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Intercultural Citizenship Education in Greece: Us and Them

Michalis Kakos and Nektaria Palaiologou***

Abstract: The multidimensional crisis in Greece has influenced relations between the native population and the large number of ethnic, national, cultural and religious minorities currently residing in the country. Poverty, intolerance and an increase in political extremism contribute to a grim illustration of the position of minority groups in Greece. Convinced there is a role for education in responding to this social fragmentation, and in actively supporting the development of intercultural understanding, this paper evaluates the Greek State's approach to, understanding of, and expectations in reference to overcoming divisions in society. Focusing particularly on the role of education in the development of students' intercultural citizenship and identity, the study analysed four key documents outlining official strategies for the inclusion of minorities and the programme designed for Citizenship education. Our analysis suggests that although attempts have and are being made to improve intercultural communication, underlying these attempts is the problematic understanding underpinning Greek identity, which suggests Greece is an ethnically homogenous, mono-cultural society. The distinction between 'Us' and 'Them' which is integrated into Citizenship and intercultural education programmes could act as a counter-force to tolerance, preventing the attainment of the objectives set out in these programmes.

Keywords: citizenship education, social cohesion, European crisis, intercultural education

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Intercultural relations in Greece and attitudes towards the ‘Other’ in the context of the current economic, social and political reality

In recent years, many articles that concern Greece have commenced with a reference to the significant demographic changes that have taken place in the country during the last three decades and to the economic crisis which the country is currently dealing with. These two aspects of modern Greek reality have not only forced significant changes in the way that the Greek state is organised and run, but most importantly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, have caused social and political shifts which may be more significant than the direct impact of the crisis on the economy.

The purpose of this article is to contribute to the discussion about whether Greek education is prepared to respond to the new social and political reality emerging out of these demographic, political and social changes and to address relevant concerns. It will do this by focusing on certain key policy documents that outline the direction and priorities of the Greek educational system in relation to the dimensions of intercultural relations and citizenship education. By investigating these issues, the paper positions itself within a rich vein of literature produced in Greece in recent years (see for example: Skourtou, Vratsalis, & Govaris, 2004; Damanakis, 2005; Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2011; Palaiologou, 2012; Palaiologou & Faas, 2012).

The majority of the literature on the treatment of intercultural dimensions in the Greek education system focus specifically on the design and implementation of Greek public schools’ official programmes for intercultural education, and on the curricula of relevant subjects taught in schools, such as Citizenship and Religious Education. The scope of this paper is slightly different in that it aims to examine the intercultural dimension behind the educational principles that seem to guide education and particularly citizenship education. We feel that this is particularly important given the current demographic, social and economic situation in Greece.

The nature of the demographic changes that Greek society has undergone during the last three decades is well documented and it is not in the scope of this paper to offer an account of these. However, a brief description of the changes, and of the educational initiatives resulting from them, is necessary in order to provide a context for the discussion presented here. To summarise and illuminate the current situation in society, it is sufficient to explain that during the last three decades Greece has

transformed from a country from which people emigrate, into one that people immigrate to. The result of the immigration that has occurred, is that approximately 10% of the total population currently residing in Greece was not born in the country; thus the country “has seen its demography significantly and irreversibly altered in social, cultural, economic, ethnic, racial and religious terms” (Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2011, p. 402).

The demographic changes and evidence of xenophobia amongst the native population have forced Greek society to revisit traditional attributes of xenophilia and Greek identity, as well as the conceptualisation of Greek nationality and of Greek ‘otherness’. The presence of ethnic or religious minorities traditionally referred to the Muslim population in Northern Greece and the large Roma population that resided in mainly rural areas of Greece for hundreds of years. This definition has been forcefully expanded to include immigrants with a large range of national, ethnic, religious and cultural identities. The size of this population, together perhaps with the fact that large numbers reside in the centres of Greece’s large cities, have created a need for the State to make urgent decisions about issues that until recently had been relatively easy to ignore. An example of this is that demands for the construction of a mosque in Athens have yet to be met, making the city the only European capital without a religious centre for the large Muslim population now residing in it to meet (Pavlou, 2011).

Laws which have long been in operation have supported a particular narrative about Greek nationality; however, these now seem inadequate to support an effective response to the needs of the country’s new residents: citizenship laws based on the ‘*ius sanguinis*’ principle, have led to a number of second generation immigrants from countries in which citizenship is granted on ‘*ius soli*’ being left without any citizenship (Pouliopoulos, 2013). Recent attempts to amend the law and for citizenship to be granted to anyone who is born in Greece have met resistance, not only from conservative political forces but also, by ruling of the Plenary Supreme Court, from the Greek Constitution itself (Decision no 460/2031). However, even the fact that such changes of law have been suggested and in principle approved by the parliament can be considered as a positive indication of change (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012).

The hesitant and slow changes in the State’s reaction to the growing problem of segregation and xenophobia had considerable ground to cover prior before the recent economic crisis; however, financial turmoil has exacerbated the problems within society and the state. The lack of resources have forced the establishment of a smaller, more cost-effective

state sector and welfare state, a project that is currently underway. A number of Institutions and agencies have ceased to exist, including the 'Hellenic Migration Policy Institute' (IMEPO) which was designed to study and monitor migratory phenomena in Greece, design interventions to develop awareness about issues related to immigration and inform relevant policy decisions to be undertaken by the government. In a related move in the same direction, a Ministerial Decision, validated with Law 3966/2011, article 21 (Φ.Ε.Κ. 118/24-5-2011), ceased the activities of the 'Institute of Education for Homogeneity and Intercultural Education' (IPODE) after 24-4-2012. The Institute has been reduced to a department for the 'Institute of Educational Politics', a new legal institution established to replace the four major educational institutions. However, the detrimental effects of the economic crisis on intercultural relations and on the position of the ethnic minorities in Greece have not been so much due to the abolition of the above institutions, but to the rapid deterioration in relations between the Greek State, and in many ways also the Greek citizens, and the minorities in general and the immigrant population in particular.

Possibly the most characteristic indication of the current situation and of the deterioration of the relationships between Greeks, the Greek State and the immigrant population is the increase in the support of the Far Right by Greek citizens. Advocating extreme ideas and actively supporting racist behaviours, Golden Dawn, a political party self-defined as 'The only Nationalist movement in Greece' (www.xryshaygh.com accessed March 2013) gained 6.92% of votes in the last National election (Source: <http://www.ypes.gr/el/Elections/NationalElections/Results>). The support that the party enjoys and the appeal of extremist ideas in general among Greek citizens cannot be dissociated from the constant rise in unemployment and poverty throughout the country (Knigge, 1998; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2001; Falk and Zweimüller, 2005). Parallel to their political manifestation, intolerance and xenophobia have also found expression through an increasing number of violent racist incidents. In its first report, the 'Racist Violence Recording Network' (RVCN), which was set up by the UN Refugee Agency and the National Commission for Human Rights in Greece and tasked to look into 'the quantitative and qualitative trends of racist violence in Greece', verified an 'immense increase in racially motivated violent attacks in Greece' (RVCN, 2012, p. 1). Equally worryingly, the RVCN reports a lack of an effective response by the Greek state, calling for the public to direct its interest towards effecting an end to this situation (RVCN, 2012, p. 3).

This is not, of course, to suggest that the majority of the Greek population actively support xenophobia and racist ideals. However, we argue, what we see currently in Greece is an increase of tolerance for intolerance, in reference to anything that challenges presuppositions and myths about what is to be Greek and the position of the Other in the Greek community.

Existing Educational policies –Intercultural education and citizenship education in Greece

The broader scope of this paper is to unpick the principles and attitudes towards diversity in Greece as these are expressed in some key policy documents, which inform, and in some ways direct the formation of relevant educational policies. Therefore, we are not aiming to add to the discussion about the actual implementation of the Greek programme of intercultural education. Rather, our aim is to focus explicitly on the principles and approaches that relate to the inclusion of minorities, the intercultural communication and the conceptualisation of citizenship in the context of education as informed by those approaches and principles. What it is necessary to mention, in relation to the Greek Programme of Intercultural education, is its reported inefficiency to respond to the relevant educational needs, not only of immigrants and other minorities, but also of the Greek student population. As the educational system is deeply segregated, the programme of Intercultural education concerns only that 0.2% of Greek schools which operate as educational ghettos for minority students (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012). Therefore the education system does “little to further a shift in perceptions among the majority population in understanding Greek society as more diverse, multicultural and changing” (Gropas & Triandafyllidou, 2011, p. 408).

Citizenship education has been an integral part of the Greek educational system almost since the establishment of the Greek state. A number of Educational Acts and ministerial circulars from as far back as 1829 reveal that the cultivation of political morality and the formation of citizen’s social behaviours were the basic principles around which the educational system of the new state was constructed (see Karakatsani, 2003, pp. 111-112). Embedded in this venture, and a condition for the survival of the new state, was the enhancement of the sense that citizens were members of the newly established political community. For this purpose, ethnicity (defined mainly

in terms of language and religion) was promoted as the main unifying force among the citizens, and their political identity was considered as being completely dependent upon their cultural/ethnic one (Tsaousis, 1983). Consequently, education in general, and citizenship education in particular, became the vehicle for the promotion of ethnocentric and nationalistic ideals, which were based on assumptions of historical continuity from Ancient Greece through Byzantium to the Modern Era, and of a National homogeneity illustrated in terms of language, religion and territory (Frangoudaki, 1997).

The same ideals continued underpinning Greek (citizenship) education throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Meanwhile, the historical events in which Greece was involved, were approached, explained and experienced within an ethnocentric discourse, which utilised these events to justify and reinforce itself. Designed to serve and facilitate the reproduction of this discourse, the Greek education system functioned largely and for a very long time as an exclusive social organism, hospitable only to Christian orthodox, native Greek speakers where: “Intolerance of the other non in-group members, xenophobia and prejudice [have been the] indicators of a deeply ethnocentric socialising national education system aiming at the creation of a solid national-religious identity. This ... is the role the educational system has always played since the creation of the modern Greek-state” (Pavlou, Mavrommati, & Theodoridis, 2005, p. 19).

Nationalistic aims have not only been served by ‘implicit’ forms of citizenship education, which were implemented through the entire curriculum and reflected in the ethos of the majority of the educational institutes, but also from a series of citizenship-orientated subjects implemented in both primary and secondary schools including subjects such as: Civics, Political Education, Social and National Education. The situation remained more or less unchanged during the first half of the 20th century, and was further reinforced during the dictatorship of the period 1967-1974. A shift in the content, aims and implementation of Citizenship education began at the end of the 1970s and was followed through by the Socialist government of 1981. This government, following the zeitgeist of the decade after the reinstallation of democracy, created a new framework for the organisation of students’ councils and encouraged young citizens’ participation in the way schools were run. Meanwhile, the focus of the content of the relevant modules shifted from responsibilities to rights and from the promotion of moral (ethnocentric) ideals to the familiarisation of

young citizens with the way the State and its institutions are organised and operate.

However, even today, Greek nationalist narrative, defined in terms of the myth of ethnic homogeneity and its direct links with Ancient Greece and the prominence of the Christian Orthodox religion (Palaiologou & Faas, 2012) remain at the centre of educational affairs. The centrality of the Greek nationalist narrative positions it to influence the formation of policy as text, and the implementation of policy as discourse (Ball, 2006) of a variety of educational policies, including the formation of a citizenship curriculum.

Unlike the programme of intercultural education, which has been the subject of systematic research there are few studies on the implementation of the Greek programme of Citizenship education. In one of these studies, which focused on the intercultural dimension of the content of the Citizenship education textbook used in Year 5 of Primary education, it was reported that the books “lack basic elements of ‘respect for diversity’ and of ‘any enlightened and critical notion of citizenship’... and are concerned with promoting knowledge, understanding and engagement in democratic processes, but not with promoting diversity within this democratic framework” (Palaiologou, Georgiadis, Evangelou, & Zisimos, 2012, p. 379). Currently, the citizenship education programme (Πολιτική Αγωγή και Οικιακή Οικονομία) is taught in the last two years of primary school, and until 2012, also in the third year of secondary level education.

Conceptualising intercultural citizenship

The ‘diversification’ of the notion of citizenship is being often discussed and applied through the pedagogies of active citizenship (Aguado, 2007). Representing arguably a recovery of traditions rooted in Freirean popular education and in its pedagogy of liberation, active participation in local communities and schools is expected to empower members individually and collectively. What underlies this expectation is the assumption that if this participatory pattern of activation and self-mobilisation of communities is consciously inclusive in terms of gender, age, class, religion, ethnicity, sexual diversity etc., then the resulting practice of citizenship will itself be ‘intercultural’ (Alfaro, Ansión & Tubino, 2008). Therefore, intercultural dialogue among and across these diverse lines of identification and group cohesion is a prerequisite for a truly intercultural citizenship (Santos, 2006). “An intercultural citizen is somebody who moves inside and outside specific groups, activating

relational and contextually relevant competences, but always insists that power symmetry and social justice are maybe utopian, but necessary targets for political as well as pedagogical engagement” (Palaiologou & Dietz, 2012, p. 527).

“Within the frame of the educational policies, we would argue that it is critical that educational systems empower [...] a new persona-citizen [...] as an educated and cultivated person, [...] who has developed skills in order to communicate and has the capacity to interact with other people” (Palaiologou & Dietz, 2012, p. 540). Diversity therefore is embedded in the identity of this new citizen which emerges from such interactions and from critical engagement with appropriate educational experiences. Thus the way we understand this educational process and its aims are not dissimilar to the conceptualisations already existing in literature and is largely based on Nussbaum’s cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum, 1994, 1996) a concept which relates citizenship with the skills to approach and understand diversity and differences ‘in a deliberative and dialogical manner’ (Naseem and Hyslop_Margison, 2006, p. 55). Similarly to Nussbaum, we consider that the role of education in this is to develop young citizens’ “capacity for critical examination of oneself and one’s traditions – for living what, following Socrates, we may call the examined life” (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 293). The ultimate goal of this educational process is the development of the Stoic ideal of ‘kosmou polites’ (citizen of the world) and ‘to make all human beings part of [a] community of dialogue and concern, and base our political deliberations on [our] interlocking commonality’ (Nussbaum, 1994, p. 7). In our understanding of intercultural citizenship education this is indeed its essential educational aim .

Method

The scope of this study is to explore the expectations of the Greek state and educators in contributing to the development of intercultural understanding, and the relevant directions and aims of the Greek programme for citizenship education, as portrayed in official documents. We studied a large number of documents that referred to citizenship and intercultural education, including Educational Acts, relevant sections of the National Action Plans for the inclusion of minorities and relevant curricula. All these documents have contributed to the formation of an overall vision of the aims and priorities of the Greek government as regards inclusion and

interculturalism. However, and despite an occasional reference to other documents, this analysis has focused principally on four key documents that are of particular relevance and significance for the purposes of this study: the Greek National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPSI 2005-2006) (MLSSW, 2005), the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010 (NSPSI 2008 – 2010) (MLSSW, 2008), the Action Plan for the Integration of Non-Greek Nationals Lawfully Residing in Greece: Programme ESTIA 2007 – 2013 (MHA, 2008) and the Ministerial decision for the approval of the most recent programme of study for Citizenship Education (φΕΚ Β' 2337, 03-10-2011) (MELLRA, 2011). The first two documents outline the position that social inclusion occupies in the overall policymaking in Greece, concerning the inclusion of all vulnerable groups including foreigners, ethnic minorities and immigrants. ESTIA is a purposefully designed programme for the integration of legal immigrants in Greece. All three documents outline the basic principles and overall strategy guiding the relevant policy areas, including welfare provision, employment and education. In terms of the latter, the documents outline the expectations that the government has of education in relation to the integration of the immigrants and other minorities, and the principles supporting educational policy making issues. The Ministerial decision is the document that outlines the aims, content, methods and expected outcomes of the Greek Programme of Study for Citizenship Education.

For reasons of consistency we have referred to the Greek versions of the documents, even for those where official English translations are available. The reason for this is that we detected inconsistencies in key terms in the official translation (i.e. the use of the term *inclusion* as equivalent to the term *ένταξη* in the title of NAPSI and NSPSI, instead of *integration* which is more accurate and used elsewhere in the same documents). The focus of the analysis of the documents was on the manner in which interculturalism, diversity, inclusion and ethnic, cultural and religious 'otherness' are approached by the Greek government, and the prioritisation of the development of intercultural understanding, and the extinction of xenophobia and racism in the Greek society. For this purpose we have attempted a textual analysis of references related to those issues above and we have classified the approach demonstrated in these documents according to key themes; including 'racism', 'xenophobia', 'marginalisation', 'discrimination', 'inclusion', 'Interculturalism', 'multiculturalism' and 'integration'. In order to locate the terms we used electronic copies of the documents and the relevant software function.

Using the same function we looked at the frequency of use of all these terms (see Appendix). In this we did not include cases in which the terms appear in a context clearly unrelated to the focus of the paper, such as in the contents page or within a name/title which is repeated in the document (as in the case of the term 'Cohesion' in the 'Programme for Social Protection and Social Cohesion'). However, we did include cases in which the terms appeared as part of another term with relevant meaning (i.e. *racism* in *antiracism*). In order to locate all variations of the key terms in the documents we used only parts of the terms: *ρατσι-* for *ρατσισμός* (racism); *συνο-* for *συνοχή* (cohesion); *περιθω-* for *περιθωριοποίηση* (marginalisation); *ξενοφ-* for *ξενοφοβία* (xenophobia); *ενσωμ-* for *ενσωμάτωση* (inclusion); *ενταξ-* for *ένταξη* (integration); *διαπολι-* for *διαπολιτισμικότητα* (interculturalism) and *πολυπολι-* for *πολυπολιτισμικότητα* (multiculturalism).

Discussion

All four documents seem to recognise the need for the development of conditions that put an end to exclusion and facilitate the integration of minorities in Greek society. Frequent references are made in most documents to inclusion and integration as priority targets for the Greek government. Outlining strategies that allow the attainment of this target, the National Plans focus on improvements to the employability of the members of minority groups, the facilitation of their access to welfare provision and of their communication with the State. These documents seem to be aiming for conditions in which minorities can communicate more effectively with the State, to assist them in becoming accustomed with the way that the State is organised and run, and the Greek way of life; ultimately leading to improvements in their abilities and skills in order to respond effectively to employment needs in Greece. Overall, the priority of the National Plans seems to be supportive of the minorities; emphasising their opportunity to 'fit in' to Greek society and concerning primarily those sectors of the State that are expected to engage with the minorities, including the Education sector. Specific references to the role of educational provisions made in the National Plans concentrate on three themes:

1. The programme of Intercultural education and other educational programmes for the education of minorities, including the teaching of

Greek as a second language (NAPSI, 2005-2006: 22, 36; NSPSI, 2008-2010:13, 30, 49, 51; ESTIA Articles 4.3.b and 5.2).

2. Training and Lifelong Learning provision, which improves the employability of minorities (NAPSI, 2005-2006: 5, 6, 7, 36; NSPSI, 2008-2010:51; ESTIA Article 4.2).
3. Training of civil servants and other professionals in order to improve service provision and communication with minorities (NSPSI, 2008-2010: 50, 53; ESTIA Article 3.1).

Another educational priority which, however, appears only in the NSPSE (30, 37) and is almost absent in the other two documents (absent from NAPSI, mentioned once in ESTIA in Article 5.2.c) is the potential of education to challenge exclusionary or racist mentalities, in the form of attitudes and behaviours exhibited among the native population. Overall, the changes that National Plans seem to suggest as ways to tackle exclusion are concerned far less with the native population, placing the majority of expectations of change on the minorities. Moreover, references to racism, xenophobia and discrimination are made only 27 times in the 108 pages of NAPSI (compared to 109 references to inclusion and integration), 21 times in NSPSI (2008-2010) (93 references to inclusion and integration), and the terms do not appear at all in ESTIA (a document which refers 21 times to inclusion and integration).

The Ministerial decisions outlining the Citizenship Education programme of study are different from the National Plans, in that they are addressed to all those involved in the implementation of the programme, regardless of whether the minorities are represented in the classrooms in which this implementation takes place or not. In contrast to the National Plans, the document makes more frequent references to racism, xenophobia and discrimination, while references to inclusion and integration are scarce (see Appendix). Undeniably, this is a positive indication that the Greek Ministry of Education recognises racism and xenophobia as issues that need to be addressed, as well as the role that education can play in addressing this need. However, our reading of the Citizenship Education programme suggests that the relatively frequent references to these issues, and the lack of references to inclusion, could be related to an assumption hidden in the development of the programme of study about those for whom the programme is addressed. In other words, the question posed is about the identity and background of the students, rather than the educational needs the programme attempts to address. A strong indication of the assumed identity of the students can be found in the second

Educational Unit concerning citizenship and identity, which is entitled: *'I am a Greek citizen'*. Given the conditions that are in place for the attainment of Greek citizenship, and which were discussed earlier in the paper, the title of the unit gives out the message that the programme is addressed to an exclusive group of students who are expected to hold Greek citizenship. By doing so, the Unit (and the programme of study) seems to place its emphasis on the *status* element of citizenship; that is the legal and most exclusive aspect of citizenship identity (Osler & Starkey, 2005, p. 10). Giving out the same message as the title of the unit, the educational activities in which the students are expected to engage include the "study of foreigners' stories, stories of those who request asylum, stories of immigrants, illegal immigrants [in order to] become familiar with *their* problems" (ΦΕΚ 2337, 3/10/2011, p. 11). Similarly, educational activities in the educational Unit 3 for Year 5: Us and Them: Equality and Diversity include a discussion about "whether immigrants have citizenship rights and what other rights should *they* have", discussion about "forms of racism and xenophobia" and the creation of a collection of photos under the title: *Us and Them: problems and their solutions* (our emphasis). Within a similar unit in the Year 6 Programme of Study difference is portrayed as an issue that students need to address, since they are expected to develop "respect towards cultural differences by adopting an active stand towards racism and difference" (ΦΕΚ 2337, 3/10/2011, p. 24).

Despite the acceptance that it is apparent in the Citizenship programme of study regarding the need to tackle racism, discrimination and xenophobia, the efforts that are made in this direction seem to be based on the hidden assumption that those who will benefit from this educational experience belong to an exclusive, ethnically homogenous group. It is characteristic also, that the programme of study contains only three references to multiculturalism and interculturalism, none of which is made in relation to Greek society. The students who appear to be the anticipated recipients of this programme are immigrants or other members of minority groups who are unlikely to be able to identify with the persona of citizen presented in it. Furthermore, and despite its best intentions, the programme seems to reinforce the most exclusive aspects of the identity of this persona, essentially preventing the development of its intercultural dimension (Alfaro, Ansión & Tubino, 2008). Within such understanding, it is almost inevitable that difference appears next to racism as an issue that needs to be addressed, as in the extract quoted above. Furthermore, the concern regarding the role of education in the maintenance and further development

of minority cultures, and the familiarisation of all students with the cultural diversity within their schools seems to be being ignored as a (citizenship) educational goal.

Projecting the above observations onto an analysis of the National Plans, and bearing in mind the emphasis placed by these on the integration of minorities', we can suggest that all four documents, to a varied degree, appear to recognise the co-existence of a variety of cultures within the Greek territory. However, this recognition of the multicultural aspects of contemporary Greek society is not embedded in the definition that they adopt about what it means to be 'Greek'. What the official documents seem implicitly to suggest, is that cultural diversity is accommodated in Greece, but that those aspects that are defining features of Greek society are dissociated from this diversity. From this perspective, it is unsurprising that the Greek Intercultural education programme follows a segregatory model, or that priority is placed in Greece on the teaching of the Greek language, since '...those who benefit from the [teaching Greek as a second language] programme [are expected to] overcome the first factor of social exclusion and exclusion from the job market, which is lacking knowledge of the Greek language' (NAPSI, 205-2006, p. 36). The picture that is drawn as a comparative reading of the National Plans and the Citizenship Programme of Study depicts two segregated communities. The policies and action plans seem to aim to facilitate communication between, and the co-existence, of these communities, without including a negotiation of the nature and identity of the host community. Their design seems to be heavily based on, thereby reinforcing, a distinction between 'Us and Them' which is counterproductive to any effort for the attainment of social cohesion. What remains as a valid effort, in terms of the intercultural communication made by these documents is the attempt to assist 'Them' to 'fit in' by overcoming their vulnerability.

Although it is impossible to deny the vulnerability of immigrants in Greece, we believe that the way that the concept of this vulnerability is represented in the documents we examined needs to be problematised in view of their role in the design of national targets. The discussion of the social conditions that we attempted at the outset of this paper suggests that the vulnerability of these groups is related to their relationship with Greek society and with the Greek State. Contrary to what seems to be suggested in the documents we studied (see for example NAPSI 2005, pp. 1-7 and Article 4 of ESTIA programme), their exclusion does not seem to be solely or mainly the outcome of their economic conditions or lack of relevant

skills, but rather a consequence of attitudes that seem to be embedded in portions of the population. Consequently the re-education and training of ‘persons with disabilities, Roma, the elderly, the uninsured, repatriates and immigrants’, so that they can ‘develop labour skills, and couple them with job market requirements’ (NAPSI, p. 10), will hardly be a sufficient measure to insure against their social exclusion and marginalisation.

Furthermore, the recognition of the vulnerability of these groups, at least as it is portrayed in one of the documents that we studied (the NAPSI), seems to be itself problematic, since it is related not to their place in the Greek society but to their ‘characteristics’. This invokes a phraseology that reflects an understanding of cultural difference as cultural deficit (Kirk & Groon, 1975; Sue & Sue, 2003; Thao Vang, 2010). NAPSI states: ‘Certain groups of persons, such as Persons with Disabilities, economic immigrants, repatriates and refugees, are in need of special treatment because of their special characteristics’ (NAPSI, 2005, p. 42). Roma seem also to be included in this category since they are considered to be members of a group in need of ‘psychological and social support’; they seem to be particularly benefited by the relevant educational interventions, since these aim “develop their skills (i.e. in music) and to improve their cognitive abilities” (NAPSI, 2005, p. 47). It should be noted that the tone of the above quotations is not reflected in the content and aims of any other documents that we studied. Given the fact that NAPSI was launched before the other two National Plans and the Programme of study this may be indicative of a shift in the approach to diversity by the Greek State. However, the analysis of all the documents suggests that if this shift is indeed happening, it is very slow and has not yet led to a direct challenge of ethnocentrism in policy making in Greece. Moreover, it has done very little towards the promotion of a model of citizenship among Greek student population which can resemble the cosmopolitan ideal as envisaged by Stoics and as described by Nussbaum.

Conclusions

The economic and political crisis that Greece is currently facing, coupled with the challenge of demographic change that has taken place in the last three decades (Triandafyllidou, 2007) have had a significant impact on the position of minority groups in Greek society. Also impacted are the

relationships between the native population and these minorities, particularly as a large number of immigrants reside in big cities.

Within this context, and during the last decade, Greece has launched a number of National Plans aiming to develop conditions that will facilitate the integration of minorities into society to increase social cohesion. Our analysis of the aspects of these programmes concerning the education sector, together with the analysis of the Citizenship Programme of study indicates that hidden within these expectations regarding education lies an understanding about Greece as a mono-ethnic, culturally homogenous society. Fed by and further reinforcing the ethnocentrism, which has long been accommodated in the Greek curriculum and promoted by the educational system, this assumption seems to penetrate the aims and methods suggested for citizenship education.

The notion of intercultural citizenship as one based in deliberation and dialogue among citizens does not seem to be of concern, either for the educational aims of the National Plans or for the Citizenship Education programme of study. The primary aim seems to be the integration of immigrants into a pre-defined, homogenous society, which aims to handle diversity, rather than to take advantage of the cultural fertilisation that diversity has to offer. This reality, together with the fact that intercultural education in Greece remains trapped in the confines of a specific programme, shows that Greek education is still very far from achieving reform in accordance with the arguments about multiculturalism put forward by Banks and Banks (2009). The consequences of the above affect, not only students from minority backgrounds, but also the Greek students, in that it restricts their chances to develop a pluralistic, intercultural notion of citizenship (Alfaro, Ansión & Tubino, 2008) supported by and supporting the development of intercultural communication competencies (Byram, 1997). Moreover, we feel that Citizenship Education and education in general seem to do very little to support identities in the context of intercultural relations. Despite the potential appropriateness of the adopted objectives and methods, the approach to education seems to share and possibly reinforce, the most extremist political and social views in Greece by stressing the distinction between 'Us' and 'Them'. The citizenship curriculum, in conjunction with the Greek citizenship law, seems to be doing nothing to challenge this distinction.

Challenging mentalities and shifting long-standing assumptions which inform the conceptualization of citizenship identity within a given National context is not an easy task. Particularly for Greece, a country which is

struggling to consolidate a turbulent recent history under the extraordinary circumstances brought by the crisis, an immediate engagement with a process of reconceptualization of citizenship seems to be a Herculean task. The reasons, however that make the task so difficult are the same that make it necessary. We think that education has a pivotal role to play in this. More than a programme for the learning of the Greek language or the training for future employment addressed to students from minorities, Greece has the need for intercultural citizenship education, which operates as a liberator of minds from the “bondage of habit and custom” (Naseem and Hyslop Margison, 2006, p. 53) and is available for all students. Importantly and since the design of educational policies is often influenced by the mentalities that it should aim to challenge, we think that Greece could seek the support and involvement of experts who sit outside the forces that have shaped these mentalities. Most importantly, we think that there is a responsibility for all agents with the power to influence public mentalities in Greece to contribute to a critical, liberating understanding of the reality that citizens currently experience and to promote a similar stand for the imagining of the future of the Greek society.

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Appendix: Frequency of use of all these terms: racism, Xenophobia, Exclusion & Marginalisation, Inclusion, Integration, Multicultural & Intercultural, (Social) cohesion

		<i>Key terms</i>								
		Racism (Ρατσισμός)	Xenophobia (Ξενοφοβία)	Discrimination (Διακρίσεις)	Exclusion & Marginalisation (Αποκλεισμός & Περιθωριοποίηση)	Inclusion (Ενσωμάτωση)	Integration (Ενταξη)	Multicultural & Intercultural	(Social) cohesion (Συνοχή)	
Policy documents	NAPSI (108 pages)	11*	2*	14*	55*	23*	86 (9 in relation to education)	8 (7 in relation to the programme for Intercultural education)	9*	
	NSPSI (111 pages)	2*	3*	16*	23*	11*	82 (4 in relation to education)	6 (four in relation to the programme for Intercultural Education)	13 (once in relation to education)	
	ESTIA (14 pages)	0	0	1*	0	0	21*	3 (once in relation to education)	0	
	Citizenship Education (76 pages)	13	3	11	3	1	0	3	3	

*(none in relation to education)