



## Greek Language Education in Egypt: Legitimate Practices of an Ethnocentric Model

Ieronimakis Giannis<sup>1</sup>, Efstathopoulou Aggeliki<sup>2</sup>

### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 07 May 2017  
Revised: 18 June 2017  
Accepted: 19 September 2017  
online: 22 May 2019

### KEYWORDS

Egyptian Hellenism  
Greek Diaspora/colony  
Ethno-cultural identity  
Intercultural education

### ABSTRACT

The educational content of the Greek language education in Egypt is drawn from the metropolitan centre (Greece) with the aim of developing a national consciousness based on a single ethno-cultural identity (see Greek). Such a choice is debatable as to its feasibility and results in the sense that it contrasts with the conditions of Greek children socialization in the host country (Egypt), which are bilingual, coming from two different cultures, while their education is ethnocentric or oriented around Greece. In our research we examine the reasons that led to an education cut off from the sociocultural reality of the Greeks of the Diaspora, as well as its consequences, given that the Greek community has lost its past dynamics and it is on a declining path. The role of the Greek community has proven to be decisive in educational matters and has largely determined the educational policy of Greece, and partly of Egypt, and, on the other hand, it shaped the attitudes and behaviours of alien residents on this issue. Our analysis reveal the need for an intercultural specification of the ethnic identity in migratory environments in order for this identity to reflect the experiences and living conditions of its bodies.

<sup>1</sup> PhD in Education of Sciences, Instructional Laboratory Personnel, University of Crete, [giannis.ieronimakis76@gmail.com](mailto:giannis.ieronimakis76@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Mc in Political Sciences, University of Crete, [angefst@hotmail.com](mailto:angefst@hotmail.com)

## **0. Introduction**

In the present study the Greek language education in Egypt is examined at a diachronic and a synchronic level as a part of a qualitative research. The assessment of the Greek children education is based on two criteria: a) the position of the Arabic language in the Greek school as a primary lesson which convey the technical elements of a culture – language code of communication, and the socio-cultural values as well, and b) the role of the Greek community in education of the Greek children as network of socialization and as a link with the metropolitan centre and the host society. Our theoretical tools for this purpose derive from the contents of the ethno-cultural identity and the way the legitimize Greek language education in the Diaspora.

## **1. Research Framework and Methodology**

Hellenic diaspora has a long history in Egypt and Greek children education is part of this history. In the present paper we will be concerned both with the forms and the content of Greek – language education in this particular country. In order for the context of this survey to be understood, it should be borne in mind, first of all, that Egyptian Hellenism fluctuated according to the political and social conditions in this state with extension to education, and secondly, that particular importance was attributed to the Greeks of diaspora in order to cultivate the national consciousness and to preserve the common ethno – cultural elements with the Greeks of the metropolitan center.

Our study covers the period from the 1930s to the first half of 2010s. Methodological reasons require this period to be distinguished in individual periods or segments, knowing in advance that there is a time sequence and a sequence of events among them. A criterion for such a distinction is the established historical conjuncture or, in other words, the spatial-temporal context (political, social and economic developments), linked to the position of the Arabic language in the Greek school and the role of the Greek community in the educational activities of the diaspora (see indicatively: Dalahanis, 2015; Efstathopoulou, 2015; Soulogiannis, 2000, 1999). Specifically, we refer to four periods / phases, with the following qualitative characteristics:

### *a. 1930-1970:*

- Nationalization of the economy resulting in the limitation/termination of the Greek

commercial and economic power.

- Introduction/strengthening of the Arabic language into Greek schools, at the request of the Egyptian authorities, while being undermined by the Greek community under the tolerance of the Egyptian authorities.
- Creation of a migration wave from the Greek community with negative consequences for its dynamics.

*b. 1970-2000:*

- A part of the Greek community become aware of the importance of the Arabic language for the new generation's educational and professional career while simultaneously undermining it by the majority of the diaspora.
- Continuous weakening of the Greek community due to young people's departure for studies or work in Greece and other countries.

*c. 2000-2015:*

- Disturbing the balance of the social system from the "Arab Spring" and after.

A total of seventeen (17) subjects were selected for research purposes, distinguished as follows: (a) graduates of the Greek school in Egypt or in the Egyptian School in all the above periods except the last one, b) students and teachers of the Averofius Lyceum of Alexandria in the period 2000-2015. The survey took place in the second half of 2017 after a two-month exploratory / pilot phase. A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data.

In this context the following research questions are being discussed: a) what is the content of Greek-language education in Egypt and how it evolved over time, b) which factors influences it and how it is legitimized ideologically, c) what are the results of the Greek - language education in the new generation and the community as a whole.

In short, the structure of the chapters of this study is as follows. In the *first* chapter, the subject of the work, the objectives and the methodology are clarified. A historical review to understand the wider context of Hellenism in Egypt is attempted in the *second* chapter. In the *third* chapter, ethnocultural identity is analyzed as an identifying element of the collective / social identity, which is linked to the educational content of the school and legitimizes the

educational choices in diasporic (or non -) environments. The *fourth* chapter discusses the role of the colony in its communities in shaping a specific model of education for the Greeks of the diaspora. The *fifth* chapter analyzes the findings of the research in relation to the content of the education of Greek children.

## **2. Historical conditions / spatial-temporal context of the Greek diaspora in Egypt**

The presence of the Greek element in Egypt is associated with the establishment of commercial communities from the 18th century in Alexandria and Cairo. Over the years, mainly at the end of the 18th century, the Greek alien residents are financially established and form the emerging bourgeoisie that will control trade and economic activity as a whole. During the Greek-Turkish warfare, migratory flows will be increased, a fact which was largely due to the favor of the Egyptian pasha Mohamed Ali.

In the second half of the 19th century, the Greek colony is growing in numbers and achieves remarkable results in the economy - trade, industry and agriculture. Within this framework, the first steps are taken in the colony organization with the establishment of Greek communities, such as Alexandria in 1843, Cairo in 1856 and others. The communities rely financially on the contributions of the most wealthy alien residents, demonstrating a multilevel social and philanthropic project (Tomaras - Sideris, 2007).

The prosperity of the colony is temporarily suspended in a period of generalized dissatisfaction of the people over the penetration of foreign capital into the country as a result of an emerging nationalism. After a turmoil in the colony, resulting in a wave of flight, the equilibrium came with the annexation of Egypt from Great Britain. In the period that followed, and until the end of World War I, the size of the commercial, banking and industrial activities of the Greeks increased, as well as their number (in 1907 it reached 63.000). At this stage, the Greek communities have flourished with significant charity and social work under the guidance of well-known Greeks. At the same time, a rich literary and artistic creation is recorded.

This booming period essentially ended its cycle after the end of World War I (1918): world market crisis, international capital competition, Egyptian / ethnic bourgeois development, competition with other colonies.

A revival, even only in numbers, was observed after the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922), when

the number of alien residents approached or exceeded 350,000, which was not sufficient for the recovery of the trade (Zoues, 2017). The rise of Egyptian nationalism after the autonomy (1920) and the independence of Egypt (1936) created an even more stifling context for the Greek element. Indicative of the contraction of the Greeks are the following figures: in 1930 numbered 200,000 people and in 1937 only 91,000.

The downward trend continued after World War II (1945) (Kitroev, 1984). The economic and social disorganization of the colony was intensified after Nasser's assumption of power in the name of nationalism / Pan-Arabism (1952) (Dalahanis, 2015). In the framework of the nationalizations, the assets of the Greeks were banned and their economic activity was generally blocked (Sakkas, 2015). The Greek population in Egypt was limited to 65,000 in 1960, approximately as much as it was in the first decade of the 20th century (in 1907 it was 63,000). The wave of immigration of the Greeks, this time came from the diaspora and its destination was both to the overseas countries as well as the Central European countries and Greece (repatriation).

The sharpening of the political situation in the wider Middle East region in combination with the domestic social situation made it harder for the Greeks to remain in Egypt in the years to come. On the one hand, the country suffered high levels of unemployment and poverty, and on the other, it suffered increasing violations of fundamental rights and freedoms. The debilitating political and social conditions from 2011 to 2014 (Arab Spring - Bubarak regime's fall, Islamic regime's rise and fall, Sissi's rise to power), has contributed to this, which had a common denominator of violence and insecurity.

The Egyptian Greek population is currently estimated at 4,000-5,000, since many Greeks have acquired Egyptian citizenship or come from mixed marriages. Most of them are employed in commerce, craft industries, light industry and a smaller percentage holds jobs in the public sector, while it is worth noting that the developed diplomatic / economic relations between the two countries have contributed to the professional career of young people. The Greeks of Egypt have now secured relative permanency of residence, linked to an economic prosperity or a stable standard of living. On a social level, they interact with each other within the community, reside in separate districts and have their own Greek schools. Another common element of the Greek community is the maintenance of contacts with Greece and the development of a national identity / conscience.

In this historical context, the prevailing view has been formed within the Greek community to

educate the new generation.

### **3. Diaspora/colony and ethno-cultural identity**

#### **3.1. Concept / theoretical classification of the diaspora**

The outcome of the external migration process is diaspora. This technical definition should acquire qualitative features through which the content of the term will be analyzed. Taking into account the various categorizations (Cohen, 2003; Clogg, 2004; Damanakis, 2007; Dyfoua, 2010, Vendura & Baltiotis, 2013, etc.), we can choose the criteria for investigating the Greeks of the diaspora in Egypt.

The first criterion is the reasons or causes of the move: a. It is primarily a dispersion that arose from (voluntary) mobility for labor (professional mobility) or merchandising (commercial mobility) purposes, in other words for financial reasons (economic mobility). b. It also occurred, more rarely, as a result of displacement from ancestral hearths, as happened during the Ottoman domination or after the Asia Minor's catastrophe.

The second criterion is the time of mobility (see historical or migratory diaspora) (Damanakis, 2007: 46-48): a. On the one hand, we can speak of a «*historical diaspora*», which lasted from the period of Ottoman domination to the establishment of the modern Greek state (1830), resulting in the creation of commercial communities in Egypt (see regional Hellenism). b. On the other hand, we can also talk about «*migrant diaspora*», in the sense of voluntary labor migration from the newly established Greek state in the late 19th century until the 1970s.

The third criterion is integration into the country of residence: a. For the most part, a life is chosen within the Greek community with greater or lesser participation in local or inter-local dispersal networks. b. To a lesser extent, members of the diaspora develop relationships within the institutional, economic, social and cultural system of the country of residence, attend Egyptian schools and universities, create families with mixed marriages, etc.

The fourth criterion is the conditions in the host country (residence status) (see chapter 2).

The fifth criterion is the orientation of a future stay in one of the two countries (Greece or Egypt): the general picture is that the alien residents are thinking of repatriation, which is constantly postponed or can occur as a result of accidental or extraordinary circumstances.

The sixth criterion, which will concern us in our analysis, is ethnic orientation / ethno-cultural identity. Most of the Egyptian Greeks are distinguished by their intense orientation towards

greek-based models, proposing a distinct identity based on the idealization of the past with an ethnocentric ideology, irrespective of the length of their stay in the host country, the degree of integration into it or the participation in diaspora networks.

In this context, the general position of the colony and the formation of the social / collective identity of its members should be seen.

### **3.2. The formation of ethnic identity in the diaspora**

The term «*ethnocultural identity*» means a collective / social identity based on general cultural categories or taxonomic schemes such as origin / ethnicity, language, religion, history and customs (Gotovos, 2002: 13). These elements can be directly detected or otherwise can be «*synchronous*» or documented in a specialization / mythology of the past in a symbolic or imaginative way, so we are talking about «*diachronic*» elements (Damanakis, 2009: 219). Below we will link ethnic-cultural identity to the term «*diaspora*», in an attempt to interpret theoretically the tendency of rallying the alien residents around a distinct ethnocultural identity (Brubaker, 2005: 6).

On the one hand, someone who is away from his/her homeland is naturally wishing to speak his/her own language and to maintain his/her cultural roots. On the other hand, its socialization takes place in an intercultural / bilingual environment. In this context, the concept and approach of diaspora involves the ethnocultural dimension. Such a definition is given by M. Damanakis (2007: 45), according to which, «*the term "diaspora" means the geographical separation of ethnic groups that are detached but not necessarily alienated from their origin / reference group or ethnic group, live as ethnic groups or as ethnic minorities within a culturally diverse society, move between two reference groups and between two cultural systems and therefore their identity is shaped under particular circumstances.*» As a result of this definition, the diasporic identity is constituted in a dialectical relation to the place of origin and place of residence. That is, it takes place under bilingual or multicultural conditions. Consequently, the individual's socialization should draw on this multicultural reality. In our case, an alien resident can participate as an active citizen in the social reality of the host country and at the same time maintain his Greek identity. In other words, it has a complex or multi-level identity that will co-exist with ethnic-cultural elements from both countries.

A privileged space for developing a collective identity is education. The creation of a national identity is linked to the above function as a consequence of the conditions created and consolidated by the national state, as through school there may be the necessary homogeneity based on common origin, language, religion, history or, otherwise, the common cultural content. By the same recipe, the national consciousness for foreigners abroad would be ensured as a prerequisite for achieving the unity of all Hellenism (Damanakis, 2001: 7).

However, the desirability of an ethnocentrically oriented education in the diaspora is debatable. While the purpose of the school is to transmit the socio-cultural standards of society and the culture in which the individual is developed, ethnocentrically oriented Greek-language education seems to ignore the overall socio-cultural influence of the student. The result is that the latter's identity is not synthetic but partial, and therefore non-functional in multilingual diaspora.

### **3.3. The role of the colony/community**

In this chapter we will talk about the role of communities within the colony organization, focusing on their involvement in the educational activities of the diaspora and clarifying the motives and goals of their involvement. Previously, however, the term "colony" should be discussed as the shell of the various communities-organizations and their networks (Katsiardi-Hering, 2003). By this term we mean the whole of the settled persons in a territory beyond national borders, which are self-defined as collectivities based on a series of characteristics, mostly ethnic-cultural. Below we will proceed to a further exploration of the role of the colony with respect to the following levels: a) its ethnological orientation, b) its overall position in the host country's social sphere, c) the practical purposes it serves, d) the role of the individual / subject, e) communication with the metropolitan center.

At any case, one can diagnose, directly or indirectly, the influence of the ethno-cultural elements, that legitimize the strategies and practices of the colony which the education is about to validate and reproduce (Hassiotis, 2004).

In relation to the first two levels (see above a. and b.), the starting point of our analysis is the multicultural framework of the colony, which means that its members move between two or more cultures. The way the members of the colony will move between these systems depends on the ethno-cultural orientation of the colony and on the general policy of the host country.



At a theoretical level, it could be argued that a colony can reach such a point of autonomy or independence so as to meet the material and social needs of its members with its own resources. In this case, we would talk about “society within society” or “parallel society”, but a prerequisite for this is the agreement of the host country. What usually happens is for the colony to follow the general rules of the “dominant” country and to choose between intercultural participation in social life on the basis of reciprocity and co-operation, and an ethnocentric orientation or even an assimilation strategy.

A colony mainly contributes to the adaptation / integration of new coming immigrants within it and to the host society and meets the cultural, social and psychological needs of its members. This is the third level (see c.), which can be characterized as more of a practical feasibility and functionality (Selekou, 2004). Depending on age, length of stay in the host country, or socio-economic situation, the criteria of the colonists are differentiated along with the care and role of the community.

Based on the fourth level (see d.) it is also the person who decides how to move between two or more socio-cultural systems, since he/she can evaluate and impersonalize things in his/her own way. In this way he/she can choose a life within the community or be integrated into society. Many times it is difficult for an external observer to diagnose the individual's orientation. It is indicative, for example, that colonists belong to associations, without implying by this that they are actively involved in their operation, and on the other hand, their participation may have beneficial motives or be due to the need to acquire an identity. The same applies to integration into the country of residence.

We can not, however, overlook the fact that the individual is a member of an ethno-cultural group and, to a certain extent, is influenced or controlled by it. It is interesting to see what kind of treatment is reserved for the subject within the colony or the community. Is he/she free to decide or a coercive framework in a direct or indirect way is imposed upon him/her? An indirect way can be considered the continuous exposure to mono-cultural standards and a direct way the marginalization. So we return to the initial theoretical discussion of the first two levels (see above).

With regard to the fifth level (see e.), our main interest is the degree of communication / interconnection of the community with the metropolitan center. Regarding this level, we have three main cases. On the first occasion, the colony claims autonomy or dexterity from the national center, as it believes it has reached such a level of self-awareness / independence

that does not require any care. The second case moves in the opposite direction from the first. The relationship with the homeland is considered to be essential, as through it the connection with the common reference points of Hellenism is achieved. In the third case, a more realistic / intercultural approach is followed. Diaspora can communicate with the country of origin in a context of exchange and cooperation, while preserving its autonomy.

Education can function legitimately in any strategy chosen. This explains on a first level the interest of the community about the education of Greek children. In the next chapters we will try to interpret any options given.

#### **4. Greek-language education of Egyptian Greeks**

##### **4.1. 1930-1970 Period**

The Greek element has been benefited from its long-standing privileged position in the Egyptian economy, but in the course of time, from the inter-war period onwards and especially after Nasser's assumption of power, domestic capital has been strengthened and the Egyptian state «*protected and supported its citizens through the Egyptian labor market*» (Dalahanis, 2015: 180). Under these circumstances the education of Greek children was a major issue for the Greek communities in the sense that through it «*the contact points of the community with the formation, labor, and cultural environment of Egypt*» (Dalahanis, 2015: 178) could be strengthened. However, since such a strategy would not have immediate effects and required time to reward, a more short-term solution was chosen to link education to the labor market by providing technical knowledge from vocational schools, as well as by teaching the Arabic language to students who attended Greek schools (Markantonatos, 1957: 30).

At the same time the Egyptian school attracted students from Greek families who wanted greater contact with the society of the host country or did not have the financial comfort to attend another foreign private school. At the end of the 1940s, the percentage of Greek students in Egyptian schools reached 6.5% (Dalahanis, 2015: 180). By far the first choice of the colony was the Greek school, the second was the French, followed by the Egyptian, Italian, British and American schools.

An indicative of the distance that the Greek community wanted from the Egyptian element was the exemption of Egyptian ethnicity students from Greek schools at least until 1960. The question that arises is how such practice is legitimized since the status of the Greek schools in

Egypt (privately) allowed for the study of pupils of different nationality from the Greek. The causes of this “closeness” should be sought in the ethnocentric ideology of Greek-language education, according to which any interference with different ethno-cultural elements is considered harmful to language, culture and national identity.

The same ethnocentric concept was followed as far as the Arabic language was concerned. How else the marginalization / degradation of Arabic language in Greek-language education could be explained, when by law 40/1935 students of foreign schools (see Greek) had to learn the Arabic language (the Arabic language had been included in the curriculum since 1926) (Cochran, 1986: 29, in Dalahanis, 2015: 209). Greek students were relieved of this obligation in various ways with the tolerance of the Egyptian authorities - these are the so-called “loopholes” as reported in the interviews, such as facilities for students who did not start their first-class studies in Egypt (attended classes in Greece) or pupils whose parents were transferred to a public service in Egypt from Greece, and this also justified their exclusion from being taught the Arabic language.

It was only in the early 1960s that the need to learn the Arabic language had become entrenched by part of the colony. The change of attitude occurred as a consequence of the disadvantage of the Greek element at socio-economic level since the nationalization period, and the wave of immigration that hit the Greek colony. In the late 1950s, three out of four candidates in public sector or business companies were excluded due to language deficiency (Dalahanis, 2015: 209-215).

The residents of the colony should now have adequate proficiency in the Arabic language as it was the only way to have access to jobs and to be able to compete with the domestic workforce. However, the project faced many problems and was led to failure for two main reasons. The first was about the difference between the classical Arabic (Fusha), which is the written form of the language officially used in the institutions, etc., and the Egyptian dialect used in everyday communication. The problem of the students was that they had become familiar with the oral dialect and when they started learning the official language they felt confused. The second reason was that the teachers of the Arabic language in Greek schools were not properly trained.

To sum up, we can see that the more extrovert the Greek communities were in terms of trade and economic activity, the more introverted they were in relation to the education of young people, which meant that they did not perceive the socio political changes that had begun to

emerge in Egypt since the late 1920s and peaked in the early 1950s. Since then, two basic views have been formulated within the community on the learning of Arabic language and the education of Greek children in general. The one side was directed towards studies that helped graduates seek employment and integrate into the host society, so their education had to be bilingual and emphasized in foreign languages. The other side believed that the purpose of Greek-language education abroad was the transmission of Greek language and culture and the development of national consciousness as a defense against assimilation. As it is known, the second view prevailed with the results we described above and we will see how they evolved over the coming decades.

#### **4.2. 1970-2000 Period**

The introversion, educational and cultural, of the Greek colony in Egypt has undermined the viability of the diaspora since the 1960s. In the early 1970s Egyptian Hellenism had shrunk considerably. Those who continued to reside in the country had maintained their companies or were working in the public sector.

As far as Greek schools are concerned, the content of education continued to be the same with the exception of changes in the teaching of the Arabic language, which was compulsory for 8-10 hours a week, while French and English were also taught.

In other words, in the given phase, the Greek school provided the opportunity to the students to learn the Arabic language and, by extension, the possibility for its graduates to have an academical / professional career in the host country. This, of course, was theoretical, as only a small number of Greeks continued their studies at an Egyptian university. Most of them, as reported in an interview, *«were afraid of engaging with the Arabic element, considered it to be a kind of hindrance, harassment, and insult to their culture.»*

It is worthwhile to clarify the reasons that led to such an attitude / choice for the Greek community. The first reason is that the socio-economic context may have made it necessary to learn the Arabic language, but this was not accompanied by a similar culture within the colony and school. Its Greek-language curriculum did not differ in anything from that of Greece, and on the other hand, the Arabic language was being taught instrumentally, isolated from its cultural (and inter-cultural) elements.

All the above are not independent of the powerful role of communities in educational matters

and this is the second reason for ethnocentric oriented education.

Thirdly, a strong incentive for students to stay in the Greek school was their easy access to Greek universities or Technological Educational Institutes. More specifically, the Law 1351/1983, "Admission of Students in Higher Education and Other Dimensions" (Government Gazette 56A), introduced special measures for the admission to higher education of the children of Greek civil servants working abroad and of Greeks who live abroad. The pupils from abroad were taking special examinations, generally speaking, easier than the state examinations that Greek students had to take, with a special rate (4%) of posts covered by them.

And thus, for the second time, the position of a minority part of the Greek colony, has been undermined, although in the given phase it was acknowledged as practically useful, that education could «*create and strengthen the contact points of the community with the working and cultural environment in Egypt, which was still being developed.*» And even if at the first time this position was first put forward, it was obvious that there was justification that «*it takes time to bear fruit*», the second time after three decades there was no excuse (Dalahanis, 2015: 178). To sum up, we can see that a strong legitimizing basis for Greek-language education other than ideology, which is always present, provided the utilitarian criterion of easy entry of pupils into higher education in Greece.

#### **4.3. 2000-2015 Period**

In the 2000s Greek schools had shrunk to such an extent that the number of pupils in some of them did not exceed 10-15. As far as the orientation of graduates is concerned, the trend towards returning to Greece has been strengthened. The result was that since the early 2000s a tendency for young people to be autonomous has emerged from Egyptian social and cultural standards.

At this stage, the predominant view of the Greek community for Greek-language education is almost identical to that of previous decades, with the exception of a pragmatic view of the Arabic language. In 1970 - 1990 the young people were leaving mainly due to (financial) need, and in such a case «*everyone is trying to save what they can and the collective spirit weakens.*» On the contrary, young people in the 2000s were, at first, more conscious as «*they could not stand the pressure that existed in the Egyptian everyday life.*»

The 2011 events constituted an overturning of what the Greeks in Egypt had taken for granted (the 25 January 2011 revolution, also known as the “Arabic Spring”, began from Tahrir Square as a follow-up to the Revolution launched by Tunisia and continued in other Arabic countries). The Egyptian society has gone through revolutions and internal conflicts, which have gradually shaped a new social and political context. The main feature of the new era, at least at its beginning, was the prolonged insecurity.

The choice of pupils attending the Averofio Lyceum to continue their studies after high school by 50% in Greece and 50% in Egypt should be taken into account at this point. Egypt’s high percentage should not surprise us as it is due to the increase of mixed marriages. Children of Greek origin could acquire Egyptian citizenship and this changes the data we have been discussing so far.

As far as the Arabic language is concerned, not all students seem to have a satisfactory level of knowledge. The above view is also supported by the fact that there has been no change in the attitude of the Greek community on how it addresses the education of Greek children. The teachers we have talked to had the same opinion about the nature of education: *«It is purely Greek-centered»*, they pointed out.

## **5. Instead of Conclusion: Results of the Study-Discussion**

Our analysis has attempted to demonstrate the orientation of Greek-language education in Egypt and its ideological / legitimizing basis. A first question about “orientation” is from which centers it is directed or strengthened. Our research has shown that the Greek students’ education comes mainly from the Greek community, which acts as a pressure group towards both the national center and the members of the colony in the host country.

A common element of these interventions is the defense of national consciousness through Greek-language education and its educational content derived directly from the curriculum in Greece. The legitimation of such an orientation rests on the need to preserve Greekhood as an integral element of the collective identity of the Greeks of the diaspora. We can conclude, however, that this is one of the legitimate versions of ethnocentrism. The other has to do with the benefits of easy access for students coming from Greek schools from abroad to higher education in Greece.

In any case, the orientation and its manifestations should be seen within the historical context

of the Greek diaspora. From the 1930s to the 1960s the ethnocentric orientation was a necessary choice for Greek-language education in Egypt. Students were studying in Greek schools and were mainly taught the Greek language, despite the fact that there was an obligation to learn the Arabic language as well, and on the other hand, Egyptian students did not have the opportunity to attend these schools, despite the fact that they were private schools.

The control of schools belonged to the community to a large extent. In a sense, this could be expected. Communities funded and supported financially schools and also constituted a channel of communication with the Greek authorities in the metropolitan center.

The results of ethnocentric education have been manifested through the inability of the Greek element to adapt to socio-economic and cultural facts, particularly in times of sudden political and economic changes (see nationalization). To a certain extent, this could have been avoided if the Arabic language had the right place in the Greek school. It is well known that language deficiency has deprived young people of the diaspora from the access to the labor market and thus undermined the future of the colony. Since then, the orientation of education for Greek children has been re-determined, albeit with contradictions. Thus, the Arabic language could be taught in the Greek school, which means that its importance was recognized at the economic, institutional and social level, but education continued (and continues) to be ethnocentric oriented. This is due to two reasons. The first reason is that the introduction of the Arabic language into the Greek school emerged out of necessity at the request of the Egyptian state and not as a conscious choice. One could argue, secondly, that the Greek-centered nature of education was further strengthened, as the Greek element had now shrunk to a considerable extent and there was a need to develop national sentiment as a defense mechanism.

The answer to the question of what education ought to be in diasporic/multicultural environments, therefore, can not be other than the inclusion of all ethno-cultural elements in the school, bearers of which are the students of different ethnic groups, with the full awareness that the school must take into account the conditions of people's socialization and develop synthetic identities. To do this, however, all the obstacles that make cultural encounter, interaction and ultimately cultural enrichment in school and society should be removed. Translating this in the role of the Greek communities, which with the assistance of the Greek state react to an intercultural education in the diaspora, what must be understood is

that Greek spirit is in no way threatened by the learning of the Arabic language or elements of the Egyptian culture, since they are enriched with the corresponding ethnic-cultural elements of the Greek diaspora.



## References

- Brubaker, R. (2005). The «diaspora» diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28, 1-19
- Clogg, R. (2004). Some reflections on the history of the Greek Diaspora. In: M. Damanakis, V. Kardasis, T. Mihelaki, A. Chourdakis (Ed.), *History of Modern Greek Diaspora Research and Teaching* (p. 75-79). Conference Proceedings 4 – 6 July, 2003, Rethimno: E.DIA.M.M.E.
- Cochran, J. (1986). *Education in Egypt*. London/Sydney: Croom Helm
- Cohen, R. (2003). *Global Diaspora* (N. Tatsis, A. Kontis, I. Petrakou, Eds.), (T. Plita, Translation.). Athens: Papazisis
- Dalahanis, A. (2015). *Ungovernable Colony. The Greeks in Egypt from the abolition of privileges to the exit 1937-1962*. Heraklio: University Editions of Crete
- Damanakis, M. (2001). The formation of the national and cultural identity of Greek-foreign students. *Education of Sciences*, 1, 7-19
- Damanakis, M. (2007). *Identities and Education in Diaspora*. Athens: Gutenberg
- Damanakis, M. (2009). Concerning “national” identity. *Education of Sciences*, 4, 218-220
- Dyfoua, S. (2010). *Diaspora*. Athens: Nisus
- Efstathopoulou, A. (2015). *Egypt after the fall of the Budvarah regime: The country in transition*; Rethimno (Master Thesis at the Department of Political Science of the University of Crete)
- Gotovos, A. (2002). *Education and diversity. Issues of intercultural pedagogy*. Athens: Metehmio
- Hassiotis, I. (2004). Past and present in the History of Modern Greek Diaspora. In: W. Kokot, K. Tölölyan, C. Alfonso (Eds.) (pp. 93-101), *Diaspora, Identity and Religion. New Directions in Theory and Research*, London-New York: Routledge
- Katsiardi-Hering, O. (2003). The networks of the Greek Diaspora. In: S. Asdrahas et. al. (Eds.) (pp. 461-481). *Greek Economic History 15-19 century*, v. 1, Athens: Cultural Foundation of Piraeus Group

Kitroef, A. (1984). *The Greek community in Egypt and the Second World War*, Accessed at 30 of August 2017, from <https://ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/mnimon/article/viewFile/7911/7659.pdf>

Markantonatos, L. G. (1957). *The Greek Educational Institutes in Egypt*. Thessaloniki: Society for Macedonian Studies

Sakkas, G. (2015). Nationalization in Egypt. *Kathimerini*, accessed at 3 of September 2017, from <http://www.kathimerini.gr/843126/article/epikairothta/kosmos/oi-e8nikopoihseis-sthn-aigypto>

Selekou, O. (2004). *The daily life of the Greeks of the Diaspora*. Athens: National Center of Social Research

Soulogiannis, E. (2000). *The Greek colonies in Egypt during the modern times*. Athens: Cultural Organisation of the Municipality of Athens.

Soulogiannis, E. (1999). *The position of the Greeks in Egypt*. Athens: Cultural Organisation of the Municipality of Athens

Tomara – Sideri, M. (2007). *Alexandrian Families. Choremi – Benaki – Salvaglou*. Athens: CORFU

Vendura, L., Baltiotis, L. (2013). *The nation beyond the borders*. Athens: Vivliorama

Zoues, V. (2017). *Greek Egyptians of yesterday and today*, accessed at 13 of July 2017, from <https://hephaestuswien.wordpress.com>