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Gerasimos Koustourakis ^a

^a University of Patras, Greece

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The new educational policy for the reform of the curriculum and the change of school knowledge in the case of Greek compulsory education

Gerasimos Koustourakis*

University of Patras, Greece

This article looks critically at Greek educational reform to the curriculum of compulsory education—reform that took place so that Greece could put into practice the decisions of the European Union of Lisbon (2000) for the contribution of education to the adaptation of the new data of the ‘knowledge society’. Bernstein’s theory about pedagogic discourse is utilized. Also, with the use of qualitative content analysis in specific resources (parliamentary debates, new curriculum and textbooks) we tried to answer the following questions: Which are the dominant social principles that led the Greek state to change the curriculum? Through which process and with the contribution of which factors did the reform of the curriculum come about? And which are the characteristics of the new school knowledge and of the pedagogic practices that are selected for their reproduction at the level of the classroom?

Introduction

This article looks critically at Greek educational policy, which at the beginning of the 21st century led to the establishment of a new curriculum for compulsory education and to the total change of school knowledge, as the educational material of all the curriculum subjects was written again from the beginning. The creation of additional educational software that will support the printed educational material constitutes an innovation. The writing of the new school handbooks was completed in 2006 and they were given immediately to the school community for use in first degree education (kindergarten and primary schools). The particular way in which the curriculum was reformed was an application of the modern European policy after Lisbon (2000)

*Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, 265.00 Rio Patras, Patras, Greece. E-mail: koustourakis@upatras.gr

with regard to the utilization of education for the construction of the knowledge society.

The Greek educational system is distinguished by its bureaucratic, hierarchical and centralistic nature (Kazamias, 1990). Within it, the humanitarian values have always been sovereign and engaged with historical and religious elements contributing to the culture of a conscience with a national Hellenic-Christian nature (Frangoudaki & Dragonas, 1997; Bouzakis, 2000). Theoretical humanitarian knowledge possesses greater prestige compared with practical technical knowledge. For this reason, too, the philological courses held an important position even in the curricula of the schools of technical and vocational-professional direction (Noutsos, 1988).

The study begins with the theoretical frame that is drawn from the opinions of Bernstein on pedagogic discourse. The inquiring questions and the methodology are presented in the second section. The question of the formation of Greek educational policy concerning dominant social principles is approached in the third section. The question of the formation of the modern curriculum of Greek compulsory education with the activation and action of specific agents in the official recontextualizing field is discussed in the fourth section. The question of the new school knowledge, which was created with the publication of the new textbooks, as well as the subject of pedagogic practices, which were enacted for its elaboration at the microlevel of the classroom, are approached in the last section of the project.

Theoretical pointings out

In each period of educational history the choice of knowledge, faculties and proceedings that are incorporated in the curricula constitutes an ideological process, which is related to the interests of the socially, financially, culturally and politically dominant groups (Young, 1998; Apple, 2000). The particular teams try to 'control what counts as legitimate knowledge in school for their own interests' (Apple, 1992, p. 62). For this reason the curricula, which constitute an important element of the pedagogic device, are a field of ideological struggles because they contribute to the regulation of the students' conscience. Moreover, 'the pedagogic device, the condition for the materializing of symbolic control, is the object of a struggle for domination, for the group who appropriates the device has access to a ruler and distributor of consciousness, identity, and desire' (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999, p. 268).

The pedagogic device has stability in time and includes the pedagogic discourse, the production of which goes through the following levels, which have a hierarchical character among them (Bernstein, 1999, 2000; Bernstein & Solomon, 1999): the generation level, the recontextualization level and the reproduction or transmission level.

The generation level of the pedagogic discourse refers to the choices of the state with regard to the sovereign ideological values that lead to the formation of the occasional educational policy (Bernstein, 1987). More specifically, the dominant principles of the society, which constitute the general regulative discourse of a particular historical period, are created as the result of the relations and effects between the

field of the state and the fields of production (physical resources) and symbolic control (discursive resources) and are influenced by international developments (Morais *et al.*, 1999, p. 39). In our times globalization affects the formation of educational choices of various countries (Bauman, 1998; Carnoy, 2000). Contemporary education policies can be interpreted as a response to the new needs that globalization is imposing on economy and society. Education is perceived as an institution which should serve the contemporary needs of the economy, allow the formation of the new citizens with a universal consciousness and enable individual access to the labour market (Zambeta, 2002). In the generation level of the pedagogic discourse the state,¹ as the sovereign factor of exercising power and control, manages the dominant principles of the society and converts them into specific educational policies, such as the reform of the curriculum. The general objectives of the educational system are expressed in a specific way in the curriculum and the educational political ideology for the official school knowledge and the pedagogic practices, that are considered to be suitable for transmission to the students, are incorporated (Apple, 2000).

The curricula express the official pedagogic discourse and are made with the application of recontextualization rules through the activation of two fields (Neves & Morais, 2001; Lamnias, 2002; Singh, 2002; Moore *et al.*, 2006). The point is the official recontextualizing field (ORF) and the pedagogic recontextualizing field (PRF) (Bernstein, 2000). More specifically, the state is activated through the ORF, which includes the specialized sectors of the formation of education policy, the governmental educational bureaucracy, the local educational authorities and the central or regional-decentralized systems of organization and monitoring of education, in order to manufacture and legalize the official pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 1990; Singh, 2002; Moore *et al.*, 2006). This discourse is subject to a further process of recontextualization through the operation of PRF. The PRF consists of the departments of education, pedagogies in schools and colleges, specialized journals, specialized research foundations, the specialized media that deal with education and the editorial houses that publish educational books, along with their scientific staff (Bernstein, 1990, 2000). 'Today, the state is attempting to weaken the PRF through its ORF, and thus attempting to reduce relative autonomy over the construction of the pedagogic discourse and over its social contexts' (Bernstein, 2000, p. 33).

The effort of the state to intervene in the PRF is connected with the fact that in this field struggles and debates are developed mainly between different groups of interests in the frame of the middle class. These groups seek the control of educational policy for the production of school knowledge (Bernstein, 1990; Lamnias, 2002; Power & Witty, 2002). According to Bernstein (1977, 1987, 1990), they are made up of: a) the groups of the middle class, which come from the economy (production, distribution and circulation of capital) and the liberal professions (tradesmen, doctors, lawyers, engineers). These groups want the school to be operated with the application of visible pedagogic practices, the development of specialized curricula and specialized schools. Also they object to the increase of public expenses for education and support the connection of education to the economy and

the job market; b) The second category of the middle class consists of those who work in public offices or are professionals of symbolic control (services, media). It is about social groups that support governmental intervention for the regulation of educational subjects and the increase of public expenses for education. Also, they prefer the application of invisible pedagogic practices with weakened space-time networks, particularly in the case of first degree education. This is so because they believe that students should be given the opportunity to act by themselves in order to develop their personality and conquer knowledge.

The reproduction of pedagogic discourse takes place at the microlevel of the school, where school knowledge undergoes a new recontextualization. This process is influenced by the specific context of each school, the pedagogic practice of each teacher, the relations that exist between school context and family-community, and the relations that are developed between the teacher and students during the pedagogic interaction in the frame of the school class (Morais *et al.*, 1999; Bernstein, 2000).

The pedagogic discourse transports the relations of power and social control among discourses, agencies and subjects. The relations of power are analyzed with the use of the concept of classification and the relations of social control are analyzed with the use of the concept of framing (Bernstein, 1990, 2000). Classification (C) refers to the power of borders between categories that can be well marked (strong classification: C+) or can be blurred (weak classification: C-). Framing (F) implies the nature of communication that is developed during the pedagogic process for the transmission of knowledge. Moreover, framing refers to the incorporation of an instructional discourse (ID) into a regulative discourse (RD). The RD is a discourse of order, relation and identity and refers to the regulation of the context about what is considered legal communication and about who controls the development of the pedagogic relation. That is to say, the RD creates the conditions for the expression of the ID. The ID refers to the acceptance or not, for transmission and exploitation in the school, of the daily knowledge of the students, to the order of presentation of knowledge (sequence), to the time that is dedicated to the conquest of knowledge (pace) and to evaluation criteria (Bernstein, 2000). When the control is focused on the one who possesses the power then we have strong framing (F+). When the control is shared among the parts that are involved in the teaching practice then we have weak framing (F-).

Inquiring questions—methodology

The theoretical frame concerning pedagogic discourse leads us to develop the following inquiring questions that will occupy us in this project:

Which are the dominant social principles that led the Greek state to the modern educational choices for the reform of the curriculum?

Through which process and with the contribution of which factors was the reform of the curriculum of Greek compulsory education promoted?

Which are the characteristics of modern school knowledge and the pedagogic practices which are selected for its management at the microlevel of the school class?

In this project we will attempt to answer these particular questions with the application of qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980; Dey, 1993) and our findings will be grouped into the following categories:

- Strategic educational political choices and sovereign ideological views.
- Educational reform for the new curriculum.
- School knowledge.
- Pedagogic practices.

The sources of this research are: a) texts with the opinions and the choices of the protagonists for the modern educational reforms, such as acts of parliament and articles in magazines and in the press; b) the new curricula of compulsory education (MoE, 2003a); c) the proclamations for the creation of the educational material; and d) the new printed educational material. The particular sources of research refer to the sovereign ideological choices which led to the formation of the educational policy under examination (Dale, 1989; Gale, 1999), as well as to the final product of the particular reform.

Dominant social principles and educational reform

The concepts of tradition and modernization can be considered opposite to each other; however, the borders between them are not explicit (Giddens, 1990), and for this reason they coexisted in the case of Greece during the 1990s. More specifically, at the beginning of this decade the traditional values came to the very centre of Greek society and dominated due to the manipulation of Greek politicians and the Orthodox Church concerning the national affairs of that period. It is about the effort for the prevention of the recognition of a state with the name of Macedonia in the northern borders of Greece. And this is because the particular name is considered to belong to the Greek cultural heritage. Moreover, in 1996 there was a Greek-Turkish crisis in the Aegean Sea on the subject of the rocky islands of Imia, which developed a feeling of national insecurity among Greek citizens. In both cases it was considered that an outlet for the national dangers could be provided only through the reinforcement of the position of Greece within the framework of the European Union (EU). Consequently, the dominant Greek social principles of the 1990s refer to the promotion of the importance of the national cultural heritage and to the need for a closer attachment to the European institutions aiming at the guaranteeing of national rights. The fact that in 1996 the Panhellenic Socialistic Movement (PASOK) presented to Greek society modernization as its sovereign political ideology is significant. Its application required financial sacrifices from the Greeks because it was connected with the growth of the economy. However, at the end of the process was integration into the Economic Monetary Union and also into the zone of the Euro countries, and this was expected to lead to the classification of Greece as one of the powerful countries of Europe and to strengthen its voice within the international globalized environment. Consequently, the signal of modernization cultivated the expectation of a better and safer future and it was adopted by the Greek population,

who approved it by electoral vote twice (in 1996 and 2000), giving PASOK the governmental command to promote it.

The need for modernization of the Greek society and economy could not happen without changes in the field of education. Thus, in 1997/1998 a new educational reform was worked out by PASOK with the establishment of the single lyceum and two circles of secondary school for technical-professional education in sectors needed by the job market, the reintroduction of the evaluation of the educational work of the teachers and the establishment of the appointment of teachers through a pan-Hellenic examination (Bouzakis, 2000). The objective of this reform, which continued at the beginning of the decade of 2000 with the change of the curriculum of compulsory education, is expressed as follows:

The nation today needs to build a new form of education in order to be prepared for the twenty-first century. A modern form of education that will give Greece the necessary competitiveness to compete with the other nations in a time of societies of information and, from the society of information, to the society of knowledge. (Speech of the Minister of Education, G. Arsenis, in the Greek Parliament. Parliament Acts, 1997. See Bouzakis, 2002, p. 988)

The attitudes of the Greek politicians belonging to the two parties of power—PASOK and New Democracy—regarding the relationship between education and economic growth are included in the theory of technological functionalism and to a large extent reproduce the relative arguments of big international organizations—the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Coulby *et al.*, 2000; Zambeta, 2002). This is expected for Greece, which follows and tries to comply with the decisions of the EU. For this reason also, the Minister of Education, P. Euthymiou, who promoted the reform of the Greek curriculum, declared:

My own vision is a school that meets all the requirements of our times ... The changes that are attempted this moment in the educational system ... constitute henceforth a prerequisite for the integration of Greece in the single European educational field, which is shaped at the most rapid rates. (Kroustalli, 2001, p. 14)

Consequently, in the generation level of the pedagogic discourse, the modern Greek state is activated and it works out educational reforms expressing the social dominant principles with regard to the need for a way out from the period of national insecurity. With these reforms the modernization of Greek society is sought because it is considered that education can contribute to the economic growth and the strengthening of the international position of Greece (Kassotakis, 2000).

The reform of the curriculum of Greek compulsory education

The reason for the continuation of the reform of 1997/98 with the extension of changes in the field of the curricula of compulsory education was given with the decisions of the European Council in Lisbon (23–24 March 2000). There, the European leaders agreed to give priority to the educational convergence so that the EU could effectively compete with the USA in the sector of the new economy (Commission of

the European Communities, 2000, p. 15). This could be done with the elaboration of special policies that would lead to the incorporation of information and communication technology (ICT) into education and training. The reason is that ICT is considered to be the vehicle of the new economy (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 3). These actions were financed by the EU so that suitable infrastructures could be created in the European schools and they led to the change of the Greek curriculum with the projection of a 'technical-instrumental' logic (Moore & Young, 2001).

The creative exploitation of ICT in education, which constitutes the tool for access to the information society (Castells, 2000), is considered to ensure the acquisition of 'digital education' (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 2). With the entry of ICT into the educational practice of the European schools, the following are intended (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 19): a) the influence of pedagogic practices; b) the adaptation of new technologies in the various scientific sectors and their utilization in the teaching of all courses; and c) the promotion of interdisciplinary influences is sought.

The process of adaptation of Greece to the political decisions of the EU on education began in the autumn of 2000 with the activation of the ORF (Alahiotis, 2002; MoE, 2003b). The entry of ICT into the educational process for the teaching of all courses requires the review of school knowledge and pedagogic practices which apply to Greek schools. The materialization of the objective for a new curriculum was undertaken by the Pedagogic Institute (PI), which is an organization supervised by the Ministry of Education with competences in the matters of the curriculum, the textbooks and the retraining of teachers. The leaders of the PI (chairman and vice-presidents) are appointed by the Minister of Education each time and come from the universities. The formation and materialization of ideas for the reform of the curriculum in a way that would make the entry of ICT possible in the educational process is related to the scientific interests of the members of the PI who were appointed in 2000 by the minister of education. They are members of the PRF, professors of pedagogic departments, whose scientific work is focused on the sectors of curricula and instructive practice. An additional element in common is the adoption of constructivism as the most suitable instructive approach, the importance of which is proven with reports mainly influenced by Piaget and Vygotsky (Apostolakis *et al.*, 2006; Plakitsi *et al.*, 2006). At a theoretical level, these opinions formulate the image of the introduction into Greek schools of a progressive theory of instruction, which is connected with the intra-individual acquisition of the school knowledge on the part of the students (Bernstein, 1987, pp. 70–71).

The leading team of the PI (members of the PRF who acted in the ORF shaping the educational policy for the curriculum) proposed to the minister the 'cross-thematic' approach (*diathematikotita* in Greek). In this way, Greece hoped to initiate its entry into the European arena (Alahiotis & Karatzia, 2006). That is because the cross-thematic approach in Europe may occupy the researchers but only 'three countries had programmed a general strategy of application of it' (Karatzia-Stavlioti, 2002, p. 56). The new curriculum was published in 2003 in the Government journal and

became a law of the State (MoE, 2003a). The second phase of the work for the change of the school knowledge is being continued with the process of the creation of new educational material with the monitoring of the PI. It is about the basic printed instructive material (students' book, teachers' book and exercise notebook) and the supportive instructive material which is in the process of being developed. The most important intervention with regard to the second case is the creation of educational software for all curriculum subjects. The creation of educational material was assigned through a competition among the main publishing houses that deal with the publication of pedagogic-scientific books and collaborate with a scientific staff that emanates, to a large extent, from the pedagogic departments.

Consequently, for the elaboration of the new curriculum and the creation of the necessary educational material that materialize, important factors of the PRF worked in the ORF. Also, the particular reform was supported by the institutions of symbolic control that control the press. For this reason Athenian newspapers of wide circulation with a pan-Hellenic range often published in their pages articles by the contributors to the reform of the curriculum (Papamathaïou, 2001; Alahiotis, 2003). Through them they tried to make the cross-thematic approach of knowledge known to the Greeks. After the publication and the beginning of use of the new school handbooks the members of the academic community (PRF), who participated in the PI for the formation of the new curriculum (ORF), have appeared to intervene directly to answer the public criticisms that are often expressed (Alahiotis, 2005, 2006). This occurs without their having any institutional role in the ORF anymore, because the governmental change in 2004 was also accompanied by their replacement in the PI. Of course, the policy of application of the cross-thematic approach was not changed by the new government of the New Democracy.

The cross-thematic curriculum was presented as an innovation that accomplished two European objectives: the entry of ICT into the educational process, and the promotion of the interdisciplinary concept (Commission of the European Communities, 2000, p. 19). The first objective will materialize with the creation and use of educational software. In fact, in the new curriculum it is anticipated that 10% of the teaching time of each subject will be spent on the utilization of educational software, so that the cross-thematic approaches will be facilitated (Karatzia-Stavlioti, 2002; Panagakos, 2002). With the use of software:

the exploitation of the possibilities that the ICT offer (interconnection of information, its multiple representation, investigation, experimentation etc.) for the creation of an attractive and challenging training environment that will encourage inquiring, energetic and creative learning are sought. (MoE, 2003b, p. 3)

The second European objective of cross-science is considered to be achieved by the new curriculum itself, as it is claimed that 'the term cross-thematic exceeds interdisciplinary concept and outdoes it' (Alahiotis, 2002, p. 11).

With the new curriculum a different instructive approach is introduced that requires the active participation of the students for the acquisition of knowledge. And this occurs without changing the 'humanitarian' nature of the Greek school and the

existence of separate courses in the curriculum (Alahiotis & Karatzia, 2006). Thus, the content of the new curriculum is organized according to the major discipline areas (C+). The basic innovation of the cross-thematic idea refers to the fact that the teacher can select some of the subjects of the course material that he/she teaches—for example, castles—and approach them in an overall, spherical way. That is to say, one can combine knowledge from the subjects of the class curriculum proceeding to the horizontal interconnection of their matter (C–). Thus, through the historical subject ‘castles’, mathematics can be taught when the students measure and calculate in order to ascertain the surface, for instance, of the castle of Monemvasia, but also the rest of the subjects (literature, sciences, geography, arts) may be taught.

On the other hand, with the new curriculum it is attempted through the teaching of various courses to cultivate specific values. These are connected with the following concepts that appear in the content of the school handbooks: interaction, dimension, (time-space), communication, change, unit (atom-element), whole (group, set), similarity-difference, civilization and system. The selection of these concepts was made because they were considered to possess important scientific diachronic value:

The fundamental scientific concepts describe or interpret ‘what is’ and constitute the subject of epistemology, while the values mainly concern the field of action, ethics and are ‘what should be’, ‘what ought to be’. And while there is not necessarily a linear relation between ‘is’ and ‘should be’, with the realization of fundamental concepts the promotion of values is also facilitated, which in their turn constitute an important objective of the curricula. (MoE, 2002, p. 649)

It is a choice that approaches the case of a ‘curriculum as fact’ (Young, 1998).

Consequently, the new cross-thematic curriculum for Greek compulsory education appears to combine traditional and technical-instrumental logic (Moore & Young, 2001). More specifically the old classification of school knowledge in specific subjects is kept (C+) and at the same time through the teaching of various subjects the promotion of certain humanitarian values is sought. Also, with the expected entry of ICT into the educational process the possibilities and the choices of the teacher and the student with regard to the approach of knowledge are broadened (F–). Furthermore, with the application of the new curriculum the abolition of the teacher-centred way of teaching and the promotion of the active participation of the student for the conquest of knowledge through common cooperative processes are sought, as happens in the case of a ‘curriculum as practice’ (Young, 1998). The particular way of work is considered to be the most suitable one on the part of the groups of the middle class that are activated in the symbolic control (Bernstein, 1990). This is because it is expected that the cross-thematic curriculum facilitates the creative potential of the students to express itself and to be developed (Alahiotis, 2002; MoE, 2002; Panagakos, 2002).

New printed educational material and pedagogic practices

According to the sovereign educational culture in Greece the school textbooks possess a fundamental and instructive role in the educational process and their

content determines with precision the order of presentation of the matter of all the subjects of the new curriculum (F++ of sequence). With the new reform, school textbooks for all the subjects were published and they make the teacher rely on them in order to do his/her lesson, even when it is about gymnastics. In the previous curriculum there were directive instructions for the achievement of specific teaching objectives with regard to gymnastics, music and the fine arts and the teacher had almost absolute freedom to shape the course as he/she judged to be suitable.

The publication of the new school textbooks occurred without being piloted and without the necessary training of the teachers that are to use them. Also, they were introduced abruptly and hastily to all the classes of the primary school without the relative preparation of the students and their families, who were asked to contribute substantially to the support of the new system. Concerning these problems, criticisms have been expressed by certain members of the PRF, professors of universities, and by the Teachers' Federation of Greece (TFG) (Bagakis, 2006; Boubouka, 2006; TFG, 2006). A typical example of the hasty entry of the new textbooks into school practice is provided by the case of mathematics. Here, the students who would be attending the B class of the primary school (ages 7–8) during the school year 2006–2007, using the new textbooks of mathematics, began to be taught starting from the number 100 in order to cover the subject matter up to the number 1,000, while the previous year in the A class of the primary school (ages 6–7), they had been taught up to 20. In a similar way the students of the C class of the primary school (ages 8–9) started from the number 1,000 in order to reach up to the number 10,000, while in class B they had been taught the numbers up to 100. Moreover, for the students of A class of the primary school, the teaching matter has been extended from number 20 to 100.

The intensifying of studies, with the upgrading of the school knowledge in the case of the primary school and the increase in each instructive unit of the school handbook of the quantity and the variety of the exercises, was also created for the promotion of the criteria of the test Programme of International Student Achievement (PISA2000) (Alahiotis & Karatzia, 2006). However, the instructive time available in the school is not sufficient for the students to elaborate and conquer knowledge (F+: strong pacing). For this reason, the modern Greek family is asked to create a second pedagogic frame at home so that the student continues his/her cognitive effort there. In the case of the mathematic textbooks, the authors' teams wrote letters to the parents in which they guide them about the way of operation of the particular pedagogic frame:

Initially we should point out once more that, when you ask your child to make a calculation by reckoning, ask it to explain the way in which it made the calculation. If your child finds it hard to make calculation by reckoning then it needs to use the means of the senses, such as its fingers, a reckoner etc. In order for your child to develop the ability of analyzing and composing complex geometrical combinations it is advisable to occupy itself both with various jigsaws that are offered in the market and with the Chinese game 'tagkram'. You can also make, along with your child, the game tagkram, following the instructions that are given as follows. (Lemonidis *et al.*, 2006, pp. 181–182)

In the case of the linguistic course, there are no letters, but the responsibility of guidance of the family is assigned to the teacher:

For the effective collaboration of the family with the school the teacher recommends to the parents the application of techniques that help the children systematize the knowledge of writing and reading ... They also encourage the parents to share relative activities with the children. (Karatzola *et al.*, 2006, p. 25)

The necessity of providing the child with a second pedagogic frame at home from the family creates inevitable social inequalities and benefits the students that come from the middle and upper social classes (Bernstein, 1990). These students who possess an elaborated linguistic code and transport corresponding cultural experiences of the urban nature to the school environment are benefited at the beginning of studying at school (Bernstein, 1977, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1997). In fact, in the new books of language at A class of the primary school for the teacher, it is claimed that:

The children come to the A class of the primary school with experiences, knowledge and opinions regarding written reason ... They already know that certain words that are found written in their direct environment, such as trademarks, names of food, shops, streets, games and so on, carry a meaning and the majority of them recognize them. The children have already shaped perceptions with regard to reading and writing. If they are asked to write an advertising text under a picture of a product, they will use the imperative form by themselves; their text will be short and will contain a certain argument. (Karatzola *et al.*, 2006, p. 7)

Consequently, when the new school knowledge was created it was not taken into consideration that: a) the students emanate from different socio-economic environments; b) they have different social engaging; and c) that modern Greek society is multicultural. The increase in the quantity and the quality of knowledge that the students in the A class of the primary school have to conquer and the strong pacing of the school knowledge led to the readjustment of the curriculum of the kindergarten. Thus, the kindergarten is required to prepare and to support the transition of the students to the primary school with the transmission and cultivation to them of certain linguistic and mathematic skills and other knowledge and skills of a cultural nature (Dafermou *et al.*, 2006). This fact explains the decision of the Ministry of Education in December 2006 to establish obligatory attendance at kindergarten.

In the modern primary school with the new curriculum, mixed pedagogic practices are established. The hierarchical relation of teacher-students is distinct when the former presents and transmits the linguistic and mathematical knowledge, and when he/she evaluates and marks the learning effort of the children (F+). In other cases, however, the teacher is asked to move within the limits of an invisible pedagogy. In this case, he/she is asked to shape the suitable pedagogic frame for the students to collaborate and to provide them with the essential educational material. Also, the teacher is called upon to support the common cooperative effort of the children, guiding them in a discreet way so that they can approach knowledge by themselves (F-). The type of directional intervention of the teacher depends on the type of school activities, the rank of the school class and the particularities of the subject with which they deal. The teacher is more instructive in the lower classes of the primary school. There, apart from teaching the linguistic course and mathematics, the teacher seeks

to help the students consolidate the common-cooperative way of work that is introduced (F+). The teacher becomes less instructive when he/she seeks the activation of the students for the elaboration and acquisition of knowledge, as happens in the case of sciences and in the materialization of projects (F-).

With regard to the evaluation of the students, a complex system of evaluation techniques is applied. Thus: a) in the frame of the everyday routine of the school class the positive exploitation of the errors of the students is sought, aiming at their self-assessment and self-correction on an individual or common basis (F-); and b) the teacher evaluates and marks the cognitive effort of the children per term based on explicit criteria of evaluation that become known to the students and their parents (F+). Besides this, the exercises in the workbook and the revision tests make the criteria of evaluation visible. In fact, in the specifications of the educational software there is an instruction for the constructors for the creation of a file for each one of the students that will be aimed at their individual self-assessment but also at the control-evaluation of their training effort by their teacher (MoE, 2003b).

Concluding remarks

From the analysis of our research material the following conclusions can be drawn.

The Greek state monitors the dominant social principles, which at the end of the 1990s were characterized by the coexistence of traditional cultural values and the need for the modernization of Greece so that it could adapt itself to the European facts. The reform, therefore, of the Greek educational system that led to the change of the curriculum of compulsory education appears as a necessary movement of modernization (Kassotakis, 2000). With this, two objectives are sought: first, the reinforcement of Greece in the framework of the EU, a fact that is considered to ensure the national interests and guarantee the national cultural values, and besides this, the moral humanitarian values continue to be cultivated in the new curriculum as well; and second, the application of the European objective for the integration of ICT into the educational process, a fact that is expected to contribute to the promotion of the knowledge society and the new economy.

The reform of the curriculum is realized in the official recontextualizing field by the Pedagogic Institute, a supervised institution of the Ministry of Education. An essential role in this reform was played by the leaders of the PI, who were appointed by the Minister of Education, and who are scientists, members of the pedagogic recontextualizing field, agents of symbolic control. They mainly come from humanitarian faculties with specialization in the management of pedagogic discourse (theoretical and instructive pedagogic approaches of the curriculum). Their collaboration in the PI resulted in the cross-thematic curriculum that led to the review of school knowledge.

With the new curriculum, mixed pedagogic practices have been established (Bernstein, 1990, 2000; Morais *et al.*, 1999). More specifically, the teacher is asked in some courses to apply an invisible pedagogy, discreetly directing the students so that through projects and common cooperative work they conquer knowledge. It is about pedagogy that is characterized as progressive, is preferred by the area of the

middle class that belongs to the symbolic control and is justified with the use of theories from cognitive and developmental psychology (Bernstein, 1987, 1990; Power & Witty, 2002). However, the teacher remains the powerful factor in the Greek school. He/she creates the frame of communication in the school class, determines the way of work of the students and evaluates them with explicit evaluation criteria. Teacher control enters all the events of school life, even in the case of the use of educational software by the students, as all his/her movements will be recorded and will be observed by the teacher (MoE, 2003b). In fact, including all of the educational reforming interventions that have been attempted since 2000 and later on in Greece, we are in the position to support the notion of 'the state's increasing control over its own agencies of symbolic control, especially education, at all levels' (Bernstein, 1990, p. 154).

A typical element of the work in schools with the new school textbooks and the new curriculum is strong pacing. This fact makes the cooperation of the parents necessary in the educational process so that they themselves help and support the completion of the training effort of their child at home. The particular intervention and the fact that the modern Greek school presupposes and supports both its work on elements of a cultural nature, which it has not cultivated previously, such as skills of a linguistic and mathematical nature, but also particular social experiences (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bernstein, 1990) will not function, as we believe, and will intensify social inequalities in Greek society.

The new educational policy in Greece, with the reform of the curriculum and the change of school knowledge, began from the school year 2006–2007 to be applied in practice. This fact, we believe, opens up a wide field for sociological research which ought to approach the various fields and levels of the pedagogic device that is developed in a period of very rapid and important changes in the European and world environment. The following could be interesting research questions arising from this project: social inequalities and the new curriculum policy in Greece; new school knowledge and ICT; Greek family, school knowledge and the home pedagogic frame; the school knowledge change and teachers' stress; new curriculum and new teachers' identities; citizenship and textbooks content analysis; hidden curriculum; school knowledge and pedagogic practices; analysis of the new Greek pedagogic device.

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Note

1. The state in the Greek case has always been centralized, bureaucratic and paternalistic (Kazamias, 1990; Bouzakis, 2000, 2002). According to Kazamias (1990), the state in Greece after the Second World War has been urban and has intensively got all the characteristics of a typical liberal state of welfare, which appears to act as a neutral medium benefiting the whole of society. Also, the Greek state totally controls the whole educational system, which is closely connected with bureaucracy and with the centralized state mechanisms. Moreover, it appears

to act for the protection of the dominant social principles and for an effort for cultivating the Greek national identity through the formation and operation of the educational institution.

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