

Original Paper

The Greek Educational Policy Model towards the Reinforcement of Democracy: From the Marginalized Citizen to the Active

Political Individual

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to define the legalizing process of a differentiated operational model for schools, emphasizing and reinforcing democratic values. In this respect, new organizational forms of students and teachers are being proposed, aimed at formulating a bio-political environment characterized by new communication networks—of both social and personal appeal. These will be conducive to transforming authoritative structures and domination relations into democratic forms of organization, taking into consideration the individuals' social and cultural subjectivity within their social environment. More specifically, explicit and implicit forms of domination and authority are transcended with a focus on the forming correspondence of structures and relations, rendering democracy a new interpretation regarding its social and political content.

This proposal is expected to serve as an exemplary model for democratic education beyond the needs emanating from the Greek reality. The institutional organization and operation of the education bureaucratic mechanism is emphasized in order that schools operate as areas of consideration and political reflection on democracy.

Keywords

democracy, educational system, equality, humanism, active political individual

1. Introduction

The time period between 2008 and 2018 puts new economic, political and social facts at the forefront, conducive to forming different educational conditions. The economic crisis alongside the financial

affairs settlement by institutions that do not belong to the Greek nation generates a different and multi-faceted condition for Greece. In this vein, education is affected by imposed economic choices in terms of limited expenditures. The same policy also affects perceptions about democracy and the democratic political constitution. As a result, racism is intensified, stemming from extreme right political practices and the “feeble entities” social marginalization from the system.

The economic crisis in Greece is coupled with a political crisis which is expressed through the enfeebled relations between the citizen and the carriers responsible for policy formulation. Within these difficult conditions of disdain, education is invited to play a determinative role in the formulation of citizens responsible to develop actions conducive to monitoring authority and restoring politics exercise to citizens.

The worrying phenomenon of democracy deregulation of the Greek society forms the basis of observing the citizens’ choices such as: a) non participation in the national elections, b) voting political parties that lack political discourse and organized policy program, and c) choosing extreme right political parties. Besides, it should necessarily be pinpointed that, more generally, citizens do not participate in instruments and carriers related to the electoral function of political instruments and carriers. In other words, even if they vote in elections, their role is still typical and marginalized without having the feeling of being participants in the political procedures.

It is proved by quantitative and qualitative researches that young citizens of 18-35 years old mainly, are those ones that are either distant from participation or, when participating, choose extreme right political parties while policies stated by these parties, such as racism against migrants, maximization of inequality at the expense of women, ongoing violence and adoption of choices conducive to disdaining the democratic institutions and deconstructing the political system are accepted.

The educational policy is imperative in formulated anti-democratic conditions, which reproduce anti-democratic stances and behaviors in order that the role and discourse is present by redefining its objectives and functions. The issue of formulating citizens who will respect the democratic institutions and will participate in politics disapproving of both the political marginalization and the totalitarian fascist choices are a matter of education.

In the present paper special emphasis is placed on a structured model of educational policy about democracy which, in terms of cross—curricular and interdisciplinary, will combine within the curriculum history and political culture as cognitive fields so that the value of democracy towards the reinforcement of equality as well as the development of the individuals’ personality is elevated. It is about a concurrent paradigm towards the projected model of education conducive to market with special concentration on the awareness of democracy.

1.1 The Economic Crisis in Greece and Its Political Consequences

Since 2008 Greece has been experiencing an unprecedented economic degradation (Note 1). A massive amount of the population has been found marginalized, as they cannot be integrated into the labor market within a period in which unemployment reaches 30%; 40% especially among young people (Note 2). It is important to mention that citizens have the feeling that their personal pursuits cannot be fulfilled and, comparing to the former prosperity period 1982-2008 (Note 3), they are aware that their life is downgraded in all its aspects relevant to the right for work, the possibility of self-realization, social co-existence and the pursuit for prosperity and progress.

The negative consequences, as they are being currently experienced, do not allow people to envision their future as there is a general view that the future will be the same if not more negative than the present. For the first time the individual experiences a situation of personal cancellation and feels psychologically, socially and politically enfeebled to make life plans, as uncertainty and insecurity become the impediments towards the formulation of personal pursuits in a state which, under financial and political terms, has been left without the possibility to form its policy due to the monitoring and surveillance performed by the dominant European power, Germany (Note 4).

Along with the economic degradation, Greek citizens are concurrently experiencing national submission that is a nation-state disdaining condition as well as its institutions dynamics. Therefore, every discussion about democracy and equality becomes problematic because the individuals' association with the policy of rights (Note 5) is violently ceased. This achievement was the outcome of social and political struggles and was institutionalized by laws for protecting and maintaining equality and justice through the development of welfare state policies (Note 6) for the lower social strata that were given the right to improve their life within a political system which acknowledged their freedom and re-negotiated on their benefit the right in education and the possibility of social mobility (Note 7).

During the economic crisis the political system itself and the principles of democracy are under question by both native and migrant citizens who develop disdain attitudes and political indifference. Democracy is deemed to have been degenerated while they put forward political views and standpoints reinforcing the extreme right political parties the recent elections (Note 8) the extreme right political party expressing national-populism (Note 9) and an idiosyncratic form of party rejecting democracy while, at the same time, suggesting the violent political complete expression was observed to have been enhanced for the first time.

As regards the Greek education policy, the focal point of the educational system is on performing an information-knowledge transfer, emphasizing the examination model which has enfeebled the value framework pertaining to individual political and social survival within society and maximized existential insecurity, social uncertainty and people's indifference to politics.

2. Theoretical Educational Approaches to Democracy

Amidst the economic crisis, education is expected to manage issues tied to knowledge and the individuals' integration (Note 10) into society. From this perspective, in terms of humanism, the redefinition of concepts such as prosperity, success and progress (Note 11) is imperative. An underclass (Note 12) seems to be formulated, namely a group of people who are not part of the society. Shrinking opportunity structures are ascertained, in educational and social terms, and collateral losses for lower social strata seem to be insurmountable.

It is noteworthy that people hit during an economic prosperity period were those ones less favorable by the economic, social and political system. The impressive dimensions of social inequality cannot be evaluated by the educational system. Within the public school there are students experiencing marginalization, disdain and cancellation of individuality, being, at the same time, excluded from society. People experienced the economic prosperity period, a value environment in which accessing the consuming society (Note 13) defined the constitution of their social status, since the concepts of success or failure were defined in terms of an economic—materialistic pattern of obtaining goods within a system of expanded needs.

Education is expected to form a value system anew, by re-approaching, in political terms, the concept of democracy, reconstructing the illusionary entity of society (Note 14), and formulating students' experiences within a democratic school environment (Note 15), in which the concept of the citizen will be redefined. Emphasis, therefore, is placed on institutions, attitudes and behaviors enhancement tied to school democratic operation. At this point, operational, institutional structures, either disdained or not legislated, are emphasized. In particular, reference is made to: 1) Teachers' Associations (Note 16), 2) Students' Communities, and 3) Mixed Boards of School and out-of-school representatives.

It is clear that policies advance towards organizing a democratic school by imposing principles and standpoints conducive to enhancing the articulation of opinion-viewpoint and reinforcing integration strategies into society, in political terms of participating and monitoring institutions and processes (Note 17). Within the educational environment, the reinforcement of political deliberation along with the concurrent reduction of leading experts and messianism (Note 18) attitudes are sought after, as the latter are reinforced through monitoring by educational system carriers, enhancing formal or informal types of violence. According to Freud (Note 19), it could be said that the educational truth is imposed by using any form of power, and, in political terms, systems of power are legalized along with the concurrent cancellation of democratic interaction processes. Thus, amidst a crisis period, with limited resources (Note 20), the policy of rights is enfeebled, while the opportunities redistribution is restricted for lower social strata.

It is evident that the issue of participation is crucial because it presupposes involvement in processes, joint responsibility, avoiding co-optation in individuality. Therefore, an education policy in common experience is required, so that, from a psychological point of view, fear is avoided and, from a social point of view, integration into society is pursued, despite the expected danger, pain and challenges

(Sennett, 1996). At this point, reference should be made to enhanced forms of deliberation (Note 21) on all levels of educational processes so as to construct a reinforcing system for citizens' society by restoring the debate about justice and humanism.

Nowadays, even if reference is made to a liberal form of education, schools operation is one-dimensional and is based on the restricting legal framework, which forms formal or informal leaderships with absolute devolution of non-controlled powers. Both teachers and students are trapped within an operation model in which their social rights have been informally deputed, as they have been transformed into performers of a group of responsibilities. In this respect, students have become the "consumers" of useful knowledge (Note 22) to be used only for examination purposes, while teachers have been disdained within an educational system in which they act as marginalized and enfeebled entities, amidst fluidity, with vague aims and objectives. At the same time, the education process moves on randomly, eventually aligned with the broader context of a mandated disorganization of the political system.

3. Rerecording Educational Principles in Education

It is clear that the economic crisis brings two crucial implications for the democratic policy: the subversion of the citizens' economic and political possibility to define their present and future and the consequent concession of their political participation as well as the political institutions disdain. Amidst an economic crisis period the enlargement of political inequality (Note 23) is observed because the economically inactive citizens, unemployed or semi-employed people are marginalized and gradually lose their possibility as citizens to control institutions and to vindicate democracy based on their standpoints and stances. By unwillingly ceasing to secure the democratic function the political and social inequality is reinforced through the intensification of insecurity and uncertainty (Note 24).

Within such an environment a decomposition of ideological differences is observed resulting in the manipulation of the situation by the right political wings, formulating and legalizing violent reactions, totalitarian formations and cancellation of democracy. Education acquires a significant role because in difficult economic and political conditions it is invited to argue for democracy, freedom and equality (Note 25) by making democratic principles apropos, arming the institutions' democratic function, formulating principles and standpoints conducive to the cancellation of the ideological and political content of the extreme right political parties that project their principles as "natural" and politically correct.

Education should work on four levels: a) formulation of the theoretical discourse to defend the societies' democratic function, b) development of conflicting discourse based on argumentation against the totalitarian models of organizing the societies and managing the citizens, c) utilization of history on the basis of a comparative approach between past and present, and d) systematic teaching of the democratic principles through the subject of citizen's education (Note 26).

It is observed that the educational system ought to confront the risk of political indifference as well as the risk of acceptance or legalization of the extreme right parties' standpoints. As a result, through the critical

reading of the social and political changes, reference could be made to the restructuring of democratic discourse in education with a concurrent reinforcement of the same democratic principles with the function of school. The educational community should re-invest on the democratic ideals and institutions and re-orientate individuals towards the systems' democratic function (Note 27).

As regards the educational system, the co-operation among teachers-students and broader groups of population is deemed imperative so that the value of participatory action, the value of freedom and structured political discourse are perceived by all the participants, students mainly, by associating the model of democratic function with the superior form of the societies' organization that permits individuals to invest on freedom and equality (Note 28).

At the same time, properly selected chapters of History (Note 29) will reinforce the procedure of the students' political participation (Note 30) in the school boards and the action committees because the principles of democracy will be projected comparatively to the framework of function related to totalitarian regimes. More specifically, the actual principles and standpoints of fascism along with its consequences upon the individual and societies will be presented, mainly in the case of the Second World War. Giving information, utilizing the society of knowledge and new technologies will all be conducive to the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary approach of fascism and political totalitarianism placing emphasis on the phenomena of violence, inequality, counter-freedom, disdain of human personality and racism (Note 31) which are developed when the extreme right parties become politically strong and cancel the democratic institutions (Note 32).

Even though the educational system faces the economic crisis effect—as expenditures on education are falling, schools are being merged or suppressed, the material infrastructure is shrunk and the educational force is reduced—it is invited to assume a role by assisting the country to recover through the provision of useful knowledge conducive to innovation and development. In the political field, education should be conducive to reinforcing democracy so that citizens-natives and migrants—co-operate towards the development of financial conditions and during this ordeal, to prevent situations of confuting democratic principles, racism and political intimidation that eventually cancel humanism, equality and opportunities structures policies in favor of individuals and societies.

The educational system, through the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary approach, is able to form cognitive fields, teachers' historic-political information so that they are not encircled within an adoption of extreme right political choices. On the contrary, their menace should be transformed into a moving force of defending democratic principles and standpoints opening for the state the way towards development of welfare policies for the benefit of lower social strata, so that education along with the political system become collaborators in overcoming the economic crisis and preventing political crisis.

3. From Theory to Practice about Education

It is made well-understood that, contrary to the bureaucratic model of education—which emphasized rational behaviors, despite disdaining education—a more flexible model is suggested. According to it, people are operationally dependent. At the same time, political participation and integration are conducive to deconstructing the obsolete educational model, while micro-social factors are underpinned in favor of the maneuvers, even within the suffocating bureaucratic system. In other words, the concept of power is rephrased, as the educational community—with repetitive, participatory, planned in advance actions—invents and reinforces a form of “democracy of experiences”. This is about a different version of political culture, in which individuals—groups and collectivities of the educational environment expand possibilities, redefine the educational process, re-utilize structures and operational relations which include democratic patterns in an internal settlement of procedural democratic structures.

It is noteworthy that in the model suggested hereby, the educational system is released from introversion, eventually generating conditions of contacting society and benefiting from proposals made by people and carriers outside the educational environment. This is exactly how the democratic principle of reinforcing individuals’ equality is conceptualized through fragmenting issues and assembling the Discourse of others, being trained to get involved with institutions by bridging the gap and mitigating the bias of participatory opportunities. In other words, political discourse dissemination is put forward, in which the political is redefined through people’s everyday life, contrary to the dominant political system which conceptualizes democracy in terms of voting for the elections and indirect representation. Thus, from a democratic point of view, people redefine themselves based on a policy of rights.

The afore-mentioned operations are conducive to forming a system of structures, operations and relations which should be associated with a theoretical model that puts forward democracy in the curriculum and various school subjects, even informally in students’ everyday life and in classrooms, in order to surpass the fear of diversity, insecurity, violence and the disdain of the political subject. Education about democracy aims to bring back, in the form of choice, education about coexistence, especially amidst a time period characterized by fragile economic, political and social conditions and a fluid value framework. The democratic operation within educational areas aims to deconstruct authoritative solutions and enforcements against disciplinary models, generating the concept of “we” in which social inequality is not underestimated. Furthermore, benefits for the lower social strata are maximized since they are noticeable in the educational environment and benefit from opportunities structures, generated within the regular operation of democracy, not in the form of philanthropic actions, but of civil rights to which people are entitled as citizens.

It is obvious that education about democracy generates experience for all social strata within a model of political morale based on interaction and security, which makes coexistence feasible, while it reduces conflicts, especially during times of economic deregulation and value insecurity. Adjustment to an insecure and uncertain system towards deregulation and anomy is what education should definitely avoid at present.

Should it be misled and operate within the disintegrated political values, it is certain that “zero” education will be generated, to recycle ready cognitive packages in an educational setting without political subjects, since privacy and disdained institutions will maximize deregulation (Note 33), inequality and, eventually, will condescend education itself. At this point a question to the educational community is posed, as to whether they wish to be the enfeebled ones of the system, not those ones merely experiencing uncertainty, but those who, through their educational role, will manage and instrumentally reinforce the deterioration of a situation towards a new generation of people who will act privately, reinforcing any form of power through their passivity, silence and ignorance.

4. Conclusion

This article focused on the concept of political education or the concept of the political in education in an attempt to redefine the same aims and objectives of education. Although students’ transformation into political subjects is vaguely mentioned in the aims and objectives, the concept of democracy is absent or defined in one-dimensional manner as procedural political act selected to serve certain purposes. In other words, democracy is not associated with individuals’ everyday practice and their participation in collectivities. On the contrary, the policy seems to be assigned to certain entities that form an operational model based on their own rules and principles. This is enhanced through vagueness and limited perception about both its role and dynamics in the society.

Given the above reasoning, education naturalizes and legalizes, either formally or informally, the distance between the political subjects, agents of power, and the others, the recipients of legal or illegal violence, and the imposing power. A postmodern perception of education would primarily be based on the demystification and naturalization of power stemming from political subjects, creating broader fields of rational, democratic operation within a vision a good order. In this framework, throughout the formation and realization of decision, individuals would assume a “decisive” attitude that would help them overcome insecurity and uncertainty, namely the psycho-social situations in which the political status quo is politically disputed.

A favorable environment for the rise of extreme right political wings is being formulated by the economic crisis in Greece. Within a period of canceling personal goals, social and national pursuits, citizens seem to doubt upon the political institutions, to be marginalized while the proper ground to support the development of the extreme right political discourse is generated. Education could play a crucial role in such a formulated situation by assuming the responsibility to educate individuals on the basis of democratic principles, to prevent privatization, to reinforce the participatory action and to encourage citizens, mainly the young, to actively and politically participate in and contribute towards the promotion and reinforcement of democratic principles. It seems necessary for the citizens to co-formulate democratic requests, to redefine their relation to politics and the demand for equality so that the policy of rights becomes again an issue of the political agenda.

To recapitulate, reinforcing democracy and studying the principles and standpoints at present is a

one-way route for the educational community that should be released from the stigma of alienation, marginalization and deconstruction of political rights (Note 34). Given that U. Beck emphasizes individual solutions chosen by people involved in systemic contradictions, education is expected to play a different role through a policy attached to a context of current economic and social components, by reformulating the teacher-student relations. Thus, there will be a transfer from chimeric to viable relations, eliminating the outworn image of democratic values. At this point, it is imperative to mention the reinforced far right trends within schools (Note 35), tied to the entire model of eliminating democratic values, legalizing violence and authoritative forms of power. The main objective is to approach schools as a place for democracy in which where its objectives could be fulfilled—instead of a reaction, within circumscribed differentiated intentions, by encouraging people to socialize within a participatory policy of discourse and reaction.

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Notes

Note 1. See (indicatively) Issues for economic, political and cultural dimensions of the economic crisis and how the economic crisis generated negative effects to individuals and society. The comparative data are of special interest referring to the prior-to-crisis and during-crisis periods with special

emphasis on embarrassment, uncertainty and insecurity following the crisis (Vradis & Dalakoglou, 2011; Liargovas, 2012; Lynn, 2010; Manopoulos, 2011; Mazower, 1991).

Note 2. See (indicatively) Latest data by the Greek Statistics Association and corresponding carriers. <http://www.bloko.gr/ellada/institoyto-ergasias-ths-gsee-sto-29-h-anergia-to-2013-pinakes.html>

Note 3. See (analytically) about the irrational development of economy until the economic crisis and how the political parties' economic choices were conducive to the economic crisis (Mitsopoulos & Pelagidis, 2012).

Note 4. See (indicatively) about the role of Germany on imposing financial measures to the South-European countries and more generally how the policy of frugality and its implications on the international financial system is formulated, Krugman (2009).

Note 5. See (indicatively) about the development of the policy of rights in different countries and analytical data on the action of international organization and nation-states in the formulation of special sets of rights (Weissbrodt et al., 2009).

Note 6. See (indicatively) about the development of a welfare state model and its functionality towards the reinforcement of political rights (Castles et al., 2012; Palmer, 2012).

Note 7. See (indicatively) about the possibility of social mobility in democratic societies and how this is constructed on the basis of opportunity structures for individuals and the redistribution of rights (Morgan, Grusky, & Fields, 2011; Kerbo, 2011).

Note 8. See (indicatively) the study about the rise of the extreme right political parties and the dynamics developed in the European territory, Mudde (2007).

Note 8. See (indicatively) about the political consequences of the economic crisis and especially about issues of confuting the political rights (Macedo, 2005; Yeh-Yun Lin et al., 2012).

Note 9. See (indicatively) about the reinforcement of the extreme right political parties and the ideologies of populism and nationalism formulated within a crisis period and which are adopted by the extreme right.

Note 10. Quote. According to U. Beck, when uncertainty as well as a political and social setting of contradictions and capsizing emerge, individuals concentrate on personal meanings and choices (Beck, 1992).

Note 11. Quote. In a postmodern situation, reality is conceptualized in terms of efficacy, knowledge commercialization and focusing on a euphoric present (Lyotard, 2008; Lipovetsky, 2010).

Note 12. According to Z. Bauman, the underclass is "a vivid representation of nothing in which people can be pushed, fall or descend. The desperate position of these ones belonging to the 'underclass' is irreversible and irreparable".

Note 13. See (indicatively) about the model of consumer society, as it had been formed prior to the economic crisis, as value and systemic situation in western societies (Ritzer, 2001).

Note 14. See (indicatively) about the connection between democratic institutions disdain and the imposed economic crisis (Alivizatos, 2013).

Note 15. See (indicatively) about the promotion of democratic principles in the school environment with emphasis on forming a culture of democracy in education (Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1998).

Note 16. See (indicatively) a theory about school operation as a democratic cell, allocating work and responsibilities conducive to socialization within a democratic environment (Blankstein & Houston, 2011).

Note 17. See (analytically) about the operation ability of participatory and pluralistic institutions with corresponding concern whether democracy disdain and anomic phenomena can be prevented (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

Note 18. See (indicatively) about the correlation of power, authority and messianism in the political system in the form of far right political components (Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005).

Note 19. See (indicatively) about the imposing power as a means of formulating “truth” in order to manipulate the individual (Freud, 2012).

Note 20. See (indicatively) a modern perspective about the policy of rights with emphasis on a new field of framing (Dworkin, 2013, pp. 379-400).

Note 21. The suggestions about reinforcing forms of viewpoints direct exchange within an open deliberation process (Habermas, 1991, pp. 181-222).

Note 22. Quote. M. Gauchet contends about the existence of school consumerism in and out of school with study courses and extracurricular activities (Gauchet, 2016).

Note 23. See (indicatively) about the issue of social inequality and how the societies’ organization is affected through the generation of extreme phenomena conducive to political instability (Stiglitz, 2013; Keister & Southgate, 2012).

Note 24. See (indicatively) about the insecurity and uncertainty as they are formulated by the capitalist system conducive to marginalization and isolation (Bauman, 2000; Sennett, 2007).

Note 25. See (indicatively) about the role of education towards the reinforcement of democratic principles through special programs of familiarizing the students with the advantages of democratic organization in the societies (Roemer, 2006; Allen & Reich, 2013).

Note 26. See (indicatively) Issues of democratic education (Calogiannakis & Eleftherakis, 2012; Eleftherakis, 2011).

Note 27. See (indicatively) Issues of political integration and participation (Friedrich, 2011; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007).

Note 28. See (indicatively) Issues of democratic education and democratic school community (Kourkoutas, Eleftherakis, Vitalaki, & Hart, 2015; Eleftherakis, 2011).

Note 29. See (indicatively) about the history of formulating political and national awareness in modern democratic societies (Carretero, Anensio, & Rodriguez-Moneo, 2012).

Note 30. See (indicatively) about education in the political participation within a dynamic citizens’ society who co-operate and define a common future (VanSledright, 2010; VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007).

Note 31. See (indicatively) how racism is formulated and its implications to the opportunities structure

(Lipsitz, 2011).

Note 32. See (indicatively) about the evolution of democratic institutions and they are associated with the societies progress and the development of political systems with emphasis on humanism and equality (Olsen, 2010; Macedo, 2005).

Note 33. Reference is made to inequality among nations and citizens within them (Firebaugh, 2003).

Note 34. According to Bourdieu (2006) teachers could perhaps interfere in the political field as intellectuals. If they wish to remain autonomous for themselves within the educational community, they can contribute to authority control.

Note 35. See (indicatively) recent researches about educational community issues relevant to the far right wing, along with more general issues tied to the far right party of “Golden Dawn” about education (Kalerante, 2013a; Kalerante, 2013b).