

INCORPORATION OF LANGUAGE VARIETIES AND IDIOMATIC MATERIAL INTO TEACHING AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM FOR THE SUBJECT OF HISTORY: CULTURALLY MEDIATED TEACHING & CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CONTEXTS OF LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The present article focuses on the importance and role of language variation and idiomatic material in teaching as part of the History syllabus, in secondary education, in light of a multi-cultural perspective and the pedagogics of multiliteracy. It also showcases the use of employing the particular material in conjunction with the objectives of culturally mediated teaching, as well as its contribution to the modern Greek school. Finally, the paper also illustrates the term 'culturally responsive curriculum' and its interconnection to the introduction of dialects into schooling.

Keywords: History curriculum, dialects, History teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Defining the content curriculum undoubtedly constitutes one of the most crucial and complex issues in planning and formulating an educational policy. Its approach rests with the goals set by the educational and political leadership, which, in turn, are determined by history, heritage, economic and political imperatives and intentions of the status quo (Kazepidis 1998, 176). Therefore, it is reasonably implied that the shaping of a philosophical and scientific research method, aim and rationale of present study.

As already discussed above, the particular issue of employing material provided in dialectic texts in History curriculum and History Teaching has not been widely investigated in the past. Our research comes to cover the gap collecting, studying and analyzing as much as possible material available and suggest ways and methods of applying all valuable information hidden so as to improve and streamline the teaching of History.

Materials and tasks

The examination of the benefits and prospects, which the specific material provides for teaching, has been conducted on the basis of the literature review and the study of secondary sources, both domestic (Greek) and foreign. It has been mentioned quite a few times that the particular issue of research has not been extensively covered by scientific studies in the past, and hence research was expanded also to other closely related areas, such as Verbal History, School Ethnography etc.,

The literature survey has been concentrated on studying articles from international bibliography concerning the conceptualization and delimitation of the terms culturally mediated teaching & culturally appropriate contexts of learning but also their pedagogical and teaching benefits,

on investigating the Greek and international bibliography aiming at detecting bibliographical references to the issue of importance and the role of introduction and utilization of dialectic and idiomatic material of every type in teaching especially for teaching History.

Process

All the material was collected as part of my postdoctoral thesis research and it was quite a tough process as the relevant material has been detected with great difficulty. The main reason is that there is hardly any published scientific work concerning the introduction of dialectic and idiomatic material in teaching and in the curriculum and school books of History as such a perspective has never been within the main pedagogical targets of Greek educational System. Therefore, it was an innovative but rather lonely process which finally proved to be very rewarding since the results are very interesting and encouraging.

If an argumentation around the curriculum given at a time is an imperative. After all, as it is commonly admitted, in Education sections or components of it pertain to different scientific fields of expertise, notwithstanding though the need of a single holistic approach and supervision of its content. The philosophical preoccupation with Education demands solid philosophical awareness, philosophical mentality, general knowledge and specialized knowledge of the given subject matter (Karafyllis 1999, 231-249).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers' interest in studying the scope and philosophy which pervades the composition and content of the History school books, in particular, can be traced back to the end of First World War and it is reinforced during the Second, since school knowledge is interpreted as one of the several causes of war. Revising/Reviewing the History school books is considered vital for the cultivation of spirit of peace and reconciliation (Koulouri 1987, 219). Research concerning School History (teaching methods, content, scope) has been developed also in Greece, especially over the past two decades. The educational articles mainly after 1997 starts to discuss the issue of the relation between syllabus, taught book and its accompanying material. Basically, that was the time when the scientific dialogue for the position of primary sources/references within the taught curriculum (Gryntakis 2001, 72-77). Following 1981, the setting alters drastically with articles that contain concrete proposals for the content of School History (Mavroskoufis 1999, 53).

Particularly in the last decade, research has been extended into the area of syllabus typology, which ought to be implemented for the subjects of humanitarian studies, including that of History. It is a relatively common idea that the structural features of targets-centred curricula – distinguished from the older academic analytical programmes – incorporate the learning, cognitive, affective and psycho-kinesthetic aims, as well as the subject contents, the teaching methodology and the assessment not only of the teaching process per se, but also of the produced overall work (Kokkinos & Sakka 2012, 73-74). The objections, which were expressed, regarding the lack of flexibility and the strictness of those curricula were various.

There is a scientific and research-based need to conduct also in Greece an examination in terms of school curriculum and of the teaching context, in general (i.e., teaching material, school books etc.). More specifically, about the subject of History, a noticeable progress in its methodological research and in the analysis of its school books has been during the three (3) last decades, although this venture has not been followed by a corresponding progress in its

content research. Yet, there is an urgent need for the school curricula to be designed on the basis of the international scientific developments and studies (Avgeri 2016, 13).

The subject of history has always been of great value and School History has been a terrain for intense ideological and political conflict both in our country and worldwide. Thus, the effort to establish, as much as possible, a rational, detached and serious scientific argumentation on what should be taught through School History constitutes a huge task for our country, too (Avgeri 2016, 13). Still, another critical question to be examined is what factors contribute more effectively to meeting the learning objectives set by the scientific community for the subject of history.

The lack of interdisciplinary orientation in History has attracted the attention of experts ever since the 1990s, given the fact that History is an interdisciplinary subject par excellence and also that a historian should take into consideration the results of a range of scientific studies in order to draft his/her lecture in history. (Svoronos 1988, 21). The necessity for the interdisciplinary approach and the induction of new components into the History syllabus has been stressed already by several researchers of the particular field (Kyrkini 1997, 44-49).

The involvement of idiomatic language and dialects in the teaching of History helps in making the course accessible to local communities and cultures – especially under the present conditions of globalization and the current multi-faceted crisis. It is therefore achieved what the field experts consider as important, that is its multidimensional shaping by everyone engaged in the learning process (tutors, experts, pupils, local communities etc.), and not merely by the official government.

Furthermore, the lack of research studies dealing with the good use of dialect- based/idiomatic texts and testimonies in the lesson of History is another aspect in support of the immediate need to delve deeper into this area. Even though significant work - both in quantity and in quality - on the integration of dialects into the teaching of Modern Greek and Greek Literature has been published in our country, in the previous decades, no respective scientific action has been taken for the subject of history.

METHODOLOGY

Aim and rationale of present study

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DISCUSSION

Multicultural education has sprung along with the civil rights movement towards the end of the 1960s, and it continued to evolve, as the ethnic and national groups were fighting for an 'equal share' of the school curriculum, on all grades. In the recent decades, under the new reality of the United Europe, the globalization and immigration, with the simultaneous emergence of ethnic and minority issues, the leaning objectives in the History lesson are reconstructed. The intercultural and multicultural dimension lies in the centre of scientific dialogue, and the teaching of History is assigned with the task to assist students in acquiring intercultural competence, demonstrating its inherent ability to shape supra-national conscience, highlighting the multiplicity and collectivity of the human civilization. Viewing the lesson of history as a means to an end, pupils are able to comprehend all those features which differentiate them, as well as these which unite them with the 'Other', so as to function better in a multicultural setting.

Under the new context formed during the previous decades with new trends and viewpoints arising in the field of historiography, several scientific approaches are being shaped accordingly, particularly though in relation to methods and models of teaching to facilitate intercultural objectives through the lesson of history. Countries comprised of indigenous and minority populations of diverse characteristics (religious, cultural, linguistic etc.) and of identity different than the one of the dominant culture, were in need of more effective learning strategies and for an educational policymaking based on multiculturalism (Coffey, 2019).

The request for the school subject of history to stop promoting the Western Thought and perception of the world one-sided is expressed more and more intensely after 1980 by Anthropologists, Ethnologists, Historians and Pedagogues, mainly in the United States and Canada, as well as in Australia (Avgeri 2013, 99-100). The exposure of students to dialects and idiomatic language – not only of their own geographical area but also of the wider national territory where they live – puts them in contact with the reality of multiple identities, of linguistic and cultural variety, thus endowing them more tolerant to this multiplicity. The acknowledgement and understanding of multiple identities in the framework of globalization but also in light of the individual right to self-define oneself, within the context of a multi-sided reality, constitute the main purpose of an education for multiculturalism and democracy (Psymmitis 1999, 91). In particular, historic records, written in local varieties, but also oral testimonies by native speakers of a dialects can familiarize students with this reality, in an experiential way.

Drawing from this kind of mentality, the movement of Multiliteracy appeared in the middle of the 1990s, intending to cultivate an educational orientation which would take into account the cultural and linguistic differentiation within the European educational environment. According to this movement, the literacy pedagogy/pedagogics should acknowledge the pupils' multilingual ability, yet also to expand their literacy beyond the linear text-based teaching as well as beyond the traditional notion of literacy. The key parameters of multiliteracy for productive learning in a differentiated classroom setting are cognitive stimulation and identity empowerment (Cummins 2009,143).

The multiliteracies pedagogics respects and acknowledges the different linguistic and cultural inventory which every student carries along either from home or from his/her community and, interestingly enough, attempts to employ it in an effort to achieve better results both in terms of knowledge input and in terms of fostering one's own identity (Cummins 2009,143). Linguistic heterogeneity owed to variety and the existence of dialects, idiomatic language, diction and all sorts of other language-based differences builds up the multiple faces of an externally unified language code, a fact which should be a case of good practice (Skoutrou 2009, 152). According to Tsami, multiliteracy at its fourth and final stage, its transformative usage, intends to enable students discern the geographical diversity, distinguish between users of a dialect and users of idiomatic speech, as well as not to assign social attributes/characteristics to speakers of a dialect (Tsami 2016, 102-103,110- 111).

The school curriculum should be diversified, not one-sided. One of the main principles underlying a school curriculum, especially the one related to the lesson of History, is its connection with the existing knowledge background of the students and their experiences. Pupils carry into the school environment an already formed input of knowledge, which embeds knowledge, values, attitudes, perceptions and competencies associated with and bequeathed by the community, in which the pupils were raised and of which they are members (Sidney 2000, 7-12). In this sense, the school curriculum should integrate and respect local knowledge, appreciating it as equally valuable. Students' experiences and the means through which they have learned to perceive and study the world and everything that takes place around them, should not be ignored nor excluded from the schooling process, but rather to be appropriately employed in it, in accordance with the official school curriculum (Sidney 2000, 7-12).

In this context, of course, language variety spoken by a particular community consists an inextricable part of local knowledge, with all of its accompanying features of vocabulary richness, historical evolution, idioms and verbal tradition. The intercultural examination of programmes of study presupposes the view that minorities are not to be interpreted as deficit communities, but rather to be given value, instead (Roth 2000, 30- 32).

In fact, this line of thought is followed by many countries, which attempt to incorporate multicultural elements into their school curricula (*Culturally responsive curriculum*). This kind of approach aims to create a climate of mutual understanding and appreciation among the different cultural groups, mitigate tensions and conflicts and produce an analytical programme that would reflect the experiences, traditions and historical contribution of each group, as nationality (Coffey 2008, 2). Also, it is taken into consideration that students enter school with a fixed system of beliefs, principles and knowledge of the world, shaped upon their cultural experiences; this already formed codification of the world should not be overlooked or replaced by the school, but rather to be used with respect, as point of reference complementary to the learning procedure.

Tutors must be able to grasp the meaning of the unique cultural capital which a pupil brings with him/her into the teaching-learning process, even if this is considerably different from the established social norms and worldviews. As observed in the classroom reality, it is a common occurrence that the cultural background of students presents noticeable differences, a fact which can serve as an opportunity for the teacher to seek for a common ground using meaningful pedagogical strategies away from racist ideas and inclusive of the concept of cultural relativity (Coffey 2008,2).

What is more, let us be reminded of the fact that the majority of secondary education pupils are not academically mature or capable enough to grasp the cultural differences between their own cultural input and that of others. In fact, most students at this level rely exclusively on their tutor and on the teaching methods which they choose to implement, accordingly.

In cases where teachers insist on using non-productive methods, students are deprived of their academic preparation, which is necessary also for their active participation in society. Thus, it is understood that teaching based on good practices of the linguistic and cultural background of students-speakers of a dialect as well as on the good use of language variety itself has got a significant impact and role (Hallins 1996, 312).

A pedagogic and educational intervention able to address the multiple heterogeneity of the school classroom cannot, however, be targeted only to the given minority group but it should refer to and involve also the given dominant group, projecting its own – equally figurative - (Androusou & Askouni 2007, 24-25). After all, such an approach could be helpful also to pupils of the majority group students, since several studies have highlighted the interrelation between high academic performance and the introduction of multicultural teaching material into the classroom.

Culturally Mediated Teaching

Culturally mediated teaching is characterized by the use of culturally responsive cognitive procedures, culturally appropriate social contexts for learning and culturally valuable knowledge in the school curriculum content. The culturally responsive cognitive procedures pertain to approaches which make good use of the ways of learning, understanding, representation and expression employed by a particular culture.

The phrase ‘culturally appropriate social contexts for learning’ refers to the relationships developed among students as well as between teachers and students during the learning procedure, which are in line with cultural values and practices. For instance, it has been shown that in cases where teaching is in balance with natural interactions, as an extension of learning facilitation beyond the classroom setting, and when it expresses a spirit of students’ understanding, the latter tend to switch from being traditionally described as non-analytical and non-verbal to participating in a verbal interaction and analytical/inductive reasoning. In this case, of course, the school curriculum framework is the one drawing on the investigative approach. Hence, managing the social dimension of life at school constitutes a major aspect of the productive teaching.

The culturally valuable knowledge in the content of the school curriculum entails the integration of knowledge which assigns/attributes value to the student’s original culture (Hallins 1996, 313). As pointed out by Malott & Pruy: “... *it is a simple procedure. Turn the manuals with hegemonic speech against themselves and give value, incorporate into the school curriculum the cultural capital, the stories and wisdom of students. This way, the*

school years will acquire meaning and strength. We shall give pupils multiple perspectives around the syllabus, even through the existing school books..." (Malott & Pruyn 2006, 165). Therefore, it is evident that there is a direct link between the introduction of language varieties (dialects) into teaching and the learning objectives and strategies of the multicultural education. Until recently, linguistic variation and differentiation from the standard form of a language has been considered a threat (Gates & Ilbury, 116). Contrary to this view, the good use of dialects supports the effort to preserve local cultures and the cultural and heritage uniqueness of those communities, where dialects and/or idiomatic language is spoken. Ultimately, dialects, and languages too, are part of a people's cultural heritage, signifying ethnic and other identity genres, while also contributing to their construction (Wondimu 2015, 265).

CONCLUSIONS

-Throughout the centuries, the richness of cultural expression and creativity, modernity and inventiveness as a panhuman and eternal element should pervade the philosophy of the School History syllabus.

-The History curriculum should aim to instill into students the ability for them to apprehend the beauty of/in cultural heterogeneity and variety, which has always permeated the history of humanity.

-The language variety spoken by a specific community with its vocabulary richness, historical evolution, idioms and verbal tradition is an inextricable component of local knowledge.

-The good use of dialects reinforces the attempt to preserve local cultures and the cultural and heritage uniqueness of communities whose members are speakers of dialects and/or idiomatic language.

-The integration of the diversified idiomatic language into teaching exhibits for the students to experience in practice the multiple functions of language, as a fundamental cultural expression of the human race.

-The presence of works of verbal and written tradition in dialects and idiomatic language variations adds up to the understanding not only of the cultural diversity yet also of the similarity through difference.

-A close up examination of dialects and language varieties showcases and interprets the thread of connecting dots (with other languages etc.).

-The introduction of local communities' colloquial language into schooling is an empowering thing for students, who are also provided with motives for learning. Ultimately, it evokes positive feelings towards the target group, to which these students belong, as well as towards School as an institution, which now, instead of a strange and distant place, it becomes familiar and accessible.

-In this context, teaching methodology implements important aids and rich and beneficial learning material – neglected in Greece, until recently. Namely:

Verbal tradition.

Oral testimonies (verbal καὶ local History καὶ Ethnography).

Literature and Poetry in local colloquial variety and in dialect.

Written records of every type in idiomatic language.

Records/documentation of local communities, associations etc.

Online material (platforms, YouTube etc.).

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