

THE RISE OF FAR RIGHT IN EUROPE: CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS RELEVANT TO THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Evaggelia KALERANTE*

Abstract: *The political situation formed across Europe on a political level with the rise of far right and the adoption of attitudes and behaviours representative of the broader acceptance of far right ideologies on a social level is the focal point of this paper. This issue should also be a consideration in terms of education so that an educational model reinforcing democracy and humanism is formed. Concentration is placed on the Greek educational policy aiming at suggesting interventions in the curriculum and the educational school reality, too. This is a period when an increasing number of individuals educate themselves for long years. Therefore, formal education encompassing Primary and Secondary education as well as lifelong education should be emphasized. As regards schools, democracy and humanism should be aligned to the school environment and the formulated juvenile culture. As regards lifelong education, the topics and content offered through seminars should be enriched with theoretical principles which are reinforcing to the association of learners with the democratic operation of society.*

Keywords: Greek educational system; democracy; humanism; school environment; juvenile culture; democratic society

1. Political theoretical formulations

The European political system is challenged by the dynamics of far right political parties, being a developing phenomenon across Europe. Greece forms a particular case study due to the political parties' restricted presence whereas the percentage of the far right party of "Golden Dawn" has increased over the past eight years. Citizens are affected in shaping corresponding attitudes and behaviours by the far right political discourse. During a period of acute economic crisis, far right political standpoints are underpinned and people's feelings of exclusion and marginalization are generated as they are deemed the "others" in the society¹. Thus, natives turn against immigrants and outdated ideological schemata about racial

* Assistant Professor, University of West Macedonia, Greece; e-mail: ekalerante@yahoo.gr.

¹ See (indicatively) modern theoretical perspectives about diversified people and collectivities based on racial features, nationality or religion (Garcia, 2001).



superiority or inferiority become a propos². Meanwhile, throughout a period of confined welfare policies, far right political parties assume the role of the natives' protectors.

In the globalized societies, far right political parties put forward viewpoints about the nation-state as the only political cluster in contrast to globalization. The notions of "people" and "nation" are promoted in contradistinction to the broader conceptualization of the citizen as the citizen of the world³. The far right restricted viewpoints cancel ideologies about democracy and humanism. Anti-democratic standpoints are pinpointed with emphasis on totalitarian systems in which violence and irrational political operation become the dominant models of political expression.

Rivalry against immigrants is related to rivalry against Jewish and Muslims. Moreover, within the formulating conservative policy, far right political standpoints focus on the threefold of family, country and religion. Traditional stereotypes about women's inferiority, cancellation of their rights, their confinement to household duties and children care-taking are included in the family model.

Within the country model, the native population is underpinned as the dominant population. Moreover, homogeneity is the objective whereas diversity is deemed the failure of monitoring modern parties' policies. Religion is approached in political terms by which the religious content of Christianity is perceived along with the nation's dynamics. Thus, the social and political subjects' identities become powerful since roles and behaviors are aligned to policies of integration based on the traditional combination of country-religion⁴.

Within the European area, a cancellation of the policy of rights is observed toward a political model of shrunk principles and standpoints about the citizens' dynamic role and presence in a globalized environment. Both the reception of far right standpoints and tolerance across expanded population strata should be of primary consideration as far right viewpoints are spread, either explicitly or implicitly, across people's everyday attitudes and behaviors.

Nowadays, protection against globalization and the economic crisis becomes an underpinning ideology of the far right wing across Europe. Protection is interpreted as a selective distinction of groups to be protected in contrast to other groups to be excluded. In this respect, the criterion is centered round national, religious, political and cultural diversifications.

The present paper focuses on the role of education in Greece; that is, how the political capital can be formed within the educational environment, reinforcing democratic principles and standpoints⁵ so that bonds among citizens become powerful on the basis of co-operation and mutuality, without interfering and

² See (indicatively) about the action and dynamics of the far right party of "Golden Dawn" among the Greek youth (Kalerante, 2013b).

³ See (indicatively) about issues of political identity (Biesta, 2010).

⁴ See (indicatively) about issues of religion and the association between religious identity and nationalistic principles (Moore, 2007).

⁵ See (indicatively) about the formation of democratic principles and viewpoints in schools (Giroux, 2005; Noddings, 2013).



distinguishing ideologies tied to nationality, religion and culture. Within the formed political subversive situation, education arguably has its own discourse and assumes the responsibility toward political socialization in a humanistic educational program with emphasis on inter-cultural, harmonious co-existence and reinforcement of political rights⁶.

Within a period of economic crisis in which focus is placed on the financial paradigm, the educational policy should form a model of interpretation and understanding of the socio-political phenomena conducive to reinforcing far right political parties and their standpoints. Consequently, the structures and functionality of the educational system is reconsidered. The present paper focuses on specific proposals of political enhancement of the educated so that they, as citizens of globalized environments, define their political and social co-existence in equality terms⁷ with a parallel reinforcement of political participation⁸. This way, weaknesses of the economic system and political choices are no longer unnoticed. On the contrary, they generate the prerequisites for dialogue, deliberation and political change.

2. The political role of education

The educational policy in Greece could not stay intact from political swings to more conservative standpoints. The rise of far right parties in Europe should be interpreted as the weakness of the political system to confront the effects of the economic crisis. Thus, political parties were given the possibility to develop protective, political bonds with individuals and societies in every nation-state. The concentration on the nation-state and the consequent underpinning of unifying, cultural and religious features is tied to the formation of the notion of “citizen” in restricting terms, being the outcome of immediate reference to the nation-state.

In this framework, globalized principles of political humanism are cancelled along with the policy of rights. The Greek political system is found to embarrassingly observe the developments while citizens’ passivity, institutions and democratic system disdain are intensified. Within this political scene, the educational policy ought to engage with the subject’s political reconstruction, political socialization and elevation of humanistic principles and standpoints. This way, the relation of social subjects within an expanded globalized environment is enhanced.

⁶ See generally about intercultural issues and broader considerations about the effectiveness of methods and practices (Korn and Bursztyn, 2002).

⁷ See (indicatively) about policies towards the reduction of social inequality with emphasis on educational programs about equality and humanism (Green and Preston, 2008).

⁸ Quote the European Youth Week has already been completed (EYW2015) which commenced on 27/04. Mr. Tibor Navracsecs, the delegate of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports met representatives of juvenile organizations to undertake active roles in the democratic society. The young show disbelief to European Union and decisions of the European institutions are not convincing.

This is, perhaps, an opportunity for education to assume an active role since it seems to be disdained as an institution within an expanded internet educational environment. The carriers seem disorientated and marginalized by the limited educational packages of knowledge and exams far off the broader political environment which is formed with idiosyncratic features and facts without integrated political elements from other socio-political areas.

The disdain of the political system is being observed as the voters' percentage is reduced in Greece, particularly their participation in pressing groups and collectivities. These are issues to be seriously considered by the Greek educational policy. Within the period of economic crisis and intense dependence on international financial centres and the corresponding institutions, the reinforcement of far right political discourse is observed instead of the reinforcement of leftist political movements. Within Secondary and Tertiary education, the juvenile population is observed to adopt attitudes and behaviours stemming from far right political discourse and the corresponding political practice.

The Greek educational policy should form an expanded draft of political socialization that should diffuse democratic political discourse to all grades through selected subjects and every day practice. The issue of economic crisis should be interpreted in political and social terms so that the dimensions are underpinned. At the same time, population groups such as immigrants and Jewish should not be incriminated and resolution of such issues based on far right political standpoints should be cancelled.

In the current globalized conditions, the Greek educational policy ought to contribute to enhancing the relations between Greece and other countries as well as the corresponding international organizations. This way, political solutions about the economic crisis could be promoted away from political rivalry within the nation-states and off far right political standpoints. The humanistic content ought to be elevated by the educational policy with emphasis on the harmonious co-existence of people, social equality, operation of the democratic system, integration of citizens into the political life to confront issues like poverty and racism⁹. The democratic function of deliberation and participation ought to be reinforced within the school community with viewpoints exchange and the development of a dynamic political discourse. This way, individuals could have their own discourse and promote democratic attitudes to resolution of issues by excluding the far right political discourse.

In this framework, the educational policy could contribute to forming an educational community in which students and teachers do not merely handle educational packages of knowledge toward exams. On the contrary, through the transformation of the cognitive environment they will choose knowledge conducive to understanding and elevation of humanistic ideals by underpinning functionality, the principles of equality and the value of life. At the same time, they will be able to promote principles that could correlate prosperity and progress of

⁹ See (indicatively) about anti-racist policies with emphasis on enhancing democracy (Pollock, 2008).



collectivities in which individual course will not be isolated from collectivities. On the contrary, people will be able to enhance their relations within the social environment.

Nowadays, there are many lifelong learning programs focusing on labour market. However, they could integrate elements of political socialization provided that issues on democracy and humanism are put forward by the educational policy. Within the historic moment in which individual progress is interpreted through success in examinations to enter University and the labour market, education should set further objectives towards individual prosperity along with the democratic operation. This way, the humanistic democratic educational content, in economic terms, could be related to the right in labour as a political prerequisite and to social equality as a political practice.

3. An organizing model of cognitive domains

A re-organizing model of cognitive domains for Primary and Secondary Education could be based on the reformation of the Curriculum, namely the functional interventions in the structure and content of material. In this sense, the content of subjects tied to the formation of political and social identity, like History and Religious Affairs¹⁰ could be investigated. The afore mentioned subjects are taught in all school grades, apart from University, and only students of philological and pedagogical faculties are trained to teach them.

In this paper, reference is made only to organizing History in Primary and Secondary Education, as History and Religious Affairs conceptualize the Greek identity, namely a framework by which students perceive and interpret the notions of the country and social co-existence. In globalized conditions and after the integration of Greece into the European Union, the content of the afore-mentioned subjects has not changed.

The instruction of Religious Affairs, in particular, focuses on a specific doctrine, namely the instruction of principles tied to the orthodox Christian doctrine. Thus, students of both grades are familiarized with these principles. Despite the fact that there is a large Albanian immigrant community in Greece and, consequently, a large number of Albanian students in schools, issues on diversity and multiculturalism have not been taken into account, especially for students of a different culture. At the same time, the strict religious context does not facilitate native students to familiarize with other religions. In other words, the “other” is not perceived through their different religious identity.

The combination of Religious Affairs and History results in a strict Greek-centred historical model against the promotion of democratic principles. As a result, racism is underpinned, ethnocentrism is enhanced and ideologies about the superiority of the Greek culture compared to others are reinforced. History, in both educational grades, emphasizes the Greek civilization and the Greek heroic actions

¹⁰ See (indicatively) about the function of History and Religious Affairs in Greek schools with emphasis on the formation of the Greek identity (Kalerante, 2013a).

against various conquerors. Sacrifice for the country and heroism are promoted as dominant values and give meaning to actions and choices within a historic continuum which expands from antiquity until today. The elevation of classic antiquity is promoted as a dynamic differentiating element in comparison to others and not as a sign of an evolving civilization with emphasis on its contribution to the universal cultural heritage.

The distinction between Greeks and the “others” is further reinforced through the description of historic events without reference to other sources, namely different readings of History. Therefore, both Religious Affairs and History are conducive to forming the perception of “we” in contrast to “others” making, this way, the perception of concepts rather difficult, especially those ones tied to co-existence, solidarity, humanism and internationalism which are actually concepts tied to democratic organization and operation. Theoretically speaking, the young’s perception about the social, political and historic environment is confined due to a sterile ethnocentrism which impedes the formation of collaborative democratic conceptions within an international environment.

Based on the afore-mentioned realizations, it is suggested that History be maintained with a different content which would support the bonds of nation-state along with those of a globalized socio-political environment. This proposal encompasses a balanced re-writing of the books in which elements of the Greek civilization and the evolution of the Greek state will be illustrated along with the presentation of globalized events tied to the evolution of cultures and the dynamic process of societies modelling with emphasis on the human being both as a personality and citizen. The evolving organization of nation-states, international organizations and the policy of rights will also be presented in political terms. Man, civilization and citizen will be interpreted through relevant fields of a common course through underpinning ideologies of equality and humanism.

Religious Affairs can be modified to religiology and its content could unfold the evolution of religions, the illustration of different doctrines as well as issues from “holy books” of the various religions. Special emphasis should be placed on the comparative approach of doctrines so that common thematic elements are highlighted to concepts like love, equality, humanism, tolerance and harmonious co-existence. In this framework and provided that Religious Affairs is taught in all grades, History could function in a supplementary manner toward the formation of a moral attitude and behaviour. In other words, the evolution of civilization, the operation of democratic regimes, the highlighting of common issues addressed by nation-states in direct association with the development of democratic institutions could be combined with ethics and religious principles and doctrines and form the basis on which principles and standpoints are interpreted. The common core of both subjects could be the highlighting of the advantages of a common course of all people through the historic and religious narrative conducive to reinforcing the bonds of co-existence and acknowledgment of the other.

It seems that intercultural education can not be confined to piecemeal actions of merely exchanging viewpoints about different cultures. It should be integrated into the subjects taught in both grades so that certain attitudes and behaviours are



formed toward the rejection of far right political discourse and the consequent racist ideology.

During a period when the rise of far right parties is obvious, lessons on democracy should be reinforced with specialized thematic units emphasizing democratic principles and standpoints. A subject like Citizenship Education taught in Primary Education could function in both educational grades with enriched content on democracy and humanism. Some of its thematic units could be the evolution of democracy, the necessity of political participation through the citizens' active participation. The democratic function could be promoted with emphasis on the nation-state on condition that the citizen is acknowledged based on their relation with the nation-state. In this sense, immigrants will not be deemed the "others" of the system but citizens with equal rights.

The globalized environment could be understood by students within the evolving process of the policy of rights and the dynamics of nation-states, collaborating toward an expanded draft of dynamic population mobility. In this respect, immigrants would not be considered as a distinct phenomenon but rather a situation to be interpreted. Thus, globalized problems ought to become a propos with emphasis on their effects. For example, poverty, capitalist conditions, the enfeebling policy of rights as well as people's insecurity and uncertainty should be conceptualized within the context of exclusion, mainly for lower social classes and immigrants should not be perceived as part of the problem but rather victims of social and political choices.

As regards interdisciplinary and cross-curricular approaches, literature and art could particularly contribute to students' cultivation, their familiarization with democratic principles and the reinforcement of moral attitudes and choices. In this sense, discourse and aesthetics could contribute to identity formation that could include elements of civilization and could value love, devotion and mutuality in a struggle for equality, social prosperity and humanism.

Within the current economic crisis period, the curriculum should include a subject on professional orientation so that each and every individual is assisted in making their economic choices and understanding economy as a whole. Different skills and competences are conducive to shaping an economic environment both on national and globalized levels. The concepts of economy are clarified and interpreted while economic schemata and models are interpreted. Within this framework, immigrants are not deemed the "others" but rather contributors to economic development. Disdain of immigrants was maximized by the economic crisis. Therefore, specific ideology is necessary to subvert the existing viewpoints. A subject on professional orientation could underpin the immigrants' contribution to nation-states and their role in economic development along with their social work toward the support of welfare policies.

As foretold, modern pedagogical principles are concentrated on cross-curricular and interdisciplinary conducive to promoting and reinforcing democratic principles. An expanded draft on democracy is imperative and should combine principles and standpoints of various subjects. This way, narratives from other subjects are included in a paradigmatic discourse on democracy. The cognitive

content of subjects could be aligned to everyday school life in which monitoring and guidance toward organizing everyday life of both students and teachers points to a different perception about the democratic function of school and the familiarization with the basic democratic function of society.

4. An organizational model of everyday life

Organizing a progressive democratic curriculum could be achieved by changing approaches about the content of subjects. a curriculum that is included in the paradigm of democracy, encompasses units about a nation-state's democratic organization and operation within an internationalized environment of re-classifications and balance that should stay away from cancelling democratic achievements. On the contrary, within an economic crisis period and the rise of far right wings, education could work toward the achievement of reinforcing democratic attitudes with emphasis on the weaknesses of functional bonds, carriers and relations.

The policy of A. Papandreou's first government between 1981 and 1985 basically subverted the policies of former governments through a socialist draft and the legislative draft on the democratic organization of the students' communities with increased participatory responsibilities and monitoring of school democratic operation. This institution has been enfeebled since then and students' communities both in Primary and Secondary Education do not operate properly. The same is the case in Tertiary Education with students actively participating in various activities. The decline of institutional instruments is interpreted as a deficit because students are not familiarized with democratic principles, organization and operation.

As regards the period of economic prosperity and with emphasis on consumption, consuming models were included in the culture and social values were formed based on access to markets. The economic crisis period along with the consequent rise of far right wings is perhaps suitable to investigate the disdain of democratic institutions across the Greek society. According to the model proposed student communities should be activated in the sense that student participation in voting their representatives should be obligatory. Moreover, responsibilities of instruments should be explicit and students should participate in teachers' councils, parents' councils as well as broader collectivities through their representatives. Students' communities could be the areas where they communicate, exchange viewpoints and opinions, propose solutions to issues deriving both in school and the broader environment. This way, dialogue and deliberation are reinforced so that the young population get used to the process of deliberation and dialogue as parts of the citizens' society.

In this context the immigrant identity does not generate differences or other stereotypical identities regarding gender, since the concept of citizen is underpinned as a unifying group of people shaping common goals. It is evident that in the Greek educational system a number of other institutions is also disdained, namely teachers' councils and syndicalist unions. This disdain has gradually contributed to the citizens' marginalization and overall disdain of democratic



functions in a society. On the micro-level, the operation of institutional instruments in the educational environment will contribute to reinforcing citizen identity on the basis of interpretations that would include collaborative structures of action and expression. Instruments' processes will be monitored, issues will be made known and emphasis will be placed on the policy of rights.

Furthermore, negative phenomena in schools will be utilized as issues for deliberation. The flowing democratic political discourse will contribute to enfeebling far right standpoints and perceiving the necessity of a different society in terms of organization and operation. Nowadays, democracy is being challenged since no concentration has been placed on the function of principles and standpoints. The educational system allowed the emergence of anomic performance, enfeebling of political discourse and democratic expression. It is noteworthy that education is responsible regarding phenomena of anomy, political immorality, the rise of far right wings and cancelling of democratic institutions.

On the macro-level, a gradual shift is made from the democratic function of institutional instruments to the reinforcement of democratic operations to broader areas. In this respect, a systematic perception is conducive to reinforcing forms of interconnection. Thus, verbal discourse on democracy which encompasses principles and ideas on humanism and social equality could be the dominant reference point.

New technologies and new communication models included in juvenile culture¹¹ can contribute as instruments to promoting democratic discourse¹². School sites could function as areas of consideration, diffusion of ideas and illustration of issues and considerations.

Textual discourse from various political areas sparks off dialogue. During a period of ideas spreading, information networks are activated by schools and the contact between students and teachers is expanded on cognitive fields. Far right viewpoints are enfeebled when interpreted and made known to the educational environment with simultaneous reinforcement and underpinning of democratic standpoints. Active political issues are illustrated on sites toward further consideration and dialogue. Internet connection among various schools both on national and global levels creates the prerequisites of different perception of political operations as well as the individual's placement as citizen within a broader socio-political and cultural environment.

Within the classroom and for each cognitive module, across all educational grades, rich insights and information supplement the content of books taught in schools based on a selected policy of promoting and reinforcing the democratic dialogue. As foretold, cross-curricular and interdisciplinary approaches contribute as instruments and through the Internet, to information knowledge and communication channels acquisition from a globalized area of ideas distribution and organization.

¹¹ See (indicatively) about the characteristics of juvenile culture and networks of relationships that have been formed (Brown, 2013; Mueller, 2007).

¹² See (indicatively) about communication systems formed through new technologies and their association with juvenile culture (Salkowitz, 2010).

Both teachers and students are informed through communication networks¹³. Yet, the difference lies in that focusing on democracy enables them to observe social, political and cultural issues not merely as the audience but rather as examiners. In this respect, each fact is interpreted on the basis of various theories conducive to sparking dialogue and promoting argumentation. The everyday life model is obviously correlated with the content of modules with emphasis on democracy through modern communicative tools which highlight facts and contribute to the shaping of theory. Schools become laboratories of critical thinking processes both on institutions operation and ideas diffusion. The school area hosts various events dedicated to democracy. Poetry, literature and art are activated to generate a different narrative about life and social co-existence. In all school areas there are proper frameworks to host students' considerations and current issues of their interest. Prints and sites co-exist in order to enhance the channels of communication and activate students, teachers, parents and other collectivities toward certain issues of consideration.

All in all, the school democratic operation along with its institutional instruments on all levels will contribute to shaping juvenile culture. The latter would include equality principles and acknowledgement of the other through active political participation and action to cancel anti-democratic principles and standpoints. This dynamic framework of organizing and operating education in different terms will gradually lead to a changing political environment because the young, as citizens, will be able to manage democratic political capitals through the modification of new perceptions about the role and dynamics of social subjects. The opening toward collectivities as well as participation and action are obviously the solution to creating emotional conditions that would prevent introversion or negative feelings. This could be achieved by activating positive feelings through argumentation, viewpoints exchange and social contact.

Conclusions

Education should be included in the welfare policy about human beings and citizens who will regard themselves as member of a broader humanistic democratic society. Moreover, the technological forms utilized by the young through Internet communication should boost toward the modelling of communicative discourse which would exclude far right policies as the latter also make use of communication networks.

It is noteworthy that there is a necessity for a complete draft on democratic education through underpinning and highlighting actual democratic issues focusing on the composition of the political subject. The latter is supposed to feel secure within an institutional framework of protection being the outcome of the policy right operation. Should the far right political area focus on forms of exclusion, education must highlight inclusion and corresponding forms of political and social inclusion. It is imperative that

¹³ See (indicatively) about communication networks and political identity formation (Collins, 2009).



in the expanded draft on democratic political socialization, all educational carriers and pressing groups point toward weaknesses and make corrections. This way, inter-democratic communication could be established among European states based on a policy of viewpoints exchange for applied programs to reinforce democracy.

Accepting failure is a prerequisite to generate a democratic draft on education organization because the ongoing dynamics of far right parties is also considered a failure of education. Moreover, the issue of political socialization and co-existence in the political environment as well as the content of cognitive packages should be re-examined. Even though focus is placed on the Greek educational system, it is estimated that transfer to the micro-level of the Greek educational policy could be conducive to broader considerations about the formation of a complete educational draft on democracy and humanism. This is based on the connection of the states' educational policies so that good practices are announced and a propos and educational systems are formed as open educational models which get feedback.

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