

Maria Mertzani




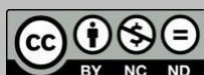
Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul
maria.d.mertzani@gmail.com

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LINGUISTIC POLICY IN GREECE AND TEACHER'S TRAINING IN QUESTION

ABSTRACT

After the 1980s, Greece, as a member state of the European Union (EU), entered in a series of educational reforms that compiled to the EU's agenda on societal modernization and fiscal economy. In relation to language, the reforms dealt with the teaching of standardized Greek as a mother tongue, as a second/foreign language, of traditional foreign languages (e.g., English, French, German), and recently, of immigrant languages. Gradually, the official language curriculum is transformed in a multilingual and multimodal one, calling the student to learn and the teacher to teach multiliteracy, within a multilingual and multicultural context. The paper discusses Greece's language policies in parallel to the indigenous curriculum as a minority curriculum that is based on two contrastive concepts: the societal (hence, educational) multiculturalism, and the monolingual homogeneity of its corresponding community.

Keywords: Linguistic policy. Early childhood education. Multilingualism. Greek education.

A POLÍTICA LINGÜÍSTICA NA GRÉCIA E A FORMAÇÃO DOCENTE EM QUESTÃO

RESUMO

Após a década de 1980, a Grécia, como estado membro da União Europeia (UE), entrou em uma série de reformas educacionais que compilaram a agenda da UE sobre modernização social e economia fiscal. Em relação à língua, as reformas trataram do ensino do grego padronizado como língua materna, como segunda/estrangeira língua, das línguas estrangeiras tradicionais (por exemplo, inglês, francês, alemão) e, recentemente, das línguas imigrantes. Gradualmente, o currículo oficial da língua se transforma em multilíngue e multimodal, chamando o aluno a aprender e o professor a ensinar a multiletramento, dentro de um contexto multilíngue e multicultural. O artigo discute as políticas linguísticas da Grécia em paralelo ao currículo indígena como um currículo minoritário baseado em dois conceitos contrastantes: o multiculturalismo social (portanto, educacional) e a homogeneidade monolíngue de sua comunidade correspondente.

Palavras-chave: Política linguística. Educação infantil. Multilinguismo. Educação grega.

POLÍTICA LINGÜÍSTICA EN GRECIA Y FORMACIÓN DOCENTE EN CUESTIÓN

RESUMEN

Después de la década de 1980, Grecia, como estado miembro de la Unión Europea (UE), inició una serie de reformas educativas que compilaron la agenda de la UE sobre modernización social y ahorro fiscal. Con respecto al idioma, las reformas abordaron la enseñanza del griego estandarizado como lengua materna, como segunda lengua/extranjera, lenguas extranjeras tradicionales (por ejemplo, inglés, francés, alemán) y, recientemente, lenguas de inmigrantes. Gradualmente, el currículo de la lengua oficial se vuelve multilingüe y multimodal, llamando al alumno a aprender y al docente a enseñar multialfabetización, dentro de un contexto multilingüe y multicultural. El artículo analiza las políticas lingüísticas de Grecia junto con el currículo indígena como un currículo minoritario basado en dos conceptos contrastantes: el multiculturalismo social (y por lo tanto educativo) y la homogeneidad monolingüe de su comunidad correspondiente.

Palabras Clave: Política lingüística. Educación de la primera infancia. Multilingüismo. Educación griega.

1. INTRODUCTION

The years 2018 to 2022, project works¹ about the minority curriculum (MERTZANI, TERRA, DUARTE, 2020; MERTZANI, 2022a; 2022b; 2023) in the Educational Department of the Federal University of Rio Grande, RS-Brasil, surfaced meanings and manifestations of *indigeneity*, *language ownership* and *ethnoculturism* in a country's language policy and practices, and, subsequently, in teacher's training programs. The minority curriculum is a recent development and as such it has set goals to connect minority language learning (e.g., of indigenous languages, signed languages) to monocultural and hence, homogeneously monolingual approaches, as a way to help reverse the decline of minority languages and restore linguistic identity to their corresponding communities. In fact, its "ethnocentricity" contrasts the so-called "western-based" curricula, like the curricula of the member states of the European Union (EU), and their set multilingualism and multiculturalism objectives.

This paper discusses these two contrasting perspectives, by presenting as a case study contemporary language policies and practices in Greece as a current member state of EU. Based on previous comparisons of the indigenous curriculum (MERTZANI, 2022a), this study examines how and to what extent both curricula call for multilingualism and multiculturalism, with a particular focus on early childhood education² and the less visible policies and practices (hence, their indirect effects) that may undermine language learning. In this context, the teacher's role is also addressed since the multilingual context calls for extra linguistic knowledge (and not only) besides the one of mother tongue. The study carried out a literature review of national policies, related practices, and literature in comparable socio-linguistic contexts (e.g., countries with an official multilingual curriculum; see

¹ Back in 2018, during the study and construction of the Brazilian Sign Language (Libras) Curriculum of the city of Rio Grande (MERTZANI, TERRA, DUARTE, 2020), the meaning of literacy was examined for spoken languages, including minority languages, in the literacy cycle of the official national curriculum. To this end, the following curricula were compared: the Canada curricula from the provinces of Ontario (East-central Canada), Manitoba (East Canada) and Alberta (Western Canada) (2000); and the Northern Territory Indigenous Languages and Cultures Curriculum of Australia - NTILC (2017). Other indigenous curricula were also studied (like the Samoan and Hawaiian curricula) and a critical reading resulted to the use of the former ones, for they provide rich and culturally oriented objectives that could be mapped to the literacy components under study (e.g., phonological awareness; text comprehension).

² Greek schools are divided into three levels: (i) primary (Dimotiko) six years; (ii) secondary level I, high school (Gymnasio) three years; secondary level II, lyceum (Lykion, Geniko or Techniko) three years. Primary and secondary level I together make up nine years of compulsory education. The compulsory school system is divided into three stages: preschool, primary school and lower secondary school while upper secondary (from the age of 15) is non-compulsory. For this study, the language policies for the early childhood education are involved; that is, for the kindergarten and the first year of the primary education, which includes the emergent literacy year, the first year of the Greek literacy cycle.

GARCÍA, LIN, MAY, 2017) and in relation to the provision of minority languages in the education system.

2. LANGUAGE POLICY IN GREECE

Greece has a centralized education system and thus, it is the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs that is responsible for the country's education administration, policies and procedures, school knowledge (e.g., curricula, school timetable, textbooks) and the employment of teachers. The current educational system was set up by the 1976 educational policy that was introduced with the new Constitution and by a series of reforms since the 1980s that aimed at modernizing the national curriculum. Thus, the current legislative framework guarantees schooling, free³ of cost at all levels in public institutions, for all children, citizen or foreign, aged 6 to 15 years old.

In 1974, after the fall of the military dictatorship in Greece, the implemented educational reforms impacted greatly the teaching of Greek, its dialects and literature. In 1981, the country entered in the European Economic Community (later known as EU), and, following the neo-European *modernization* agenda, the socialist government (of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, known by the acronym PASOK [in Greek, Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα - ΠΑΣΟΚ]) made attempts (especially the years 1982-1985) to systematize education. Mainly, these reforms revolved around the issue of *diglossia*, a debate⁴ around the country's national language, aiming to eliminate the diglossia between the *katharevousa* (the archaic form of written Greek) and *demotiké* (the Greek that was used orally and in writing), thus establishing the latter as the official language.

Therefore, from the 1980s onwards, the Greek governments promoted language planning and policies in which a standardized Demotic Greek was considered as the only

³ Students do not pay tuition fees, and the state pays for textbooks in all educational levels. At the higher education level, private providers are explicitly prohibited by the Constitution.

⁴ This debate arose from the existence of two distinct written forms of Greek: from *Katharevousa*, the "purified" language (used in public service, administration, legal or medical matters, in government dominated media and education); and from *Demotiké*, the "common" language (used in personal communication, certain literary texts and a part of the press). The first was developed by some influential scholars and the Church (the so-called "traditionalists"), and was designed to "purify" (from the noun καθαρός [clean] < Καθαρεύουσα) the Greek language of its non-Hellenic characteristics (e.g., of Turkish words), which had been acquired over the centuries. This linguistic form has been supported by conservative governments, and it has been suggested that Katharevousa was used to prevent students from lower socioeconomic classes from continuing their studies in high school and college. On the other hand, *Demotiké* incorporates changes that have taken place over the centuries, so that there are lexical, morphological and phonological differences from older languages. It corresponds most closely to the language spoken by most Greeks and it was always supported by the so-called "liberals" that promoted its use as the only means of Greek education.

means of Greek education. As a result, traditional Greek literary-humanist education⁵ has been redefined, making it less ethnocentric and more Eurocentric (KAZAMIAS, ROUS-SAKIS, 2003). Furthermore, it is during this decade that the Greek government established for the first time reception and tutorial/support classes (with Law 1404/24-11-1983) in public schools so as to integrate children of repatriates Greeks from abroad (e.g., Germany, the USA, Canada, Australia) and to teach Greek as a second language (L2) to pupils who did not have it as their mother-tongue (L1).

Up to the 1990s, the country adhered to a Helleno-Christian canon⁶ for building and maintaining its national cohesion and identity, mainly due to events concerning the country's international affairs. From 1989 onwards, there was a massive emigration from the Balkans, the ex Soviet Union, Asia and Africa to Greece with demographic and social consequences. In addition,

[T]he prevention of the recognition of the state with the name of Macedonia [current Northern Macedonia] in the northern borders of Greece. And this is because the particular name is considered to belong to the Greek cultural heritage. Moreover, in 1996 there was a Greek-Turkish crisis in the Aegean Sea on the subject of the rocky islands of Imia, which developed a feeling of national insecurity among Greek citizens. In both cases it was considered that an outlet for the national dangers could be provided only through the reinforcement of the position of Greece within the framework of the European Union (EU). Consequently, the dominant Greek social principles of the 1990s refer to the promotion of the importance of the national cultural heritage and to the need for a closer attachment to the European institutions aiming at the guaranteeing of national rights. (KOUSTOURAKIS, 2007, p. 135).

As the country received immigrants, its educational policy regarding language teaching and learning at school raised much concern. As a result, Greece followed European norms of multilingualism (e.g., Council of Europe 2003, Commission of the European Communities 2003) and recognized immigrants' right to use their mother tongue privately or in public, although their languages did not enter the national curriculum. Art 40 of the Law 2910/02-05-2001 (Government Gazette 91/vol.A) stipulated that all children born to

⁵ I refer to the teaching of reading and analyzing literary text excerpts, including those of ancient texts too, an activity that occupied the weekly teaching schedule and is known internationally as the *grammar translation method*.

⁶ The educational focus (demonstrated in the official textbooks and learning materials) was on mixing ancient Greek and Christian Orthodox religion, which had a continuous influence on Greek Education and its purposes. For example, up to the 1990s, the Greek schools presented the Christian Orthodox faith only (TRAIANOY, 2009), a phenomenon that is still met in the Greek communities abroad (e.g., in the U.K., U.S.A., Australia). Additionally, the aforementioned Katharevousa was developed by the influence of the Orthodox Church too. Overall, this type of education adhered to a limited and reconstructed history, with a certain emphasis on the classical times and the ancient Greek of that time, rather than on other Greek script forms (Mycenaean, Ptolemaic, Cypriot, Coptic etc.) and with certain humanistic bias (e.g., to differentiate modern Greeks from the country's neighbors, like the Balkans and Turkey).

third-country nationals living in Greece are obliged and have the right to compulsory education, and, up to present (2023), schools enroll foreign students even if their families do not have the necessary documents.

Hence, the 1990-2000 educational reforms aimed at the commodification of the school in the European Economic Zone, projecting a global technical and instrumental education (GOUNARI, GROLLIOS, 2012; FLOURIS, PASIAS, 2003; KAZAMIAS, ROUSAKIS, 2003; TRAIANOY, 2009), in order for students “[...] to compete in an increasingly globalised and competitive environment” and “to successfully integrate within the European Union” (TRIANDAFYLLIDOU, GROPAS, 2007, p. 3). These reforms was an official demonstration of Greece - from across the political spectrum - to maintain the country's EU membership (BOUZAKIS, KOUSTOURAKIS, 2002) in order to benefit from accessing EU funds and support the reform costs (TRIANDAFYLLIDOU, GROPAS, 2007). Hence, they viewed and demanded Greek education to be less ethnocentric, recognizing other cultures and languages and promoting respect for diversity.

Law 2416/17-06-1996 (Government Gazette 124/vol.A) set the foundations for intercultural education⁷ in Greece and established intercultural schools, reception and support classes for students with little or no knowledge of Greek (a continuation of the 1980's reform), especially for students of foreign nationality, apart from the co-ethnic returnees (Presidential Decree 13/17-06-1996, Government Gazette 124/vol.A.; Presidential Decree 015/18-01-1996, Government Gazette 9/vol.A). Based on art. 34 of Law 2416/96, these schools and classes followed the national curriculum of the mainstream schools, with adaptations and a significant degree of autonomy (since they were not obliged to cover the entire curriculum) to support students' needs. Additionally, intercultural schools could provide courses on the language and culture of the country of origin of the foreign student (bound to the EU directive 77/486/EEC regarding the education of students of another EU member state and the obligation to provide immigrant students with mother-tongue classes) and encourage the family to participate in school activities with the scope to support pupils' integration in the wider society. Moreover, both reception and support classes could operate in parallel with normal teaching hours, although the reception classes could last two years only, after which period pupils had to integrate in the mainstream classes. Sup-

⁷ The establishment of intercultural education in Greece goes back in the Greek-Turkish Educational Agreements and Protocols of the 1950s and 1960s. During the 1970s, a series of laws and presidential decrees set the foundations of the bilingual education of the muslim minority in Thrace, in the north-east of Greece, and the Roma schools for the Roma population in the country (SYMEONIDIS, 2014). However, bilingual kindergartens based on the model of elementary schools do not exist.

port classes could last longer, aiming to cater for the needs of pupils who did not benefit from the reception classes, or who, after the attendance of reception classes, still had a poor level of Greek.

The 1990's reforms were based, overall, on the decisions of the Lisbon European Council (23-24 March 2000), in which European leaders prioritized educational convergence so that the EU could effectively compete with the USA in the economy (FLOURIS, PASIAS, 2003; KOUSTOURAKIS, 2007). The introduction of the *Unified Curriculum* defined the content that must be covered during the compulsory school years in a way that resembled the UK National Curriculum (TRAIANO, 2009). This curriculum was modified in 2001, and the term *interdisciplinary* was added to its title, emphasizing an interdisciplinary approach to learning and teaching (apart from the intercultural one). In 2002, the idea of project work was introduced in the context of the *flexible zone*⁸. In accordance with the general principles of the *Interdisciplinary Unified Curriculum Framework* (in Greek, Διαθεματικό Ενιαίο Πλαίσιο Προγράμματος Σπουδών [henceforward, DEPPS]), language teaching is related to topics of daily life, with few references to Greek folklore and traditions, and in relation to certain school subjects (arts, music, environmental education, etc.) (MERTZANI, 2022b). With the Ministerial Decision 21072a/Γ2/13-03-2003 (Government Gazette 303/vol.B), the curriculum included the principle "Strengthening of cultural and linguistic identity within a multicultural society" (in Greek: Η ενίσχυση της πολιτισμικής και γλωσσικής ταυτότητας στο πλαίσιο μιας πολυπολιτισμικής κοινωνίας) (p. 3735), where the term *multicultural* (in Greek, πολυπολιτισμική [polypolitismikí]) was added to the Greek *διαπολιτισμική* [diapolitismikí], intercultural education.

This curriculum remained up to the educational reforms of 2014. From this year onwards, up to the latest reform in 2021, the national curriculum integrated in early education (e.g., in pre-school, kindergarten, and in the first year of primary education) *multiliteracy*⁹ and *digital literacy* (see below) next to *traditional literacy*¹⁰. In compliance with the EU principle that all European citizens should have three languages (Council of Europe, 2001, p.

⁸ It is a two-hour subject, planned by the class teacher for a specific period of time (for example, for a trimester) with activities that need to be approved by the District School Counselor. Through this unit, children interact and engage in collaborative activities related to certain cultural themes of everyday life and communication (PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE, 2003a; 2003b).

⁹ Firstly, the term "multiliteracy" is associated with the ever-increasing variety of important ways of constructing meaning and communicating, especially in digital environments. The written text combines and interacts with the spoken word, with visual, audio, kinetic or spatial elements. Thus, meaning is increasingly constructed by combining a variety of symbolic systems multimodally. Secondly, meaning is constructed according to particular communication contexts, determined by factors such as: different cultures, languages, social groups, learning areas, experiences, etc.

¹⁰ Usually, limited to the teaching of the four language skills: speaking, listening, writing, and reading.

168; 2003, p. 8; Commission of the European Communities, 2003), English was introduced as the compulsory first foreign language from the third year in primary school (around the age of nine) onwards. Furthermore, pupils could study either French or German as their second foreign language from this third year until the end of secondary school. At the same time, immigrant languages kept having little functional value and/or there was no interest in their learning at school. The years 2019-2022, the Greek government implemented an integrated model for foreign language instruction, from pre-primary to upper-secondary education, based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), with transversal competencies (the so-called *soft* or *transferrable skills*) playing a key role. In particular, it introduced (i) English in the kindergarten, and ii) the legal consolidation of alternative methods of student assessment, including the *21st Century Skills Labs* for the development of communication, co-operation, teamwork, creativity, critical and innovative thinking, problem-solving, and leadership.

3. LANGUAGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

With the Presidential Decree 476/31-05-1980 (Government Gazette 132/vol. A) *On the Hourly Curriculum of the Kindergarten* (in Greek: Περί του Αναλυτικού και Ωρολογίου Προγράμματος του Νηπιαγωγείου), the curriculum emphasized strengthening pupils' oral language and vocabulary rather than reading and writing. In fact, these two latter skills were not included at all. In addition, the curriculum promoted and implemented up to the end of the 1990s an open pupil assessment that could be carried out by the teacher arbitrarily. Emphasis was also on the importance and continuation of local traditions and customs (p. 1733). In the 1989 curriculum reform (Presidential Decree 486/26-09-1989, Government Gazette 208/vol. A), reading and writing entered in preschool education, which aimed at pupils' gradual introduction to pre-writing and pre-reading so as to understand both the causal relationship of the spoken and written word and its grammar (in terms of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) (p. 4478).

Following the educational reforms of the 1990s, with the Ministerial Decision Γ1/58/10-02-1999 (Government Gazette 93/vol.B), *The Greek Curriculum in Early Education and Primary School* (in Greek: Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών της Νεοελληνικής Γλώσσας στην προ-Δημοτική Εκπαίδευση - Νηπιαγωγείο και στο Δημοτικό) was preserved under the new title *Child and Language: curriculum for planning and developing language activities for the kindergarten* (in Greek: Παιδί και Γλώσσα: πρόγραμμα σχεδιασμού και ανάπτυξης δραστηριοτήτων γλώσσας για το νηπιαγωγείο) (Ministry of Education, Pedagogical

Institute, 2003, p. 593-597), focusing on emergent literacy; that is, on i) oral communication (speech and listening), ii) reading, and iii) writing and written expression. Through this revision, the curriculum required pupils to become aware of the social dimension of writing and its importance as a communication means through their text production by dictation to their teacher (p. 596-597). Contrary to the previous curricula, it proposed pupils' assessment through alternative methods, like portfolios, group/peer evaluation and teacher observation (p. 592), and the overall evaluation of the educational process at the end of the school year.

In 2011, this curriculum went through another reform via a pilot study, which led to the 2014 curriculum. Both reforms focused on multiliteracy and the social dimension of language, emphasizing text production beyond the boundaries of the school classroom (mainly on online environments). To this scope, toddlers were introduced to oral language through ICT use and to *critical literacy*, by producing their own multimodal texts and speech evaluations in certain communication contexts of cultural and linguistic diversity. In line with this, language learning involved: Language as Communication, Language as a System, and Textual Organization of Language. Furthermore, there was a terminology shift, replacing, for instance, the traditional terms "speaking", "listening", "reading" and "writing" by "the production and understanding of spoken language" and "the production and understanding of written language" correspondingly. Moreover, in terms of pupils' assessment, the curriculum promoted self-evaluation and peer-evaluation, adding family in the evaluation process and in close collaboration with the teacher (PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE, 2011, p. 42).

Table 1: Thematic areas and units in the kindergarten curriculum

| Thematic Fields | Thematic Units | Thematic Sub-sections | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| A. Child and Communication | <i>A.1 Language</i> | A.1.1 Oral Communication | A.1.2 Written Communication | A.1.3 Multilingual Communication |
| B. Child, Self and Society | <i>A.2 ICT</i> | A.2.1 Knowledge and Communication with ICT | A.2.2 Discovery, Programming and Digital Gaming | A.2.3 Information Processing and Digital Creation |
| | <i>B.1 Personal and Socio-emotional Development</i> | B.1.1 Sense of Self | B.1.2 Emotional Awareness | B.1.3 Interpersonal Relations |
| | <i>B.2 Social Sciences</i> | B.2.1 History and Culture | B.2.2 Relationship with the natural and built environment | B.2.3 Social and economic life |
| C. Child and Science | <i>C.1 Mathematics</i> | C.1.1 Geometry and Measurements | C.1.2 Numbers - Operations and Algebra | C.1.3 Stochastic Mathematics |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| D. Child, Body, Creation and Expression | <i>C.2 Natural Sciences</i> | C.2.1 Living Organisms | C.2.2 Matter and Phenomena | C.2.3 Earth-Planetary System and Space |
| | <i>C.3 Construction Technology</i> | C.3.1 Traditional and Modern Technological Tools/Equipment and Devices | C.3.2 Construction Technology as a Tool in Daily Life | |
| | <i>D.1 Physical Education</i> | D.1.1 Body and Movement | D.1.2 Physically Active Life | D.1.3 Sports-Cultural Tradition and Creative Movement |
| | <i>D.2 Arts</i> | D.2.1 Visual Arts | D.2.1 Drama | D.2.3 Music |

Source: Institute of Educational Policy (2021, p. 26-27). Translated by the author.

Following similar objectives and agenda, the 2021 curriculum introduced new thematic areas (e.g., robotics, entrepreneurship, sex education, environmental protection, road safety) (see Table 1) with the aim to respond “to the conditions shaped by the modern Greek social and educational reality in the context of its European perspective” (Institute of Educational Policy, 2021, p. 4). Towards this aim, emergent literacy is blended with literacies found in the previous curricula, such as functional and critical literacy, and with new ones, like visual and digital literacy. Interestingly, the “Language Communication” component of the previous curriculum is now termed “Multilingual Communication”, under which pupils are encouraged to use in class their maternal language (apart from Greek) and/or other languages (including signed languages) for the oral and text production (see Table 2).

Table 2: Multilingual Communication in the kindergarten

| A. CHILD AND COMMUNICATION | A.1.3 Multilingual Communication | Knowledge | Skills | Attitudes |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| A.1 LANGUAGE | i. Encouraging the use of languages when understanding and producing oral texts ii. Encouraging the use of languages in understanding and producing written texts. | To recognize words and phrases in the mother tongue and in other languages concerning basic functional and educational needs (i). To recognize words in other languages that show semantic and phonological similarity with Greek [e.g. tigris (Greek: τίγρης), tiger (English), tigër (Albanian), βιδα (Greek), βιντα (Romani)] (i). Recognize key elements of non-verbal communication that may vary in relation to cultural context (similarities and differences) (i). To recognize written codes of languages, as well as their similarities and differences (ii). | Use codes from two and/or more languages to communicate using verbal and non-verbal communication elements (i). To narrate texts of the narrative tradition of the culture of origin in any language they wish using elements of verbal and non-verbal communication (i). Produce orally different kinds of texts in different languages to meet communicative and educational needs (i). To write, as they can, in the mother tongue and in other languages, using, according to their developmental level, various semiotic modes and types of writing (ii). | To appreciate the importance of the knowledge and use of languages in the modern multicultural society (i). To demonstrate respect for linguistic and cultural diversity (i). To enjoy texts from the narrative tradition of various cultures (i). Pursue intercultural communication with appropriate verbal and non-verbal practices. To feel proud of their linguistic and cultural origins (i). To participate/cooperate with pleasure in activities of reading texts (books/myths) of different cultures (ii). |

Source: Institute of Educational Policy (2021, p. 33–35). Elaborated and translated by the author.

4. PARALLELS TO THE INDIGENOUS CURRICULUM

In Greece, education was never separated from politics and the reforms presented above show how each government, left and right, opted and still continue to advocate for a neoliberal model of education (inclusive of early childhood education) as seen with the 1990s and 2000s reforms under the socialist party PASOK (TRAIANOY, 2009), and the latest 2021 reform under the right party Nea Dimokratia. The educational reforms support multilingualism and cross-border contacts with the aim to “loosen the grip of nation-state thinking” and to promote economic, monetary, legal and political union (KILIARI, 2009, p. 21) for a transnational and transcultural identity.

In such an educational model, the pupil is placed as the “capital” to serve the EU to effectively compete the global economy. Interestingly, the 2000s EU directives (and by extension, the Greek educational reforms from this time onwards) came at the same peri-

od when the USA passed the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2001) (replaced in 2015 by *The Every Student Succeeds Act*), which stipulated schools to demonstrate improved students' standardized test scores at state-determined Annual Yearly Progress reports with punitive consequences (e.g., schools' obligation for public improvement plans, staff reconstitution, school closures). From this period onwards, there is an increasing international demand to monitor students' progress through country performance standardized measurements and reports (like PISA, OECD) in specific fields (e.g., in Mathematics, Natural Sciences).

Early childhood education is being directed towards this end throughout the reforms, as the curricula display a gradual change of language content and scope. Hence, from the 1980s oral literacy with Greek ethnocentric aims (e.g., by teaching Greek traditions and customs), the curriculum currently addresses the learning of linguistic decoding and coding skills (inclusive of foreign languages) in a non ethnocentric but multicultural context, next to highly technical skills (like the ICT skills). In other words, the child's language is tied to serve multimodally future global financial and technological changes.

This curriculum objective contradicts with the language aim of the minority curriculum, which - as mentioned previously - places the indigenous language in strong and close connection to the corresponding community and its ethnoculturalism. For example, the indigenous curriculum follows a seasonal educational theme and time frame that corresponds to seasonal ways of life and knowledge (e.g., land tenure, ceremonial life, local history, dream stories, knowledge of ecosystems, hunting) (DISBRAY, MARTIN, 2014; HERMES, HASKINS, 2014; NICHOLAS, 2014), in which older community members play a dominant role and their knowledge is usually recorded, transcribed and elaborated (HERMES, HASKINS, 2014). Education is closely adapted to the community economy, and learning takes place through participation in community life (NICHOL, 2011), an educational model that contrasts the neoliberal one that serves the global market.

Since the 2000s, Greece's primary production sector collapses, and the country ranks¹¹ 26th in the EU, as it exhibits "production ageing", which, in turn, is directly linked to the low level of education and training in this sector. Additionally, the country ranks 3rd in the EU in vertical skills mismatch. A 32% aged 15-34 with tertiary education degree is employed in low-level skill occupations, a phenomenon that also contributes to the *brain drain*

¹¹ Based on the latest report of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (in Greek, Γενική Συνομοσπονδία Εργατών Ελλάδας - ΓΣΕΕ): The primary sector is collapsing - Greece is vulnerable to a food crisis (in Greek, ΓΣΕΕ: Καταρρέει ο πρωτογενής τομέας - Ανοχύρωτη η Ελλάδα σε μια επισιτιστική κρίση), *Daily (Ημερησία)*, Tuesday, 7 February 2023. Link: <https://www.imerisia.gr/oikonomia/43849_gsee-katarreei-o-protogenis-tomeas-anochyroti-i-ellada-se-mia-episitistikhi-krisi>.

as the most dynamic and quality human resources escape abroad. As there is a high demand for Higher Education entry - because such a degree offers advantaged employment in Greece's public sector - it is also high the number of Greek students exported abroad (DIMITROPOULOS, KINDI, 2017, p. 3).

This shift away from the country's primary production sector occurred in parallel to the intercultural reform, and later (to present day), to the multicultural focus of the language curriculum. In the 1980s, although an ethnocentric focus was maintained, the language curriculum addressed mainly the teaching of a standardized Demotic Greek, which, in turn, neglected the use, learning, and transmission of local dialects and oral traditions¹² that are strongly connected to agricultural practices. From the 1990s to present curricula, as more languages are added, Greek learning is reduced and emphasis is on the multi-modal use of language (e.g., through translanguaging; see also GARCÍA, LIN, MAY, 2017) in the digital era. This focus also translates to a reduced teaching of the linguistic and metalinguistic aspect (e.g., grammar, syntax) of any language in the curriculum as the objectives of digital literacy and multiliteracy are put above all other language learning objectives.

In the indigenous curriculum, knowledge overall - inclusive of the linguistic one - is not entirely entrusted to the school, since for years the latter served colonization. Knowledge is also private, transmitted by the Elders, the *Knowledge Keepers* of each community, and some curricular objectives are presented as *discretionary* (e.g., the language used in ceremonies and rituals) (MERTZANI, 2022a; 2022b). In contrast, the western-based curricula reveal a trend for instituting a globally centralized education that promotes certain "science", and hence, a central learning authority, which, in turn, can demolish traditional sustainable ecological knowledge, which is seen as inferior/irrelevant in the promoted curriculum.

The centralization of Greek education has been criticized for many years from almost all political sides (TRAIANOY, 2009; KOUSTOURAKIS, 2007). Such a centralization exists

¹² At this decade, the promoted discourse viewed dialects as a speech to be avoided and an inferior language, used by the *peasant*, a word coined to mean the illiterate person. Those who spoke a regional dialect were marked by that cliché, a phenomenon that impacted the future of the remaining dialects in the regions, resulting in the eclipse of Greek linguistic variety and folklore knowledge with the passing of community members. Its teaching was also restricted by the official religion (Orthodox Christianity) which did not allow the learning of certain customs as they were characterized negatively *pagan*. Dialects spoken outside of Greece and are still alive (e.g., Pontic, in Russia and Asia Minor; the Greek dialect in Cappadocia; South Italian Greek in Calabria and Salentina; the Marioupolitic or Hellenocrimaic in Ukraine; the Sarakatsan in Bulgaria; the Cypriot Greek) had never entered in the official national curriculum. The same applies for the dialects spoken within Greece.

in the EU and is imposed top-down to its members, as was the case with the Greek reforms demonstrated in this study. In the name of the modernization and fiscal credibility, the Ministry of Education complied to the EU directives, narrowed its curriculum to testable knowledge, and modified a cumulative body of local knowledge (including Greek language), making the local calendar meaningless (MERTZANI, 2022b). There is a strong pressure to teachers and school leaders to conform in the new curricular content and proposed pedagogies, which, as they follow external influences, become more and more similar to the ones established by the EU members (TRAIANOOU, 2009). Moreover, family and elder members have become less significant as transmitters of traditions, which, in turn, are blurred with popular culture that still maintains idealized values of certain historic periods.

The increased refugee flows (from 2016 to present) have created an even more complex situation, which does not favor Greece's language policy decisions as there is a wide range of foreign mother languages. Just for the year 2016-2017, 173,450 persons entered Greece (FOULIDI, OIKONOMAKOU, PAPAKITSOS, 2016), and according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2010), more than 33 different L1 languages were registered. The country has received unequally a large immigrant population in analogy to its own aging¹³ demographic population and in comparison to the one that EU members have accepted from 2000s onwards (see HELLENIC STATISTICAL AUTHORITY, 2023). In 2001, Greece documented 693,837 immigrants and estimations for the following years reached to 1.2 million, hence over 7% of Greece's population (TRIANDAFYLLIDOU, 2009; ANTONOPOULOS, WINTERDYK, 2006). In the same decade, the percentage of foreign students reached the 9% (GOTOWOS, MARKOU, 2003). In 2014, in the UK there were 1,992,600 immigrant students, in Spain 781,446, in Italy 755,939, and in Germany 665,960 (CATARCI, 2014, p. 100).

Interestingly, the period when Greece was called to implement the intercultural educational reforms, EU members like France, the UK, Germany and Italy were shifting their policies away from this multilingual and intercultural scope, implementing linguistic and cultural assimilation by promoting citizenship education through the academic achievement of ethnic minorities, national cohesion, solidarity, and equal opportunities (CATARCI,

¹³ Since 2005, Greece is experiencing a population decline. The most recent projections show a continuation of this decline, resulting in a population of 9.03 million by 2050 and 6.61 million by 2099. Link: <<https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/greece-population>>. The population decline also means the decline of Greek, which is currently demonstrated in the endangerment of its dialects, despite the denying position of few academics (e.g., DENDRINOS, 2009) who argue the "decline myth". Numbers (registered in Ethnologue) show otherwise.

2014). In fact, in 2014, working towards the academic achievement, the UK added in its national curriculum (for students 7- 11 years old) the study of an ancient language (ancient Greek or Latin) or modern foreign language. Currently, although the country is not in the EU, it has announced the Latin Excellence Programme¹⁴ in order to support students' maths learning and the dropping numbers of language learning (e.g., English, French, Spanish) (TINSLEY, 2019). Obviously, EU is not prepared to implement its own Directive 77/486 of the European Communities according to which immigrant host countries are required to provide free education in the official language of the host country and, in parallel, in cooperation with the countries of origin, to teach the native language of migrants. In practice though, considering the number of immigrant languages involved, their L1 teaching proves difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, the 2021 language curriculum adopted principles of critical pedagogy and literacy, which favor the use of different languages during classroom time. Does this then translate that EU expects a multilingual Greek teacher, who, beyond the knowledge of two EU foreign languages (additional to Greek), would use in her/his practice other language(-s), like the immigrants' language(-s)?

There is a call for a careful review of multilingualism and language rights in the mainstream society and within this campaign of modernism and its geopolitical networks to which many countries (including Greece) are pressed "into a uniform march to progress" (CANAGARAJAH, 2005, p. 5). Greek language is not spoken as other modern languages (e.g., English, Spanish, French) and due to this status, a careful language policy study needs to be made in relation to that of minority languages (as the less spoken languages), their curriculum (especially of the indigenous languages of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) and its received critique that addresses issues and cases of invisible language subordination (see: The Gaeltacht and Irish Language Education Council, 2015; GARCÍA, LIN, MAY, 2017).

5. TEACHERS THROUGH THE REFORMS

The pedagogical practices internationally applied to language teaching are also followed by the Greek teachers, who are trained in Higher Education pedagogical departments. In these, Greek is taught as mother tongue (L1) and as a second/foreign language (L2), although there is no course concerning Greek as a minority language, considering the endangerment of certain dialects inside and/or outside of motherland, and/or a course

¹⁴ Thousands more students to learn ancient and modern languages. GOV.UK, 31 July 2021. Link: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-students-to-learn-ancient-and-modern-languages>>.

on language education of minorities outside of EU (of indigenous communities in the Americas, Australia, Oceania, etc.). Furthermore, little academic research exists on the conditions under which teachers work with immigrant students and their families concerning secondary education and not the early childhood education. It is common knowledge though that teachers are facing difficulties to respond to current educational, cultural, linguistic, religious or ethnic characteristics and needs of their classes, since there are no specialized material as well as ministerial and/or EU support.

From the 1980s to the end of 1990s, teachers did not have to follow any particular evaluation of their students and/or their educational practice, since the curricula did not involve any. With the introduction of the intercultural curricula of the 2000s, three large scale educational programs were launched in Greek Higher Education, supported by the European Commission; that is, the Business Education and Initial Training Program (in Greek, Επιχειρησιακό Πρόγραμμα Εκπαίδευσης και Αρχικής Κατάρτισης), which sought to train teachers working, primarily, with students from the muslim and Roma minorities in Greece, and secondly, with repatriated and foreign students. The 2007 financial crisis, led international authorities such as the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund to interfere in Greece's educational decisions and policies, and during the years 2010 - 2019 they demanded the educational assessment of teachers and schools.

In 2011, the OECD report was announced, pointing out that the future economy and quality of life in Greece depended on improving the quality and performance of education, while respecting its commitments to equality and social justice. As a negative aspect, OECD addressed the country's lack of reliable indicators that could provide information on its quality and effectiveness, such as the lack of external evaluation of learning, and inadequate comparable data for pupil, teacher and school unit performance. Due to this failure, the Law 4336/14-08-2015 (Government Gazette 94/vol. A) committed the government for an updated OECD report on Greek education, from pre-school to higher education, in line with the general public administration evaluation system. Hence, in the period 2010 - 2014, the evaluation process included qualitative and quantitative assessment methods (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, observation, peer evaluation).

In particular, the Law 4024/27-11-2011 (Government Gazette 226/vol. A) established teacher assessment as a criterion for his/her professional development. It specified the percentage of increases/decreases in the basic salary, imposing even a reduction or removes of various allowances. This legislative framework met with opposition from the

teacher union, who denied the evaluation process as a whole. However, the Ministry of Education (with the Circular 44375/Γ1/24-03-2014), obliged school headteachers to set up working groups and implement this legislation by June 2014. In 2015, the new socialist government suspended this evaluation process and disconnected the teacher assessment from their rank and salary development.

Despite this opposition, in its 2016 and 2017 annual reports on education monitoring and instruction, the European Commission called the Greek Government to introduce additional measures for teacher evaluation and standards implementation, create a culture of accountability on comparable data, and associate evaluation with teacher's professional development. Thus, with the Law 4547/12-06-2018 (Government Gazette 102/vol. A) and the Ministerial Decision 1816/ΓΔ 4/11-01-2019 (Government Gazette 16/vol. B), staff and school evaluation were re-introduced by the establishment of the Education Coordinators in Regional Educational Planning Centers that aimed at designing, monitoring, coordinating, and supporting school' educational work, teachers' scientific and pedagogical work, and the organization of training. The Law 4823/03-08-2021 (Government Gazette 136/vol. A) established teacher's evaluation to be registered electronically, and the Ministerial Decision 9950/ΓΔ5/27-01-2023 (Government Gazette 388), defined two evaluators (the Education Consultant and the School Headteacher) for the final teacher evaluation report (on the service consistency and teacher competence). Since 2021, teacher and school evaluation is an ongoing process that has already generated educators' public opposition.

6. CONCLUSION

Urbanization and globalization have profoundly changed Greek society and prompted the abandonment of many customs and traditions in the teaching practice. It appears that assimilative policies of the EU imposed top-down and curricula constructed to member-states models, indicate foreign ways of "doing and being" in Greek linguistic policies. At the same time the newest language curriculum promotes knowledge that actively asks the Greek teachers and students to abandon ancestral knowledge in the name of modern multiliteracy and multiculturalism. Therefore, a balance must be maintained by critically reflecting this multilingual context, considering the function and use of language(-s) within this global and neoliberal market, and, most importantly, school educational models employed and applied in linguistic policies for minority languages worldwide. Greece needs to question and filter the meaning(s) and significance of its linguistic policies within the EU as a member state and in relation to the other languages of the globe.

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