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Citizenship education in the new inter-disciplinary National Curriculum of Greece

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Introduction

In October 2001 a major curriculum reform in Greece reorganised subject content, reconsidered of the place of subjects, and redefined wider educational philosophy. In these reforms citizenship education curriculum appears different to earlier content-driven curricula (see Chelmis, 1999). Citizenship has been coherently organised across compulsory education, and provision made for inter-disciplinary and cross-thematic approaches to learning, built on the examining contemporary socio-political and economic issues, problems and themes.

An inter-disciplinary curriculum (Figure 1) teaches accumulated knowledge, concepts and processes from various epistemic fields through separate subjects, but attempts inter-connections with the content of other subjects. Inter-disciplinary curricula locate where subjects share common ground, and encourage pupils to explore this through the lenses of different disciplines. This practice is considered to best serve the distinct educational goals of separate subjects. Although there are some serious reservations whether inter-disciplinarity can lead to a balanced and inclusive cooperation across the professions (Hegstrup, 1999), inter-disciplinary interactions have led to the formulation of new, hybrid disciplines whose methods and content have taken their place in school programs.

Cross-curricular thematic approaches depart from teaching the organised body of knowledge of different disciplines, and propose integrated learning processes through a holistic study of themes, issues and problems. When pupils engage in the study of themes they deal with personal, social and academic matters, and they produce an essay on them. Some example themes are :

a. the circle of life,
b. members of a group,
c. production and consumption,
d. close relationships.

In studying issues, children deal with personal, social and scientific controversies. Examples of issues are the rights of (non)smokers, the rights of refugees, of those accused of crime, and censorship. And when children deal with problems, they have to consider solutions to demanding situations like pollution, overpopulation or the abandonment of agricultural areas.

Specific curricula may be characterised as theme-centred (teaching method), child-centred (content), and multi-epistemic or multi-disciplinary because they engage multiple disciplines in the study of topics.
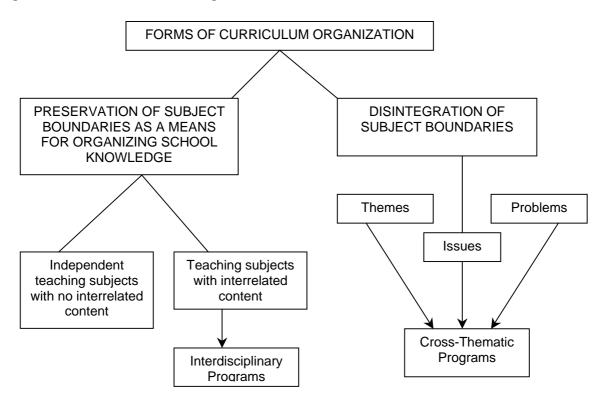
Figure 1. Forms of Curriculum Organisation

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  FORMS OF CURRICULUM ORGANIZATION    │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ╱                          ╲
   ┌──────────────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │ PRESERVATION OF SUBJECT      │      │   DISINTEGRATION OF      │
   │ BOUNDARIES AS A MEANS        │      │   SUBJECT BOUNDARIES     │
   │ FOR ORGANIZING SCHOOL        │      │                          │
   │ KNOWLEDGE                    │      └──────────────────────────┘
   └──────────────────────────────┘
        ╱              ╲                ┌────────┐  ┌────────┐  ┌──────────┐
 ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐     │ Themes │  │ Issues │  │ Problems │
 │ Independent  │ │ Teaching     │     └────────┘  └────────┘  └──────────┘
 │ teaching     │ │ subjects     │
 │ subjects     │ │ with         │            ┌──────────────────┐
 │ with no      │ │ interrelated │            │  Cross-Thematic  │
 │ interrelated │ │ content      │            │    Programs      │
 │ content      │ └──────────────┘            └──────────────────┘
 └──────────────┘      │
              ┌──────────────────┐
              │ Interdisciplinary│
              │ Programs         │
              └──────────────────┘
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The need for inter-disciplinarily and integration

Curriculum integration has long been an ideal: Plato suggested separate subjects should be taught through common references and that all subjects should refer to the inner meaning of reality. In the early twentieth century progressive education resisted teaching specialised knowledge as a replica of scientific world, and suggested child-centred and 'social problem' curriculum designs.

After many decades in which the technical-scientific model dominated education there is today a revived trend to curriculum integration, which can be attributed to the many factors - epistemological, socio-economic, psychological and instructional (Matsagouras, 2002).

Epistemological factors

New epistemological paradigms have shaken the basis of long-established bodies of laws and principles. New theories contest the modernist picture of a world ruled by objective and foreseeable natural laws and the belief that these laws can be understood through increasing levels of epistemic specialisation. Instead, it has been recognised that epistemological validity is situational and may be confined by time limits, so that one can talk about truth only in terms of specific contexts.

To overcome the high levels of doubt inherent in the view of reality as context-bound, cooperative networks - which include professionals from a variety of epistemic fields - have formed, to achieve a holistic picture of reality. Many such cooperative networks have led to the formation of new fields such as bio-ethics, biotechnology, and the cognitive sciences, which have gained a significant place within the academic community.

Schools need to keep pace with new epistemological data and move away from obsolete pedagogical models of socialising pupils through separate disciplines, towards a model that nurtures life skills through a holistic approach, where knowledge and skills accumulated from different disciplines become tools in the pupils' hands. They can then deal effectively with problem situations.

Socio-economic factors

Four features define the post-modern socio-economic environment that drives curriculum development on subject integration.

1. The 'knowledge explosion' creates the information society: citizens need to filter knowledge and give a personal meaning to learning, so that are more than mere 'consumers' of presented information and easy-to-manipulate subjects. Schools contribute to the personal development of pupils if their focus changes from transmitting knowledge to fostering skills of self-regulatory learning, decision-making and implementation in real situations.

2. A multiethnic society requires higher levels of empathy and mutual understanding which the traditional curriculum cannot meet, because it emphasises cognitive processes and devalues the affective, which are indispensable for promoting intercultural communication.

3. Changes in working conditions in society dictate corresponding changes in school work conditions. The abandonment of the top-down model of decision making in work settings and of mass production practices offer an example for schools where children's suggestions, cooperation and needs-driven learning experiences take priority over teacher's authority and rigid curriculum implementation. Cross-thematic approaches which require cooperative and inquiring processes forward the development of the contemporary citizen.

4. Social problems require active involvement of schools to sensitise pupils to these problems and to suggest and implement solutions. These include drug use, school violence, ICT illiteracy, genetically modified food and the violation of the balance of nature. Each separate school subject has to address social problems and examine them through the lens of the corresponding scientific field, as well as through inter-disciplinary associations and cross-thematic references.

Psychological factors

Psychological trends such as phenomenology, child study and more recently, cognitive/social constructivism and the theory of multiple intelligences denote the complex and holistic nature of human perception and suggest that schools should involve pupils in learning situations where the physical and social milieu retain natural unity and provide opportunities for multiple talent evolution. Specifically, the notion of learning integration (together with those of situated learning and of the knowledge construction advocated by constructivism) as opposed to traditional school practices of knowledge transmission and accumulation, seem best to fit the way humans perceive and organise information and competencies. Discipline and subject barriers hinder learning development, while teaching subject defragmentation liberates learning potential.

Holistic approaches of learning are supported by contemporary neuro-psychological research. As Cain & Cain (1994:39) note:

> Split brain research helped us to appreciate that the brain has an enormous innate capacity to deal with parts and wholes simultaneously. The brain can deal with the interconnected, interpenetrating, "holographic" world, provided it is encouraged to do so. One common thrust of many new methods of teaching is a sense of "embededness" – a sense of wholeness that emerges from seeing how academic subjects relate to each other and how human beings relate to the subjects … Thematic teaching and the integration of curriculum are only two approaches to learning that epitomise this kind of teaching. In effect, such approaches orchestrate complex experience in a way that takes advantage of what the brain does well. They do not limit the brain by teaching the memorisation of isolated facts and skills.

Instructional factors

Contemporary instructional designs that promote cooperative learning, project learning, holistic language teaching, inquiry-based learning and critical/creative thinking adopt cross-thematic curricula as a natural frame for their realisation (Erickson, 1998:126). This can be attributed to the fact that cross-thematic curricula seem to serve multiple instructional needs, goals and approaches. Cross-thematic curricula are believed to secure better understanding of teaching content, effective perception, easier transfer of learning, a holistic perception of reality and the development of critical thinking and creative thinking skills. Following pupils' interests and encouraging pupil communication triggers motivation towards learning, perhaps particularly with foreign students, those with learning difficulties or from less privileged backgrounds.

Finally, cross-thematic approaches benefit teachers by helping them develop better relations with their pupils; they allow for greater flexibility in incorporating change and promoting a positive climate within the wider community of their school (Mathison & Freeman, 1997:18).

Instructional principles: the case of the new citizenship education curriculum

The factors that lead to curriculum integration, explicitly or implicitly, translate into principles for use in the classroom. These are found in the new Greek citizenship education curriculum, which does not propose specific methodologies or models of teaching, but offers general instructional guidelines that might be adopted to maximise student learning. They include the following points:

- interconnect citizenship education with other disciplines (history, geography, music, arts, mathematics, language) and with hybrid disciplines;
- pupils learn through autonomous involvement and research: within this the teacher facilitates and inspires;
- base learning activities on pupils' interests and experiences;
- developing emotional security, tolerance and acceptance between classmates is vital;
- use literature and art in the wider sense (cinema, theatre, painting, sculpture, photography), to multiply approaches and trigger pupils' interest and involvement.

Inter-disciplinary and cross-thematic curricula develop procedural skills, including declarative knowledge. Therefore general curriculum guidelines describe basic skills to be developed, which can be categorised into three major dimensions:

1. Development of knowledge and methodology:
    *   use of numbers and everyday mathematical concepts
    *   use of resources and tools to retrieve, analyse, evaluate and present information
    *   self-development through reflective thinking and self evaluation
    *   design and critically review strategic problem-solving
    *   making rational choices - personal and collective levels - to preserve nature
    *   knowledge and skills in health protection.

2. The advancement of cooperation and communication:
    *   communication skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing, argumentation, participation)
    *   cooperation in group work (respect, mutual recognition and social interaction)
    *   acquiring of social skills.

3. The inspiration of art and the use of science in everyday life:
    *   fostering innovative thinking
    *   art appreciation, acceptance of art and creating pieces of art.

These general principles are strikingly different to those adopted by the content-driven citizenship education curricula of the past and its resulting concept-based teaching approaches.

The old meets the new: common threads and differences

Content-driven curricula, as contrasted to integrated curricula, use the content of the 'mother' discipline, breaks it down into teaching units, and organises these units into an hierarchy according to the way discipline is organised (Ross, 2000: 92). In citizenship education in Greece teaching units used to follow the structural format of basic sociology or political science elements - a linear model of human needs satisfaction, satisfaction of communication needs, formulation of communities, political systems, and democracy. This model does not share common ground with the way children experience/sense their socio-political environment (Chelmis, 1995). Similarly, in a concept-based intra-disciplinary approach, the prevailing approach of content-driven curricula, though valuable for helping children grasp abstract civic concepts, remains irrelevant if it is not combined with inter-disciplinary and cross-thematic processes (Ross, 2002; Matsagouras, 2002).

Curriculum interdisciplinarity is seen in the way content is organised. Following the rationale of an inter-disciplinary approach and subject integration, the content of citizenship education is organised around core concepts and skills and calls for the coordination of various teaching subjects throughout both primary and secondary education. The new curriculum does not treat skills like democratic participation, or concepts such as peace, welfare, democracy, and development, as peripheral or as an indirect by-product of the instructional process, but as core concepts and skills around which learning activities are structured and which are best nurtured through the aid of different hybrid disciplines such as environmental education, health education, traffic education and sex education. Traditionally separate subjects such as history, geography,

music, arts, mathematics and language jointly contribute to the needs of citizenship education.

For grades 1-4, core concepts and skills are evolved around three main topics:
1. Social life, social institutions, the world-wide community
2. Labour, production, dissemination, consumption
3. Communication, arts, civilisation and athleticism.

For grades 5-6 and for secondary education the curriculum provides for four main topics:
1. The individual within society
2. The individual and the state
3. The individual and the European Union
4. The individual and the world-wide community.

Coordination of topics, content and themes of integration takes the form presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Topics and content of the 1st grade's citizenship curriculum

Topics	Content	Suggestions for thematic integration
1st topic: Social life, social institutions, world-wide community	1. My class 2. My school 3. My family 4. My neighbourhood	"Children around the world" (Language, Music, Theatrical play, Aesthetics, Gymnastic)
2nd topic: Labour, production, dissemination and consumption	1. Our needs 2. Goods, needs and occupations 3. Tools and apparatus 4. Means of transportation	"Work at home" (Language, Music, Theatrical play, Aesthetics, Gymnastic)
3rd topic: Communication, Arts, civilisation and athleticism	1. Athleticism in school 2. Spare time after school: Games at home and in neighbourhood 3. Use of TV and telephones	"Games I play" (Language, Music, Theatrical play, Aesthetics, Gymnastic)

Table 2. Topics and content of the 5th grade's citizenship curriculum

Topics	Content	Suggestions for thematic integration
1st topic: The person within society	Social groups (family, associations, etc.) Institutions (School, community). Relations, roles, organisation, importance, interactions Special groups, cooperation, social acceptance	"The family around the world" (Language, Geography, Arts, Foreign Languages)
2nd topic: The person and the state	The concept of state The Greek state Form of government / Greek democracy / elections The Greek citizen Rights and duties International relations	"Consumption: Rights and duties of consumers" (Language, Aesthetics)
3rd topic: The person and the European Union	EU: Conception, chronicle of foundation, member states European citizen	"The currency" (History, Geography, Aesthetics, Math, Language, Foreign Languages)
4th topic: The person and the world-wide community	International organisations Human rights	"Child labour" (Language, Geography, History, Math, Aesthetics)

Citizenship education in secondary schools builds on previous knowledge and skills. Integrated themes include violence in stadiums, Greek benefactors, the art of rhetoric, and environmental conservation.

As already noted, there are differences between the two curricula in respect of content selection, content organisation and teaching approaches, but there are also similarities with regard to the general citizenship aim. Specifically, both curricula contain references to
- knowledge acquisition
- problem solving skills

- participatory skills
- sensitivity towards human community (see Table 3).

There are qualitative distinctions between the statements of aims that mirror the source philosophies. In the 1984 curriculum acquisition of knowledge is the primary aim, while this is sixth in the 2001 curriculum. The 2001 curriculum stresses the development of personal skills, personal empowerment and active participation, in contrast with the earlier morr conservative stance.

Table 3 Citizenship education goals in 1984 and 2001 curricula

1984	2001
Knowledge of organisation and function of Greek society and the values it is based on,	Roles and duties within contemporary democratic societies.
	Facing and managing difficult questions and socio-moral problems that come regularly in personal and social life milieu.
Understanding / appreciating the importance of social and political institutions for the person and the group,	Acquiring necessary knowledge and skills …
	… to actively participate in social processes on local, national and international level.
Developing critical thinking as far as contemporary problems are concerned,	Fostering spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, self-confidence and sense of responsibility.
Practising social awareness in order to participate through a responsible and creative way to the life of a democratic society,	Acquiring important information about the state, democratic institutions, community values and information about the economy.
	Supporting the welfare of the school, the neighbourhood, the community and the world.
Becoming sensitive towards the international community.	Respecting various national, cultural and religious differences.

Issues of curriculum evaluation and development

Stufflebeam (1982) identifies four types of curriculum evaluation: context, input, process and product. Curriculum reform in Greece, particular in citizenship education, began in examining and evaluating the socio-economic, psychological, epistemological and instructional context. The new curriculum is in development and only a general frame is presented; process evaluation will take place when the whole curriculum package is developed and implemented.

Pupils' progress will be evaluated with multiple tools, from written or oral tests to joint projects. Indices of pupil's progress will be the level of attainment of cognitive objectives, particularly the grasp of concepts and the development of skills, the reflection of desirable attitudes in the student community, and the level of sensitivity and empathy towards the world-wide community.

Great emphasis will also be placed on input evaluation. Questions to be addressed include:

- Are the citizenship concepts scientifically valid and congruent to social needs and demands?
- Is content organisation and suggested teaching methodology pedagogically valid?
- Is the curriculum sufficiently comprehensive to allow for the adjustment of goals, content and methodology to the needs and development of each grade?
- Is it flexible and does it allow for multiple initiatives on behalf of curriculum developers and teachers?
- Is it open, allowing constant readjustments according to changing contexts?

Apart from considerations internal validity, input evaluation must assess the school system's capability for curriculum innovation. Theory and practice show that change is not easy. A primary method to overcome resistance to change is to make innovation as compatible as possible with the old system. The new citizenship education curriculum attempts to conciliate long-established practice civics to the new theory of an integrated curriculum by retaining the traditional format of separate curricular subjects and concurrently making inter-disciplinary associations. Characteristic features of traditional civics such as the systematic presentation of information regarding local, national and international socio-political institutions and the concept-based teaching processes remain, but there is an opening towards other curricular subjects which contribute to the aims and goals of citizenship education.

The cross-curricular thematic approach, which can be said to be theoretically advanced, though difficult to implement as compared to inter-disciplinary approach, will be implemented through 'lending' 10% of each subject's allocated curricular time to cross-thematic activities. The complementary curriculum suggests a special 'exploratory time' of at least two hours per week. During this time children work on cross-thematic projects which stem either from their own interests or from contemporary issues and children's concerns.

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