The Orientation of Greek Education towards Multiculturalism

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Abstract

The recent transformation of Greece from a country of emigration to one of immigration has resulted in diversity in Greek classrooms. According to the Greek Ministry of Education, during the school year 2004-2005 there were about 140,000 foreign and repatriated Greek pupils in Greek schools out of a total of 1,500,000 pupils, i.e. about 10% of the total school population.

This paper, based on an empirical study conducted in Junior High School of Athens, (in the framework of the fieldwork I conducted for my DPhil thesis), explores the intercultural orientation of mainstream Greek education by presenting results from questionnaires and interviews with Greek teachers and Greek and migrant pupils.

These results indicate that Greek education is not yet seen as an education whose goal is the preparation of all children for life in a multicultural society. Instead, schools in Greece (at least the ones studied), are dedicated to a monocultural and monolingual philosophy even though Greece is a de facto multicultural country and this is reflected in the classrooms. Above all, the school, through ethnocentric teaching materials and national commemorative events, reflects the exclusionary construction of the Greek national identity, which defines the concept of ‘Greekness’ on the basis of religious, linguistic and genealogical criteria, rather than civic ones. Such an approach does inevitably lead to the discrimination and exclusion of those who do not fit in the above-mentioned criteria, i.e migrant pupils. Discrimination and rejection are among the factors that hinder migrant children in developing a positive identity. Schools in Greece are not sufficiently active in combating discrimination and racism, and teachers do not provide a strong enough model to combat them.

Keywords: intercultural education, linguistic diversity, language maintenance, ethnocentrism in Greek education
0. Introduction

Mass immigration into Greece has been reflected in the school population. During 2004-2005, about 140,000 migrant and repatriated Greek pupils were enrolled in Greek schools, accounting for almost 10 per cent of the overall school population (1,449,032) (IPODE 2006). Although no data are available as to the nationalities of the pupils for the school year 2004-2005, during 2002-2003 72% of the migrant pupils were from neighbouring Albania.

Table 1. Distribution of indigenous, foreign and repatriated pupils in Greece during the school year 2004-05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Number of foreign pupils</th>
<th>Number of repatriated pupils</th>
<th>Number of foreign and repatriated pupils</th>
<th>Number of indigenous, foreign and repatriated pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>9,503</td>
<td>1,580</td>
<td>11,083</td>
<td>138,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>59,334</td>
<td>8,405</td>
<td>67,739</td>
<td>638,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior-High</td>
<td>29,170</td>
<td>7,217</td>
<td>36,387</td>
<td>333,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior-High and Technical-Vocational</td>
<td>15,456</td>
<td>7,528</td>
<td>22,984</td>
<td>338,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>113,463</td>
<td>24,730</td>
<td>138,193</td>
<td>1,449,032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IPODE, 2006

Educational systems with an intercultural orientation develop language policies and organise their curriculum and instruction in such a way that the linguistic and cultural capital of migrant children and communities is strongly affirmed in all the interactions of the school. This way, the school rejects the negative attitudes about diversity that exist in the wider society while preparing migrant and indigenous pupils for life in a multicultural and democratic society (Cummins, 2000). An examination of the measures taken by the Greek state to address the issue of multiculturalism indicates that Greek education appears widely off the mark in terms of striving to reach the
intercultural pedagogic ideal of considering diversity, including linguistic diversity, as a resource.

Greece took its first institutional steps towards addressing issues relating to multicultural classrooms in 1983, as in the late 1970s and early 1980s the return of Greek migrants mainly from countries of Western Europe and the United States had started to increase. Thus, with the law 1404/1983 ‘Tutorial Classes’ and ‘Reception Classes’ were established, aiming to integrate repatriated and foreign pupils into the Greek school system by teaching them intensively the Greek language1. In 1990, reception classes were integrated within the mainstream school system and pupils were taught Greek language, history and culture. In 1994 a ministerial decision offered the possibility of the introduction of the language and culture of the pupils’ countries of origin. Despite this provision, neither the language nor the culture of the pupils’ countries of origin are offered in tutorial and reception classes (Damanakis, 1997). According to Skourtou et al. (2004), this fact indicates that teaching in these classes remains in essence oriented towards the linguistic and cultural assimilation of foreign pupils.

In 1999, new regulations were institutionalised concerning tutorial and reception classes, allowing for more flexibility and innovation in teaching schemes and curricula. However, their orientation remained the same: the intensive learning of the Greek language. The only difference from previous regulations is that Greek is now referred to as the pupils’ second language. Consequently, according to the new ministerial decision, teachers in these classes would have to be trained in teaching Greek as a second language

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1 Tutorial Classes provide a couple of hours of after-school tuition for minority children. Although the amount of tuition that pupils receive varies per school, in practice the amount of time spent in such classes (often in small groups) can vary between 3 and 10 hours per week. Pupils in Reception classes receive 5-10 hours of instruction per group. The number of hours will depend on how many years the student has attended school, how many years of remedial instruction s/he has followed and to what extent s/he is linguistically competent. Absolute beginners receive 10 hours of instruction per week. During the rest of the school day, they attend mainstream classes (Dimakos and Tasiopoulou 2003).
The same ministerial decision mentions the teaching of the pupils' first language and culture, which, however, remains at the discretion of the prefect, while the teaching of Greek is planned and regulated by the Ministry of Education (Skourtou et al., 2004). In 2003, 422 reception classes and 556 tutorial classes operated all over Greece (Skourtou et al., 2004). The increasing number of migrant pupils in Greek classrooms during the 1990s led in 1996 to the establishment of an ‘Office of Intercultural Education’ (IPODE) within the Ministry of Education, and to a law entitled ‘Greek Education abroad, Intercultural Education and other provisions’. This law represented the first official recognition by Greek authorities that different communities had specific educational needs. The Law consists of 11 chapters, of which only one refers to intercultural education in Greece, the other 10 referring to the education of the pupils in the Greek diaspora. In the law there is a general reference to the aim of intercultural education, its content and its organisational structure. More specifically, the legislators propose the establishment of ‘intercultural schools’. These are the new type of school to be attended by mostly repatriated Greeks and foreign immigrants (Damanakis, 1997; Nikolaou, 2000). Furthermore, as Nikolaou (2000) has pointed out, certain measures did not work as expected. The principle of intercultural schools, which were supposed to serve as meeting ground for national and immigrant pupils in a truly culture-enriched environment, was not attained. Although immigrant pupils enrolled in such schools, national pupils stayed away from them, fearing that such schools offered limited opportunities for learning. Eventually, these intercultural schools catered exclusively to foreign pupils and did not become the centres of cultural exchange the authorities had initially envisioned (Dimakos and Tasiopoulou, 2003).

Further legislation, put forward by Greek Ministry of Education and Religion in 1996 in collaboration with Greek Universities and financed by the European Union, supported three large educational programmes which ran between 1997-2000 and 2000-2004. These related to three specific groups of pupils: Muslim pupils in Thrace; repatriated and foreign pupils; and Rom pupils (Dimakos and Tasiopoulou, 2003). The part of the programme concerned with
repatriated and foreign pupils was taken over by the University of Athens. Actions of the programme included the development of bilingual coursebooks (mainly Greek/Albanian and Greek/Russian) and the involvement of bilingual language assistants (in Albanian and Russian) in multilingual classrooms. This programme was piloted in certain schools all over the country, but it has not yet been evaluated. As the present study found out, although certain schools had received bilingual textbook editions, teachers were not aware of their existence, and in any case had not received the necessary training on how to use them. Moreover, according to Skourtou et al. (2004), the programme for repatriated and foreign pupils did not include specific guidelines as regards the inclusion of the pupils’ mother-tongues in education.

Despite the legal measures taken by the Greek state to address the effects of immigration on schools, immigrant pupils are subject to assimilation pressures in practice, since none of the governmental measures that have been implemented encourages the maintenance of one’s ethnic identity and parental language. As a result of these assimilation pressures, the smooth integration of foreign pupils into Greek society is hindered. Therefore, although there are several migrant pupils who excel in Greek school, a large number of them shows signs of low self-esteem and experiences school failure and other school-related problems (Nikolaou, 2000).

1. The present study

In this study, undertaken for the requirements of my doctoral studies at the University of Sussex, I investigated the factors affecting language maintenance among second-generation Albanian and Egyptian migrant pupils in Athens (of an average age of 14). Using a combined quantitative and qualitative methodology, I explored the influence of three sets of variables on language maintenance, namely: a) ethnolinguistic vitality, defined by the demography, status and institutional support of each group in Greece, as well as migrant and indigenous pupils’ perceptions regarding these factors; b) migrant parents’ attitudes to language maintenance and their role in language
transmission in the home; and c) the attitudes of teachers and the institutional approaches of mainstream Greek education to linguistic and cultural diversity.

As the space here does not allow for a detailed presentation and analysis of all the results, this paper will focus on results regarding the attitudes and approaches of Greek teachers and pupils to linguistic and cultural diversity, addressing the following research questions:

- What are Greek teachers’ views on migrant pupils’ bilingualism and language maintenance?
- What are the attitudes of Greek pupils towards their migrant peers?
- To what extent does mainstream education in Greece promote interculturalism among Greek and migrant pupils?

2. Greek teachers’ attitudes and approaches to linguistic and cultural diversity

In a study by Bombas (1996) involving directors of elementary school directorates and local directors of elementary school administration offices throughout Greece, the vast majority of participants (87.5%) responded that immigrant pupils faced enormous adaptation problems in the schools they attended. Furthermore, one in three respondents believed that the presence of immigrant pupils in the classrooms delayed and negatively affected the overall educational process of the class. Similarly, in a large-scale study conducted by UNICEF (2001), 23% of teachers responded that migrant pupils face behaviour and learning problems at school.

In the present study, 18 out of 30 teachers claim that migrant pupils have some language and adaptation problems at school. The ones who have the most language-related difficulties are pupils from the ex-USSR and pupils of the Muslim minority of Thrace, while Albanian pupils on the whole have the fewest adaptation and language problems. Many teachers mentioned that
‘reception classes’ should be organised in the school, so that pupils can improve their Greek language skills. In this sense, teachers do not view migrant pupils’ bilingualism as being associated positively with learning at school, but rather, as hindering their learning of Greek. However, the majority of teachers (20 out of 30) are in favour of the teaching of mother-tongues at school. The reasons why they propose mother-tongue teaching are: (a) so that the children maintain their cultural identity, (b) possible repatriation, (c) language maintenance as a fundamental human right. Moreover, the majority of teachers believe that mother-tongue classes should be co-funded by Greece and the pupils’ country of origin, and that they should take place right after the end of the mainstream lessons.

The above results agree with the results by research undertaken by the University of the Aegean (Skourtou et al., 2004) and by Kassimi (2005). Although teachers in these studies were found to have positive attitudes to linguistic diversity and to believe that other languages are a benefit to a school classroom, they did not seem to accept the fact that a pupil’s knowledge of his/her first language is related to his/her learning of Greek, or that bilingualism has any cognitive benefits. Moreover, the view that bilingualism is responsible for learning problems was expressed by some teachers, while very few teachers expressed the view that bilingualism may be associated positively with learning.

In the present study, the majority of teachers (27 out of 30) claim that they are not trained to teach foreign pupils and they believe that special training for all teachers should be organised by the state. A similar need for training was expressed by teachers in the UNICEF study (2001). Moreover, 18 out of 30 teachers in the present study mention they would be willing to learn at least some elements of Albanian, or other migrant languages, as they feel this would shorten the distance between them and the migrant pupils.

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2 However, according to a large body of research migrant pupils cannot learn effectively the language of the majority culture unless their first language has developed to a significant degree (Cummins 1979, 2000; Baker 2006).
However, and in support of findings by other researchers (Athanasiou and Gotovos 2002; Skourtou 2002; Kassimi 2005), teachers in the present study discourage parents from speaking the minority language with their children at home. In the following excerpt a teacher expresses her concern about Albanian parents not speaking in Greek with their children at home:

*It is a problem when they speak their mother-tongue at home, because this fact does not help them learn Greek. Especially some parents speak only Albanian at home, while others speak Greek for the sake of their children. This helps them a lot. A child who has language problems at school, uses this often as an excuse. ‘How can I know Greek, we speak only Albanian at home’. It is usually educated parents, (University graduates) who speak to their children in Greek at home because they understand it will do good to their children* (Greek language and literature teacher, female, 49).

These concerns on the part of the teachers seem unsubstantiated, as, according results of my study, Greek is increasingly gaining ground in interactions between parents and children in Albanian households. It is rather the ethnic language that is not used at home. This fact is demonstrated in Table 2.

**Table 2. In which languages do conversations take place in your home?** (% data, N=70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTIONS</th>
<th>CHILD AND MOTHER</th>
<th>CHILD AND FATHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mostly/only Greek</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equally Greek and Albanian</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly/only Albanian</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, a concern not expressed by teachers, should refer to the accuracy with which Albanian adults speak in Greek to their children. Research evidence suggests that if the parents are not accurate speakers of the language, this is to the detriment of their children’s linguistic development. According to Skourtou *et al.*, (2004):
Only adults who are models of language usage can contribute to the children’s correct language development. For effective learning to take place at school, it does not matter in which language communication takes place in the home, as long as communication takes place in a correctly used language (2004:87).

Having examined the ways in which teachers deal with linguistic diversity in the classroom, I now turn to an examination of the extent to which they manage to create a climate of harmonious intercultural co-operation among migrant and Greek pupils.

A large-scale research on xenophobia among Greek pupils conducted by UNICEF in 2001 shows that xenophobia is higher in secondary school pupils than in primary school pupils. Moreover, in a recent Europe-wide study of young Europeans aged 15-24, Greek youths were found to be among the most hostile towards immigrants (European Commission, 2001). Similarly, in a study by Dimakos and Tasiopoulou (2003) on Greek pupils’ attitudes to immigrants, strong and negative opinions about immigrants were revealed. Generally, immigrants were considered ‘unhealthy’, ‘crime-prone’ and ‘tax dodgers’. These points of view seemed to be constant across respondents’ social and economic categories. Some of the quantitative results obtained in the present study seem slightly more encouraging in comparison to the studies discussed above. Pupils in the present study, as Table 3 indicates, show a rather ‘neutral’ attitude to the existence of migrant pupils in the classroom.

Table 3. What do you think of the fact that there are foreign students in Greek schools? (% data, N=70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘It is good because we learn things about other cultures’</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It is bad because they create problems in the schools’</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘It is neither good nor bad nor does it affect Greek pupils in any way’</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, xenophobia is far from absent among the Greek pupils of the present study. Especially some pupils express extreme xenophobic attitudes.
towards their migrant peers (especially Albanians) as the following excerpt from a focus-group interview indicates:

Participants: Dimitris, 14; Katerina, 13; Eleni, 14

Dimitris: Albanians kill Greeks now. Imagine what they will do in a few years, when they have acquired more power.

Interviewer: How do you know that?

Dimitris: I see it on the news on TV

Eleni: They also kill in front of our own eyes. Where I live, near the cemetery there are no lights and there have been many murders, mainly by Albanians, who have killed other Albanians. A lot of murders have taken place there.

Dimitris: I have some foreign friends but basically I don’t like to hang out with foreigners, especially with Albanians.

Interviewer: Why?

Dimitris: Hmm, because they are not so good people.’

Eleni: Not only do we put them up in Greece, they come here and have fights, swear, etc.

Dimitris: They do whatever they want.

Katerina: They steal…

The above extract reproduces – through the eyes of young teenagers – the stereotypical representation by the Greek media of the ‘Albanian criminal’ (Kapllani and Mai 2005). Such negative attitudes on the part of some Greek pupils towards their migrant peers may be hindering the smooth integration of the latter into Greek school, and consequently into Greek society. In this context, one might expect teachers to have a determining role in the social integration of migrant children, as school is undoubtedly the most important institution of socialisation. Interviews with teachers, however, indicate that the majority of them avoid having discussions in class which could help eradicate prejudice and enhance tolerance. Most of the teachers interviewed claimed the reason why they avoid them is so as not to create further tensions. Therefore, some teachers choose to cover up problems that arise, and
pretend that they do not exist, rather than expose and deal with them. The following excerpts illustrate this stance:

*We have never talked in class about issues such as 'racism' and 'xenophobia' because there have not been such instances in students' behaviour* (Political and social education teacher, f, 36).

*We have never had discussions about racism or xenophobia in class because there have never been such instances throughout my teaching experience. On the whole, relations between Greek and foreign students are quite harmonious, at least within the school* (RE teacher, m, 35).

A few teachers try to handle the problems, although such discussions usually end up in fights:

*During class I try to dissolve the negative stereotype against Albanians. I stress how immigration has helped the Greek economy and agriculture. How they have helped us. I also talk about immigration in Europe. I lived in France as a post-graduate student so I use it as a further example of immigration. These topics are very well received by Albanian students and then heated discussions among Greeks and Albanians follow in class. Sometimes discussions continue during break time and end up in fights between Greeks and Albanians* (Physics teacher, m, 42).

### 3. Ethnocentrism in Greek education: the debate over the flag

The Greek educational system is a good illustration of a school system that attaches particular significance to its account of national history. The continuity of Hellenism from antiquity to the present, constitutes an essential component of Greek national identity that is continuously reinforced in school, particularly through the teaching of history, but also through courses on geography and language (Avdela 2000). In the national narrative reproduced in school, the Greek nation is understood as a natural, unified, eternal, and unchanging entity, not a product of history. The teaching of history neither moves beyond this ethnocentric concept of the nation nor familiarises students with the production of historical knowledge (Avdela 2000). An example of the way history is taught at the Greek educational system is
provided by the following dogmatic statement from one of my interviews with teachers:

*When I teach history I do not use any intercultural methods because I believe there are sensitive national issues at stake. I teach history in an ethnocentric Greek way. History is history and nobody can change it* (Greek history teacher, f, 54).

According to Avdela (2000), the authors of history textbooks begin their work by taking as given the superiority of Greece’s 3,000 year-old civilisation and the belief that it has remained unchanged throughout the centuries; indeed, they are explicitly obliged by the Greek Ministry of Education to write textbooks that promulgate this premise. This emphasis on the superior, continuous and unchanging nature of Hellenism through the centuries determines the specific way that the national ‘self’ is portrayed in history textbooks, as well as the way that various national ‘others’ are depicted (Frangoudaki and Dragona 1997a). The contents of these books are not questioned and they fail to cultivate critical thinking on the part of the pupils or teachers. The teacher in the following excerpt accepts whatever is written in history textbooks as axiomatic:

*Greek civilisation, at least as depicted in history books, which however reflect reality, is superior to the civilisation of these peoples (migrants). This doesn’t mean that I will not mention the positive elements of other nations. I may say that Greeks paved the way, but the other nations followed suit* (Greek literature teacher, f, 54, Kifissia).

The teaching of history in Greek compulsory school is determined to a great extent by the way the Greek school system is organised. Each course in this

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3 It was long ago pointed out, for example, that junior high and high school history textbooks are ethnocentric because they portray Bulgarians and Turks as hostile and inferior, while Greeks are full of virtue and talent and superior both spiritually and militarily (Ahlis 1983). Although ethnocentrism persists in more recent school history textbooks, descriptions of other peoples are more nuanced and to a great extent free from the blatant negative characterisations of older textbooks (Avdela, 2000). However, the recent introduction of a more ‘progressive’ history textbook in Greek primary schools sparked unprecedented reactions by representatives of the Orthodox Church, politicians and parents. Its critics accuse the authors of the book of glossing over the hardships that Greeks faced under Ottoman rule in favour of adopting a more politically correct approach (*Kathimerini*, English edition, 6/3/2007).
highly centralised system (the system of textbook production is one of the most centralised in Europe) is based on a single textbook that follows to the letter the detailed official curriculum for each grade. This syllabus and its corresponding textbook allow teachers little flexibility in the classroom (Avdela, 2000).

The above discussion provides a framework within which the ‘notorious’ issue of the Greek flag in the hands of Albanian pupils may be considered. The flag debate started in 2000 when an Albanian pupil was elected flag-carrier in a commemorative (military-type) school parade in northern Greece, because he had the highest marks in the school. Greek pupils (under the encouragement of their parents) occupied their school so as to stop their Albanian peer from carrying the flag. Moreover, the reactions of the Greek public opinion were unprecedented, and the issue was presented as a national cause by the mass media. In the end, the Albanian pupil withdrew from his right to carry the Greek flag. Similarly, in the present study, some Albanian pupils claim that they are ready to resign from the right of being flag-carrier, as they have realised that the majority of the Greek public opinion see it as a ‘provocation’:

I wouldn’t even think about it. After what we see on TV, all these reactions, it is out of the question (Albanian boy, 14).

It is interesting how in the following excerpt an Albanian pupil has internalised so much the exclusivist discourse of Greek public opinion that he has been convinced that indeed, it is not right for an Albanian to carry the Greek flag:

I believe it is the Ministry’s fault because the law says that the best student should carry the Greek flag regardless of nationality. The law should say that only Greek students should carry the Greek flag. Like this we wouldn’t have had all these problems. Sometimes I don’t think this is a racist thing. It is a Greek flag, not an Albanian flag. It is unfair for the Greek kids because they are the majority. An Albanian should not carry the Greek flag (Albanian boy, 13)

As the excerpts above indicate, the flag issue remains a controversial one in Greek educational matters. Every year Albanian flag-carriers are elected and
every year there are similar reactions even though foreign pupils are entitled to carry the Greek flag according to the law. In the following excerpt, a teacher explains why the issue of the nationality of the flag-carrier is so important for Greek people:

…in other countries they do not do military parades at school so this is not an issue, but then, other countries do not have our tradition and culture. They do not have our history, not only in terms of the great civilisation we once created, but also in terms of hardship. And such hardship makes a people magnify situations and feelings. This is also connected to the ancient Greek tradition whereby the brave man is the virtuous man, the one who is brave in the battle. I believe that this is in every Greek's genes. And we have had to prove this many times throughout our history. Other peoples have not had to do so, and maybe this is why they do not attribute so much significance to symbols, parades, flags etc. (Greek literature teacher, 56).

According to the above teacher, the national self is defined as superior because it is an entity that maintains as its immutable features the national traits of patriotism, courage, and love of freedom. In this sense, it is a rather airtight cultural entity that does not change and cannot be influenced, as indicated by the repeated use (highlighted by underlining in the quote) of the first person plural.

The exclusivity of the Greek ethnic community naturalises origin and belonging. As in other cases, Greek nationalism activates a mechanism through which it begins to identify those characteristics that enable the ‘nation’ to see itself as an established and pre-defined phenomenon (Handler, 1988; Foster, 1991). For example, senior members of the conservative party Nea Dimokratia (New Democracy) suggested that bearing the flag is a question of birthright, thus overriding the civic conception of the nation. The substitution of civic with ethnic understandings of the nation figured again in 2003, when the Prefect of Thessaloniki declared ‘You are born a Greek, you cannot be turned into a Greek!’ (Christopoulos, 2004). This distinction between civic and biological nationality is reproduced by discussants in another revealing focus-group excerpt:

Dimitris: They must not carry the Greek flag because they are not Greeks and the parade is
Eleni: *Only for Greeks!*

Katerina: *Greek parents react when they see an Albanian carrying the Greek flag and not a Greek, because they don’t belong to our country.*

Interviewer: *And how will an excellent Albanian student be rewarded if not with the flag?*

Eleni: *With prizes*

Kostas: *No. With nothing! And even if an Albanian child was born in Greece to Albanian parents, this does not make him Greek, so he should not carry the flag.*

According to Kapllani and Mai (2005) and Tzanelli (2006), the debate within Greece regarding the ‘right’ of the Albanian pupil to hold the Greek flag is nothing other than an internal negotiation of the contours of Greek identity and of its place in the European political order. That is, Greece, a country traditionally placed at the (economic and cultural) margins of ‘Europe’, could easily regard the influx of foreigners from other, even more ‘underdeveloped’ Balkan countries as an attack upon both its internal cultural homogeneity and its European ‘purity’. Moreover, this perception of the ‘Albanian other’ as ‘underdeveloped’ is extended over anyone (Asians, Africans, East Europeans) who does not come from the West, and who is, thus, considered to be economically, socially, and culturally inferior to ‘us.’ This comparison leads Greeks to believe even more strongly that they belong to the modern, advanced and powerful West, whilst the impact of the traditional, primitive East on the Greek social, cultural and ethnic ‘self’ is weakened.

4. Conclusion

As discussed in the introduction to this paper, educational systems with an intercultural orientation develop language policies and organise their curriculum and instruction in such a way that the linguistic and cultural capital of migrant children and communities is strongly affirmed in all the interactions of the school. This way, the school rejects the negative attitudes about
diversity that exist in the wider society while preparing migrant and indigenous pupils for life in a multicultural and democratic society. This paper has demonstrated that Greek education is not yet seen as an education whose goal is the preparation of all children for life in a multicultural society. Instead, schools in Greece are dedicated to a monocultural and monolingual philosophy and most teachers have been raised, educated and even trained in the tradition of a monolingual and monocultural country — even though Greece is a de facto multicultural country and this is reflected in the classrooms. Above all, the school, through ethnocentric teaching materials and national commemorative events, reflects the exclusionary construction of the Greek national identity, which defines the concept of ‘Greekness’ on the basis of religious, linguistic and genealogical criteria, rather than civic ones. Such an approach does inevitably lead to the discrimination and exclusion of those who do not fit into the above-mentioned criteria, i.e. migrant pupils. Discrimination and rejection are among the factors that hinder migrant children in developing a positive identity. Of course, discrimination and racism are not created only in schools, nor can schools alone prevent them. However, combating prejudices, stereotypes and racism is unimaginable without the collaboration of teachers in schools, for there is no other institution, nor social forum in which the majority and the minorities living amongst them may come to grips with such an understanding of co-existence. Schools in Greece are not sufficiently active in combating discrimination and racism, and teachers do not provide a strong enough model to combat them. What is more, despite the exclusion of access not only to institutional citizenship (through the barriers to naturalisation) but also to ‘cultural’ citizenship (e.g. as shown by the flag incidents), many of these children have decided to remain and create their lives in Greece. The Greek state, apart

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4 In order to become Greek citizens, immigrants have to be resident in Greece for more than 10 years in the last 12. This is one of the longest residence requirements for naturalisation in Europe. Moreover, a high fee is to be paid by the applicant (1,500 euros), and the decision is discretionary. Furthermore, authorities are not required to reply within a specified period of time and need not justify a negative decision to the applicant. If an applicant is rejected, s/he may apply again after one year (Triandafylidou and Veikou, 2002). Foreigners born on Greek territory are not granted citizenship, even in the absence of acquiring a parental nationality: they must wait until they reach adulthood to apply for naturalisation, although this requires 10 years of continuous residence (Gropas and Triandafylidou, 2005).
from the need to reconsider the educational system in order to make it more inclusive, needs also to reconsider its migration policy and responsibilities vis-à-vis these children, the second generation.
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