



CRITICAL EDUCATION AND INTERCULTURALISM IN THE TEACHING OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION: THE CASE OF GREEK PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

Theodoros Vavitsasⁱ

Adjunct Lecturer,
Department of Philosophy,
& Postdoctoral Researcher,
Department of Primary School Education,
University of Ioannina,
Greece

Abstract:

The present research aims to investigate Interculturalism and the Emancipatory Interest in the textbooks of Citizenship Education in the Greek Primary School. Applying Habermas' theory of Emancipatory Knowledge Interest as a theoretical framework, the research methodology used is interpretive content analysis. The results of the research showed that Intercultural Education is promoted by the textbooks of Citizenship Education in the Greek Primary School, mainly by the one taught in the 6th class, while the Emancipatory Interest is, also, reflected in many cases. The perspective of valorizing the Emancipatory Knowledge Interest derives not only from the textbook of the 6th grade itself, but also from the teacher's contribution, which is to be evaluated as equally crucial. Finally, although the subject of Citizenship Education contributes, clearly, to the reproduction of the dominant ideology, it seems that if we study the content of the textbooks in-depth and, in particular, the concepts it discusses, namely, freedom, justice, equality or solidarity, we can, definitely, identify opportunities for emancipation.

Keywords: citizenship education, critical education, interculturalism, Greek Primary School

1. Introduction

In the present research, our intention is to investigate elements of Interculturalism and Emancipatory Interest in the textbooks of Citizenship Education in the 5th and 6th grades of Greek Primary School. In particular, the textbook is a particularly important means of school education (see Johnsen, 1993; Olechowski, 1995), as in addition to it, being a means of teaching and learning, it is considered, especially in the context of the Marxist (critical)

ⁱ Correspondence: email vavitsast@gmail.com

tradition, to be a political product, since its content expresses and diffuses the dominant ideology and aims at its reproduction (see Bonidis, 2009; Neumenn et al., 1974; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). As far as the Greek school textbooks of Citizenship Education are concerned, their content has been the subject of research many times in the past (see Nikolaou, Papa, & Papa, 2020; Karakatsani, 2004; Mousena, 2004; Dagiakis, 2000; Kontogiannopoulou-Polydoridi, 1995). The main reason that urged our research on these textbooks is the fact Citizenship Education is a special case of a school subject, which determines the role of the social and political education of the students. However, one can perceive its marginalization, namely, its treatment as a “secondary” subject, a fact which is obviously reflected in the position it occupies in the school schedule (1 hour/week). In addition, we believe that it would be extremely interesting to consider whether the principles of intercultural education, such as the cultivation of empathy, the education for solidarity, the cultivation of citizenship in young students, the intercultural respect and a way of thinking against the ethnocentric/nationalist perspective derive from the textbooks that are designed to enhance the students’ citizenship education (Essinger, 1988, pp. 58-72; 1990, pp. 22-31). Moreover, what is worth examining is if the content of the textbooks is governed by an emancipatory knowledge interest, and if, as a result, it is possible to use the research findings in the light of a broader perspective for a critical education, which aims to cultivate social emancipation. Given the above questions, we consider the present research important, since it aspires to contribute to the dialogue between interculturalism and education for citizenship, with a view to giving prominence to the perspective of social emancipation in the future.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in this research relies on the Critical Paradigm of Pedagogy. More specifically, the term “Critical Paradigm” refers to the theory of education, which is philosophically, epistemologically and theoretically based on the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, which puts special emphasis on the basic principles expressed by Habermas. In this light, to our view, adopting in practice the Critical Paradigm, the knowledge produced in the context of the critical science of education is accompanied by an emancipatory interest (see Habermas, 1968). More specifically, Habermas (1968), trying to point out the fact that there is no “neutral” knowledge, introduced three different knowledge interests, each of which had a different goal, in the sense that the technical knowledge interest aims at the control and management of reality, in measurement and management, the practical one focuses on understanding and meaning, while the third one, the emancipatory, aims, through critical action, at change. Our purpose is not to highlight whether the textbooks turn to one of these knowledge interests or to what extent each knowledge interest is promoted. On the contrary, our goal is to highlight the possibility of utilizing the knowledge provided in an emancipatory direction. In any case, in most contexts, knowledge interests exist side by side. Therefore, our effort lies in featuring those critical - emancipatory elements, as they

derive or may emerge from the textbooks of Citizenship Education. As a consequence, critical education is comprehended in a broader context as a general effort aiming at social emancipation.

3. Material and Methods

The main problem of the present research is whether the education for Citizenship, as denoted in the Greek Primary School through the course of “Social and Political Education”, utilizes elements from the context of intercultural education and emancipatory knowledge interest. The above basic reflection could be conceived as having a dual nature. Therefore, it is divided into two sub-objectives. First, it aims to explore the place of intercultural education in the textbooks of “Social and Political Education” of the Primary School. Secondly, it aims to explore the emancipatory knowledge interest in the content of school textbooks. Having clarified the context, in the present research, we are able to formulate the research questions that we will attempt to answer, which are structured as follows:

- 1) Are the principles of intercultural education promoted in the textbooks of Social and Political Education?
- 2) Does the content of the textbooks incorporate elements of emancipatory interest?

Regarding the research methodology chosen, as well as similar research in school textbooks (see Fragoudaki, 1979; Achlis, 1983; Meek, 1988; Bonidis & Hontolidou, 1997; Xochellis et al., 2000; Wong, 2002; Nikolaou, 2009), this is a content analysis using the interpretive method. More specifically, it has been pointed out that “*interpretive method and quantitative content analysis have been the most used methods in researching the content of textbooks*” (Bonidis, 2004, p. 84). However, our research examines not only whether the textbooks of Social and Political Education contain elements of interculturalism and emancipatory interest, but also whether from the activities proposed, and the content of the textbooks, in general, situations that favor the critical action and change may arise. Thus, it is obvious that there is no possibility of quantitative expression of all the above, i.e., only in the light of the frequency of occurrence of specific words within the text. It is, therefore, obvious that, although categories are to some extent given (e.g., empathy, solidarity, etc.), the process of matching “*content*” with “*category*” becomes a demanding and thorough interpretive one. Given the above, it is clear that the interpretation is necessary in order to achieve the fullest possible investigation of the content of the school textbooks (see Bonidis, 2009). At this point, it is worth dwelling a little more on the role and importance of the concept of “*interpretive*” for content analysis, before proceeding to the presentation of the technical parts of the process. We must, therefore, mention - briefly- that the interpretive method, which experienced particular development during the period of Humanism and the Renaissance (see Wulf, 1978) and during the past two centuries (19th - 20th), was developed and evolved further mainly by Schleiermacher (1959), Dilthey (1961, 1990) and Gadamer (1982, 1990, 1998) resulting in it “*be used both in the analysis of the text and in the analysis of its illustration*” (Bonidis, 2004, p. 88). What is

understood here is that the analysis of content, in the light of interpretation, concerns not only the written text, but also the images. Here, it is worth noting that understanding, as Dilthey (1961) pointed out, is a process, which, starting from the signs outside (expression, directly sensory data), seeks to recognize something inside (meaning, significance). In particular, we must mention the following: *“In this context, ‘signs’ means the ‘objects of interpretation’ and the ‘externalizations of life in duration and fixed form’, in which the human spirit has been ‘objectified’. Thus, through the process of comprehension, starting from the outside signs, the expression, the given in the sense, its inner meaning, its meaning is recognized”* (Bonidis, 2004, p. 85).

4. Results and Discussion

Before beginning with the description of the results of our research, we consider it appropriate to make a reference to the way our material is processed. Initially, regarding the textbook of the 5th grade of Primary School, this was examined per **Unit**, and each **Unit** per *chapter*. The specific school textbook consists of four (4) units, the first (A) consisting of eight (8) chapters, the second (B) of four (4) chapters, the third (C) of five (5) chapters, while the fourth (D) and last unit of four (4) chapters. Additionally, the textbook for the 6th grade of the Primary School was examined by thematic units, each consisting of units, while each unit was further divided into chapters. More specifically, the 1st thematic unit consists of four (4) units, in which the first unit consists of three (3) chapters, the second of two (2) chapters, as well as the third, while the fourth consisted of five (5) chapters. The 2nd thematic unit consists of two units, with the first unit consisting of five (5) chapters and the second unit of four (4). The 3rd thematic unit consists of two (2) units, with the first unit consisting of three (3) chapters and the second unit of two (2), while, finally, the 4th thematic unit also consists of two (2) units, where both the first and the second consist of two (2) chapters each.

4.1 5th Grade School Textbook

To make an introduction, the 5th grade textbook promotes and attempts to cultivate the principles of interculturalism, as they have been identified above, but not to a satisfactory degree. However, the fact that the textbook seems to be divided into two makes a rather negative impression, because, while in the first two units (A and B) the element of interculturalism is evident, in the next two - the last ones, almost no reference to values with *“intercultural”* content is recorded. This fact, admittedly, if understood in combination with the distribution of material within the school year, leads us to the conclusion that in the second half of the school year of the 5th grade students will not come in contact with tangible data of interculturalism in the subject of Social and Political Education, except for few cases.

A. Empathy and Solidarity

In the school textbook of the 5th grade, we could say that elements of empathy and solidarity appear to a limited extent. For example, to promote the social role of the church, it is stated that: *“The Church strengthens financially and supports spiritually people, who at some point in their lives, are in need. It offers food and shelter to our needy fellow citizens. There are boarding schools, orphanages, nursing homes, hospitals, children’s camps. It also sends aid missions to countries at war, regardless of the religion of the peoples of those countries. It helps in many ways in various cases of major disasters (earthquakes, floods, etc.) by sending humanitarian aid and volunteer staff”* (Florou, Stefanopoulos & Christopoulou, 2008, p. 10). At this point, the values of mutual aid and care for the “Other”, regardless of cultural characteristics (nation, religion, etc.), derive very clearly. Elsewhere, children are invited, through an activity, to observe three different images of children, who come from different countries, and to develop their views on what differences children have, what needs they have, and if they believe that the needs are similar or different (Ibid, p. 47). Starting with the difference among the three children of different origins and highlighting the universality of human needs, a first step is taken towards the empathetic understanding of the “Other”, regardless of their particular cultural characteristics, since all people have common needs.

B. Intercultural Respect and Anti-Ethnocentric/ Anti-Nationalist Thinking

Aligning with the values of empathy and solidarity, those of intercultural respect and anti-nationalism/anti-ethnocentrism have limited presence in the primary school textbooks. In particular, an important point of intercultural respect and anti-ethnocentrism is activity 6, on page 26, where students, on the occasion of a poem written by a French student about their homeland, are also invited to write a poem about the nation to which they belong (Ibid, p. 26). Thus, each student in the multicultural school classroom can write a poem about their country, while, in addition, the teacher is given the opportunity to develop a class discussion, where culturally different students will be able to express themselves about their place of origin, to report what they know about their mother culture, etc. Also, at the same point in the school textbook, in activity 7 (Ibid), there are examples of doctors, who will rush to help and treat people in countries other than their own, that is, where they are needed. This way, the importance of intercultural cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity between people is highlighted. In addition, highlighting the coexistence of different peoples, cultures and languages within the European Union, that is, within a wider nation-state level of cooperation between different nations, as well as highlighting the common cultural “matrix” of European peoples (Ibid, p. 28), emphasizes the fact that people can coexist, create broader collectives and respect each other’s peculiarities, accepting the “Other”. Finally, the fact that intercultural respect and anti-nationalism stem from the very core of the Greek Constitution is also emphasized, as it is stated that: *“In Greece, as in other countries, the rights of the individual are protected by the Constitution and laws. These rights divided into individual, social and political concern Greek citizens. The rights of foreigners are protected by*

international conventions, but also by articles of the Constitution, such as Article 5, which prohibits discrimination based on racial, linguistic or religious criteria” (Ibid, p. 53). As it is clear, therefore, intercultural respect emerges as fully integrated and legislated in the Greek state. Thus, the culturally different is not simply treated as existing, but becomes fully respected.

C. Citizenship and Interculturalism

In this part, we refer to the elements that particularly concern the concept of the citizen and how, through it, interculturalism is utilized (through examples, references to the different, etc.). More specifically, at the beginning of the school textbook, we encounter the concept of nationality, as well as its relationship with the concept of citizenship. The authors of the textbook, through activity 2, bring students face to face with the issue of the acquisition of Greek citizenship by non-Greeks in origin (Ibid, p. 13). In particular, the story of Khalil is given as an example: *“Khalil was born in Egypt and was Egyptian. When he was 18, he came to Greece to study. During the years of his studies, he learned the Greek language and got to know the Greek culture. Having decided to live here permanently, being already an adult, he wanted to become a Greek citizen. According to the law, after 7 years of permanent residence in Greece, he had the right to apply to the Municipality of his residence, to be granted Greek citizenship. The competent Service of the Ministry of Interior examined his application and invited him for an interview. After a while, with a decision made by the Minister of Interior, he acquired Greek citizenship, after taking an oath to abide by the Constitution and the laws of the Greek state and to fulfill his duties as a Greek citizen” (Ibid). Through the above narrative, the framework for the acquisition of Greek citizenship by a foreigner is presented. Thus, it follows and promotes the fact that national groups are not inaccessible collectives, but the possibility is given, under certain conditions, to the citizens of the country to acquire citizenship. Thus, the deeper logic promotes the shift from “blood law” from origin to “soil law” from residence. Furthermore, references are made to the concept of naturalization (Ibid, p. 14), that “sometimes people (...) settle in other countries, to work (immigrants) or are forced to leave their homeland due to war or other disasters (refugees) (...)” (Ibid) and that citizens of other countries, who also have rights and obligations (Ibid, pp. 16-17) in Greece live. What is also mentioned elsewhere is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which “sets out the basic rights of all human beings, such as the right to life, liberty, freedom of thought, religion, food and at home” (Ibid, p. 49), as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child: “The 54 articles contained in the Convention concern all children regardless of their national origin, sex, language, religion, special needs or their appearance. They can be grouped into four major categories” (Ibid, p. 51). Finally, in the context of the promotion of democracy, as a concept but also as aspects of it in everyday life, an example from everyday school life is presented, which can reflect the contribution of democratic behavior to intercultural understanding and the indicative attitude towards the different. In particular, the following example is mentioned as a state of concern for the students: “Recently, students from other countries came to Paul’s school. They speak a different language; believe in a different religion and have different habits. Paul would very much like to get to know*

these students well, to learn about their homeland, and if possible, some words in their language. But some of his friends try to persuade him to take part in the teasing against these students, to interrupt them when they talk and to tell them to go back to their homeland. Paul's goal is to make his friends stop this behavior. He does not want to ruin his friendship with them, but he believes that such teasing to the detriment of their new classmates is unfair. He believes that it is very interesting to have classmates from other countries and that in a democratic society everyone can live harmoniously" (Ibid, p. 72). We consider this particular example, which we present independently, to be particularly important, since it presents the way in which exclusion is intertwined with intercultural understanding, highlighting the difficulties and dilemmas that a student may face when they want to meet their "different" classmates, emphasizing the fact that in a democratic society everyone can live harmoniously.

D. Emancipatory Knowledge Interest

During the elaboration, special emphasis was placed on the activities suggested in the school textbooks, because the emancipatory interest is oriented towards critical action, setting the ultimate goal of achieving change. In this light, we are mentioning two activities that are found in the school textbook of the 5th grade and could gain emancipatory interest. The first one: "5. A museum in the classroom! Create a museum of nations. You can bring pictures, handicrafts, cooking recipes, costumes, songs (...) Present and discuss the exhibits. Find similarities and differences" (Ibid, p. 25). Here students are invited to explore, gather data, discuss. In addition, the teachers could, if they wanted to trigger an emancipatory interest through the generated knowledge, assign the students an additional task: to develop an action plan, through which the "museum of nations" can contribute to the improvement of communication between nations, to ponder whether the "museum of nations" can mitigate the differences that arise between nations and lead to conflicts, etc. The following activity may also be of emancipatory interest: "5. The little researchers (...) 1. You were informed that a mobile phone antenna has been illegally installed in your neighborhood. 2. Have you noticed that the stream or river, which exists in your area, recently presents a bad picture with a lot of dangerous garbage, rubble, dirty and smelly water? Choose one of the above two questions and research: How can the problem be solved? Who will help you? Organize the action plan. The following steps will help you develop it. -Dialogue among all of you. -Communication with officials. -Cooperation with other residents of the area" (Ibid, p. 42). In this case, students are motivated not only to reflect on issues that may arise in their daily lives, but also to act within a framework of organization, dialogue and cooperation, in order to change the current situation and suggest feasible solutions.

4.2 6th Grade School Textbook

Regarding the school textbook of the 6th grade, it could be said that it promotes and attempts, satisfactorily enough, to cultivate the principles of intercultural education, as these have been identified above. If we take into account the textbooks of the 6th grade compared to those of the 5th grade, we infer that the former differs to a great extent in the principles of interculturalism from the latter. In addition, in the 6th grade textbook, a

positive impression is made due to the fact that it is not divided into two, in terms of intercultural elements, such as the 5th grade textbook, so the intercultural elements are distributed throughout the material.

A. Empathy and Solidarity

In the textbook of the 6th Primary School, elements of empathy and solidarity appear to a sufficient degree, throughout the textbook. More specifically, introducing the issue of the integration of all children in school, it is stated that: *“Schools also have students with special needs, such as deaf or hard of hearing children, the blind and children with mobility problems or children of economic migrants and gypsies. All children have the right to education and progress”* (Nikolaou, Vatsitsi, Daniilidou, & Paschaliori, 2008, p. 21). This point highlights the concept of diversity, as well as the importance of inclusion, as it emphasizes the fact that all students have the right to education, regardless of special characteristics (special educational needs, cultural differences, etc.). The concept of inclusion, as it follows from this, can cultivate solidarity towards the different, help to those in need, etc. Assistance to those in need arises later, where the reference to the Church of Greece is as follows: *“The Church of Greece is an important factor in modern Greek society. (...) Also, with the cooperation of all believers, clergy and laity, the Church carries out the command of Christ ‘love one another’ and cares for the elderly, young children and families, offering medicines, care, food, etc. without discrimination against sex, religion or nationality”* (Ibid, p. 24). Referring to the European Union, it states: *“The Member States of the European Union shall cooperate with a view to fulfilling peace, stability, security, democracy, justice, solidarity, social and economic development, and defense of the common values of Europeans (respect for the rights of all people and culture, healthy environment, etc.)”* (Ibid, p. 66), while reference is also made to the International Organizations, where: *“The main task of these organizations is to preserve international peace and security, to assist the economic and social development of poor countries and to protect the rights of the people”* (Ibid, p. 83). Finally, references to Médecins Sans Frontières, an organization that *“provides medical assistance wherever there is a need without any racial, religious, political or other discrimination”* (Ibid, p. 86), are considered important for the development of solidarity and empathy. References to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which *“binds all states to ensure that human rights are respected by all states and apply to all citizens, regardless of gender, language, origin or their religion”* (Ibid, p. 89) and Amnesty International, which *“is a non-governmental organization that supports human rights. Its members, despite their different backgrounds and beliefs, serve a common goal: all people to live with dignity, free and truly safe”* (Ibid, p. 90). We believe, therefore, that both through the operation of supranational and international organizations and through the values, operation and goals of voluntary organizations, as well as declarations, the cultivation of empathy and solidarity without divisions is attempted.

B. Intercultural Respect and Anti-Ethnocentric/Anti-Nationalist Thinking

Similar to the concepts of empathy and solidarity, those of intercultural respect and anti-ethnocentrism/anti-nationalism are satisfactorily found in the 6th grade textbook. More specifically, in the introduction to the education system and the school, in an attempt to present the different structures of the educational systems of other countries, there are examples of four children, from four different countries (Ibid, pp. 18-19). Thus, students are called to identify similarities and differences between educational systems and to realize, through an anti-ethnocentric prism, that what applies to their country has no universal validity and does not apply to every child, in every part of the world. Elsewhere, reference is made to the value of secularism, as it is noted that: *“Some people in our country believe in other Christian doctrines, such as Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Some others, Greek or foreign immigrants, follow other religions, such as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Every religion has its own believers, its own principles and traditions, its own places and ways of worship”* (Ibid, p. 26). Here, students are asked to recognize and to show respect for everyone’s right to religious freedom. However, apart from respect to everyone’s particular religion, the same demand for respect is also expressed in the different languages. In particular, the chapter on the peoples and cultures of the European Union (Ibid, p. 74-75) refers to the fact that peoples differ from one another on the basis of certain elements, such as language, traditions and customs. In addition, *“the European Commission strongly supports the teaching of languages to children, in order to make them more aware that they belong to the European family and to take advantage of the opportunities presented in a multilingual Europe”* (Ibid, p. 75). Thus, in this context of multilingualism and respect, the textbook introduces the word *“Good morning”* in the different languages of the countries of the European Union, while the activity that students are asked to carry out concerns the synthesis of different cultural elements. Additionally, they are asked to write a fairy tale containing different heroes, from different countries, such as Bolek and Lolek (Poland), Heidi (Austria), Asterix and Obelix (France) etc. (Ibid, p. 75). In this light, then, we consider that the anti-ethnocentric/anti-nationalist orientation of the school textbook is clearly reflected, as well as the effort to highlight the intercultural respect for the different as a key component of its content.

C. Citizenship and Interculturalism

With regard to those points from which intercultural elements emerge through the broader context of the concept and status of citizens, they can be summarized as follows: First, by making an introduction to the concept of family, and, in addition, referring to the fact that family acquires particular characteristics depending on the social environment, economic potential, tradition, culture and way of life (Ibid, p. 10), the book introduces a very sensitive issue, which is family hardships. Starting from there, it is stated: *“Most difficulties can be faced by the family, when all its members are united, show a willingness to cooperate, talk to each other, try to understand and help each other”* (Ibid, p. 14). Here, cooperation (solidarity) and the effort to understand each other (empathy) are considered as important for overcoming the difficulties of the family. We can, therefore,

note that, on the one hand, there is some reference to culture, tradition, etc., noting that these factors affect the characteristics and structure of the family, and on the other hand, the values - skills that, thus or else, they are projected and promoted here, as qualities that the future citizen must possess in various aspects of his life, are also values of interculturalism. In addition, in other places, the main focus on the Constitution, which *“defines the form of government and the primary obligations of the state, such as respect for and protection of human dignity, the pursuit of peace, justice and the development of friendly relations with other states and peoples”* (Ibid, p. 52), attempts are made to highlight the values that should govern a democratic society, in various areas, since: *“The democratic state enshrines by law values such as equality and freedom of all citizens. People are considered equal to each other; they have the same rights and obligations”* (Ibid, p. 47). This, of course, concerns issues of religious faith, as it is *“respected by the State”* and *“everyone can freely and unhinderedly worship the God in whom he believes, according to the principle of secularism, which is clearly described in the Greek Constitution”* (Ibid, p. 27), as well as the general *“respect for society as a whole”* (Ibid, p. 55), which is one of the most important obligations of the citizen, as they arise from the Constitution. In conclusion, it is worth noting that it is precisely this position of respect for the “Other” in the Constitution that makes the concept of the citizen, and the obligations arising from it, to approach interculturalism and to develop within a common framework.

D. Emancipatory Knowledge Interest

Regarding the emancipatory knowledge interest, as this can be found in the activities proposed in the textbook of the 6th grade, we could first mention: *“In a family live the father, the mother and the two children, George and Christina. The parents have returned from work and are very tired. The children shout, argue and... We discuss and complete the script (what happens next?) ❖ How can we deal with similar situations? We share the roles and play the script”* (Ibid, p. 13). Here, students are asked to formulate a hypothetical scenario, aiming at drawing up an action plan to tackle similar situations in the future. Therefore, their purpose is to change one situation and replace it with another. Then, in another point we find the following: *“2. We think about problems that concern our school (e.g., cleaning the courtyard, school security). We are divided into groups; each group chooses a problem and writes suggestions for its solution. We discuss the suggestions of each group and record the ones that we can implement”* (Ibid, p. 50). Again, students are asked to write an action plan, which aims to solve an existing problem. Finally, another activity is the following: *“In recent years, people are increasingly concerned about the problems caused by the lack of water on the planet. We are divided into groups. The members of each group represent people from one continent: Africa, Asia, America and Europe. Each group selects a country facing a water shortage problem. Looking for information from Geography, each group describes the situation prevailing in the place they represent and answer the following questions. ❖What are the effects of this problem on the lives of the inhabitants or the natural environment and how can the country solve it?”* (Ibid, p. 82). In this case, too, students are asked to work in groups and draw up an action plan, which aims to solve the problem of water scarcity on the planet.

5. Conclusion

In this research, we have attempted to investigate the position of interculturalism and emerging knowledge interest in the school textbooks on the subject of “Social and Political Education” of the last two classes of Greek Primary School. In order to achieve the purpose of our research, we set two sub-objectives, from which two research questions have come up, to which we have attempted to respond. Their summary results are presented below.

Initially, with regard to the first research question, on whether the principles of intercultural education are promoted in the school textbooks, the content analysis revealed that the intercultural principles are promoted, but not to a satisfactory extent. In particular, the significant negative elements of the school textbook of the 5th grade lie in its “*division*” into two. Firstly, while in the first two Units (A and B) the element of interculturalism is evident, in the last two (C and D) almost every reference to values with an “*intercultural*” content is missing. This fact, if we approach it from the point of view and distribution of matter into the school year, leads us to the conclusion that in the second half of the school year of primary school, students of the 5th grade will not come into contact with tangible intercultural elements. In addition, the problem with the school textbook is the fact that in the third unit of the book, which deals with democracy, only one reference is made to interculturalism, only in the margin of the lesson, through a single example (Florou, Stefanopoulos & Christopoulou, 2008, p. 72). The issue of democracy is universal and cannot be associated only with the local characteristics of the respective culture. Therefore, the fact that no attempt is made to focus on democracy is a strong disadvantage and the connection of democracy is not emphasized with equal treatment of people, irrespectively of racial, linguistic, cultural, etc. origin. On the other hand, in the 6th grade school textbook, there seems to be a sufficiently satisfactory presence of intercultural elements, which, in fact, are distributed uniformly throughout the textbook. The points of the school textbook, on which we could exercise individual, constructive criticism are mainly two: First, in the chapter where the need for education and education as a given right for all is presented (Nikolaou, Vatsitsi, Daniilidou, & Paschaliori, 2008, p. 21), the social causes that determine school dropout (e.g., disabled students, gypsies, etc.) are omitted. Secondly, the whole of the 3rd thematic unit (Ibid, pp. 63-78), which deals with issues in the European Union, could be governed by a comprehensible eurocentricity, which is contrary to the basic principles of intercultural education. Extensive reference to relations between the peoples of the European countries, their common cultural origin, etc. is noted but there is no equivalent interest in the relations between the Member States of the European Union with the other States that do not belong to the EU.

The second research question asked whether the content of the school textbooks incorporates evidence of emancipatory. As it emerged from the analysis of research data, the school textbooks can contribute in this direction, with the role of the teacher, however, as we will substantiate below, to be considered a hub. In particular, we could say that the

6th grade school textbook is a more appropriate tool in this direction, including activities that can be exploited as surveys - actions. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that activities, as presented in both school textbooks, beyond minimum exceptions, cannot cultivate an emancipatory knowledge interest. The nodal role of the teacher, who has to perform the role of the “*mediator*”, with a dialectical concept of the term, between the content of the activities and their presentation to the students, is outstanding. Therefore, the teacher is necessary to deepen the inherent potential of activities, to highlight their emergency capabilities, to motivate students and stimulate them towards “*emancipatory action*”.

Finally, what should be made clear is: that the subject of “Social and Political Education” is, undoubtedly, identified with the dominant ideology and reproduction. On the one hand, apparently, such a position is valid. On the other hand, however, in the light of a critical approach and perspective, if we are growing more to the content of the school textbooks of social and political education, we could identify the possibilities of emancipating. These possibilities, in our view, lie in the same concepts that deal with citizenship education. We will be able to highlight the inadequacies of concepts such as freedom, justice, equality, etc., if these are approached in the light of a critical vision and if we dive into their content in the existing framework.

Acknowledgements

I, the author of this paper, would like to express my deepest thanks to my colleague Athena Sevi, PhD Candidate at the University of Patras, for her contribution to the completion of this paper.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Dr. Theodoros Vavitsas is a graduate of the Department of Primary Education of the University of Ioannina. He graduated with honors (9.73) from the Postgraduate Program "Educational Sciences" of the same Department. He holds a PhD from the Department of Education and Social Work of the University of Patras. He has participated in international scientific conferences, workshops, and his articles have been published in prestigious scientific journals. He is an Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Ioannina and a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Department of Primary Education of the University of Ioannina.

References

Achlis, N. 1983. Our neighboring peoples, Bulgarians and Turks in the history textbooks of Gymnasium and Lyceum. Thessalonians: Kyriakidis Bros.

- Apple, M. and Christian-Smith, L. (Eds.). 1991. *The Politics of the Textbook*. New York/London: Routledge.
- Bonidis, K. 2004. The content of the textbook as a subject of research. Intertemporal examination of relevant research and methodological approaches. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Bonidis, K. 2009. Critical, methodological approaches to researching the content of textbooks: Theoretical assumptions and "examples" of analysis. *Comparative and International Educational Review*, 13, 86-122.
- Bonidis, K. and Chontolidou, E. 1997. Textbook research: from Quantitative Content Analysis to qualitative analysis methods - The Example of Greece. In: M. Vamvoukas & A. Chourdakis (Eds.), *Pedagogical Science in Greece and in Europe - Trends and Perspectives* (pp. 188-224). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
- Dagiakis, A. 2000. Europe in the books of Social and Political Education of the Elementary School Sixth and Sixth grade, *Open School*, vol. 75, pp. 29-31.
- Dilthey, W. 1961. Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik. In W. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 5, pp. 319-338. Stuttgart-Goettingen: Teubner.
- Dilthey, W. 1990. Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in der Geisteswissenschaften, 3. Aufl., Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Essinger, H. 1988. Interkultureller Erziehung als antirassistische Erziehung. In G. Pommerin (Eds.), *Und im Ausland sind die Deutsche auch Fremde* (pp. 58-72), Frankfurt.
- Essinger, H. 1990. Interkultureller Erziehung in multiethnischen Gesellschaften. *Die Bruecke*, 52, 22-31.
- Florou, D., Stefanopoulos, N. and Christopoulou, E. 2008. *Social and Political Education (5th Grade)*. Athens: Institute of Computer Technology and Publishing "Diofantos".
- Fragoudaki, A. 1979. *Elementary school reading books. Ideological coercion and pedagogical violence*. Athens: Themelio.
- Gadamer, H.-G. 1982. *Reason in the Age of Science*. Cambridge, Massachusetts. The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Gadamer, H.-G. 1990. *Hermeneutik: Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzuege einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 6th Ed.. In H.-G. Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 1, Tuebingen: Mohr.
- Gadamer, H.-G. 1998. *The problem of historical consciousness*. Athens: Indictos.
- Habermas, J. 1968. *Erkenntnis und Interesse. Mit einem neuen Nachwort*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Johnsen, B. E. 1993. *Textbooks in the kaleidoscope - A critical survey of literature and research on educational texts*. Oxford.
- Karakatsani, D. 2004. *Education and political education: knowledge, values, practices*. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Kontogiannopoulou-Polydoridi, G. 1995. Mechanisms for the transfer of school knowledge: The books of social and political education. In: G.

- Kontogiannopoulou-Polydoridis (Ed.), Educational policy and practice: Sociological analysis (pp. 258-270). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
- Meek, M. 1988. How texts teach what readers learn. Stroud, UK: The Trimble Press.
- Mousena, E. 2004. Political education in primary education (kindergarten and primary school) after the war in Greece (Doctoral Thesis, University of Patras). Available from the database of the National Documentation Center (Code 31942).
- Neumann, G., Schoeps, J., and Wiedner, W. (Eds.). 1974. Das Schulbuch als Politikum. Sozialwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Medien - und Unterrichtsforschung, Sozialwissenschaftliche Schriften, 6, Duisburg: Verlag der Sozialwissenschaftlichen Kooperative.
- Nikolaou, S.-M. 2009. Socialization at school. Research in the textbooks of the language course of the 6th grade of the Primary School. Athens: Gutenberg.
- Nikolaou, S. M., Papa, M. and Papa, Gl. 2020. Political Socialization at School. The example of social and political education textbooks in Greece, In: International Scientific Conferences Conferencll "Science and Society" 27-3-2020, Namur Belgium, Fadette Editions pp. 100-104 (ISBN 978-2-5494-0322-4)
- Nikolaou, S.-M., Vatsitsi, A., Daniilidou, D.-M. and Pashaliori, V. 2010. Social and Political Education (6th Grade). Athens: Institute of Computer Technology and Publishing "Diofantos".
- Olechowski, R. (Ed.). 1995. Schulbuchforschung. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Schleiermacher, F. 1959. Hermeneutik. Heidelberg: C. Winter Un. Verlag.
- Wong, S. L. 2002. School Textbook and Cultural Authority. In. D. Levinson, P. W. Cookson, A. R. Sadovnik (Eds.), Education and Sociology. An Encyclopedia (pp. 533-538). London & New York: Routledge.
- Wulf, Ch. 1978. Theorien und Konzepte der Erziehungswissenschaft. Munchen: Juventa Verlag.
- Xochellis, P., Kapsalis, A., Ismyrliadou, A., Loukidou, D., Bonidis, K. and Savvidis, S. 2000. The image of the "other" / neighbor in the textbooks of the Balkan countries. In: A. Kapsalis, K. Bonidis and A. Sipitanou (Ed.), The image of the "other" / neighbor in the textbooks of the Balkan countries (pp. 43-65), Proceedings of the International Conference, Thessaloniki, October 16-18 1998, Center for School Books Research and Intercultural Education. Athens: Typothito - George Dardanos.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).