



BALANCING BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION; THE CASE OF INTERCULTURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GREECE

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Abstract:

This paper explores teachers' and head teachers' perceptions of the nature of intercultural education within the thirteen intercultural primary schools in Greece. The research methodology adopted is a mixed-method approach which has been employed in order to achieve a better understanding of the issue examined. The research methods used include questionnaires administered and interviews undertaken with teachers and head teachers. The results indicate that although teachers may be aware of the main principles of the theoretical background of intercultural education, most of them agree that they are not implemented in the classroom, especially as regards the principle that foreign pupils' mother tongue should be taken into account in the curriculum and they provide a number of reasons for that. The contribution of this study to the topic examined is significant since there has been no previous research conducted in all 13 intercultural primary schools in Greece.

Keywords: intercultural education, primary education, mixed-method approach

1. Introduction

The term 'intercultural education' is ambiguous. There is not a universally agreed definition of the term. Its meaning and aims vary from one author or one country to the other. It lacks a universally accepted definition. Therefore, there are a number of different interpretations of it (Katsikas and Politou, 2005). There are times that the terms 'multicultural education' and 'intercultural education' are used interchangeably due to the confusion between the terms 'multiculturalism' and 'interculturalism' (Kaldi, 1999).

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Some researchers recognize the dynamic process of intercultural education, while others do not. There are also some researchers who do not accept the term and others who use the term without accepting its basic principles (Palaiologou and Evaggelou, 2003). Some researchers use the term 'interculturalism' to describe the multicultural situation and to talk about the aims of intercultural education. Other researchers distinguish between the terms 'multiculturalism' and 'interculturalism'. They use the first term to describe the existing situation and the latter term to denote what 'it should be' (Kaldi, 1999).

Intercultural education approaches also vary from national directives established as part of national education programmes to approaches concerning communication and cooperation between authorities at a national, regional and school level (Onestini, 1996). Intercultural education approaches may also take a variety of forms in terms of their focus of study. Some forms pay more attention to the history and culture of the countries from which immigration has taken place, others to developing students' awareness of their racial attitudes and some others to transmitting a sense of the relativity of all cultures (Council of Europe, 1991).

Intercultural education constitutes the evolvement of multicultural education (Nilolaou, 2000). It was critical multiculturalism which pinpointed the negative points of multicultural education and triggered the notion of intercultural education. It is a more active process (Kaldi, 1999), as it provides pupils with the opportunities to discuss and exchange ideas and get to know other cultures more deeply (Hatzinikolaou and Marasli, 1999). Besides, the very same term 'intercultural' denotes this communication and interaction among different cultures (Androussou, 1996). According to Freedman Lustig (1997) the first component of the word 'inter' is preferable to 'multi' because it denotes an active process rather than a collection of separate cultures. The aforementioned theoretical elements of interaction, exploration of similarities and differences underpinning intercultural education were used to interpret the research data of the study presented and discussed.

Multicultural education just aims at the peaceful co-existence of different cultural groups, which is not enough. Co-existence of different cultural groups does not guarantee that people coming from different cultural groups appreciate, understand each other and communicate with each other effectively. This can be fulfilled through the implementation of intercultural education, which encourages dialogue (Palaiologou and Evaggelou, 2005) and the exploration of similarities and differences between people of different cultural groups.

There is no doubt that there are commonalities between multicultural education, critical multiculturalism and intercultural education. They all make an attempt to recognise and to accept the differences emerging between the different cultural

identities. Their differences lie in the extent to which each belief tries to understand and resolve the differences.

Intercultural education is a complicated term and the aim of this piece of research presented is not to oversimplify it. Making clear what it means and elucidating its complexities is of great importance because it informs the design of the appropriate teaching strategies for implementing intercultural education. As so, the fact that there has been little in-depth research (Sarantakos, 1998) conducted on the issue has also been taken into account as a factor contributing to the decision to focus upon this subject.

As regards as the case of Greece Law 1234 of 1996 constitutes a very important step towards the institutional recognition of the aims of the implementation of intercultural education in Greece. However, it seems that the regulations of the law which are relevant to intercultural education refer to the foundation of intercultural schools which accommodate foreign pupils, with no mention of the accommodation of native pupils as well, so that an essential intercultural dimension can be established not only in those schools but in all schools of the country. Furthermore, it is not specified to which groups of pupils this law refers, how these educational, social and cultural needs are defined and how teachers can meet those pupils' needs (Damanakis, 1998).

2. Main objectives

In this paper the results of the first part of the main aim referring to the nature of intercultural education within the intercultural primary schools are presented and discussed. More specifically, teachers' and head teachers' views on the meaning they attribute to the term 'intercultural education' both in theory and in practice are presented and discussed as well as the problems they encounter towards the implementation of intercultural education.

3. Methodology

The research strategy employed is a survey conducted over a period of two school years in the 13 intercultural primary schools in Greece, where native, foreign and repatriated pupils participate. The study investigates the issue of intercultural education and the extent of its implementation within the intercultural primary schools in Greece. Since it sought to explore the field of intercultural education, which is multi-faceted, a variety of sources and research methods were combined in order to reveal the different aspects of intercultural education. Within the two-school year period of the empirical part of the study, a questionnaire was distributed to all teachers of the primary schools aiming at providing a survey of information regarding the topic. In total, 133 primary school teachers completed the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with some of the

teachers of each school, who seemed to be aware of and have experience of intercultural education. In total, 39 teachers were interviewed. Interviews were also conducted with the head teachers of each school. Thirteen head teachers participated. The principal amount of data came from the questionnaires and the interview data shed light and revealed different aspects of the social phenomenon investigated.

In the present study the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was not used in order to maximize the validity of the results. It was mainly employed in order to add breadth and depth to the analysis (Fielding and Fielding, 1986) and to achieve a better and more complete understanding of the social phenomenon of intercultural education examined (Scott and Morrison, 2005).

4. Teachers' perceptions of the meaning of intercultural education

4.1 Questionnaire data

Each one of the statements shown in Table 1 below constitutes a principle of intercultural education and respondents were asked to express their opinions on each one of them. All six compose the main theoretical framework on which the implementation of intercultural education should be based. Therefore, as Table 1 reveals, teachers were asked to answer to what extent they think that each one of the principles below are implemented so that a comparison can be made between teachers' perceptions regarding the theoretical framework of intercultural education and its implementation.

Table 1: Meaning of intercultural education in theory

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Missing values
1. Cultural experiences of all pupils	(0%)	3 (2.3%)	5 (3.8%)	70 (52.6%)	52 (39.1)	3 (2.3)
2. Similarities and differences of cultures	1 (0.8%)	5 (3.8%)	7 (5.3%)	68 (51.1%)	50 (37.6)	2 (1.5)
3. Dynamic interaction of all pupils	1 (0.8%)	7 (5.3%)	(0%)	72 (54.1)	51 (38.3%)	2 (1.5)
4. All pupils' cultural capitals are equal	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.5%)	6 (4.5%)	53 (39.8%)	68 (51.1%)	3 (2.3%)
5. All languages are part of the curriculum	4 (3%)	8 (6%)	32 (24.1%)	50 (37.6%)	35 (26.3%)	4 (3%)
6. All pupils' cultural identity evolves	(0%)	4 (3%)	7 (5.3%)	63 (47.4%)	56 (42.1%)	2 (1.5%)

n=133

To begin with, as Table 1 reveals, it is significant that the largest number of teachers (94%) have realised that intercultural education refers both to native and foreign pupils,

that it is beneficial for both groups of pupils (Markou, 1997) and that it is not a segregationist type of education. In the same sense, the respondents have understood that the six statements of Table 1 above, which compose the theoretical background of intercultural education, refer to both native and foreign pupils. More specifically, according to Table 1 the largest number of teachers generally agrees or strongly agrees that each one of the statements of the table constitute the theoretical underpinnings of intercultural education. This percentage is higher with reference to cultural experiences of all pupils (91.7%) (Batelaan and VanHoof, 1996), the exploration of similarities and differences between cultures – a principle that teachers interviewed refer to a lot – (88.7%) (Monasta, 1997) and the dynamic interaction of all pupils (92.4%) (Camilleri, 1992b) within the framework of intercultural education. There is a small percentage of teachers who disagree with the idea that the intercultural dimension in education is based on all pupils' cultural experiences, the exploration of similarities and differences among different cultures, the dynamic interaction of all pupils as well as the acceptance and use of all pupils' languages in the curriculum. It is also noteworthy that there are a number of respondents who are undecided as to whether the cultural experience of all pupils are taken into account (3.8%), the similarities and differences of cultures are explored (5.3%), all pupils' mother language is incorporated into the curriculum (24.1%), the equality of all pupils' cultural capital is accepted (4.5%) within the framework of intercultural education. The number of teachers who disagree or are undecided regarding the theoretical framework of intercultural education may be small. However, it shows that a number of teachers working in the intercultural primary schools either do not know or they are doubtful about the exact meaning of intercultural education. As a consequence, they cannot implement intercultural education fully, although they work in primary schools which are designated to promote it. This may be due to their lack of formal and continuous training on issues of intercultural education (UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education). In Sismanidou's (2005) research only 32% of primary school teachers had answered positively on knowing the basic principles of intercultural education.

At a practical level, as Table 2 shows, a large number of teachers agree or strongly agree that each one of the principles stated in the table is implemented for the promotion of intercultural education in the primary schools of the research. However, the cumulative percentage of the 'agree' and 'strongly agree' categories for each one of the principles is not so high in practice compared to the theory, especially as regards the principle that all pupils' mother language should be taken into account in the curriculum. This is proved by the increased percentage of teachers who have stated that actually they do not implement the principles of intercultural education in the primary schools. Teachers may be aware of the theoretical background of intercultural education, but they may not feel capable of implementing it because enough practical

training has not been offered to them (Sismanidou, 2005). The percentage of the 'undecided' category in each one of the principles is higher in practice compared to in theory. This is worrying since it makes us think that if teachers are undecided as to whether a principle of intercultural education is implemented or not it may be due to that whatever teachers plan in order to promote intercultural education is based on their own responsibility and will, or self-training/self-education or instinct. Therefore, they may be confused and they may think hard as to whether they are implementing intercultural education or not.

Table 2: Meaning of intercultural education in practice

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Missing values
1.Cultural experiences of all pupils	7 (5.3%)	21 (15.8%)	8 (6%)	59 (44.4%)	33 (24.8%)	5 (3.8%)
2.Similarities and differences of cultures	4 (3%)	24 (18%)	13 (9.8%)	58 (43.6%)	30 (22.6%)	4 (3%)
3. Dynamic interaction of all pupils	0 (0%)	13 (9.8%)	14 (10.5%)	69 (51.9%)	33 (24.8%)	4 (3%)
4. All pupils' cultural capitals are equal	1 (0.8%)	22 (16.5%)	17 (12.8%)	50 (37.7%)	38 (28.6%)	5 (3.8%)
5. All languages are part of the curriculum	15 (11.3%)	42 (31.6%)	25 (18.8%)	30 (22.6%)	11 (8.3%)	10 (7.5%)
6.All pupils' cultural identity evolves	2 (1.5%)	23 (17.3%)	14 (10.5%)	58 (43.6%)	27 (20.3%)	9 (6.8%)

n=133

Through the 17th and the 18th open-ended questions of the questionnaire, a first explanation of the existing gap between theory and practice in intercultural education is attempted from the primary school teachers' side. First and foremost 46 teachers have detected problems in the curriculum, both the official and the hidden one (Apple, 2004). They state that it is appropriate only for Greek students and not flexible enough to meet the requirements of a diverse population of pupils in the classroom,-that is the curriculum is Eurocentric and ethnocentric. This is also stated by the interviewees. It is noteworthy that this problem has been referred to by Greek primary school teachers in previous research studies regarding the relevant issue (Sismanidou, 2005). Furthermore, the material required to be taught is extensive and the available teaching time is not enough (8 teachers). In the same way the school books are inappropriate for a multicultural classroom, especially for Roma pupils, as teachers state, and the Greek language used in them cannot be understood by foreign pupils (44 teachers). In this it should be added that neither Greek as a second language is taught systematically in the intercultural primary schools (15 teachers), nor is the foreign pupils' first language included in the curriculum and taught by teachers of the mother tongue (41 teachers).

Sismanidou's (2005) research also revealed that 75.7% of primary school teachers were positive towards foreign pupils being taught their mother tongue in the school. According to Bereris' (1999) and Sismanidou's (2005) research teachers admitted that they developed their own teaching material in order to be able to teach foreign and repatriate pupils efficiently. The large number of pupils per classroom hinders the implementation of intercultural education. In Miliou's research (2011) the same problem is reported by primary school teachers working in mainstream primary schools regarding foreign and repatriate pupils' education. Twenty-two teachers state that the case of each pupil is special and that each pupil has a different learning level. Therefore, it should be examined separately, especially when pupils are foreigners. However, this is not feasible due to the large number of pupils in each classroom. According to 23 teachers there is an insufficiency of infrastructure and audiovisual material as well as a problem with small classrooms in some of the schools (six teachers) which cannot facilitate the implementation of intercultural education.

Teachers focus on some more obstacles which make the implementation of intercultural education difficult. Teachers believe that they usually cannot cooperate effectively with the families of foreign pupils both because they work long hours and they cannot dedicate time to their children's education, also because they have financial difficulties and cannot support fully the education of their children (16 teachers). It may be the case that foreign parents may not feel confident enough to cooperate with the school because they do not speak the language of the host country well (Moler, 1993 and Bermudez, 1994 as cited in Crozier and Davies, 2007). As the literature review showed, cooperation between school and home constitutes a very important characteristic for the establishment of an intercultural ethos in the school and the empowerment of pupils towards learning (Miliou, 2011). Moreover, 16 teachers detected that foreign pupils' negative behaviour constitutes one more problem as regards intercultural education. Some of them do not care about the school at all, they rarely attend school, especially Roma pupils (Bafekr, 1999), they are aggressive and create conflicts either in the classroom or during break time. This negative behaviour may be due to either the school not being welcoming enough for them or because it is difficult for them to adjust themselves to Greek society. The contribution of psychologists working in the school would be valuable in those cases, as two teachers reported (Zergiotis, 2006). Nevertheless, no provision has been made for the employment of this kind of specialist in the intercultural primary schools in Greece. There are four teachers who believe that foreigners tend not to keep connections with their mother tongue and their customs because they do not want to be stigmatised. They try to be assimilated into the Greek society; otherwise they do not feel confident enough. In this sense, it is difficult for teachers to implement intercultural education. However, if this is the case, this means that Greek people have stereotypes and

prejudices towards foreign pupils (Frangoudaki and Dragona, 2000). This view is supported by nine teachers participating in the research. They believe that Greek pupils are cautious towards foreigners because this perception has been transmitted by their families or by the teachers to them (Guttmann and Bar-Tal, 1982). Besides, it is not unusual that some of the intercultural primary schools are disproportionate in terms of pupils' country of origin, as some of the interviewees have stated. Parents of native pupils decide to enrol their children in another school due to the high number of foreign pupils in the intercultural school. According to Frangoudaki and Dragonas (2000), Greeks still consider themselves monocultural due to social and historical reasons and they do not focus on by whom and to what extent they have been influenced by other cultures. Research conducted by Damanakis (2005) in Greece also showed that intercultural education met the resistance of both parents and teachers. The difficulty of the implementation of intercultural education increases when teachers are attached to traditional methods of teaching or they do not agree in establishing an intercultural ethos in the school. This constitutes a potential reason for disagreements and conflicts between teachers working in the same school. Four teachers believe that the aim of Greek education is still the assimilation of foreigners, which is reflected in the school through the establishment of hegemonic relationships (Cummins, 1996).

Thirty-seven teachers pinpoint that they do not have sufficient teaching experience or formal training on issues of intercultural education. They believe that although love for what they do is very important, it is not enough for teaching in an intercultural school. They need to be equipped with the appropriate knowledge on ways of promoting intercultural education (UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education). Some of them add that teachers being placed by accident in intercultural primary schools should not work in them, because they do not really want it. They suggest that theory of intercultural education should be implemented in practice in order to be able to see whether and to what extent it is effective or not. In turn, these practices and various pieces of research should be published, so that teachers could learn more regarding the implementation of intercultural education (24 teachers) (Kiger and Manning, 1997). Therefore, teachers' efforts to implement intercultural education are mainly based on their personal will. In Nikolaou's (2000), Spyridakis's (2002) and Sismanidou's (2005) research, Greek primary school teachers also stated that they need to be trained in issues of intercultural education before implementing it in the classroom.

Nikolaou's (2000) and Miliou's (2011) research also showed that the implementation of intercultural education in schools is mainly based on teachers' self-education. Further to that, 27 teachers believe that the state does not appear to support intercultural education in the country. There is no financial support and no definite and clear legal framework regarding intercultural education (Spyridakis, 2002). They think

that the aims of intercultural education and the teaching framework have not been defined clearly (five teachers). According to them the provision of intercultural education has been designed and organised very roughly. It is true that the aims of intercultural education vary from one author or one country to the other (Androussou, 1996) and that different interpretations have been provided (Katsikas and Politou, 2005). Three more teachers believe that the school advisers do not support their work towards the implementation of intercultural education. There are two other teachers who believe that intercultural education would be more feasible if the school extended its relationship with the wider society and cooperated with other institutions (UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education). At this point it should be mentioned that the adjustment of the official curriculum to the needs of pupils accommodated in intercultural schools or the application of special curricula with the addition of supplementary or alternative subjects as well as the reduction of the number of pupils in each class and the reduction of teachers' working hours due to the special circumstances existing in those schools constitute issues which are laid down by law 2413/1996 regarding intercultural education. Law 2413/1996 gives the rights to intercultural schools to proceed with the aforementioned changes or alterations when the circumstances of the school demand it, after gaining approval from the National Ministry of Education. However, ten years after the enactment of the law, when actually the present research was undertaken, teachers keep on referring to these unresolved issues and these problems continue to be an issue that needs to be further explored. The aforementioned problems hindering the implementation of intercultural education are also discussed by teachers and headteachers interviewed.

There are two teachers who believe that it takes time for teachers to adjust to the idea of intercultural education and that there is an expected fear towards this new educational reality. That is why they find it difficult to implement intercultural education at the moment. However, since the enactment of the first law regarding intercultural education in 1996 until the actual conduct of the present research in 2006, ten years had passed, which I believe constitutes a reasonable period of time for teachers' adjustment to intercultural education. Twelve teachers admit that there is a gap between theory and practice in intercultural education without stating any reasons and four others state that there is not a gap between theory and in practice without justifying it, as well. A summary table of the main problems that teachers think hinder the implementation of intercultural education with the sequence presented above is cited below.

Table 3: Problems towards the implementation of intercultural education

Problems	Number of teachers
1. Inflexibility of the curriculum (formal and hidden)	46
2. Inadequacy of time to teach the large amount of material	8
3. Inappropriate school books	44
4. Greek as a second language is not taught systematically	15
5. Foreign pupils' mother tongue is not included in the curriculum	37
6. Large number of pupils per classroom	22
7. Insufficiency of infrastructure and audiovisual material	23
8. Small classrooms	6
9. Ineffective cooperation of the school with foreign pupils' parents	16
10. Foreign pupils' negative behaviour and absenteeism	16
11. There are no psychologists employed in the schools	2
12. Foreign pupils tend not to keep connections with their mother tongue and their customs	4
13. Some Greek pupils, their families and some Greek teachers are prejudiced towards foreigners – Traditional teachers	9
14. The aim of intercultural education in Greece is still assimilation	4
15. Insufficiency of teachers' formal training on issues of intercultural education – Insufficiency of teaching experience in intercultural schools	37
16. Theory of intercultural education should be applied for its effectiveness to be checked.	24
17. The state does not support intercultural education	27
18. School advisers do not support the implementation of intercultural education	
19. School should extend its relationship with the society and keep cooperating with other institutions	3
20. Teachers need time to adjust themselves to the new educational reality	2

4.2 Interview data

Teachers' and headteachers' answers to the question of what comes into their mind when they hear the term 'intercultural education' show that on the basis of their teaching experience they relate this type of education to pupils coming from other countries who have different experiences and different cultures (20 interviewees). Thirteen of the interviewees added that intercultural education is based on the notion of equality of all cultures – one of the main principles of this type of education (Kanakidou and Papagianni, 1998) – and that it aims at cultivating the acceptance of difference, the respect of other cultures, the peaceful co-existence of people and the efforts made to integrate foreign and repatriate pupils in the society of the host country while maintaining their cultural characteristics in parallel (Batelaan and Gundara, 2000). It is important that some of the interviewees have extended their thoughts on the nature of intercultural education by stating that all groups of pupils, including native pupils, can benefit from this type of education (Tsakiropoulou, 2008) through the interaction of

cultures, the exchange of different cultural elements and the discovery of similarities and differences between cultures. As it has already been mentioned in the introduction the very same term 'intercultural' implies interaction and exchange (Kaldi, 1999) and as I have suggested above I believe that this point differentiates intercultural education from multicultural education.

Two of the interviewees mentioned that intercultural education includes antiracist education, as it relates to the education of native pupils against xenophobia and racism and the managing of multiculturalism, in general. This perception of intercultural education reminds us more of the multicultural antiracist education which had been suggested as it had been thought that multicultural education or antiracist education alone was inadequate to achieve satisfactory educational results (Grant and Ladson-Billings, 1997). At a practical level two of the teachers suggested that teachers should work with foreign and repatriate pupils in the classroom, so that equal chances of learning can be provided to all pupils. On this point the view of one teacher and of one headteacher who believe that intercultural education has both a social and learning dimension should be mentioned. According to Kontogianni (2002) intercultural education should be implemented in all aspects of school life and in the wider society, so that an intercultural continuum is established in the whole society.

It was thought at first that the interviewees have moved towards this direction of the meaning of intercultural education, as this meaning has been defined in the present study. This is also confirmed by the analysis of questionnaire data. Most of the respondents are aware of the main principles and aims of intercultural education at a theoretical level. However, when interviewees were asked to make a comparison of intercultural education with multicultural education and bilingual education in an attempt to define more precisely intercultural education, there was a variety of answers which shows the confusion at an ideological level. Four of the interviewees could not define those three terms. Another eight interviewees believe that the three aforementioned educational terms are relevant and another 11 of them support the view that both multicultural and intercultural education refer to the comparison of cultures and the cultural exchange, that is they believe that there are no distinct boundaries between these two types of education. It is true that there are some researchers who also use the terms 'multicultural education' and 'intercultural education' interchangeably (Kaldi, 1999). Another 14 of the teachers answered that bilingual education refers to the children being educated with the use of two languages – their first language and the formal language of the host country (Baker, 1993). Therefore, it constitutes a restricted term as it refers to a homogenous pupil population. Nevertheless, they could not compare bilingual education with multicultural and intercultural education except seven other teachers who believe that bilingual education is part of intercultural education, since pupils should be taught their first language

within the framework of an intercultural educational programme. First of all, as research has revealed, knowledge is better acquired and pupils can better progress academically when they are taught both in their first and second language (additive bilingualism) (Dean, 2000). Secondly and equally important is that pupils feel more secure to start school using their first language (Scarcella, 1990) and this leads them to empowerment, since they feel that their language which constitutes part of their cultural identity is accepted.

However, there are 17 interviewees who support the view that there is a difference between multicultural education and intercultural education. According to them multicultural education is a wider term compared to intercultural education. It simply aims at knowing other cultures and peaceful co-existence of cultures (Palaiologou and Evaggelou, 2003). Whereas according to other interviewees' views intercultural education is based on interaction between cultures, the exchange of cultural elements as well as the ideological conflict between cultures, so that all groups of pupils are benefited by discovering the similarities and differences between cultures (Monasta, 1997). Another teacher prefers to use the term 'managing cultural diversity in the school' instead of the term 'intercultural education' due to the theoretical confusion which exists as regards this term.

Two other teachers support the view that intercultural education should only refer to foreign pupils and that an intercultural school resembles a school with pupils with special educational needs. Those extreme positions confirm the existing ideological disorientation of teachers regarding the nature of intercultural education. In general, the variety of the answers provided by teachers and headteachers regarding the nature of intercultural education confirms that they are confused regarding the nature of it. It also suggests that there are a number of different interpretations of it (Katsikas and Politou, 2005) according to teachers' teaching experiences and personal representations. These experiences and representations, in turn, lead and define their everyday teaching practices, which they do not feel confident when implementing because they do not know whether or not these practices reflect intercultural education (Katsikas and Politou, 2005).

5. Implications for practice and policy

The findings of the study suggest that it is important for the teachers to be knowledgeable about the meaning of intercultural education, so as to design the appropriate pedagogical/teaching techniques in order to incorporate an intercultural dimension in education.

Regarding the implications of policy in terms of curriculum, this needs to be characterised with flexibility so as to be adjusted to the educational needs of the

different groups of pupils accommodated in each school. Teachers also discuss their lack of formal training on issues of intercultural education and the demographic data obtained from questionnaires confirmed that 69.2% of the teachers do not have any further qualifications. According to the ministerial decision Φ.361.23/159/Δ1/5271 of 1997 teachers asking to transfer to intercultural schools need to have sufficient knowledge of the mother tongue of the majority of foreign pupils accommodated in the school. Moreover, they need to have further qualifications in education such as training in issues of teaching Greek as a second language, postgraduate studies in education in general or in intercultural education, attendance at conferences or seminars relating to intercultural education and teaching experience in reception classes or intensive classes. However, ten years after the enactment of those laws, when the present research was undertaken, teachers keep on referring to these unresolved problems which constitute an issue that needs to be re-examined, although the law takes provision for those issues.

To continue with educational legislation, the law 2413/1996 on intercultural education and related issues does not clarify the aims of intercultural education and this issue has to be revisited, because the definition of the aims of intercultural education constitutes the first step for moving on to its implementation.

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