Greek, Finnish and Danish curricula and their relation to the labor market: a critical approach

Marina Sounoglou

University of Thessaly, Volos, Greece

Abstract

The present paper is a comparative examination of three European Commission (EC) countries' primary and elementary education curricula with the European Commission's Communication and its consequences for curriculum skills relating to children's lives as adults and workers. It is a documentary analysis of secondary sources of the texts of the curricula. It emphasizes on the aims and objectives concerning skills required to be cultivated in students through the education curricula of European countries of Greece, Finland, and Denmark, as economically developed countries according to the World Bank (2019). According to the European Commission's Communication "Rethinking Education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes" (2012a), the European Commission's Communication "New Skills Agenda for Europe: Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness" (2016) and the European Commission's Communication "Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 Resetting education and training for the digital age" (2020), they are compared with the curricula in terms of skills required for the labor market. The method that was used was the qualitative content analysis in the texts of the curricula based on the required skills. The results show that the texts of the curricula from Greece, Finland, and Denmark have common references with the aforementioned above European Commission's Communications. Regarding the content of the curricula, it is observed that the goals and aspirations are linked to the development of the personality and

the cultivation of skills related to employability. The goal of the curricula is to cultivate skills in students that will be necessary for the children's lives as adults and workers. In the conclusions, it is stated that there is the intention and purpose of developing and cultivating skills based on the requirements of the labor market and the instrumentalization of these skills for the benefit of the economic framework not only for the researched countries but also on a wider scale.

Keywords *school education, curricula, critical education, labor market*

Introduction

The changes that occur around the world and the development of technology affect school education and by extension the curricula. The official texts of the European Commission Communications, specifically the Communication "Redesigning education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes" [1], the Communication "New skills agenda for Europe: Working together to strengthen human potential, employability and competitiveness" [2] and the Communication "Action plan for digital education 2021-2027. Redefining education and training for the digital age" [3] show the purpose and aspirations of the European Commission for the member countries of the European Union in relation to the skills that early childhood and primary education students should be cultivate. The paper indicates the aims and objectives of the specific Communications, in relation to the skills that are required to be cultivated in students through the education curricula of European countries of Greece, Finland, and Denmark, as economically developed countries according to the data of the World Bank[4]. Also, the three countries are members of the OECD, take part in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)[5] procedures, and have a common 27- members EU education policy. These three countries have been chosen in order to indicate the high, medium, and low scores in PISA. From the

results of PISA 2018 Finland has the 2nd ranking with a 520 score, Denmark the 13th with a 501 score and Greece the 33rd with a 457 score. The average score for all countries which participated in PISA was 487.

School Education, labor power and the neoliberal capitalism

Several studies and research[6], show the relationship between the school education and the labor market in neoliberal capitalism. According to some research, there is a great need to make structural changes and reforms in primary education with the aim of modernizing the content of curricula, strengthening student motivation, and cultivating skills so that there is a connection between school education and labor.

As a consequence, the students are viewed as potential employees and should have motivation and communication skills as well as knowledge of industrial work patterns.

This is achieved when the school education system "delivers" to the labor market the necessary and properly trained workers for productive employment to the labor market and the labor market finally absorbs them, utilizes them, and upgrades them[7].

In recent years according to the European perception, the "needs of industry" influence school education to cultivate skills in students so that they can later be flexible workers in a post-modern labor market[8].

The European Union and the European Commission with clear guidelines through the European Commission Communications (2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2014, 2016, 2020)[9] organize the European education policy with measures and programs aimed at the uniform education framework of the member states regarding the transition of young people to the labor market in an effective way. Ensuring access to capital in the educational context determines the "value" that

each student should have in order to secure a future job. The curricula are oriented towards the cultivation of skills and special abilities aimed at specific professional characteristics.

As Verger, Fontdevilla, and Zancajo[10] note, the business takeover of education has become *"*a global education industry*"* in recent years. According to Rikowski, employers look for work attitudes more than 'skills' or categories of skills or abilities[11].

In the capitalist system, employers request specific employment criteria and state their needs with the aim of harmonizing school education with curricula so that the education system "produces" potential workers who have the characteristics that define as far as specific specifications, competences, qualities, skills, and abilities are concerned. That is, there are specific "industry needs" from employers regarding which skills, abilities, and attitudes students should cultivate in students as future workers; more specifically elements of personal qualities such as self-discipline, the right attitude at work, the ability to communicate and work in a team, a critical and thoughtful approach to problems, the willingness to accept change[12].

However, there is a resistance from the teachers towards converting the pedagogical procedure into a flat cultivation of skills, and as Rikowski states:

> *"*things look distinctly uncomfortable for employers who believe that their needs regarding youth labor can be stated in a straightforward and unproblematic way, and that schools and training providers can simply go out and 'do the business' regarding meeting these needs" [13].

European Commission Communications and skills

According to the texts of the European Commission Communications[14] it becomes clear that the targeting is the orientation of the curricula to the cultivation of transversal skills because knowledge-based economies require students to increase their skills more and more and in a more targeted manner. Finding work and employability can be achieved when students acquire skills from an early age. In fact, according to the three texts, transferable skills such as initiative, problem-solving, teamwork, and creative thinking are the basis for future development and for the interdisciplinary profile that is being created by the labor market, competitiveness, and the digital economy. According to the recommendation of the European Commission, the cultivation of transversal skills needs to start from kindergarten and primary school at the latest, so that these skills can be developed throughout life according to labor market demands[15].

Also, in line with the texts of the European Commission Communications[16] the cultivation of transversal skills alone is not sufficient for development and competitiveness and therefore further tools for the individual assessment of entrepreneurship skills need to be developed. It is suggested that there is still too much distance between the school educational environment and the workplace, so that curricula meet the demands of the market and in fact schools should cooperate with businesses and employers to direct the skills according to the demand in the market. Business skills necessary to increase employability are entrepreneurial initiative, digital skills, and foreign languages. It is even pointed out that students should have practical business experience before finishing compulsory education. In this way, students who will be equipped with entrepreneurial skills will be able to find better jobs because the global economy is changing, and demands are increasing.

According to the European Commission, great importance is attached to the support of the member states for the evaluation of the progress of business skills through the curricula[17].

In compliance with the texts of the European Commission Communications[18] due to rapid technological changes, digital skills from the simplest to the most complex are essential for the labor market. It is believed that if students are introduced to ICT (Information and Communications Technology) from an early age and equipped with high skills, then they will be able to adapt to changing conditions. Therefore, Member States should invest more through curricula in cultivating digital skills including coding, and computer science through curricula. The goal by 2027 is for classrooms to be digitally supported in infrastructure, content, and processes. Since the global economy is digital, the corresponding skills that should be digital in order to potential workers be able to respond in the digital sector or in digital jobs, or other economic sectors. The digitally literate can adapt to a changing environment, so curricula should target digital and communication literacy and leverage digital technologies as tools for research and learning. Globalization and international exchanges create competitiveness and the need to cultivate the ability to speak foreign languages to overcome obstacles to the free movement of workers. Businesses and the global market require language skills for employability and worker mobility.

As claimed by the texts of the European Commission Communications[19] due to the increased demand for a skilled workforce in technology and research fields, it is considered that STEM skills (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) need to be a priority in education. For students to thrive as future workers seeking employment in a technology-based economy, they must also have

developed relevant skills in new and emerging technologies. It is therefore recommended that member states develop national education policies and streamline curricula with math and science center infrastructures**.**

Methodology

This study presents the primary and elementary education curricula of Greece, Finland, and Denmark. Four categories of skills arose from the official texts of the European Commission, the Communication of the European Commission "Redesigning education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes"[20], the European Commission's Communication "New skills agenda for Europe" and the European Commission's Communication "Action plan for digital education 2021-2027. Redefining Education and Training for the Digital Age"[21] there are 4 categories of skills that have arisen. The official texts of curricula are examined through qualitative content analysis in order to highlight skills that have arisen from the Communications and are linked to the labor market.

Content Analysis is preferred for examining written data[22] because it examines in depth texts that contain a large amount of information[23]. It is formulated a criterion for skills, derived from theoretical background about the link of education to the labor market and is emerged the research question how the curricula formulate the skills for the labor market, which determines the aspects of the textual material of curricula taken into account. Following this criterion, the material is processed following the criterion, the emerging categories are tentative and deduced step by step. Those categories are revised within a feedback loop, they are eventually reduced to main categories, and checked with respect to their reliability. Deductive category application works with previously formulated, theoretically derived aspects of analysis, bringing them in connection with the text.

The initial step concerns reading the written data. Then we divide the data into smaller chunks, units of meaning ensuring that the core meaning is still preserved. The next step is to label condensed meaning units by formulating codes and then grouping these codes into categories[24] that are related to skills and the labor market. The resulting categories were:

1. transversal skills: development of critical thinking, the ability to solve problems and make decisions, active citizenship, the ability to adapt to changes, responsibility, social and communication skills, creativity, and readiness to learn.

2. entrepreneurship skills: entrepreneurial initiative, organizational ability, planning, productivity, efficiency, problem-solving, flexibility and adaptability, taking the initiative, self-awareness, resilience, individual assessment of skills, innovation, competitiveness, critical thinking, and collaboration.

3. ICT skills: knowledge of operating devices, digital skills, communication and information management, foreign languages, technical skills, presenting information, retrieving and storing data.

4. STEM skills: computing, creating and sharing digital creations, Coding, Interdisciplinary and cross-curricular use skills of new technologies, Digital literacy, Technological literacy, Scientific/computational thinking.

Transversal skills	Entrepreneurship skills	ICT	STEM
development of critical thinking	entrepreneurial initiative	Knowledge of operating ICT devices	computing, creating and sharing digital creations
the ability to solve problems and make decisions	organizational ability	digital skills	Coding
the ability to adapt to changes	planning	communication and information management	Interdisciplinary and cross-curricular use skills of new technologies
social and communication skills	productivity	foreign languages	Digital literacy
creativity	efficiency	technical skills	Technological literacy
readiness to learn	problem-solving	present information	Scientific/computational thinking
active citizenship	flexibility and adaptability	retrieve data	Science
responsibility	taking the initiative	store data	
	collaboration		
	self-awareness		
	resilience		
	individual assessment of skills		
	innovation		
	competitiveness		

1. Categories of Skills

Based on the four categories, the texts from education curricula from Greece[25], Denmark[26], and Finland[27] were examined for common references.

Findings

The three curricula as quoted by the official body are presented below and at the end, there is a summary table with the common points that are mentioned in the categories:

Education Curricula GREECE[28]

Primary school in Greece starts at 6 years old and lasts 6 years. The Gymnasium/Lower secondary school lasts 3 years and covers the period between 12-15 years old.

According to the curricula, the primary goal is to cultivate the students' skills and highlight their interests. School Education must be characterized by thematic breadth and support active and participatory methods of approaching knowledge, in order to ensure the necessary cognitive background and those tools that will help each person to meet the needs for specialization, as dictated by current developments and the prospects of the future.

At school, the students should mainly learn at school "how to learn", so that they can actively and creatively approach the knowledge provided. The school should also teach the students "how to act", so that they can apply the knowledge and skills they acquire in their daily life, in their social activity, and in their professional occupation. In this way, and on the condition that new foundations will be laid for a more substantial connection of school education

with the labor market, the curriculum will contribute, among others, to dealing with unemployment, social exclusion, and any form of social pathology.

In modern society, there is a multitude of different options in all areas of human activity, with new professions, new branches of science and technology, new trends in art, and new possibilities in the disposal of free time. As stated, a modern and effective educational system should operate in a way that favors the highlighting of students' interests and the encouragement of their inclinations. In this process, crucial elements are the appropriate adaptation of the curriculum, the teaching material and, the methodological approaches.

An important reference is made to redefining the needs of the individual and social groups, which in turn forces a redefining of the value system that we have adopted up to now as individuals and as societies. To achieve this goal, appropriate school education is required, which primarily the school can ensure for all students - tomorrow's citizens. Also, some abilities and skills should be cultivated:

a) the skill of **communication** (speaking, listening, reading, writing, argumentation, dialogue, etc.),

b) the skill of effectively **using numbers and mathematical concepts** in everyday life,

c) the skill / ability to use various sources and tools of information and communication with a **goal** of finding, analyzing, evaluating, and **presenting** information on the one hand, and protecting against "information pollution" on the other,

d) the skill of **working with other** people in group work,

e) the ability to **critically process** information, values, and assumptions,

f) the ability to **solve problems** through the cultivation of the necessary skills and

planning, control, feedback, and corrective intervention strategies,

g) the ability to **make rational choices,** at an individual and social level,

h) the ability to **manage resources** (natural, **financial,** social, etc.),

i) the ability of **creative i**nvention,

j) the ability to "sensitively perceive art" and create art and

k) the utilization of knowledge and the adoption of values suitable for the formation of a personal point of view in **decision-making**.

Also, according to the curricula, there are compulsory subjects for information and communication technologies that can be valuable tools for the acquisition of knowledge, for the promotion of personalized education, and for ensuring lifelong learning, in order to cultivate skills with which they will use their knowledge and they will produce new knowledge.

In this way, it is considered by the curriculum[29] that the understanding of the concept of the system, in combination with those of change and interaction, contributes positively to the understanding of the functioning of democracy. This offers the possibility of cultivating the responsibility of students, as tomorrow's active citizens as conscious citizens of their country, their nation, Europe and the world.

In curriculum 2021 there is an accompanying toolkit referred to as “skills workshops” that are implemented according to the program. These workshops aim to students cultivate skills such as: virtual business, youth entrepreneurship, pro-

fessions of the future, financial literacy, economy and ethics, tax awareness, social responsibility, digital environments/open digital environments, digital skills, innovation, new professional skills, personality, and professional identity.

Education Curricula DENMARK[30]

The “Folkeskole " consists of one year of pre-school class, nine years of primary and lower secondary education, and starts at 6-7 years old.

The school contributes to the development of students to become active citizens with social skills. As a community, the school embraces the parents and together they promote the development and education of students, giving them knowledge and skills to prepare them for further and higher education and encouraging their desire to continue learning.
As referred, it is vital for the school in Denmark that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that Denmark can compete successfully in international markets.

To address the challenges they face, public school in Denmark have set three main goals:
1) Public schools should encourage all students to use their full potential and skills.
2) Public schools should reduce the importance of social background on academic outcomes.
3) Confidence in the school and the well-being of the students must be enhanced through professional knowledge and practices in the public school.
These goals will help set a clear direction and a high mutual level of ambition for public school development and will also provide a clear framework for a systematic and ongoing evaluation.

In this case, it is recommended to working with students' multi-level development and related learning abilities, with integrated learning strategies, knowledge acquisition and creativity, motivation and reflection. Working for a better teaching environment and students' well-being, it is essential the cooperation between teachers and pedagogical staff, physical activities and exercise, the relationship between theory and practice.

Students should engage in in-depth studies while having the opportunity to work with a range of classroom elements essential to students' academic achievement, learning, motivation, and well-being. It is about varied and differentiated ways of learning, differentiate learning for students, teaching practices and methods that can open the school to the world that is full of knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity. This allows students to transform knowledge into products of value and supporting learning activities aimed at developing students' ability to cultivate their social skills.

Also, there is a compulsory subject for technology. An additional and qualified use of ICT in the classroom presupposes ICT not to be viewed in isolation, but as an integrated part of the teaching and as a pedagogical and didactic tool to increase the outcome of teaching. Several initiatives will be initiated as part of the reform with the aim of increasing the use of ICT in public schools. Digitized competences and digitized teaching support are considered in all subjects and in assisted learning activities in connection with the clarification of the Common Objectives. It is mentioned that the use of ICT in connection with the final examinations, the digitization of the written examinations and the use of self-correcting examinations, in selected subjects is significant.

In addition, a good level of language skills will prepare students for life in a global world, where new and higher demands require better language skills to be able to compete successfully in the labor market in Denmark and abroad.

Education Curricula FINLAND[31]

In Finland primary and lower secondary education consist of grades 1-9. Education starts the year a child turns 7 and lasts until pupils are 15–16 years old.

Objectives and subject content have been updated to reflect today's society as well as the knowledge and skills required in the future. For example, social studies and learning a second language have been introduced from the first grades of school. There is also a greater emphasis on ICT skills, wellbeing, and managing everyday life across all courses.

The new core curriculum emphasizes transversal skills in teaching. A changing society requires more and more transversal skills and competences.
The objectives set for cross-cutting responsibilities include:
- thinking and learning for knowledge
- cultural competence, interaction, and self-expression
- self -care and daily life management
- diversity
- ICT competence
- professional life and entrepreneurship
- participation and building a sustainable future

The objectives of transversal competences are set out in the national core curriculum. Guidelines for the development of school culture are set out in the national core curriculum. The aim is to build a school culture that promotes learn-

ing, interaction, participation, well-being, and a sustainable lifestyle. The principles that guide the development of school culture emphasize the school as an educational community. In addition, a goal is to ensure the well-being and safety of each student.

Schools should provide opportunities for experimentation, exploration, active learning, physical activity, and play. Cultural diversity and linguistic awareness are also key principles that guide the development of school culture. The use of different languages in the daily life of the school is considered essential. The National Core Curriculum mainly consists of the aims and content described for various topics linked to the description of policies on underlying values, conception of learning, and school culture. The purpose of the curriculum is to enable the reform of school culture and school pedagogy, which will improve the quality of the learning process and enhance learning outcomes. The curriculum reform aims to ensure that the knowledge and skills of Finnish students remain strong in the future, both nationally and internationally.

In addition, it is mentioned that the pedagogical guidelines are established to help schools develop their operating methods in order to increase students' interest and motivation to learn.
Some of the key goals of the reform are to increase student engagement and the importance of learning, and enable every student to feel successful. Children and young people are encouraged to take more responsibility for their schoolwork and receive more support in their studies. Students set goals, solve problems, and assess the learning against set goals. Learners' experiences, feelings, areas of interest, and interaction with others form the basis for learning. The teacher's task is to support and guide students to become lifelong learners, taking into account each student's individual approaches to learning. The following

subjects are a compulsory part of the educational program in Finnish primary schools: vocational guidance and labor market guidance.

	Transversal Skills	Entrepreneurship skills	ICT Skills	STEM Skills
Greece	• tomorrow's active citizens as conscious citizens of their country, their nation, Europe and the world • social activity • take initiatives • working together • critical thinking • decision-making • function autonomously • creative invention • analysis, evaluation and presentation of information	• youth entrepreneurship • financial literacy, • economy and ethics, • tax awareness • manage resources • innovation • creative problem solving • Foreign languages	• digital environment/open digital environment • virtual business • digital skills • individual and social groups, • use of ICT	• Knowledge of science and technology • understand the role of new technologies, to use and exploit them adequately, but also to constantly improve his ability to access them.
Denmark	• multi-level development and related learning abilities • creativity	• innovation • entrepreneurship	• use of ICT • Foreign languages	• Digitized competences • digitized teaching support
Finland	• thinking and learning for knowledge • interaction and self-expression	• set goals • solve problems, • professional life • entrepreneurship • labor market guidance	• ICT competence • Foreign languages	• science • experimentation • exploration

2. Countries' Curricula related to Categories

The texts of the education curricula of Greece, Finland and Denmark share common references with the European Commission's Communication "Redesigning education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes" (2012), the European Commission's Communication "New agenda skills for Europe: Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness" (2016) and the European Commission's Communication "Action plan for digital education 2021-2027. Redefining education and training for the digital age" (2020).

In the texts of the Communications[32] extensive references are made to the desired skills and qualifications. It typically states:

> "The way we work, learn, participate in society and live our daily lives is constantly changing in response to technological developments and global and demographic challenges. The right skills help people adapt to these changes and ensure their well-being, while contributing to society, productivity and economic growth. This is why individuals should have a wide range of skills, ranging from basic skills such as basic literacy and numeracy and digital skills, to professional or technical skills, as well as business and horizontal skills , such as foreign languages or the ability to learn and take initiative"**.**

The common reference in curricula, in relation to skills, is the great importance placed on the development of transversal and core skills such the ability to think critically, take initiative, solve problems and work in a team, in order to meet the demands of the future.

Also, another common reference in all official texts of the European Commission's Communications and curricula is the cultivation of STEM skills, because

in the future a skilled workforce will be needed in highly research and technology-intensive sectors. In addition, it states that curricula should enable students to develop a wide range of skills, ranging from basic skills such as basic literacy, numeracy, digital skills, vocational or technical skills, entrepreneurship, horizontal skills, and foreign languages to prepare future working citizens.

Comparing the three programs it seems that they have common goals in terms of skills. Common references to the cultivation of soft skills, entrepreneurship, and ICT support harmonization with EU directives even though countries have different national education policy frameworks and different state budgets for education funding.

What can be learned from the comparison is that in the curricula there is no mention of the possible problems of the readiness of the students in terms of learning and cultivating these specific skills. Each student has a cultural background with different interests, needs, and idiosyncrasies, yet no connection is made between the individual interests and individual ways of learning in which students see the world with the prevailing inequalities and with the dominant ideology that permeates the entire curriculum[33]. It is noticeable that the specific curricula are based on predetermined behavioral type goals since they determine which students and when they will cultivate these skills.

Discussion

For the European Commission, it is a priority that the skills related to the labor market are cultivated through the curricula in order to prepare the students and become the specialized staff with the ability to access and adapt to changing environments[34]**.**

According to the curricula, the provision of the right skills at the right time is crucial for the development of competitiveness and innovation. According to

the European Commission's Communications, growth will return to Europe only through higher productivity and higher qualifications, and for this to happen the reform of the education systems is necessary. All these actions are intended to give the necessary impetus to governments, education institutions, educators, businesses as well as other partners to take joint action, according to national circumstances, in a concerted reform effort. Through the evaluative procedures of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other assessments programs this harmonization is coordinated, because students' skills are evaluated outside of school as well.

Students as potential employees should also be able to submit their skills to assessment, validation, and recognition so that they can present a skills profile to potential employers. Information about the skills' assessment across the student population will enable authorities to identify potential shortages and focus on the areas with the best return on investment in order to impose even greater surveillance and control.

As Gounari claims:

> "Capitalism sets as a priority a different type of education that aims at mechanization, automation, and quantification of the educational process, and imposes a new regime of oppression, authoritarianism, and loss of autonomy for both students and teachers"[35].

With this tactic the schools, the teachers, and the students should become familiar with, if not forced into, a culture of assessment through the OECD's Program (PISA) and work in a highly classist 'market school' which is forcefully promoted, with the prospect of this becoming a class-based "digital school of the

market" [36] where competition and assessment of skills will dominate exclusively.

As Hill mentions:

> "enforcing acceptance of the neoliberal revolution and weakening opposition to it is partly carried out through the importation of 'new public managerialism' into the management of schools and education service"[37].

As Grollios and Liambas support

> "The neoliberal-neoconservative socio-political restructuring is an international attack by the forces of capital against the forces of labor, the main characteristic of which is the reduction of the social character of the state and the strengthening of its repressive role"[38].

There are studies that rely on evidence based on capital needs and serve to inform policy-making in countries' education systems. Rikowski reports that:

> "There may be other ways of understanding employers' workforce needs. There may be other ways of theorizing employers' need statements about what they 'look for' in good workers and their requirements in relation to education and training, especially if one denies that their 'needs' are basically workforce needs or that the wrong notions of skill or ability will do. On the other hand, understanding the workforce needs of employers to make them coherent is as far as we can go with the problem. This "coherence" comes at a high price. But perhaps, for employers, that's as good as it gets"[39].

The EU's cooperation with the OECD to develop critical skills in education in Member States is crucial. Enforcing specific educational policies through funding guides the development of business-oriented curricula. The strengthening of digital tools and an entrepreneurial mindset is evident from the actions of the European Commission which has proposed specific positions to address key challenges and skills issues, such as "New skills for new jobs and redesigning education"[40].

If school education aims to address and reduce unemployment and prepare students to be potential workers, pushing them to nurture a capitalist mindset and prepare for the capitalist labor process, then education falls short and is removed from its essential role. Education and curricula that focus on preparing students for the labor market limit the all-round development of students. As Rikowski states:

> "The tragedy of labor can disappear and, with this fading away, education is freed from the shackles of capitalist labor as it becomes increasingly redundant as a generator of labor power qualities designed to work in capitalist labor processes"[41].

There is the targeted intent and purpose of developing and cultivating skills through the curricula based on labor market requirements and instrumentalizing these skills for the benefit of the economic framework and capital. In the curriculum of Greece, it is stated that each student is the future citizen who should meet the needs for specialization, as dictated by the developments of the present and the prospects of the future. Students should be able to apply the knowledge and skills they acquire in their daily life, in their social activities as well as in their professional occupation, for a more meaningful connection of school education with the labor market. The Danish curriculum emphasizes entrepreneurship by enabling students to transform knowledge into products of value so that

they can compete successfully in the labor market. In the Finnish curriculum, the objectives and content reflect today's society as well as the knowledge and skills needed in the future, promoting competences oriented to the labor market.

The contribution of the present work is the reflection of the European educational policy in the researched curricula and it is confirmed according to the theoretical background that school education and curricula are harmonized according to the criteria of the capitalist system, because there is no distinction of the students' needs, of the different economies, the different culture, the available resources but only one common educational policy, a single policy that is applied without the particularities of the student population, but with the common goal of homogeneity for better control.

Valuable knowledge about critical pedagogy and policy development is that curricula appear as a preparatory filter that ranks students according to their skills and prepares them for the labor market. Students, as learners, are presented as products, in a context of commercialization with the aim of cultivating skills, monitoring and evaluating these skills and ultimately disciplining production systems according to the rules of the global market[42].

Conclusion

To conclude, from the results and discussion we can see that the curricula of the three countries follow the directives of the European Commission complying with the dictates of the economy and technological progress while disregarding pedagogical principles. The collection of skills as a priority for dealing with unemployment and shaping the future citizen who can adapt to the fluidity of employability looks scary and foreshadows the dystopia that students will be called to face as future workers.

It is clear that curricula are taking on another orientation in the context of neoliberal globalization. From the examples mentioned above, there is coordinated guidance from a transnational class of capital where nation-states have less power than global actors[43] and curricula are similar in terms of the specific skills that need to be cultivated. The education system and consequently the curricula should create the conditions that reduce social inequalities and terminate exclusions. Focusing on the cultivation of skills for students to enter the labor market as tomorrow's workers creates social inequalities and exclusion. A fundamental strategic approach should primarily be oriented to the new socio-cultural values[44].

Notes

[1] European Commission 2012
[2] European Commission 2016
[3] European Commission 2020
[4] World Bank 2019
[5] PISA 2018.
PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.
Students in Greece scored lower than the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science. Compared to the OECD average, a smaller proportion of students in Greece performed at the highest levels of proficiency (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject; at the same time a smaller proportion of students achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in at least one subject.
Students in Finland scored higher than the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science.Compared to the OECD average, a larger proportion of students in Finland performed at the highest levels of proficiency (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject; at the same time a larger proportion of students achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in at least one subject.
Students in Denmark scored higher than the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science. Compared to the OECD average, a similar share of students in Denmark performed at the highest levels of proficiency (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject; while a larger proportion of students achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in at least one subject.
[6] Brown, Souto-Otero 2020, Ionescu 2012, Smyth, Gangl, Raffe, Hannan, McCoy 2001, Gangl 2000, Sweet 2000
[7] Kanellopoulos 2004, p. 141
[8] Jaakkola et al., 1995, Merson 1996 as cited at Rikowski, 2001 p.30
[9] European Commission 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2014, 2016, 2020
[10] Rikowski, 2019 p.6
[11] Rikowski, 2001 p.39
[12] Beck 1981, p. 93 as cited in Rikowski, 2001
[13] Rikowski 2001, p.32

[14] European Commission 2012, p.3, European Commission 2016, p.4, European Commission 2020, p.13
[15] European Commission 2011, p.64
[16] European Commission 2012, p.5-15, European Commission 2016, p.2, European Commission 2020
[17] European Commission 2012, p.4
[18] European Commission 2012, 2016, 2020
[19] European Commission 2012, p.4, European Commission 2016, p.6-13, European Commission 2020, p.13-15
[20] European Commission 2012
[21] European Commission 2020
[22] Mayring 2000
[23] Fairclough, 1995
[24] Erlingsson, Brysiewicz 2017
[25] Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute 2003, Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs 2011, Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs 2015
[26] Danish Ministry of Education 2013, Danish Ministry of Education 2022
[27] Finnish National Agency of Education 2016
[28] Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute 2003, Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs 2011, Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs 2015
[29] Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs 2021
[30] Danish Ministry of Education 2013, Danish Ministry of Education 2022
[31] Finnish National Agency of Education 2016
[32] European Commission 2012, European Commission 2016, European Commission 2020
[33] Grollios 2022, p. 22
[34] Fasih 2008, p.8
[35] Gounari 2021, p.114
[36] Mavroyiorgos 2021
[37] Hill 2007, p.207
[38] Grollios, Liambas 2021, p. 3
[39] Rikowski 2001, p. 46
[40] European Commission 2012, p.4
[41] Rikowski 2020, p. 20
[42]Au 2022, p. 86
[43]Holborow 2012
[44] Martínez Virto, & Rodríguez Fernández 2018

References

Au, Wayne (2022): Unequal by design: High-stakes testing and the standardization of inequality. USA, Routledge.

Brown, Phillip/Souto - Otero, Manuel (2020): The end of the credential society? An analysis of the relationship between education and the labour market using big data. Journal of Education Policy, 35(1), 95-118.

Danish Ministry of Education (2022): Subjects and Curriculum for Primary Education. Retrieved from: http://eng.uvm.dk/primary-and-lower-secondary-education/the-folkeskole/subjects-and-curriculum

Danish Ministry of Education (2013): Agreement between the Danish Government (the Social Democrats, the Social-Liberal Party and the Socialist People's Party), the Liberal Party of Denmark and the Danish People's Party on an improvement of standards in the Danish public school (primary and lower secondary education) Available at: https://eng.uvm.dk/-/media/filer/uvm-eng/pdf/13/131007-folkeskolereformaftale-eng-red--2-.pdf

Erlingsson, Cristen/Brysiewicz, Petra (2017): A hands-on guide to doing content analysis. African Journal of Emergency Medicine, 7, p. 93–99. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.afjem.2017.08.001

European Commission (2011): Transferability of Skills across Economic Sectors: Role and Importance for Employment at European Level. Retrieved from: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication- detail/-/publication/21d614b0-5da2-41e9-b71d-1cb470fa9789, Retrieved 19.06.2021

European Commission (2012a): Reengineering education: investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes. Retrieved from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/?uri=celex:52012DC0669

European Commission (2012b): 2012 Joint Council and Commission Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (EC 2020) 'Education and Training for a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Europe' ", Official Journal of the European Union (2012/C 70/05). Also available online here http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52012XG0308%2801%29.

European Commission, (2012c): Youth unemployment: studies show that apprenticeships and traineeships are useful, but need to be improved, Brussels: Press Release.

European Commission, (2014): The European Union in simple words: Education, training, youth and sport, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

European Commission (2016): New skills agenda for Europe: Working together to boost human capital, employability and competitiveness. Retrieved from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0381&from=EN

European Commission (2020): Action plan for digital education 2021-2027. Redefining education and training for the digital age. Retrieved from: https://eur-

lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0624&from=EN
Fairclough, Norman (1995): Critical Discourse Analysis. London and New York: Longman.
Fasih, Tazeen (2008): Linking education policy to labor market outcomes, World Bank, Washington, DC.
Finnish National Agency of Education (2016): National Core Curriculum for Basic Education. Retrieved from: https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/new-national-core-curriculum-basic-education-focus-school
Gangl, Markus (2000): Education and Labour Market Entry across Europe : The Impact of Institutional Arrangements in Training Systems and Labour Markets, no. 25, Mannheim.
Gounari, Panagiota (2021): From Twitter to Capitol Hill: Far-right Authoritarian Populist Discourses, Social Media and Critical Pedagogy.Boston: Brill.
Grollios Georgios (2022): Evaluation and differentiated teaching in the new Primary School Curricula. Educational Review, 73, 11-24.
Grollios, George/Liambas, Anastasios (2021): "New Democracy's current education policy", Critical Education, 2, p. 14-29.
Hill, Dave (2007): Critical teacher education, new labour, and the global project of neoliberal capital, Policy Futures in Education 5(2) p.204-225.
Holborow, M. (2012). Neoliberalism, human capital and the skills agenda in higher education–the Irish case. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, *10*(1), 93-111.
Ionescu, Alina Mariuca (2012): How does education affect labour market outcomes. Review of Applied Socio-Economic Research, 4(2), 130-144.
Kanellopoulos, Konstantinos/Mavromaras, Konstantinos/ Mitrakos, Theodoros (2004): Education and the labor market. KEPE
Martínez Virto, L., & Rodríguez Fernández, J. R. (2018). Exclusion and neoliberalism in the education system: Socio-educational intervention strategies for an inclusive education system. *Journal For Critical Education Policy Studies, 16 (2), 135-163*.
Mayring, Philipp (2000): Qualitative Content Analysis. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research (On-line Journal), 1.
World Bank. (2019): Countries and Economies. Retrieved from: https://data.worldbank.org/country
Mavroyiorgos, George (2021): Evaluation of the teacher - partnership negotiation. Retrieved from: https://paratiritirio.edu.gr/mayrogiorgos-axiologisi-ekpaide/ 10/04/2022
Ministry of Education - Pedagogical Institute (2003): Interdisciplinary Unified Framework of Study Programs (D.E.P.P.S) and Detailed Study Programs (A.P.S) of Elementary School. Retrieved from: http://www.pi-schools.gr/download/programs/depps/1Geniko_Meros.pdf
Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs (2011): NEW SCHOOL (School of the 21st century) – New curriculum, in Priority Axes 1,2,3, - Horizontal Action" ,

with code MIS 295450 and in particular in the context of Sub-project 1: “Elaboration of Primary Education Curricula ” .
Ministry of Education & Religious Affairs (2015): "NEW SCHOOL (School of the 21st century) - New Curriculum" with OPS code : 295450 Horizontal Act on 8 P. S ., 3 P . St. _ Ex ., 2 P . St. _ Enter _ Sub-project 1: "Elaboration of Compulsory Education Study Programs". Revised Edition , 2015. Athens. retrieved from http://ebooks.edu.gr/info/cps/1Geniko_Meros.pdf
Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs - Institute of Educational Policy (2021): New Curriculum at school: new content, digital dimension, in focus students. Retrieved from https://www.minedu.gov.gr/news/50646-11-11-21-parousiasi-tis-ypourgoy-nikiskerameos-ton-neon-programmaton-spoudon
Pedagogical Institute (2011): Transition Observatory, Introduction: Transition of young people from education/initial training to the labor market, available at http://www.pi-schools.gr/programs/par/p2.html
Rikowski, Glenn (2001): Education for Industry: A complex technicism, Journal of Education and Work 14(1) p. 29-49 DOI10.1080/13639080020028693
Rikowski, Glenn. (2019): On the Capitalisation of Schools in England. The Flow of Ideas, Teoria e Prática da Educação 22(3) p. 05-18.
Rikowski, Glenn (2020): Education and the Tragedy of Labour.
DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.13584.23046
PISA. (2018). https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/pisa-2018-snapshots.htm
Smyth Emer/Gangl Marcus/Raffe David/Hannan Damian/McCoy Selina (2001): A Comparative Analysis of Transitions from Education to Work in Europe (CATEWE). Final Report [and] Annex to the Final Report, Dublin: ESRI. Available at http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED459355.pdf.
Sweet, Richard (2000): A Comprehensive Framework for Indicators of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life: Perspectives from the OECD Thematic Review, Paris: OECD.

Author Details

Dr. Marina Sounoglou is an assistant professor at the University of Thessaly.
Assistant Professor, Pedagogy in Early Childhood Education
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Early Childhood Education
University of Thessaly
Argonafton & Filellinon, 38221, Volos, Greece
Tel.: +30 24210 74735
e: msounogl@gmail.com