

HOW TEACHERS COPE WITH THE RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN GREEK KINDERGARTEN CLASSES. FROM THEORY TO REALITY.

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ABSTRACT: *Nowadays, the religious diversity is a reality in Greek kindergarten school and it is found in almost all the classrooms. The kindergarten teachers are invited to manage effectiveness with this diversity. The legislative framework of religious diversity defines in some extent the range of practices that will be implemented. The opinions and the attitudes of kindergarten teachers play an important role, as they are those who implement the religious education in kindergarten school. This research examines the attitudes, the opinions and the ways of managing with religious diversity by kindergartener teachers. For this purpose, a questionnaire was given to 173 kindergarten teachers from various regions of Greece. The results shown that teachers know how to manage with religion diversity theoretically, but in practice they do not implement always. Younger kindergarten teachers and assistants seemed to implement practices which take more into account of children of another religion.*

KEYWORDS: Education, Religious Diversity, Kindergarten Teachers, Religious Education, Prayer, Churchgoing, Religious Feasts

INTRODUCTION

Last decades Greece received a great amount of immigrants. Greek society lost her homogeneity and pluralism is part of everyday life. These social changes reflect on Greek education system, which is called to incorporate all pupils no matter ethnicities, religions, languages, cultural identities. Regarding religion diversity, people from other religions require to maintain a distinct religious identity and the customs and religious traditions of their culture. Teachers, as a part of the educational policy, very often have difficulty in managing with religious diversity. Especially teachers in kindergarten school, which is an important part of education, since it is its first step. The management of religious diversity in kindergarten schools is the subject of the research that took place. Its aim was to ascertain kindergarten teachers' opinions for prayer in the classroom, the children's churchgoing, and the celebration of religious feasts and the importance of religious education in kindergarten schools. Data was collected relating to design and implementation of curricula on diversity and the relationship of kindergarten teachers with parents of another religion and their community. A questionnaire was used filled by kindergarten teachers.

THEORY

According to Cesar Bîrzéa <<religion is an important cultural fact (similar to other identity sources such as languages, history or cultural heritage)>> (Bîrzéa, 2007: 7). According to another approach, based on M. Weber and theologian P. Tillich, religion is defined as a set of

integrated responses to human existential dilemmas –birth, illness or death- that give meaning to the world. In this sense, religion is the human response to questions that preoccupy human being (Abercrombie et al., 1991:163). Religions are presented as homogeneous systems, while according to post-modern views religions are artificial structures which serve the interests of particular groups of people. The interpretive approach portrays religions dynamically, demonstrating the diversity and complexity of religious traditions and different ways in which the term “religion” is used, avoiding stereotyping, as religious differences are still a source of tension, conflict and discrimination (Jackson, 2007:21-29). There are three important “schools” that describe the relationship of other religious traditions with Christianity and try to give answers to questions about the nature of God and salvation. These are: pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism. Denise Cush points out her own typology, which is a development of these categories, although some of the terms are different, as the positive pluralism, the notion of hierarchy and inclusivism. Of course, she mentions that, as with all typologies, they are ideal types rather than conform to what we find in practice. Real life is more complex than any pure typology. Each type has its own forms. It also has different variations when they come from the dominant group than when they framed by non-dominant groups (Cush, 2006).

Religion preoccupied always the human being. That is why childhood needs and asks to find out about the issue of religion. Religious education tries to give answers in many questions concerning the meaning and the purpose of life and world. It transfers also a point of view that accepts human life as a single, while it determines a direction. Conveyors of religious education are firstly the family, then the Church and last the school. Religious education includes regular churchgoing and prayer. Church attendance is a religious dimension that sometimes is associated with Christian fundamentalism. Attending church is likely to strengthen traditional Christian beliefs. Thus, levels of church attendance and Christian fundamentalism appear to be reciprocally related (Eun Jung Oh et al., 2007:2). Especially prayer is a central element of all religions and it is defined in different, though related, ways by the various religious traditions (Mountain, 2005). It is acceptable that people from all cultures, times and locations pray to God as the Absolute Reality, the Higher Self, the Nature or any other name in view of religion (Baesler, 2012).

Beyond the above, there are the feasts, the festivities, the name days, the religious painting, the church music and poetry (Lambrou, 2003). But it is important to consider that there are no homogenous groups of pupils, even in the same religious tradition (Tsioumis & Birmpili, 2010). Religious beliefs of each child are part of his identity and they are ingrained in him, since family is the one that transmits them first and cultivates religious consciousness. It has been shown that the quality of home-school interactions have significant impact on pupils, especially in the first years of schools. The limited experience or understanding of children’s culture by teachers can lead to negative educational and psychological effects on children. The researchers use the terms “cultural discontinuity”, “cultural congruence” and “cultural mismatch” to describe cases where the culture of education has significant differences from that of parents and children. Teachers are likely to misinterpret children’s behavior when they do not understand or have limited exposure to the cultural norms of their pupils (Selcuk et al., 2009). That is why religious plurality should be included in diversity curricula. Such courses demonstrate that students can move beyond personal biases to focus on social issues that challenge internalized values (Constance Wise, Richmond West, 2002: 1) Surely it cannot be denied that pupils have experiences that are directly related to the learning process. Pupil has memories, family, religion, feelings, language and culture that give him a distinct voice. We

can move beyond all them, we can judge them, but certainly we cannot deny them (Kunzman, 2006, 4/12).

In kindergarten school, tradition and life experiences of children are playing an important role in religious education, as it passes through children's real situations and needs. It is also important to avoid influencing ideologically children and furthermore to promote their autonomy and prevent them from dogmatism (Tsioumis, & Birmpili, 2010). The role played by kindergarten teacher in confronting discrimination and diversity in a multicultural classroom is crucial. Apart from the practical that is used, it is important for them to reduce and eliminate their own racism. This takes a commitment and hard work on their part. The development of custom "self reflection" will help them become more effective (Donna M. Gollnick & Philip C. Chinn, 2006).

This process is essential as teachers refuse to adapt the principles of intercultural education. This is because their value system passes through the filter of what they taught. Then they adapt their own practices (Guillaume, 1998). It is important to mention that even school curriculum is itself a cultural product, since there is hereby established and maintained by the dominant cultural group. Whether in the form of explicit or implicit, subliminally transmits values, practices, perceptions of the dominant culture, which define acceptable methods of communication, social interaction, ways of thinking and knowledge (Kyridis, 1996; Hollins, 2006: 219–222).

According to Hohmann <<intercultural education aims at: a) the meeting of cultures in the base of equality and reciprocity, b) the setting aside of obstacles that are inserted at the meeting, c) the launch of "cultural exchange" and "cultural enrichment">> (Nikolaou, 2005:218-219). This means that school should make some changes in order to succeed in the achievement. Fullan claims that school improvement process involves three phases: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. The entry refers to the process that leads to the decision to approve the school or to make changes. The application relates to attempts to put an idea or reform into practice and the institutionalization refers to building innovation into everyday practice (Choi Ho Wa, 2010: 265).

At this point we should emphasize that Greek school calendar is based on Christian calendar. This embarrasses parents of other religions, as some periods of time are completely dedicated to Christian celebrations. Thus, their children should either be incorporated into these preparations or keep them at home until they are finished (McCreery et al., 2007:208). It is, therefore, necessary for pupils to maintain their own culture and religiosity. This should not be taken as an element of partition, nor as contrary belief systems, but as interdependent and multidimensional. Moreover, in many cultures were found to coexist in different religious beliefs (Huijbregts, et al., 2008). As Kimlyn J. Bender supports "religious and moral convictions as embodied in particular communities and traditions are therefore seen not as lifeless belief systems but as live options that require rational debate and polemical exchange" (Bender, 2007: 9). The arrangements for the protection of religious freedom are included in the whole system of protection of individual right.

"Religious freedom in Greece is consolidated in Article 13 of the Constitution and relevant are the provisions of Articles 3 and 16 § 2 of the Constitution, and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which has been ratified (legislative degree 53/1974) and it prevails over any conflicting provision of law" (Chrysogonos, K., 2010, 31/1). Article 3 of the

Constitution provides that “the prevailing religion in Greece is the religion of Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ”. So the development of religious consciousness is effected in the interpretative light of “prevailing religion”.

The 2000s was marked by rapid changes in the social-political space. The idea of modern Europe is associated with multiculturalism, the “post-national citizenship”. The nation state is transformed into European policy and the mono-cultural national identity in multicultural European consciousness. And in this entire situation, Greece is invited to set up its European identity and consciousness and to preserve also the particular cultural and national identity (Pantidis, S. & Passias, G., 2003). The latter years analysts such as Ulrich Beck speak on <<risk society>>. He defines it as “a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities included and introduced by modernization” (Beck 1992:21).

Especially after September 11, public debate was developed on the positive or negative contribution of religiosity in the acceptance of difference or the development of fear of the other. In the years that followed the events of that day efforts are made to promote interreligious dialogue. These face-to-face meetings can break the walls of suspicion and mistrust and perhaps bring under control the fundamentalism or the existing extremism acts (Langer, Ruth & Perdeu VanSlyke, Stephanie, 2011:6). Religious diversity concerns the inclusion of individual in a religious community. In the early 1990s some authors begun to recognize the need for an anti-racist attitude, but to criticize also the anti-racists that they underestimate the importance of issues related to cultural and religious representations, broadcasts and change (Jackson, R.,2004:4).

According to Micheline Milot << the diversity of beliefs and values and of identity-related claims based on religious affiliations and the increasingly sensitive nature of freedom of conscience and religion, concern all democratic societies that have an interest in forming citizens capable of reflection democratic participation. Our underlying idea is to approach religion –a social, cultural and political phenomenon- as a means of fostering democratic citizenship>> (Micheline Milot, 2007:13). Besides, <<a democracy should value all voices>> (Constance Wise, Richmond West, 2002: 4).

Aim of the research

The aim of this research is to examine the attitudes, the opinions and the ways of managing with religious diversity by kindergartener teachers

The inquiring axes are:

- To find out kindergarten teachers’ opinions about prayer in school and children’s churchgoing within the bounds of school life and to discover their perceptions of the importance of religious education.
- To find out the importance of religious festivals for kindergarten teachers and their celebration in kindergarten school.
- To assemble data touching the planning and realization of instructive programs regarding diversity and to ascertain the relations between teachers and parents of another religion and also with their community.

Procedures

The elements were collected with self-supplementing questionnaires, seeing that the target-population is big. In Bell's opinion the choice of the methodological approach in a research depends from "*the nature of the research and from the type of necessary information that should be collect*" (Bell, Judith, 2001:28). The research was drawn in January 2013 and it was carrying out from February to June of the same year. The questionnaire used questions that cover all the aspects of study (Gajendra K. Verma-Kanka Mallick, 2004). It was used the convenience sampling, while it was supported by individuals that was available and could easily participate in the research.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire contains 32 questions. The first part contains information on the demographic social and professional characteristics of the sample. The questions are all closed, according to the five-point scale of Likert. The sample is asked to declare the degree of agreement or disagreement, where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree or the degree of frequency, where 1=never and 5=always. According to Gajendra K. Verma, Kanka Mallick (2004:238) «closed questions are often used to find out the opinion of those that answer the questionnaire. The scale of Likert is one of the most useful forms of questions and the five-point scale is the most practical».

The questionnaire consists of four main sections.

The reliability and validity control showed the following:

Scale	Title of the scale	Cronbach's Alpha
1 st scale	Prayer and churchgoing	0,701
2 nd scale	Religious feasts	0,714
3 th scale	Planning /implementation of curricula	0,765
4 th scale	Relationships with parents and the community of children of different religion.	0,830
Overall scale		0,877

The first section consists of seven questions (no 1-7) that consider the perceptions of kindergarten teachers about prayer in the classroom in the classroom and children's churchgoing in the context of religious education. The second section includes nine questions (no 8-16) that pertain to religious celebrations, both Christian Orthodox and other religions. The third section (no 17-24) contains eight questions related to planning and implementation of curricula in relation to diversity. The fourth section (no 25-32) consists of eight questions that impress the relationships between kindergarten teachers and parents/ community of children of another religion.

The sample

The questionnaire was completely confidential and it was used for statistical results. Anonymity was maintained. The questionnaire was distributed to 173 kindergarten teachers (N=173).

Table 1. *The Sample: Demographic, Social and Professional Characteristics*

Gender	f		%	
Male	3		1,7	
Female	170		98,3	
Graduate Level	f		%	
2 years degree	30	17,3	0-5 years	13 7,6
4 years degree	62	35,8	6-10 years	33 19,2
Didaskaleio (+2 years training)	56	32,4	11-20 years	76 44,2
Postgraduate degree	25	14,5	21-30 years	47 27,3
Type of class			>30 years	
Regular	157	90,8	Attendance of Training programs in multicultural education	f %
Inclusion class	15	9,2	Yes	142 82,1
			No	31 17,9
Experience in migration issues	f		%	
Yes	16	9,2	Teaching experience in multicultural classes	f %
No	157	90,8	Yes	66 38,2
			No	107 61,8
Years of experience of teaching in multicultural classes				
0-5 years	37	56,1		
6-10 years	18	27,3		
>10 years	2	3,0		
No response	9	13,6		

The results

1st sub-scale: prayer, churchgoing

		Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I pray with children in the classroom	3,9711	1,25025
2	I think it is important the prayer to be neutral regarding religious content	3,8844	1,26143
3	I believe that religious education is an important part of education	3,6012	1,02151
4	Children's churchgoing is a part of religious education	3,2486	1,25363
5	Churchgoing, as a part of the educational process, is associated with the development of our cultural identity	3,3237	1,22918
6	I think that children's churchgoing contributes to the maintenance of Greco-Christian culture	3,3642	1,28511
7	I believe that it is important to keep alive the Orthodox part of our culture in the school premises	3,5376	1,14883

As it is seen from the table above, in the first section kindergartner teachers express the highest degree of agreement in the first question that refers in prayer in the classroom. Second question is following closely, where teachers agree that prayer should be neutral as for the content. Regarding the standard deviation, we observe the smallest value in the third question that examines the religious education as an important part of education. This means that in this question most values of the division are close to the average. Seventh question is following closely which refers to the importance of maintaining the orthodox part of our culture within the school premises. The standard deviation is greater in the sixth question that examines whether children's churchgoing contributes to the maintenance of Greco-Christian culture. This means that in this question the most numerous distribution values are far from the average.

2nd sub scale: religious feasts

		Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Christian orthodox feasts are celebrated in the classroom	4,0925	,92924
2	Feasts of children of another religion are celebrated in the classroom	1,9017	1,06019
3	I consider that it is important to have knowledge that concerns in the feasts of children of another religion in the classroom	3,7630	1,08178
4	I incorporate in teaching references to religious feasts from different religions	2,8960	1,19623
5	The reference of religious feasts of children of another religion in the classroom helps to enhance their self-esteem.	4,1272	,92511
6	It is important to cultivate in children conscious understanding in religious practices (feasts, prayer, church attendance e.t.c.) of other religions	4,0983	1,09260
7	I develop activities related to traditions of children of another religion	2,7688	1,22653
8	I think that feasts which bring children together with Orthodox tradition are important	3,8035	,98038
9	I use material or tales of religious traditions in the classroom	3,4913	1,02650

From the table above we see that in the second section kindergartener teachers express averages the highest degree of agreement in the fifth question that examines whether the reference of religious feasts of children of another religion in the classroom helps to enhance their self esteem. Sixth question is following, which refers to cultivation in children conscious understanding in religious practices of other religions and first question as well that examines whether Orthodox Christian feasts are celebrated in the classroom. Regarding the standard deviation, we observe the smallest value in the fifth question. This means that in this question most values of the division are close to the average. First question that refers to the celebration

of Christian feasts is following closely and the seventh question also which examines the feasts' importance that bring children together with the Orthodox tradition. The standard deviation is greater in the seventh question which examines whether activities related to traditions of children of another religion are developing.

3rd sub-scale: Planning /implementation of curricula

		Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I discuss with children about the similarities and differences between religions	3,0462	1,20953
2	I think that superficial references to various religions in the classroom may result in stereotypes	2,8555	1,06582
3	Religious tradition is part of civilization/ culture that carries each pupil	4,3468	,75940
4	I use in my teaching modules for diversity in religions	2,7168	1,09736
5	I think that programs that approach the particularities of religions help in prevention of social exclusion phenomena in the classroom	3,6936	1,07499
6	I read stories/ tales about diversity in the classroom	4,3237	,81367
7	In thematic sections for religious diversity I define the specific learning and teaching objectives	3,3179	1,25178
8	Each module for diversity is accompanied by an assessment of its success	3,3931	1,17946

As we can see from the table above, the fourth section kindergartener teachers express averages the highest degree of agreement in the third question that examines whether religious tradition is part of civilization/culture that carries each pupil. Sixth question is following with small difference, which refers to reading stories/tales about diversity in the classroom. Regarding the standard deviation, we observe the smallest value in the third question that we saw above. This means that third question most values of the division are close to the average. The standard deviation is greater in the seventh question that examines whether in the thematic sections for religious diversity are defined the specific learning and teaching objectives.

5th sub-scale.: Relationships with parents and the community of children of different religion.

		Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I discuss with parents of another religion their opinion for the participation of their children in Christian Orthodox feasts	4,1965	1,09788
2	I discuss with parents of another religion about issues of religious education of their children	3,2081	1,38620
3	I involve parents of children of another religion in organizing feasts in the classroom	2,8613	1,30444
4	I seek the active participation of parents of another religion in the classroom	3,3121	1,21795
5	I give the opportunity to parents of another religion to show customs from their traditions in the classroom	3,5029	1,05447
6	I think that collaborating with parents of another religion is a fundamental prerequisite empowerment/ inclusion of their children	4,0405	1,05300
7	I believe that it is important the discussion with religious communities on issues relating to religious education of children of another religion	2,9827	1,91528
8	I think that it is important to collaborate with religious communities	2,5756	1,22836

As we can see from the table above, in the fifth section kindergarteners teachers express averages the highest degree of agreement on the first question referred to discussion with parents of another religion their opinion for the participation of their children in Christian Orthodox feasts. Regarding the standard deviation, we observe the smallest value in the fifth question that examines whether teachers give the opportunity to parents of another religion to show customs from their traditions in the classroom. This means that in this question most values of the division are close to the average. The standard deviation is greater in the seventh question that examines whether it is important the discussion with religious communities on issues relating to religious education of children of another religion.

ANOVA TEST

ANOVA test showed the following results: the intersections of variables regarding **age** lead us to some interesting conclusions. Although the *age group* <25 counts only two people, both of them understand the significance of paying attention to children of another religion in the classroom. In the *age group* 25-35, half respondents (52.3 %) celebrate the feasts of children of another religion in the classroom or they make mention of other religions. However, they all discuss about religious diversity with children and they seek to be in touch with parents of another religion and, moreover, to involve them somehow in participating in the classroom. Almost all of the respondents (95.2 %) believe that children of another religion do not conceal their religious identity for the sake of acceptance. The *age group* 36-50 considers more the needs of children of another religion and they carry out many activities for religious diversity. Furthermore, they make great efforts to communicate with parents and motivate them to

participate in the classroom. In the *age group* >50 we observe that they don't celebrate the feasts of children of another religion (78.2 %).

The correlation of the variables regarding the **educational level** of the sample shown that almost all the teachers (96.6 %) *graduated of the two years studies* believe that religious education is an important part of education and that it is important to keep alive the Orthodox part of our culture in the school premises. Moreover, half of them (43.3 %) don't seek after the participation of parents of another religion in the classroom. Theoretically, they do know what to do, but they do not practice it. The same views are in *University graduated* teachers, except that they try to involve parents of another religion in the classroom. Teachers that are *holders of Postgraduate* don't make much of religious education, but they believe that it is important to be informed of other religions. Regarding the **years of service**, kindergarten teachers that have 0-5 years of service in schools present the highest percentages (61.6 %) of celebrating feasts of children of another religion in the classroom. Teachers with 6-10 years of services with 30% celebrate these feasts. However, teachers with 11-20 years of service present a percentage of 82.8 % of not celebrating them at all and teachers with 21-30 years of services present a percentage of 74.4%. Some teachers (35.6%) with 11-20 years of service believe that children churchgoing is a part of religious education. 46.1% of them do not incorporate in teaching references to religious feasts from different religion and 86.8% believe that feasts that bring children together with Orthodox tradition are important. However, 56.6% of them believe that it is important the discussion with religious communities on issues relating to religious education of children of another religion.

Most teachers (76,6%) with 21-30 years of service believe that children churchgoing is a part of religious education and 97.8% of them believe that feasts that bring children together with Orthodox tradition are important. 68.1% believe that it is important the discussion with religious communities on issues relating to religious education of children of another religion. Regarding the teacher's **experience of teaching classes with a multicultural population**, it can be observed that kindergarten teachers with such an experience present lower percentages of issues related to religious education and higher percentages of issues related to intercultural education than teachers who do not have this experience. Specifically, teachers with no experience of teaching in a multicultural classroom think that it is very important religious education (94.4%), the maintenance of the Orthodox part of our culture in the classroom (96.1%) and they celebrate the orthodox feasts (99.1%). However, they neither involve parents of children of another religion in organizing feasts in the classroom (44.2% do) nor they seek their active participation (67.3% do). Half of the teachers (55.1%) discuss with religious communities on issues relating to religious education of children of another religion.

Teachers with experience of teaching in a multicultural classroom think that it is not so important the religious education (81.8%), the maintenance of the Orthodox part of our culture in the classroom (75.8%) but they celebrate the orthodox feasts (89.4%). They also consider that it is the same important to have knowledge that concerns in the feasts of children of another religion in the classroom (90.9%) as to bring children together with Orthodox feasts (93.4%). However, they quite involve parents of children of another religion in organizing feasts in the classroom (66.6%) and they seek their active participation (89.8%). Many teachers (72.7%) discuss with religious communities on issues relating to religious education of children of another religion.

Regarding **teaching years in classes with multicultural population**, kindergarten teachers who have no experience of multiculturalism and religious diversity in the classroom believe that religious education is very important (100%). All the same, they do not perceive the importance of working with parents of another religion and collaborating with them as a fundamental prerequisite empowerment/ inclusion of their children (57.1%). A lower percentage of teachers that have 0-5 or 6-10 years of experience (81% and 84.2% respectively) believe that religious education is an important part of education. However, most of them believe in collaborating with parents of children of another religion as a fundamental prerequisite empowerment/ inclusion of their children (97.2% and 94.7% respectively).

Regarding **work status**, kindergarten teachers in private education seem to accept and incorporate more religious diversity and multiculturalism in the classroom. Below them, teachers who are deputies follow and last are the permanent teachers. Teachers in private education have the highest percentages of celebrating the feasts of children of another religion (33.4%) and of discussing with religious communities (83.4%). They also organize activities related to traditions of children of another religion (83.3%). Teachers that are deputies present a 25% percentage of celebrating feasts of children of another religion in the classroom. All of them (100%) organize activities related to traditions of children of another religion and 75% of them discuss with religious communities. Permanent teachers present a low percentage (7.6%) of celebrating feasts of children of another religion in the classroom. However, many of them (53.4%) organize activities related to traditions of children of another religion and discuss with religious communities (61%). No matter the work status, all kindergarten teachers believe that churchgoing is an important part of religious education.

DISCUSSION

It should be taken in mind that the answers of the questionnaire are partly influenced by the pedagogical ethics of the same questionnaire. The thematic axis of the questionnaire relating to prayer and churchgoing points out that kindergartener teachers make prayer in the classroom, but it is not because it is required by the system. They choose to make a neutral and not a religious prayer. Religious education is considered as an important part of education. Indeed, the lower the educational level is and greater lack of experience in multicultural classes have teachers, the higher the rates shown significance. Most kindergarten teachers believe that children's church attendance is part of the religious education. The trend is upward again in teachers without the experience of multiculturalism as well as alternates and kindergarten teachers in private education. Furthermore, they connect churchgoing with the development of our cultural identity and this confirms how close religion to our cultural identity is. They believe that children's churchgoing contributes to the conservation of the Graeco-Christian culture. It is obvious that the ideology of "Graeco-Christian culture" (Sotirelis, 1998:23) that characterizes our country greatly affects the attitudes of kindergartner teachers. As Sotirelis reports, *Orthodoxy is treated as a component of Hellenism, which is finally an inseparable unity: the "Graeco-Christian culture"* (Sotirelis, 1998:71).

The culture of Greek school is identified with Orthodoxy. According to Zambeta (2003:119), the element that basically highlights Greek education is that Greek national identity is inseparable from Orthodoxy and Greek culture is interwoven with the Orthodox Christian religion. This message is transmitted through religious practices that take place in schools (Tsioumis et al., 2013).

Educational practices, such as churchgoing, prayer, school celebrations point out the crucial presence of religion in education. However, very often practices associated with religious traditions take place without involving religiosity (Zambeta, 2003:28). Probably, this is a reason they don't choose a religious prayer in order to strengthen the Orthodox side of our culture.

In the thematic axis referring to religious festivals, the majority of kindergartner teachers celebrate Christian orthodox feasts. This happens to a greater extent with teachers that don't have the experience of children of another religion. They don't celebrate the feasts of children of another religion. More conciliatory in this question are kindergartner teachers with few years of experience, those of private education and alternates.

However, most kindergartener teachers –especially those with higher education level, with a few years experience and without the experience of a multicultural classroom- consider that it is important to have knowledge about the celebrations of children of another religion and they claim that they incorporate in teaching references to religion feasts of other religions. The incorporation of these references increases the smaller the age of teachers is and the fewer the previous service they have. They realize that references to religions feasts of children of another religion enhance their self esteem, especially teachers with few years of experience. They argue that it is important to cultivate in children consciousness of understanding one another in religion practices of other religions. Celebrations that bring children into contact with the orthodox tradition are considered to be very important and this position strengthens the views referring to the maintenance of orthodoxy within the school premises and the celebration of Christian festivals.

Teachers argue that they discuss about religious experiences of all children in order to respect the religious diversity. Teachers who discuss more about these issues belong in the age up to 35 years old and over 50 years old. The questions that arise is the context in which they discuss and if children with another religion are given the opportunity to express their experiential elements. Kindergarten schools needs to respect the right of the minority to express itself and to enrich democratic life with its opinion (Nikolaou, 2005: 208). This contributes to the respect for religious diversity and creates trusting relationships regardless of religious beliefs.

All kindergartner teachers agree that knowledge of the existence of other religions contributes to peaceful coexistence among them. They encourage effective interaction of children of different religion, especially teachers with higher education, because they believe that cooperation between them strengthens the feeling of self-perception. They also believe that free development of children's religious consciousness is essential for free development of their personality. Survey's data shows that this is a general trend, which doesn't always find practical application in the classroom. In theory, the development of religious consciousness, provided for by article 16.2 of the constitution, doesn't mean adherence to a mainstream religion, but free development of personality, as required by article 5.1 of the constitution and article 13.1 of the constitution, which safeguards the freedom of religious conscience.

Smooth intergration and socialization of all children help in the evasion of phenomena of social exclusion of children of another religion. It is known that the socialization of child begins from family and school and constitutes "a complicated, multiform and dynamic process that lasts as long as the human life" (Rerakis, 2010: 33). In the thematic unit that is referred to the planning

and materialization of instructive programs, the elements shown that kindergartner teachers discuss in general religion's resemblances and differences. Teachers under 25 years of age and over 50 years old possess the biggest percentages. However, many kindergartner teachers do not consider the surface report in religions lead to stereotypes. This is likely to be owned in the fact that they do not know which type of report to make, provided that this presupposes deep knowledge of questions that are related to religions. The holders of postgraduate title agree that something like this happens.

The majority of kindergartner's teachers realize that religious tradition is a part of the civilization and culture of every child. Nevertheless, the elements shown that teachers do not do activities that have religious traditions as a subject. Generally, they do not use in their teaching thematic units for religion diversity. It worth mentioning that religious minorities in classrooms are deprived of the right of education corresponding to their cultural values and traditions, something that not only it is not goes for other children, but it constitutes violation of fundamental human rights. On the other hand, these discriminations do not create suitable conditions for the educational and social integration of children of another religion, leading them on the margin of society. Kindergartner teachers recognize that the programs approach the particularities of religions contribute in the avoidance of religion's exclusion phenomena. However, in practice they do not apply them. It is still important for each activity to be coupled with evaluation of its success, so as to become comprehensible what was achieved or how the activity could be modified, in order to achieve better results (Keast, 2007).

The two thematic units above make known the necessity of acquaintance with the Other. The ignorance of Other leads in stereotypes (which is the representation of Other) and prejudices (which express the readiness for positive or negative attitude against Other), because we interpret, categorize and classify others a little beat arbitrarily. Data from the thematic axis on relations with parents and with the community of children of another religion point that teachers seek after the contact with those parents. They talk about the participation of their children in Christian festivals in the school. Many teachers involve parents of another religion in feast organization in the classroom. This happens especially from young teachers and those who have the experience of a multicultural classroom. This involvement is a determinant factor in being sensitive in the culture of children of another religion and in reducing the possibility of intensities among parents, because festivals, inevitably, touches on our identity and our views on religion and country (Tsioumis & Mpirmpili, 2010). More often teachers seek after their active participation in the classroom. Teachers who are aged 25-35, those with the experience of multiculturalism, the holders of postgraduate title and teachers from the regional unit of Pella seek more the participation of parents of another religion. Generally, it seems that teachers make efforts to exist communication between school and family. School seems that it is not in position to confront the cases of populations that presents particularities. Moreover, education is not surrounded by groups of social services, which would allow better communication with populations of different religion (Zambeta, 2003:181, Matziouri et al. 2014). The school appears that it is not in position to face the cases of populations that it presents particularities. Moreover, the education is not framed by a network of social services that would allow a better communication with populations of different religion (Zambeta, 2003:181).

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