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The Balkan peoples in the analytical history programs of compulsory education in Greece

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Abstract

The text examines the presence and role of the Balkan peoples in the History Curricula of compulsory education in Greece. Initially, the structure, philosophy and categories of objectives of the Curricula (cognitive, emotional, psychomotor) are analyzed, as well as the factors that influence their composition (social, political, cultural, etc.). The Greek history curriculum is then described, which follows an ethnocentric approach, with an emphasis on Greek history and limited reference to other Balkan peoples. The material is organized based on the triptych of "ancient", "Byzantine" and "modern history" and uses the spiral teaching method. It is also analyzed how at the various levels of education (Primary, Middle School, High School) selective and often one-sided references are made to the Balkan peoples, which reinforce the supremacy of the Greek identity. The text concludes that Greek education maintains ethnocentric characteristics and resists the integration of modern approaches to historical research and history teaching.

Keywords: Balkan peoples; Compulsory education; Ethnocentrism; Spiral method; Educational policy; Byzantine history;

1. Introduction

The essence of a detailed program (curriculum) is not easy to describe, because the elements with which it is composed and the relationship between them, depends on the sections it includes and its content (Matsangouras, 1997:53). The syllabus expresses the selection and organization of official school knowledge, as well as the educational philosophy that governs it (Reppas, 2007:17). In fact, by the term syllabus we mean the lesson plan, the material to be taught, as well as the activities that the students should develop (Flouris, 1983:9).

2. Curriculums

The educational objectives of the curriculums are divided into three categories: cognitive, emotional and psychomotor. Cognitive objectives include the categories of knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Krathwohl, 2002:212-213). Emotional goals cannot be precisely defined, because there are overt behaviors, but also feelings that are not visible. Consequently, types of behavior that correspond to specific goals cannot be defined (Bloom & Krathwohl, 1986:27). Finally, the psychomotor objectives have to do with the skills that each student develops in the various activities that he must develop at school.

Each curriculum is created according to the imperatives and needs of its time and, naturally, expresses the economic, social, spiritual, cultural and political realities of life itself. It also moves in this reality, and in essence, the curriculum expresses the goals that society sets for the formation of people, which it aims to achieve through education (Pinar, 2004 ref. Koutselinis-Ioannidou, 2013:19 -20).

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The structure of the analytical programs is also expressed through their study, which reveals the social, philosophical and political influences they received, both locally and globally (Koutselinis-Ioannidou, 2013:22).

Modern curriculums are a mixture of philosophical and sociological discourse, follow the findings of psychology and seek to humanize cold rationality. For this reason, they can be easily changed and adapted appropriately, so that they are efficient for the students, while they are not closely related to the textbook (Koutselinis-Ioannidou, 2013:19).

The construction of an analytical program is based on a schematic diagram which provides a basis for philosophical, sociological, technological, scientific, political, cultural, as well as economic criteria (Hatzigeorgiou, 1998 ref. Koutselinis-Ioannidou, 2013:19; Chrysafidis, 1997:77). Thus, each branch of science contributes in its own way to their efficient design.

In more detail, philosophical criteria unite education with life, knowledge and society, extending the work of education. Sociological criteria focus their interest on the connection that society has with the school as well as on the role of the individual in its development. The psychological criteria in which way and in which areas education can be efficient, for students to develop their skills. Technological criteria encourage the use of new technologies in teaching as they improve learning and strengthen the possibility of information exchange (Vouglanis, 2020; 2023; 2024; 2025; Vouglanis & Drigas, 2022; Vouglanis & Driga, 2023; 2024; Vouglanis, & Raftopoulos, 2023; Vouglanis & Salapata, 2024; Vouglanis, Driga, & Drigas, 2022). The scientific criteria show the structure of the programme, i.e. its themes and ideas. Political criteria reflect real life and present-day conditions, while emphasizing the goals aimed at by the education process. The cultural criteria incorporate elements of culture (values, customs, institutions, etc.), on which the educational system is based (Koutselinis-Ioannidou, 2013:20-20).

A syllabus can be closed or open. Regarding the first category (teacher proof curriculum), a syllabus is drawn up that follows the traditional approach, "the sequence of contents", or a pattern provided by a "logical" approach to the subject (module). However, in this way it weakens and hinders the teacher's ability to interact with the subject. The concept of closed syllabi has been heavily criticized as they devalue the teacher while limiting their ability to organize their planning around the content or knowledge they want to impart. In addition, in this way the school cannot shape the teaching package of the particular class. In contrast, the open curriculum is favorably received because it meets the needs of the students. At the same time, it provides the teacher with the possibility to shape the content of the teaching subjects, as well as to set and implement the objectives of the teaching unit according to the needs and interests of the students (Chrysafidis, 1997:79-83; Vrettos & Kapsalis 2001: 79-84).

In the history syllabuses, the arrangement of the material follows the spiral method. In this way, knowledge is enriched and gradually broadened by level but based on the previous knowledge background. Thus, the interaction between different levels is possible since the student initially knows concepts and ideas and can then delve into them. Based on this method, the history taught in 5th Primary and 2nd High School focuses on the Byzantine period, while that of 6th Primary and 3rd High School focuses on modern Greek history.

The current syllabus in our country has the logic of closed syllabuses and the final course is determined by the way the teacher will take advantage of the practical guide (the teacher's book) through which the final stage of the transformation is implemented.

This process is due to a series of general and specific factors, which, depending on the case, exert a catalytic influence on the formation of the syllabi. The general factors include the culture, civilization and tradition of each state, its historical course, natural resources, the regime that prevails at the political level, religion as well as economic and technological development. It is readily apparent that broad objectives can have a great influence because of the wide scope they cover. For example, in a state that has a particular official religion it is reasonable that the majority of the syllabus will be focused on it, even if there are references to other religions as well. The special factors include those responsible for drawing up and planning the educational policy, the teachers, the students themselves, and even the influence exerted by their parents (Flouris, 1983:52). For example, if a syllabus includes elements to which public opinion, including parents, reacts strongly, then this can have a significant influence on the shaping of the syllabus in order to avoid backlash.

3. Detailed History programs

The history lesson for primary and secondary school students aims to enable students to ask questions and think analytically, but at the same time to be interested in the past of their country (Palikidis, 2009:52-53). In addition, extra-educational factors intervene in the teaching of History. Alongside the direct influence of political thought, the History course is heavily influenced by the ideas advocated by religion, but also by social and cultural norms, while the role of the state in the selection of authors and the writing of textbooks remains decisive.

The technical part of the publication of the textbooks until 2012 was held by the Organization for the Publication of Teaching Books (OEBD) until it was abolished (Law 3966/2011). Subsequently, this role was taken over by the Institute of Computer Technology and Publications "DIOFANTOS" (ITIE - Diophantos) and in particular the Publications Directorate established in the summer of 2011. However, the planning of the analytical programs was done by the Pedagogical Institute in accordance with Law 1566 /85 while the content of the textbooks was shaped by the Pedagogical Institute until 2012 and then by the Institute of Educational Policy (I.E.P.).

The Greek education system attaches special importance to national history. This is also the reason why references to the Balkan peoples in history textbooks are limited to events related to Greece only. Throughout school education, historical material is organized on the basis of the tripartite scheme ("ancient", "Byzantine" and "newer history") established at the end of the 19th century by Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, without essentially changing the purpose and distribution of material in school classes (Mavroskoufis, 1997:62). What is valid to this day is the spiral repetition of the historical material in the three school levels (Elementary – Middle – High – High). In other words, the same thematic periods, such as the Byzantine period, are studied for the first time in elementary school, but their teaching continues in the following school levels in a more expanded way (Palikidis, 2009:33).

In the last grades of elementary school (E' & 6'), the subject matter of the detailed history programs is different from each other, i.e. different periods are taught in each grade. In the 5th grade, starting with the Roman Empire, he follows the course of Christianity until its establishment as an official religion, expands to the study of the Byzantine state, its relations with other peoples and especially the neighbors and follows its prosperity and decline (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Curriculum Framework, 2003).

In the 6th grade, the program focuses on the modern era, starting with the fall of Constantinople. Starting from there, he traces the fate of Hellenism up to the revolution of 1821, in an attempt to determine the factors that led to the establishment of the Greek national state. It also includes references to the important events and developments that took place in Greece but also worldwide during the 19th and, mainly, the 20th century (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Study Programs, 2003).

While elementary school curricula, as can be seen from their content, examine historical events more generally and summarily, the same is not true of high school curricula. This is because of the spiral method. In elementary school, the facts are listed in general and summary, while in the other school levels, they are more detailed so that the student can delve even deeper based on the initial knowledge he has acquired. The detailed program of the 2nd grade of the Gymnasium also focuses on Byzantium, but in more detail, dividing the Byzantine period into three periods: first centuries, heyday, and decline. In addition to Byzantium, however, it examines the other powers that began to develop worldwide, such as the Islamic East and the European West, reaching the modern times of Europe (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Study Programs, 2003).

Accordingly, in the syllabus of the 3rd grade of the High School, the history of Greece is examined in the general context of approaching European history. According to the syllabus, the beginnings of modern times are placed in the French revolution and the new ideas it brought, influencing in this way developments throughout Europe, including Greece, from the Greek revolution onwards. The same happens in the rest of the content of the syllabus covering the 20th century, according to which the developments in Greece and Europe are examined interrelatedly and not separately (Study Syllabus/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Study Programs, 2003).

4. The modern Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified History Curriculum Framework of History

According to the Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified History Curriculum Framework, the history course seeks to develop historical thinking and consciousness. The teaching of history at every educational level expects the continuous renewal of the students' attention to the historical past and to historical memory, so that through the

teaching the student can shape a personality of conscientious citizens while strengthening their judgement. With the same logic, the axes, the overall goals and the cross-curricular concepts for each class of Primary and Secondary Education, the purpose, the units, the activities proposed as well as the programs for all classes are presented.

Then, the principles of the teaching methodology of the course are described, according to which the History course is considered as a necessary means that contributes to the successful formation of children and to learning (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Curriculum Framework, 2003). According to the authors of the Analytical Program, this course provides important knowledge for the student to understand and learn how society works. The authors argue that the process followed in each teaching unit helps students to learn alongside the historical events and some concepts and principles that they can compare and then draw useful conclusions (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Common Curriculum Framework, 2003).

In the course students interact and participate more and do not just expect the guidance of the teacher. This process requires the use of modern teaching methods. These include working with a research plan on an individual or group level, the formulation of research questions, the experiential method, the research of sources, the systematization with exercises of representing historical events, etc. (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Study Programs, 2003). In each chapter, the students are taught the historical events and at the same time learn the following (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Curriculum Framework, 2003):

- Understand serious historical concepts, such as colony, invasion, conquest, conflict, slavery, enslavement, civil war, myth, etc.
- Have the ability to connect concepts, incidents, situations and be able to draw general conclusions.

In the elementary school history syllabus it is noted that students, in addition to everything else, must:

- "To be informed about the social, cultural, religious and national differences of the societies they study.
- To understand and accept cultural, religious or other differences as a fundamental right of people in a democratic society and as a positive factor in its development.
- To acquire national consciousness, love for their country and a disposition for peaceful coexistence, cooperation and mutual understanding with the neighboring peoples" (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Study Programs, 2003: 188).

The same applies to the high school curriculum where one of its goals is:

- "To form, through the study of individual cultures and their contribution to world culture, a spirit of moderation, tolerance and respect for the different" (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Study Programs, 2003:214).

From the above it is reasonable to conclude that the presentation of the Balkan peoples in school textbooks must be within the framework and objectives set by the syllabus. However, this is not entirely accurate, since as will be shown below, the image of the Balkan peoples in the textbooks is not only not positive, but on the contrary, it moves towards highlighting the superiority of the Greeks.

5. The Balkan peoples in the current curriculum

In the current comprehensive history curriculum for both Primary and High School, there is limited reference to the Balkan peoples. More specifically:

In the detailed history program of the 5th grade of the Primary School in a total of 51 teaching units, the Balkan peoples are mentioned only in the following seven units: The Byzantine state and the neighboring peoples, The "neighbors" of the Byzantines, Byzantium Christianizes the Slavs, Friendly relations and conflicts with the Bulgarians and the Russians, The Ottoman Turks conquer Byzantine lands, The Turks besiege Constantinople, The fall of Constantinople by the Turks.

In the detailed history program of the 6th grade in a total of 60 teaching units there are several references to the Balkan peoples. This is because it examines, firstly, the Ottoman era, secondly, the peoples conquered by the sultans and, thirdly, the decline and dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The sections dealing with Balkan peoples are as follows: The Ottoman Empire, Its Strength and Weaknesses, Ottoman Conquerors Granting "Privileges" to Ragiades, Rigas and His Balkan Vision, The "Eastern Question" in the Balkan Peninsula, The Macedonian Struggle, The movement of the Young

Turks (1908) and the movement in Goudi (1909) change the political scene, The Balkan wars, a great Greek success, Greece in the First World War (Analytical Curriculum/ Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Programs Studies, 2003).

In the syllabus of the 2nd grade of the High School, reference is also made to the Balkan peoples. In the section "Peoples around the Byzantine state during the Middle Ages", reference is made to the Slavs and the Bulgarians, as well as to the relations of these peoples with Byzantium. It is interesting that the syllabus provides the possibility for the teacher to ask the students to write a work plan on the topic: The Christianization of the Balkan peoples and the Russians (Syllabus/Interdisciplinary Curriculum Framework, 2003).

The detailed curriculum of the 3rd grade of the High School and, in particular, the section "The crisis of the 'old regime' and the formation of the New Europe (18th - 19th century)", provides the opportunity for children to study the genesis of nation-states of Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, as well as Greece's contacts and interconnections with the Balkan states (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Curricula, 2003). In the section "Europe and the world in the first half of the 20th century", the detailed program foresees the reference to the diplomatic contacts and alliances of the Balkan states, as well as to the negative results that the Young Turks movement had for Greece. The aim is for the students to be informed and get to know the most important events of the Balkan Wars. Also, the children are informed about the diplomatic activities and initiatives of the Greek Prime Minister El. Venizelos and the Balkan alliances he concluded, seeking the maximum benefits for Greece (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Curricula, 2003).

In the section "The post-war world" students are invited to study contemporary historical events, but also to learn to consider with great care all the elements, consequences and results of the socio-political and territorial changes that occurred in the Balkan Peninsula after the fall of the socialist regimes. Finally, it is planned that they will be taught the internal and external policy of Greece during the same period (Analytical Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Study Programs, 2003).

In conclusion, we stress the importance of all digital technologies in the field of education and curriculum development. These technologies are highly effective and productive and facilitate and improve assessment, intervention, and educational procedures through mobile devices that bring educational activities anywhere [33-36], various ICTs applications that are the main supporters of education [37-43], and AI, STEM, and ROBOTICS [44-49] that raise educational procedures to new performance levels. Furthermore, the development and integration of ICTs with theories and models of metacognition, mindfulness, meditation, and the development of emotional intelligence [50-66], accelerates and improves educational practices and results more than those, curriculum and ethnicity education.

6. Conclusions

The Greek education system remains ethnocentric. Syllabus, no matter how contested, monopolize the presumption of validity, if not authority, in the minds of the majority of educators. Based on this, almost all of their educational activity is planned and prepared. Especially the analytical programs of History are considered to be, or at least should be, carriers of the "official" narrative, that is, the one that responds to national stereotypes and ideologies and should not "destroy" them, but instead reinforce them. History is perhaps the only subject in the Greek school, which stubbornly refuses to integrate the achievements of the last decades in the fields of historical research, Greek and international, as well as the Teaching of History.

Compliance with ethical standards

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The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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