



This paper is taken from

*Teaching Citizenship
Proceedings of the seventh Conference of the
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe
Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2005

edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 389 1

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Spinthourakis, J., Papoulia-Tzelepi, P., Stavlioti-Karatzia E., Karras, J. (2005) National Policy and Practitioner practice in Greece, in Ross, A. (ed) Teaching Citizenship. London: CiCe, pp 67-76.

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This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- Cass Mitchell-Riddle, head of the CiCe Coordination Unit at the time of the conference, and for the initial stages of editing this book
- Lindsay Melling and Gitesh Gohel of IPSE, London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of the Department of Education and Culture of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

National Policy and Practitioner practice in Greece

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Cultural and religious differentiation in the Greek population

Greece has traditionally been one of the most ethnically and religiously homogeneous countries in the Balkans. The country with approximately 10.9 million residents has ethnic/religious minorities numbering barely 250,000 (2.3% of population). Approximately 94-97% of the population identify themselves with the Greek Orthodox faith. Greeks tend to link religious affiliation very closely to ethnicity; ie an ethnic Greek equals Orthodox Christian. For many, the role of the Greek Orthodox Church during the Ottoman rule was fundamental to the survival of the national character of the people; thereby crediting it with preserving Greek language, values, and national identity.

The Muslim population, concentrated in western Thrace with small communities in Rhodes, Kos, and Athens, is composed mainly of ethnic Turks but also includes Pomaks and Roma. With the exception of the Muslim community, the Greek state does not keep statistics on the size of religious groups. The religious affiliations of the ethnic Greek and foreign-born population is presented in Table 1. The majority of non-citizen residents are not Greek Orthodox. The largest of the group is the Albanians; a few are Orthodox and Roman Catholics, but the majority is nonreligious.

Table 1: Religious affiliations of ethnic Greeks and foreign born population

Religious Affiliation	Ethnic Greeks	Non Greeks
Muslims	98,000-140,000	500,000
Catholics	50,000	165,000 (Poles 80,000, Filipinos 40,000, others 45,000)
Jehovah's Witnesses	50,000	
Protestants & Evangelicals	30,000	
Mormons	300	
Jews	5000	
Baha'i	250	

The Orthodox Church and the Jewish and Muslim religions are the only groups considered by law to be a 'legal person of public law.' Other religions are considered 'legal persons of private law.' Two laws from the 1930's require recognized or 'known' religious groups to obtain 'house of prayer' permits from the Ministry of Education and Religion in order to open houses of worship.

Greece has only recently had to deal with a role reversal in terms of immigration, from a place one leaves to a place one comes to. In the last century though, large waves of immigrants have come, all Greek Orthodox Christians, and selected on that basis. In 1923, with religion the only criteria, over a million Christians were deported from Anatolia to Greece and hundreds of thousands of Muslims were dispatched from Greece to Turkey.

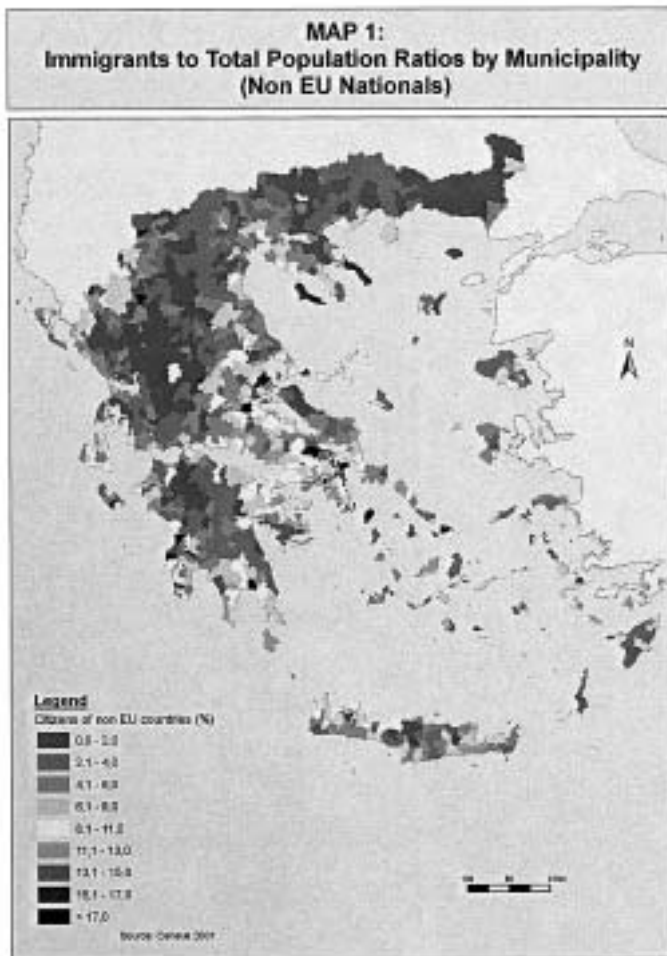
National Origins of Recent Migrants

Mass immigration to Greece arrived in two waves; the first arrived in the early 1990s with most coming from Albania. The second came after 1995, and while including Albania also involved other Balkan states, the former USSR, Pakistan, and India. Greece's initial reaction to the immigrants crossing its borders can be described as one of 'tolerated irregular immigration'. Table 2 provides a sense of the immigrant arrivals since 1951 (Kasimis & Kassimi, 2004). Today, government estimates set the number of immigrants working in Greece at approximately 800,000 but acknowledge that it is probably higher. Together with their dependants, they add up to an immigrant community of over 1.2 million.

Table 2: Greece: immigrant and population growth (1951-2001)

Year	Number of immigrants in Greece	Total pop.
1951	30,571	7,632,801
1961	54,736	8,388,553
1971	92,568	8,768,641
1981	171,424	9,740,417
1991	167,276	10,259,900
2001	797,093	10,939,771

Specifically, the hundreds of thousands of new residents to Greece, from many different cultural and religious backgrounds, pose considerable challenges. Among policy questions raising strong emotions among the Greek public recently have been issues linked to religion, nationality and identity. This massive influx of foreigners through porous borders has and continues to present challenges. Greece perceives itself as an ethnically cohesive Christian Orthodox country, and attitudes towards immigrants are essentially untested but strong emotions abound.



According to the 2001 Census, the largest group of immigrants comes from the Balkan countries of Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. People from these countries make up almost two-thirds of the total 'foreign population'. Migrants from the former USSR comprise 10%; the EU countries approximately 6%. A heterogeneous group of mostly first/second-generation Greek emigrants from the US, Canada, and Australia, also account for around 6%. Finally, a group from a wide variety of countries makes up 13% (NSSG, 2003). The wave of return migrants of Greek origin from the former USSR peaked after the collapse of the USSR. The total number of return migrants of this type between 1985-2003 is

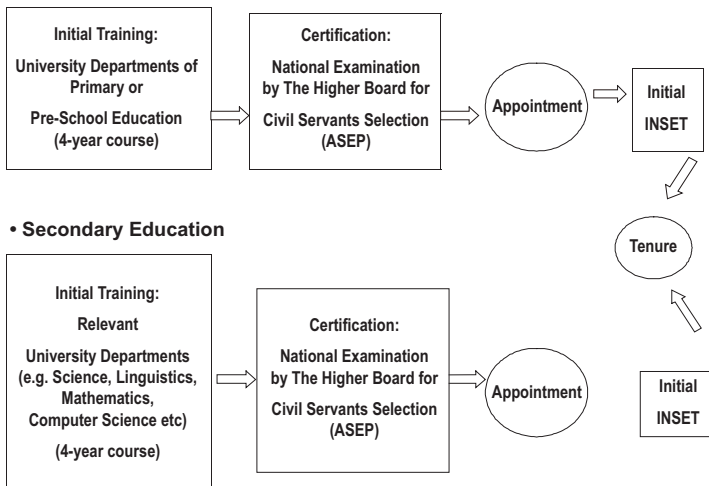
estimated at 150 000. The numbers of asylum seeker and refugee children are very small compared to migrants or return migrants. The main asylum seekers are Turkish, Afghanistani, Iraqi and Iranians.

The areas in which migrants are concentrated are related to the patterns of their economic integration. Urban areas, especially Athens, Piraeus, Thessalonica and Patras constitute the typical settlement areas for migrants. Immigrants working in the agrarian sector are settled in rural or semi-urban areas, following patterns of labor demand. According to the data from the first phase of legalization (1998) 44.3% of the immigrants live in Attica, 15% in Central Macedonia, 6.7% in Peloponnesus, 6.5% in Central Greece, 6.1% in Thessaly, 5.7% in Crete and 5% in West Greece (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004).

Greek Educational System and Teacher Training

Teacher Education

• Pre-School and Primary Education



Until 1984 teachers were trained in 2-3 year *Pedagogical Academies*. Today, education and training of primary and pre-primary teachers consists of an eight-semester study program at university. Practical training at elementary schools and kindergartens are mandatory for studies in a) primary school education, or b) kindergarten education. The education of in-service teachers is not systematic. Intercultural education is incorporated in the courses of some university primary and secondary school teacher training departments. In-service training is provided every year through Regional Centres for Teacher education (PEK) which organise a number of programs in different thematic fields which are not obligatory but more and differentiated training models are needed (Spinthourakis & Katsillis, 2003; Ksohelis, 2001).

Education provisions and the immigrant child

Recent waves of economic immigrants have affected the school in significant ways (Mitis, 1998; Nikolaou, 2000; Spinthourakis & Katsillis, 2003). The current educational system recognizes three categories of immigrant children in Greece, a) children whose parents are citizens of another state migrating to Greece (for a limited period of time or permanently), independent of legal status, b) children whose parents (or at least one of them) are ethnic Greeks or Greek nationals living abroad and migrating from a third country to Greece, and c) children whose parents are or have been asylum seekers and have been given refugee or humanitarian status by the Greek authorities, or are irregular resident. Since 1995 the Greek state's educational policy toward refugee children has been integrationist, encouraging a mainstream approach within the frame of intercultural education. There is no refugee-specific policy for this group of pupils. Asylum seeker and refugee children are eligible for support measures on the same footing as other return migrant or migrant students from the same school.

Educational services are provided to all immigrant children aged 6 to 15 (primary and lower secondary education) irrespective of legal status in Greece. The current legal framework related to immigration include, a) L. 2413/1996 on intercultural education, b) L. 2790/2000 reception on accommodation of ethnic Greeks coming from a third country, and c) L. 2910/2001 on reception and accommodation of migrants from non-EU countries. These laws reflect a major shift in order to account for the new situation resulting from Greece's decision to move to normalize irregular immigrants living and working in Greece. All foreign children living in Greece are obliged to attend school/complete the 9 year-compulsory education as are Greek nationals. School administration is required to enrol immigrant or refugee children even if absent necessary documents and allows for optional instruction in the mother tongue and in the culture of the country of origin as additional, extra-curricular student support activities and programs. Finally, article 34 of L. 2413/1996 provides for an adaptation of the mainstream curriculum in special schools or classes of intercultural education for the social, cultural and learning situation of a multicultural environment (Gotovos & Markou, 2003; Eurydice, 2003/4).

The Greek educational system has generally followed a model of mainstreaming for immigrant children; separate programs based on religious, national/ethnic, linguistic and cultural difference are not used. Schools usually provide information to parents on the specific support strategies available. This is more readily available if the child attends a school that is part of the 'School Integration of Return Migrant and Immigrant Children' network (Gotovos & Markou 2003), or if the school is affiliated with one of the state universities offering pre-service intercultural teacher education.

Two types of reception classes are available to all immigrant children according to their needs. However, there is no obligation for schools to conduct language tests for the placement of pupils. Type I reception classes are where students are organized in special learning groups. Pupils here get instruction in Greek and other subjects, joining mainstream classes for music, sports, arts and foreign language. The maximum duration of type I classes is two years; the decision for student's participation is jointly taken by the school and the family. Type II reception classes are where students don't have parallel learning groups; additional supportive instruction (individually-oriented/specific teacher interventions) is provided while attending their regular classes. Apart from reception

classes, there are preparatory courses of mainly afternoon remedial or compensatory instruction at school.

Teachers in these forms of instruction are either mainstream teachers with additional qualifications, or teachers hired for this specific instruction. Knowledge of students' background language and awareness or knowledge of the culture is assessed in the personnel selection procedure. In-service training is provided for all types of teaching staff. Additional funding is provided indirectly through the implementation of special measures, often jointly funded by the EU and the Ministry of Education.

Schools/classes of intercultural education have relative autonomy concerning the curriculum design. Mother tongue and culture instruction is possible on a non-obligatory basis and offered as an extra-curricular activity.

The national curriculum doesn't directly speak to multiculturalism but does so indirectly through cross-thematic concepts. These are reflected through: a) the teaching of the social science subjects, literature and foreign language classes, b) actively promoting cross-thematic curriculum and teaching methodology, c) a weekly flexible curriculum zone where various topics can be discussed and on which projects can be developed, d) e-networks between Greek and foreign schools and e) reduction of ethnocentrism and stereotypes in curricula and textbooks.

Preliminary research results

In order to elaborate and further understand how schools and teachers address multiculturalism, information was collected using semi-structured interviews with school teachers, head teachers and educational counsellors, as well as interviews with twelve year old pupils. These aimed at identifying issues related to multiculturalism, Europe, racism and xenophobia, civic and political rights. The school teachers were also asked to refer to their sources of information/ training and indicate areas they required further training/support to be effective.

Developing understanding of a multicultural society

Our analysis indicates that teachers and head teachers have an understanding of a multicultural society that varies and depends on the area they work, their training and their experiences with minorities. Those that seem to have deep understanding of multiculturalism acquired this from participating in long-term in-service training, through the media and readings, teaching in schools with immigrant children or other experiences.

Teachers that have a deep understanding of multiculturalism try to promote awareness of multiculturalism in pupils mainly through the organization of projects and cultural events. They believe that when children work together and deal with various cultures they are offered opportunities to 'see the other, the different and cooperate'. Non-immigrant pupils that participated in our research generally identify themselves as Greek with a rather skewed idea of a European. The immigrant pupils seem to have a 'vague' and confused idea on their identity. They refer to it in direct ways like 'I was born in Albania, brought up in Greece, so am I both Albanian and Greek?' In schools where multiculturalism is developed, pupils speak about their identity in more clear way.

When teachers were asked about their practices in class they mainly gave ‘politically correct’ answers and referred to the application of individualized, cooperative and participatory methodologies. However, more in depth questioning helped us to identify that there is divergence between their talk and their practice. When multiculturalism focused on Europe and the teachers had participated in European projects initiatives, the whole picture in schools was in a more multicultural context.

We participated in a COMENIUS network of schools. Our children travelled abroad and they met pupils of other cultures. They worked in schools with a varied curriculum. These experiences promote understanding and assist us in applying relevant innovative teaching approaches.

Respondents referred to the need for a change in the national curriculum mainly in the areas of language, history, environmental and social studies. Those that were aware of the new Cross-thematic Curriculum to be introduced in 2006, which is content and methodologically oriented to multiculturalism, express their high expectations towards this curricular change.

The teachers express their need to administrative support as having in-school specialists as well as the ability to organize special lessons/classes for the immigrant children. They believe that universities and the educational counsellors are the ones that are more effective in offering training, which they wish to be longer than one-day workshops. They identify the following major areas for training and support:

- Teaching Greek as a foreign language
- Applying innovative methodologies
- Syllabus development in various topic areas and lesson plans
- Acquiring multicultural awareness

Developing an understanding of Europe

Most of the participants felt quite distant from Europe. They had rather positive views of Europe; their knowledge about it was mainly obtained through travelling and personal reading, rather than through training. Children in sub-urban areas had a very vague idea of Europe, while those in areas where tourism is developed, seemed to have developed their view of ‘Europeans’ through observing tourists, or through the media. There was a link between the European dimension in education and the issues of multiculturalism in the global society.

Some of the respondents expressed views that showed how difficult it was for them to feel like European. Their every day connections with Europe were mainly on the economic (Euro) and then at the political sphere (political discourse). Children make some rare references to them being Greek as well as European citizens.

Racism and xenophobia

Our findings indicate that most participants used the talk of politically correct multicultural practice. However, when more specific answers were asked on religion issues and of equity, their responses were contradictory. The ones that lived in areas with many immigrants and mostly Albanians, showed signs of xenophobia and mentioned

some incidents of violence that took place. On the other hand they spoke of pupils from Albania that were doing very well and admitted that 'Not all Albanians are bad people'.

Civic and political rights

Citizenship education was seen as a venue offering knowledge of the political system of democracy and promoting relevant skills/behaviours. Children said that through learning about this they become better in their classmate relationships. They also referred to equity issues.

We work together. We realize that we all have a talent. There is an area in which each of us is doing well. We all know how well we do and our teacher should help us all.

Conclusion

Our data indicate that teaching in multicultural contexts should have a higher priority in the teaching agenda, both in terms of policy and practice. Educational policy makers should plan hands-on in-service training taking into consideration the professional development requirements of the staff. Also, teachers' acknowledge that they should become more aware of the multicultural context of the contemporary Greek society, as well as of its European dimension.

The new Cross-thematic curriculum sets the basis for the new educational material that is being developed and that should definitely be closer to the needs of a multicultural society. Generally, most participants' talk showed a positive attitude towards multiculturalism. Their practices however seem not to be so 'culturally sensitive'. More work needs to be done mostly through specialized training that increases self awareness, knowledge on multiculturalism as well as on good teaching practice.

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