Intercultural Education: A Vehicle for the Ethnicization of Educational Policy in Greece?

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article l'auteur discute et évalue la situation de l'éducation interculturelle en Grèce. Il mentionne que l'émergence de cet interculturalisme est apparu dans les années 1980, en premier lieu au niveau de l'analyse théorique et en deuxième lieu dans les années 1990 au niveau de la politique éducative, qui coïncidait avec l'arrivée d'une grande vague d'immigrants de l'ex-Union soviétique et des Balkans. L'auteur conclut que si les dirigeants politiques en Grèce, ont sincèrement l'intention d'aborder la question de la cohésion sociale et la diversité culturelle de ses citoyens, alors il doivent chercher à le faire par le renforcement des valeurs démocratiques d'égalité, de justice et de solidarité, car ces valeurs garantissent le droit de tous les citoyens, mais aussi le droit des groupes culturels à sauvegarder des éléments importants de leur culture tout en participant à la culture commune.

ABSTRACT

In this article the author discusses and evaluates the situation of intercultural education in Greece. He mentions that the emergence of this interculturalism appears at first in the 1980s at the level of theoretical analysis and later in the 1990s at the level of educational policy, coinciding with the arrival of a large wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and from the Balkans. The author concludes that if the political leadership in Greece, sincerely intents to address the issue of social cohesion and diversity of its citizens, then it should seek to do so by strengthening democratic values of equality, justice and solidarity, since these will assure the right of all citizens, but also the right of cultural groups to preserve important elements of their culture while participating in the common culture.

1. Introduction

The challenge facing Greece in the 21st century is the development of a democratic framework of social and cultural values that meets the needs and

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aspirations of all citizens and one equivalent to a European and global level.[1] The accession of Greece to the European Union, constantly reminds us that we are all "ethnic" and that world heritage is not solely the work of a single people. The opportunities for intercultural dialogue among ethnocultural groups and the growing need for cultural tolerance, based on the understanding and recognition of cultural differences, constitute major challenges to education and society. The inclusion and the participation of 'others' in the economic, social, political and cultural life of modern societies raises the issue of citizen participation in general and the possibilities arising from it, at a time when abstinence and indifference characterise increasingly larger sections of society in modern representative democracies.[2]

The last thirty years, at least, have been marked by the beyond the boundaries phenomenon[3] in the areas of economy, society and politics, hence, undermining peace and democracy. With reference to the beyond the boundaries global capital which is only interested in its own immediate profit, K. Tsoukalas states that: "*As modern Attilas, the venture capitalists-investors can now move freely within a boundary less and non-border restrictions 'desolate country', attacking, invading for profit, 'laundering', abstracting and seizing wealth, destroying, plundering, liquidating and then departing… while simply gazing indifferently at the carnage accumulated in their path*". [4] In a similar way, Stephane Hessel,[5] in his latest book titled "Indignez Vous!", underlines that the power of money has never been so limitless, insolent and selfish, reaching even the upper echelons of the state. The disparity between the rich and the poor has never been so deep and the pursuit of money has never been so hallowed. He comes to the conclusion that we live in an era of global dictatorship of financial markets, undermining peace and democracy.

It seems that increasingly, more and more people are beginning to realise that globalization, which is based on the neoliberal model of growth, has increased inequality, has shattered social cohesion, abolished social achievements, created insecurity and uncertainty without ensuring stability. The recent riots in the Arab world are further confirmation of the instability and uncertainty.[6]

The interest of intellectuals has always focused on democratic education. Truly convinced of the potential of education to contribute significantly to intercultural dialogue and to the development of democratic citizenship, they supported the development of culturally enriched schools, which could offer a democratic intercultural program where all children can learn from the wealth of societal diversity and where trends of balkanization and separation in modern societies can be ceased or even reversed. Schools can and should contribute substantially to the societal eradication of hubris (ύβρις), from an arrogant past which continues to

affect us negatively, and restore social cohesion and solidarity through the reconfiguration of democratic values, of political and social equality and justice. Equality, a fundamental value of democracy, delineates a relationship in which man as a social being must be with others. It is not easy to discern the meaning and value of equality from the meaning and value of justice. Equality, as a means of identifying a particular type of relationship that exists between members of a whole is valued and pursued when it is just. A relationship of equality is pursued to the extent that it is deemed just, that is to say to the extent that it establishes or restores order and harmony between the parts of a whole. Equality has value to the extent that it constitutes a necessary condition for orderliness, for harmony between parts of a whole and for internal balance of a system characterized as just.[7] In democracy, justice is depended on tolerance and tolerance is depended on the education of children who can understand and evaluate different forms of diversity without fearing them. The diversity which exists in schools is an excellent pedagogical teaching tool for cultivating the skills of understanding and assessing those cultural differences which are creative in nature for life in a multicultural society. Therefore, the discussion for interculturalism and intercultural education can not be limited to a discussion on cultural differences, but should include, in particular, discussions on democracy and citizenship in modern culturally heterogeneous capitalist societies.[8]

2. The Particularity of Interculturalism in Greece

The emergence of interculturalism in Greece is noted in the 1980's at the level of theoretical analysis and later in the 1990's at the level of educational policy, coinciding with the arrival of a large wave of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and from the Balkans.

At the level of pedagogical discourse,[9] there is an attempt to identify the principles and the conceptual content of the intercultural approach and to stress the need for its adoption in Greek schools. Despite differences in the conceptualization of intercultural education, there is a consensus regarding its fundamental principle, namely that its scope extents to all students within a school unit, according to the belief that a good school is good for all its students, while a bad school, is bad for all students.

At the level of educational policy, the Law 2413/1996 acknowledges that multicultural Greek society and intercultural education is adopted into the Greek educational system. Under the Law, the aim of intercultural education is the "organisation and operation of primary and secondary schools for the provision of education to young people with educational, social, cultural and learning

needs differences".[10] In these schools, especially designed curricula with additional or alternative courses can be implemented. By Ministerial approval and following joint consultations between local and regional educational authorities and the IPODE (The Institute for the Education of Greeks Abroad and Intercultural Education), it is possible for schools to be able to:

1. convert state schools to schools for intercultural education

2. establish classes for intercultural education in state schools

3. establish intercultural schools under the auspices of local government authorities, the church and charitable non-profit organisations, and which may be funded from the Private Education Fund.[11]

However, it is noted that the Law 2413/1996, although introduces intercultural education to Greece, contains inconsistencies and ambiguities and confusing directives referring to separate schools, classes or sections and addressing activities to students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds and not to all children within the school. Activities addressed *to all students* constitute the basic premise of the intercultural approach. According to the law, operators of any ethno-cultural, migration or other group can set up a charitable organisation or body and in turn demand the establishment and operation of a separate school for 'their' children.

The contradictions and the risk of a prevailing separatist logic and practice is noted by M. Damanakis when he stipulates that: "*The Law 2413/1996 also poses an imminent danger, namely the establishment of minority schools disguised behind the façade of intercultural education.*"[12] Damanakis further suggests that *"the contradictions in the law may be overcome during the process of its implementation, through the activation or non activation of the provisions that pose the risk of a 'separatist' education. In this way, the accentuation of the positive aspects of the law will solely depend on those who will implement it.*"[13] Indeed, during the implementation of three programmes, enacted by the Ministry of Education to promote the new policy and the implementation of intercultural education in Greek schools, there was clearly a different approach adopted by the scientific leaders of the programmes.[14] For a decade, from 1997 when the intercultural education programmes commenced, till 2007, the programmes for the 'Education of Returning Greek and Foreign Migrant Students' and the 'Education of Roma Children' implemented the intercultural education approach, while in the programme for the 'Education of Muslim Children' in Thrace, the ethnic - minority approach was applied. Given that the proponents for the ethnic - minority in education were the instigators of this legal provision favouring the establishment of ethnic minority schools, it is quite

difficult to find any support of the view expressed by M. Damanakis that "*the contradictions of the law reflect the theoretical deficit of the time*."[15] The ambiguity and the contradictions reflect a clear ideological stance of the instigators for this provision in the law for ethnic - minority schools and for obvious reasons covered it under the guise of intercultural education.[16] Intercultural education can only exist in a democratic school that addresses all students, irrespective of ethnicity, race, gender and religion, as political and social equals. And as aptly noted by A. Gotovos, intercultural education can not exist in a political vacuum, "It requires a model citizen and a model relationship of the citizen to the state in which the person is a citizen of. A school program in which a citizen of the State - in this case the minority citizen - is presented as an extension of a people of another country, with specific mental, emotional and cultural commitments towards a third state, then, this is a pedagogical implementation of the ideology of minority ethnicism, and in no way can it be considered as intercultural education."[17] The intercultural approach can be understood as a complex and essentially continuous negotiation between social groups for freedom, equality and justice. This can not occur by replacing one mono-cultural nation state with many others, as evinced in the case of separatist educational logic and practice. A democratic polity assumes the responsibility to foster in all its youth the necessary skills and competencies so that they may function successfully in a democratic society, and whose core values - political and social equality and justice - can be shared and identified with. Tolerance and recognition of cultural diversity, as basic principles of intercultural education can make a substantial contribution to the establishment of common cultural values, of mutual trust and solidarity between social groups and to the preservation of the unity of the nation state.

3. The Implementation of Differentiated Approaches to Interculturalism in Greece

From this point on, we will endeavour to present and analyse as much as it is possible in the present paper, the particular case of interculturalism in Greece through the description of the different approaches adopted by the leaders of the three previously mentioned programmes, with the purpose and expectation of shedding some light on what seems to be a rather unclear field regarding the intercultural approach, which, in terms of legislation, still constitutes the official educational policy of the Ministry of Education. The position advocated here is that in multicultural societies, intercultural education and democracy are complementary concepts, since one requires the other, hence the use of the word "democratic multicultural education" in this paper.

3.1. The Intercultural Approach in the Programmes: "Education of Returning Greek and Foreign Migrant Students" and "Education of Roma Children"

The understanding shared by the first leaders of the programmes for the 'Education of Returning Greek and Foreign Migrant Students' and the 'Education of Roma Children', G. Markou and A. Gotovos respectively,[18] is that interculturalism can provide a framework of shared values within which different cultures coexist and interact. They do not however share the belief that the cultural groups that compose a society are homogeneous nor are they "sealed" so as to repel influences from other cultures, particularly from the national culture. Their main premise is that people are confronted with strong influences from the common national culture throughout the entire process of socialisation even if they retain strong ties to their group. This means that despite the existence of particular characteristics of different ethnocultural groups, all citizens of a distinct society share many common characteristics and values. The various ethno-cultural groups can preserve their own cultural values, provided that they are congruent to the framework of common values such as political and social equality and justice, the Constitution and the laws of the State, providing evidence daily that it is a just state.

It is noted here, that the common cultural framework is considered dynamic and flexible having the capacity to adapt to existing and future multiculturalities of the population. This understanding of interculturalism, which treats cultural diversity as an asset, was adopted by the political leadership of the Ministry of Education and by the education community and was supported by a particular educational practice nationally in schools except for, notably, in the region of Western Thrace. For the leaders of the above mentioned programmes, the ethnic - minority education model is not democratically legitimised, that is, it can not be advocated on the basis of democratic principles, especially when the state finances or subsidises the operation of such schools. In multicultural settings, a democratic state has the responsibility to ensure that all citizens have access to intercultural education and take measures so as to avoid succumbing to pressures or becoming depended upon the generosity of any particular ethnic group agents and parents. Democratic education responds to cultural challenges of the various ethnocultural groups that make up society *by supporting intercultural dialogue* as a means of addressing differences, and *by providing a state education that can best educate all children as political and social equals*.[19]

In short, the educational challenge is for an education that assists all students to acquire knowledge and develop attitudes and skills necessary to function in

multicultural societies in both national and supranational settings. The development of students' ability to function in all environments and to identify all the common cultural expressions, requires an intercultural school curriculum that contributes to the shaping of a cultural identity and reflects the aspirations, hopes and opportunities for all citizens while at the same time promoting public interest. A curriculum that fosters social unity and reflects the cultural diversity within a just state and integrates all its citizens, from whom the state derives its legitimacy from. An emphasis on difference and the enhancement of the particular identity of various ethnic cultural groups within a society without activating the tools that promote social cohesion and unity, leads to the "balkanization" of the nation state. Social cohesion and unity is inextricably linked to the transformation and reproduction of society and has been addressed in the past through the acquisition of 'national collective identities' as unifying elements.[20] For the sake of general public interest, which is often accompanied by the promise or expectation of assured basic survival and prosperity, it is possible for individuals to identify with the wider group and to conform to the specific legal and social commitments. A contributing factor to this was the establishment and development of the welfare state that fostered, at least, for the majority citizens, a conviction that their 'best interests' are aligned with the promotion of social cohesion and solidarity and that the specific society can go on eternally without themselves having to be constantly vigilant and resistant to those forces which conspire against them.[21] The dismantling of the welfare state once again raises the crucial issue of social cohesion and solidarity in neo-liberal democracies.

3.2. The Ethnic-Minority Approach in the Programme: "The Education of Muslim Children"

At the level of a theoretical pedagogical discourse, advocates of the ethnic - minority approach, hold the view that the nation state is made up of various ethnocultural groups (minorities-majority) who compete against each other for the promotion of their individual economic and political self interests and that, the inclusion of members of these ethnocultural groups into general society can be fully realised through the strengthening of the capacity of ethnocultural groups to negotiate their interests with the dominant group from a position of power.

Proponents of this perception invest in the 'difference' and over-emphasise what separates rather than what unites the various cultural groups within a society. According to K. Tsoukalas,[22] the excessive accentuation and the unconditional and limitless projection of cultural difference pose a serious threat

by steering the discussions about diversity away from the issue of class and of the domination of the neo-liberal, self regulated market economy, which has resulted in a rapid growth of poverty and unemployment.

With reference to school education, proponents of the ethnic - minority education model argue that there are no common principles guiding state education for children and for this reason each ethnocultural group must decide for itself how to educate 'their' children. In other words, each group should have the right to choose the education that the children of this group will receive. They hold the belief that the state must maintain a neutral stance regarding the content of education and the teaching methodologies adopted in the education of the various ethnocultural communities and that the state must allocate resources equitably to the various models of education.

In the absence of the possibility of establishing a separate ethnic - minority school, then, extensive emphasis should be given to support programs for the development of the ethnic-minority identity and for mother tongue maintenance and bilingualism. The school curriculum, they argue, should take into serious consideration the diversity of the groups by accommodating within its framework, the learning styles, the history, the religion and the experiences of students from the various ethnocultural groups. The curriculum should also foster the development of the competencies and skills required for an individual to be able to function successfully in the context of the ethno-cultural group and to actively participate in its social activities, which in turn strengthen and highlight the group. Those who consider that the strengthening and the preservation of the identity of the ethnocultural groups is the primary purpose of education, in essence support an ethnic - minority model of education. While denouncing the monocultural nation state, proponents of the policies for identities use the term to support multi-separatism and ultimately the plethora of monocultural groups. Hence, policies for the recognition of identities adopt an approach of empowering each ethnocultural community to sustain linguistic and cultural particularities through the generations. The approach that perceives inequalities due to cultural differences and interprets them on the basis of ethnic - minority origins, is not only problematic from a scientific point of view but also complicates an existing difficult situation, as it further fuels conflict, chauvinism and hostility between ethnocultural groups and by propagating separatist practices.[23]

Those responsible for the programme for the education of Muslim children, consistent with their ideological position of a separatist ethnic-minority education, align themselves with the leaders of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace who, in turn, claim to have the sole responsibility for the education of "their" own

children in regions with a predominate Muslim population (in the districts of Organi, Echinos, Glafki, Thermi and Smithis, etc.).

The leaders of the programme for the education of Muslim children consider *"the request by the minority group leaders for a substantial increase in the number of minority secondary schools as both appropriate and equitable,"* [24] despite the fact that they themselves characterise these schools to be ghettos, and despite the considerable sums spent and that continue to be spent without substantial programme results.

However, they don't endorse the parallel request by the minority group leaders for the cessation of state schools in the previously mentioned regions in which they seemingly have sole responsibility of, arguing that this would be a violation of the democratic right of parental choice between public and minority school education. That is, the choice between two types of schooling, imposed on them without being able to have a say regarding the type of school and the content of the school curricula. Most notably, though, Muslim families from mixed settlements are recipients of various forms of pressure, ranging from informal social control and criticism, to the threat of enforcement or actual economic and other forms of sanctions, particularly towards 'non conforming' families- that is, towards those families that insist on enrolling their children in state schools. As A. Gotovos states *"...the fact remains that there exists systematically a strategic alignment of Muslim citizens towards the politically correct choice of the minority elite, a choice which not only omits to include any solutions to strategies of integration, but also, diachronically, is denounced as ' assimilative' or 'of betrayal' ".*[25]

Parental choice for minority schools is not solely due to the pressure exercised by the minority elite, but also as a consequence of the ideology of the Greek identity based on narrow religious criterion[26] and hence, noting, the inability of the Greek state school system to ensure political and social equality to all students and to include in the school curriculum the teaching of minority languages and aspects of culture and contributions from the various minority groups in the economic and cultural life of Western Thrace.

This shortcoming leads to question the legitimacy of the claim by state school education for the education of minority groups, especially when it is a conscious choice.[27] At this point, we need to stress the fact that the invocation of the right of parents to select for their children a school of their choice (parental choice) was the convincing factor on which the proponents of neoliberalism based their arguments on, so that neo-liberal educational policies such as those seen during the Thatcher Government in the UK and the Reagan administration in United States, could be accepted; policies which unfortunately, are still instigated today, in many countries.[28]

It is difficult to comprehend any endorsement for the request of extending the provision of minority schools, despite the persistence of the minority leaders that these schools must "remain unchanged", when taking into consideration the concluding statements by the programme scientific leaders, that the minority school - ghetto "*confines the minority children... and increases their overall (geographic and social) segregation and alienation. Additionally, social fusing between minority and majority children is restricted, the encounter with the 'other' by both groups of children from an early age is obstructed, dual linguistic osmosis is thwarted, and the bridging of the gap between the two groups as a means of avoiding isolation, is averted.*"[29] It is acknowledged that the implementation of the principles of democratic isonomy by the state "*has cleared the pathway for minority communities to function as communities through the confrontation of ideas, the negotiation of specific social interests and through dialogue amongst its members on all issues.*"[30] It is also acknowledged that minority children need to be distanced from minority ghettos, who are often netted by the segregation of the local community and by its marginalisation and that harmonious integration and social advancement can only be achieved through social fusing and osmosis.[31] Despite all acknowledgments, their only educational proposal is the creation of Support Centres (KESPEM), "*an alternative road to schooling that revokes the minority ghetto by teaching and socialising children in truly bilingual and bicultural environments*".[32]

It is of particular interest to note that, this 'side road', the KESPEMs (Support Centres) is presented as the most important innovation of the programme while at the same time proclaiming that its success is solely due to the strengthening of the minority identity in the minority schools. As a solution to the general problems, they invest extensively in a 'long and difficult, open citizen participation and control' dialogue, replacing the two authoritarian monologues " the singular voice of their respective leaderships and the enforcement of silence to all civil social groups..."[33] However no persuasive answer is given to the crucial question: how is it possible to foster in young people, dialogue, tolerance, respect and recognition of diversity, when the right of parental choice regarding school selection, is placed over and above the right of the state to provide its citizens with an education for political and social equality which ensures both the interests of minority students and the unity of the wider community. If the provision of an education that promotes political and social equality can be realised in state schools, it can not however be assured in ghetto schools, as these minority schools stand today. Irrespective of the curriculum content of minority schools, this educational model is designed to prevent any state school from offering 'something extra', even if its citizens have requested it, after intercultural dialogue.[34] It also hinders the democratic right to public debate on the value and

limitations of tolerance and recognition, and generally restrains the content of the criteria for a common education.

The request for the right of parents to expand minority schools can not be legitimized on the basis of democratic principles of political and social equality and justice for intercultural tolerance, respect and recognition of the cultural 'other'. However, no reference is made to the interests of the children who should be taken into account when considering these segregating concepts and practices for specific groups, particularly, when they use the criterion of the basic democratic principles which aim at addressing all children as political and social equals for the purpose of achieving segregational outcomes. It has become evident that, the priority given to the right of parental choice over the interests of the children, constitutes a fundamental problem. In short, despite the efforts by the scientific leaders to present a picture of a differentiated educational 'policy' to that of the minority leaders, in essence, they do not differ, since they endorse and support the existence and expansion of 'minority school-ghettos', as they themselves characterise them, and continue to spend program funding on the operation of these 'detour' (KESPEMs) rather than promoting mainstream democratic intercultural schools.[35]

4. The Ethnic - Minority Model and its Deficit Democratic Legitimacy

For the majority of Greeks, the presence of migrants does not constitute a threat to the Greek culture, Greek identity and to the wider community. The same applies to the large Roma population, which for centuries forms an integral part of Greek society. At no time in Greek history, have the Gypsies been noted as representing a threat to the rest of the community, or exhibiting any form of violence. The vast majority of them have been integrated or even assimilated, whereas the rest have adopted a way of communal life distant from the political processes which underpin wider society, and conceded with the view that there was no reason to insist or even demand, at least in the area of education, the implementation of the principle of political and social equality and justice. This exception, however, has ultimate consequences when the actual state begins to place the value of preserving a particular way of communal life over the value of democratic education. Undoubtedly, the consequences are serious when the state succumbs to the demands of the various minority groups, which, by various means, even by force, pursue, and in some cases, succeed in taking responsibility of the education of 'their' children, as noted in the case of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace. In the case of the gypsies, we are dealing with a communal group

that operates on the logic of 'withdrawal' (independent of the reasons that dictates such an action) from the social and political processes, while the second communal group (the Muslim minority of Western Thrace) seeks secession, segregation.

The issues posed with the concept of segregation are particularly serious as it jeopardises the unity of the wider community and it infringes on basic democratic - intercultural principles, such as political and social equality, justice, tolerance, respect and recognition of diversity.[36] The transfer of exclusive jurisdiction and responsibility for the education of muslim children to representative bodies within the minority community, simply because they represent a different culture and on the legal premise of an agreement during the dictatorial regime of period 1967 - 1974 (the Greek-Turkish Agreement of 1968), cannot be legitimated through the democratic principles. It is important to note here that the demands raised by the minority groups and the pressure placed for segregated education for 'their' children, is usually done so in the name of political and social equality and justice. With regard to the 'educational position' of the Muslim minority, A. Gotovos[37] notes that this is constituted within a framework of cooperation with the various instruments of the Turkish State (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish Consulate), and legitimated by the invocation of the principle of respect for difference and by the principle of respect for human rights. The legitimate democratic state has the sole responsibility of defending effectively its obligations and legal obligation. It must ensure the highest political and social equality for all and avoid succumbing to pressure for the creation of alternative segregating educational institutions. A democratic public intercultural school is what will ensure, in the best possible way, the political and social equality for all and foster in *all* children, tolerance, respect and intercultural dialogue.

According to Charles Taylor[38] a democratic education supports the intercultural principles of tolerance and recognition based on respect for individuals and political and social equality, rather than those based on different traditions, the proportionate representation of various groups or the rights of perpetuating cultures. This means that democracy can not accept any kind of cultural practice for the sole reason that some groups or individuals seek to enforce it, claiming cultural reasons. Nor can it tolerate programmes that mandate segregational logic that reinforce 'ghettoisation' and marginalisation. The value of a cultural practice or belief can not simply remain on the level of discussion of subject matter, but its value should arise through the understanding and evaluation of its contribution to the processes of supporting and consolidating political and social equality and justice. Different beliefs and practices are therefore subject to understanding and evaluation. As aptly stated

by K. Tsoukalas,[39] the recognition of cultural diversity and the promotion of the right to difference should be targeted at extending democracy and implementing the basic principles of equality and justice, beyond aspects of nationalism and racism, particularly those embedded in ideological, racial fictions. The effective exercise of a just state and cohesive law-abiding society, set the terms and the limits of the salience of cultural differences.

5. For a Democratic - Intercultural Education for all Children Without Exclusion

With great difficulty would any democratic citizen disagree with the principle that all children, irrespective of nationality, race, gender or religion, be educated as political and social equals and that tolerance and recognition form the basic premises of intercultural education. One of the main goals of democratic education is to foster in young people, the ability and commitment to create a society characterised by its isopolity and isonomy.[40] The education of political and social equity is particularly essential in societies that exhibit linguistic and cultural diversity, as it provides the opportunity of developing a common framework of democratic values that can be supported from the perspective of the various cultures. It is precisely these values that arouse nations and ignite revolt by people demanding political liberties and social justice. From the time of Solonas and Kleisthenes to the present date, this is the constant lesson from history. The recent riots in Tunisia and Egypt and the likelihood that these could spread to other Arab countries, the Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said that "*the lesson that emerges is that the Arab world should not be treated as something different. We are not different. We want to live free and with dignity, with our fundamental rights and with governments that take nurture our needs.*"[41] This phenomenon, that could be labeled as cross - cultural values, should not be confused with culturally neutral values as advocated by supporters of the neo-liberalism. Values are not and can never be culturally neutral. An intercultural democratic citizen is one who respects and treats equally others, is tolerant of cultural differences and is able to recognise their role in shaping society. The shaping of citizens within the institutions of education requires a process of not only cognitive and cultural learning but also of democratic socialisation of people who are neither 'tabula raza' in terms of cognitive and moral development, nor prepared to exercise their democratic rights and obligations. This applies more so for people who come from environments with a serious democracy deficit.[42] The purpose of such an education is to foster in all children the ability to undertake the responsibilities and to assert their rights that emanate from the principles of isopolity and isonomy

which must form the foundation upon which the relationship between state and citizen, regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, sex, etc, is constructed in any country. The disagreements, which are anticipated in relation to the content of political and social equality and its practices which need to be implemented, are discussed between the different citizens, hence, constituting an essential element of state education in multicultural democracies. In democracy, citizens are deemed capable of disagreeing and discussing what differences broaden democracy and what limit it. We are, however, obliged to identify those cultural differences - practices which we must acknowledge and be tolerant towards, since not all differences and practices form part of the democratic culture. Even if we accept that all cultural variants - practices are of equal value, they don't however have the same impact on democracy, that is to say, that not all constitute the same beneficial significance for democracy. The issue of social cohesion requires any democratically structured society to develop a framework of common cultural codes and values, but also criteria for distinguishing between permissible and impermissible cultural differences and practices. An unrestricted cultural tolerance in the sense of recognition and protection of all cultural differences and practices, is not consistent with the development of a cohesive society that controls and if necessary suppresses those cultural differences and practices deemed 'harmful' for democracy. The right to cultural self-determination, writes K. Tsoukalas *"is nothing more than a limited historical scope of rhetoric construction, a scope embedded by the systematic concealing that this right is intrinsically selective, and therefore in reality, controlled."*[43] Amy Gutmann[44] distinguishes between those differences that are simply tolerated from those that are respected. Tolerance covers a wide range of views on the condition that they don't pose any threat or harm others. Respect covers those instances were we disagree, yet acknowledge that they express a particular moral stance. The debate surrounding these 'respectable moral disagreements' gives us the opportunity to learn from our differences.

Contradistinctively, discussions of tolerance and respect are redundant in situations where racist or anti-Semitic attitudes and behaviours are prevalent, simply because the exponents of these attitudes and behaviours deny the equal treatment of others, while at the same time, are unable to explain their perception of inferiority / superiority of certain individuals or groups, over others. In general, we can say that political and social education should nurture in students tolerance and recognition of those cultural differences that contribute to the formation of equal citizens, thus being in a position to defend political and social equality. When for example, the dominant group hampers the basic objective of the education for all children as equal citizens for the purpose of preserving its prerogatives, it places in serious jeopardy the actual democratic education for

social and political equality. The same applies in instances where members of ethnocultural - minority groups engage in applying various forms of pressure on parents to enroll their children in ethnic - minority schools rather than in regular state schools. In the absence of ethnic - minority schools, special emphasis is given to the preservation of the language code of the mother tongue and neglect the code of the official language of the school. The language policy in linguistic multicultural environments is an exceptionally complicated issue and there is no singular solution which applies to all instances. The functioning of a democratic intercultural school and the fulfilment of its objectives for political and social equality and justice, prerequisites that all students speak the same language. And this can not be other than the official language of the state.

It is no less than naive to support the view that the development of skills and competencies in all children so as to be able to strive for a just and well-governed state, can be achieved by a minority language taught curriculum in a minority school environment.

6. Concluding Remarks

In times of global instability and uncertainty, as we witness today, social cohesion and unity constitute the highest priority for contemporary Greek society, offering serious challenges which can best be addressed through the expansion of democratic institutions, and principally, through the process of application.

The contribution of education in the shaping of intercultural democratic citizenship is significant when the process is not restricted to cultural education teaching but rather when it embraces democratic socialization. That is to say, equipping students with the essential knowledge and understanding necessary for the participation in the democratic process and the knowledge of the limits (moral values) so as to not bring about hubris both at an individual and collective level. The democratic socialization of the intercultural citizen should not be confined to the theoretical analysis of democratic principles and to the affirmation of the gap between democratic ideals and social realities, but rather, focus on the process of implementation, that is to say on the content of democracy.

This should be reflected in the goals and objectives of the curriculum in its entirety, so as to accommodate conditions for cooperation and hence equipping all students with basic skills for life and with essential intercultural competencies and skills, if they are to function adequately in national and supranational environments and be in a position to defend basic democratic principles for a more humane society.

In a democratic society, citizens strive for the improvement of the entire society and not just for the rights of their own ethnocultural communal group. This is or rather should be, the intended objective by the Greek state in their provision of the right to immigrants and their children to acquire Greek citizenship, that is to say, the right to become Greek citizens.

The emphasis, therefore, can not merely focus on the maintenance of their mother tongue language and the strengthening of their ethnic identity, but on the establishment of a common field, a common democratic framework with fundamental principles which all Greek citizens regardless of ethnicity, religion, sex and race can identify with. These changes have the capacity of transforming the nation state and ensuring social cohesion and national unity, a prerequisite in addressing successfully the major challenges of a new era characterised by global instability and of economic, political, social and cultural unrest, the consequences of which can not yet be predicted.

In short, if the political leadership in Greece, sincerely intents to address the issue of social cohesion and diversity of its citizens, then it should seek to do so by strengthening democratic values of equality, justice and solidarity, since this will ensure the rights of *all* citizens, but also the right of cultural groups to preserve important elements of their culture while participating in the common culture.[45] This also constitutes the basic goal in education policies of other Member-States of the European Union where all social groups and all citizens are able to participate and contribute in joint efforts for structural changes; thus, being able to challenge the factors of discrimination, poverty and other obstacles that individuals usually encounter in their role as democratic citizens, in modern multicultural societies. In these countries, during the 1970's until the mid 1980's the teaching of the mother tongue to migrant students had many supporters and it was always associated with the repatriation of migrants, which at the time appeared as the sequential scenario to migration. When it became apparent in the mid 1980's that "nothing more permanent than the temporary" was true in the case of immigrants, they proceeded with measures to fast track integration, spearheading the provision of citizenship (nationality). As was expected, the interest in the teaching of the mother tongue diminished and was sustained only in cases where the countries of origin were able to take on the responsibility of implementing and financing it.[46] The integration of migrant cultures into the school curriculum, which was mainly useful for psychological support purposes, did not significantly alter the educational outcomes for the 'different' students. Additionally, the downgrading of intercultural education to the level of 'folkloric multiculturalism', that is interpreting educational inequality and social differences

exclusively as cultural differences, traps migrant students in a cultural identity devised by the dominant citizens, whereby, reproducing ethnic divisions and ethnocultural differences.[47] It seems that better results are attainable through the implementation of strategies which promote the respect and the recognition of the contributions of various ethnocultural groups to the economic and cultural life of a country, as this also indicates respect and determination by the state to address equitably the people who identify with these cultures.

At a time when the neoliberal model of development, with its core values of competition, consumerism and individualism, has global predominance, and when, at a European level, the very existence of the European Union[48] is under threat, *education* has the responsibility to place as its highest order priority, the development of democratic intercultural citizens. This constitutes the best possible way to deal constructively with both cultural diversity and social cohesion and unity.

NOTES

1. The context is determined by the basic democratic values of political and social equality and justice. The term 'political equality' refers to the equation of all citizens of a society in terms of civil rights and obligations, while the term 'social equity' refers to the equation in terms of social rights and obligations. We consider that both the social and political dimensions of these values constitute the fundamental pillars of citizenship. The political dimension of values refers to the sense of solidarity that unites people on common goals, which on a first level refers to the means of co existence and survival in modern multicultural societies, and on a second level to the methods of developing a common culture from the wealth of cultural diversity which in turn strengthens the unity.

2. The right for migrants to acquire Greek citizenship as set by the Law 3838 / 2010 (current provisions with reference to Greek citizenship and the political participation of Greeks living abroad and legally resident immigrants and other regulations. Government Gazette 49 / 24.03.2010) and hence the opportunity to participate in the political and social life of the country, raises the fundamental question about the possibilities of citizens to significantly influence the political, economic and social life in modern representative democracies. In this context, discussions and analysis by scholars dealing with the issue of democracy not only as a system of political representation, but primarily as an implementation process helps us to better understand the type of democracy we have today. See Castoriadis, K. (2007). The Greek Particularity. Athens: Kritiki, Volume II.

3. The issue of exceeding the boundaries, constitutes, in the ancient Greek sense, a hubris, an insult, which leads to a nemesis, a punishment, and is applicable to all human activities. The issue of self-restraint (knowing that for everything there are limits) appears only in free democratic societies, which set out their own internal limits. The hubris features in all of the ancient Greek tragedies.

4. Tsoukalas, K. (2010). The Invention of Diversity. "Identities" and "differences" in the Age of Globalization. Athens: Kastaniotis, p. 75. Referring to the new austerity budget of the United States, the far from radical Nobel Prize winner Paul Krugman spoke of cutbacks that "steal the food from the mouths of poor babies" To Vima, 27/2/2011, p. B17 41.

5. Hessel, Stephane. (2010). Indignez vous!. Athens: Patakis (In Greek). The book of just 32 pages amazed the publishers when the French bought 500,000 copies within the first two weeks! For Hessel, the worst of all sins, is indifference, when someone says that he can not do anything to change a policy which uproots all social achievements simply because the 'holder-the possessor' decides it should be so. He stresses emphatically the words of Jean-Paul Sartre "The indifferent man is no man". Much earlier, of course, before Sartre, Pericles in the Funeral Oration, addressing the Athenians said: "... μόνοι γαρ τον τε μηδέν των δε μετέχοντα ουκ απράγμονα, αλλ' αχρείον νομίζομεν " (..only we can believe that those that do not interest themselves in politics are not only indifferent but also worthless). Thucydides, History B (40), Pericles Funeral Oration. Whoever does not participate in the process of decision making and power is considered worthless, since his non-participation abolishes politics, the citizen and democracy.

6. For the new challenges posed by globalization, the proliferation of which will result in instability and uncertainty, doubt, and the limitation of the possibilities of the nation state, see Cotzias, N. (2004). The Active Democratic State. National State and Globalization. Athens: Kastaniotis. Cotzias, N. (2003). Globalization. The Historic Position, the Future and the Political Importance. Athens: Kastaniotis (In Greek)

7. See Bombio Norberto (1995). RIGHT AND LEFT. Significance and causes of a political discrimination. Athens: POLIS, p. 161 (In Greek).

8. Justice, as a supreme asset of a constituting whole, is primarily a social asset, a concept Aristotle refers to as "social virtue". That is why, in antiquity, the virtue of citizens is considered as the foundation of a good state more so than the laws. Aristotle distinguishes between justice as a "corrective justice" and justice as a "distributive justice". "The first concerns the relationship between the parties, while the second takes place between the whole and its parts and vice versa". See Economou, G. (2007). *Direct Democracy and the Critique of Aristotle*. Athens: Papazisi.

9. See Gotovos, A. (1997). "National Identity and Intercultural Education". In: The Teachers Journal, pp. 23 -28. Gotovos, A. (1996). Racism: Social, Psychological and Educational Aspects of an ideology and a practice. Athens: General Secretariat of Lifelong Education (GSLE). Gotovos, A. and Markou, G. (1984). (ed.) School

Reintegration of Repatriating Greek Students: Problems and Prospects. Ministry of Education - UNESCO. Damanakis, M. (1997). The Education of Returning Greek and Foreign Migrant Students in Greece. An Intercultural Approach. Athens, Gutenberg. Damanakis, M. (1997). "Intercultural Education in Greece". In: Pedagogical Association of Greece, pp 78 to 91. Markou, G. (1995). Introduction to Intercultural Education. Greek and International Experience. University of Athens. Markou, G. (1996). The 'Multiculturalism' of Greek society, the process of globalization and the Need for Intercultural Education. Athens: GSLE. Markou G. (1996). Approaches of Multiculturalism and Intercultural Education - Professional Training of Teachers. Athens: GSLE.

10. Law 2313/1996 "Greek Education Abroad, Intercultural Education and Other Provisions". Government Gazette 124 / 14.06.1996, article 34.

11. Op. cit. article 35, para.4. The following year the Polish ethnic school was founded and following that the Armenian community school was also founded.

12. Damanakis, M. (2000). "The Conceptualisation of the Intercultural Approach in Greece". In: The Science of Education, vol 1 - 3, pp. 3 -23. p. 4. See also in this Issue of Études helléniques/Hellenic Studies: Damanakis M. "The Education of Students with Migratory Background in Greece. Educational Politics and Pedagogical Logos".

13. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

14. The three Programmes referred to: a) "The Education of Returning Greek and Foreign Migrant Students", Scientific Director: Professor G. Markou, b) "The Education of Muslim Children", Scientific Director: Professor A. Frangoudaki and Relieving Director Assistant Professor: I. Dragona and c) "The Education of Roma Children ", Scientific Director: Professor A. Gotovos.

15. Damanakis, M. (2000). op. cit., p.6.

16. It is worth noting that the proposal by the supporters of intercultural education for a horizontal development of the three programmes of the Ministry of Education and their implementation under the umbrella of intercultural education and their coordination by IPODE (Institute for the Education of Greeks abroad and Intercultural Education), did not succeed. On the contrary, the proposal which prevailed was that of the supporters of the ethnic - minority perception who saw the programmes as vertically autonomous and distinctly separate in their implementation. When in 2007 in a second attempt for a uniform proposal of the programmes, ie the education of returning Greek and foreign students and the education of Muslim children, in partnership with all the major universities in Greece, the process is again cancelled by the supporters of the ethnic - minority approach, who, as it became obvious, maintained over time, distinctive access to relevant instruments of political and administrative power, and once again, proclaiming the programmes as separate projects. The awarding of the programme for the 'Education

of returning Greek and foreign migrant students' to implementers who also co incidentally, share the same ideological concepts, raises serious questions and suppositions for the adoption of the ethnic-minority approach in the case for immigrant support programmes.

17. Gotovos, A. (2007). "Minority Education and the European Framework. Review of the Programme for Ethnic Minority Education and Educational Appeasement". In: International and Comparative Education Review, vol 9, pp 13 - 56. Page 19.

18. See Gotovos, A. (2002). Education and Diversity. Issues of Intercultural Pedagogy. Athens: Metaixmio. Markou, G. (1997) Introduction to Intercultural Education: Greek and International Experience. University of Athens. and Markou, G. (2010). Introduction to Intercultural Education: Issues of Intercultural Education and Educational Policy. Athens: Self Publication.

19. See Torres, C. (1998). Democracy, Education, and Multiculturalism. Dilemmas of Citizenship in a Global World. Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Torres points out that democracy implies a participatory process where all are considered equal, but education involves a process where the "immature" come to identify with the principles and forms of life of the 'mature' members of society. That is why he emphasises the importance of the democratic socialization, the preparation of young people to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities.

20. This is true for liberal representative democracies and 'societies of free citizens'. In contrast, as mentioned by Cornelius Castoriadis, in the case of direct Athenian democracy, 'free and equal citizens' were able to create mechanisms that were necessary for the reproduction or transformation of the existing "status quo" in the Athenian Polity. See Castoriadis, C. (2007). "The Greek Particularity". Athens: Kritiki, Volume V.

21. Bauman, Zygmunt (2004). Work, consumerism and the new poor. (In Greek) Athens: Metaixmio, p131 and Bauman, Zygmunt. (2008). Liquid Times:Living in an Age of Uncertainty. (In Greek) Athens: Metaixmio, p. 97. According to Bauman, the establishment of the welfare state led many to believe that as a 'vested right' no political party would dare diminish. So without thought, neoliberal political forces who had as their main objective the 'lesser state' with core values of competition, individualism and consumerism, were brought to Government. Solidarity is no longer a collective need safeguarded by the state, since the individual is solely responsible and accountable for his survival, but also culpable for whatever 'bad' happens to him. It seems that history repeats itself. In his address to the Athenians, Pericles advises the Athenians to be vigilant and to maintain their sovereignty, their freedom and the glory of the city. He characteristically says, that they must choose whether they will be indifferent or free. Thucydides, Book II, 60 - 64.

22. Tsoukalas, K. (2010). op. cit., p. 138.

23. According to this view, a member of a minority is not employed on the rationale of equality and justice, but on the grounds of culture.

24. Frangoudaki A. (2008). "Thrace is changing: Concluding comments on the prospects and obstacles". In: Dragona, T. and Frangoudaki, A. (ed.) Addition not Subtraction, Multiplication not Division. The transformational intervention in the education of the minority in Thrace. Athens, Metaixmio, pp 483 -499. p. 487

25. Gotovos A. (2007). op. cit., p. 28.

26. Stathopoulos, M. (1999). "Constitutional entitlements for religious freedom and the relationship between State - Church". In: Christopoulos, D. (ed.) Legal issues of religious diversity in Greece. Athens Review, pp 198 - 224. p. 210.

27. Choosing a policy of an "appeasement education" to use the apt term by A. Gotovos, the Greek state does not take responsibility for the development of an appropriate democratic intercultural school environment for all children. The invocation for unity without a state education for political and social equality and justice, has no democratic legitimacy. The deficit of political and social justice renders particularly difficult the acceptance of diversity by all groups.

28. It seems that the advocates of this argument ignore the particularly negative results obtained from the application of this policy for children from low social economic classes and from ethnic - migrant groups. For the failure of these policies see the fierce criticism of a former ardent supporter, D. Ravitch: "When the minister makes a turn of 180 degrees". In Le Monde diplomatique, No. 664, 14.11.2010.

29. Fragoudaki, A. (2008). op. cit., p. 488.

30. Dragona, T. and Frangoudaki, A. (2008) "Introduction. Addition not Substraction, Multiplication not Division". In Dragona, T. and Frangoudaki, A. (ed.) Addition not Substraction, Multiplication not Division. The Transformational Intervention in the Education of the Minority in Thrace. Athens, Metaixmio, pp17-56. p 52.

31. Fragoudaki, A. (2008). op. cit., p. 488.

32. Dragona, T. and Frangoudaki, A. (2008). op. cit., p. 48. The activities offered by the Support Centers (KESPEMs) within the programme "The Education of Muslim Children" provide the opportunity for primary and junior secondary school students to participate in out of school hours support classes, for students and teachers to borrow books, for parents and teachers to acquire information and seek advice and for the organisation of cultural events and creative activities.

33. Fragoudaki, A. (2008). op. cit., p. 488.

34. Given the persistence of the minority leaders to maintain the minority status of the schools and additional extend minority education towards pre-school education (kindergarten) and towards secondary education, and the insistence by the programme managers to intervene qualitatively only in the Greek language program

of the minority schools in the hope of a probable overall improvement, indicates at best, a scientific mistarget.

35. This proposal is also consistent with the ethnic - minority approach adopted by the programme leaders since the 1990's and was hence expressed in the Law 2313 / 1996 under the pretext of purporting intercultural education!

36. What usually is observed in conditions of segregated education on the basis of ethno-cultural differentiation, is that children do not show tolerance and respect for members from other ethnocultural groups and are not drawn to and unable to participate in intercultural dialogue.

37. Gotovos A. (2007). op. cit., p. 18.

38. Taylor,Charles. (1997). Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition. (In Greek). Athens Polis, p. 71. In the introduction of the book, Amy Gutmann says that "What strengthens multiculturalism are the outcomes of the democratic consultations which respect to basic individual rights (freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, religious freedom, etc.) and not the survival of each regional cultural unity ". Page 51.

39. Tsoukalas, K. (2010). op. cit., p. 140.

40. Isopolity (equal treatment by the state, before the law, of all citizens as equal) and isonomy (equality of rights and obligations of all citizens before the law). Isonomy is probably the original name of democracy. It means political equality secured by law. Isonomy is not simply equality before the law but the system whereby citizens, have equal power in governance, can participate equally in the state and in the authority. See G. Economou (2007). op. cit. p. 265.

41. Eleftherotypia, 14/2/2011, p. 49.

42. This is particularly true for ethnocultural groups migrating to Greece from the former Soviet Union, Asia and Africa.

43. Tsoukalas K. (2010). op. cit. p. 110.

44. Amy Gutmann, "Introduction". In Charles Taylor (1997). Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition. (In Greek). Athens, Polis, pp. 37-69, pp. 66-67.

45. Only in democracy can there exist laws which ensure public interest, because only in democracy can people participate for the adoption and implementation of the laws. The argument is, that democracy ensures equal rights, political equality for all, hence the equal enforcement of the law for all.

46. Greece is one of those (few) countries which spend significant amounts of money on the teaching of the Greek language and culture for Greeks living abroad, exporting typically Greece-centred education models both in terms of organisation and content, and with doubtful learning outcomes.

47. See, Govaris, C., (2002) "Culture, cultural differences, multicultural society.

References to the pathology of the prevailing direction of Intercultural Education".
In: Polemikos, N., Kaila, M., Kalavasis, F. (eds). Educational, family and political
psychopathology. Athens: Atrapos, p. 348-362.

48. The conditions and the new realities which are taking form throughout Europe are
exceptionally difficult. The latest developments in the forefront of multiculturalism
marked by the renunciation of multiculturalism by Chancellor Merkel was not
"something out of the blue". With the reunification of Germany, postwar European
Union history turned a new chapter. The EU, as a supranational entity, constituted
for Germany a critical issue of survival. Today, this entity has become for Germany
nothing more than one of many possible options. The national interests of Germany
receive priority over the interests of the European Union, whose future, without the
political integration of the European Federation of States, seems rather bleak. At the
turn of the century, Habermas expressed his anguish and emphasised the imperative
nature of proceeding, without delay, on Europe's political establishment. See
Habermas Jurgen (2004). The Division of the West. (In Greek) Athens: Kastaniotis.