practice, the criticism of it focuses on the lack of clarity in the formulation of the aims, principles and educational practices of intercultural education. A lack of transparency that carries the risk of misinterpretations or even arbitrary actions that may lead to the failure of measures or efforts to integrate immigrants with an emphasis only on intensive teaching of the Greek language.

4 CONCLUSION

The social reality, as it has evolved in recent years with the arrival of an increasingly larger population of students with different cultural backgrounds, shapes new educational, educational and social needs, as the relationship between society and education is a two-way street and multicultural classes in today's schools are a fact, from which the necessity for intercultural orientation of education arises. The role of the school, as

a basic social institution and a place of socialization for the pupil, is decisive in terms of adopting standards of behavior characterized by a lack of social discrimination, respect for diversity, acceptance of diversity and mutual understanding and cooperation. Intercultural education is therefore not a kind of special education for a specific group of pupils, but a dimension of general education which must ensure that all pupils have opportunities and possibilities for learning and social inclusion, regardless of their possible differences.

In this context, both the European Union and the Member States individually are called upon to formulate education policies that will be able to integrate and assimilate all those from third countries while minimizing the risk of their marginalization. Today's societies, which are now multicultural, must use intercultural education as a key pillar in order to ensure the well-being, respect and integration of people from third countries in the smoothest possible way.

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