

Promoting and Applying Intercultural Education through Literary Textbooks in the Greek Primary Schools: Content Analysis

¹Zoe Karanikola, ²Prof. Balias Efstathios

^{1,2}University of Patras, Greece

Abstract: Until recently Greece was a migration sender rather than a host country. But, over the last 20 years, things have changed and, according to the National Statistical Authority (2011), the percentage of aliens residing permanently in Greece is 8.34%, of which 52.7% come from Albania. Thus, the student population is significantly heterogeneous, and the demand for new curriculums and textbooks which are in accordance with universal agreements and conventions that promote equality, mutual respect and human rights was intense.

However, how can we create a cohesive and democratic society while at the same time allowing citizens to maintain their ethnic culture and identity? These two concepts, interculturalism, on the one hand and nationality on the other, were the motive forces for writing this paper.

In particular, this paper aims at examining, through content analysis of the texts and the activities and by following the *summary method*, how potential it is to implement intercultural education through literary textbooks, which are used in the Greek primary schools over the last years (since 2001 and 2006). The results showed that the references to high interculturalism prevail. There are a few references to the additive or to the contributions approach, while the presence of strong national elements is not intense. The references to mild nationalism are increased.

Keywords: intercultural education, literature textbooks, legislation, approaches.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Greek education system is highly centralized, having the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Educational Policy responsible for the complete education proceedings: curriculums, timetables and textbooks are a few of such examples. During the last 20 years, intercultural education has gradually emerged in Greece as a new type of education.

The 1996 legislation (2413/96) was the first institutional measure taken towards the direction of the intercultural education, and it expressed the intention of the Greek policy to set aside the assimilation approach and to deal with the educational, linguistic and cultural needs of all students. It is based on the international conventions on the children's right for education and equality. This law introduced the term of "*intercultural education*" for the first time, established 26 intercultural schools, and aimed at providing education to young students with special educational, social and cultural needs. Despite the fact that this law it mostly refers to the organization of the Greek education abroad, it has undoubtedly affected the development of programs regarding cultural diversity, the writing of new curriculums and textbooks.

According to the findings of an international conference held in Thessaloniki, previous Greek textbooks and mainly those on history and language used to present the "*others*" (mainly Turks and Germans) in a negative way. On the one hand, they reproduced many stereotypes and prejudices, and on the other hand, they put much emphasis on patriotism and martial events (Xochellis, 2000).

The previous literary textbooks, written between 1976 and 1978, were replaced by new. One volume was written in 2001 and the other two in 2006. Education prepares people for fighting for their rights, finding a job, keeping it, inventing new fields of action and understanding their fellow citizens (De Romili, 2000). Another significant fact is that it contributes to the deep change of beliefs and attitudes. Afterward, many biases and prejudices can be eliminated at early childhood (Maitles & Cowan 2000). Furthermore, all children should have the chance to develop their cultural and linguistic identity and become aware of concepts, such as human rights, world peace and dignity. Among others, these are some of the principles on which the writing of the new textbooks was based. As for their aims, it is mentioned in the curriculum that all students should become aware of various texts of both national and universal literature.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are:

- How possible is it to apply intercultural education through these textbooks?
- Which approach is dominant? The contributions, the additive or the transformative one?
- What type of nationalism is prevalent? A mild or a strong one?

The aforementioned questions derive mainly from a four-level model, which Banks (as cited in Banks, 2002) describes and is arranged in terms of the degree at which issues are central to the curriculum. The 1st level is the “*Contributions Approach*”, where the students discuss holidays, heroes and customs. The 2nd level is the “*Additive Approach*”, where concepts and themes that reflect other cultures are added to the existing curriculum, without changing its structure. The 3rd one is the “*Transformative Approach*”, where the structure of the curriculum is changed and the students are motivated to view problems and themes from different ethnic and cultural groups. The “*Social Action Approach*” is the 4th and highest level. Here, students identify social problems and act in order to resolve them (as cited in Bieger 1995 - 1996: 309).

As far as nationalism is concerned, when it is defined as a natural bond with one's country, there are no elements of racism. In order to express our personality, it is necessary to compare ourselves to “*others*” (Vrizas 2003: 197). In this case, we use the term “*mild*”. Aspects of Greek culture are described, given that Greek students have to learn their culture, tradition, history and customs. In the case of “*strong*” nationalism, the “*others*” can be described in a negative way. In this case racial elements may be found.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the method of qualitative content analysis was used and in particular the “*summary, resume*” (Zusammenfassung) model, which was composed by Mayring in 1980 (Mayring, 1983). There were used three evaluators, including the first author. The other two were practicing teachers. All evaluators worked alone, used the same model of analysis and jumped to the same conclusions.

This model leads to the reduction of the material which is under research, aims at finding the significant messages of the text and produces a general idea of it. The recording unit used was the *theme*, as the basis for analysis of educational material (Bonidis, 2004).

More specifically, literature textbooks were chosen, as literature is not only closely related to nationalism but also to interculturalism. Literature is a way of expressing culture, society and communication, and plays a crucial role in the moral, political and social development of the individual (Kress 1994).

On top of that, it is taught to all grades of primary school and it is considered to cultivate attitudes. Three volumes were examined: one that is common in the two first grades of primary school, one for the 3rd and 4th grade and one for the last two grades. The total number of pages from the three volumes is 654. In this paper, texts and activities were examined.

Following the theoretical context, the principles, the dimensions and the approaches of intercultural education, we made 5 categories for the texts and 7 categories for the activities:

Categories for the texts:

- Texts of high interculturalism that refer and promote universal concepts like peace, equality, love, freedom, friendship, solidarity, understanding.
- Texts of additive intercultural approach that present cultural elements from other countries: customs, tales, dances, music and poetry.
- Texts with both intercultural and national content that promote events from Greek history which simultaneously have got a universal dimension.
- Texts with mild national content that promote elements from the Greek culture: like mythology, poetry, music, pictures and customs.
- Texts with strong national content that are mainly patriotic and present enemies in a negative way.

Categories for the activities:

- Activities of high interculturalism that refer to universal concepts and values.
- Activities of additive approach that are divided in two sub-categories: the *direct*, which shows direct cultural elements from other countries (for instance, “You can see a school class from a distant country of India: compare it to yours) and the *indirect*, where foreign cultural elements are presented indirectly (for instance, “Bring some information about the dances and music of your home/ country”).
- Activities of contributions approach that refer to foreign writers, poets and painters.
- Activities that encourage decision and social action that encourage students to take action, initiatives in order to give solution to universal problems.
- Activities of both intercultural and national content that refer to events taken from the Greek history, which, at the same time, have a universal dimension.
- Activities of mild national content that refer to the Greek culture: mythology, poetry, music, pictures and customs.
- Activities of strong national content that refer to patriotic events.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Regarding the texts (see Table I) in the 1st volume, 24 out of 62 texts have references of high interculturalism (38.70%), 2 of additive approach (3.22%), 8 of national/intercultural content (12.90%), 5 of mild national content (8.06%), and 1 of national content. In the 2nd volume, 17 out of 59 texts are of high interculturalism, 1 of additive approach, 12 of national/intercultural content, 5 of mild national content, and 5 of national. In the 3rd volume, 32 out of 93 texts are of high interculturalism, 24 of national/ intercultural, 5 of mild national and 7 of national content. There are no texts of additive approach.

Regarding the activities, there are activities of high interculturalism (30 in the 1st volume, 30 in the 2nd and 50 in the 3rd), activities of additive approach (16 in the 1st, 11 in the 2nd, 10 in the 3rd), activities of contributions approach (4 in the 1st, 1 in the 2nd and 4 in the 3rd), activities of decision and social action (2 in the 1st, 5 in the 2nd and 5 in the 3rd), activities of national/intercultural content (7 in the 1st, 20 in the 2nd and 30 in the 3rd), activities of mild national content (32 in the 1st, 13 in the 2nd and 21 in the 3rd, activities of national content (3 in the 1st, 9 in the 2nd and 17 in the 3rd).

According to the findings, we can see that the elements of high interculturalism are dominant in both cases. In an effort to interpret this finding, we can argue that cultural diversity of contemporary societies has undoubtedly affected the writing of the new school's textbooks. Besides, the vast majority of the writers of the textbooks are people who have produced a large number of books about contemporary themes. Consequently, they tried to comply with the new regulations and the new principles of the curriculum, which, among others, support that students should become sensitive regarding human rights, peace and dignity.

The elements of additive approach regard a few countries, mainly West European ones. Even though the great majority of foreign students are Albanian, no reference to their culture is made. According to Massey (1991) and Banks (1993), all children need a chance to develop equal and non stereotypical perceptions about their national and cultural group (as cited in Coelho, 2007). When foreign cultural elements are recognized and accepted, then a message of high educational expectations is transmitted to the students (Cummins, 2005).

Likewise, the elements of contributions approach are very rare. We can see that only 39 out of 214 texts are foreign, the origins of which are mainly from France (25.6%), England (15.38%), Italy (12.8%), the Middle East (5.1%), the USA (5.1%) and Spain (5.1%), while there is no reference to nationalities that live in our country, such as Albanian and Poles. Nevertheless, we should report that in previous literary textbooks no foreign texts were found, whatsoever.

The elements of social decision and action are very rare, despite the fact that this category is strongly related to interculturalism, since it promotes diversity, democracy and critical thought. Such activities help students interact in an effective way within an intercultural environment, think critically in order to participate in social action, doubt and change injustice (Coelho 2007). When children's autonomous judgment is empowered, fundamental democratic principles and values are promoted (Balias, 2004).

Texts and activities of both national and intercultural content are increased. This shows that the writers do not aim at the presentation of national elements in a way that reproduces prejudices and bias. Contemporary education does not improve concepts related to nationalism, but aims at creating a global citizen (Mavromati 2009). The national elements are presented in texts describing history and past events, that reflect the time at which they were written (Xochelis, 2000). The presence of these texts/ activities is essential, given that both Greek and foreign students should be familiar with Greek history and culture.

Elements of strong nationalism are rare and they are presented in texts taken from the Greek history. Foreign countries and, in particular, Turkey and Germany are occasionally presented in a negative way. Negative and derogatory phrases are used in order to describe them. To be more exact, they are presented mainly as an enemy and rarely as an ally or a friend, and they are related to unpleasant history events, like wars. Greeks, on the other hand are presented as heroes, fighters, people brave and determined to sacrifice their lives in order to protect their country. Still, nationalism is getting milder, since there are also some positive references to the "enemy": this could be seen in specific texts that narrate the friendship developed between Italian soldiers and a Greek during the World War II.

Nevertheless, the fact that the negative reports to the "others" and the very positive reports to the "Greeks" are limited down to a very small number of historical texts is a positive outcome. The fact that literary textbooks include texts of Turk poets and writers and that in some cases Italians and Turks are presented in a positive way too is another positive estimation. Other texts state that the Greeks have some negative traits. For instance, during the Greek War of Independence in 1821, the Greek society was characterized by dissension and injustice. In fact, in one text, it is referred that "*Being a slave to the Turks is much better than having a dark Greek soul*" (Katsiki – Givalou, Papadatos, Kalogirou, Protonotariou, & Pilarinos, 2008:200).

The simultaneous presence of intercultural elements and the recognition of errors made by the Greeks lightens the projection on nationalism. War, resistance, fighting for rights and freedom are events that concern not only the Greeks but people worldwide.

Besides, the significant number of elements of mild nationalism shows that the writers do not intend to project nationalism. In many texts it is obvious that even different cultures share many characteristics.

TABLE I: EXAMPLES OF TEXTS

A. TEXTS OF HIGH INTERCULTURALISM			
TITLE,	WRITER,	PAGE,	REPORTS IN THE TEXTS
KIND OF REPORT			
"Who is running?"	Gianni Rondari,	p.16.	A little girl's response to the question "Who is the head of the house; Mum or dad,": "Neither; at home we love one another."
"Family love and equality among the family members"			

B. TEXTS OF ADDITIVE APPROACH	
<p>“<i>The whistle</i>”, a French folk fairy tale by Henri Pourrat, p. 63.</p> <p>“An element of French culture”</p>	<p>Fairy tales are a kind of heritage shared by all mankind. Yet each country attributes its unique trait to them.</p> <p>Here, Christ, disguised as an elderly man, asks from a young shepherd to help him cross the river. As a thank you he offers him a magic whistle that makes “everyone around him dance”.</p>
C. TEXTS OF NATIONAL/INTERCULTURAL CONTENT	
<p>“<i>Celebrating the “No Day”</i>”, by Kostas Kalapanidas, p.124.</p> <p>“Nationalism and high interculturalism: claiming one’s freedom and human rights”</p>	<p>In this poem by Kostas Kalapanidas ethnocentric and intercultural traits can be seen. While Greek kids celebrate the “No Day” the main reasons why the Greek people opposed their conqueror are projected: “<i>We say no to tyrants! No to slavery! Yes to peace! Yes to freedom!</i>”. Claiming peace and freedom is a human right and should be everybody’s concern. Thus, we do not see a negative description of the “others” as an enemy, but resistance as a step towards claiming one’s rights.</p>
D. TEXTS OF MILD NATIONAL CONTENT	
<p>“<i>Easter has come</i>”, by Haris Sakellariou, p.116.</p> <p>“Greek Easter: customs”</p>	<p>“Easter has come, and the kids tap each other’s egg”.</p>
E. TEXTS OF NATIONAL CONTENT	
<p>“<i>In the Mountains of Albany</i>”, by Yiannis Beratis, p.312.</p> <p>“Greek soldiers in the battle lines”</p>	<p>The Greek-Italian War in Albany: « ... <i>those were the last few remaining road kilometres we could control, our final edge to move freely, as down the road the Italians were in command</i>». The soldiers’ emotions are stressed during bombing: “<i>We stood still, dumbfounded, speechless, not knowing what to do, where to go. Get down! Get down! Don’t run!... The great suffering, the only care was that during the slightest moments of quietness in between, you wondered in agony if you should stay in your initial position or slide away. Yes, it was a hard game of possibilities and chances, for which no answer could be found and given</i>”. Feelings are detected, emotions that are still present, despite their decision to defend the country.</p>

TABLE II: EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES

1. ACTIVITIES OF HIGH INTERCULTURALISM	
<p>“In the “<i>Dolphin</i>” there are other texts, as well, that describe a mother’s love. What do the heroes have in common?”</p>	<p>A mother’s love</p>
2. ACTIVITIES OF ADDITIVE APPROACH	
<p>“Each nation has its fairy tales. You have just read a story from France. Search in books and find a fairy tale from another country. If your classmates do the same, you could make the “<i>Fairy Tales from around the World</i>” Book”.</p>	<p>Direct: other countries’ fairy tales</p>

3. ACTIVITIES OF CONTRIBUTIONS APPROACH	
“Music mimes the sound of the wind too. If Antonios Vivaldi’s <i>Four Seasons</i> is available on CD at your school, listen to the <i>Winter</i> ”.	Important Italian composer
4. ACTIVITIES OF DECISION AND SOCIAL ACTION	
“What did the flounder suggest for protecting sea life? Discuss in class about endangered species. Choose a species and form a committee for its protection. Write a letter to those that threaten its existence and explain the reasons why it is useful for nature”.	Social action to protect the environment
5. ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL/ INTERCULTURAL CONTENT	
“What do we owe to our heroes and why?”	Feeling of duty towards the country and its link to claiming one’s freedom
6. ACTIVITIES OF MILD NATIONAL CONTENT	
“Dance all together in the sounds of traditional Easter songs you can find in various CD, like Domna Samiou’s <i>Easter Songs</i> CD”.	Elements of Greek tradition
7. ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL CONTENT	
“Where did the rightful owners of the houses (Greek Cypriots) go, after being thrown out of them? Can you continue the story?”.	Necessary migration of the Greek Cypriots: negative reference to the Turks.

5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Concluding, this thorough effort is remarkable, taking into account the big differences between new textbooks and the previous ones. The latter included no references to any foreign literature. Modern textbooks have been widely accepted, and the reviews on them are positive. Through texts and activities students have the chance to face contemporary issues and become aware of the fact that they need to form many identities: one regional, one national, one European and one global. As a result, the social role of literature emerges (Charalambakis, 2002).

The goals, the legislation and the principles of intercultural education have affected the content of new books, which are dominated by concepts common to all people such as equality and respect. Negative references to the “others” are restricted only to texts taken from history. Besides, as Gloria Anzaldúa claims, on the one hand cultural borders tend to weaken, and on the other hand a common civilization tends to be created, where people from different cultures will interact and will perform dialogues and actions (as cited in Banks, 2002).

Textbooks and curriculums have undoubtedly changed. But as Fullan (1991) claims, these changes do not only concern the materials used in class but the persons involved in the education process as well. Consequently, we should, also, examine the significant role teachers are called to play in applying intercultural education. Are they ready to support this change? Change is a highly personal experience, consists of changes in beliefs and teaching styles.

Teachers’ positive or negative attitude can affect the entire education process. Not to mention that they are the ones to choose which texts will be taught and the methods to be used. Even the intensive national elements, which reproduce stereotypes, or the negative descriptions regarding different national or cultural groups, may be used positively by the educator in order to face and handle matters such as racism and xenophobia.

REFERENCES

- [1] Balias, St. (2004) Human rights in the era of democracy. Athens: Papazisis [in Greek].
- [2] Banks, J.P. (2002) An Introduction to Multicultural Education (3rd ed). Boston, MA: Ally & Bacon.
- [3] E.Bieger (1995-1996), "Promoting multicultural education through literature-based approach", The Reading Teacher, vol.49, no4, pp.308-311. www.jstor.org/pss/20201604.
- [4] Bonidis, K. (2004) The content of school textbook as an object of research. Athens: Metechmio [in Greek].
- [5] Ch. Charalambakis (2002) "Book reviews. With thoughts and dreams. Anthology of literature texts of the 5th and 6th grade of the elementary school", Mentoras, vol.6, pp.152-156. <http://www.pi-schools.gr/publications/mentor/>.
- [6] Coelho, E. (2007) Teaching and Learning at multicultural schools. Athens: Epikendro [in Greek].
- [7] Cummins, J. (2005) Identities under negotiation. Education with the aim of Empowerment in a society of diversity. Athens: Gutenberg [in Greek].
- [8] De Romili, J. (2000) the treasure of oblivious knowledge. Athens: To Asti [in Greek].
- [9] Fullan, M.G. (1991) The New Meaning of Educational Change. London: Cassell.
- [10] Katsiki – Givalou, A., Papadatos, G., Patsiou, B., Politis, D., & Pilarinos, Th. (eds) (2008), Anthology of literature texts of the 3rd and 4th grade of the Elementary school. At a school of the world. A book for the Teachers. Methodological instructions. Athens: OEDB [in Greek].
- [11] G. Kress (1994) "An English curriculum for the future", Changing English, vol.1, pp.97-109.<http://www.informaworld.com>.
- [12] H. Maitles & P. Cowan, (2000), "Feature or footnote? Teachers' attitudes towards the teaching of the holocaust in primary schools in Scotland", Scottish Educational Review, vol. 32, pp. 78-87. <http://www.scotedreview.org.uk/pdf/86.pdf>.
- [13] Mavromati, M. (2009) Globalizing and education. <http://www.alfavita.gr/artra/art12-1-09-654.php> [in Greek].
- Mayring, Ph. (1983) Grundlagen und Techniken Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse, Dissertation, Munchen.
- [14] Vrizas, K. (2003) Universal communication. Cultural identities, Athens: Gutenberg [in Greek].
- [15] Xochellis, P. (2000) "The icon of the "other" / neighbour in the books of Balcans", in A. Kapsalis, K. Bonidis, A. Sipitanou (eds), The icon of the "other" / neighbour in the books of Balcans. International Conference in Thessaloniki [in Greek].