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*Official curricula of the history subject
in Greek secondary education
from 1975 until today, focusing
on the term of historical consciousness*

DURING THE LAST DECADES THERE HAS BEEN AN EMERGENT AND crucial shift of research interest from the cognitive subject-matter of History itself to the very processes of its instruction themselves. Historical knowledge is no more encountered as a fixed and static dimension of human consciousness, but as a dynamic process, which can shape this consciousness. The development of historical consciousness has been the main priority, in such a way, so that students are aware of their role as agents of historical development and shape a conscious path for their lives (Rüsen, 1987: 87-97). With such awareness, students can realize how the perspective of the past continues to hold firm in their present. An integral element of historical consciousness is the orientation of man in time (Rüsen, 1993: 162). Historical elements are always included in the process of self-knowledge and the meaning that individuals attribute to the world. This central position of orientation in time has an important impact on historical learning, as the latter is the human consciousness in relation to time, and the consciousness which gives meaning to time.

In this frame, it is really interesting to overview the extent and the way in which Greek education since 1975 until today has, in the frame of its normative texts, moved towards this direction. It has already pointed out that the turbulent history of the Greek nation state, the need for creating, or recreating, its national identity, the spiritual and moral values of Christianity, as expressed by the Greek Orthodox Church, are some of the reasons contributing to an overemphasis on the formation of nation-centred historical consciousness in the Greek students (Flouris, 1995,

1997, Frydaki, 2009). However, there has been little research on how the Greek curricula of history incorporated firstly the new epistemological and pedagogic development regarding the cultivation of students' intellectual qualities and secondly the needs of an emergent open, pluralistic society, for the students to become informed, active, socially responsible and probably universal civil citizens (Flouris, 1997; Koutselini, 1997; Xochellis, 2001).

Research Purpose and Procedures

For clarifying the meanings which Greek education since 1975 until today has attributed to the notion of historical consciousness and the relevant educational orientations, we have indexed all the data of the official curricula concerning the phrasing of general and particular aims of history teaching. This indexing provided the data that are then described and interpreted to shed light on the meaning and the importance given to the formation of students' historical consciousness.

Afterwards, we have presented the indexed normative texts in chronological order, which allows us to describe and interpret the various shifts in the issues under discussion during these decades.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

From the very first verbs used in the Presidential Decree 831/20-9-1977¹, for the students "to realise and adopt", the clear intention of its composers to instil knowledge and values in the students comes forward. The phrasing of general and particular aims of history teaching leads to the ascertainment of a discrepancy: the general aims refer to the Greek and world civilisation, man's motives of action, the connection among past-present-future, the dependence of present decisions on people's deeds and actions in the past. On the contrary, the particular aims refer exclusively to the Greek civilisation.

In the spectrum of aims in general, an orientation focused on knowledge and nation is distinguished; the realisation of Greek course and the

¹ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 270, 20/9/1977, volume A', p.2516.

cultivation of a patriotic conviction/belief, are narrower terms in relation to the main aim. Hourdakis (1993: 39) mentions characteristically: “globalisation and internationalisation, in the way they refer and are related to the ancient world, are completely absent. The references are nationalistic and strictly Greek, devoid of a cosmopolitan spirit”.

The references to the “objective consideration of the regimes”, and the “connection of historical events in generative relations” and the “coherence of causes and effects”, indicate the methodology of positive historicism, which leads to the one and only, objective historic truth, the instillation of the national identity and the transmission of the collective national memory (Iggers, 1984: 26-29· Goff Le Zak, 1998: 227).

The term “formation of national consciousness” is absent, nevertheless it permeates all teaching aims and constitutes the base on which their development is structured. On the contrary, the term “historical consciousness” is not even implied. Finally, there is no reference to critical thinking, discovery or construction of historical knowledge by students (Chatzigeorgiou, 2004²: 121). Maybe it was too early for something like this. The overall spirit of the text seems to treat history as an ideological “arsenal”, so that the students can keep up their ideological and cultural tradition. This ascertainment is strengthened by Flouris’ (1995: 342) and Kokkinos’ (1998²: 339) views that the subject of History has been and still is a field of intense ideological-political interventions of the state in the formation of national consciousness in the Greek students because national identification assumes high importance due to the great importance the idea of the Greek nation’s continuation had in the Greek culture.

The next Presidential Decree (374/15-5-1978²) promotes emphatically the teaching of modern history as a general aim; surprisingly, European history precedes and reference to the Greek one follows, in a period still not characterised by today’s multicultural societies’ demands. An interpretation can be indirectly inferred by the phrasing of the aim itself: students who attend junior high school may end their attendance at the completion of the nine-year compulsory education.

There is no development in the aims of history teaching in the following seven years. In the P.D. 438/19-9-1985³, there is simply a reference to the aim of the cultivation of “historical consciousness” as well as

² Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 79, 15/5/1978, volume. A’, p.731.

³ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 158, 19/9/1985, volume A’, p.2459.

“judgment” and “collective perception”⁴. One month later, in the P.D. 479/7-10-1985⁵ these particular terms become prevalent. The emphasis given equally to the cultivation of historical thinking and historical consciousness is characteristic.

The notion of absolute objectivity is also moderated: the “objective consideration of political systems” of the previous two P.D. is developed to “for the young person to interpret more objectively what happens around him today”.

The aims of this particular P.D. coincide profoundly to a great extent in the cultivation of historical consciousness. There is also a distinct shift from the views of positive historicism to the view that history is not a simple sequence of events but their interconnectedness. Given the fact that the P.D. of 1985 refers to history teaching in senior high school, it could be assumed that the students’ cognitive development and their competency in abstract and critical thinking are taken into consideration.

These new orientations seem to give more freedom to the students to evaluate and interpret historical events. However, the phrasing of the aims is quite schematic. The aim “to inform the students of the methodology of historical research” is general since there are no methodological instructions for their involvement in something like that provided. Moreover, the aim which refers to the search of the deeper causes of historical action, the judgement and evaluation of the events, the interpretation of the different forms of culture seems – in its phrasing – to be rhetoric.

Again it is not clarified in what ways the students will be initiated into historical search and the cultivation of critical historical thinking.

The general impression created by the P.D. of 1985 could be described by Paul’s view (1992: 53): “students read the complete works of professional historicists, not the data which enable them to think historically. They don’t have a sense of how they can be involved in historical thinking, thus they don’t recognize the historical dimension of the problems they face in their everyday life”.

There is no development noticed during the next eleven years. In P.D.117/24-5-1996⁶ there is a considerable nation-oriented shift⁷. All

⁴ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 158, 19/9/1985, volume A’, p.2459.

⁵ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 170, 7/10/1985, volume A’, p.2631.

⁶ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 87, 24/5/1996, volume A’, p.1520-1521.

⁷ In total of sixteen lines, the terms “Hellenic” and “Hellenism” are existed six times, whereas six references are done to the Greek cultural substance and identity, to the Hellenism’s offer and to the spread of the Greek cultural achievements.

three general aims of teaching emphasize Greek history and culture, the formation of cultural identity, the continuation of cultural existence and contribution of the Greek nation, without any reference to the European and world history or culture and their connection with the Greek one.

The Greek-oriented references and the lack of cosmopolitan spirit do not go hand in hand with the effort for the students to cultivate a spirit of moderation and realize that the Greek civilization can coexist peacefully with the European and the world civilization. As far as the notion of historical consciousness is concerned, it is restricted to an introductory and general reference only.

Fragoudakis (1997: 399-400) had commented then: “the obsession with the determinative effect of the ancient Greek civilization on the most important accomplishments of the European one is profoundly indirect evidence of the righteously equal position of the Greeks in the globally superior European family.[...]. It is then evident that the subject of history [...] does not promote the students’ historical national consciousness. On the contrary, it prevents children from realizing that history is a reconstruction and interpretation of the past. [...] and prevents them from considering the interactions as a positive social phenomenon [...]”.

An explanation of this Greek-oriented shift was given by Cavoura: “indeed, if we examine the social context, historical time is marked by realignments in the wider area of the Balkans. The sensitizations created by these changes for our national matters, seem to signal the need for the empowerment of the special characteristics of the “national self”. In this battle, the subject of history was recruited in a more overt political expediency” (Cavoura, 2002: 425).

As a matter of fact, this phenomenon is not exclusively Greek. In the Balkans all national historiographies attempt to persuade about their glorious historical past, and for their, immutable in time, cultural characteristics. The nation is not equal to the result of historical conjunctures, but as a self-evident truth, established in the collective consciousness.

In the Ministerial Decree No. C2/5051 a of 2001⁸, in the frame of the Cross Thematic Curriculum Framework (Δ.Ε.Π.Π.Σ in Greek), the general aim of history teaching deviates from the spirit of the Presidential Decree of 1996 and is uttered on the basis of the bipolar scheme of the Presidential Decree of 1985 (the cultivation of historical consciousness

⁸ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 1366, 18/10/2001, volume B', p.18501-18525.

and judgment). The difference is that the bipolar scheme now becomes “historical thought” and “historical consciousness”. Historical consciousness refers to the understanding of man’s behavior in particular circumstances and the ensuring of the presuppositions for the demonstration of responsible behavior in the present and the future. It is the first reference that brings forward this dimension of the term “historical consciousness”: the preparation of conscious citizens, who will have the awareness not only that the modern world is the continuation of the past but also that the modern historical horizon is directly linked to their life. The aim of the cultivation of historical consciousness is corroborated by the three first specific objectives of the subject-matter teaching in junior high school⁹.

For the first time there is an explicit reference to the formation of a spirit of moderation and respect towards the different, which seems to recognize the demands of the developing multiculturalism in the Greek society and education.

There are two references (aims 7 and 11) to the worldwide civilization. The aim: “for the students to realize the contribution of the Greek civilization to the worldwide one and form a corresponding consciousness” is somewhat general, as it does not specify what kind of consciousness is pursued to be formed. At the same time, the orientation towards the Greek nation appears milder. The aim: “for the students to learn the historical course of the Greek nation from ancestry till today, with references to the broader worldwide history”, seems to attempt to link the Greek and the worldwide history. However, a more careful reading demonstrates perhaps a disposition to highlight the Greek history over the worldwide one, which constitutes the background of the presentation.

Finally, there is for the first time a reference to the notion of historical time, and the necessity to familiarize the students with the specific vocabulary of the historical science, which are necessary elements for the cultivation of historical thought. There is also a particular reference to the critical evaluation of historical sources, in order to understand that is based *on* and written *on the basis of* the evidence of each period. It is not mentioned, nevertheless, whether these sources need to be affirmative of the narration of the school textbook or opposing historical sources are provided for elaboration, so that, through their examination and interpretation, it is understandable that there are multiple historical narrations

⁹ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 1366, 18/10/2001, volume B’, p.18509.

and multiple, sometimes opposing, aspects of the historical facts.

In the next Ministerial Decree No. 8212/C2, 7-2-2002¹⁰ the general aim of the subject matter teaching¹¹ is still the same, but examination of the specific objectives of history teaching in the senior high school¹² shows a differentiation from the corresponding ones in the junior high school in many levels. It is obvious that the specific objectives are uttered around the following axes, which start to outline the course of the subject matter today:

A) Complexity of the modern world, familiarization of different civilizations, appreciation of their contribution to the worldwide civilization, need to co-examine the Greek, European and worldwide history. The aim: “for the students to realize the contribution of the Greek civilization to the worldwide one and form a corresponding consciousness” (Ministerial Decree, 2001), is developed into “to learn the different civilizations, to be accustomed with the procedure of determination and studying of the relations among the nations, to appreciate their contribution to the worldwide civilization” (Ministerial Decree, 2002). This realization can form not only a spirit of moderation but a substantial recognition of the other civilizations as well.

B) Historical thought, in the sense of accuracy in the comprehension and the use of historical terms and notions, the documented correlation and logical analysis of historical issues as media of deeper understanding of the historical past.

C) Historical consciousness, as defined in the Ministerial Decree of 2001 (aims 14, 15, 16). These aims imprint a shift in the epistemology of history and its teaching in senior high school “the students are asked to penetrate into the historical events and comprehend the diversity and interweaving of the causal factors which are determinative for the life of the people in each period, to be able to correlate them in a substantiated way, and utilize sensibly the information for a deeper understanding of the past, so as to perceive the past as an entity and conjunction of various levels of the human activity (aim 14).

D) There is a particular emphasis on the examination of the historical sources. The aims of understanding on the students behalf that history is a reconstruction of the past, is based on sources and constitutes a selec-

¹⁰ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 131, 7/2/2002, volume B', p.1344.

¹¹ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 131, 7/2/2002, p.1344.

¹² Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 131, 7/2/2002, p.1345.

tive process and their ability to approach critically different kinds of historical sources, is a dynamic renewal of the quality of the teaching process. In the aim: “to introduce the students in the process of understanding, analyzing and evaluating the different perspectives with which the historical events and phenomena are approached and interpreted by historians” the differentiation of epistemology and history teaching from the positivistic approach is profoundly manifested as well as the disbelief towards the “great narrations” and the search for catholic generalizing schemes (Lyotard, 1984). We can also distinguish the first resonance of the post-modern thought, with which, according to its exponents, people can discover the truth in its various versions (Habermas, 1987). This aim goes hand in hand with the broader developments in the domain of history teaching, according to which the use of the sources should be related to the development of abilities of historical thought, which render the students able to evaluate the evidence, develop comparative and causative analyses, interpret the historical writing, construct historical arguments and realize the prospective on which every day’s decisions are based.

The general aim of history teaching in the Presidential Decree No. 21072 a/C2¹³, 13-3-2003, is not essentially different from the two previous ones (2001, 2002). What is absent is the reference to the role of the knowledge of the past in the understanding of the present and the planning of the future, which exists as a basic idea for the determination of historical consciousness and historical thought, something, however, which is presumed by various points.

Very few differentiations have been noticed at the comparative examination of the particular aims of teaching of the subject matter in junior high school as well¹⁴. In the Presidential Decree of 2003 the aim of the students’ understanding the notion of time and the ways if measuring it is absent, an aim which is, nevertheless, essential in all the levels of education in order for the students to be able to realize “the relations that history has with time and historical duration” (Goff Le Zak, 1998: 14). The students can, through the understanding of the notion of time, realize that history is a consistent dialogue between the past and the present, and pinpoint periods if stagnancy or progress.

Finally, the specific objective “to realize and appreciate the contribu-

¹³ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 303, 13/3/2003, volume B´, p.3915.

¹⁴ Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic 303, 13/3/2003, volume B´, p.3944.

tion of the Greek civilization to the worldwide one” (Presidential Decree 2003), is not essentially different from the aim “for the students to realize the contribution of the Greek civilization to the worldwide one and form a corresponding consciousness” (Presidential Decree 2001) and both phrasings contain an underlying orientation towards values.

Discussion

The notion of historical consciousness and the way it has been handled in history teaching seems to have moved in two different directions: the first, until 2000, is expressed as the teaching of a common national history, in order to strengthen the national existence and identity. It is a pre-determined historical consciousness which coincides with the familiarization of tradition and the knowledge of the past as conditions for the development of national societies. The partial isolation of the subject matter from the epistemological and historiographical developments seems to have put on the strengthening of a series of stereotypes which, well established in the collective memory, equated historical consciousness with national identity.

The second one seems to follow –at a slow pace– the tendency of the new epistemological and pedagogic development in the cultivation of students’ intellectual qualities, so as to take responsible action with as active citizens. This tendency leads to the departure from the one, official version of the past, in the interest of a pedagogy based on the students’ historical thought and consciousness; the purpose is for the latter to make the study of history part of their intellectual arsenal: not to remain at the level of absorption of inert historical information, but to attain a kind of historical awareness, which could perform the function of guidance in daily and social life (Megill, 1994: 51).

Nevertheless, the positive steps to this direction are not enough. More consistent efforts are needed still for the determination of the aim of historical knowledge as well as its use in the current socio-political context, so as to bring forward the social function of history and utilize constructively the new theories and researches for the development of school historiography in the 21st century.

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Περίληψη

Τις τελευταίες δεκαετίες παρατηρείται μια σημαντική μετατόπιση του ερευνητικού ενδιαφέροντος από το γνωστικό αντικείμενο της ιστορίας στις διαδικασίες διδασκαλίας του. Η ιστορική γνώση δεν αντιμετωπίζεται πια ως μια στατική διάσταση της συνείδησης του ανθρώπου αλλά ως μια δυναμική διαδικασία διαμόρφωσης μιας συνείδησης, που επιτρέπει στους μαθητές να αποκτήσουν επίγνωση του ρόλου τους ως παραγόντων ιστορικής πορείας, και να διαμορφωθούν σε έλλογα ιστορικά υποκείμενα και ενεργούς πολίτες. Η καλλιέργεια της ιστορικής συνείδησης αναδεικνύεται, έτσι, σε κύρια εκπαιδευτική προτεραιότητα.

Σκοπός αυτής της μελέτης είναι να περιγράψει και να σχολιάσει τις ποικίλες σημασιοδοτήσεις και την εξέλιξη της έννοιας της ιστορικής συνείδησης μέσα από την ανασκόπηση των αναλυτικών προγραμμάτων για τη διδασκαλία της ιστορίας στη δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση από το 1975 έως σήμερα. Αυτό που διαφαίνεται είναι ότι, από τη μια αρχίζει να αναδεικνύεται ένα νέο περιεχόμενο της έννοιας της ιστορικής συνείδησης, σε συμφωνία με τις σύγχρονες επιστημολογικές και κοινωνικές εξελίξεις, αλλά από την άλλη αρκετές αναντιστοιχίες παραμένουν.

Η Μαρία Μαμούρα αποφοίτησε από το Τμήμα Φιλολογίας του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών, έκανε μεταπτυχιακές σπουδές στις Επιστήμες της Εκπαίδευσης και είναι Διδάκτωρ Παιδαγωγικής του Τμήματος Φιλοσοφίας, Παιδαγωγικής και Ψυχολογίας της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών. Από το 2003 είναι επιστημονική συνεργάτης του Τομέα Παιδαγωγικής του ίδιου Τμήματος, στο Πρόγραμμα Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών «Θεωρία, Πράξη και Αξιολόγηση του Εκπαιδευτικού Έργου». Έχει συμμετάσχει σε ελληνικά και διεθνή συνέδρια, και έχει δημοσιεύσει σε ελληνικά και διεθνή επιστημονικά περιοδικά. Κύρια ερευνητικά της ενδιαφέροντα είναι η διδακτική της ιστορίας, οι αξίες, οι αντιλήψεις και οι διαδικασίες σκέψης των καθηγητών των ανθρωπιστικών μαθημάτων στη δευτεροβάθμια εκπαίδευση και η εκπαίδευση των εκπαιδευτικών.