Creating Gender Equality in the Educational System

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Despite many efforts to increase gender inequality in international level the issue still remains. The gender equality is among the goals of UN, which is expected to put an end to all forms of discrimination against women and girls throughout the world. This article focuses and gives an overview on existing gender differences in the educational system of Greece because as both family and the workplace can play an important role in shaping them through positive interventions and gender mainstreaming. The conclusions and recommendations offers a starting point for preventing the development of gender discrimination and stereotypes in education.

Keywords: gender, women, education, UN, goals, Greece

INTRODUCTION

For more than half a century, since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and the Treaty of Rome in 1957, international and European organizations have dealt with the issue of gender equality. Equal opportunities between men and women in the educational process have been an important parameter of gender equality policies and have strengthened dialogue between states with the aim of improving the quality and efficiency of both education systems and teaching and learning products. However, despite the significant progress that has taken place, inequality of opportunities in education, which raises multiple and complex problems, still remains an important issue (INE-GSEE,2015).

Despite the fact that the reproduction of gender stereotypes is not limited to the school context, as both family and the workplace can play an important role in shaping them, education is still the most appropriate field for implementing positive interventions to this direction. In Greece, although the institutional and legal framework ensures equal opportunities for both sexes, there is a need for policies and measures to promote gender equality in education: interventions in school textbooks, pedagogical material and methods, sensitization of students and teachers – both men and women. Such measures, combined with special emphasis on the professional orientation of young men and women, are intended to help remove prejudices and create prerequisites that will allow for meaningful equality of men and women in the field of education and labor (INE-GSEE,2015). Promoting gender equality is not only an issue of social justice and respect for the principle of equality and non-discrimination. Tackling the barriers that gender disparities create shall critically contribute to releasing the creative potential of public education, and improve the quality of scientific research produced in this country (Dia Anagnostou,2019).According to the Greek General Secretary for Gender Equality and the National Active Plan 2016-2020 the importance of the role of education on in promoting equality issues and the promotion of an equality culture among pupils on the basis of reciprocity, partnership, solidarity and respect for diversity constitute a long-standing belief and goal (GSGE, 2016-2020).

METHOD

The methodological approach followed comprises a set of research tools, both quantitative and qualitative ones. The qualitative and quantitative methods share common ground in that the collection

of accurate information on social phenomena is attempted but tend to differ in terms of the type of information collected and the way the latter is being gathered. The combined and complementary use of quantitative and qualitative methods is considered to be the most effective methodological approach towards achieving a thorough presentation and delineation of social reality dimensions (Kyriazi N.,(2002). A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, involving research in libraries and archives, fieldwork, collection of quantitative and qualitative data as well as carrying out structured interviews involving questionnaire completion by the staff (center management, specialized staff and students, regardless of gender) within a time frame of 15-20 minutes have been conducted. By means of combining open and closed-ended questions with quantitative and qualitative data analysis respectively, an effective and comprehensive approach towards social reality was attempted. Furthermore, through reconciling and combining two research methods, the questionnaire technique - a tool whose exploitation was deemed imperative as already mentioned- has been used as part of the quantitative approach while the interview technique has been selected as part of the qualitative approach to this research. The interviews conducted before the research also significantly contributed to the preparation of the questionnaires, which had to get restated in alignment with the particularities of the population in question.

FINDINGS

Promoting gender equality at an international level

At an international level, the first concrete reference to the elimination of gender discrimination is made in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted and voted by the United Nations General Assembly (UN) in 1948.

These articles formed the basis for the adoption of the subsequent Treaties, Conventions and other legal documents, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Papagiannopoulou & Karageorgou, 2013). On December 18, 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW) (United Nations, 1979). This Convention is considered to be the most important document for the development of gender equality policies at a global level and its main purpose is the elimination of gender inequalities as well as the adoption of necessary measures -including legal ones in all walks of life and in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural areas- by the governments of the countries that have ratified it to ensure women's full equality, development and advancement.

In its 30 articles, there are definitions of discrimination against women, as well as measures to be taken by the Member States, such as:

- Legislation to eliminate discrimination against women (Articles 2 & 3).
- Equality promotion mechanisms (Article 4).
- Changing gender-based sociocultural behavior patterns to eliminate prejudices and habits based on the inferiority or superiority of the gender concept or on the idea of gender stereotypes, as well as recognition of the joint responsibility of men and women with regard to the upbringing of children and understanding maternity as a social function (Article 5).
- Measures to combat prostitution and the sexual exploitation of women (Article 6).
- The right to participate in politics and public life (Article 7), the ability to represent their country on an international scale and at international organizations (Article 8), equal rights to nationality and citizenship (Article 9).
- Equal rights in critical areas: (a) education (vocational guidance, program attendance, etc.) (Article 10), b) employment in other sectors of economic and social life (right to work and

equal pay, social security (Article 11 and 13),; (c) healthcare (Article 12),; (d) rural development (Article 14).

- Equal rights to family relationships and marriage (Article 16).

The UN has effectively set up a mechanism (the CEDAW Commission) under which Member States that have ratified the Convention are required to produce national reports every four (4) years to assess the progress of the implemented policies on gender equality as well as the related commitments.

In addition, in 1985 the UN held the 3rd World Conference on Women in Nairobi, which adopted the "Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women ". In 1995, the Fourth UN World Conference on Women under the "Equality - Development - Peace" emblem was held in Beijing, where the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action were adopted (United Nations, 1995).

The Declaration and the Platform for Action endorsed at the end of the Conference, set out the strategic objectives and actions to be implemented in order to remove the obstacles to the promotion of gender equality. Twelve (12) critical sectors have been identified as an obstacle to the promotion of women and therefore require taking specific actions:

- women and poverty
- education and training for women
- women and health
- violence against women
- women and armed conflicts
- women and the economy
- women, power and decision-making
- institutional mechanisms for the promotion of women
- human rights of women
- women and the media
- women and the environment
- the girl-child.

The Beijing Platform for Action is the first official international document to adopt the strategy and the term "gender mainstreaming" and has been defined as the promotion of an "active and explicit policy of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programs so that an analysis of the impact on women and men is made before decisions are taken by governments and other bodies".

Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Madrid European Council (15th and 16th December 1995) called for an annual review of the implementation of the Platform for Action in the Member States. A Special UN Summit in 2000 on "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace in the 21stCentury" (Beijing + 5) (United Nations, 2010a) ensured the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and a frequent evaluation of the implementation of the Beijing Program by 2005 was agreed on. On this basis, three reports were published: Beijing +10 - Progress within the European Union (2005), Beijing +15: The Platform for Action and the European Union (2010) and Beijing +20 (2015), where the progress achieved by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995 to 2015) was assessed.

The implementation report on the Platform confirmed that it cast a positive impact on gender equality policies. However, there is still much to be done in the field of equality between men and women as

the progress of gender mainstreaming is slow (Council of Europe, 2008). Gender equality has, thus, been the core component of all policies that shape the agenda, and is no longer considered an autonomous and regional issue (UN, 2002). Within this context, the UN Commission on the Status of Women 2008 has had been set up to record good practices and assess the progress of gender policies in individual countries based on the Beijing Platform for Action.

There was a total of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that responded to the key global development challenges and needed to be achieved by 2015. These objectives were determined by the actions and objectives set out in the Millennium Declaration (United Nations, 2000b) which had been adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 Heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in September 2000.

The 8 MDGs were subjected to time constraints and were measured on the basis of 48 indicators, specifically developed to monitor their progress. The first three objectives involved: 1) the eradication of poverty and hunger, 2) the provision of primary education to all (to ensure that all children around the world, boys and girls, will be offered the opportunity to complete a full-time Primary Education program by 2015), 3) the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The third objective highlights the elimination of gender inequality in Primary and Secondary education by 2005 and at all levels of education not later than 2015.

Despite the progress made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which were of particular importance to women and girls, and although the Millennium Development Goal 3 identifies gender equality and women's empowerment as a universal priority, overall progress on women and girls in all the Millennium Development Goals remains slow and uneven, both within and between countries. Indeed, the lack of progress on gender equality has hindered progress towards all the Millennium Development Goals and remains a concern for regions and areas affected by poverty and for marginalized, vulnerable and disadvantaged women and girls as well and for those suffering from multiple forms of discrimination and inequality of different kinds.

In general, Greece, as a member of the International Organizations, has accepted, adopted and ratified all the International Conventions that aim to improve the status of women in all areas of the country's economic, political, social and cultural life. In general, Greece, as a member of the International Organizations and the European Union, whose social policy pursues gender equality, has accepted, adopted and ratified all the International Conventions that aim to improve the status of women in all areas of the country's economic, political, social and cultural life.

Sustainable development goals by the United Nations

At the end of September 2015 at the Summit of the United Nations (UN) in New York, the document containing the 17 overall goals that the Member States will be called upon to implement by 2030 was voted.

Among these 17 goals is goal number 5[1] on gender equality, which is expected to put an end to all forms of discrimination against women and girls throughout the world and it can be suggested that part

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1   Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. Major progress has been made towards increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrolment rates in schools particularly for women and girls. Basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, yet bolder efforts are needed to make even greater strides for achieving universal education goals. For example, the world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys, but few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education.

Facts and figures:

•Enrolment in primary education in developing countries has reached 91 per cent but 57 million children remain out of school

•More than half of children that have not enrolled in school live in sub-Saharan Africa

•An estimated 50 per cent of out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas

•103 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills, and more than 60 per cent of them are women

Goals

•By 2030, it will be ensured that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes

•By 2030, it will be ensured that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education

•By 2030, equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university, will be ensured.

•By 2030, the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship will have substantially increased

•By 2030, gender disparities in education will be eliminated and equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations will be ensured.

•By 2030, it will be ensured that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

•By 2030, it will be ensured that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

•Education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive will be built and upgraded while safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all will be provided.

•By 2020, the number of scholarships for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training, information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes will substantially increase globally and will be made available to developing countries, in particular less developed ones, small islands and African countries.

•By 2030, the supply of qualified teachers, through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially in less developed ones and small islands will be substantially increased.

of it is narrowed down in goal number 4[2] which refers to the acquisition of quality education, considering that the latter constitutes the foundation for improving people's lives and sustainable development.

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2   While the world has achieved progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education between girls and boys), women and girls continue to suffer discrimination and violence in every part of the world.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large.

The European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) are embarking on a new, global, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) – the Spotlight Initiative.

The Initiative is so named as it brings focused attention to this issue, moving it into the spotlight and placing it at the centre of efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

An initial investment in the order of EUR 500 million will be made, with the EU as the main contributor. Other donors and partners will be invited to join the Initiative to broaden its reach and scope. The modality for the delivery will be a UN multi-stakeholder trust fund, administered by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, with the support of core agencies UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women, and overseen by the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General.

Facts and figures:

•About two thirds of countries in the developing regions have achieved gender parity in primary education.

•In Southern Asia, only 74 girls were enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys in 1990. By 2012, the enrolment ratios were the same for girls as for boys.

•In sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia, girls still face barriers to entering both primary and secondary school.

•Women in Northern Africa hold less than one in five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. The proportion of women in paid employment outside the agriculture sector has increased from 35 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015.

•In 46 countries, women now hold more than 30 per cent of seats in national parliament in at least one chamber.

Goals:

•End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

•Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

•Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

•Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

•Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life

•Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

More specifically, the goal number 4 in case pertains to ensuring equal access for all women and men to affordable and high-quality technical and vocational training as well as access to higher education, including universities by 2030, among others.

In Greece, in the past decades new data with regard to the relationship of young women with education have emerged. These data include:

- the balanced participation of boys and girls in all levels of education
- the best school performance of girls
- their more successful promotion within higher education contexts
- the fact that they constitute more than 50% of the student population
- the fact that their successful presence in higher education allows them to claim high status and profitable posts
- the elimination of anachronistic social perceptions concerning women's education due to the abovementioned facts

However, gender-based social discrimination is still reflected in the field of education, in all its forms and levels.

Gender Mainstreaming in Education in Greece

In earlier studies, (Frosi & Deligianni, 2001) focusing on girls' access to various education levels and on their low school performance as compared to that of boys, particularly in science, but also in their educational and professional choices which are closely related to their poor performance, the lower participation rate of girls in all levels of education, which has decreased with their transition from lower to higher educational levels, is highlighted.

However, a different picture is emerging from a new wave of studies (KETHI,2003) especially as regards girls' access to all levels of education both on a quantitative level and on girls' overall school performance. It is widely acknowledged that both sexes' equal access to Primary and Secondary Education is a fact that cannot be disputed. Women in several European countries as well as in Greece represent more than 50% of the student population, a significant attribute of women's and European societies' recent history. In fact, in a number of cases, girls' performance at school is better than that of boys and girls are more successfully promoted to Higher Education. What follows is that such academic successes set the ground for claiming high-status jobs.

With regard to the above, research shows than over the past thirty years the population's education level in Greece has considerably improved for both genders despite the fact that women followed men with some delay (Vitsilaki- Soroniati et al., 2001). In particular, the participation rates of boys and girls in Pre-School and Primary Education are similar in the last decades and range at 50% for each gender (Vitsilaki-Soroniati et al., 2000, Deliyanni-Kouimtzi & Ziogou, 1995). The difference, which was primarily felt in Secondary Education in the 1970s and 1980s, was then limited and does no

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•Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

•Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.

•Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

longer exist (Vitsilakis-Soronias et al., 2001). With reference to Tertiary Education, the actual admission number has increased in the past three decades. Today, girls account for the 53% of the student population in Tertiary Education and for the 49% in Higher Education.

It is true that the increase in girls' access to all levels of education, regardless of the reasons that contributed to it, is a very positive development if compared to the results yielded by respective data in the past and although their performance is satisfactory, come first in the Pan-Hellenic exams and obtain their degrees within prescribed time frames, etc. yet, women's status in the labor market does not indicate the same positive change and improvement. Women are still in occupations that have traditionally been classified as female, which, for the most part, do not yield high profits and whose social status, prestige and participation in decision-making processes are restricted while they are being affected by unemployment, at the same time.

It's worth mentioning the admittedly positive growth in the rate of the female gender's access to Tertiary Education and the numerical superiority of female teachers in Secondary Education, as compared to previous years. Girls are also dominate the theoretical areas of knowledge and principally maintain their attendance in Primary Education schools within the General Education context. The penetration of girls in science as well as in male-dominated theoretical schools, such as the Law school, appears to be hesitant.

As far as teachers are concerned, the majority of them do not seem to be aware of gender discrimination at school (Kantartzi, 1996; Deligianni et al., 2000) with the exception of few activities and only in the case these activities are specifically assigned to them (Kantartzi, 1996). They are in favor of gender equality when this issue is directly addressed to them and they assert that they are sensitized to gender-related issues (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, 1990; Deligianni and Ziogou 1998; Deligianni et al., 2000). However, when asked questions related to the individual factors that make up the grid of inequality, a truth that they are unable to perceive is unearthed which pertains to the fact that they are pervaded with stereotypical ideas as to their gender and social roles, a condition that encourages their contribution to the reproduction of such stereotypes (Deligianni et al., 2000). In particular, research reveals that teachers have different expectations for boys and girls (Moscofoglou, 1996). They attribute stereotypical personality traits to the two sexes (Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou, 1990; Savvidou, 1996; Kantartzis, 1996; Natsiopoulou and Giannoula, 1996; Frosi, 2000b). They consider aggression, vivacity, spontaneity and innocence that exist side-by-side with courage and competitiveness to be attributes that boys exemplify while girls are characterized by guile and suspicion in their relationships with people, as well as obedience, care, organizational skills, tenderness and sensitivity. They hold a negative attitude towards technical issues and occupations and prefer dealing with issues that are associated with traditional female roles.

In terms of school performance, contradictions are evident, as according to Frosi's research (2000), teachers argue that, in general, girls' school performance is better than that of boys', but to a number of them, as shown in Stavridou et al. (1999), boys do better in practical courses while in Kantarzis' (1996) research on teachers it appears that this distinction as regards gender predominance in courses is not acceptable. The same applies to a high percentage of teachers who took part in the study of Stavridou et al. (1999). However, these contradictions could be investigated in the light of a different sample in each of the studies in question.

One of the findings pertains to the different causes to which teachers attribute boys' and girls' good performance. This can be the result of girls' increased effort and boys' special mental abilities (Frosi & Deligianni, 2001).

Furthermore, teachers keep drawing a distinction between "male" and "female" courses, thus further distinguishing theoretical from science courses (Deligianni et al., 2000) while adopting the distinction

between "male" and "female" occupations (this is not the case for the second group of the sample in Sidiropoulou-Dimakakou's survey, 1990) and maintaining stereotypical perceptions of boys' and girls' characteristics.

Also, as research suggests, teachers ascribe women the leading role of a wife, mother and housewife (Savvidou, 1996; Kantartzis, 1996), a finding that is overturned in Deligianni et al.'s (2000) research, in which, in the first place at least, they oppose the traditional distribution of roles which requires boys' connection to the public sphere of life and girls' connection to the private one.

In fact, male scientists adopt far more traditional and stereotypical perceptions about women's position in the Greek society as compared to those of their female counterparts in theoretical sciences (Deligianni & Ziogou, 1998), a fact that is found to be in agreement with findings in foreign research, linking teachers' specialization to the extent to which traditional or not traditional perceptions are adopted by them (Riddell, 1989).

In addition, an examination of the study programs offered in Schools of Humanities preparing teachers for Secondary Education, indicates an extremely limited number of courses on raising future teachers' awareness of gender equality, in the departments and faculties they are offered. Three courses are offered at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Athens, two courses are offered at the University of Thessaloniki and two at the University of Ioannina. At the Department of Philosophy of the University of Ioannina two courses are offered while three courses are offered at the Department of Philosophy and Social Studies of the School of Philosophy as well as at the Department of Sociology of the School of Social Sciences of the University of Crete. Finally, one to three courses are taught at the Departments of History and Archeology of these three Universities (Aristotle, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, University of Crete). Based on the total number of courses offered at each department, it can be concluded that gender-related and social inequalities' awareness-raising modules could be increased and extended. As the gender issue is not examined independently but is treated as a submodule of a broader course, the introduction of more courses that focus on sexes and women's position in socio-educational processes is necessary.

It needs to be emphasized that only a number of these courses offered are part of the core courses and the consequence of this academic practice is the degradation of future teachers' training in issues related to implementing gender equality in school practice, which is also pointed out by the teachers themselves (see Deligianni-Kouimtzi, 1998). This lack of teachers' basic education has unquestionably added to the limited effectiveness of any gender-related training program, as it fails to enrich education with new, sensitized workforce.

However, it should be pointed out that an upward trend can be observed in the issues of gender and equal opportunities in university education in recent years. Today, those who are scientifically involved in these matters are becoming increasingly aware that any regulatory change in education with the aim of achieving gender equality needs to take teachers' basic education and training into consideration.

RESULTS

The following results are based on empirical and theoretical studies carried out by the Research Centre for Gender Equality in collaboration with respectable researchers (2000, 2001, 2003, 2007 etc) in Greece during the past decades:

- As regards the composition of the student population, there is a significant increase in the female share of the percentage who now take numerical precedence over all levels of General Secondary Education, Initial Vocational Training and Higher Education. During the five-year period 2010-2015 the total number of female students in tertiary education (Universities and

Institutes of Technological/Applied Sciences) reached 758,345, while the total number of male students reached 626,405 with the respective percentages being 55% for female and 45% for male students. Nevertheless, a close examination of the study options reveals a traditional gender division, leading to the conclusion that girls' and young women's increased access to education, especially to Higher Education, has not been enough to bring about a break from the past of women's education.

- As regards the formation of teen sex identities, it appears through the responses of the teachers that school reproduces the dominant ideologies on gender relations that lead to the formation of hegemonic male and female identities, built on the basis of preserving the role of males as breadwinners for boys and motherhood and family creation as the exclusive mission of girls.

- Additionally, while girls' attitude towards school is more positive than that of boys' and their academic performance is better in all areas of school life, their successful presence is not reflected in the way their classmates and teachers construct representations of the girl-schoolgirl, representations that remain extremely stereotypical and traditional. Furthermore, the formal division of disciplines and school subjects in male and female ones is still prevalent, despite boys' attempts to enter areas of knowledge that have typically been considered female, in their attempt to achieve better access to the labor market.

- The same applies to professional choices, which are characterized by great contradictions, especially in relation to women's employment since the employment rate (of people aged 20-64) is 49 % for women and 70 % for men. Therefore, while girls claim better study options and envision high-status occupations, they keep considering maternity and family as their primary priority, ignoring the conflict involved in linking the professional and family spheres.

It is also worth mentioning that the presence of women in the academic world is extremely limited, which substantiates the claim that scientific knowledge retains its male-centered character and impenetrable nature that prevent female scientists from massively entering and controlling the knowledge definition and production area. In 2016 the 31% were women teaching in the universities and 69% were men.

In particular, with respect to male and female teachers and their place in the educational hierarchy, this appears to be in contrast with women's high participation rate in the workplace in case (for instance, 71% of the teachers in Primary and Secondary Education are female, however their representation in educational and trade union decision-making centres is extremely low).

In conclusion, it could be stated that:

- while the number of female students steadily increases and has even exceeded the number of male students in certain areas and grades, the knowledge offered is still male-centered and focused on the interests of the male gender,

- while the performance and overall academic success of girls rise above those of boys, the agents in the educational process create traditional representations for the female student and raise expectations for her that reproduce patriarchal social structures,

- while boys and girls are now trained together and have come closer more than ever, their knowledge as to the needs, desires, expectations, identities of the other side is limited,

- while school's official aim is to educate both sexes on their transition to the modern labor market, its internal and covert forces shape different sex destinations and encourage discrimination against half of the student population,

- while the curriculum sets the promotion of democratic awareness in male and female students and the creation of equal citizens as official objectives, it appears to ignore important principles related to gender equality that could enable it to successfully fulfill its purpose,
- while teachers accept social equality at a theoretical level and are opposed to discrimination and segregation, their views on gender relations are extremely traditional and look at, especially male teachers, gender division of labor and domestic roles as being self-evident.

In a nutshell, school sometimes guides boys and girls directly or indirectly into developing and internalizing personality traits, making study choices, having aspirations of professional advancement, life visions and goals in accordance with social perceptions and assumptions that are typical of their gender as well as in conjunction with the formal school curriculum and teachers' designated place in the labour pyramid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Raising awareness of parents and educators, both male and female ones, so that they can distinguish inequalities and promote equality within the education system. For instance, the design and implementation of teacher education/awareness-raising programs are deemed necessary considering that university departments - with the exception of few- do not adequately prepare teachers/educators to adopt educational practices that promote gender equality in education.

A best practice to be adopted is a training program under the auspices of the National Center for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA). The program in case is addressed at teachers and attempts the enhancement of teaching through gender activities and the introduction of the gender equality perspective in all disciplines while the corresponding principles are promoted throughout the curriculum on the basis of existing teaching manuals that take the form of projects.

The training program is aimed at enabling participants to:

- develop expertise in gender equality issues, and in particular in gender mainstreaming within the school community.
- raise awareness, become sensitized and strengthen their knowledge and skills in terms of issues related to the promotion of gender equality, gender mainstreaming in pedagogical practices and the implementation of educational interventions with regard to gender and discrimination.
comprehend specific issues and areas where gender inequalities and discrimination are (re)produced in the course of the educational process and within the school community.

Another suggestion could be the introduction of modules, in combination with knowledge which focuses on familiarizing students with family life issues (economy, hygiene, sexual education issues, etc.), across the curriculum, primarily across the Middle school (Gymnasium) curriculum. For instance, the concept of care provision in all its forms which constitutes a key thematic area and the principal aim of the proposal in case and refers to the attempt to include boys into a process of accepting and "acquiring" the ideology as well as the practical aspects involved in "caring" could be included in the curriculum. This proposal has been widely applied within the Dutch education system (Extra, 1995). The enrichment of Primary Education curricula with Gender Mainstreaming (women's history, updating on the status of women in society today, the necessity for redistributing social roles in society, work and decision-making centres etc.). At this point, the importance of enhancing teaching curricula with lessons that develop communication and companionship between members of the opposite sex, the refutation of myths and ideological constructs around the human body and gender relations are worth mentioning.

Another suggestion is the enrichment of School Vocational Guidance courses with Gender Mainstreaming, which contributes to the goal of children making professional, unaffected choices based on their inclinations, interests and abilities. To successfully achieve this goal the conscientious encouragement of girls to turn to traditional "male" occupations and of boys to occupy with care professions are required (Deligianni-Kouimtzi, V., Dimitrouli, K., Ziogou-Karastergiou, S., Kanellou, A., Koronaiou, A., Maragkoudaki, E., Ravanis, K., Sakka, D., Stogiannidou, A., Frosi, L. & Psalti, A., 2003)

At the same time, the production of non-sexist material and its use in all areas in which child socialization occurs, particularly in Primary and Secondary Education and education in general, is imperative, provided that we wish the upcoming generations to live in a society which is less defined in terms of gender discrimination and inequality (Theodorou E., & Koutlis E., 2001). Within the field of education, an area characterized by a serious delay and strong resistance to overcoming gender discrimination and where linguistic sexism is dominant is that of discourse and language (Gasouka et al., 2014). The term "linguistic sexism" refers to linguistic interactions taking place in a male-dominated society, in which language accurately reflects the power relationships between the two sexes while its function serves the perpetuation and legitimization of men's power at the expense of women. It is our belief that the visibility of both sexes in discourse does not entail a "feminist obsession", but rather a pressing political and democratic demand, a key prerequisite for achieving gender equality (Kogidou & Gasouka, 2010).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be argued that the provision of quality education, which ensures students' equal rights, irrespective of their gender, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness, etc., focuses on interculturalism and is based on gender equality and opportunities, can shape a positive environment for adult life not only for today's generation but also for future ones.

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