

The task of critical educators in the era of globalized immigration: a view from the European periphery

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Abstract

The main point of this article is that the task of critical educators in the age of massive globalised immigration is to move beyond national essentialism and cultural purism. They have to transgress the restraints of methodological nationalism, omnipresent in the diverse aspects of education including the action of many educators. This implies that they should act as public, critical and transformative intellectuals seeking to politicize education especially vis-à-vis current xenophobic political discourses and media representations, which draw on hegemonic understandings of history and culture. As the immigration history reminds us, these anti-immigrant crusades are intensified during economic crises because of nationalist propaganda triggered by the political elites in their attempt to gain over their disillusioned voters. In the era of forced migration, strongly associated with the pressures of late capitalism, educators should be inspired by humanist, democratic ideals, as framed understandings of cultural translation and not as another Western canon in order to pursue coexistence and activate alliances through cultural and other differences. This seems to be an urgent task in Greece now.

Introduction

Both transcultural scholarly research and social policy planning conclude that education may be seen as the most important institution for integrating second generation immigrants. The recent transformation of Greece from an emigration to an immigration country is the reason why education has come to the foreground of Greek public debate. This debate takes place in quite diverse contexts and occasions not only among educators and policy planners but also in ordinary and extra-ordinary contexts such as the media, associations of teachers and parents and even among associations of ex-army officers. While most stakeholders involved agree that in this environment Greek education should be radically transformed, there is a profound disagreement regarding the direction of such transformations: while pundits in conservative circles demand a turn ‘back to the basics’ of Hellenic language and civilisation, critical educators assert that educational change should move towards intercultural paths as the only way out from a parochial ethnocentrism. Despite the adoption of ‘intercultural education’ by official education policies from 1996 onwards, the ethnocentric official understandings of the term ‘interculturality’ and the presence of a high percentage of immigrant students in Greek schools over the past two decades has fuelled passionate debates around the meaning of the concept and the content of the relevant policies¹. These debates came up more vividly in the course of current economic crisis.

¹ For a discussion on intercultural education in Greece see, Paleologou, N. 2004, Triantafillidou A. & Gropas D. 2007, & Tsimouris G. 2008.

My aim in this paper is to substantiate the view that the task of critical educators at all levels of education is to move beyond the core values of the nation, and the restraints of methodological nationalism², very present in the curriculum as well as in the action of many educators, and to act as public, critical and transformative intellectuals. This implies the need to include in the praxis of education the humanist, emancipatory and democratic ideals, especially vis-à-vis immigrants, not as another Western canon but rather as framed understandings of cultural translation in the age of globalisation and forced migration. Certainly, nationalism is not a uniquely Greek phenomenon and can be articulated in diverse ways according to historical framework. In the Greek case is made of ethnic purity, quasi-biological continuity with a glorious antiquity, Orthodoxy in the form of religious absolutism and an ambivalent European identification (Herzfeld 1987).

Before going further, let me clarify two concepts, which are central for the development of my argument. Firstly, for Greek educational institutions, the core values of the nation include the continuity of the present ‘imagined community’ with the glorious ancient past, the inextricable association of Greekness with Christian Orthodoxy and the superiority of Greek nation vis-à-vis neighbouring Balkan nation states.

Secondly, the idea that the nation state is a natural and eternal entity as described by Wimmer and Glick Shiller in their elaborations on ‘methodological nationalism’³ shapes fundamentally Greek educational institutions.

Globalisation as ‘power geometry’.

The term globalisation became very popular over the last three decades signifying broadly the acceleration of movement concerning capital, goods, information, images and people which has intensified the contact between people and cultures and making possible the celebration of a globally interconnected community. This process of interconnection and the annihilation of space and time that has been summarised by the geographer David Harvey as ‘time-space compression’ (Harvey 1989) and was celebrated rather hastily in certain *milieus* as the relativization if not the end of national borders leading to the deepening of global community at the expenses of the authority and the sovereignty of nation states.

While one could not oppose the view that national borders became more permeable and porous in the age of the late monetary capitalism, often phrased as high modernity, their permeability and porosity needs further examination regarding the content, the direction and the consequences of global flows for different and indeed very unequal social groups, persons and regions. The anthropologist Doreen Massey stresses that it is important to closely examine ‘the power geometry’ of these flows and their impact upon different social groups. In her words,

² For an extensive account on “Methodological nationalism, see Wimmer, A. & N. Glick Shiller, 2002, “Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences”, *Global Networks* 2, 4, pp. 301-334.

³ According to their statement, “methodological nationalism is understood as the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world” (ibid p. 1).

Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it (Massey 1991:25).

Despite the fact that supranational and national policies regulating the border crossing flows of humans, investments, goods and information predominantly serve the needs of corporate markets, these are usually represented as either serving 'the nation' and its people, especially when it concerns the mobility of investments, consumer goods, images and services. This flow across borders, however, is also seen as threatening national interests, especially when it concerns the mobility of humans, in particular refugees and immigrants. In these approaches and representations, regularly prompted by the Greek 'socialist' administration, conservative political forces and the media, the nation is backed up by new forms of patriotism and treated anew as a homogeneous, classless category, a rather horizontal brotherhood representing the interests of all the people. Furthermore, in hegemonic representations especially during the crisis, the Greek nation is identified with the state, the country and Greek society in the conceptual framework of methodological nationalism.

Patriotic racism against immigration in the era of crisis.

In this context, patriotism, a form of authoritarian populism, became a very popular category and expression in mainstream political discourse framing the Greek crisis. Over the last months the Greek prime minister made extensive use of 'patriotism', in his words, 'for the good of the homeland' (gia to kalo tis patridhas) either to persuade the public of the need of another loan with oppressive terms or for building up a wall in Thrace to keep Turkish immigrants out and to control immigration at the borders of Europe.

In both approaches, the term 'homeland' is used interchangeably with other terms such as the nation, the state and the society as altogether referring to the same signified and having the same significance. This tendency, observed not only in political discourse but also in social research on migration, has been criticised as 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer & Shiller 2002:301).

Fundamentalist political movements organized and romanticized upon ultra-right conceptualizations of the nation state reappeared in the 70s and the 80s in Western Europe as a result of the 'oil recession' and have recently become even more popular in the last few decades in Greece as they have targeted immigrants as the source of domestic unemployment and criminality.

Similarly, immigrant pressures at the borders of Europe and official policy aiming at the policing and the control of immigration fuelled further patriotic discourses over the national land and the threatened national 'us'. Among the core values projected by these racist political parties are a purist, naturalised perception of the 'national self', propagating the total expulsion of all immigrants and the closure of the borders 'for the good of the homeland'.

The condition has further deteriorated in the course of recent economic crisis because once more immigrants and other 'minority' or 'minor' groups have been treated as the

scapegoats responsible for economic stagnancy and unemployment, an attitude quite common in immigration history⁴. The expulsion of gypsies living for decades in France by Sarkozy's administration may be seen as part of this process.

Paul Gilroy eloquently reconnects nationalism and racism with crisis, a process that forces immigrants to become the scapegoats of globalized casino capitalism.

We increasingly face a racism, which avoids being recognized as such because it is able to line up "race" with nationhood, patriotism and nationalism. A racism which has taken a necessary distance from crude ideas of biological inferiority and superiority now seeks to present an imaginary definition of the nation as a unified *cultural* community. It constructs and defends an image of national culture -homogeneous ... This is a racism that answers the social and political turbulence of crisis and crisis management by the recovery of national greatness in the imagination. Its dream-like construction of our sceptered isle as an ethnically purified one provides special comfort against the ravages of decline" (Gilroy, 1992:53).

Ironically, the more the nation-state is restrained and controlled by complex supranational globalized, corporate, political and media forces, which are mainly responsible for the crisis, the more the public space becomes vulnerable to nationalist and racist voices and ideology as a result of economic and social crisis. Anderson is absolutely right to object that "transnational corporations have somehow made nationalism obsolete" (Anderson 2002:263).

This aspect of globalization, driving to further exclude and persecute less privileged groups, is what Peter McLaren calls "a direct assault on the very possibility of democracy" (McLaren 1999:9) and further, is "strengthening the state against civil society, by increasing prison construction, by enlarging and strengthening police forces ... and by inculcating new respect for the cultural faiths of Western business" (ibid. p., 11). This is exactly what takes place now in Greece.

Especially in Greece and other countries of the European South, classified with the devaluating term PIGS⁵ in the era of crisis, and forced after the Dublin II convention, to manage and regulate a large number of non-documented immigrants, the nationalist ultraconservative groups coupled by the dominant media undertook the enterprise to 'clean up' the country from foreigners in general. 'Immigrants and IMF go home' is one of the slogans propagated by 'Chrissi Avgi', (Golden Dawn) a violent, ultra-right political group.

In short, the consequences of the catastrophic, monetary capitalism have been attributed directly to 'alien others' placing them at the centre of the political turmoil in Greece. The result has been that conservative or self-designated socialist political forces were driven to more ethnocentric and exclusivist positions in their attempt to maintain the support of the most conservative voters. Due to the implications of 'power geometry', the political tension provoked by the totalising forces of the corporate global market and powerful international institutions such as the IMF and

⁴ See, J. Higham, *Strangers in the land: patterns of American nativism 1825-1925*, New Brunswick N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1988.

⁵ From the initials of the countries Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain.

the World Bank, have been made more visible in the peripheries *of* the West as well as in the peripheries and the margins *in* the West. As Kevin Robin stresses, globalization, as it dissolves the barriers of distance, makes the encounter of colonial centre and colonized periphery immediate and intense” (Robins, 1991:25). We should note that this process has been highly facilitated by the submissive, comprador domestic political and economic elites.

What is dissimulated and glossed over in many immigration accounts, is the fact that immigration is a globalized phenomenon provoked predominantly by Western domination and imperialist action through the exploitation and dependency of poor countries via debt or via open military intervention for resources. Some other reasons giving rise to immigrant flows are the destruction of small producers and the expansion of market-oriented agriculture and the dominance of consumerism of western commodities. While it is true that the end of World War II was the end of colonization for many regions of the periphery, it is also true to argue that, after their departure, the colonizers left behind political instability, plundered and deserted lands and, more to the point, Western domination has never ended but rather undertook more subtle forms of political intervention and economic exploitation phrased as neo-colonialism.

Nevertheless, brutal military intervention for natural resources such as oil or for geopolitical expansion or for both remained always a favourite way of Western domination. We should not forget that the West and the Rest constituted, according to the expression of Said, ‘overlapping territories, intertwined histories’ (Said 1993:1-72) for a longer period than the last three decades or so in the course of which the globalization discourse came to be largely in fashion. While immigration is at the core of Western imperialism its consequences are felt and suffered more in its peripheries. In the words of Stuart Hall,

... global interdependence now works both ways. The movements of western styles, images, commodities, outwards has been matched by a momentous movement of peoples from the peripheries to the center in one of the largest and most sustained periods of "unplanned" migration in recent history. Driven by poverty, drought, famine, economic under-development and crop failure, civil war and political unrest, regional conflict and arbitrary changes of political regime, the accumulating foreign indebtedness of their governments to western banks, very large numbers of the poorer peoples of the globe have taken the "message" of global consumerism at face value, and moved towards the places where the chances of survival are higher (Hall 1992:626).

This framework of forced migration is necessary for understanding what happens now in Greece, a country on the European periphery in economic, political and cultural terms. Turning from a country of emigration to a country of immigration was initially viewed as a mark of prosperity, which was ratified by its membership in the European Union. The geographical position of the country also explains why Greece has been transformed to an entrance channel in the West (King, R. & Black, R. 1997). In this context, even the positive voices towards immigrants which have been orchestrated to deal with anti-immigrant voices made use of utilitarian discourses vis-à-vis

immigration, i.e. ‘immigration is good for economic reasons and for our economic development’.⁶

However, by dealing with immigration either in utilitarian terms, as a temporary workforce ‘good for us’, or as problem to be resolved through policing and repression, Greek public administration alienated and marginalized immigrants (Marvakis A., Parsanoglou D. & Pavlou M. 2001). There are several reasons implicated in the absence of integration of immigrants in Greece. The absence of policies facilitating the legal and social recognition of immigrants, their invisibility in the public space, the high rates of unemployment, the lack of protection of their human and political rights and institutional racism are some of the most important causes.

Critical education to make explicit the missing links among neo-liberal capitalism and immigration.

A creative coexistence with ‘others’ living among us is currently problematic because genuine intercultural dialogue is being blocked by a domestic hegemonic discourse that draws upon a linear genealogy to connect the present to the glories of the Greek past; this discourse also incorporates ethno-biological and mono-religious understandings of national ‘we-ness’ that is strongly embedded in education and in popular imagination. To put it plainly, the ideological ground of cultural racism should be detected in the core values of the nationalist culture disseminated by the state apparatuses and the educational institutions.

The recent economic crisis merely worsened the already existing condition of xenophobia in Greece. If we historicize closely the interconnection of economic crisis and unemployment with xenophobia both through the American immigration history (Higham 1988) and the post-oil European crisis of the 70s we will understand better what is taking place now in Greece. While the reconfiguration of cultural difference and the explanation of xenophobia can not be reduced exclusively to neo-liberal economic relations, current forms of exploitation related to ‘route causes’ which give rise to circuits of migrants are a necessary precondition in our attempt to understand xenophobia and its oscillations.

What is therefore the task of the critical educator acting in the European periphery in the era of globalized immigration? Working in both educational and non-educational contexts, one of his/her tasks is to bring into the forefront and to make visible the missing links among neo-liberal catastrophic capitalism and immigration. One of these missing links is the absence from the public space of any debate around root causes giving rise to immigration. Most commonly, in mainstream representations and understandings, immigration begins only when immigrants succeed in crossing the borders, either legally or without documents, and become settled in the host country. The causes of immigration fall out of the scope of the official and the less official approaches to immigration.

Sayad reminds us eloquently that most approaches study emigration and immigration separately as being irrelevant phenomena (Sayad 1999:2). However, Pierre Bourdieu

⁶ For an account of utilitarian uses of immigrants see Morice A., *Le travail zero: De l’immigration zero aux quotas*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Novembre 2000.

stresses that all approaches ignoring the generative and diverse factors of immigration, are at least subconsciously ethnocentric (1999:XIII). Indeed, most approaches which treat immigration as an integration problem for destination countries, gloss over the fact that immigration lies at the centre of globalization, a process that has always existed as an essential aspect of modernity closely associated with the unequal relation between the West and the Rest. Similarly, ignorance of the root causes of immigration indicates a lack of memory of the deeply unequal distribution of the resources between regions, classes and people and the long term of impacts of imperialism.

The tense coexistence between nationalism and globalization (Banks 2008:132) is a well-documented notion in migration studies. This becomes even more clear when immigration issues bring questions of national 'we-ness' to the centre of the public debate such as, what are the cultural materials of the nation, who is included or can be included in the national 'we' and who is not or cannot be included. (Triandafyidou A. & Veikou M. 2002). In other words, how societies and states deal with the tension between the capitalist need for cheap labour and the human, civic and political rights of immigrants.

What however, is less recognized in these debates it is the intensification of the oppressive character of the neo-liberal state, especially against the less privileged newcomers. While in the late modernity the dependency of the peripheral nation state by Western economic, and political establishments has been expanded, the state is still powerful with respect to issues such as citizenship provision, border controls and the regulation of immigrant flows according to the interests of the ruling classes and their visible or less visible commitments to their international allies.

In Greece and elsewhere, the location of the new immigrants predominantly in the lower economic strata of the society, their association with the so-called 3D work force⁷, is quite telling and needs no further comment. Therefore, their precarious existence in terms of civic and work rights and their invisibility in the public sphere, as cheap and flexible immigrant labour serves predominantly the interests of the dominant classes and their goals for more profit through human exploitation. Furthermore, new immigrants contribute to the process of reproduction of the domestic labour force for example, many female immigrants in Greece work in the sector of caring and the domestic services).

In this context the task of the critical educator is to make explicit at all levels of the immigration process the interconnection among global-neoliberal capitalism and immigration and therefore to expose the marginalized links between immigration and the rules of aggressive monetary capitalism. To expose the fact that the expansion of immigration and refugee flows are primarily a consequence of neo-liberal capitalist action. While immigration is not a new phenomenon, the 20th century gave rise to such refugee and immigrant flows across nation-states as never before in history. In the words of Said the 20th century "has produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history ... " (Said 1993:402-403). The policies of strong states such as the USA and of the former colonial powers of the West contributed a great deal to the generation of these movements globally. Western

⁷ Abbreviation for 'demanding, dangerous and dirty work'.

states operate as part and parcel of corporate neo-liberalism that is deeply engaged with its peripheries.

The main features of the neo-liberal state that make human exploitation so profound, go hand in hand with the disappearing of the welfare state and the endorsement of the repressive state (McLaren 1999). Therefore, the relative autonomy of the state with respect to the social classes, as developed four decades ago by Nikos Poulantzas, is further diminished to the profit of international economic and political elites (Poulantzas 1973). In the words of McLaren, the capitalist state has been “destabilized by the constant deterritorialization and reterritorialization of capital and whose power is increasingly facilitated by the quick movement that permits instant turnover times within financial markets” (McLaren 1998:441).

Through debt, environmental degradation, political intervention and war the transnational corporate state-media-military complexes based mainly in the West drive many people to take refuge somewhere else for a better future. Briefly, the decision for migration could not be explained according to the liberal, free-choice rational theory but rather should be seen mainly as an act of survival dictated by imperatives of a totalitarian, global capitalism. In this context it bears remembering that within international scholarship, while much emphasis is placed upon immigration as a social problem for the countries of destination, the ‘root causes’ generating immigrant and refugee flows have not been adequately explored and theorised (Zetter 1988:6). Alexander Aleinikoff also invites us to conduct a ‘source control’ over the reasons of these flows (Aleinikoff 1995:265).

In conditions of economic/political crisis and unemployment, ethnocentrism becomes more prevalent everywhere in small countries of the periphery like Greece, and this may yield absolutist and exclusivist repercussions. Parochial ethnocentrism backed up and framed by an educational system that has been always bureaucratic, ethnocentric and centralised (Fragkoudaki & Dragonas 1997) provides a fertile space for essentializing and cementing the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ rather than creating a space for intercultural dialogue. Educational ethnocentrism does not drive students towards the path of coexistence and mutual recognition but rather contributes to the consolidation of national borders and to brutal racism. In spite of the rhetoric for intercultural education in Greece any attempts performed remain in the field of the exceptional and the experimental (Paleologou 2004).

Recent and current attempts to restructure schooling in Greece at all levels⁸, do not seek to undermine the antagonistic core values of the system to the benefit of critical education. Accordingly Paulo Freire’s dictum ‘educators should begin their action by attempting to respond the needs of their students’ (Freire 1972), has no place in the Greek education system as it currently stands. Instead of changing the curricula in order for education to provide a space of genuine intercultural dialogue that Greek society needs, most recent changes in education address the examination system and adhere to the principles of assessment at various levels while currents changes in the

⁸ According to current educational reform in Greece, public education should be reoriented to private sources for funding and research should be marketized. Accordingly, more emphasis is placed upon the disciplines, which are promising for the market while human sciences, especially those belonging to critical humanist tradition, are further marginalized. On the top of that, if this educational reform will be implemented, education is going to be controlled strictly and centrally by governmental authorities.

universities seek to fulfil the commands and the standards of globalized, market oriented, neo-liberal principles. Dave Hill's words reflect perfectly what happens in Greece when he argues that neo-liberal policies "increased inequalities globally and nationally, diminished democratic accountability and stifled critical thought-by compressing critical space in education today" (Hill 2003:1). This fits exactly what is happening with current transformations in Greece.

Critical educators have the task to intervene in both educational and non-educational context in an attempt to expand the critical space to include both the non-privileged native students and the students of other cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds in an intercultural dialogue without prerequisites and virtually without guarantees. To this end, transformative, critical education is needed in general and the creation of space for a transformative citizenship education for social justice in particular.

In order to act as transformative intellectuals, educators should undertake initiatives aiming to deconstruct the 'naturalness' of the nation state and to include non-native, silenced and other cultures, histories and mother tongues beyond the restraints of ethnocentric education. While this is not an easy task to perform, the work of activist teachers in Greece and elsewhere reveals that the creative, intercultural space regarding curriculum orientation and school culture in general can be expanded significantly. Taking into account that students are called to live in multicultural, hierarchical societies, the democratic ideal should be understood as a politicised, intercultural and emancipatory process rather as one more national cause defined by elite's values and visions.

I contend therefore with James Banks that "transformative education helps students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values needed to function effectively within their cultural community, nation-state, and region in the global community ..." (Banks 2008:129) therefore, he goes on "... the conception of citizenship in a modern democratic nation-state should be expanded to include cultural rights and group rights within a democratic framework" (ibid., p. 130). Giroux and McLaren provide a more radical understanding of the transformative intellectual when they assert that his/her task is to "exercise[s] forms of intellectual and pedagogical practice which attempt to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations" Giroux & McLaren (1986:215 quoted in Hill 2003). The latter definition politicizes the role of the teachers, foregrounds the moral and ethical aspects of their action and invites emancipatory intervention.

In spite of the rhetoric of intercultural education in Greece and in other European nation-states⁹, the liberal assimilationist, monolingual and monoreligious project in educational context it is proposed by the government as the best option for students of non-Greek origin. Indeed, all accounts around the ways in which intercultural schools in Greece operate reveal their assimilationist agenda (Paleologou, 2004, Triantafillidou & Gropas 2007, Tsimouris 2008.). In non-educational contexts, the assimilationist project is coupled with strict measures of exclusion, surveillance and

⁹ For the assimilation project in Britain see, Ali Rattansi, 6 - 10 - 2004, *New Labour, new assimilationism* in, http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/Ali_Rattansi.jsp

control of immigrants and refugees that makes death at the Greek borders a recurring event. Both assimilationist and exclusivist policies in countries in which employment policies are dictated by the IMF and the World Bank, pave the way for xenophobia and brutal racism. Dave Hill touches the right chord when he asserts that in the era of global neo-liberalism “inequalities both between states and within states have increased dramatically” (Hill 2003:4). This line of interpretation of the Greek crisis challenges West European popular analyses pointing to the South European mentality, corruption and laziness, summarised as PIGS, as the explanatory causes of the Greek economic crisis. As I mentioned earlier, these racial, orientalist interpretations are adopted in the domestic terrain by conservative political forces and re-addressed to ‘minor’ domestic others.

Holding that racism is not a pathological phenomenon nor a certain individual abnormality (Rattansi 1992:30) but rather a certain way for understanding reality and crisis and a conceptual map framed by mainstream institutions of society such as ethnocentric ethno-religious education and the media, what Althusser calls ‘ideological apparatuses of the state’, I argue that radical changes are necessary for a citizenship that may include immigrant rights and culture and that can develop alliances across ethnic, racial, linguistic, gender and religious differences and to build up a common front against the totalitarian forces of neo-liberal capitalism. Critical education is also necessary for making explicit global ‘power geometry’ and the root causes of forced migration and human suffering. This implies that teachers should undertake transformative action and will turn to ‘dangerous’ intellectuals challenging the neo-liberal *status quo*.

To this end, teachers have to leave behind the idea of a national tradition as a fixed body of knowledge and consciousness that goes back to the Greek antiquity and to assume an idea of national culture that is the result of transformation, cultural contact and translation especially in the era of massive immigration in which “boundaries are crossed; cultures are mingled; identities become blurred” (Morley D. & R. Kevin R. 1995:123). This implies teachers should deal with both their own national traditions and with those of ‘others’ as historically constructed and not as naturally given: as translated rather than as authentically inherited from ancient ancestors. In the words of Said “to see others not as ontologically given but as historically constituted” which can, thereby, “erode the exclusivist biases we so often ascribe to cultures, our own not least” (Said, 1989:225 quoted in Morley D. & R. Kevin R. *ibid*). This process will bring teachers closer to the daily experience of their students.

In this framework, I argue, together with Dave Hill, that “teachers are dangerous because they are intimately connected with the social production of labour-power” (Hill 2003:3) and that

the capitalist State will seek to destroy any forms of pedagogy that attempt to educate students regarding their real predicament - to create an awareness of themselves as future labour-powers and to underpin this awareness with critical insight that seeks to undermine the smooth running of the social production of labour-power (*ibid.* emphasis in the original; See also Rikowski 2001).

The bureaucratic and centralizing character of the Greek educational system, treating teachers as submissive employees, the strict control of the curriculum, the absence of

teacher training on intercultural understanding and on group minority rights may be taken as some of the causes of the unawareness of the marginalization of immigrant students in Greek schools. Such an environment prevents student critical awareness and generates more divisions and classifications between immigrant and native students impeding the creation of a space for an-other more inclusive citizenship education beyond the nationalist one.

Conclusion: Teachers as dangerous public intellectuals

I argue therefore, that the creation of a space for an inclusive and intercultural education citizenship entails, that critical educators should behave as ‘dangerous’ workers operating against an oppressive system that strongly blocks and annihilates forms of life at the terrestrial and symbolic borders of the neo-liberal, corporative nation-state. This more inclusive citizenship, what Rosaldo phrased as ‘cultural decolonization’ (Rosaldo 1994:410), implies radical transformations in education and investing generously in the cultural diversity of students that is the *sine qua non* of democratic and multicultural coexistence. A similar point by Giroux argues that, “school knowledge must be analyzed to determine to what degree its form and content represent the unequal presentation of the cultural capital of minorities of class and color” (Giroux 1980:353).

This is urgently needed for the Greek educational space, in the framework of aggressive, neo-liberal capitalism coupled with strongly oppressive state action and nationalist revival. This task becomes urgent in periods of crisis in which the close ties among the (Greek) state and the transnational corporate financial institutions such as the IMF become transparent and leave no doubts on the total absence of interest for human life itself. Certainly, minority groups are mostly affected by the escalation of racism during economic and social crisis. Ratansi’s point that, “...assimilationism, ... is the admission that racism is a strongly embedded– although not overwhelming or unchanging – part of British culture” (Ratansi 2004:3), is completely valid for Greece as well. Therefore, the task of educators is not simply to combat racism and to apply antiracist policies, but rather to struggle against official nationalist assimilation and ‘free-market’ conformism strongly embedded in national culture and education.

In this small country on the periphery of Europe the portrayal of teachers and other non-submissive citizens as ‘dangerous citizens’, especially in times of crises, i.e. military juntas and the civil war, has a long history¹⁰. Critical educators need therefore to take seriously this characterization and, operate as organic (in the Gramscian sense), dangerous intellectuals, to try to disseminate their unsettling and explosive ideas among those subjects who can make use of them and can be unified *in* and *through* action. To this end, they need to work beyond the cultural and class divides and to address their steps towards the cohesion and the empowerment of their learning communities including, students and their parents. Part of this pedagogical endeavor should be to substantiate the view that cultural diversity *has been* and *can be* absolutely compatible in Greece, in the Balkan region and elsewhere. What, however is incompatible, is the rampant corporative neo-liberalism of the early 21st century with democratic ideals and human dignity.

¹⁰ The term has been used during and after the Greek Civil War for Communists and other non submissive citizens. For a full account see Neni Panourgia 1999.

This implies collective action both in and out of the educational space, an endeavor that places in the same project the simultaneous unraveling of both the national and the neo-liberal myths we live-by and to build up alliances and communities of solidarity, knowledge and action across national, class, gender and religious borders and walls. Their job is therefore indoors and outdoors, in networking, in building *blogs* and alliances as well as in the workspace, in roads and squares. They have to fight against the commodification of collective forms of life and the destruction of social solidarity.

This endeavor will expose the barbarity of the neo-liberal, transnational and corporative forces and the submissive domestic governments as responsible for escalating human suffering and making life so precarious and virtually non-viable in the peripheries *of* and *in* the West, on the borders of Europe and the multiple margins in the center of the western metropolis. In our common precarious future, educators should work as public intellectuals and not as a commodified labor force ready to reproduce and disseminate the ethnocentric, market oriented, neo-liberal truths. In the words of Edward Said their task is 'to speak the truth to power' (1994:71) and not the truth of the power.

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