

## The place of civic education in the Greek education system. Problems, inconsistencies, contradictions and stakes

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**Keywords:** Social Studies, Greece, Didactic, Assessment, Teacher

**Purpose:** In this Report we analyse the place of civic education in the Greek Education system. The integration of civic education into education since 1982 represents a major step forward in the upgrading of general education. However the curricula are mainly characterised by teacher-centred approaches, with a strong emphasis on the achievement of cognitive objectives and little emphasis on the learning process and teaching strategy.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This report is based on an analysis of the place of social studies in the Greek education system. We analysed the aims of the curricula, the role of teachers, the didactic approaches, the educational practices and the assessment.

**Findings:** From our analysis we have detected a gap between the public rhetoric about the role of social sciences and their implementation in the Greek education. Although it seems that the general principles of curricula are permeated by a more democratic and flexible note which encourages critical thinking and participation, they are not implemented in practice and by and large are annulled due to the great emphasis the Greek education system places on knowledge acquisition and exams. The elimination of Social studies in some classes points to a school which is cut off from the current socio-economic reality, thus condemning students to a passive attitude towards social and educational affairs.

**Research limitations/implications** This article reports on the research conducted on civic education since the 1990's and onwards. The study of all these researches leads us to the conclusion that neither the curricula nor the textbooks of social studies courses have been extensively analysed, and this could be a future field of research. Another area of research is the role of school charters, the didactic approaches and the assessment in this course in the Greek education context.




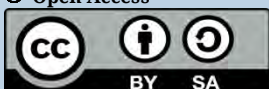
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**Practical implications** Upheavals in the history of the Greek governmental system and democracy left their indelible mark on citizens' education; changes in the title of the course, the time allotted to its teaching and the content of school knowledge evidence its dependence on the respective socio-political and ideological regime as well as its indoctrinational character. The turning points in civic education which can be pinpointed between 1982 and 2003 were linked with the educational policy of socialist governments and the gradual paradigm shift in social studies.

## 1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Our contribution looks into the place of civic education in the Greek educational system (Karakatsani, 2013) from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century till nowadays. It is of great interest to correlate the place of civic education – which to a great extent reflects the main priorities and objectives of the educational system – with contemporary social imperatives, political and economic challenges and educational priorities. Generally, the history of the Greek educational system focuses on building a solid national and religious identity. Education in Greece is organized by the state in close collaboration with the Greek Orthodox Church. It is based upon the Greek Constitution where in Article 16 defines them as follows: “Educating Greeks to become free and responsible citizens is one of the basic aims of education, which constitutes the main goal of the State”. The article 16 which remains unchanged although it has been subject of several discussions and debates, also ensures free public higher education for all citizens, freedom in teaching and research, that higher education is provided exclusively by institutions that are legal entities under public law with self-governance. The Greek educational system is mainly divided into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary, with an additional post-secondary level providing vocational training. All levels are overseen by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων). The Ministry exercises centralized control over state schools, by prescribing the curriculum, appointing staff and controlling funding. We should also note the use of a single textbook in Greece for each grade. These textbooks are written by a team of authors selected after an open call and approved by the Institute of Education Policy (Ινστιτούτο Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής), which is a branch of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

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The use of multiple textbooks was introduced in 2020 and is expected to be implemented in 2025-2026 across all levels of education. Teachers will choose one textbook among those approved by the Ministry of Education. There is open discussion in the educational community about the role and use of the multiple textbook and its contribution to a more critical and objective approach of knowledge <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/society/1425122/to-pollaplo-vivlio-xekina/>

## **2 THE PLACE OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE GREEK SCHOOL FROM METAPOLITEFSI TO THE LATE 1980s**

Before analyzing the place of civic education in the Greek education system we have to differentiate civics and citizenship education as subjects: Civics relates to knowledge and includes a fundamental understanding of the structure and function of government, civic rights, civic responsibilities, and the processes by which laws and policies are made. Citizenship relates to the development of the skills, attitudes, beliefs and values that will predispose students to participate, to become and remain engaged and involved in the society and the democracy. A rich and complex set of understandings, based on civics, knowledge and attitudes or values, plus the opportunity to experience and practice civic competencies is required for an effective citizenship education. (Eurydice, 2017)

In Greece, first political and educational attempts to introduce civic education to the curricula of primary and secondary education were undertaken in the early twentieth century. The emergence of civics as a separate subject in its own right, distinctive in the programme, was for a long time met with objections raised as to the need for specific subjects, mainly History and Geography, and on the other hand concerns were voiced about the potential negative impact the course might have on students' morals ("moral utilitarianism") and the "deviation of their thinking" towards "critical doubt" (Chelmis, 1995). Civic education was finally introduced first to the curricula of secondary schools entitled "Citizen's Education" (Αγωγή του Πολίτου) in 1931 during the government of Liberals. Its introduction was a result of the 1929 educational reform which aimed at the adaptation of school education to the economic needs of society and to the dissemination of the principles of the parliamentary system (Karakatsani, 2004, 99). More than two decades later, in 1957, the course was introduced to the curriculum of primary education under the title "Education of the Citizen", which continued to be the dominant model of civic education throughout the postwar period; its main aim was national and political education, and strengthening the citizens' bond with the "nation, homeland and Greek-Christian culture" and the values connected with it dominant during the whole after war period in Greece till the 1980's. The concept of homeland has been the key issue of the Greek national identity, focusing not only on the national myths about the indivisibility of the Greek national history, but also on the composition of the identity itself. In terms of syntagmatic relations, national identity is based on three fundamental aspects, that is, the long glorious Greek past, orthodoxy and the continuity of the Greek nation. (Gazi, 2011,

75)

Post-war Greek development stood in many respects as a microcosm of the international bipolarity, exemplified by the prolonged civil war in the 1940s, and the victory of the liberal over the communist forces. Weakened economically by the world war and the civil war which followed it, and divided by acute political conflicts, Greece saw the subsequent establishment of an exclusionary, and repressive anti-communist parliamentary system during the 1950s and 1960s. The imposition of the 1967 military junta and of seven years of authoritarian rule marked the epilogue of the post-war anti-communist state, while its collapse signaled the beginning of a more pluralist democracy. The defense of national ideals in the mind of the Greek military officers coincided with the defense of traditional Greek values, the “Helleno-Christian spirit”. Greek officers believed that the Army was the embodiment of national ideals, Greek national identity and consciousness. Some changes in the direction of democratization can be detected during the *Metapolitefsi* (transition to democracy. In the Greek case “Metapolitefsi” is the period starting in 1974 after the Junta), which will have a direct impact on the objectives and the content of civic education as well. Metapolitefsis can be roughly defined as the democratization process that commenced after the fall of the military junta in 1974 and lasted throughout the 1980s. Undoubtedly, during this period new data in education were introduced, many of which were positive and unprecedented. But this time too, despite the fact that a strong liberal and pluralistic spirit prevailed in education, paradoxes and contradictions did not diminish till the beginning of the Socialist government in 1981.

The colonels’ junta (1967-1974) introduced political education with a strong emphasis on anti-communism, nationalism, on the role of Greek nation in history and in contemporary era in strong connection with the regime’s ideals and role. After the the subversion of the dictatorship in 1974 and under the political and ideological conditions that were dominant at the time (failure of the anti-communist and “Greek-Christian” ideologies, political differentiations amongst the majority of the people), the main political objectives of New Democracy (the right wing party that came to office after the 1974 general election) was the re-introduction of parliamentary legitimacy, the modernization and the creation of a proper institutional and political framework. This new framework would ensure the unhindered economic development, so that Greece could become a full member of the European Economic Community. The aim of the “Elements of Democracy” (Στοιχεία Δημοκρατικού Πολιτεύματος), the subject introduced into secondary education in 1975, was to enhance knowledge about the principles of democracy, its structure and the function of a democratic state as well as to raise awareness of and cultivate a sense of responsibility towards the state and the society as to create free and responsible citizens (Law 309/1976).

After 1976 and up to the 1981 elections, there had been an escalation of reactions against the 1976-1977 reform and the New Democracy's education policy, while criticisms of this policy and demands for a general “democratization” of the educational system and the modernization of the curricula had been shaped by the opposition parties and the

Teachers' Unions. Education, as a basic domain of the welfare state's activities, constituted an important area of intervention by PASOK's government, which came to power in 1981 and expressed the intention to reinforce the social and compensatory roles of schooling and, at the same time, adjust it to the economic developments. Among the most significant changes brought about by the socialist government (PASOK) during the 1982-1985 period were the new model of civic education, social and political education, in connection with the aims, described in law 1566/1985, of the Curriculum in Primary and Secondary education: personal development, social and political education. This course should promote a common sense of belonging based on equality, justice and peace. As Karakatsani argues "the curriculum no longer aimed at the enforced adjustment of the student to community life but instead at the student becoming an active, critically thinking citizen who participated in community life" (Karakatsani, 2002, 61). In the first four years of PASOK there was a general orientation towards the social dimension of school knowledge. The course of Sociology (Κοινωνιολογία) was introduced in 1982 in the last class of Lyceum. It was a course examined nationwide for candidates of the schools of economics, politics and social sciences. In order to temporarily cover the need for a textbook in the Sociology course, the Cypriot textbook *Introduction to Sociology* (Εισαγωγή στην κοινωνιολογία) was used. It was a small volume of 75 pages, written by Cypriot teachers, which contained the basic concepts and the main theorists of Sociology (Therianos, 2018).

### **3 SOCIAL STUDIES AND CIVIC EDUCATION FROM 1990 TILL TODAY**

In the late 1990s, the subject of Sociology in secondary education was rendered optional; new courses with an emphasis on law and justice were gradually introduced; that is "Principles of Political Science and Elements of Democratic Society", "Introduction to Law and Political Institutions", "Politics and Law", "Political Education" and "Contemporary Citizen" (Bikos, 2008). As has already pointed out, the inclusion of social studies in the curricula of secondary education has frequently sparked off political and ideological disputes. Their place in the curricula, the time allotted to their teaching, their objectives and the emphasis laid on them through their inclusion in the list of subjects to be examined in the context of national (university admission) exams are some of the issues that should be more analysed (see below). The educational reform of the years 1997-1998 during the socialist government attempted to establish a democratic educational system aiming to raise competent citizens who could face social and political challenges and have knowledge about the European Union. The importance of understanding the international environment, the cultural diversity and the socio-economic difference was stressed. The significance of life-long learning and the preparation of students so as to be able to meet the contemporary needs of the society of information and knowledge was also underlined. Special reference was made to the importance of holistic and interdisciplinary approach of the subjects. In this respect, civic education aimed at the development of personality, personal and social accountability and solidarity, the preparation of a free, responsible

and critically thinking citizen in tandem with instilling universal values. The importance of cultivating respect for the values of freedom, democracy, equality and egalitarianism, individual and social responsibility, tolerance and acceptance of others, social cohesion, solidarity and human rights was also emphasized. In this way, it was expected that respect for and acceptance practices of diversity would be cultivated. Moreover, it was anticipated to raise students' awareness of such issues as the protection of the environment, traffic, and health and consumer education. However, the citizenship model which continued to inform educational practice and the subject's didactics remained the one that promoted the ideal of the "good citizen" who was harmoniously integrated into social and political life adopting a code of conduct defined by a series of obligations and duties towards the nation and society (Karakatsani, 2013, 160).

A significant turning-point in Greece as regards the content, purposes and aims of the subjects being taught was the creation of the Cross-thematic Curriculum Framework for Compulsory Education in 2003. In accordance with this framework, the standard subjects have been maintained, while at the same time promoting ways to correlate knowledge on two axes, the vertical and horizontal one. Specifically, the vertical axis connects the syllabus in a spiral fashion, from grade to grade and from level to level, while the horizontal axis connects and processes the subjects of each individual curriculum from several angles, thus contributing to the promotion of knowledge and its connection with reality. (Chelmis & Matsagouras 2002, 64)

In October 2001 a major general curriculum reform in Greece reorganised the subject content of Citizenship Education, reconsidered the place of the subjects, and redefined the wider educational philosophy. As Chelmis and Matsagouras argue (2002, 63) '[i]n these reforms citizenship education appears different to earlier content-driven curricula'. The new model of civic education had been set up and the transition to a teaching model in direct relation with social studies had been implemented since the 1990s. Political and social education was gradually replaced by the analysis of socio-political issues; pupils' education through practice and experience was promoted along with their socialization and initiation into politics. In secondary school, the subject is offered with the aim to "develop students culturally by strengthening their national and cultural identity, increasing their awareness of the nature and role of various groups they belong to, their readiness to accept diversity by developing young people's Greek identity and awareness based on Greek national and cultural heritage" (Chelmis & Matsagouras, 64 ). It is offered as a mandatory textbook-based and separate subject. As such, its objectives, content and learning outcomes are constrained within a separate subject boundary. (Official Government Gazette, 2003). By reforming the state's national curriculum and incorporating the European and intercultural dimension for compulsory education the aim was to strengthen diversity. This meant promoting changes that encouraged students to learn about: a) the cultural diversity via developing values of respect that combat racism and xenophobia; b) the international dimension via an understanding of contemporary cultural diversity related to international relations, migration and



integration phenomenon; and c) Europe, European identity, peoples' cultural characteristics etc.

The left-wing Syriza government when it came to power in 2015 abolished Latin as a subject in the Panhellenic exams and replaced it with Sociology. The first reaction came from the deputy of the right wing and vice president of the political part (New Democracy) Adonis Georgiadis, who said in an interview on Blue Sky TV that the government replaced Latin –which is considered a course of high level- with Sociology because it wants to make students left-wing.

Law no. 4692/2020 removed, with the exception of “Political Education”, the social sciences courses from the curricula of secondary education. Besides, Latin replaced Sociology in the list of courses to be examined in national exams. According to the conservative government's educational policy, it was decided to place greater emphasis on teaching ancient Greek and Latin from the schoolyear 2020-2021 through text analysis, grammar and syntax and not through the analysis of the ideals and values of ancient democracy.

#### **4 RESEARCH ON SOCIAL STUDIES AND CIVIC EDUCATION**

In Greece, several studies and research have been carried out since the 1990s in the field of teaching and didactics of social sciences with the emphasis on courses on social and political education and sociology. What follows is a review of these studies that summarizes their key findings.

In the 1990s, the first studies on social and political education appeared, which laid emphasis on the analysis of school textbooks and curricula (Karakatsani, 1998; Zevlas 1999). There were both studies from individual researches and from University professors at the University of Athens and Salonica. During the same period studies which in general looked into issues of social sciences didactics came out. M. Damanakis (1990) explored the didactics of political education, arguing for its role as a mediator between science and society and promoting directions for the Didactics of Political Education. Makrynioti and Solomon (1998) highlighted that there is no correspondence between the existent model of selection, organization and communication of knowledge and the dynamics of interpretations and approaches adopted by social sciences. Gkotovos (2003) added that the model of civic education taught at schools is in conflict with the social and political reality, because it doesn't really prepare students as critical citizens of contemporary social and political problems and active learners. This lack of correspondence poses a serious dilemma for teachers and undermines their reliability in front of the students. Since the 2000s there have been several studies that looked into the didactics of the subject. Raftopoulou (2009) studied the potential of and possible changes in the teaching of social and political education in primary schools. In her research, she analysed the students' oral and written speech as well as the dialogues between students during group work, the qualitative assessment of their tasks. Other sources of data collection were also used, such as interviews, diaries, participatory observation notes and questionnaires in order to

explore students' attitudes towards the civic education course and the use of new technologies.

Chatzikiyriakou (2013) looked into how students develop critical thinking through social sciences courses with the use of internet. He stressed that innovative pedagogical practices which employ internet applications as the main source of information for students and prompt them to get involved in creative exploratory activities contribute immensely to the development of "high-level" cognitive skills that help them solve problems. According to this analysis the introduction of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in educational practice raise concerns about the content of traditional curricula which insist on passive learning and memorization of useless knowledge.

Fewer studies have been carried out on educational policy in Secondary Education. In his study, Zevlas (1999) noted that during the period 1929-1993 two models of "Political Education" were put forward: the Greek-Christian idea and culture and "the modernizing", both of which reflected the dominant ideologies in the country's socio-political scene. In her study, Papadopoulou (2007) investigated the social and political education in Greece by analysing how students perceive the concept of citizenship and the role of the state through interviews. She highlighted that students construct their ideas about citizenship and the state in such a way that they are not a mere reflection of the dominant Greek culture; they are rather a creative exchange with institutions, concepts and practices, which does not constitute a subject of analysis in educational practice.

Bikos (2008) used a thematic method in order to analyse the political culture inscribed in the secondary school civic education textbooks between 1975 and 2004 and how this culture was perceived by students. Among his findings were that students do not necessarily embrace this political culture which neither promotes critical political thinking nor develops participatory political attitudes in a satisfying manner and the model of the "active" citizen.

Barbarousis (2010) analysed the attitudes to Sociology as well as the interest in issues related to the science of Sociology of grade 3 Senior High School (General High School) in the schools of a Greek prefecture, Karditsa. His research showed that students had a positive attitude towards Sociology with girls, as compared to boys, appearing to have more positive attitudes and demonstrate higher interest, which is mostly connected with their professional ambitions and chances to work as researcher in this field or teachers at school. According to the author this is related to the Spyropoulou (2010) looked into how school Sociology shapes the content of the knowledge it promotes and the goals this knowledge serves. Her research pointed to the static character of curricula which do not aim at the scientific interpretation of society but at the non-critical acceptance of knowledge and views so as to conform and adapt to the dominant social structures.

Dimakopoulou (2011) studied the gender representations of citizenship in the secondary school textbooks on Law and Political Sciences during the period 1964-2010. Kougioumtzaki (2001) looked into how secondary school teachers of Sociology work in



class with the basic concepts of the curriculum and the direction towards which contextualization of the curriculum is moving. In his doctoral dissertation, Pliakis (2015) focused on the place of economy as part of social sciences in the Greek education system and some didactic approaches in this field. The most recent doctoral dissertation by Fragkoulidou (2018) which analysed the curricula of Secondary Education in the period 1982-2004 attempted to foreground the epistemological choices of Didactics. By analyzing the connection between the objectives of the curricula and the goals of education, the author seeks to define the role of Social Sciences in education. Her analysis indicated that the curricula promote a form of ideological manipulation as they compartmentalize scientific knowledge and preclude students' experience. In his study *Against the phenomena: An epistemological approach to the Didactics of Social Sciences*, Gerasimos Kouzelis (2005) reflects on the particularities of teaching social sciences. His theoretical approach, which he terms as "epistemological approach to the Didactics of Social Sciences", is based on the premise that epistemology and didactics as fields of knowledge overlap. Both are necessary for the construction and consolidation of knowledge. Epistemology concerns knowledge per se as attaining mastery of the scientific method while didactics concern the individual's acquisition of knowledge through teaching. It is suggested the teacher provide his students with strong motivation for learning; to achieve this, the teacher can take them by surprise either by unsettling the usual course of teaching or providing non-expected answers to much anticipated and obvious interpretations. In this way, knowledge is constructed by rupture and subversion of everyday logic as students face and acknowledge their ignorance. The author underlines that science is built up systematically as proof of the fallacy and therefore learning is attained by studying and exploring this very procedure. Learning according to Kouzelis begins where one realizes that things are not as he or she expected; when he or she realizes his/her ignorance: knowledge according to Kouzelis is not transferred or simply transmitted but reconstructed all the time. If the student is not interested in "solving the puzzle" – according to Thomas Kuhn's interpretation in his book "The structure of scientific revolutions" (1963) - he/she cannot acquire any knowledge. And there can be no new knowledge if there is no new problem. Didactic constructivism, as mentioned by Kouzelis, considers that learning is a process of constructing the world, which is based on the experiences of the subject and forms different classes for different situations. Kouzelis underlines that the double influence of modern epistemology is recognized in the criticism of the social sciences. However, what the constructivist reductive simplification necessarily overlooks, according to Kouzelis, is the critical function of scientific explanation in terms of the original material of the processing, the fallacy of prior knowledge. That is, what remains unclear about didactic constructivism is anything beyond "conceptual change". He underlines the role of critical pedagogy on the revelation of the existing power relations in connection with the social groups and the individuals and the significant role of social sciences for achieving these goals. according to the theoretical positions of critical pedagogy, the social sciences must play an important role

and their discourse contribute to the formulation of social and political positions, drawing up guidelines and orienting the actions of the subjects. This means that the social sciences must claim the strongest presence in a multitude of social fields and social institutions, thus offering scientific approaches to a multitude of social problems. (Kouzellis, 2005, 101). Kouzellis actually provides a theoretical approach of teaching social and political concepts in the context of a school course with an emphasis on different epistemological approaches. It would be interesting to use his work as a theoretical framework for the analysis of the aims of social sciences in Greek education and of the educational and didactical praxis.

## **5 PUPILS' PARTICIPATION, NEW CURRICULA AND SCHOOL CHARTERS**

The new curricula promoted in the 2000s foregrounded the interdisciplinary and holistic approach of knowledge supported by methods of active acquisition of knowledge (Fragkoulidou, 2018). Recommended teaching actions for the teaching of social studies include: discovery and active approach of knowledge, designing and implementing fieldwork so as to effectively address real problems in the students' immediate social environment, further aiming to encourage students "to learn how to learn"; empirical-hands-on approach with trips to the natural and human environment; use and employment of new technologies or teaching aids for searching, collating, selecting and presenting information; concept-oriented knowledge; dialogue, discussion and teacher-student questions as well as small-group discussions; collaborative learning based on collaborative group activities; and projects during the Flexible Zone (Ευέλικτη Ζώνη) that is 2 hours per week. During these hours teachers can work with students on different subjects that could be interesting for them and prepare projects), role-playing, dramatization and theatre play; and last but not least, the classic, yet always indispensable and more direct form of teaching, as a procedure of providing information about different subjects. Becoming responsible through collaborative work and self-assessment, enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem, and acquiring metacognitive skills fall also within the goals set by the new curricula.

Up until 2000, student assessment was limited to tests and oral exams. The curricula that were to follow put forward interdisciplinary activities, projects with the use of various tools and teaching methods (Fragkoulidou, 2018). It is suggested the teacher draw a monthly and annual schedule for the teaching of a particular subject and be assigned a new role so as to serve as a partner (βοηθός/σύμβουλος) and facilitator in the classroom and encourage students to participate in learning and help them develop different forms of intelligence. The need to constantly link theory with practice as this is how students become active, develop interests and participate in the social and political life was also stressed. Apart from print resources, in many cases digital resources are also recommended, i.e. films, educational software – exclusively launched for or adapted to the needs of particular subjects. Until today, there is no empirical evidence on how much digital resources are used in social studies classroom.

For a long time (until 2000) Social Studies courses in secondary schools were taught by language and literature teachers (philologists) despite the fact that the first sociologists in Greece had already graduated since 1986 and in the meanwhile had been appointed in secondary schools. It was only after 2000 that these subjects were almost exclusively taught by sociologists but also by lawyers, economists and political scientists. There are very few courses of didactics of civic and political education included in the initial training of teachers both for primary and secondary education. Newly appointed teachers could participate in introductory training programmes for 100hours. The Ministry of Education organizes these courses in cooperation with the Institute of Education Policy, but no systematic in-service training was provided for those already teaching these subjects.

In the late 1990s, Makrynioti and Solomon (1998) had already pointed out that social sciences were downgraded in education departments due to the technocratic perceptions that surrounded learning. This is why they repeatedly stressed that it was necessary future teachers be trained so as to be able to teach civics. In this respect, Makrynioti and Solomon put forward a series of changes in the curricula of education departments: to introduce subjects on racism, xenophobia, sexism, nationalism, social conflicts etc.; redefine concepts according to current social perceptions; recognize the ideological entanglements of the approach of social sciences. This critic usually comes from researchers active in the didactics of sociology and civic education from a left wing aspect. However, it is only recently that courses on the didactics of social sciences have been introduced in initial teacher training. It must be stressed though that Greek teachers demonstrate a passionate interest in acquiring extra qualifications and knowledge by attending postgraduate programs – often on education management and administration, and intercultural education. They attend many seminars about democracy, human rights and intercultural education which are either organised by school officers or offered at life-long education centres run by universities. On the downside, teachers are often expected to cover the cost of their further training (Makrynioti & Solomon, 1998).

Although pupils' active participation during teaching is considered as crucial for the development of critical thinking and learning, this is not very much developed in the Greek case. Up until 1997, pupils' participation was limited to knowledge acquisition activities which contributed to optimal learning of various subjects. No provisions were made for specific activities, active participation and decision-making within the school and the classroom. In particular, the role of student boards and communities as provided for in the "Charter of the operation of student communities" drawn up in the 1980s (Ministerial Decision 23.613/6/Γ2/4094/86, Government Gazette-619 B/25-9-86) has been disparaged in practice by both teachers and students. What is more, the election of student representatives is carried out without students displaying awareness of the importance of this mission for the improvement of everyday conditions at schools and for the effective handling of problems. Student board meetings are not held according to the law provisions in terms of regularity and responsibility; nor teachers are supportive in order that these meetings prove indispensable for decision-making (Karakatsani, 2013: 166).

Furthermore, until 2020 (Law no. 4692/2020/School Upgrading and other regulations), there has not been any provision on how to draw up school charters despite the fact that they are considered to play a key role in cementing a democratic collaborative school. A major problem caused by the new law as well is that students are not encouraged to participate in the process of drafting school regulations which could strengthen hands-on education in citizenship and facilitate the effective handling of everyday problems most schools are faced with (violence, tension). The employment of school boards is adopted with meaningful and creative ways only by teachers who embrace the active methods of Freinet pedagogy (Lachlou, Baltas & Karakatsani, 2017). There is a pedagogical group of teachers created ten years ago from those that have adopted Freinet pedagogy. This group organizes seminars for teachers about specific tools that can be used for teaching in a more active way.

Moreover, the role of School Clubs (art, music, sports, literature clubs) and the Optional Educational Programmes implemented in the 2000s, which aimed to encourage student participation in school life and provide them with new education and social experiences, has been particularly weakened.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

Upheavals in the history of the Greek governmental system and democracy left their indelible mark on citizens' education; changes in the title of the course, the time allotted to its teaching and the content of school knowledge evidence its dependence on the respective socio-political and ideological regime as well as its indoctrinative character (Chelmis, 1995).

The turning points in Social Studies which can be pinpointed between 1982 and 2003 were linked with the educational policy of socialist governments and the gradual paradigm shift in social studies, their teaching and didactics. During this period, changes in respective curricula and school textbooks were implemented. The new Interdisciplinary Integrated Framework of Curricula and the Curricula for compulsory education, in effect since 2003, are landmarks in the teaching of these subjects and were followed by a call to draw up new teaching materials. Student-centered approaches, new teaching methods such as collaborative group teaching and use of hands-on methodologies, discovery learning with the aim not only to communicate knowledge but also to forge attitudes and foster values. The use of diverse sources and media, especially of new technologies for researching, collecting, selecting and presenting information, was considered of utmost importance.

Notwithstanding these changes, a gap can be detected between the public rhetoric and their implementation. Although it seems that the general principles of curricula are permeated by a more democratic and flexible note which encourages critical thinking and participation, they are not implemented in practice and by and large are annulled due to the great emphasis the Greek educational system places on knowledge acquisition.

Besides, teachers find it at times difficult to implement these principles and contribute

towards instilling political and social values in their students. The asphyxiating timetable, the lack of pre-service as well as in-service teacher training, under motivation for further professional development account for this difficulty.

Many authors refer to the place civic education and in general social studies have in the Greek curriculum. They all agree that the time allotted to teaching this subject (2 hours per week in the last two classes of primary education, one hour in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class of Gymnasium and one hour in the first class of Lyceum) is not sufficient which shows the little importance attached to it (Fragkoulidou, 2021). It is often the case that especially primary school teachers would rather use these hours so as to teach what they consider as “core subjects”; that is Modern Greek Language and Maths.

Starting in 2020, regression has been detected in the field of social studies. The recent elimination of Social Studies from the curriculum of Senior High School points to a school which is cut off from the current socio-economic reality, thus condemning students to a passive attitude towards social and educational affairs. The introduction of multiple textbooks in the Greek educational system to be implemented the following school year (2023-2024) needs also to be connected with more freedom given to the teacher, more time and better education and training in the use of appropriate teaching tools and methods.

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