希臘教師在政經危機中
對國家認同與教育
困境之體認

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摘要

　　本文是一個小型研究的總結報告，主要探討希臘教師面臨社會經濟危機和面臨面國家權力正當性低落之際，教育與國家認同與此現況之關係。本文採用半結構式訪談法，探究希臘教師在國家近期之社會經濟危機斷裂復甦後對國家認同的反思，也檢視教師對不公平待遇、種族歧視和移民等更為廣泛議題的看法。本研究結果顯示，希臘社會除了經濟危機面臨人道主義、價值和認同危機外，反移民的情緒也相當嚴重，高度斷裂和分化的社會，使排斥和融合政策激增，凸顯希臘人和移民之間的差異。對希臘人而言，當前社會經濟形勢出現的困難和問題是社會的新危機此已導致人民之間的一種新人道主義，即反對排外主義。上述發現顯示，希臘人民已喪失超越其他國家的自我優越感，並對國內正在發生的情事感到興趣。

關鍵詞：國家認同、人道主義、社會經濟危機

Greek National Identity and the Greek Education System in the Age of Austerity: How Do Teachers Experience and Understand the Current Situation?

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Abstract

This paper is a summary report of a small-scale research project, which engages with issues around education, national identity - and their connectivity at this present time of socio-economic crisis in Greece. Specifically, using the method of semi-structured interviews, the study explores the way Greek teachers rethink the Greek national identity as it has fractured in the wake of the recent Greek crisis. It also examines teacher's perceptions of the issues of discrimination, racism and immigration. The findings of the project show that Greek society apart from the economic crisis is facing a serious humanitarian crisis, a crisis of values and an identity crisis. As anti-immigrant sentiments fuel, they reveal a rather severe, deeply divided and polarized society that proliferates politics of exclusion and inclusion through emphasizing deep rooted distinctions between Greeks and immigrants. The current socio-economic situation has made apparent difficulties and problems for Greek citizens but also new tendencies in society. The Greek crisis has prompted, over and against the growth of xenophobia, a new spirit of humanitarianism among Greek people. It has also made Greek people lose their sense of superiority over other nationalities and become interested in and conscious about what is happening in their country.

Keywords: Xenophobia, socio-economic crisis, Greek education system

Introduction

In the last few years, major political and economic changes have swept through Greece. These changes have generated growing complexity of the society, uncertainty in Greek people, unpredictability of the future and changing attitudes towards belonging and identity. The country every day is being driven into deeper and deeper recession, a fact that fuels xenophobic backlash (Amnesty International, 2012; EU-MIDIS, 2011; Eurobarometer, 2012).

Many Greek people have started expressing racism more and more as a result of their unemployment and their bad quality of life (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2011). Incidents of racial violence targeting indiscriminately aliens, based solely on their skin colour or country of origin have increased the last year, particularly in Athens. Apart from the escalation of racially motivated attacks there are many reports about failures by police officers to protect third country nationals from racial violence (Amnesty International, 2012).

Current debates in Greece include discussions about economics, fairness, concepts of national identity and perspectives on "outsiders". In the Greek elections of April and June 2012 the political party with fascist and nationalistic ideology not only received enough votes to enter the Parliament but it was also the first party in a number of electoral districts, receiving more votes than any other single party. This situation raises fundamental questions about how the Greeks will treat present and future immigrants and how the immigrants will cope and respond to the already difficult situation in Greece.

Greece, at this present time of financial crisis and accompanying social uncertainty, is a really important context and a fascinating place to study the evolution and nature of the challenges the education system and teachers face, how certain social ideas are communicated through

schooling to young people and the role schools and teachers play in either enhancing or mitigating tensions of citizenship.

The purpose of this paper is to present a small scale research project which aims to understand how teachers think about the wider issues of discrimination, racism, and immigration or reflexively consider their own position in discussions on aspects of modern citizenship. Specifically, the project attempts to explore teachers' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs towards their national "selves" and national "others" (minorities and immigrants), teachers' views of the textbooks/curriculum and their relevance to their contemporary lived experiences, especially around Greek national identity, Europe, immigration. Moreover, it tries to find out if according to the teachers the Greek education system promotes anti-racism, whether teachers see this as important and necessary, and if they do, what challenges they think that the Greek education system is facing in order to promote anti-racism in this era of crisis.

The above issues, although they are pivotal for understanding the role of teachers and schools in tackling or enhancing growing discriminatory attitudes, have not yet been adequately researched in Greece. The studies that refer to the role of schools in the formation of national identity focus mostly on the ethnocentric content of the textbooks and the national curriculum and they examine the ways the Greek and the other nations are presented, described and evaluated in the Greek school. Teachers' perceptions towards the immigrants are examined only in a few studies, and teachers' key role in the formation of national identity stays almost in the dark. Perhaps given the proximity of the event it is still too early to speak of a lack of existing research.

This paper begins by discussing the Greek social and educational context. It briefly describes the geneses of Greek national identity and its transition after the entrance of Greece in the European Union, and it tries to shed light on what is going on in the present. It continues with some important features of the Greek national education system with specific

reference to its instrumental role in the formation of Greek national identity from the emergence of the Greek nation state until today. It also focuses on the key challenges for the Greek education system and Greek teachers in this age of austerity. Moreover, it discusses the role of schools and teachers in the fight against xenophobia, racism, aggressive nationalism and related intolerance in Greek society. Finally the paper presents the methodology of the project and the findings.

The social context

The entrance and settlement of waves of immigrants in many countries, especially during and after the nineteenth century, is a phenomenon that has given a diverse character to many societies in different countries all over the world (Lynch & Simon, 2003). Greece is among a number of European countries, that, as a result of immigration and asylum migration, have significantly and irreversibly seen its demography changed in social, cultural, economic, ethnic, racial and religious terms (Stratoudaki, 2008).

During the period following the 1990s, Greece not only witnessed a significant return of nationals to their homeland, but also experienced a shift from being a traditionally "sender" country to a main destination country for immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Rozakis, 2001). Rapid demographic changes that took place during the last two decades have led to an increasing participation of immigrant people in Greek society and immigrant children in education (Stratoudaki, 2008).

This has resulted in a growing complexity in the Greek society and a dramatic change in its composition. The population has become progressively more heterogeneous and in turn this has affected the Greek national identity, which has grown more unconfident and xenophobic (EU-

MIDIS, 2011; Eurobarometer, 2012). A significant proportion of the Greek population now expresses both antipathy and fear towards the immigrants, who were generally seen as the main cause of the significant rise of criminality in Greece (Stratoudaki, 2008).

When the global financial downturn struck, Greece was badly prepared after years of profligacy, unrestrained spending, cheap lending, hosting the expensive Olympic games in 2004 and the failure to implement financial reforms. By the end of 2009, the Greek economy faced the highest budget deficit and government debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratios in the European Union, which led to rising borrowing costs, ultimately resulting in a severe economic crisis, one of the worst in its history (Romanias, 2009).

Greece's fiscal and economic problems have left the country struggling with high levels of unemployment, especially among young people (Malkoutzis, 2011), and striving to pay its bills. The government in order to avoid a downward spiral has requested and agreed to a recue package from the EU, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank (Vayanos, Meghir, & Vettas, 2010). It has also begun to slash spending and has implemented very severe austerity measures that aim at reducing the deficit. It has applied tough tax evasion regulations, raised the retirement age by two years, imposed public sector pay cuts, closed schools and public hospitals; thousands of people have lost their jobs and more redundancies are planned (Vayanos et al., 2010).

The severe budget cuts and the savage measures adopted by the Parliament have led workers nationwide to stage strikes, closing airports, government offices and schools; Greeks to rally in central Athens to denounce politicians, bankers and tax dodgers; and a large number of Greek people to abandon the country and emigrate in search of better working and living conditions to the USA, Australia and other parts of Europe. Many Greeks are unwilling to accept the austerity measures, and are already showing dissatisfaction and public unrest (Pappas, 2010).

Economic reform in Greece has been met with protests, some of them quite violent, fortified by the belief of many Greeks that foreign forces such as European central bankers and other financial speculators are manipulating the crisis.

The educational context

National education systems began to develop in post-revolutionary Europe in the late eighteenth century as instruments of state formation and tools for developing a common national identity within specific geographical borders (Green, 1997; Wiborg, 2000). As Durkheim argued, schools as social institutions had a purpose, which was to ensure social cohesion, unity and harmony (Pickering, 2006). Today, three centuries later the education systems still hold this role even though many other agents of socialization such as family, peer groups, mass media etc. influence students as well. Education systems everywhere, through their subjects, their textbooks and other activities seek to initiate young people into the traditions and cultures of their society and promote cohesion and a sense of national identity (Goodings, 1987).

In Greece the education system seeks to cultivate the Greek national identity and to educate Greek students in a "natural" and "normal" way, as if the conceptualization of national identity is fixed by nature and given by god, into the culture of their society (Stamelos, 2000). The Greek education system is highly centralized and the teachers in schools must follow the school curriculum and teach each subject exclusively from the Pedagogical Institute textbooks, which are state-endorsed [1] (Avdela, 1998;

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[1] The Pedagogical Institute as a representative of the government writes the curriculum and the textbooks. The Institute takes advice from academics and teachers when it draws up particular textbooks, but the last word on content remains in the Ministry of National Education and Religions.

Coulby & Jones, 1995; Massialas & Flouris, 1994).

For the Greek government teachers are civil servants and their professionalism is connected with their professional knowledge, autonomy and responsibility. Teachers in Greece are degree holders from a four-year university-level course and they have access to teaching posts in the state sector by examinations administered by the Supreme Council for Civil Personnel Selection (Eurydice, 2010).

The public regulation of teaching in Greece controls both what is taught and how it is taught, lessening in a way teachers' professional responsibility and autonomy (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988). But although the government determines the professional identity of teachers, this identity is also mediated by teachers' own experience in and out of school as well as by their beliefs and values about what it means to be a teacher (Sachs, 2001).

Today, within the context of financial crisis in Greece, the multiple political restructurings and uncertainty, more problems have been added to the chronic inefficiencies of the Greek education system (Paraskevopoulos & Morgan, 2011). According to the Law 3833/2010 ("Protection of Greek Economy-Urgent measures for the treatment of fiscal crisis") the initial government's annual budget has been reduced by 10% for all ministries including the Ministry of Education. This has resulted in huge cuts in teachers' salaries, a reduction of the already limited resources,[2] an abatement of intervention programmes for schools with large number of students of migrant parents, and in many other problems (Christodoulakis, Leventi, Matsaganis, & Monastiriotis, 2011).

One of the most important challenge for the Greek government and the policy makers today is how to organise an education system that will address in its policy and curriculum documentation the full implications of the recent political and economic changes; will meet the needs of

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[2] There is a large number of dated school buildings, lack of libraries, limited new technology infrastructure, reduction of teaching staff (Paraskevopoulos & Morgan, 2011).

teachers, learners, parents and the community (Bigelow, 2006); will inspire conciliation and peace, will promote an understanding of identity and diversity, construct a more tolerant conception of Greek national identity (Held, 2005; McKinnon, 2005; Tan, 2005) and "transform antagonism into agonism" (Mouffe, 1995, p. 108).

The emergence of Greek national identity

The emergence of the Greek nation state happened in the 19th century and it was a result of a revolutionary uprising with the demand of the national revival (Stamelos, 2000). Greek national identity was invented and constructed in the turbulent and doubtful period of 1922-1974 after the collapse of the "Great Idea" (1922) (Tsoukalas, 1982). The term "Great Idea" appears for the first time in Kolletis speech to the first Greek parliament (1844). This term refers to the expectation of some Greek politics[3] that some regions, which were under Turkish sovereignty, would enter the Greek state of the 1830. After the Asia Minor destruction (1922), as the treaty of Lausanne brings to an end this expectation, the "Great Idea" collapses and the "Greek" nation is forced to accept the imposed reality, the new narrow boundaries of "its" land (Skopetea, 1988).

Historical evidence shows that nationalism has been brought to Greece by the Greek speaking Diasporas (Myrogiannis, 2010). As it happened with most national geneses the Greek-speaking intellectuals of the 18th and 19th centuries were greatly influenced by the spirit of the Enlightenment and carried it with them translated to the geographical, social and cultural environment of what was to become the Modern Greek kingdom. The above intellectuals believed in the superiority of the Greek nation and the Greek language at least in the Balkan Peninsula and Asia

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3 Kolletis, Deligiannis, Venizelos.

Minor, the need to hegemonize the Balkans with an educated class of Greek speakers, and the need to expand the Greek state. Many of them were clerics and understood Enlightenment through the Orthodox dogma (Chrysoloras, 2004).

The Greek nationalist discourse was structured around a series of nodal propositions that prevail till today: a) there is a unified history of one Greek nation starting from the pre-Homeric era, through to classical Greece, the Hellenistic epoch, the Byzantium, and continuing in modern Greece. b) The nation is bound together by geography, history, language, and religion. c) Being Orthodox Christian is an almost necessary pre-condition for being Greek. d) The Greek nation is superior to almost any other nation in the world since Greeks are the heirs of almost all the great civilizations of the West (Chrysoloras, 2004, p. 17).

Greek national identity after the entrance of Greece in the European Union

The entrance of Greece in the European Union (EU) brought the country closer to the "European miracle"[4] (Beck, 2005). The political project of the creation of the EU and the European citizen attempted to turn enemies to neighbours by dispelling from the horizon of Europe the threat of violence as a political option, whether between member states or against supranational institutions. The EU also aimed to ensure the health of the member states and the economy, effectively dealing with unemployment, and encouraging a lively democracy through a cosmopolitan viewpoint (Beck, 2005).

Soon after joining the European community in 1981, the Greek

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[4] A term coined by Eric Jones in 1981 which refers to the rise of Europe to geopolitical dominance during the modern period.

government aimed to introduce secularisation, modernization measures and increase Greece's standard of living, and made considerable steps towards this direction, liberalising the economy, and trying to replace the old clientelist politics with an effective bureaucracy. Greece also became the recipient of many grants from the EU to strengthen its agricultural sector and to build public works projects hoping to enhance economic growth (Dimitrakopoulos & Passas, 2004). However, even with the European Union's financial assistance Greece stayed behind many of its fellow EU members and remained one of the least economically developed member countries in the EU. In January 2001 Greece joined the EU's single currency (the Euro), thereby allowing the European Central Bank govern its economy.

Although many Greeks were positive towards the EU motivated mostly by economic advantage rather than a desire for deeper political and cultural convergence, a large part of the Greek population criticised the EU concentrating on the cultural rather than the political or economic aspects of the European unification, and felt more and more estranged from the new westernised "image" of Greece. Besides, the Greek attitude towards the West has always been equivocal, and the functioning of western-type institutions has often been disharmonious, if not always problematic (Chrysoloras, 2004).

Many Greek people thought that the new European order undermined the role of national culture and the socializing of the state and family and saw the EU as a threat against their imaginary collective identity. Those ideas have in effect prevented the full cultural and political integration of the country into the EU and its institutions. Under such social circumstances the nationalist discourse and especially that of the Greek Church found a fruitful background in order to develop. The Church presented itself as a cultural opponent to the forces of assimilation and homogenisation and the Greeks identified themselves strongly with it maybe as a reaction to the abovementioned "threats" (Chrysoloras, 2004).

The Greek case is an example, which demonstrates that the forces of Westernization and European integration do not automatically make weaker the forces of nationalism in Europe (Fukuyama, 2006). Maybe it is because the Greeks don't feel secure and confirmed in their national dignity. As Beck (2005, p. 114) argues, the more secure and confirmed Europeans feel "the less they will shut themselves off in their nation-states and the more resolutely they will stand up for European values in the world and take up the cause of others as their own".

Greek national identity in the age of austerity

Appadurai some years ago (1996) argued that the very epoch of the nation-state is near its end and nationalism enters a terminal crisis. Today, we see that nationalism not only doesn't enter a terminal crisis but also on the contrary in some countries is being revived. Even the most superficial examination of Modern Greek society reveals that the latest political and economical changes have fuelled xenophobic backlash in Greece, and that Greek nationalism has become even more racist, ethnocentric and looks at everything from the national perspective, a fact that jeopardizes national prosperity and democratic freedom (Christodoulou, 2010).

Like many European nations, Greece is currently undergoing a dramatic transition and seems to be in a state of confusion, feeling threatened that Greek national identity is becoming obsolete. The financial crisis, which has developed into socio-political crisis, has called into question the existing national identity and it has given rise to emotional responses that "resonate" within society (Christodoulou, 2010).

The media occupy a key site for the monitoring of the Greek self-imagining and the antagonistic relationship with the "others" in this era of socioeconomic crisis. By observing the pages of tabloid newspapers or the

TV shows we can see that negative language and misinformation for the "others" -that are not anymore only the immigrants from the surrounding Slavic and Balkan populations, but also the EU is very common.

Very common also is the use by protestors, commentators, politicians, bankers of the narrative of the all-seeing public economist for Greece, which goes like this: "Greece is a poor but honest country...The present crisis is a symptom of its exploitation by the European "centre", whose essential nature is to be rich and exploitative. We poor Greeks were duped into entering the EU and adopting the euro. The cunning union gave us grants for our honest labour. Eventually, we were sucked dry: but the centre's greed is boundless, and now they want to gain more through usury and, if bad comes to worse, political domination (Doxiadis, 2011).

The aforementioned narratives, which are very similar to the narratives that have been used since the emergence of the Greek nation state in the 19th century, treat Greeks as immature children, ultimately irresponsible for their acts and their faults, who must demonise others rather than understand themselves. Moreover, they enslave them to their worst ethnocentric self (Doxiadis, 2011).

The economic crisis has given rise to a dangerous new form of nationalism. The Golden Dawn, the once-marginal extremist party, has won 18 parliamentary seats in Greece's general election by campaigning against austerity measures and immigration and by blaming undocumented migrants for the economic crisis. The above have contributed to the serious increase in violence and intimidation directed at Greece's immigrants. In a recent report, Human Rights Watch (2013) warned that xenophobic violence in Greece has reached "alarming proportions," and accused Greek authorities of doing nothing to stop the attacks.

In periods of social, political and economic crisis "the others" provide for a "distraction" from the real causes of the crisis and serve as a scapegoat and as a means for reasserting the positive identity of the nation against the odds (Triantafyllidou, 2010). If we look at the past we

will see that the revival of extremist movements in periods of crisis was a desperation reaction of "the disgruntled and the psychologically homeless, the personal failures, the socially isolated, the economically insecure, the uneducated, unsophisticated, and authoritarian persons at every level of the society" (Lipset, 1960, p. 175).

The role of the Greek education system in the formation of Greek national identity

The Greek national education system has played and continues to play significant role in the formation of Greek national identity. Some of the main reasons why Greek national identity has resisted international pressures that are attempting to construct a European or a more cosmopolitan identity, which would replace existing ethno-nationalisms, are the predominance of the ethnocentric national history in the Greek national education system and the ethnocentric content of the books and the curricula (Stratoudaki, 2008).

The curriculum and the textbooks, especially in subjects such as History, Greek Language and Geography promote Greek nationalism by presenting an image of the Greek nation, which is based on the common agreement of its homogeneity and superiority (Avdela, 2000; Zambeta 2000). They also attempt to identify the modern nation state, "via Byzantine Orthodoxy, with the city-states of the fourth century BC and thus with Hellenic civilization" (Psomiades & Thomadaki, 1993, quoted in Coulby, 2000, p. 92).

Students in Greece are exposed and become acquainted with other countries, as well as with the concept of Europe only in the context of warfare and hostility (Flouris, 1995; Hamilakis, 2003). The curriculum

and the textbooks see the Greeks as the fountainhead of European civilization and focus on other states only through the teaching of the wars, expansionary policies in the past and hostile stances in the present (Coulby, 2000; Flouris, 1998).

Relevant studies about the Greek education system and its role in the formation of Greek national identity in the present rapidly changing era show that the Greek education system seeks to make more efficient the curriculum and textbooks (Stratoudaki, 2008). Although different policies taking in account the current deep transformations, the new social conditions and the increasing and changing diversity are proposed, these policies do not seem to tackle the problems of Greek society with sufficient breadth.

The Greek education system fails to address in its policy and curriculum documentation the full implications of the recent political and economic changes and, as many other education systems around the world (Kiwan, 2008), it continues to propose a single national identity, even though it is acknowledging the presence of a plurality of nations, to be based on exclusion rather than inclusion and on ethnocentrism rather than multiculturalism, and to be racist and nationalistic (Stratoudaki, 2008).

Even if the curricula and books have improved being more tolerant and understanding to "others", they still present an ethnocentric national history and tend to be introvert; they are still conservative and oblivious towards matters concerning religion or other nationalities, those traditionally seen as "enemies" and are still highly reluctant to accept the potential transformation of Greek society into a multiethnic society (Stratoudaki, 2008). It might be extreme to indicate that the Greek national education system encourages hostility and warfare; nonetheless it may be said that it undoubtedly does remarkably little to inspire conciliation and peace.

In short, having in mind the importance of education in the formation of the national identity, we could say that the predominance of the

ethnocentric national history in the Greek education system and in general the ethnocentric content of the books and the curricula may be one of the main reasons of the anti-Western feeling and of the persistence of identitarian discourses like nationalism.

Nonetheless, we should be cautious when we make judgments about teaching from curricula and textbooks alone (Council of Europe, 1996). Brindle (1996) reminds us that "we cannot assume that the content of the textbook is the same as the content of the lesson" (quoted in Goalen, 1997, p. 2). Grosvenor (1999) argues that in order to come to some conclusion about the impact of the teaching in identity formation, we need to extend our vision of schooling to consider the cumulative effect of value messages in both the formal and "hidden curriculum" and to look at the role of teachers.

Challenges for the Greek education system and Greek teachers in the age of austerity

The education sector is probably one of the most sensitive and politically charged areas of public policy because of its important role in identity formation and its potential to prepare students for their roles as world citizens (Kenway & Bullen, 2000; Wiborg, 2000). The severe complexity of issues surrounding nationality and immigration suggests a need for conceptualizing new forms of citizenship identity that are more appropriate to these new times (Halpin & Moore, 2006), a need for responsible citizens who can "assimilate the local to the national" and the supra-national (Whitty, 2002, p. 95).

If the schools are to meet the challenge of educating the next generation in a way that equips them for their contemporary life and for

their future, then they must change. The education systems should include a global perspective into the curriculum and teach in ways that encourage co-operation, critical thinking, democratic values of fairness and practices (Whitty, 2002; Steiner, 1994).

The above improvement efforts cannot be realised without the involvement of teachers (Johnson & Hallgarten, 2002). Teachers' role is crucially important; it is a very decisive and influential factor in social change (van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001). As Fullan (2001) states, any change attempted in society is strongly hinged on education and on what teachers think and do about it, and depended on public support, careful training of the teachers and teachers' improved status and professional identity (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988).

In order for Greek schools to change significantly and start promoting citizenship education with an understanding of identity and diversity teachers should: be critical educators committed to human rights, actively seek to keep informed, use a range of teaching styles, encourage their students to be active and participate in the wider societal context (Bigelow, 2006; Down & Smyth, 2012; Kiwan, 2008). Teachers should also have high morale, self-esteem, trust to themselves, energy and positive motivation to innovate and develop practice that improves learning (Johnson & Hallgarten, 2002).

Methodology

The purpose of this research project is to explore how teachers think about Greek identity and the wider related issues of discrimination, racism and immigration. The research project is located within a constructivist paradigm and the hermeneutic/interpretive perspective as well as symbolic interactionism informs theoretically its methodology and research process. Its intention is not to make generalisations but hopefully to shed light

upon the perceptions and beliefs of some teachers, and to produce possible explanations and arguments. It focuses on "teachers" voices' because they offer an important range of insights into the current restructuring and reform processes in education (Goodson, 2000).

Research questions

The current study focuses on a specific institution, a typical inner city primary school (Dimotiko)[5] in Athens with an ethnically diverse intake,[6] and tries to answer the following questions:

a. Has the current social and economic situation in Greek society affected the school, the students and in what ways?

b. Has the current situation in Greek society affected behaviour in the school? Are there incidents of xenophobia among kids?

c. Has the crisis led the teachers to think differently about ethnic diversity in Greek society?

d. What skills, attitudes and values do teachers think they need to teach to students in order to prepare them for the future? Do they feel equipped to do this?

Methods for data collection

The area of study of this project is relatively new; therefore, at the strategic level of the research design, in conformity with the epistemological and ontological perspectives of the researcher, individual interviews were conducted with a small number of teachers. Specifically,

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[5] (demotic, meaning municipal) a carryover term from a time when such schools were run by local communities. The name remains although it has been obsolete for decades.

[6] It had thirteen classes, two for year 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and three for year 3. The total number of its students was two hundred eighty three, fifteen per cent of which were students from other nationalities: Albanians, Pakistani, Polish and Black African.

semi-structured interviews were chosen with questions open enough to permit amplification and expansion in order to distinguish and classify the main issues that will be investigated more thoroughly in the future.

Sampling—Access and procedures

In the present project a "purposeful sample" (Patton, 2002) was employed with a number of interviewees that would allow the exploration of the research questions and the classification of the main issues that will be addressed in the future. The method of sampling apart from "purposive" could also be described as "Snowball Sampling", which is a nonprobability method that relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects (Robson, 2002). Eight teachers (four women and four men) were purposively sampled on the basis of gender and teaching experience (years of teaching) with considerable diversity of experience.[7]

Even though the above sampling technique gave us easy access to the school and the teachers, this access came at the expense of introducing bias. This technique reduces the possibility that the sample will represent a good cross section from the population (Robson, 2002). Moreover, with this technique we have bias come into play if the initial subjects, recommend additional subjects that are "like-minded" and thus exclude diverse perspectives.

All the interviews were conducted in the school, after the end of the lessons, on the basis of mutual agreement. The interviews were conducted in Greek, as it was the native language of the teachers interviewed. Great care was taken over the selection and phrasing of the questions so that their meaning was both purposeful and clear and the research objectives comprehensible.

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[7] Some of the teachers had worked at the Greek education system around twenty-five years, some others around eight.

Findings Implications of the social and economic situation for students' lives

The majority of the teachers I interviewed argued that just by looking at their students they understand their families' financial problems. Teachers have observed many differences in the way students are dressed and in the way they act when they have to pay for something. Many students cannot afford to pay tickets for school excursions or visits to museums and the school tries to help them. In the classroom students discuss very often about the economic crisis and the financial problems of their families.

Almost all the teachers declared that they have noticed big differences in their students' diet. Students most of the times bring food from their home. The good thing in this situation, as teachers made the point, is the fact that students eat homemade food and they don't buy chips, chocolates or refreshments from the school canteen. Unfortunately the food sometimes is very little and occasionally some students have not got food at all.

Most of the teachers pointed out that students' behaviour in the classroom has changed a lot. Students lately are much more aggressive, full of tension and stress. The teachers explained that students bring in the classroom their family tensions and problems.

Many of the teachers I interviewed (F_1, F_3, F_4, M_2, M_4)[8] commented

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Profile of Interviewees				
M_1	Teacher	Male	49 years old	24 years service
M_2	Teacher	Male	45 years old	15 years service
M_3	Teacher	Male	52 years old	29 years service
M_4	Teacher	Male	54 years old	18 years service
F_1	Teacher	Female	51 years old	30 years service
F_2	Teacher	Female	43 years old	16 years service
F_3	Teacher	Female	31 years old	8 years service
F_4	Teacher	Female	40 years old	18 years service

that students lately are much more aware of what is going on in Greece and they are very interested in understanding what brought the country in this situation "*(...) their thinking, their questioning, their concern has changed (...)*" (F_2). They watch the news, they discuss about the socio-economic crisis with their parents, their teachers and their classmates, and they are very worried about the future. The positive thing, as teachers declared, is that students nowadays are more conscious and they are able to realize the difficulty of the situation. The negative thing is that they are very worried and it is difficult for them to concentrate on their lessons or enjoy their childhood.

Some teachers stated that they have noticed some problems with students' ability to work as a team. The classrooms are multitudinous (more than twenty-five students) and students are not willing to show understanding, and cooperate with their classmates. Students' behaviour towards their classmates is often hostile and this makes the situation very difficult for teachers.

The economic crisis and Greek national identity

Most of the teachers noted that Greek society is facing a serious crisis of values. Hardly any day goes without some news indicative of the above. There is an erosion of social, moral, cultural, economic and political values at all levels. The erosion of values has led to corruption, violence, and abuse of human rights, frustration and crisis of character. Teachers went so far as to say that if we think that the political system alone is responsible for this crisis, we are mistaken. No political system can develop in vacuum; it is the sub-system of the entire social system that is responsible. Teachers suggested that merely criticism to a particular sphere will not

solve the problem, nor accusing individuals or groups would take us a long way.

The majority of the teachers claimed that Greece apart from the crisis of values is facing a humanitarian crisis. No one in the country thought that the situation could change so dramatically; no one really imagined that Greece could face a crisis like this. As a teacher said: *(...) it's the first time in my life that I meet so often people who look for food in the bins, people who sleep outside, children who faint because they haven't eaten for days (...).* Greece now is a country in serious poverty and things certainly get worse every day. The poverty is rising all the time; many people have lost access to primary health services, medical examinations, hospitalisation and medication. In teachers' opinion before the crisis we had false security offered by the institutions and mechanisms of the EU.

The teachers also put forward that the Greek family institution is in crisis because of the economic crisis in Greece. According to the teachers there is a structural crisis in Greek families caused by the difficulties that their members are currently experiencing. The families have become disorganized and they experience stress. Family members have stopped communicating with each other and their closeness have started to diminish.

> (⋯) we don't talk to each other as we used to talk (⋯) we are all the time in front of the TV or in front of the computers. We don't go out very often and we have stopped doing interesting things such us fun activities and sports (⋯) (F_3).

However apart from the above the teachers stated that Greek crisis has prompted a new spirit of humanitarianism among Greek people. Even if things are difficult for the majority of people in Greece, there are many people who try to offer goods (used clothes, books etc.), food, and heating oil to people in extreme need.

Implications of the social and economic situation for Greek national identity

Most of the teachers communicated feelings of shame, disappointment and discontent with both the state and society. Teachers explained that they are embarrassed towards Europe and the rest of the world for being included in the same collective group as Greek politicians: *(…) we are very embarrassed for being Greek and for having this kind of politicians (…).* For them the Greek economic crisis reflects a failure of society, as a moral and civil institution, and contemporary Greece reflects feelings of shame and embarrassment.

According to the teachers the implications of the crisis are very serious for Greek national identity. Nowadays the social space is infused with misery and feelings of inferiority. Many teachers admitted that they do not feel anymore proud of their nationality, and superior to other nationalities. Some of them argued that they have started loosing their conceit and arrogance: *(…) we no longer believe that we are the "chosen people", our feelings of superiority have come to an end (…)*, which may be a good thing, but also the positive image of their national identity.

Some teachers claimed that one of the implications of crisis for Greek national identity is the fact that the self has become the internal "other" whom they blame for their existing misfortunes (e.g. corrupt politicians, tax evaders). They feel betrayed from their own compatriots. In the past they were afraid of the "others", now the "others" are themselves.

A few teachers, after they commented that there is a crisis in Greek national identity, tried to justify it rationally in occurrences of the foreign criticism. They explained that Greek identity crisis is due to the fact that the other countries refer to the Greeks as lazy, corrupted, inefficient, and belonging to a backward-looking society whose mentality lacked communal feelings of public good.

Several teachers stated that they can see a xenophobic backlash in Greek society. Unfortunately, as they said, the revival of extremist and fascist movements is very strong because of the crisis. The worst thing for them is that the voice of the extremist movements is very loud unlike the voice of the democratic movements, which is very low. As a teacher noted the extremists *(…)insist on the purity of the Greek blood and they think that if they clean up the country from the non Greeks the country will be saved (…).* The extremists are unified and they can approach easily the desperate people who look for someone or something to hold on.

One teacher tried to demonise the European Union and especially Germany for the whole situation in Greece. The teacher declared that the present crisis is a symptom of Germany's exploitation, and Greeks are irresponsible for the situation. She also pointed out that the European Union is jealous of Greece because of the fact that Greek people love their country and they were used to be very proud of it.

One teacher reported that the economic crisis has led people to shift to Greek products. Greek products never before were so much in demand. The crisis, according to this teacher, has made Greek people come together and unify against the external enemy, which is the other countries' economies.

In the view of one teacher Greece enters into slavery to international bankers. *(…) this is called economic enslavement (…) our children will be raised as slaves into poverty (…).* Greece is going down because it owes so much money that it will never be able to pay it off. This means that Greek people have been placed in perpetual slavery to the banking cabal and will never be free to live their lives without banks exploiting them. The aforementioned, as the teacher claimed, have negative impacts on Greek national identity.

The increase of incidents of racial violence against immigrants

Many teachers in their attempt to explain the increase of incidents of racial violence against immigrants and asylum seekers told me that unfortunately, during this period of social, political and economic crisis the immigrants serve as a scapegoat and provide for a distraction from the real causes of the crisis. Immigrants are the easy target that Greeks need at present for fighting and bullying. As reported by the teachers there are some people who believe that the only problem in Greek society is the immigrants. Immigrants for them are very violent and they reduce working class opportunities in schools, jobs, and housing. According to these people, if they manage to solve this problem by sending them away, things will be much better for everyone.

Some teachers reported that there is an increase of incidents of racial violence against immigrants because immigrants are generally seen as the main cause of the serious rise of criminality in Greece. As they say: *(...) if there wasn't any criminality because of the immigrants, then things would be different (...)*. A significant proportion of Greek people, as they stated, express their antipathy and fears towards the immigrants as exaggerated patriotism and xenophobia.

Few teachers argued that the increase of incidents of racial violence has to do with the increase of crimes committed by undocumented immigrants. For them the undocumented immigrants should be sent back to their countries; they accept immigration but not illegal immigration: *(...) I disagree with illegal immigration... when someone is illegal and lives in squalid and overcrowded conditions then it is very easy for him to commit a crime (...)*.

Two teachers suggested that the increase of the incidents of racial violence is a result of the way the whole Greek society treats immigrants.

As they told me, although Greek society is regarded to be fairly open to diversity, in reality it is a non-inclusive, a racist society: *(…) Greek former farmers suddenly transformed to bosses and treated the immigrantsas if they were slaves (…)*. Greeks were racist before the economic crisis but they didn't have a reason to express it, now that they have lost their jobs and their quality of life they have many reasons to be racist and act like this.

A few teachers reckoned that the increase of the incidents of racial violence is the Greek state's fault. The Greek state is so disorganised that cannot protect its citizens from the immigrants; as a result the citizens try to protect themselves. The Greek state, according to these teachers, should have done something in order to avoid the inflow of immigrants in the country. There are too many immigrants in Greece, a number that it cannot handle.

Implications of the social and economic situation for students' behaviour towards immigrant students in the classroom

In some teachers' opinion there are no implications of the current social and economic situation for Greek students' behaviour towards immigrant students in the classroom. They argue that there are not any incidents of racist behaviour between the students. Sometimes Greek students communicate negative racial opinions for the immigrant students in the classroom and the schoolyard -they call immigrant students with their nationality and tell them to go back to their countries- but this happens mostly when they are fighting with each other. Teachers do not count the above behaviour as racist and they justified it as behaviour, which is a result of what students hear from their parents at home. Some of

these teachers believe that there are not racial incidents nowadays because the immigrants have been gradually integrated in Greek society.

Some teachers reported that Greek student's behaviour towards immigrant students has changed lately. Students' behaviour has become more racist than it used to be before the economic crisis. Greek students speak derogatorily of immigrant students sometimes just for fun and they keep on highlighting the differences between them. Immigrant students try to hide their nationality in order not to face racist behaviour and they stay isolated. As teachers posited the reason why students act like this is the fact that kids at this age need to identify with the majority, which is stronger, not with the minorities.

> (...) I will never forget the student who suggested to the whole classroom that the best solution for the illegal immigrants would be to put them on a boat and let them die without food and without any help (...) (F$_2$).

Implications of the social and economic situation for the way teachers think about ethnic diversity

Most of the teachers argued that the current social and economic situation has affected the way they think about ethnic diversity. Because of the increase on racial incidents in Greece they try to think more about issues of racism and about their role as teachers. One teacher noted that there are no implications of the current situation for the way he thinks about immigrants. Another teacher admitted that sometimes it is difficult for her not to become racist in the classroom.

(...) I try to talk to my students about what it means to leave your country because of a war, what it means to live to another country without relatives, without job, without even a house to sleep (...) students show understanding when we talk about these issues but after a while some of them return to their nationalistic behaviour (...) nationalism is so deeply ingrained in our society that it is very difficult to get away from it (...).

One teacher pointed out that teachers should treat with the same way all the students no matter which is their nationality. She suggested that we should think of the immigrant students as potential Greek; they have been born in Greece and they go to Greek schools, so they are part of the Greek culture. This teacher had personal experience with immigrants in her home and in her classroom and she described this experience as something very positive: *(...) some immigrants who live in Greece many years are fully integrated and they offer to our country (...)I also had many immigrant students and it was great (...) there was an exchange of culture and traditions (...).*

Few teachers stated that it is unfair for Greek people to live in a country full of immigrants. The state should have done something to prevent so many people to come to Greece. It should have accepted only the ones that could be positively absorbed.

Challenges for the education system

Almost all the teachers argued that the Greek education system should change in order to meet the new challenges. Teachers posited that the government should spend more on education. The Greek education system needs better buildings, libraries, better books, new technology infrastructure, and teaching staff.

Many teachers (F$_2$, F$_4$, M$_1$, M$_2$, M$_3$) suggested that the way school functions as well as its learning system should be changed: schools should be open fewer hours, especially in the warm months; active and meaningful learning should take the place of rote learning; the learning system should be more flexible and responsive to students' capabilities and interests; there should be vocational guidance and counselling for students.

They also noted that the Greek education system needs structure and priorities. Teachers should not teach all the subjects with the same importance, some subjects are more important than other and should be taught that way. They reported also that the education system does not promote students' critical thinking; it promotes only knowledge, fact that they don't like. They suggested that the national education system should: teach in ways that encourage critical thinking, co-operation and democratic values of fairness and practices.

Many teachers (F$_1$, F$_3$, F$_4$, M$_1$, M$_2$, M$_3$) stated that their role at times is very stressful, neglected by the state and put in a second-class position by those in authority, by parents and the wider public. They argued that the "frontistiria"[9] (a prevalent type of private cram school in Greece) should be demolished. Parents should trust the state-sponsored education and appreciate teachers' work. Teachers feel a lack of reward following the cutbacks in their salaries and they believe that they need support from specialised staff such as psychologists, and moral rewards from the society. They also proposed that they need training and seminars. They admitted that although seminars are very important, it's up to them to improve their work.

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[9] Most Greek secondary and primary education students whose families can afford the significant fees attend a frontistirio because they believe that it is necessary given the poor quality of state-sponsored education in Greece, An even more expensive alternative is to hire private teachers who tutor the students at home (usually one teacher per subject).

Skills, attitudes and values for students in the present rapidly changing social context

All the teachers reckoned that in the present rapidly changing society it is very important for primary students to learn skills, attitudes and values. Most of the teachers noted that the education system should inspire conciliation and peace, promote an understanding of identity and diversity, construct a more tolerant conception of Greek national identity, transform antagonism into noble rivalry, encourage critical thinking, teamwork, co-operation, democratic values, respect, solidarity, imagination, creativity, stimulate spiritually the students to be good listeners, to be active, to participate in the wider societal context, and teach students how to learn.

Teachers' ability to meet the challenge of educating the next generation

Some teachers answered that they feel unprepared to fulfil their role as teachers. They explained that they need help from the state in order to meet the challenge of educating the next generation in a way that equip them for the future. They noted that professional development, trainings and seminars are more than necessary. They also claimed that apart from a change in education, a change of mentality in the family is required in order to help teachers do their work properly.

Few teachers told me that they try to improve their work all the time and especially nowadays that there is so much misery around. Their weapon in this difficult situation is their creativity. They try to approach

and teach their students using creative and pleasant activities. Their students respond with imagination and interest to their attempts.

One teacher stated that it is difficult for teachers to meet the challenge of educating the next generation because of the rise in the number of immigrant students in schools. Immigrant students, according to him, have got many problems, different background, different culture, and very often they are violent. It is hard for the teachers to be calm, fair and not to become racist even if they accept diversity. As a teacher stated

(…) we fight every day and we try through our love to show understanding but it is very difficult to justify some behaviour even for us who accept diversity (…) (M₁).

Teachers' views of the textbooks and the curriculum

Some teachers claimed that the new curriculum and textbooks[10] are much better than the previous. They are not anymore solely based on national knowledge and they take into account the future of the students as world citizens. But despite the fact that the curricula and the books have improved and give more attention to tolerance and the understanding of "others", teachers think that they still tend to be introvert and conservative: *they have got many non Greek or disable characters, which is very positive, but I can say that they are still conservative (…)* (M₂).

Many teachers stated that although the curriculum and the books are better than the previous, they are outdated and they need to be reviewed and change. The teachers put forward that the textbooks as well as the curriculum have not got any texts or aims that are related to the

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10 They were published in 2006-2007.

understanding of the economic crisis or the crisis of Greek family. They only deal with issues of knowledge. In their view the curriculum and the textbooks need to be adapted into the current needs of Greek society and give a new perspective, and why not a hope about how can Greeks overcome their problems.

Some teachers argued that the textbooks are unacceptable. As they explained the textbooks are written by academics and teachers at the Pedagogical Institute. The problem is that the academics and teachers who write the books have never taught in the classroom so they do not know the reality of it. Moreover, they pointed out that the books have not got any structure and topics that students are interested in, and they are not attractive.

Most of the teachers commented (F_1, F_2, F_3, F_4, M_1, M_2, M_4) that the textbooks are only one means of teaching. The way teachers teach is mediated not so much by the content of the books they use but mostly by their experience as well as their beliefs and values. Luckily, they feel free to use other books and materials if they want to.

Discussion

The discussion of the findings remains tentative because there are many limitations in this study in terms of the analysis. The analysis undertaken thus far highlights many issues but obviously there is a need of deeper analysis and more work with the data. Of course by reading the findings we cannot make claims about the majority of the teaching profession since the project relates to only a very small sample. Nonetheless, the findings do offer some interesting indications of teachers' thinking about Greek education system, Greek national identity and about issues of discrimination and racism.

The new social context and Greek teachers and students

Notwithstanding the huge economic difficulties, the anxiety for the future, the general disappointment and the pessimism of most of the teachers there are some teachers who have not given up hope and try to remain optimistic. These teachers find strength through their love for their students and believe that this crisis is one of a kind opportunity to redefine their life goals and rethink education as a process of self-knowing and empowerment in a period of enormous economic and ontological insecurity. They suggest that every single Greek is responsible for this situation, and that this current era could be a time of reform and opportunity for the whole country.

According to the teachers, Greek students face huge financial problems in their families. Teachers have observed differences in the way students are dressed and in their diet. They have also observed differences in students' behaviour in the classroom. Students lately are much more aggressive, full of tension and stress, and their behaviour towards their classmates, and particular towards their immigrant classmates, is often hostile and racist.

In the view of the teachers the new social context in Greece apart from negative implications has also some positive implications for students. Students lately are much more aware of what is going on in Greece and they are very interested in understanding what brought the country in this situation. They watch the news, they discuss about the socio-economic crisis with their parents, their teachers and their classmates.

Having in my mind teachers' responses on the implications of the crisis for them and for their students I could not agree more with Ken Jones who argues that a crisis is "a moment of contestation, in which

the reordering of social arrangements becomes a possibility" (Jones, 2010, p. 793). Crises are situations of difficulty that are causing chaos and constraints but also they offer opportunities for self-criticism, self-reflection and change (Christodoulou, 2010).

Any historical moment offers opportunities of change (Levin, 2012). Today, in Greece, we live and work in a historical moment of intense and rapid social change, which offers many possibilities. It is a chance for teachers to use this moment to come together, break the limitations that have been set up for teaching and learning in the past, and design a new path in education for the future (Cole, 2012).

The economic crisis and Greek national identity

Clarke and Newman (2012) claim that the economic crises are necessarily crises of ideas and values. If we look at Greek society we can see that apart from the economic crisis, which indicates a failure of society, as a moral and civil institution, it is facing a serious humanitarian crisis, a crisis of values, a structural crisis in the Greek family institution and an identity crisis. Contemporary Greece reflects feelings of shame, embarrassment and inferiority.

Greeks on the one hand feel betrayed from their own compatriots who have become the internal "other" whom they blame for their existing misfortunes; on the other hand they have come together and they have unified against the external enemy by demonising the European Union, the international bankers and the immigrants for the whole situation in Greece. The above have resulted in the appeal of extremist nationalist movements in Greece, and in a serious increase in racial incidents.

Unfortunately, there has been a complete lack of action by the

government and public bodies to address these issues. Xenophobic attitudes have increasingly been blamed for the absence of a civil society in Greece and the lack of anti-racist education in a country where children are still taught to take immense pride in their ethnic purity.

If we manage to sidestep the negative implications of the current situation in Greece we may succeed in becoming aware of the possibilities that this situation offers us. Crises, apart from amplifying disorientation and increasing the sense of flux, force people into the between and into bewildering array of new contexts that release creativity, energy and new possibilities (Bussey, 2012).

Most of the teachers argued that the current social and economic situation has made apparent new tendencies in society. The majority of Greek people have lost their sense of superiority over other nationalities; they have begun to lose also their conceit and arrogance, which, as teachers suggest, may be very positive. The Greek crisis has also prompted, over and against the growth of xenophobia, a new spirit of humanitarianism among the Greek people. Many philanthropy networks have been created lately all around Greece from people who want to offer to those in extreme need. Moreover, teachers feel that the current situation has influenced the way they think about being Greek and about ethnic diversity and it has made them think more about issues of racism and their role as teachers.

Challenges for the Greek education system

Teachers suggested that the Greek education system should change in order to meet the new challenges. The Greek education system needs better buildings, libraries, books, new technology infrastructure and teaching staff, although in relation to current economic policies of austerity

this is unlikely to be a priority for government. It also needs a change in its learning system; it should, the teachers argue, be more active and meaningful and more flexible and responsive to students' capabilities and interests.

Maybe the above reformulations would be more possible if Mouffe's critiques of deliberative approaches to democracy were taken seriously, and reforms established the possibility of an agonistic public sphere (Ruitenberg, 2008) and, as Norval (2000) argues, a non-essentialist account of identity formation that would not privilege the antagonistic over the differential dimension of identity.[11]

Drawing upon the writings of Mouffe, we could say that in relation to such radical democratic citizenship education systems would not be concerned with overcoming the "us/them" distinction but with constructing the "them" in such a way that it would no longer be perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an "adversary"[12] whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated (Mouffe, 2000). Perhaps such schools could meet the challenge of educating students in a way that would prepare them for their present and for a different future.

All of this might be made more possible if new forms of teacher professionalism were to develop; in as much that teachers need to revise, renew and bring their teaching skills up to date by means of professional development. Most of the teachers that were interviewed feel unprepared to fulfil their role as teachers and they pointed out that they need help from the state in order to meet the challenge of educating the next generation in a way that equip them for the future. Unless teachers learn new skills to enhance their confidence, they will be unable to perform their central role in a rapidly changing society (Fraser et al. 2007; Guskey, 2000; Sachs,

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[11] There is a crucial distinction between antagonism and agonism. Antagonism is a struggle between enemies, while agonism is a struggle between adversaries (Mouffe, 2000).

[12] That is, somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 101-102).

2000).

As far as the curriculum and textbooks are concerned, teachers commented that some of these are outdated and badly written and need to be reviewed and adapted into the current needs of Greek society. Although their content has improved and gives more attention to tolerance and the understanding of "others", they still present the Greeks as the fountainhead of European civilization and focus on other states only through the teaching of the wars, expansionary policies in the past and hostile stances in the present. But as the teachers commented, the curriculum and the textbooks are only one means of teaching. The way teachers teach is mediated not so much by the content of the curriculum and the books but mostly by their experience as well as their beliefs and values.

Drawing on teachers' responses we could argue that although centralization is at the root of many of the problems of the Greek education system, the centralization of curriculum and textbooks should not be viewed as a de facto de-professionalization of the teaching force. This would oversimplify the reality and would ignore important aspects of the complex relationships between teachers and the state (Sachs, 2001). We should not forget that teachers could be active in responding to the curriculum and textbooks control (McCulloch, Helsby, & Knight, 2000) even in Greece where the education system is highly centralized.

Conclusions

In the above discussion of the findings we attempted not to focus only on the negative implications of the socio-economic crisis for the Greek education system but to understand the core values of the current era and the crucial issues that may become opportunities as well as driving forces for reflection and change. Following Rogoff's ideas (2008) we tried not to stick to how bad things are and to think about the principles we cherish in

the education process (Ball, 2012).

Greek society apart from the economic crisis is facing a serious humanitarian crisis, a crisis of values, a structural crisis in the Greek family institution and an identity crisis. As anti-immigrant sentiments fuel, they reveal a rather severe, deeply divided and polarized society that proliferates politics of exclusion and inclusion through emphasizing deep rooted distinctions between Greeks and immigrants, while creating a hostile gap that separates the two, rather than fostering conditions of reconciliation.

The current social and economic situation has made apparent huge difficulties and severe problems for Greek citizens but also new tendencies in society. The Greek crisis has prompted, over and against the growth of xenophobia, a new spirit of humanitarianism among Greek people. It has also made Greek people lose their sense of superiority over other nationalities, their conceit and arrogance, and become more interested in and conscious about what is happening in their country, which I believe is very positive.

We agree with some teachers who believe that this crisis is one of a kind opportunity to redefine our life goals and rethink education as a process of self-knowing and empowerment. There is room for imagining another way of thinking and I think that if we manage to sidestep the negative implications of the current situation in Greece we may succeed in becoming aware of the possibilities that this situation offers us, and in preparing for the new challenges.

To survive crises, financial or otherwise, requires new stories to emerge (Bussey, 2012), and we are of the opinion that the education system is well placed to offer such stories. We believe that we are in need of exploring precariously and insightfully what the socio-economic crisis in Greece may tell us about how to proceed in both opening up new understandings of pedagogy, education, politics, and establishing a notion of hope that is vigorous and at the same time realistic. We live at a crucial

time and we need to replace the ethos of surviving that we have adopted within the last years with the possibility of imagining a decent life and the promises of a real democracy.

By reviewing the findings of this study we can see that there is room for imagining another way of thinking. If we manage to think of the crisis from the bottom up, to see the gaps rather than the closures (Ball, 2012), and closely examine the breaks and rupture points through which new tendencies in society are disclosed and made apparent (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984), then we could deploy and use education in framing an imperative for insights and indications of what is to be done.

As Rogoff (2008) argues if education can displace our energies from what needs to be opposed to what can be imagined, or at least perform some kind of negotiation of their relation, then perhaps we have an education that is reconstructive rather than reproductive. "It is the very depth of the crisis that may force the shedding of the most deeply entrenched (mis)beliefs about education, enabling thereby a new space for innovation and growth" (Ball, 2012, p.ix). We have to prepare for the new challenges; a lot is at stake.

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