MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN MODERN GREEK SOCIETY: THE IMPACT OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

ARISTOTELIS STAMOULAS

The enormous flow of immigrants and the repatriation of co-ethnic nationals the past ten-fifteen years have brought about considerable demographic alterations in the composition of the population in Greece. Local society has turned rapidly from a relatively homogeneous and compact unit into a multicultural human mix and is being called upon to manage the effects of cultural diversity. The present article starts off by acknowledging the emergence of xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes of the resident population at the expense of vulnerable (minority) groups and proceeds to explain such attitudes in (among other parameters of socio-cultural and politico-economic nature) the lack of systematic human rights education. A comprehensive look at the evidence of such education in all levels of Greek public schooling (primary, secondary, tertiary) is provided and the prospects of establishing a human rights culture through formal education are equally considered.

1. Human rights: institutionalism and cultural consciousness in Greece

Greece tends to be referred to as the birthplace of democracy and moral ethics and ancient Greeks have been known worldwide for their unique achievements in art, literature, sports, philosophy, government and science (Singer 1985; Ketcham 1987; Gagarin and Woodruff 1995; Barker 2001; McCarthy 2003). In fact, many

countries have resourced considerable parts of the development and sophistication of their political and ethical systems from this cultural legacy. Ever since, Greek political history has been marked by long periods of unfortunate events, including the 400-year Ottoman occupation (starting from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and lasting until the 19th century), the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), World Wars I and II, the Civil War (1946-1949), and the 7-year Military Dictatorship ("The Regime of Colonels", 1967-1974). The restoration of parliamentary democracy in the modern era has been a turning point for the re-embracement of democratic values and the accession of the country to the European Union (then European Community), membership to which is dependent (among other things) upon respect for human rights[1].

The issue of human rights is rather double-faced in Greek political and social reality. From the perspective of institutional compliance to the principles of the EU and other contractual obligations stemming from the signature of regional and international Conventions and Declarations, Greece can be described as a passionate recipient of initiatives for upholding human rights. The Constitution of the country includes enough clauses guaranteeing the protection of people's rights[2], the Presidential Decree 273 of 1999 has established the Greek Ombudsman as a medium between public administration and private individuals for the protection of citizens' rights, Law 2667 of 1998 gave birth to the National Commission for

---

[1] The Copenhagen European Council (1993) concluded that membership criteria require that the candidate country must have achieved (a) stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, (b) the existence of a functioning market economy, as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union, and (c) the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

[2] The 1975 Constitution, following its revision on 6 April 2001, stipulates that every human being within Greece "shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour and liberty, irrespective of nationality, race or language and of religious or political beliefs" (art. 5, par. 2). According to art. 2, par. 1, the respect and protection of human dignity is the "primary obligation" of the state, while -according to art. 4, par. 1- "all citizens are equal before the Law". Art. 5, par. 1 finally provides that "all persons shall have the right to develop freely their personality and to participate in the social, economic and political life of the country, in so far as they do not infringe the rights of others or violate the Constitution".

Human Rights[3] with a consultative status to the state on issues pertaining to human rights protection and promotion, and finally there is a hospitable environment for private activity and collective expression and circulation of human rights ideas under the roof of freely operating NGO's.

From the perspective of the practical embedment of human rights values, on the other hand, some problematic areas deserve particular attention, mainly in relation to institutional and social behaviour towards vulnerable groups, i.e. people whose linguistic/ethnic origin and religious/cultural background constitute a minority compared to the resident population[4].

A number of surveys reveal that Greeks are relatively intolerant of other cultures and xenophobic. On November 2000, the publication of the related results of the European Commission's spring 2000 "Eurobarometer" survey showed that 38% of Greeks are disturbed by the presence of foreigners in their country. The EU average was 15% and the second highest percentage of xenophobia was among the Danes (24%).

Another, even more revealing result by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC 2003-2004) showed that, while 64% of EU citizens consider it a good thing for any society to be made up of people from different races, religions and cultures, only 36% shared that view in Greece (the second lowest percentage was 52% for Austrians), with 52% disagreeing with it (vs. 26% for EU citizens as a whole and 35% for the second highest percentage for Belgians). Generally speaking, despite its solid status as a constitutional republic and multiparty parliamentary democracy that overall respects the human rights of its citizens, Greece is plagued by a number of human rights abuses, especially regarding the treatment of migrants (many of which continue to face daily discrimina-

---

[3] In accordance with the Paris Principles (1993), adopted by the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

[4] The Ministry of Public Order (supervising the Police and Border Guard), the Ministry of Merchant Marine (supervising the Coast Guard), the Ministry of the Interior (supervising Local Authorities and responsible for migration issues) define vulnerable groups according to the taxonomy adopted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to be used in the context of policies and projects aimed at combating social exclusion. Among the groups are Roma, repatriated ethnic Greeks, migrants, refugees, and cultural and religious minorities.

tions in employment, housing and in government services[5]), freedom of religion and worship[6], and widespread societal and governmental discrimination in employment and housing at the expense of Roma (who are estimated to consitute around 350.000), in addition to their becoming frequent targets of police brutality.

In a previous article (Stamoulas 2004), I had argued that problematic respect of the rights of vulnerable groups in Greece may be attributed to traditional socio-cultural and historical patterns that deviate from the standard philosophical liberal-individualistic platform of the Anglo-Saxon world upon which the notion of human rights was initially founded. The argument went as follows: the emancipation of human rights was triggered by the sophistication of western individualism through the accomplishments of the Renaissance, Reformation, capitalism, modern science, the Enlightenment, and the 19th century ideology of liberalism that came to wrap them up politically, contributing to the development of a self-centred idea of human nature. The 400-year occupation of the country by the Ottoman Empire, which coincided with the development period of these accomplishments in the western world, had been a suspending factor for the flourishing of the birth-giving elements of human rights in Greek culture. What is more, the lengthy Ottoman occupation strengthened the collective expression of the patriotic sentiments of the population against the foreign conqueror and rendered the Orthodox Church a major force for preserving the nation's language and religion. As a result, construction of the Greek culture has been influenced by collective values of belonging to and bearing

---

[5] Migrants continue to experience bias before the courts and in dealings with police and prosecutors and in many cases no adequate translation is provided during judicial proceedings. There are quite a few reports of police brutality against migrants, who are rarely able to obtain adequate remedy for such abuses, while few policemen are convicted or held accountable on allegations of brutality.

[6] The Eastern Orthodox Church maintains its Constitutionally secured privileged status as the only official religion in Greece, creating a number of disadvantages for other religions. In December 1997, the European Court found that Greece had violated article 14 (prohibition against discrimination) and article 6(1) (right to fair and public hearing) of the ECHR by denying the legal personality of a Catholic church. Similarly, in February, the court found that Greece had violated article 9 (freedom of religion) of the ECHR by unjustly convicting Protestants for proselytism. On December 19, 1997, an association of the Church of Scientology was dissolved for having carried out business practices outside the scope of its statutes.

duties against a homogeneous and compact "whole" in a way that contrasts radically the western conception of the moral agent as an abstract individual in a plural society who has obligations to and rights against other such individuals and the state (Pollis 1987). Cultural collectivism has been mixed up with Orthodox faith to produce a powerful conception for national identity defined by the theory of the "threatening other" (Triandafyllidou 1997): religion, common ancestry and cultural tradition are the constituting elements of society. Whoever exempts himself form compliance to these elements is considered an agent threatening the coherence and stability of the community and must be treated accordingly[7]. In most cases, "threatening others" become victims of social stigmatisation and marginalisation because of their different linguistic/ethnic characteristics and cultural/religious endorsements, or they face serious administrative difficulties in freely expressing them[8].

Stangos (2006) uses the term "other" in a rather economical and political sense to relate discriminatory attitudes of the Greek population with the negative effects of immigrants' poverty. He justifies such attitudes due to difficult economic and political circumstances that emerged in Greece during the past fifteen years, including

a. government policies aiming to achieve convergence with the EU that occasionally had devastating consequences on Greek workers and their families,

---

[7] Dimitrakopoulos (2004) and Baldwin-Edwards (2005) add up to this by claiming that Greeks have learned to feel not only different from, but also superior to all "others" (particularly the neighbouring Turks, Albanians, Bulgarians and Serbs) in terms of ethnicity and religion, because other nations could make no claim on the universally acclaimed classical Greek culture. For the two authors, the vigorous nation-building process since the achievement of national independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1830 was based on the ancient classical myth of Greeks and was defined as the expression of genealogical descent and in direct reference to the glorious past of Themistocles, Pericles and Alexander the Great. This national myth was transformed into a powerful irredentism that fuelled the successive expansions of the Greek state throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, while also serving as an internal political strategy to keep people's cultural morale high.

[8] As far as religious freedom is concerned, for example, an old Law of 1938 (still in use) subjects the establishment and operation of non-Orthodox places of worship to the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities and the Ministry of Education and Religious Matters. More than few Jehovah's Witnesses in Greece have reported considerable administrative difficulties in getting such approval and prosecutions by domestic courts for setting up "illegal" places of worship.

b. political instability in the early 1990's that led to the downfall
   of several successive governments, and
c. extensive insecurity and popular discontent due to the shift
   from a generous welfare state to a liberalised economy shaped
   by the forces of globalisation.

In these circumstances, Stangos claims, the Greek public incrimi-
nates "others" (newcomers to Greece in search of a better life) for
their poverty and frequently expresses contempt for and/or superior-
ity over culturally distinct minority groups.

Adding up to such interesting analyses that explain discriminato-
ry attitudes at the expense of vulnerable groups from socio-cultural
and politico-economic perspectives, the present article will debate
conditions of a limited multicultural-friendly attitude across the
Greek population by reference to the lack of systematic human rights
education, defined by UNESCO as the type of formal training aimed
at strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental free-
doms, fully developing human personality and the sense of its digni-
ty, promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among all
nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and
linguistic groups, and enabling all persons to participate effectively
in a free and democratic society governed by the Rule of Law.
Evidence of such education will be sought in all levels of public
schooling (primary, secondary, tertiary), light will be shed on prob-
lematic areas, and the need for enlarging the provision and bettering
the quality of human rights education will be highlighted.

2. Primary and secondary education[9]

Education on human rights is increasingly considered to be an
invaluable tool for building a global culture of human rights and pre-
venting their abuse, enabling individuals and communities to under-
stand and express their personal concerns in human rights terms,
encouraging people to integrate human rights principles into both
their individual lives and their social institutions, and finally for

---

[9] Data and information gathered from the websites of the Ministry of Education and
    Religious Matters (www.ypepth.gr) and the Pedagogical Institute of Greece (www.pi-
    schools.gr).

empowering people to use human rights as vehicle for social change.[10] The two levels of basic education, primary and secondary, are considered essential in providing children with their first learning experiences in an out-of-the-family environment and setting up the basis for cognitive development, socialisation and character formation. Nothing could be more important at these early stages than stimulating students' contact with human rights principles in order to facilitate informed awareness about multicultural co-existence and respect for the life and freedoms of other people.

2.1. Program of "cross-cultural education"

Greece is facing the economic and cultural tensions of globalisation and EU enlargement and at the same time has become host to nearly a million immigrants (including aliens and co-ethnic returnees, such as Pontiac Greeks and ethnic Greek Albanians) in less than a decade. This represents about 10% of the total resident population, a strikingly high percentage for a country that until only twenty years ago was a migration sender rather than a host (Triandafyllidou, Gropas 2005). Immigrant children in state secondary schools have increased from 8.455 in 1995/96 to 98.241 in 2002/03, the latter representing some 6,7% of the total secondary school population (Skourtou et all 2004). The progressive augmentation of the "new minorities" has marked the coming of a new era. Social diversity is an indisputable fact and the challenge presented to educators is how to develop appropriate educational material and pedagogical methods in order to help the newcomers integrate with local social patterns in a sensitive manner towards their own cultural background, while at the same time infusing Greek students with an intercultural approach to enable them to successfully manage cultural diversity at school.

The Ministry for National Education and Religious Matters laid the foundations back in 1996 of a system designed to meet the educational needs of groups with a particular social, cultural, linguistic, or religious identity. The Ministry adopted "cross-cultural educa-

---

[10] Extract from the "Human Rights Education Campaign" of Amnesty International (http://web.amnesty.org/pages/hre-intro-eng).

tion", a new form of education in Greece, as part of this policy. The program applies only in schools where repatriated Greek and/or foreign students account for at least 45% of the total student body and its purpose is to adapt the standard curriculum to meet the specific educational, social and cultural needs of the students attending them. The general inclination is to provide immigrant students with an education built on their language and culture, in combination with an essential Greek language competence, in order to receive comprehensible input and make adaptation to local circumstances easier. For some critics, however (Dimitrakopoulos 2004), the concept of cross-cultural education in Greece not only has not proved broad enough to be able to build bridges between communities and between individuals from diverse backgrounds, but also has been removed from its defining purpose to develop the ability of different groups to communicate with each other and gain insight into different cultures, in order to facilitate the assimilation of these different groups into a uniform (the prevailing domestic) culture.

This seemingly mono-dimensional and deficient approach to cross-cultural education is leaving unresolved the disturbing fact that children originating from vulnerable groups are severely ill-treated at schools. A survey entitled "Discriminations, Racism and Xenophobia in the Greek Educational System", carried out under the auspices of the Greek department of UNICEF (2001) five years after the launch of the cross-cultural education program, revealed that schools tend to become an arena for discriminations at the expense of foreign students, with parents, teachers and school headmasters being negative towards not only the presence of foreigners at school, but in the country in general. Similarly, the results of a spring 1999 survey (released in December 2000) carried out by the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) showed that, on a composite index, 47%-54% of junior high and senior high school pupils, parents and teachers are xenophobic. Practical incidents indicative of such xenophobic attitudes include angry reactions by Greek parents and pupils to the carrying of the national flag during school parades by high achieving migrant pupils and also parents requesting the expulsion of foreign students from their children's classrooms on grounds that the presence of the former affects negatively the learning experiences and school progress of their offsprings.

Such phenomena of intolerant and xenophobic behaviour confirm that the experience of contact between Greeks and "others" after the

1990's did not necessarily entail any concerted governmental policy for the education of both sides as to similarities and differences in their linguistic, religious, cultural and national characteristics (Tsitselikis 2003). Mainstream public schooling does not really provide knowledge on immigrants, minorities, or any kind of otherness in Greece. The "civic education" course, which is taught in elementary schools (one hour per week in the fifth and sixth grades), as well as in high schools (third class of the Gymasium and second class of the Lyceum), outlines the political system of the state as well as the essential legal principles and institutions of Greece, but there is no serious encounter with conditions of multicultural living and the rights of aliens/immigrants in these conditions.

It would be accurate to claim then that Greek formal secondary schooling still suffers from a disability to turn from its "introvertive" orientation to a more "extravertive" one (Gousgounis 2002). Despite the launch of the cross-cultural education program, a mono-linguistic and mono-cultural policy is still the dominant model in the country and a new orientation of national education towards multiculturalism remains as such difficult to define. This is mainly because cross-cultural education has been designed with a limited scope (i.e. to serve pedagogical purposes of schools with a considerable body of foreign students), rather than being a nationwide project with protrusions in each and every schooling facility, which would establish better communication links between the two groups of students (resident-foreign) and enable comprehension of social and cultural pluralism even in schools with a smaller body of foreign students or no foreign students at all (Skourtou et all 2004). Although, as Ilias (2003) points out, cross-cultural education can be taken admittedly to address issues of integration of vulnerable groups into local society by offering equal opportunities and access to basic education for all, its limited scope
   a. contributes to the reproduction of stereotypical biased views about the distinguished characteristics of culturally diverse groups, and
   b. lacks the character of an all-encompassing, systematic educational campaign for the consolidation of human rights principles as part of the learning process at schools, which is expected to develop values of respect and tolerance among pupils.

From this perspective, cross-cultural education fits more into a broad and vague policy (along with government actions in other

fields regulating citizenship, housing, health and employment issues) for the integration of immigrants in Greek society, rather than into an explicit pedagogical framework for the teaching of human rights lessons with a view first and foremost to enable students appreciate multiculturalism.

2.2. The "schools for the application of innovative educational practices" program

Recognising the need to modernise and improve the output of primary and secondary education in order to respond to emerging challenges (rapid developments in science and technology, internationalisation of social, economic and cultural relationships and their impact on education, multicultural reality, strong competition in all sectors of social activity), the Ministry of Education brought into effect a pilot program for the application of innovative educational practices at schools.

The program lasted from 1997 until 2000 and its principal targets were the cognitive expansion of curricula, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) integration in education, the establishment of all-day schools and relating education outcomes with the labour market.

A small part of the program was intended for fostering attitudes against racism and xenophobia by enhancing student awareness on regional and international circumstances and offering multicultural experiences. This target, claims the Ministry, was achieved by means of teaching the subjects of "Greece, Balkans and Europe: Peoples and Cultures", "For Human Rights, Against Racism", "Conflict Management and Human Rights at School", and by establishing inter-cultural academic co-operation with schools in neighbouring countries.

The program, although veering towards the right direction, is difficult to assess in terms of its transparency and result-based orientation. The Ministry has only released some quantitative data about it (Pedagogical Institute 2001), i.e. the number of participating schools, the number of students and teachers involved in the process, the money invested, etc., that provide no answers of a qualitative nature about the extent to which students have comprehended human rights ideas, how much convincing were these ideas to replace previous biased conceptions against multiculturalism, what were their

feelings of those participating in these programs, how comfortable has the multicultural experience made them in attending classes together with children of a different language, race, religion, ethnic origin, etc.

In these circumstances, the program can hardly be given credit for its methical foundations and effectiveness insofar as we do not receive information about its essential contribution to the formation of a human rights consciousness among students and the impact of this consciousness on their behaviour towards students belonging to vulnerable groups.

2.3. The "cross-thematic curriculum framework for compulsory education"

Ongoing topics of debate in secondary education in Greece include additional teaching courses such as health education, traffic and consumers' education, entrepreneurship for pupils, environmental education, ICTs, arts, music, drama and dance. The reform fits into the purposes of a long term strategic planning designed by the Pedagogical Institute for the gradual transition of compulsory education from traditional field-centred curricula to student-centred and creative learning teaching methods, with a view to promote the development of students' critical thinking, collaborative skills and creative activity.

Mrs Giannakou, Minister of Education, had announced almost a couple of years ago that human rights will be among the new courses to be included in the so-called "cross-thematic curriculum", however the issue still lies in the margins of the reform.

2.4. Concluding remarks

Overall, the state seems to be willing to respond to ongoing transformations in primary and secondary education triggered by the emergence of a new multicultural reality. Initiatives are struggling to take into consideration the effects and the new requirements of cultural diversity at school, but they do it in an awkward and disjointed way, producing results that are either poor, pending to be enforced, or lacking some sort of quality assurance regarding their effective-

ness. If the purpose is to foster understanding and tolerance towards cultural diversity in young minds, then human rights must be worked out as a special, stand-alone course to be included in school curricula, rather than appearing as a disguised sub-part of some all-in-one state educational initiative with ambiguous chances of success. Teaching human rights as part of the cross-thematic curriculum, although yet to be envisaged, is probably the most promising aspect of all ministerial initiatives in the field so far, for

    a. it will set human rights in a nationwide educational perspective for the benefit of all students (native and immigrant alike), and

    b. it will be a clearly discernible educational policy, the operational framework and the desirable outcomes of which will be methodologically easier to formulate and assess.

3. Tertiary education[11]

Human rights education at university level boosts domestic and international academic discourse, facilitates research in exploring new ways for protection and promotion, and contributes to the formation of a global culture of peace and democracy. For Volker Lenhart (2006), human rights education is also very much important for members of professional groups whose duties involve somehow dealing with issues in human rights. The work of primary/secondary education teachers, medical and police staff affects almost all areas of social activity and carries a huge sense of public responsibility for its impact on the well-being of citizens. It is essential, therefore, that these professionals develop through their education reflective conceptions on multiculturalism and a strong sense of equal and just treatment of those affected by the exertion of their duties.

3.1 Training of primary/secondary education teachers

Educating teachers on human rights is important not only for their preparation to be knowledgeably competent in teaching human

---

[11] Data and information gathered from the website of each university.

rights material at class, but also for invigorating their role as "social etiquettes" that will nurture children to value diversity at school and entrench multicultural respect for the rights of other people in their future lives as adults. To that purpose, according to Banks (2001), teachers must process reflective cultural, national, and global identifications themselves, if they are to help students become thoughtful, caring, and reflective citizens in a multicultural world society.

Primary and secondary teachers in Greece are public servants appointed by the Ministry of Education and can only be graduates of a state higher education institution (AEI) with a standard eight-semester (four-year) duration study cycle, comprising courses of general education and specialisation courses on their teaching subject. We were pleasantly surprised, while researching the study programs of all Departments of Education across the country, to see that teaching of human rights courses tends to expand. For obvious reasons, primary focus for the time being is on issues of multicultural education and management of cultural diversity at school and less on the international/political, philosophical, or legal dimension of rights. Currently, courses are taught on undergraduate level and there are no more than a couple of postgraduate programs specialised on human rights for those wishing to further their studies.

Despite being in an embryonic level, efforts for the development of a potentially solid background for educating prospective teachers on human rights are multiplying. One could not expect of course to observe the lively teaching and research tradition we spot in Anglo-Saxon universities, nor their international reputation for the high-level institutional organisation, the quality depth of academic curricula, and the acclaimed educational expertise of professors. Teaching of human rights in Greek higher institutions has evolved during the past decade as a reactive measure for the management of cultural diversity that suddenly struck schools, rather that out of the spontaneous academic curiosity of professors and practitioners to study human rights in a multicultural context. Greek society has turned significantly multicultural only during the last ten-fifteen years. Before that, social diversity was restricted to minorities of relatively limited size and easily distinguishable features (mainly Gypsies), which did not actually incline professors to develop a research relationship with the phenomenon of multiculturalism the same way as western societies that encountered the effects of cultural diversity much earlier and to a greater extent did with their university tradi-

tion. Policy for the new multicultural era in Greece was quick to develop in terms of putting into practice stricter border controls and other enforcement measures for newcomers, but at the same time there has been a significant time lag in designing and implementing a more comprehensive framework for their integration across all sectors and areas of the host country (Triandafyllidou, Gropas 2005). Among these sectors, the university system of the country was not previously prepared to play its role as a social pillar for promotion of tolerance, embracement of cultural pluralism and the consideration of the positive aspects of migration, which somehow explains why a number of surveys find teachers at schools to react awkwardly towards their multicultural audience.

3.2. Training of medical staff

Greece preserves a sizeable public health system, free and equal access to the services of which is by Constitution and Law reserved for all Greek citizens, as well as for legally staying and working immigrants, repatriated Greeks and co-ethnic returnees. However, the quality of the received medical attention tends to be related frequently with the financial background, the educational level and the social standing of people, nationals and non-nationals alike. In particular, as far as members of vulnerable groups are concerned, there are noticed incidents of unequal access, low quality provision of medical services, discrimination, and unfriendly behaviour by medical staff, caused mainly by their different nationality, poor financial situation, lack of insurance, and ignorance about their social entitlements and rights (Kapsalis 2003, Maratou-Aliprandi, Gazon 2005). On an institutional level, improvement of the situation requires the co-ordinated efforts of multiple governmental agents (Ministries of Internal Affairs, Labour and Health), but training of medical staff on human rights is commonly accepted to be a contributing factor for battling the undesired consequences of biased conceptions against foreigners and their contemptuous treatment.

Medicine studies in Greece are of six-year duration (twelve semesters plus a long specialisation period) and courses are offered by the six public Medical Schools and Faculties of the country in the universities of Athens, Thessalonica, Patras, Ioannina, Crete, and Thessaly. All Greek Schools of Medicine have an international reputation for

their high standards of educational quality and for the distinguished skills and expertise of the graduating doctors. However, the focus is exclusively on the medical training (theoretical and practical) of students and there is absolutely no inclusion of human rights education in the associated programs of studies. Our research has come up with only one course of some sort of relevance to human rights entitled "Inter-cultural Nursing". The course is of one semester duration and is offered by the Faculty of Nursing of the Medical School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens.

3.3 Training of police staff

Greece is not immune from the worldwide tendency of law enforcement officials to abuse frequently the rights of citizens during arrests, interrogations, detention or imprisonment. Allegations about members of vulnerable groups being subjected to degrading and humiliating (sometimes violent) treatment by policemen "hit" the TV news bulletins and newspaper front pages from time to time[13]. Law enforcing can by nature be a professional duty of very high risk and the truth is that the limits between meticulous respect for the rights and dignity of the persons involved and police misbehaviour are quite often difficult to distinguish.

In a number of cases, however, as revealed by the NGO Greek Helsinki Monitor's "Joint Annual Report on Human Rights in Greece" (2000), use of police force escapes the boundaries of mere professional zeal and is deeply rooted in institutionalised racism against members of vulnerable groups.

There is a two-level system of police training in Greece. Police constables (low rank staff) are graduates of the Police Constables' School, which is equivalent to a public tertiary Technological Educational Institute (TEI) and provides a two and a half years (five semesters) study cycle. Police officers (high rank staff) are graduates of the Police Officers' School, which is equivalent to a public Higher Educational Institute (AEI) and provides a four-year (eight semes-

---

[13] See the 2006 US Department of State "Report on Human Rights Practices in Greece", and the Report by Mr Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights, on his visit to the Hellenic Republic, 2-5 June 2002.

ters) study cycle. The last few years both Police Schools have come to include some basic education on human rights (one course of one semester duration each), but still this is quite a recent development and the police force remains staffed to a great extent by older officers and constables with no such education back in their study years, which somehow explains their tendency for misbehaviour.

It is interesting to note here that ever since the then called Royal Gendarmerie (*chorofylaki*) was founded (1833) in the free Greek state after termination of the Ottoman occupation, training of police staff was very much close to the military standards of iron discipline and conducted in harsh and almost inhuman conditions, with an aim to produce hard-boiled and iron-handed police officers (Kteniadis 1950, Antoniou 1965). The military spirit of training remained strong throughout at least the first three quarters of the 20th century and police officers were quite frequently asked by their superiors to carry out their duties in an unsentimental and rigid manner towards civilians. The Greek Military Dictatorship (Junta) is a characteristic example of how the "Regime of Colonels" utilized the police to handle violently and arrest protesting people. Before that period, the police had also been used by the repressive anti-communist state to sort all Greeks according to their socio-political convictions and loyalty to the regime (*fakeloma*) in order to determine their access to public services and structure various forms of exclusion. This concept carried connotations of traditional threats and forms of blackmail used by any authority figure to enforce obedience, thus reinforcing a mutual mistrust in state-citizens relations (Samatas 2005). The combination of old-style training methods with a long military-tailored fashion of duty performance had been determining factors of institutionalising the role of police officers as strict and unbending law enforcers at the expense of a more human, altruistic and sensitive approach to helping people sort out their everyday problems. It would be reasonable to claim that such a view of law enforcement was so strongly embedded, that passed from one generation to another through a mechanism of experience exchange between older and younger police officers. We can just expect to see such views fading out by setting new standards of human-centred training.

In the modern era, the Hellenic Police Chief and the leadership of the Ministry of Public Order, acknowledging that incidents of human rights violations by police officers during law enforcement are inappropriate in the context of a democratic member-state of the EU,

have embarked on a campaign to raise their awareness with respect to the prohibition of misbehaviour and discrimination especially at the expense of vulnerable groups. The campaign includes the circulation of the UN's "International Human Rights Standards for Law Enforcement: A Pocket Book on Human Rights for the Police", as well as an adult education (life-learning) program for the additional training of officers on issues pertaining to human rights. The third report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI 2004) acknowledges the intensity of the efforts of the Greek state, stressing however that there is room for more action to end all instances of police misbehaviour, including ill-treatment of members of vulnerable groups.

4. Conclusion

The relatively rapid transformation of Greek society at the sunset of the 20th century from compact and homogeneous into polyethnic and multicultural has provoked confused reactions from the resident population, many of which are identified with discriminatory behaviour and xenophobia. Explanations for such behaviour can be found in socio-cultural and politico-economic studies that analyse the development mechanism of feelings of superiority against and contempt over culturally distinct groups.

At the same time, Lohrenscheit (2002, 2006) observes that states, international organisations and NGO's tend increasingly to consider education among the mechanisms in a society that can significantly contribute to the formulation of a human rights value system for the appreciation of cultural diversity and the facilitation of peaceful multicultural co-existence. At the second UN World Conference on human rights education held in 1993 in Vienna, a powerful new movement for human rights began to emerge. The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action strongly focused on the promotion of human rights education as a strategy for preventing their violation and fostering respect for human dignity. Similar international activities include also the two World Education Forums in Jomtien (1990) and in Dakar (2000) and the decade for "Human Rights Education" of the United Nations (1995-2004).

Greek educational structures seem to have responded with considerable delay to international initiatives for institutionalising a com-

prehensive network for the spread of human rights principles and ideas at school and university, despite obvious signs of a growing multicultural situation that challenged the homogeneity of the local social establishment and its mono-cultural ethics. The difficulty of the resident population and the instruments of the state to handle cultural diversity in a human rights manner is validated by the fact that Greeks are found among the most xenophobic peoples in the EU and many incidents of individual or administrative cultural racism in all areas of social activity are frequently reported. Although we can spot a traceable record of well-intentioned efforts across all levels of schooling, the quality and quantity of human rights education remains in embryonic level and quite a few steps are yet to be taken for its systemisation.

The primary and secondary curriculum of the country still suffers from the absence of a distinct course on human rights and the mapping out of a new multicultural orientation; and at tertiary level, the training machinery, although growing, is still limited to some undergraduate lectures and less than a few postgraduate programs. This meagre educational tradition has created conditions of human rights illiteracy among the population and has collaborated the flourishing of culturally biased conceptions against members of vulnerable groups. It is hopefully assumed that the educational system of the country will increase its reflexes and enlarge the provision of human rights education in order to orient institutional and social behaviour towards more multicultural-friendly ways of expression. It is anticipated that Greece, the southeast frontier of Europe, will keep its dynamics in attracting a multicultural flow of newcomers, peaceful co-existence with whom will largely depend on the extent to which a human rights culture will have expanded across the nation's consciousness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Antoniou, K., (1965), *History of the Greek Royal Gendarmerie 1833-1965*, Athens: G. Ladias, Vol. A & B (in Greek).

Baldwin-Edwards, M., (2005), *National Analytical Study on Racist Violence and Crime: RAXEN National Focal Point for Greece*, ANTIGONE - Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and non-Violence, Vienna.

Banks, J., A., (2001), "Citizenship Education and Diversity: Implications for Teacher Education", *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 52, No. 1, pp. 5-16.

Barker, R., (2001), "The nature of leadership", *Human Relations*, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 469-494.

Charalambis, D., Kafetzis, P., (2000), "Survey on the Values of Greek Society", National Centre for Social Research - EKKE, Athens (in Greek).

Dimitrakopoulos, I., N., (2004), *Analytical Report on Education: National Focal Point for Greece*, ANTIGONE - Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and non-Violence, Athens.

European Commission, (2000), "Eurobarometer: Public Opinion in the European Union", *report No. 53, Directorate-General for Education and Culture*, Brussels.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance - ECRI, (2004), "Third Report on Greece", CRI (2004) 24, Strasbourg.

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), (2003-2004), *Racism and Xenophobia in the EU Member States: Trends, Developments and Good Practice*, annual report, part 2, Vienna.

Gagarin, M., Woodruff, P., (1995), *Early Greek Political Thought from Homer to the Sophists*, Cambridge University Press.

Gousgounis, N., (2002), "Immigration as a Challenge for Settlement Policies and Education. Evaluation Studies for Cross-Cultural Teacher Training: The Greek Experience", in Pitkänen, P., Kalekin-Fishman, D. & Verma, G., (eds.), *Education and Immigration: Settlement Policies and Current Challenges*, Routledge Falmer (London-New York).

Greek Helsinki Monitor, (2000), *Human Rights in Greece: Joint Annual Report*, Athens.

Ilias, M., (2003), "Cross-cultural Education as Precondition of the Modern School: Actions and Perspectives", *Virtual School, The Sciences of Education Online*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (in Greek).

Kampanakis, J., (1997), *Police Training in Crime Witness Interviewing with the Use of Interactive Multimedia*, Master's thesis submitted to the department of Primary School Education of the School of Humanities of the University of Crete (in Greek).

Kapsalis, A., (2003), "Immigrants: Health and Social Exclusion", a study of the Employment Institute of the General Confederation of Greek Workers - GSEE, Athens, (in Greek).

Ketcham, R., (1987), *Individualism and Public Life: A Modern Dilemma*, Basic Blackwell.

Kteniadis, N., (1950), *History of the School of Gendarmerie from its Establishment until Today*, Athens (in Greek).

Lenhart, V., (2006), *Human Rights Education*, Athens: Gutenberg (Greek edition).

Lohrenscheit, C., (2006), "Dialogue and Dignity: Linking Human Rights Education with the Paulo Freire's 'Education for Liberation'", *Journal of Social Science Education*, No. 1. - (2002), "International Approaches in Human Rights Education", *International Review of Education*, Vol. 48, No. 3-4, pp. 173-185.

Maratou-Aliprandi, L., Gazon, E., (2005), "Migration and Health-Social Welfare in Greece: Evaluation of the Situation, Future Challenges and Prospects of Improvement", National Centre of Social Research - EKKE, Athens (in Greek).

McCarthy, G., E., (2003), *Classical Horizons: The Origins of Sociology in Ancient Greece*, SUNY Press.

Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, (2002), "Report by Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles on his Visit to the Hellenic Republic", CommDH (2002) 5, Strasbourg.

Pedagogical Institute, (2001), "Schools for the Application of Innovative Educational Programs", program of the Pedagogical Institute, funded by the Operational Programme for Education and Primary Vocational Training (EPEAEK), Athens (in Greek).

Pollis, A., (1987), "The State, the Law and Human Rights in Modern Greece", *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 587-614.

Samatas, M., (2005), "Studying Surveillance in Greece: Methodological and Other Problems Related to an Authoritarian Surveillance Culture", *Surveillance & Society* 3(2/3), pp. 181-197.

Singer, P., (1985), "Ethics", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Chicago, pp. 627-648.

Skourtou, E., Vratsalis, K., Govaris, C., (2004), *Migration and Education in Greece: Evaluation of the Situation, Future Challenges and Prospects of Improvement*, research carried out under the auspices of the Hellenic Migration Policy Institute, Athens (in Greek).

Stangos, P., (2006), "The Fight against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination in Greece Today: the Normative Framework, Public Actions, and the European Challenge", in Papademetriou, D., Cavounidis, J., (eds.), *Managing Migration: The Greek, EU and International Contexts*, Hellenic Migration Policy Institute, Athens.

Stamoulas, A., (2004), "Cultural Democracies and Human Rights: Conditions for Religious Freedom in Modern Greece", *Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 477-497.

Triandafyllidou, A., (1997), "Nationalism and the Threatening Other: The Case of Greece", *The ASEN Bulletin*, No. 13.

Triandafyllidou, A., Gropas, R., (2005), "Migration in Greece at a Glance", a publication of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Athens.

Tsitselikis, K., (2003), "Citizenship in Greece: Present Challenges for Future Changes", research paper, Research Centre for Minority Groups - KEMO, Athens.

UNICEF, (2001), "Discriminations, Racism and Xenophobia in the Greek Educational System", a survey conducted by KAPA Research on behalf of the Greek department of UNICEF, 6-13 March (in Greek).

US Dept. of State, (2006), "Report on Human Rights Practices in Greece", released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour.