Racism in Contemporary Educational Reality Parents' Aspects

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Abstract. Greek society and all societies in the countries of Europe alike are multiculturalist. The adoption and implementation of an intercultural approach towards "differentiated cultural groups", will give an opportunity to their members to actively participate in "social living" preserving at the same time their own cultural identity within a wider context of socially acceptable values and practices. The prevalent aspect of the dominant cultural group considering "foreign" anything different, ignoring at times the obvious (i.e. that Muslims of Thrace and Gypsies are also Greek citizens). Even the acceptance of certain different social groups should follow their "assimilation" in the way of life of the dominant social group. Thus, prejudice, stereotypes and xenophobia have become an integral part of daily life. In the 21st century Europe shows contradictory and ideological signs as to the serious impact national identity have on daily life and on the future of a nation-country, in general. The awakening of nationalism in the Middle East throws discredit upon the subsidence of the same phenomenon in the West. As the political and economic developments do not seem to be very optimistic in many countries of the European Union, the phenomenon of reemergence of extreme right national political parties and nationalist organizations appears to take place in every country in question, including Greece. The first "victims" of such an ideological turn are the residents (immigrants and refugees) and citizens of the European Union whose presence and activity throw discredit upon the image of a culturally, nationally and racially compact and unified, as far as ideological orientation is concerned, national state. Within such a xenophobic and foreign oriented environment, it is likely for obsolete ideological constructions as well as new created ones to be used as cognitive, sentimental and behaviorist "tools" in order to behave, realize and experience "others". Therefore, a pedagogical intervention is deemed essential and intentional in an effort to provide elementary analytical information concerning the social, psychological and educational mechanisms which produce, preserve and contribute to the perpetuation of racism. The present paper is focused on the phenomenon of racism in contemporary educational reality while an effort is made to point out the levels of racism as far as national identity, racial origin, sex and language differentiation are concerned.

Keywords: racism, contemporary educational Reality, social discrimination, educator's role, parents' aspects

Racism: Conceptual Clarification of the Term & Forms of Social Discrimination

The created circumstances by the European Union and the movement of the population have brought about necessary changes on the organization and operation of the Greek school. The Greek educational system as national oriented, mono-cultural, monolingual and homogeneous is incapable to deal with the national-cultural difference of the students while the Greek educational policy has made an effort to deal with the problem essentially only during the last two decades (Georgogiannis, 1997). The United States, Britain and France were the first to implement certain educational policies concerning the integration of students with national-cultural particularities (children of immigrants or minorities) into school (Askouni, Androussou, 2001).

The concept of an individual as a member of a broader category, the so called categorical concept, is in relation to the acknowledgement concerning the qualities of the social category the individual belongs to. From the aforementioned acknowledgement and mostly from the evaluative acknowledgement arises an image for the "other", whose basic characteristic is generalization and oversimplification. This image is called a stereotype.

The term "discrimination" refers to the unfair treatment of an individual, because this individual belongs to a certain social group for which there is a negative stereotype and negative prejudice, on the part of the discriminator. Social discrimination means differentiated treatment either favorable or adverse. Whether the discrimination is positive or negative, what is important is that the social identity of the "other" intervenes on the interaction and changes the regulations of the game either in favor or against him. In the case of negative discrimination the subject suspends some of his obligations towards the "victim" of discrimination cancelling in this way any respective expectations and rights of the victim. If however, the discrimination is positive, then the subject raises some of the restrictions which regulate the "other's" expectations. In this way, he exceeds the limit of his obligations towards the "other" who is subjected to a privileged treatment without deserving it. It is worth mentioning that in both cases treatment is unfairly unequal therefore unjust (Martindale, 1988).

The social category in which the individual of the discrimination belongs to ("the other") also defines the sort of discrimination. If the category is race, the discrimination is racial so there is racism in a stricter sense. If the category is national origin, the discrimination is nationalist whereas in the case the social identity of the "other" has to do with religious integration then the discrimination is religious. It is evident that there is no restriction in the forms of social discriminations in the sense that theoretically this restriction coincides with the restriction of social discriminations. History however has shown that categories of race, nation, religion, sex, age, professional group and social status have been until this day a breeding ground of social discrimination (Searle, 1992).

The relation between prejudice and discrimination is a relation of theory – action, meaning that prejudice has to do with readiness for action (stance) while discrimination is an attitude, thus involves action. Social discrimination is nothing but the materialization of an existing prejudice against a social group. If the stereotype is a categorical concept concerning the "other" and prejudice a categorical stance towards the "other", then social discrimination is a categorical treatment of the "other". There are times when prejudice is not expressed practically as hostile attitude. Whether it will take place or not depends on various factors such as the economic situation of the individual, his personality or social environment (Kassimati, Papaioannou, Georgoulas, Prandalos, 2005).

According to Dovidio and Gaertner (1986), people acknowledge only the prejudice which is deemed socially acceptable and in conformity with their ideology, personal values and policy. On the contrary, "old-fashioned prejudice" which is no longer socially acceptable, is replaced by other kind which is based on contemporary social norms.

In 1950, Adorno and his associates started studying prejudice in relation to the development of personality. Researchers concluded that prejudiced individuals had a particular type of personality which they called bossy. Bossy personality is characterized by convention, inflexibility, subservient submission to power, aggressiveness, stereotypes and prejudice, desire for power, destructiveness, cynicism and tendencies for standing out.

The fact that social discrimination constitutes materialization of prejudice does not mean that every form and case of social discrimination presupposes prejudice. The decision, for instance, of a hotel owner not to provide accommodation to Albanian immigrants is susceptible of multiple interpretations. It may be a product of classical prejudice meaning that the hotel does not accept this category of clientele in general without any particular reasons imposing such an attitude. There is also the case in which fear is expressed that these people will leave the hotel in the morning without paying the bill, which means that there would not be a discrimination, in the first place, if there was a certainty that the specific clients would behave like any other regular clients. In this case discrimination does not involve prejudice against the victim of discrimination but is based on some prediction concerning their potential attitude (Gotovos, 1996).

It is an undeniable fact that social discriminations which function as the cause for the creation of social prejudice, may be the result of prejudice from previous times created by ideological mechanisms of those particular times. The second form of creation of prejudice – "social discriminations which become visible from the low position of the particular group in the social hierarchy, lead to social prejudice" – is widely spread (Tsiakalos, 2000).

In conclusion, social discrimination (racism) is a case of differentiation of attitude towards a certain individual who belongs to a particular social category

and does not constitute social discrimination every differentiation of attitude towards the "other" based on his social identity. The basic presupposition for the differentiation of attitude towards an individual in order to become social discrimination is the institutional or moral fundamental right of every individual to be the receiver of a specific treatment regardless of whether he belongs to or not to the social category in which he belongs and because of which he is subjected to the discrimination. To sum up, racism is the cancellation of the "other's" expectation for equal treatment based on a united criterion whether it is established or considered moral by the broader environment without being established.

Education & Social Discriminations

The relation between social system and social discriminations has two aspects: a) the educational system can contribute to social discrimination through its selective operation, that is distributing school titles based on the social category of the beneficiaries and not according to their merits, and b) the school may favor social discrimination as an element of ideology whether official (analytical curricula, school guides), or unofficial (class organization, arrangement of seats, students' registration).

Social discriminations in education can be institutionally established (institutional racism) or unofficial (cultural racism). The term "cultural racism" refers to discriminations taking place in daily life yet not institutionally valid existing as characteristics of a cultural tradition of a community, society or social group (racist mentality, manners and customs).

This discrimination is useful because it allows the tracing of racist attitudes in education even if the institutional framework is neutral and other but racist. The presence of racism in education even if there is not a racist institutional framework is probable for the following reasons. First because official regulations never cover all the details of educational acts, leaving the "initiative" to the educators in order to cover the gaps. In this way overtly or covertly stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination practices are carried into education. The most frequent and difficult racism to be dealt with, is racism among students. Especially when this racism constitutes an operational element in the composition of peer groups and the assertion and preservation of status, creates a thorny pedagogical problem for the educational staff.

The first seeds of the ideology of racism are met in the sociological thinking of the 19th century, more specifically the French sociologist Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) in his four-volume work "Essays on the inequality of human races", gave the theoretical stand for the development of racist ideologies. Gobineau supported that there is a prevalent racial inequality and that only Aryans who constitute the superior part of white race have succeeded in providing remarkable cultural achievements during the course of human civilization. He also believed that the conquest of an inferior population by a superior one

contributes to the progress of civilization, taking into consideration that both populations will preserve their racial purity. Finally, Gobineau attributed the decadence of civilization to the intermingling of populations (Timasheff, Theodorson, 1983).

Reality, as it is expressed daily through the interaction of social associates in education, not only does it not coincide necessarily with the role model or as it is outlined by institutional regulations, but also deviates systematically from it. This is happening mainly within the frame of an educational system where the supervision mechanisms of its operation do not exist or if they do they do not operate. In an educational system characterized by deviation, racist practices appear in the form of infringement or ignorance of regulations which are supposed to prevent or ban social discriminations (Gotovos, 1996).

The most known and blatant form of institutional educational racism is the official exclusion of parts of the population from the educational system because they belong to specific social categories (ex. blacks, women, people of another religion etc.). It is worth mentioning that exclusion does not arise by the fact that the specific population belongs to the social categories it belongs and at the same time it presents low performance or expresses denial to use the services of the educational system. It is owed exclusively to the fact that the potential students in question belong to certain social categories. It involves administrative exclusion and not an exclusion through the use of internal educational criteria. Such exclusions are nonexistent in the educational systems of most countries nowadays and belong to the past as far as the educational systems of the technologically developed societies are concerned (Govaris, 2001).

The institutional educational racism is likely to appear in the level of educational infrastructure, organization and administration of the school, analytical curricula, school guides, education and training of educators, the system of positioning and detachment of educators and finally in the level of pedagogical practices.

When the material conditions of realization of the educational act for a particular population of students who belong to a certain social group (ex. national, religious, language, cultural minority) are policy downgraded (unsuitable school buildings, nonexistent infrastructure for the support of teaching etc.), the result is an existent, institutionally defined discrimination of the provided educational services to the student population in question, in comparison to the provided services to the rest of the country's students.

Now, as for social discrimination in the level of organization and administration of a school, it takes place when through administrative regulations there is an attempt and realization of an entrenchment of specific student groups because they belong to a specific social group (creation of intercultural schools for students of a different language). This fact constitutes an institutional barrier on communication and interaction of students from different cultural

environments within the same school premises, a kind of "cultural catharsis" in a small scale. The interesting element of this practice lies in the fact that initiatives for such a regulation do not come from the top of the educational pyramid but from students' parents of the dominant group. The decision of the administration to give in to the pressure of the "base" follows a peculiar reasoning of compromises in an educational and policy level which does not necessarily mean that the educational system in an administrative level which adopts racism. It means however, that it does not adopt as principle of administrative action the rejection of racist demands and accepts their satisfaction when this reassures certain returns (Dragona & Fragoudaki, 2001).

According to the aforementioned, an antiracist education is deemed intentional and necessary based on the principles of Intercultural Education and multicultural approach, far from elements of xenophobia, a phenomenon which is characterized by the sense of fear or dislike and aversion towards foreigners. The term is typically used to describe aversion towards foreigners or individuals who are different (Vlachadi, 2009).

The Educator's Role in Discrimination Management

The question now is how the aforementioned theories can assist the educator in managing discriminations and reducing prejudice. According to the theory of contact, an emphasis is given on the suitable existing conditions so that inner-group contact can create positive attitudes. Conditions that will promote interactions of an equal level and a contact which will have frequency and duration while its nature and quality should be effective.

The educator possessing the knowledge of this theory and its conclusions will be able to construct this effective contact selecting the cooperative methods supported on the creation of small student groups who are assigned various projects and exercises, who cross roles and duties while they cultivate responsibility and interdependence of each student, since each child should be taught and teach what he knows.

Intercultural education is above all an appeal for the cultivation of a dialectic relation, a dynamic interaction process, mutual recognition and cooperation between different multicultural groups and presupposes, as Markou (1995) and Damanakis (1997) mention, the overcoming of the narrow concept "nation-country", the abandoning of the national oriented models which permeate the school curricula, the acceptance of multiculturalism, the acceptance of the different and the created osmosis from the coexistence and cohabitation of individuals and groups with cultural differences (Nikolaou, 2000).

The theory of social identity based on the aspect that positive inner-group identity is acquired when compared to the outer-group, can provide the educator with the awareness of these processes and thus the capability to stay alert whether to prevent them or to soothe them. The theory of social

categorization in which the center of the approach involves categorization as a cognitive process, structure or form, which simplifies the process of information and defines the result of the intergroup interactions, gives the opportunity to the educator to examine the social mechanisms which create prejudice and acquire the pedagogical knowledge in order to construct the contact between his students in a way to encourage information in an individual level, contact with many and not only one member of the group while aiming at the creation of a merging super-group who will cover both conspicuous and supplementary roles for each member along with the existence of a common target.

In the theory of the realistic groups of Sherif and his associates, in which competition is inevitable when there is a conflict of interest between the two groups, the educator can decrease this competition with the adoption of "dividing" and the determination of common targets replacing the competitive interests.

So the educator is the mediator while Post innovatory society and Pedagogy as well as the basic principles of the European and intercultural dimension, demand and define a new role for the educator. According to Xohelis (2005), the post innovatory school with basic characteristics the provision of a minimum yet basic network of knowledge and mainly the initiation of the young generation in ways and methods of approaching the knowledge where the importance lies not in quantity and completion but in quality and the way of acquiring the knowledge, the creation of incentives and readiness for Lifelong Learning, the development of personal judgment that is, "defensive mechanisms for the new generation towards scientific and technological achievements, cultivation of respect towards human freedom, cultivation of sensitivity and sense of responsibility towards the natural environment as the framework of existence and presupposition of the survival of man".

According to Kossivaki (2003), in the post innovatory school the target is the cultivation of a peaceful conscience and attitude towards other peoples and foreign students, since the basic characteristic of contemporary societies is their multicultural profile, constituting a necessity the ability of understanding and solidarity for the "foreign" and the "other" who has a different racial orientation, color and religion and different models of thought and education.

Thus, in this school with European consciousness where the cultural identity of the citizens of every country-member is not downgraded, the new demands for migratory movement were expressed with the request for "Intercultural Education" forming respective tendencies and mainly attitudes in environments with different cultural characteristic systems of principles and behavioral patterns and facing prejudice and racist expressions and finally, at school where the democratic way of political organization and the cultivation of a democratic conscience require a different role and profile from the educator as well as a different way of dealing with the problems he is facing today.

The educator, as Kossivaki (2003) mentions, in order to function within the frame of the European and intercultural dimension in education, he has to respect and promote individual and social awakening of the child as well as play a leading role in the educational and social activities, he should also respect the child's particularity, be seriously aware of the incentives and speculations, awaken the child's background and abilities, whereas as far as social awakening is concerned, he defends the student's weaknesses and supports the effort of their overcoming, teaches the use of mature reasoning and the art of communication and understanding others, teaches the student responsibility in an effort to integrate him into the world, exactly as he is, and provide him with the vision and reassurance that all this is feasible (Xohelis, 2005).

The educator, according to Xohelis (2005), is a pioneer and ringleader in the service of the child, by being an example himself with his way of life while he struggles with all his strength and substantiate open and publicly his beliefs through his actions, controlling his principles and standing up for his student along with his own pedagogical freedom. The post innovatory school by adopting intercultural education is characterized by openness and flexibility (Kossivaki, 2003).

Research Part
Aim of Survey – Sample Characteristics – Survey Methodology

The basic aim of the survey was to examine the phenomenon of racism in a level of nationality, racial origin, language differentiation and sex. More specifically, the focus was on:

- Whether there are racist incidents at the Greek school?
- Who is responsible for racism?
- Whether children's parents are racists and if they affect their children?
- Whether their children have witnessed racist phenomena at school?
- Whether they have experienced racism and how they reacted?
- What was the form of racism they experienced?

The sample of the survey included 80 parents of Greek origin whose children attend Elementary School and High School in Athens. There were 40 women aged 28-40 years old and 40 men aged 35-50 years old. The sample was selected from the archives of Parents Schools operating in Athens.

For the collection of the data the method of the questionnaire was used including closed type questions in order to have more valid results.

Survey Results
The survey showed the following:

- There are racist phenomena in the Greek school not only against foreign students but also against Greek students, in a percentage of 92%.
- Children's parents are not judgmental if their children hang out or their friends are foreign students, in a percentage of 82%.
- Parents encourage their children to behave politely to foreign students (ex. inviting their schoolmate to their house) and condemn every form of social exclusion, in a percentage of 91%.
- In almost all schools in Athens half of the student population is foreign, approximately 85% in Elementary School and 65% in High School.
- Racism is reinforced due to the economic crisis in the country, according to the 38% of male parents and 40% female parents.
- The parents' educational level shapes or influences up to a point the friendly or reserved attitude of the child towards foreign children. The lower the educational level, the more prejudiced the individuals against foreigners.
- Greek students have experienced racism from foreigners because they were outnumbered, in a percentage of 92%.
- Greek students have reported a racist incident to their teacher, in a percentage of 11%, to their parents 85% and to their classmates 4%.

Conclusions

There has been an effort in this paper to define the term racism and how it arises in education, as well as the definition of otherness and how it is dealt with in education, also how attitudes are formed towards other people and how stereotypes and prejudice against groups, according to Allport (1921), and how stereotypic concepts represent the mental energy used to simplify the myriads of social information deriving from an individual's surroundings (Georgas, 1986), and what the developed theories are in order to explain the formation and propagation of stereotypes and prejudice.

It has been comprehensible that if cognitive energy of categorization of information concerning social groups, as well as its mechanisms, cognitive, sentimental, social and cultural, as Macrae (1996) mentions, which create stereotypical concepts about social groups change, then stereotypes can change along with attitudes towards social groups which create false impressions or oversimplified concepts.

Prejudice can be decreased if there is personal contact, frequent and close contact would be even better, if it allows improvement of relations among the members of the group, if the members belong to the same social class and finally if contact involves cooperative activity. Then and only then can prejudice be decreased under certain circumstances and as it was mentioned before, as far as stereotypes are concerned.

The focus of the paper was on the methods of intercultural education and the methods of social psychology which assist in the decrease of prejudice and the management of discriminations along with their mutual completion. The emphasis on the methods of intercultural education has been understood in order to comprehend the social inequalities connected to these phenomena,

while in social psychology, the evaluative part of prejudice and more specifically the three composing parts of this attitude – prejudice that is, knowledge, evaluation and readiness for action, how these attitudes are created, the prejudice and the discriminations along with racism, while the capability of the educator has been pointed out to make use of these complementary methods in order to manage the discriminations in a constant evolving school, the post innovatory school.

As contemporary pedagogical research shows, from the moment that the demand for a different educational practice emerges critical in all levels and all circumstances and since there have been efforts and solutions as well as methods have been provided in order to decrease prejudice and there is a "proper" management of difference within the classroom, the emphasis must be given on the preparation of educators who will stay alert, will always be able to identify the particularities of the framework in which they will be called to act and at the same time will be in a position to realize the capabilities and limits of the system within which they work as well as their personal contradictions.

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