

Cross-Cultural Education: A Challenge or a Problem?

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Introduction

This article focuses on the official policy for cross-cultural education in Greece, which was established in 1996 to address the needs of linguistically diverse student populations.ⁱ Like every educational policy in Greece, it has been implemented universallyⁱⁱ to cater to the needs of the diverse student populations that attend Greek schools for more than fifteen years now. The paper describes the cross-cultural program and discusses weaknesses in its original policies and its application, in an effort to contribute to the dialogue for a much needed revision of policies and practice, toward a more inclusive enactment of “education for all.”

In the last 15 years, the composition of the population in Greece has changed visibly. The collapse of the former Eastern bloc countries and the outbreak of nationalistic movements and wars in some of these countries caused mass emigration of their citizens. Greece, a country that in the past had provided developed countries with immigrants, suddenly became a host country of many Greek repatriates, as well as refugees and immigrants from the former Eastern European countries, mostly from Albania and the former USSR. As a result, children of repatriate, refugee or immigrant families start their schooling in Greece or join classes of Greek schools at later grades. The official solution for this sudden—at least according to dominant rhetoric—disruption of the homogeneity of the student population was sought in compensatory programs, under the umbrella of “cross-cultural education.” In the following pages, we will discuss the official policies, as well as the practice of cross-cultural education programs in an effort to discern intentions and propose changes for a more equitable and fair education for all.

The Official Policy

Cross-cultural education. The highlight for the education of linguistic and cultural minority children was law 2413/96.ⁱⁱⁱ Law 2413/96 introduced the term

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“cross-cultural education” (the Ministry’s term) and defined its purpose as that of the organization and operation of primary and secondary school classes that “provide education to young people with a specific educational, social or cultural identity” (the Ministry’s translation).^{iv}

According to this law, IPODE, the Institute for the Education of Greek Repatriates and Cross-cultural Education, was introduced, with the distinct purpose “to study and research the educational matters that relate to Greek education abroad, as well as to undertake the responsibility and coordination of efforts for the valid and timely application of the various programs abroad^v and in the cross-cultural schools” (the Ministry’s translation).

The same law extended the use of nine schools that had been established in the 1980s, in the larger area of Athens and Thessaloniki, to cater to the needs of Greek repatriate children from anglophone and germanophone countries, renaming them “cross-cultural schools.” At the same time, the law provided for the establishment of four more crosscultural schools, one of them in Athens and the rest in Thrace.^{vi} Finally, on the basis of law 2413/96, 13 more schools were renamed cross-cultural with subsequent ministerial decisions. The administration, organization and function of IPODE and the 26 in all cross-cultural schools were refined through subsequent ministerial decisions.

Of the latter, ministerial decision Φ/10/20/Γ1/708 in 1999^{vii} was a key one, since it elaborated on the organization and function of remedial classes, which had also been established in the 1980s and were now included in the cross-cultural education policy.

Cross-cultural schools. According to law 2413/96, a total of 26 crosscultural schools were established throughout Greece; 13 of them were primary schools, nine junior-high and four senior-high schools. According to the ministry, “these schools, which will continue to increase in number,^{viii} guarantee equality of opportunity to every student in the country, while the cutting-edge approaches to teaching and learning utilized in these schools have a positive knock-on effect on the Greek educational system as a whole” (the Ministry’s wording). In other words, the Ministry intends that the philosophy and practice informing the operation of cross-cultural schools serve as a paradigm for the operation of mainstream schools, even if unintentionally (i.e., knock-on effect).

A school is entitled to be named cross-cultural when repatriated Greek and/or foreign students account for at least 45% of the total student body. Teachers in the cross-cultural schools “receive special training and are selected on the basis of their knowledge on the subject of cross-cultural education and teaching Greek as a second or foreign language.” In these schools, “the standard curriculum is adapted to meet the specific educational, social or cultural needs of the students

attending them.” Moreover, according to the law, the application of “special curricula” and “additional or alternative lessons” is initiated in the cross-cultural schools (law 2413/96, chap. 1, articles 34, 35). The need for Greek as a second language is covered in “reception and support classes.”

Reception and support classes. Reception and support classes are transitional, remedial classes for language minority students. As mentioned previously, they were established in the early 1980s and have operated ever since with differentiations introduced by ministerial decisions. In 1996, they were included in the cross-cultural education policy but their role and function were further defined by the ministerial decision Φ/10/20/Γ1/708/7-9-1999. They do not operate in cross-cultural schools only, since most of the linguistic and cultural minority students are accommodated by mainstream rather than cross-cultural schools, so they may be established in schools throughout the country, where a sufficient number^{ix} of such students attend. Students in these classes are children of repatriate, refugee or immigrant families, mostly from the former USSR and Albania but also native children, who face learning difficulties.

According to the 1999 ministerial decision, remedial classes were distinguished in three types, two types of reception classes, reception class I and reception class II and support classes. The difference between reception and support classes is that the former run parallel to regular classes, while the latter operate in after school hours. The purpose of reception or support classes is the “smooth and balanced transition of children of linguistic and cultural minorities to the Greek educational system in the framework of cross-cultural education.” In particular, the school teachers and principal of each school decide whether they can establish and operate reception or support classes, after they assess the educational needs of their linguistic minority students and take into consideration the potential of the school unit. They also decide the type of remedial class (i.e., reception class, I, II or support class) that would best meet the needs of their school population.

Classes referred to as reception I operate parallel to the main classes and their focus is the intensive instruction of Greek. Attendance in these classes is two hours a day and is restricted to one year. Greek as a second language is the main subject taught and students join their main classes to attend lessons such as physical education, arts, music, foreign language, school life or any other lesson that the teaching staff may decide in collaboration with the school advisor. The second type of reception class, reception class II, offers parallel tutoring in language or other subjects, in which students have been identified as “weak.” Tutoring is offered for up to two and, in rare cases, three years, inside the main class by a second teacher, who “may be bilingual” (Φ/10/20/Γ1/708/7-9-1999).

Support classes operate in after school hours, up to 10 hours a week (two hours a day) and they address the needs of minority students who have either failed to attend reception classes or have inadequate school performance in some or all of the school lessons.

The Implementation of the Official Policy: A Critical Approach

Given the official educational policy, the question arising here is whether the purpose of all the programs under the umbrella of cross-cultural education is to manage the presence of children of linguistic and cultural minorities as a challenge and a chance for critical and much needed changes in our school system or as a problem that requires a quick and easy solution.

At first glance, the official description of the provisions taken for language minority children in the framework of cross-cultural education seem to reflect contemporary international practices for linguistic minority students. A more critical look, however, reveals that they are mostly aligned with neoliberal international educational ideologies, failing to avoid conservative spaces or to suggest radical, counter-hegemonic pedagogical solutions (Sleeter & McClaren, 1995). In the neoliberal framework, as Macedo, Dendrinos, and Gounari (2003) point out, public discourses are trivialized and distorted as part of a “depoliticizing” process, while “they [neoliberals] generate and legitimize their own ‘transparent’ and ‘natural’ discourse that serves as a vehicle for circulating their myths and ideologies” (p. 111). In fact, as Apple (2002) stresses, neoliberal ideologies are usually surrounded by a halo mainly because they are made to appear as the only valid and sustainable solutions in today’s world, where the globalization of market and intense antagonisms dominate. As a result, as Macedo et al (2003) suggest, we are witnessing a crisis of critique and questioning since “neoliberal politics pretend to provide the answers for concepts and ideas that should remain perpetually open and be constantly questioned and redefined if they are to contribute to a vital political culture and a process of democratization” (p.111).

In our effort to continue the dialogue for equitable and effective practice in the framework of cross-cultural education, we will examine and appraise some of the “realities” of its various versions, keeping in mind the gap that usually exists between the letter of the law and actual school practice. This gap is further enhanced by the vague and evasive wording of the Greek legislation, which allows for arbitrary interpretations and poor applications. This may have to do with the characteristic development of cross cultural education, which, as Katsikas & Politou (1999) point out, in Europe, it has been constructed mostly by European Union administrators as a discourse for the management of the

educational problems of immigrant or minority groups of students. The same administrators, who construct policies and suggest measures, are the ones, according to the two authors, who also “construct” to a large degree the groups, who they consider eligible for this type of education. In terms of national schemes, educational policy for immigrants and minorities is not simply imported. It is further processed to reflect the politics and interests of national governments. This can account for the vagueness and elusiveness that characterizes the Greek version of cross-cultural education as it is initially developed outside the official educational system, even if under its auspices, the result being the establishment of fragmented policies and scattered measures that are at times even controversial and conflicting among them (paraphrased from Greek, p. 61).

The reality of the cross-cultural schools. First, let us examine crosscultural schools. Contrary to the official announcement, cross-cultural schools have not adopted or created “special curricula” nor have they enriched the standard curriculum with “added or alternative lessons” to cater to the “specific educational, social, cultural or instructional needs of the students” that the law (2413/96) provides. On the contrary, in everyday praxis, these schools administer an education of charity, according to which the needs of their students are dealt with smaller or bigger reductions of the educational good. For example, students attending both primary and secondary classes are often promoted from class to class without real assessment of their academic gains in each year, creating a situation where culturally and linguistically diverse students fail to acquire the knowledge corresponding to their age and definitely, to the level of their Greek peers, which makes the goal of tertiary education and the subsequent pursuit of social and financial aspirations quite remote for them. A research study conducted by Kassimati (cited by Katsikas & Politou, 1999) on the educational career of Greek origin students from countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union revealed that 15-19 year old youngsters, in their country of origin, had a dropout rate and a subsequent incorporation in the work force of 5%. In Greece, this has reached 63% and these youngsters are usually occupied in heavy and poorly paid jobs.

In practice, the official announcements for “special educational programs” and “additional or alternative lessons” catered to the needs of the cross-cultural schools’ student population are not realised or are interpreted in a way that jeopardises instead of promoting the children’s best interests. By lowering expectations and allowing children to come and go to and from school without demanding that they learn what they should, that they succeed, they are in fact granted “permission to fail.” As Ladson-Billings (2002) suggests, “it is fine to empathize with your students, but don’t allow their language or attitudes to lower expectations of their abilities or to compromise your own willingness to seek creative solutions” (p.108). Trapped in a strict and uniform curriculum,

without special training, assistance or materials to assist them, teachers in the cross-cultural schools feel they cannot do much to secure academic success for their special students.^x It is quite indicative that in their joint presentation, the principals of the six cross-cultural primary schools of Thessaloniki delivered an appeal “that the law 2413/96 ceases to exist as a potential change with undefined goals and is activated immediately. How can we claim that there is clear and comprehensible cross-cultural educational policy when the curriculum, the way of operation and the methods of our schools have not changed and point to a monocultural educational model?”^{xi}

The reality of reception and support classes. Now, if we turn to remedial classes (i.e., reception and support classes), instruction in these classes aims at the acquisition of basic language skills in Greek with the expressed goal to facilitate the children’s transition to mainstream classes. Language in these classes is usually taught as a subject in a strictly structured way and without the assistance of second language teaching strategies. The children’s linguistic, cultural and cognitive repertoire is hardly “included” nor is it used as a strength to be exploited or recognized. Moreover, even if research findings point to the importance of second language learning programs that are based on the creation of a cognitively and linguistically challenging learning environment, for example, content- or literature-based language learning (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Cummins 1994; Krashen, 1989),^{xii} this knowledge is rarely taken into consideration in the design and application of programs in these classes.^{xiii}

An added difficulty is that there is a distinct tendency, both official and unofficial, that the children remain in the reception classes the least amount of time possible. One explanation for this is that there is considerable confusion among teachers^{xiv} as to the level and quality of language proficiency needed for the children’s smooth transition into the mainstream class. In most cases, the minute the children develop basic conversational skills, they are moved to mainstream classes. However, the ability to communicate in everyday, linguistically non-demanding contexts does not guarantee school success. To meet the academic demands of the classroom, children need to acquire *cognitive academic language proficiency* (Cummins, 1994), which takes at times up to ten years to develop, depending on the children’s previous school experience and of course their family, social, economic and educational background (Thomas & Collier, 1997). Thus students, who seem comfortable at communicating in everyday tasks, may struggle to understand and communicate in decontextualized, academic learning settings. This research finding is not taken into consideration in the design of remedial tutoring programs in Greece, where, according to the official decree, attendance is restricted to a maximum of two and in rare cases three years. In practice, however, this time limit is rarely reached, since the common practice is that children join mainstream classes as soon as possible.

The erroneous assumption that remedial classes operate on is further proved by the fact that there is no provision for support tutoring when linguistic minority children begin their schooling in Greece. Children, however, whose home language is different from the school language, do not usually possess the language skills that native children have to be fully involved in academic tasks, even if they are first grade tasks. In fact, a longitudinal and large scale research study showed that, even though language minority children who begin their schooling in Greece do better compared to children of the same linguistic background who start at a later grade, they still fall behind their Greek peers (Tourtouras, 2004).^{xv} Another possible explanation for the untimely transition from remedial to mainstream classes may be the negative view these classes have acquired among teachers, parents and children. They are often classes staffed by inexperienced teachers and operating without specific programs and materials. In addition, their operation is repeatedly disrupted, since teachers serving in these classes are invariably the ones to be called to substitute for their colleagues in other classes in the schools they serve in case of teacher absences (Papastergiopoulos, 2003; Somarakis, 2003).^{xvi} In fact, our own experience (first and second authors) of the reality of reception classes is indicative of their sporadic operation: every time a reception class teacher agreed to implement our program “Teaching language and mathematics through literature,”^{xvii} a program using an integrated approach to teaching, the main problem we faced was to find an uninterrupted period of time to implement the program.

Support classes officially operate in after school hours (in practice, however, they often operate during the standard school program) and are not exclusive to linguistic minority children but may accommodate the needs of native children as well. They offer tutoring on school subjects that the teaching staff and principal decide taking into consideration the children’s academic weaknesses. In practice, schools prefer the establishment of reception rather than support classes, in which case the reception class may serve the purposes of a support class as well (i.e., tutoring in a variety of subjects and mixed—native and non-native— student populations).

In sum, based on the way they have functioned so far, support and reception classes cannot be considered satisfactory solutions for linguistic and cultural minority students. Still, they are a step above total and unassisted submersion in the mainstream class. To the extent, therefore, that they constitute the only form of support for the achievement of the official goals, i.e., the acquisition of the dominant language and the smooth transition into mainstream classes, it is striking that in recent years, there has been a distinct cut in their numbers.^{xviii} This decrease is due to the combination of an official reluctance to support programs of social character,^{xix} but also of most teachers’ negative views for remedial classes, that was stressed above, and the views expressed by academics that “most non-native students attending our schools today have either been born

in Greece or have come to the country early enough to have acquired the Greek language” (Nikolaou, 2005, p.177). However, the level and nature of the children’s language proficiency is a matter of critical importance, as we mentioned above.

In short, the educational solutions that Greece has turned to for the education of “all”—including linguistic and cultural minorities—appear inadequate even for the fulfillment of their main pursuit, i.e., the successful integration of children in the dominant school system. This is so, in large part, because the presence of linguistically and culturally diverse children has been handled as a problem, thus creating problems: (1) to the minority students, whose performance often falls short of that of native Greek-ethnicity and language students and who have difficulties in participating fully in the educational process and frequently leave the school prematurely; (2) to native Greek children who may have to linger and be held up in pursuing academic targets; and (3) to the teachers of the mainstream classroom, who have been trained to address a homogeneous student population, so they often do not possess the know-how and have not developed strategies that would facilitate the minority students’ smooth and uncompromised integration in the mainstream class and would create a class community beneficial for all its members.

The basic problem of cross-cultural education programs can be located in the fact that they are programs designed and operating in the margins of mainstream education. Cross-cultural education in our country is a kind of education that is exclusively intended for children “with specific educational, social, cultural and instructional needs” (article 34, Law 2413/96), whose diversity is regarded as a deficit that has to be covered with the necessary interventions. The ambitious term cross-cultural education does not seem to prevent the assimilationist practices that operate within and outside school, disregarding such essential elements of these children’s identity as their origin, their habits and customs, their family stories and of course, their mother tongue.

The position of the mother tongue. Regarding mother tongue maintenance, the law provides that “lessons for the language and culture of the children’s country of origin are optional and classes may be established in schools, where there is a sufficient number of students (i.e., 7-15 students) in a school. Lessons are up to four hours weekly provided the class has a full program” (Φ/10/20/Γ1/708/7-9-1999). Nevertheless, despite this provision, there are hardly any public schools in the whole country that operate mother tongue maintenance programs. The official excuse for this negligence is that non-Greek speaking parents do not want their children to attend mother tongue maintenance classes, for fear that this may interfere with their children’s efforts to acquire Greek.^{xx}

It is true that parents may express reservations but, first of all, parents are unaware of the rich research findings that prove the significance of mother tongue proficiency for the acquisition of a second language and, secondly, parents usually reiterate the concerns expressed by “specialists” such as school teachers, consultants and administrators who seem to share the view that further development of the mother tongue may interfere with second language acquisition.^{xxi} Moreover, the rules of the economy and labor market necessitate excellence in Greek. Therefore, parents who seek their children’s social and professional mobility prefer them to study the mainstream language.

Of course, learning the language of the host country is an absolute prerequisite for the children’s successful integration in school and in society. In fact, the higher the proficiency in the dominant language, the better the prospects for successful integration. This is quite clear to all. What is vague for various people, both specialists and not, is the significant role of the mother tongue in this process. Research findings, however, clarify that parallel cultivation of the mother tongue not only does not hamper but on the contrary, it accelerates and supports the second language acquisition process. The knowledge and skills developed in the mother tongue are transferred to the second language acquisition effort thus acting as a means to its achievement (Cummins, 1994; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Even if further development of the first language is not provided for, recognizing the students’ first language, showing respect for it and bringing it into play in the second language learning venture is not only reassuring, respectful and comforting for the learner but it also helps to provide a culturally familiar context that can enhance learning. The disregard of mother tongue maintenance, however, reflects a general attitude of underestimating or at best, ignoring the children’s, often multiple, heritages. Goals such as enrichment of the classroom community as a result of communication between diverse languages, cultures and ideas are not pursued. The vision of interaction expressed in Law 2314/96, that cross-cultural schools would have a positive impact on the quality of the education offered in mainstream schools is definitely unfulfilled. As a result, cross-cultural education moves like a satellite in the margins of mainstream education, the content, the organization and teaching approaches of which remain untouched by the cross-cultural idea. As Tsiakalos (2002) comments, “the general school remains in reality a ‘special’ school for ‘normal’ children, that is, for children with cognitive abilities of a particular type and often with a particular social and cultural background” (p.53).

School has always been and today is more obviously than ever, a multifaceted and complex organisation. By handling the different needs of a large part of its student population as “special,” which applies only in the case of “different”

students and their teachers, the official educational policy not only fails to include these children equally, but it also deprives the other members of the educational community from the riches and diversity their equitable integration would ensue. In the name of crosscultural education, our country so far has implemented a type of education that is compensatory, in that it attempts to assimilate children of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to the dominant norm. This attempt is based on the presumption that the children's linguistic and cultural differences constitute a deficit, which can only be overcome if the children give up their own language and culture. Failure to do so is invariably blamed on the children and their families. Children are described "at risk" for failure and as Swadener (1995) claims "the inherent racism and classism in a label of anticipated failure is particularly problematic" (p. 19).

Conclusions

Thus far, cross-cultural education in Greece has been administered in the form of auxiliary teaching mainly for the acquisition of the dominant language. In its most inspired applications, as documented in our earlier work (Tressou & Mitakidou, 2002; Mitakidou & Tressou, 2002) cross-cultural education involves the chance introduction of folklore elements, such as songs, dances, holidays and recipes in the standard program. These elements are added to the curriculum with the expressed purpose that, on the one hand, children of diverse backgrounds may be made to feel self-respect and pride and on the other, that children of the dominant group may be familiarised with the "different" and develop feelings of tolerance towards different groups and individuals. However, as Bullivant (1997) claims, it is rather naïve and uninformed to believe that the mere addition to the curriculum of such superficial, more or less "touristic" elements of another culture may lead to mutual understanding and an improvement in communication among people of different groups. In fact, research has shown that the mere coexistence of diverse groups may aggravate rather than alleviate prejudice among its members (Triandis, 1997).

Cross-cultural education for all of us, members of the educational community, who insist that the school is an institution that may alleviate instead of aggravating and perpetuating social injustice and inequality, means much more than the above. For us, cross-cultural education is a challenge that concerns all parties, both dominant and minority, partaking in the educational process. The goal of this education is to prepare future citizens who will learn to confront critically and resist the mechanisms of manipulation, which create prejudice and stereotypes, to participate dynamically in decision making and in shaping their lives, to work individually or in groups to resolve social problems and improve the quality of life in their society and in the world. To achieve this, action has to be taken, so that equitable relationships are encouraged through the curriculum and relationships are created that empower children, because they are based on

familiarisation and respect. Such policies should not focus only on tolerance, but true respect for diversity in all its forms, in language, values, habits, behaviors, in bodily and mental development. This requires changes that affect the curriculum but also the organization and the educational processes and approaches of the whole school. In this framework, cooperative, holistic learning approaches should be pursued, with an emphasis on the interests and uniqueness of each child and bridges of communication between the school, the home and the community should be built. Moreover, assessment practices that sort and divide children into successes and failures should be avoided.

The presence of children with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in Greece has offered all of us interested in education the chance to imagine the classroom as a space promising that education too may contribute to the prevalence of dignified living conditions for all in society. Despite the fact that the official handling of the increasing diversity in our society has been disappointing so far, there is ample accumulated knowledge and, very often, enough willingness for the realization of the vision of a school for all children. This is why, according to Apple,^{xxii} progressive, counter-hegemonic alliances have to be made that will disseminate those sustainable, practical solutions needed for the creative and equitable handling of diversity in schools and will offer teachers the support, the “net,” they need to attempt them. It is up to us who share the vision, to form these alliances and work for the achievement of our vision.

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- i We refer to students of immigrant, repatriate or refugee families who have been coming in large numbers to Greece in the past fifteen years but also students of Greek origin who, however, have a mother tongue other than Greek, i.e., children of the Muslim minority in Thrace, whose mother tongue is Turkish and ROM children, whose mother tongue is Romani.
- ii The Greek educational system is centrally administered, that is, all decisions are made by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and every school in the country has to abide by them.
- iii For full description of this law and others relating to cross-cultural education, see the website of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs: <http://www.ypepth.gr>
- iv Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are ours.
- v The main function of IPODE (according to the ministry's site, <http://www.ypepth.gr>) is the promotion of the Greek language and culture to Greek origin children abroad. Second in the list is the education of immigrant and repatriate children, as well as children from disadvantaged socio-cultural environments in Greece. Finally, a parallel function is the teaching and dissemination of the Greek language and culture to Europe as well as U.S.A., Canada, Australia and other places throughout the world.
- vi An area heavily inhabited by Muslim, Turkish-speaking Greek citizens.
- vii This and other decisions relating to cross-cultural education can be found in the ministry's website, see note 3.
- viii In fact, they have not increased in numbers; on the contrary, according to the ministry's WebPages (Retrieved February 24, 2007 from <http://www.ypepth.gr>) they have been reduced to 24 as of 2003-2004 school year.
- ix 9-17 for the reception and 3-8 for the support classes.
- x In a study conducted by the first and last authors (Mitakidou, Daniilidou, in press), 44% of the teachers in the cross cultural schools expressed the belief that they should have lower expectations for children of linguistic and cultural minorities.
- xi Joint presentation of five of the six principals of the primary cross-cultural schools of Thessaloniki, presented at the Symposium *The experience of the primary cross-cultural schools of the prefecture of Thessaloniki: Reality and prospects of cross-cultural education* co-organized by IPODE, the local educational authorities and the cross-cultural schools of Thessaloniki on 16 April 2005.
- xii The efficacy of literature-based and integrated language learning was also manifested in our own research in reception classes, where different age children of

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- various linguistic and cultural backgrounds managed to gain knowledge in language and in mathematics through the program “Teaching language and mathematics through literature.” For details, see Mitakidou & Tressou (2002).
- xiii It is quite telling that in the exams (ASEP) that future teachers take in order to gain a public elementary school positions, the requirements for second language teaching are limited to “specific characteristics of the Greek language—writing and pronunciation, intonation, conjugation of nouns/verbs/ adjectives, etc.” (i.e., all questions of language morphology).
- xiv See the study conducted by Mitakidou & Daniilidou (in press), where 48% of cross-cultural school teachers claimed that “a few months to one year at the most is sufficient time for children to acquire proficiency in Greek.”
- xv A research study conducted by Hristos Tourtouras (co-supervised by Evangelia Tressou, the second author) in the framework of his PhD dissertation in the Department of Primary Education of Aristotle University. The study examined the performance of a very large sample (approximately 10,000.00 students in the larger area of Thessaloniki schools) of repatriate and immigrant children from the former USSR in language and mathematics in relation to the age and grade of their first enrolment in the school system of the host country.
- xvi The faults and weaknesses of remedial classes were also stressed by the principals of the primary cross-cultural schools in their joint presentation, see note 8.
- xvii See note 11.
- xviii In 1995-1996, for a total of 12,981 non-native children, 1,371 reception and support classes operated in the whole country, while the corresponding number of classes in 2004-2005 and for a total of 36,775 children was only 865 (Office of Primary Education, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, <http://www.ypepth.gr>).
- xix Personal communication of the first author with the president of IMEPO, the Institute of Immigration Policy, who claimed that there is no need for remedial classes, since the parents prefer their children to join mainstream classes without transitional support for the integration.
- xx First author’s personal communications with the secretary of IPODE and the president of IMEPO, the Institute of Immigration Policy.
- xxi See the study by Mitakidou & Daniilidou (in press), where 40% of the teachers claimed that mother tongue use may delay the acquisition of the second language and 89% of the teachers would recommend that “in order to help their children learn Greek as a second language, non-native parents should use Greek as the only language of communication at home.”
- xxii From a discussion with Michael Apple on the “Invasion of neoliberalism in education and possibilities of its confrontation” at the Department of Primary Education, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, 16 May 2006.

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