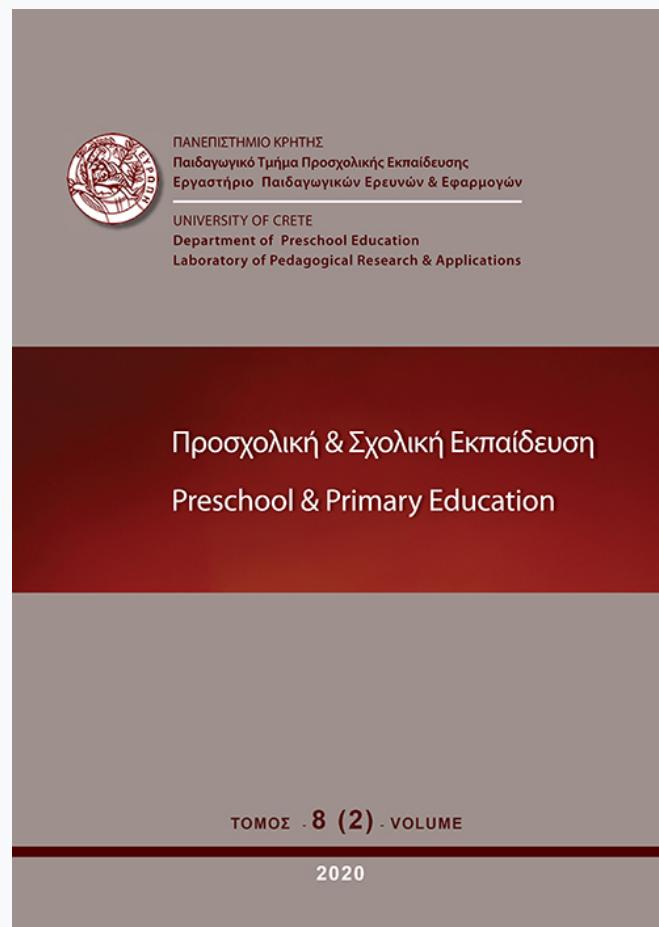


Preschool and Primary Education

Τόμ. 8, Αρ. 2 (2020)



Minority Education in Greece: Thrace Muslim Teachers' Approaches and Views

Dimitris T. Zachos

doi: [10.12681/ppej.21897](https://doi.org/10.12681/ppej.21897)

Copyright © 2025, Dimitris T. Zachos



Άδεια χρήσης [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

Zachos, D. T. (2020). Minority Education in Greece: Thrace Muslim Teachers' Approaches and Views. *Preschool and Primary Education*, 8(2), 144–157. <https://doi.org/10.12681/ppej.21897>

Minority Education in Greece: Thrace Muslim Teachers' Approaches and Views

Dimitris T. Zachos

*Aristotle University of
Thessaloniki*

Nerantzia Theodora

Papadimitriou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Eleni Sideri

*Democritus University of
Thrace*

Abstract. In this paper, our focus is on the education of children from the Muslim Minority in Western Thrace, an administrative region of Greece. Education in Thrace is a sensitive issue that affects and is influenced by the bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey. More specifically, our research aimed to explore Muslim teachers' approaches, views and beliefs regarding Muslim students' schooling. To this end, our research explored these issues in a Case Study, using semi-structured interviews of Muslim teachers in Thrace. Our findings show that the policy of positive discrimination in favour of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace for more than twenty years has had positive results, but has now reached its limits. We believe that the findings of our research can inform policy makers, colleges and schools of education, as well as teachers by providing a better understanding of Muslim teachers' prospects and needs.

Keywords: Education, Muslim, minority, Greece

Introduction

There are hardly any countries with completely homogeneous populations. Most current nation-states' populations include national and ethnic minorities (Luciak, 2006). Diversity is not static: Under certain circumstances, a group may integrate into the dominant group, but this is not always a goal for all minorities (Ogbu, 1983).

Minority population protection presupposes legal equality (full citizenship), as well as equal individual and collective rights. Furthermore, as minority groups are at a disadvantage compared to the rest of the population, a number of additional benefits are needed. For example, access to education requires that students from distinctive linguistic or cultural backgrounds receive "special treatment". Education plays a crucial role in the social integration of minority populations, as well as in the improvement of their living conditions.

Thrace is a region in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula. The western part of Thrace belongs to Greece while the eastern belongs to Turkey. In the last official census, the

Correspondent Author: Dimitris T. Zachos, School of Education, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, P.O. 26, 54124, Thessaloniki, e-mail: dimzachos@eled.auth.gr

e-publisher: *National Documentation Centre, National Hellenic Research Foundation*
URL: <http://chileducation-journal.org>

Greek Statistical Service (2011) reported that 365,821 Greek citizens lived in Western Thrace there lived (Greek Government Gazette, 2014). The exact number of the minority population is an issue of controversy between Greece and Turkey, considering that the last official statistical census of the minority population of western Thrace was held in the 50s. Presently, this population is estimated between 90,000 to 135,000 individuals (Anagnostou & Triandafyllidou, 2007; Dragona & Frangoudaki, 2006).

The Muslim population of Western Thrace is the only legally recognized minority in Greece (Hüseyinoğlu, 2013; Tsitselikis, 2007). It is homogeneous in terms of religion, but heterogeneous in terms of language. According to Borou (2009) and Faas and Palaiologou (2012), the Thracian minority consists of Muslims of Turkish origin (60,000), Pomaks (Slavic-speaking Muslims) (42,000) and Roma (18,000). The main language of the minority is Turkish (Paraskevopoulou, 2002).

The ancestors of the Muslims in Thrace were excluded from the exchange of Christian and Muslim population that took place in the beginning of the 20th century between the Greek and Turkish states (Triandafyllidou & Anagnostou, 2005). The rights and obligations of the minority population are defined by a series of treaties signed by Greece and Turkey. More specifically, Articles 37 to 45 of the Treaty of Lausanne (Greek Government Official Gazette, 1923) clearly define the rights of the minority populations of both countries, as well as the obligation of Greece and Turkey to protect them (Ataöv, 1992; Chousein, 2005; Seyppel, 1989).

The Education of Minority Populations

Education is an issue of major importance for the members of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace (Dragona & Frangoudaki, 2006). Their educational rights are determined by a number of international agreements that regulate the rights of minorities (in general), conventions that bind Greece and Turkey bilaterally and (Greek) national laws.

Articles 40 and 41 of the Treaty of Lausanne (Greek Government Official Gazette, 1923) are the relevant legislation which regulates aspects of the management of educational institutions and upholds children's right to be taught in their native language (Chousein, 2006). The minority population has the right to establish, manage and supervise schools and other educational institutions (Mantouvalou, 2009), in other words to establish private educational institutions (Achlis, 2013).

It should be noted that the children of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace (hereinafter MMT) have the legal right to attend a Greek public school or a special school for them, which is called a "minority school". Minority schools (hereinafter MS) can be attended by all children of the Muslim community, regardless of the language they speak (native language). The Treaty of Lausanne contained no legal provisions, however, for Pomak or Roma children of and thus, to this day, there are no separate schools for students of these backgrounds (Mantouvalou, 2009). Furthermore, the curriculum of MS does not include instruction in the native language of either of these two subgroups of MMT.

According to data provided by the Directorates of Primary Education of the Departments of Rodopi and Xanthi, there are currently one hundred forty-four (144) minority schools of primary education (ages 6 to 12) in the region of Western Thrace. In particular, there are 49 minority primary schools in Xanthi and 83 in Komotini (Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education, Macedonia-Thrace, 2019).

As far as the curriculum of minority schools is concerned, lessons are conducted in two languages: Greek and Turkish. More specifically, the Greek language is to be used in courses on geography, history, civic education and environmental studies, while religious

education, physics, mathematics, art, music and physical education are to be taught in the Turkish language (Dragona & Frangoudaki, 2006).

These two parallel syllabuses are not based on a central plan resulting from the collaboration of academic groups with active teachers from both countries. In other words, neither of the programme courses follow any particular scholarly or educational logic and the curriculum does not have a specific philosophy (Dragona, 2013). Rather, it is the product of a political balancing act between Greece and Turkey. At this point it is worth pointing out that the two neighbouring countries have historically acted as rivals (Koukis, Kelman, & Ganapati, 2016). Greece and Turkey have a long-term dispute about airspace and their maritime boundaries, which has recently rekindled (Psaropoulos, 2019). As both countries monitor how the Muslim minority in Greece and the Orthodox minority in Turkey are treated, the position of these populations (minorities) becomes precarious, especially in times of disputes are rekindled. In several cases, members of the Turkish community in Greece have complained of discrimination of varying degrees of severity (Bahcheli, 1987). As a result, the educational attainment of the children of the Muslim minority was very limited and the dropout rates, even as early as the years of compulsory education, particularly high (Zachos & Nteli, 2015).

Regarding the school textbooks used, for the part of the curriculum conducted in the Turkish language, the current books, in use since 2000, are written and printed in Turkey. These books' structure and content are identical to those books used in Turkey, but without that country's national symbols (Dragona & Frangoudaki, 2006). Until 1999, the textbooks for the Greek-language part of the curriculum were in more or less the same state. In other words, these textbooks were the same as those sent to all schools in Greece. Since 2000, however, according to their authors, new textbooks for the Greek part of the curriculum have been written on the basis of the specific needs of the children of MMT (Askouni, n.d.). These textbooks resulted from the project "Education of Children of the Muslim minority in Thrace", which began in the 1990s and continues to this day. More specifically, 55 new textbooks were distributed to the minority students, which adopted the methodology of teaching Greek as a foreign or second language (Chouseinoglou, 2010) and focused on shaping the cultural and linguistic identity of the Muslim students (Mantuvalou, 2009).

As regards pre-school education, there is no legal obligation to establish minority kindergartens (Baltsiotis & Tsitselikis, 2001). Thus, there are no special bilingual kindergartens for students of MMT, who of course can still enrol in the existing Greek ones.

Language is a key issue for the education of MMT children, since they speak one language at home and another at school. More specifically, primary school students (6-12 years old) – as we have already noted – are taught most of their lessons in two languages, but they must also learn Arabic letters to read the Koran. In addition, they have English lessons. This situation poses obstacles to the efforts of the students, especially those who live in isolated villages of the region. Significantly, those students from the Muslim minority who have been admitted to higher education and universities in Greece do not learn any of these languages very well (Zachos & Nteli, 2015).

Minority School Teachers

The division of the curriculum into (mainly) two languages entails a corresponding classification of MS staff. In particular, teachers are divided into two categories, the Greek-speaking and the Turkish-speaking (Moschonas, 2009). The headmaster of the MS comes from those teachers who teach the Turkish language part of the curriculum, while the assistant headmaster is chosen from those teachers that teach in the Greek-speaking part (Chousein, 2005). For the latter, working status and conditions of appointment are the same

as other teachers in normal Greek public schools (Askouni, n.d.). The teachers of the Turkish-speaking programme, on the other hand, are mainly the graduates of the now defunct Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki (from here on SPAT), who constitute the overwhelming majority of the teachers in MS today. The SPAT was founded in 1969 (Royal Decree 31/1968, OG 8/22-1-1969 in Baltsiotis & Tsitselikis, 2001) to provide better education to those members of the minority who would become teachers for the Turkish-language programme in bilingual minority schools (Chouseinoglou, 2010). Studies at SPAT lasted for two years, but in several cases, students also attended a preliminary year which meant that their studies essentially lasted for three years (Askouni, n.d.). At this point it is worth noting that the SPAT has been treated with suspicion by political factions within the MMT, who have repeatedly called into question the academic training of its graduates and particularly their competence in and knowledge of the written Turkish language (Dragona & Frangoudaki, 2006; Chousein, 2005). The SPAT was abolished according to Law 3966/2011 (31-08-2013), under which new teachers who were to teach the Turkish-speaking part of the MS curriculum in the future were to study together with all other future teachers in Greece, at Faculties of Education in the Universities and a limited number of them would enrol in the Department of Primary Education of the University of Thessaloniki. A number of those teachers are now working in MS. Finally, there are even a few -probably less than a dozen- teachers invited from Turkey to work in minority schools, who are called "metaklitoi". The number of these teachers (metaklitoi) is determined by the "reciprocity principle" and must be equal to the number of Greek teachers who are invited to teach in schools for the Greek minority in Turkey (Chousein, 2006).

It is worth noting that there used to be a discrete category of teachers, the "prosontouchoi", who studied in Turkey in the early 1960s, a privilege that few members of the minority had at the time. Prosontouchoi graduated from teacher training schools which lasted 6-7 years after finishing primary school and relatively few of them have studied at university (Askouni, 2006).

Secondary school graduates from the MMT have - as a measure of positive discrimination - the right to be admitted to any tertiary school they prefer at a rate of 0.5% of the total admitted students. This change was in response to the demand of the Muslim community and the corresponding change of Greek policy towards Muslim minority that began in the 1990s (Zachos & Nteli, 2015), as well as the findings of educational theorists who study the education of students from different ethnic backgrounds in Greece regarding how to improve the preparation of future teachers of the Turkish-speaking programme of MS.

The Research

Research Design

The aim of our research was to explore the views and approaches of teachers of the Turkish-speaking programme who work in primary education minority schools. Our research aimed to discover and interpret and not to test a theory or generalize. For this reason, we chose to use a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is especially useful when trying to understand human experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, qualitative research allows us to examine knowledge in the social and historical context in which it was created (Lincoln, 1992).

Our research strategy was Case Study (Creswell, 2011) and our research technique Semi-Structured interview. The Case Study is a well-established research strategy where the

focus is on each case in itself, while also taking into account its broader context. Typically, it includes multiple data collection methods. It may also include quantitative data, although qualitative data constitute the greater part of the data collected (Robson, 2007). In our research, our case study involved the Muslim teachers of the prefectures of Rhodope and Xanthi as seen in their local, national and geographic contexts. Such a case study was thought to be able to provide the best data concerning the issues surrounding MMT education and to contribute to a better understanding of the issues involved and, eventually, to the formulation of more effective policies.

Our main research technique, the semi-structured interview, offers a balance between the flexibility of an open-ended interview and the strictly formalized list of questions of a structured interview. In other words, semi-structured interviews allow for a type of conversation between the researcher and the interviewee which does not conform to a simple question and answer format, thus allowing room for participants to differentiate their responses, to add data, and for researchers to ask for clarification, to highlight issues and to add questions that may not have been anticipated, and perhaps had not been included in the main body of their questions.

Data Collection

Before entering the research field, we conducted a thorough review of the Greek and English bibliography concerning the education of the Muslim minority in Thrace, as well as extensive archival research on laws, circulars and decrees regulating the operation of MS and the education of minority students. The main part of our research was based on thirty interviews with an equal number of Muslim teachers in the towns of Xanthi and Komotini.

Finding teachers to take part in our research was not an easy task, because the issues we wanted to explore seem to be connected to and influenced by Greek-Turkish relations. It is significant that, despite the “flourishing” of educational programmes and academic studies related to minority education issues, no such research had yet been carried out at the time when we were starting our research.

In the beginning, in order to select our participants, we approached and interviewed some people whom we already knew from the minority population and then we asked them to suggest other teachers who would be willing to participate. We stopped this process, not because we had difficulty recruiting other people, but because the provided information reached a saturation point. In other words, we stopped recruiting people for our research when the responses we received from the teachers ceased to provide any new information.

Data was collected during a period of eight months (from January to August of 2017). Interviews were held in houses, school courtyards, public places (cafes) and parks. Each of the 30 teachers participated in a 60 to 90-minute semi-structured interview. Before starting the interview, participants were informed about the goal of our research, as well as its ethical framework. Participants could decide to stop the interview at any time. Interviews consisted of 20 open-ended questions (see annex Table 1).

Participants

As we already mentioned before, the main part of our research was conducted through interviews with 30 Muslim teachers, all graduates of SPAT, serving in minority schools. More specifically, there were 24 men and 6 women.

Gender	Number of Teachers
Male	24
Female	6
Total	30

Among them, 17 live and work in the city of Xanthi and 13 in the town of Komotini and its villages. Their ages ranged from between twenty-five to sixty years old. More analytically:

City	Number of Teachers
Xanthi	17
Komotini	13
Total	30

Regarding their years of service in education:

Years of Service	Number of Teachers
3 - 10 years	9
11 - 19 years	14
20 - 29 years	5
30 - 40 years	2

Data Analysis

Data were coded by identifying emergent themes from teacher interviews and collected documents (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). We coded the transcripts for context and meaning. More analytically, we examined words, phrases, and sentences to develop codes and categories which were identified using short descriptors, known as *in vivo* codes, for the education of MMT. We stopped the process of analysis when data saturation was reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We reached a point where no new data relating to the categories were being found; their properties had been sufficiently developed, and the relationships between the categories had been established.

Main themes were drawn from the data themselves and not from prior theory or research. Six main themes emerged from this process:

1. *Level of teachers' preparation through their studies*
2. *Legal framework of minority schools*
3. *Minority schools' operation and effectiveness*

4. *Minority students' performance*
5. *Social environment*
6. *Changes to minority school operation*

Findings

Below, we present our findings under six headings corresponding to the main themes outlined above. The following are actual quotations from the responses of the Muslim teachers to questions about their perceptions, views and feelings concerning MMT education. We present their story with words and only a few numbers (where they are absolutely necessary). In other words, we present our findings using illustrative supporting quotes from the respondents (extracts from the transcript) that we believe are representative of the participants' point of view.

Level of teachers' preparation through their studies (Adequacy of studies)

A portion of the teachers who participated in our research believed that their basic studies were sufficient to cope with the daily reality in minority schools and that SPAT, the tertiary school from which most of them graduated, provided them with all the knowledge and skills they needed:

"Of course, there were benefits. The courses were few, but adequate. I learned about child psychology. We participated in many seminars. Definitely, they helped us quite a lot. They prepared us very well" (M.T., 19 years of teaching experience).

On the other hand, another portion of the teachers who took part in our research believed that the everyday reality of school life was quite different from what they had expected and been led to believe during their studies. Furthermore, an important issue for these teachers seemed to be the need for personal development and discussion about the issues that arise in the classroom.

"I have realized that our studies were not enough. With my colleagues we were searching for more, trying to improve and develop ourselves to the extent that we could. There was no possibility of getting help anywhere. There was no Pedagogical Department in Thrace. Many times, online searching was very useful. Seminars took place on a regular basis, but these did not live up to our expectations. They included a repetition of what we had learned in SPAT. They didn't give us the necessary tools to meet the demands of the classroom" (S.A., 15 years of teaching experience).

Teachers interviewed seemed to hold that state institutions (such as the Ministry of Education, Institute of Education Policy) should play a crucial role in both their initial education and training as well as their continuing professional development. With regards to the current level of state involvement, they had a number of reservations concerning the way these initiatives were conceived and implemented:

"The preparation wasn't enough. I think that since the state had taken on the task of training teachers for the Turkish-speaking programme, it should have made sure to train us effectively so that we are appropriately qualified and in possession of the essential tools necessary for us to cope with problems in the classroom" (E.K., 23 years of teaching experience).

A particularly important and controversial issue for men and women in our research was the use of the written Turkish language. More specifically, they believed that the inadequate language instruction that they received in the SPAT, as we have already mentioned above, was a central argument against the school:

"Seminars in the Turkish language were never held even though it was our teaching field and we kept asking for it. Each government told us that there would be seminars. Things have gone too far. We were even given the names of the teachers who would be coming to educate us in the new books. However, for various reasons – mainly political – these measures were never carried out. We

kept trying to improve though, because we believe that a language that is taught at schools should be taught properly" (N.C., 27 years of teaching experience).

The legal framework of minority schools

Most teachers who participated in our research seemed to hold a positive attitude toward the legal framework determining the education of MMT. At this point we should emphasise that this framework is based on the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) which regulates various other issues between Turkey and Greece. As a result, any discussion of revising part of this (legal framework) needs special consideration and attention. Yet there are a number of issues concerning the way minority children are being educated which were raised by a large number of our research participants:

"The legal framework concerning our children's education is good enough, I believe. But there are some gaps and failures that need to be redressed" (M.K., 10 years of teaching experience).

"It seems like it would be a good idea for the bilingual system to begin at the kindergarten level. Given that there are bilingual primary schools, there should also be bilingual kindergartens. In particular, the establishment of bilingual nursery schools based on the co-existence and co-teaching of a Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking teacher, would help the students' skills develop faster" (N.E., 21 years of teaching experience).

Minority schools' operation and effectiveness

Teachers interviewed for our research believed that the way MS operate needed to be improved. They saw a number of problems that needed to be solved.

"The equipment is not good. There is a shortage of books, inadequate infrastructure and care premises, insufficient computer classrooms, and physical education equipment. Resources are few or non-existent. There are no funds" (S.K., 15 years of teaching experience).

The situation is significantly different in the MS of Komotini, where teachers appear to be quite satisfied with the way their school operates:

"We are sufficiently equipped. The school has 12 classrooms, which all have a computer connected to the internet and a projector. The school is even equipped with 7 interactive boards" (F.M., 14 years of teaching experience).

But in the MS of the small villages of Rhodope and Xanthi, there are big problems:

"We have insufficient space in our building. There are 100 pupils in a small courtyard" (C.A., 26 years of teaching experience).

Minority students' performance

Teachers that participated in our research believed minority students' educational performance in the Greek education system has improved over the last twenty years. They also believed, however, that minority students' performance could be further improved:

"In recent years the conditions for our children to succeed in school have improved. The children of this generation are more interested in school and their lessons. There is also more support from home, but for me it is still not enough" (A.F., 20 years of teaching experience).

According to our research participants, the improvement of minority students' performance is due to increased interest on the part of parents, the introduction of positive discrimination measures since 1995 for children of the Muslim minority, and the technological developments and changes of the last three decades.

"Seeing the successful performance of our high school students helps us know that there has been an improvement in our children's education. This is due to changes which occurred in the system of enrolment in universities, the increase in frequency of communication between parents and their children's teachers, increased parental interest and the assistance of technology" (I.M., 12 years of teaching experience).

As regards the linguistic particularity of education in minority schools (bilingual instruction), most participants believed that this is an advantage for children of the minority population:

"I believe that bilingual students are at the same intellectual level as monolingual students. It's just that if we evaluate them in a particular subject in Greek, the child will seem to have less knowledge than the state student. Many, however, fail to consider that the student has the same amount of knowledge if evaluated in Turkish. I think that bilingual students have the same amount of knowledge, but in order to identify this, you need to consider and evaluate [them in] both languages" (I.F., 10 years of teaching experience).

Of course, there are some opposing points of view, which are critical of the current teaching framework:

"Children confuse words and create sentences with words from different languages. It's a problem that they don't have a [single] language as a base, but three deficiently learned] languages. If you haven't learned your native language well, you can't build on it. I think this has also been pedagogically demonstrated" (S.T., 15 years of teaching experience).

Social environment

As we have already emphasized, several of the issues raised by our research falls under the category of sensitive national issues. Teachers from the Turkish-speaking part of the MS in primary education seem to be in a quite difficult position, since in some cases they are caught in the "cross-fire" between members of the Muslim and Christian communities:

"Since we are a minority, we already carry a stigma. In addition, we must deal with racism from members of the minority as well. The minority discriminates against teachers who graduated from SPAT. They think that we are not doing our job properly" (O.G., 7 years of teaching experience).

In contrast, some teachers view the attitude of the Greek state positively:

"SPAT was an attempt by the Greek state to upgrade minority education by providing us with seminars and support. I can tell you that the Greek state was trying to support the minority socially and economically. Seminars were held in Greek by SPAT itself in Thessaloniki, as its instructors were aware of the shortcomings in our education" (B.D., 35 years of teaching experience).

"Law 4310 has taken a step in the right direction, but it hasn't solved all the problems. Its enforcement [only] started this year. It's too early to say what went wrong. The state must take education very seriously and even more so the education of the minority if the state wishes to work toward a more progressive society" (P.N., 15 years of teaching experience).

Despite suspicions concerning the minority population sometimes raised by parts of the local Greek-speaking society, the teachers who took part in our research declared that their relations with their colleagues from the Greek-speaking part of the programme were very good:

"Teachers, who come to work here, know the environment they will work in and try their best" (C.C., 19 years of teaching experience).

"We work together very well. There have been disagreements in some areas, but not many in recent years. Young teachers have overcome certain taboos, so cooperation is excellent. Only some minor disagreements exist" (P.K., 15 years of teaching experience).

Participants in our research also have some reservations about certain "distinguished" members (leaders) of the (minority) community, especially those who question their integrity and level of professional adequacy:

"In the beginning of my career I experienced racism and even threats. This behaviour emanated, mainly, from certain minority individuals, who claimed that our qualifications as teachers were very low. Some minority politicians discriminate against SPAT teachers and try to isolate them. They don't think that we practice our profession properly" (A.K., 19 years of teaching experience).

Changes to minority school operation

As far as the current situation is concerned, interviewed teachers seemed to view the integration of Turkish-speaking teacher candidates into the joint Faculty of Education at the universities as an important step forward:

"Students receive better preparation at the school [of Pedagogy] today" (K.S., 35 years of teaching experience).

As to whether and to what extent they are satisfied with the support they have from the Greek state, all teachers involved in our research would like to see more done:

"The state should consider the minority teachers' education very seriously in order to sustain the existence of a developed society" (P.K., 15 years of teaching experience).

Regarding the treatment of members of the minority by the majority ethnic group, the Greek-speaking community of Thrace, the participants considered their relations to be in general harmonious, without disagreements or tensions:

"There is a positive stance on the part of the wider society. I do not believe that racial behaviours and isolation exist anymore. But maybe there are still some isolated incidents" (C.M., 19 years of teaching experience).

In lieu of an Epilogue

The education of minority children plays an important role both in their emancipation and freedom from societal discrimination and in the improvement of their quality of life. Considering this, we explored views, attitudes and opinions of the teachers of MS concerning the educational problems that their community faces. It is worth pointing out that scholarship on multicultural education in Greece has focused primarily on the temperament, experiences, and training of teachers working with refugee and immigrant students, as well as with Roma children. Researchers have paid less attention to the temperament, experiences, and training of the teachers who work with students from MMT. With the present study, we have attempted to contribute to filling this gap in the research.

The teachers who took part in our research consider that their studies were not appropriate for the difficulties of their role. That's why they want to improve their professional status and further increase their knowledge, skills and capabilities. They also expressed concern about the deficiencies in the minority schools' curriculum and funding which seem to be impeding the efforts of minority children to improve their educational performance.

In our opinion, the policy of positive discrimination applied to members of the MMT for more than twenty years has yielded positive results but has now reached its limits. They need better education, as is illustrated by the fact that in recent years a number of Thrace's Muslim minority parents and guardians have abandoned minority schools and enrolled their children in Greek common public schools.

We believe that the findings of our research can help inform colleges and schools of education by providing a better understanding of Muslim teachers' prospects and needs. The findings can also inform professional associations, NGOs and other organizations with access to and activities oriented toward minority school teachers. We also believe that these findings could contribute to the formation of better educational policy for the Muslim minority of Thrace. Finally, in our view, a more focused study on minority teachers' effectiveness could provide very useful ideas and tools for the education of minority children.

References

Achlis, N. (2013). Errors in the Greek written language on the part of the E.P.A.TH Muslim students. *Mare ponticum*, 3, 16-26. Retrieved from http://mareponticum.bscc.duth.gr/index_htm_files/Achlis_3.pdf

Anagnostou, D., & Triandafyllidou, A. (2007). Regions, minorities and european integration: A case study on Muslims in Western Thrace, Greece. *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, 1, 100-125. Retrieved from https://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/en/2006/05/Case_study_report_Thrace.pdf

Askouni, N. (2006). *The Minority Education in Thrace*. Athens. Alexandria.

Askouni, N. (n.d.). *Minority Education: Structure and institutional framework*. Retrieved from https://museduc.gr/images/stories/docs/ekpaideysi_meionotitas_domi_kai_thesmiko_plaisio.pdf

Ataöv, T. (1992). The ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace, Greece. *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 22, 89-99. Retrieved from <http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr/dergiler/44/686/8729.pdf>

Baltsiotis, L., & Tsitselikis, K. (2001). *Minority Education in Thrace; Legislation and commentary*. Athens-Komotini, Sakkoula Enterprises

Borou, C. (2009). The Muslim minority of Western Thrace in Greece: An internal positive or an internal negative "Other"? *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 29, 5-26. DOI: 10.1080/13602000902726723

Bahcheli, T. (1987). The Muslim-Turkish community in Greece: Problems and prospects. *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs Journal*, 8, 109-120. DOI: 10.1080/02666958708716020

Chousein, A. (2005). *Continuities and changes in the minority policy of Greece: The case of Western Thrace*. Retrieved from <https://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12606351/index.pdf>

Chousein, S. (2006). *Evolution of minority rights in Europe: The case of Western Thrace Muslim Turkish minority*. Retrieved from <http://acikerisim.iku.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/11413/512/SuleChouseinYLtez.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Chouseinoglou, A. (2010). *Minority Education at the southeastern margins of Europe after 1991: The case of Western Thrace/Greece*. 1st Joint PhD Symposium on South East Europe. London School of Economics. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/23364354/CONFERENCE_PAPER_-_Minority_education_at_the_southeastern_margins_of_Europe_after_1991_The_case_of_Western_Thrace_Greece

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods Approaches*. Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative Research*. Athens: Ellin.

Dragona, T., & Frangoudaki, A. (2006). Educating the Muslim minority in Western Thrace. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 17, 21-41. DOI:10.1080=09596410500399268

Dragona, T. (2013). Bilingual Education in Thrace. Conference of Cultural and Educational Association of Western Thrace (PEKEM) on Bilingualism in minority education and development of linguistics competencies. Komotini. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326781596_Bilingual_Education_in_Thrace

Faas, D., & Palaiologou, N. (2012). How "Intercultural" is education in Greece? Insights from policymakers and educators. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 42, 563-584. DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2012.658276

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Greek Government Official Gazette (1923, Issue A', 238). *Lausanne Peace Treaty*. Retrieved from http://www.geetha.mil.gr/media/Thesmika_Keimena/GEETHA/diethnh/3%20SYNTHIKI%20EIRHNHS%20LWZANIS.pdf

Greek Government Official Gazette, (2014 Issue B', 697). *Population of Western Thrace*. Retrieved from https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/1210503/FEK_Nomimos_rev.pdf/9c385e3d-cd1c-4a9f-8caa-036bb1febe69

Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of East Macedonia and Thrace (2019). *Minority schools P.E. EMT*. Retrieved from <https://www.pdeamth.gr/>

Hüseyinoğlu, A. (2013). Minority education in Western Thrace under the "modern European minority policy" of Kostas Karamanlis (2004-2009). *Journal of Balkan Research Institute*, 2, 51-72. Retrieved from <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=242024>

Koukis, T., Kelman, I., & Ganapati, N.E. (2016). Greece-Turkey disaster diplomacy from disaster risk reduction. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 17, 24-32. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijdrr.2016.03.004

Lincoln, Y. S. (1992). Sympathetic connections between qualitative methods and health research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 2, 375-391. DOI:10.1177/104973239200200402

Luciak, M. (2006). Minority schooling and intercultural education: a comparison of recent developments in the old and new EU member states. *Intercultural Education*, 17, 73-80. DOI:10.1080/14675980500502370

Mantouvalou, K. (2009). Equal recognition, consolidation or familiarization? The language rights debate in the context of the minority of Western Thrace in Greece. *Ethnicities*, 9, 477-506. DOI:10.1177/1468796809345435

Moschonas, S. (2009). Parallel monolingualism: The case of minority education in Thrace. In Tsimpriridou (Ed.), *Minority and Migration Experiences, Between The "Culture Of The State"* (pp. 121-149). Athens: Kritiki.

Ogbu, J. (1983). Minority status and schooling in plural societies. *Comparative Education Review*, 27, 168-190. DOI:10.1086/446366

Paraskevopoulou, A. (2002). *Regional policy and minorities in the EU: The case of Western Thrace, Greece*. Retrieved from <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/2108/1/U613340.pdf>

Psaropoulos, J. (2019, December 13). Turkey flexes muscle as Greece and EU stick to international law. *Aljazeera.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/turkey-flexes-muscle-greece-eu-stick-international-law-191213175146069.html>

Robson, C. (2007). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers*. Athens: Gutenberg.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Retrieved from https://books.google.gr/books/about/Qualitative_Interviewing.html?id=T5RDmYuueJAC&redir_esc=y

Seyppel, T. (1989). Pomaks in Northeastern Greece: An endangered Balkan population. *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 10, 41-49. DOI:10.1080/02666958908716100

Triandafyllidou, A., & Anagnostou, D. (2005). *Regions, minorities and European policies: A state of the art report on the Turkish Muslims of Western Thrace (Greece)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/en/2008/10/state%2520of%2520art%2520greece%2520final.pdf>

Tsitselikis, K. (2007). *Minority education in W. Thrace: Legal status, issues and perspectives*. Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. Athens: University of Athens.

Zachos, D. T., & Nteli, C. (2015). *Positive discrimination and school success: The case of Western Thrace's Muslims*. In L. Bash, G. Nikolaou, N. Palaiologou & B. van Driel (Eds.), Conference on "Cultural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (cd-rom). Ioannina: IAIE - University of Ioannina. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281114752_Positive_Discrimination_and_School_Success_The_Case_of_Western_Thraces_Muslims?_sg=Mg1f4Ix4nMuVNwQjVhjdG0yDzUbQvfPMU-poZ7IuwyMAcoiisbp-3wXvZDnOF3qWQukWRxnkvkkdyqinaN0Zhyjl49xIWBgVvL6qqsZD.kuA0azJOWxIRqw7rG7kPHUtPRfhQp5OWISOLt93UzfzvhikDXOiW4H7y0S5-KvsK1ijgzfOOv_8B2lucFCMFGg

Appendix

Table 1. Questions of the interview

1.	What is the duration of your employment in education?
2.	What are your previous studies and what were your criteria for them? How did you choose them?
3.	What is the greatest benefit you have gained from your studies?
4.	Do you think your studies have prepared you successfully for the teaching profession?
5.	What is your opinion on the framework for the education of the minority population in Thrace?
6.	With regard to minority schools, do you think that they should continue to operate in the same way, or do changes need to be made?
7.	Why do you think some parents of minority children decide to send their children to attend the Greek public school?
8.	What is the attitude of the Greek State towards you? Do you think it has supported you in education and social integration or could it have done more (and, if so, what)?
9.	What is the local community's attitude towards you and towards minority issues?
10.	How has your cooperation with the Greek-speaking teachers of the schools you've worked with so far been?
11.	What do you think about the establishment of bilingual kindergartens? Do you think they would help with the smooth transition of minority students into primary school?
12.	Do you think that the students of the Muslim minority are victims of discrimination and racist attitudes?
13.	"Muslim teachers cannot teach as part of the Greek-language programme of minority schools". What do you think about this provision? Do you think that each language should only be taught by teachers who are native speakers of either Greek or Turkish?
14.	What do you think of the curriculum? Does it meet the needs of minority children?
15.	What do you think about the school textbooks of the Turkish-language part of the programme (or, if you have an opinion, on the Greek-speaking ones)? What do you think should be done differently?
16.	What do you think about the equipment of the minority schools (have/need), for example computers, interactive boards, visual materials and libraries?
17.	What problems do you think arise from pupils' bilingualism or trilingualism? (depending on the answer, discuss remedial classes, etc.)
18.	What's your opinion about the performance of your students so far at school & the people of the Muslim minority you know in general? Do you notice any improvement in recent years?
19.	What do you think about establishing private bilingual schools in Thrace?
20.	Do you have anything else to add in reference to Muslim minority education?