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Presenting the Greeks of Diaspora through the Project method

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Abstract

The present paper is concerned with students' sensitization about the Greeks abroad who are introduced through the Project method to reinforce national awareness, especially during an economic crisis period when the economic choices followed by Greece are disapproved. The dynamics of the Greek communities abroad towards the economic and cultural development of the countries of reception and the concurrent enhancement of their bonds with Greece are pinpointed. The contact between the Greek native students and the offspring of the Greeks abroad is pursued towards an exchange of viewpoints, considerations and information about issues of politics, economy and culture. As a result, they all have a sense of solidarity in an expanded Greece encompassing the Greeks' communities abroad. History and the History of Civilization are utilized to present this topic through the Project method. This way, emphasis is placed on migration, national identity, solidarity and the dynamics developed by the population mobility in the globalized societies. The Project method forms the suitable ground to cultivate and develop such objectives. Thus, students will formulate perceptions and examine the specific issues from a different perspective. A combination of theoretical issues of nationalism with a post-modern narration about nationalism in the globalized societies is conducted, where the national identity is reinforced and the citizens' role in the globalized societies is not overlooked.

Key words: the Greeks of Diaspora, historical continuation, culture, globalization

1 Introduction

"Migration" can be defined as the temporary or permanent change of the place of residence and work of individuals or groups of people being a special demographic process. Reference is actually made to human mobility which is a dynamic and full of diversity process as change depends on the corresponding social, economic, political and environmental factors as well as time coincidences. Thus, the reasons of migration differ depending on the demands of the particular era and are due to the people's low livelihood level, national wars and environmental disasters as well as to the current globalized labor market (Stikoudi, 2011:5).

Migration, as a phenomenon, is present throughout the whole course of human history as even from antiquity people change the place of their residence in order to find new materials necessary to their everyday life or to improve their livelihood level. Besides, mobility and pursue of anything new are integral parts of the human nature. The discovery of new lands, namely America and Australia, prior to the industrial era formed the starting point of the migration influx as significantly enormous groups of people were moving from Europe towards the New World, Africa and Oceania in order to disseminate the European culture, civilization and religion but, mainly, to develop commerce and create new entrepreneurial channels between Europe and the new destinations.

Geographers were the first ones to involve themselves with the issue of migration since people's displacement is tied to moving through geographical areas and crossing boundaries

between countries. They found that emerging opportunities in certain places which lead to improving the lifestyle were the pole of attraction for many people. Furthermore, economists have argued that people migrate in order to seek opportunities like being more productive (Liang, 2006).

The migration influx is even more strongly boosted by the industrial era as the increased need for human labor force is widely apparent, especially in industry-blooming areas such as the USA, Australia and South Africa. The immigrants' presence at the new places of residence as well as their evolving course of life are characterized by dynamics as they form the major pivot of the local economy and the cornerstone of the developing global economy (Hirschman & Mogford, 2009:897-920).

There is apparently a reciprocal relationship between economy and migration as the migration influx is enhanced by the labor market needs for abundant and low-waged labor force. Thus, the economic and social history of a place is determined not only by natives but by immigrants as well since their developing activity is crucially conducive to the economic and social development of that place (Hellenic Migration Policy Institute, 2005:5-6).

Along with migration the phenomenon of Diaspora is also observed and is defined as the total of expatriates of a country settling to another country maintaining, however, emotional, cultural and material relations with their homeland. The course of the Greek migration influx and Diaspora has a long history and is divided into three major time periods. The first period is related to the years of the Turkish occupation, the second one corresponds to the period between the establishment of the independent Greek state and the 2nd World War and the third one corresponds to the years after the end of the war until nowadays (Leze, 2000:42-50).

The Greeks are intensely present at the new places of residence as they are deterministically conducive to the economic development of that place as well as to the flourishing of literature, arts and sciences. Their course of struggle is not easy at all as they experience difficulties in adjusting to the foreign land in terms of language, local culture, way of living and being accepted by the natives. The feeling of isolation prevails since they are away from their homeland and are encountered with suspicion while, in other cases, they are exposed to xenophobic, racist or discriminatory behaviors.

Despite the difficulties of integration, they eventually manage to organize themselves through the establishment of associations and communities in order to serve both themselves and the newcomers in terms of settlement, living and their gradual adjustment to the country of reception (Vogli, 2011:661-671). The church is responsible for these associations which may also be of local nature (Association of Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace etc.). The communities, on the other hand, support the cohesion of immigrants of the same nationality through the dissemination of culture, language and the association to the homeland since the use of the Greek language is in decay in the countries of reception and there is not reciprocal contact with Greece. Within this framework Greek-speaking schools are established conducive to spreading Greek language and civilization as well as to the preservation and continuation of the second and third generation immigrants' national identity (Tamis, 2009:1-19).

The activation generated by the Greeks of Diaspora in terms of their cohesion and preservation of national awareness seems to be a single-sided process as the Greek-speaking schools are not sufficiently supported by the Greek educational policy to this direction, resulting in cutting the channels of communication and the enfeebling of ties to the Greek culture (KAPA RESEARCH, 2007:14).

In this respect, the implementation of a Project by the Lyceum students in relation to the Greeks abroad could function as an inter-school bridge of communication as students contact the Greeks abroad, a reciprocal relationship between each other is generated in which they get

to know the others' way of living. Furthermore, the Greeks abroad are given the opportunity to articulate their stances and viewpoints about their ancestors' homeland, to develop their national awareness through the linguistic communication and to indulge into the Greek culture and civilization. On the other hand, the students being assigned the implementation of the Project will be more sensitized on issues related to the Greeks of the Diaspora and will be able to disseminate more elements of language, history, civilization and tradition, the four basic pivots of historical continuation and cohesion of the Greeks.

2 The Project Method: a theoretical framework

The specific method was established theoretically in the book *The Project Method* by William Kilpatrick in 1918. More specifically, it is mentioned that this method is suitable for instruction since students are given the opportunity to develop a sense of independence and responsibility and they are encouraged to adopt social and democratic forms of behavior.

Kilpatrick was influenced by the experiential theory, according to which children acquire knowledge and experiences through solving practical problems of everyday life. It is noteworthy that Kilpatrick was also influenced by the Psychology of Learning as it was formulated by Edward Thorndike (Webb & Beals, 1986). According to Thorndike's laws of learning an act is more likely to be repeated when it generates satisfaction. On the contrary, it is not repeated when feelings of dissatisfaction arise. Taking this standpoint as the starting point Kilpatrick found that a child's psychology is crucial to the process of learning. Thus, based on the belief that children should be free to decide what to do, encouragement and success in learning are developed in relation to the objectives set. The Project is apparently based on the pedagogical principle of collaboration, according to which there is a shift from teacher-student communication to student-student communication while the role of the teacher is supportive. Furthermore, experiential learning, natural development of qualities and collaboration are promoted. Learning incentives and creative thinking are activated and meta-cognitive skills are cultivated. Besides, students feel satisfied upon the completion of their work. Therefore, students potentially develop all their intellectual, communicative, social and methodological skills required to make them autonomous and self-regulated in their learning, since these qualities are necessary for their entire life. Individual work is aligned to collaborative work in the classroom as students receive stimuli from the combination of interdisciplinarity and group work which are conducive to improving their self-esteem (Matsagouras, 2011).

In addition, the opportunity of conducting a small scale research in combination to revelatory learning and creative thinking is provided by the Project Method. The effectiveness of teaching is evaluated by the project itself. Sharing information with the family, local community and broader world are characteristics of participatory education. Thus, students' interest is not confined merely to the content of learning but it is reinforced through the intellectual processing of data and the social manner of communicating and collaborating to acquire new knowledge.

The Project Method is a relatively new teaching approach in the Greek educational system and has been recently institutionalized as a 2-hours subject in the first two grades of the Lyceum. Moreover, based on the new draft of law about education, it is also introduced to the first grade of High School. Research work is part of the new policy about the New Lyceum according to the New Curriculum. Research work has been part of the Lyceum program since 2011, highlighting the educational policy tendency to change and introduction of new methods of instruction in Secondary Education. Students are aimed to work as young explorers who reach a common outcome on the basis of mutual collaboration. In this respect, a number of pedagogical principles are taken into account, namely investigatory learning,

interdisciplinary collaboration among teachers and group-collaborative learning with a differentiation of the teaching content and learning context (Matsaggouras, 2011:16).

It is a new and innovative teaching approach, supplementary to the traditional teaching model and is based on the experiential theory according to which students acquire knowledge and experiences when they are invited to solve practical everyday problems. In this manner, a feeling of responsibility and independence is developed while, at the same time, their social skills are cultivated and their democratic behavior is developed. According to Bruner children learn better and more substantially through self-actualization and initiatives undertaking and not through knowledge exclusively provided by the teacher (Trilianos, 2008:87).

Education could not be intact by the tremendous changes due to globalization, the rapid spread of new technologies and the internationalization of economy. In this context, the concepts of individual and collective acquire a new dimension through their reformation and adjustment to the new facts.

Through the implementation of a Project students are transformed into young explorers as they are involved in the searching and finding of bibliography, photographic and audiovisual material, under the teacher's assistance. At the same time, they assume responsibility in managing the material and composing the end product. In this respect Lifelong Learning is reinforced as the skills developed are necessary throughout their entire social and professional course.

It is noteworthy that, apart from the cognitive, the affective domain is also enhanced due to the fact that students learn to respect their peers and their demands, develop error-tolerance, while values and the important skills of co-operation and negotiation are cultivated (Matsaggouras, 2011:19-20). Therefore, the school micro-society serves as a means for them to gradually perceive the function of social structures.

Besides, through the implementation of a Project a school opening towards society is ventured as students are able to come closer to the broader society to carry out their work for which research in local libraries, associations or museums is required. Besides, they will be able to present the end product in a special school event which parents and local authorities' representatives will be invited to attend. On the grounds of this contact students' social learning is enhanced as it is correlated both with situations experienced by them as well as situations which will be encountered after their graduation and their integration into the citizens' society.

The Project Method is also beneficial in terms of associating different subjects of the Curriculum on the basis of interdisciplinary and cross-curricular approaches. As a consequence students approach knowledge from the various cognitive fields in a holistic manner through their interconnection and the multilateral comprehension of concepts.

Furthermore, through the aforementioned process, students develop a sense of belonging since in the form of groups they discover knowledge by turning learning into a part of their everyday life. On the other hand, passivity and over-accumulation of unproductive and sterile knowledge are shrunk. This is achieved through group-collaborative teaching which is also the prerequisite to successfully complete the Project. Groups are formed on the basis of the classroom Sociogram so that homogeneity in terms of academic performance and interpersonal relations is avoided (Hollander, 1978). They are expected to work and collaborate towards the entire benefit based on feelings of interdependence, interaction and mutual understanding, which are all necessary for a cohesive group (Zogopoulos, 2013:60-73).

The teacher's role, which is re-adjusted, is also of particular importance as a shift from the teacher-centered to the student-centered instructional model is observed. More analytically,

the teacher as a source of information and transmission of knowledge is diverted into a students' fellow-traveler towards the discovery of knowledge as he drives them towards the right outcome and solves, under pedagogical terms, any differences or conflicts arising in the groups. His detailed training is imperative as he is no longer the only source of knowledge for his students due to the plethora of information sources. Given the grounds that his students are initiated in the scientific research he should be able to orientate them properly in terms of finding, evaluating and utilizing the necessary material as well as the construction of questionnaires and interview guides according to the Project requirements.

3 The Project in action

The implementation of the Project is completed in five phases. Furthermore, time management is also crucial for the successful completion of the work. Phase 1 is concerned with teacher preparation. After the selection of the topic the teachers who collaborate to carry out the Project are orientated towards the approach and the structure of the issues so that they are able to present the corresponding activities to students. Within this framework, an association of the topic with the cognitive fields of the Curriculum, for which a cognitive background has been established by students, is carried out. The subjects involved to the implementation of the particular Project are History, History of Civilization, Geography, Literature and Foreign Languages. The teacher's accurate preparation through his personal research in bibliography is of major importance so that he is able to properly drive his students according to the Project requirements. In this respect a thorough investigation both in the school material and that one of the local libraries and a search in web sites and other data bases is carried out by the teacher. The use of the library is a means to promote and reinforce active learning, love for reading and Lifelong Learning within a continuously changing economic, social and educational environment by simultaneously reinforcing the humanistic nature of education (Kalerante, 2011:10-11). Moreover, the utilization of new technologies is imperative as a means of enriching the learning process, the holistic approach of knowledge and the global interaction within the educational community (Nikolidakis & Anastasopoulou, 2012:993-1003).

After having taken the Curriculum into account, the teacher is able to set, in collaboration with his students, explicit, comprehensible and achievable objectives as well as the corresponding evaluation criteria. Finally, the presentation of the end product should also be part of his concern as this is going to be uploaded on the Internet and presented in the school show; thus, it should be comprehensible to the audience.

During the second phase of the Project the classroom is prepared. Students are informed about the subject in question and the mode of work so that the planning is perceived as a particularly important stage which is related to the outcome pursued. Students' participation during planning is also important as it is conducive to their self-regulation in terms of their responsibilities. On the basis of the specific Project requirements the teacher should inform in detail his students about the stages of research, the material to be derived, sample-taking methods, creation of the interview guide, conducting interviews, transcription, the analysis and utilization of findings. The accurate time allocation and management is also a pivotal factor to successfully complete the venture.

The places of work are also defined in this phase, namely the classroom, school library, computers room, local library and cultural associations where material relevant and necessary to the subject is preserved. The students' interaction with the local society will be explicitly reinforced by their presence and working in out-of-school areas while this is conducive to an important opening of the school towards society.

To implement the particular Project the following aim and objectives are set:

AIM

- Getting to know the Greeks abroad, reinforcement of the ties between each other and sensitization about them.

OBJECTIVES

Students should contact the Greeks abroad.

Students should learn about their everyday life, habits and activities.

Students should study Greek History and the reasons conducive to the Greeks' mobility abroad from Turkish occupation until nowadays.

Students should develop their artistic skills by depicting the phenomenon of migration through painting and collage.

- Students should produce oral or written discourse being inspired by the activation and progress of the Greeks of the Diaspora.

Students should compose a comparative study about the feelings and experiences of both the Greek immigrants abroad and the foreign immigrants residing in Greece.

Students should dramatize abstracts from the History of Migration so that they are able to approach the psyche of the homogenea as well as their manner of expression in the reception countries.

Phase 3 is actually the implementation of the Project about the Greeks abroad. To this end, the division of the class into four groups is suggested. The first group concentrates on approaching and contacting the Greeks abroad. Students could use the official websites of Omogeneia and the social networks like Twitter or Facebook as a means to contact the Greeks of Diaspora in order to learn about their way of living, their habits and activities as well as the problems and hardships that their parents probably encountered upon their arrival at the country of reception. They could also be informed about the actions and festivities of the Greek communities abroad. In this respect You Tube is a source for a plethora of audiovisual material related to Omogeneia festivities and actions, in which their attempt to maintain their culture and civilization is depicted, and could be certainly used by this group. Finally, they could collect data about their emotions and considerations related to their coming back to their homeland.

The second group could contact the expatriates' relatives in Greece and through a qualitative research to collect and analyze data about their considerations and emotions in association to their expatriated beloved ones. They could also collect photographs and any other relevant material from the expatriates' visits in Greece, from family gatherings and fests, any data related to the type and amount of communication between expatriates and their relatives and whether the latter were given the opportunity to visit their beloved ones in the country of reception.

The third group is assigned with the research related to the history of the migration influx of the Greeks abroad. There is abundant material in the local press, school and local library, local cultural associations and the Internet which could be utilized to this direction. Being assisted by the philologist the students of this group could find narratives or poems associated to expatriation and the life of the Greeks abroad in which the Greeks' feelings upon their departure and their living in a foreign place as well as their nostalgia for their homeland and the beloved ones left behind are depicted.

The fourth group is assigned to contact with immigrants residing in Greece and through qualitative research to collect data related to the immigrants' decision to come in Greece. Students also get information about the expatriates' experiences and feelings when leaving their homeland and beloved ones behind. Data is also enriched with evidence about the way by which they were confronted by native Greeks, the time spent to be adjusted to the country of reception and any other difficulties they were faced with in their beginning a new life. The research could be conducted among students' immigrant parents while the findings could be utilized comparatively to the findings of the first group. In this respect the similarities and differences between the two migration groups in terms of displacement, experiences, emotions and the way of being accepted in the country of reception could be elevated.

The fourth phase of the Project is concerned with the presentation of the work and its further utilization by the educational community and the society overall. The end product can be presented in two different ways. First of all, a video is prepared by the groups to be uploaded on the Internet, You Tube in particular, so that both the natives and the Greeks abroad can watch it. The latter, in particular, could have a sense of being approached by their homeland. The uploaded material could spark off the tightness and preservation of relations between the natives and the Greeks abroad. At the same time, the end product can also be presented in the school event which all school students, teachers, parents, local society and local authorities' representatives are invited to attend. This kind of presentation could pave the path for further consideration and sensitization of the broader society towards the expatriated Greeks and their life abroad and could also be the starting point to take action to further approach the Greeks of Diaspora.

The fifth and last phase of the Project is Evaluation which is a complex procedure and consists both of the students' self-assessment about their individual course throughout the phases of implementation and the students' peer assessment, on a group level, in which students get feedback from their peers in relation to their contribution to complete the work. The teacher's assessment, apart from giving marks on the performance and outcome individually, is of great significance. It starts from the first phase and is completed after the presentation of the end product in the school event. Through observation and notes taking teacher intervention is concentrated on corrections and providing feedback to the students. The presentation of the end product in the aforementioned school event as well as the interaction between the students and the audience are also assessed.

4 Conclusion

It is widely accepted that the economic depression experienced by Greece over the past years has been conducive to the negative representation of the country in the global social and political scene. At the same time, the economic recession has resulted in the shutting down of many Greek-speaking schools abroad. As a consequence, the Greeks of second and third generation come less in contact with the Greek language, the civilization and the traditions of their country of origin. Thus, the elevation of the national identity is explicitly downgraded by the isolation as the Greeks abroad are rather assimilated by the country of reception through their gradual adjustment in the social and educational system of that country. In this respect, all the elements that could support their cohesion are eliminated (KAPA RESEARCH, 2007).

In this framework the economic crisis could be perceived not as a factor of isolation but, on the contrary, as an opportunity of approaching and enhancing the ties between the natives and the Greeks abroad. There are innumerable paradigms in the history of humankind evidencing that difficulties and ordeals are crucially conducive to uniting all people into a powerful network. On the grounds that in some countries of reception, such as Germany, the Greeks' integration is not allowed by the political system resulting in their being deemed as

“foreigners” and not equal citizens of the state, even today, the interconnection of both sides could positively affect, under utilitarian terms, the enhancement of their ties and the development of a sense of “belonging” despite the geographical distance (Gotovos, 1997:43-54). Under this perspective, reinforcing the channels of communication of both sides is imperative so that the linguistic and cultural homogeneity of the Greeks is enhanced irrelevant from the country where they reside. Consequently, through the systematic and continuous contact the feeling of disdain and isolation generated by the deficient and enfeebled action of the Greek state towards the Greeks abroad is diminished.

Through the Project method students are faced with the opportunity not only to substantially and constructively approach knowledge but also to proceed into personal development. The inter-student collaboration is conducive to the cultivation of social and communication skills, the management of emotions and different viewpoints and the solving of conflicts as students are able to form attitudes and better develop themselves through the dynamics of interaction (Tsantali, 2013:18-37), resulting in viewing the Greeks of Diaspora from a different perspective. Under the teacher’s proper guidance students could cultivate empathy by understanding the reasons of expatriation and fully conceiving the Greeks’ abroad emotions and considerations.

All the above suggested changes in instruction have been the outcome of more general changes in lifestyle. The rapid evolution of new technologies, internationalization of economy and globalization are conducive to introducing a completely new environment in which the concepts of individuality and collectivity are reformed and embodied in a new framework of research. Scheduling instruction should include both co-evaluation of these changes and the adjustment of teaching practices to the new reality.

Students do not longer form a passive audience focusing on studying school books, memorizing and being examined for the specific material. On the contrary, they are transformed to active entities, both transmitters and receivers of information. Besides, they study various sources and bibliography and try to gradually build their knowledge through the experience of working within the micro-society of a team as well as part of the problems which will be faced later on in the community and labour market.

Therefore, research work helps students approach knowledge from a different perspective. Cross-curricular is important towards the overall students’ development since a number of their skills are cultivated, namely using various sources of information, communication skills, practical skills for every day life and collaboration as well as problem solving and creative processing of information (Theodoropoulos, 2009: 34-39). In addition, students are able to perceive the knowledge provided by the Curriculum as a whole. Thus, the objective of combining various subjects and students’ multi-lateral understanding of concepts is achieved.

In this respect, the teacher’s role is to schedule activities, participate in the active dialogue of investigation and enable the team when necessary. It is observed that the teacher is no longer a source of information but rather a supporter who guides his students to reveal knowledge themselves. He encourages group work and his assessment is multi-lateral without deviating from his educational role. Furthermore, they should cultivate the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of students so that the latter are able to acquire knowledge, values, behavior and skills necessary to citizens, according to the emerging political and social conditions.

Given the grounds that young people all over the world share the same sensitivities, visions, needs and expectations, the approach between the Greek students and the Greeks abroad through the Project method could form the starting point to strengthen the ties of both sides, to reinforce the Greek presence globally and to further aim at the elevation of the Greek civilization, language and culture.

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