

# “YANGI ASR” - ILMİY-METODİK JURNALI

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# МУНДАРИЖА | СОДЕРЖАНИЕ | CONTENT

## FILOLOGIYA TADQIQOTLARI

<b>1. Nazarov Sardor Xasanovich</b> BADIY TARJIMANING LINGVISTIK MUAMMOLARI.....	4
<b>2. Латипов Окил Журакулович</b> КОНЦЕПТ «КОШКА» В АСПЕКТЕ ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКОЙ ИНТЕРПЕТАЦИИ.....	10
<b>3. Шахобиддинова Шохида Ҳошимовна, Рустамов Дилшод Абдувоҳидович</b> СИНЕРГЕТИКА – ТИЛГА ОИД ТАДҚИҚОТЛАРНИНГ ИСТИҚБОЛЛИ МЕТОДОЛОГИЯСИ.....	18
<b>4. Юсупов Ойбек Нематжонович</b> ТАРЖИМА ИЛМИ.....	27

## PEDAGOGIKA TADQIQOTLARI

<b>5. Adamandia Z., Kulijanov U.</b> SUCCESS FACTORS OF A SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL STORYTELLING.....	36
<b>6. Bekchonova Shaira Bazarbayevna</b> KIBER TAHDIDLAR INDEKSI.....	44
<b>7. Govindh M.</b> MODERN EDUCATION: IMPORTANCE, CHARACTERISTICS, ADVANTAGES & EFFECTS.....	51
<b>8. Konstantinos G. Karras</b> SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL WITH A FOCUS ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES THROUGH CRITICAL PEDAGOGY.....	55
<b>9. Leonidas-Dimitrios Kotrogiannos</b> EDUCATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS THE CASE OF GREECE.....	65
<b>10. M<sup>a</sup> Pilar M.C., Celia Navío</b> IDENTIFYING GOOD PRACTICES WHEN IMPLEMENTING STORYTELLING IN THE EFL CLASS.....	73
<b>11. Mamatov Dilmurad Narmuradovich</b> RAQAMLI TEXNOLOGIYALAR ASOSIDA TA'LIMDA KORPORATIV HAMKORLIK ASOSLARI.....	79
<b>12. Қўйсинов Одил Алмуротович</b> ЎҚУВЧИЛАРНИНГ МАНТИҚИЙ ФИКРЛАШИНИ РИВОЖЛАНТИРИШДА ХАЛҚАРО ТАДҚИҚОТЛАРНИНГ ЎРНИ.....	85

## PSIXOLOGIYA TADQIQOTLARI

<b>13. Акрамов Мирмуҳсин Рустамович</b> АХЛОҚИЙ ОНГ ТАБИАТНИ ЭСТЕТИК ИДРОК ҚИЛИШНИНГ ПСИХОЛОГИК ОМИЛИ СИФАТИДА.....	89
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## TARIX TADQIQOTLARI

<b>14. Зоҳидов Қобилжон Тоиржонович</b> СИЙРА ВА ТАБАҚОТ ЖАНРИДАГИ АСАРЛАР АРАБ-МУСУЛМОН ТАРИХИНИ ЎРГАНИШДА МУҲИМ МАНБА.....	95
<b>15. Ишанджанов Бахтиёр Илохомович</b> МОВАРОУННАҲРДА СИЁСИЙ-ИЖТИМОИЙ ВА МАДАНИЙ ҲАЁТ.....	101
<b>16. Саттиев Музаффар Латифович</b> ТОИФ БИТИМИ - СИЁСИЙ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ САРИ ҚАДАМ.....	106



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## EDUCATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS THE CASE OF GREECE

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### ABSTRACT

Vulnerable social groups are a structural element of modern society. They represent the generalized expression of social inequality that characterizes 21st century's society. The causes of the appearance of this phenomenon are complex and could be summarized in three factors: the globalization of the economy, the application of new technologies, due to scientific achievements and lastly large population movements in search of a better life due to ethno-religious conflicts and climate changes, which imbued the social and economic stratification of inequality with political manifestations that create an explosive mixture for the cohesion of modern developed societies, which must be addressed.

The purpose, therefore, of this article is a brief presentation of the Greek case of training the trainer through a modern and European pedagogical science program to respond to the educational, social and political function of the citizens of the future.

**Keywords:** Social vulnerability, education, Social inclusion.

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### INTRODUCTION

Vulnerable social groups are a major component of modern social structure and represent the generalized expression of social inequality that characterizes 21st century's societies. The causes of the appearance of the phenomenon are complex and could be summarized in three factors: on the one hand, the globalization of the economy which brought great changes in production and work, resulting in an increase in unemployment and the impoverishment of large social strata, on the other hand the application of new technologies, due to scientific conquests, which transformed the conditions of production and the de-dependence from human work; finally large population movements in search of a better life due to ethno-religious conflicts and climate changes, which swelled the social and economic stratification of inequality with political manifestations that create an explosive mixture for the cohesion of modern developed societies, which must be dealt with. (Troumpeta, 2012, Hatton, 2017, Modood, 2001)

Since the time of Tocqueville (2008) and Durkheim (2012) all social scientists have acquiesced that the mitigation of extreme social expressions, and therefore their relativization, can be cured by education, as an instrument of professional, social and political training from an early age for smooth integration into the labor market and into society, in order to control and limit social exclusion.

After World War II, the Catholic welfare state, recognizing social inclusion as a fundamental principle of social justice, attempted to mitigate the dimensions of social inequality with targeted

social and educational policies. Nowadays, the issue is more complex. We are experiencing the era of social competition, economic qualitative specialization and the multicultural composition of society (Stasinopoulou, 1990). We live in the era of continuous education and training to face the rapid socio-economic changes. Education is a necessary condition for everyone but especially to vulnerable social groups to face their social, economic and social backwardness. The revision and adaptation of the educational system is therefore deemed imperative and a common strategy of the European states, which emphasize the long-term dynamics of the educational systems, is the recognition of the important role of the education in formulating learners and vulnerable groups, for the relativization of educational inequality. (Calogiannakis et al, 2018)

The purpose, therefore, of this article is a brief presentation of the Greek case of training the trainer through a modern and European-standard- pedagogical science program to respond to the educational, social and political function of the citizens of the future.

For the presentation of the subject, two methodological tools were used. The literature review and content analysis.

The bibliographic review was used as a research tool, in order to be able, through the review, to determine the debate that exists around socially vulnerable groups, as well as to critically present the scientific view that exists on the specific issue. (Pavlopoulos, Kordoutis, 2006)

Regarding to the research part of the work, content analysis was used. Content analysis is a new technique that was used in the 20th century and aims to decipher and measure data, which will be able to be summarized and compared in order to draw conclusions. Consequently, the researcher investigates not only raw data but also the possible secondary, a process which can lead to forming new hypotheses and proposals. (Kollias, 2014)

### **1. SOCIAL VULNERABILITY**

Social vulnerability is a relatively new concept that appeared in the 1990s and caused intense debates about its exact definition. Theoretical searches have led to a multitude of definitions that, although they differ from each other, identify social vulnerability as high-risk groups that have limited or no access to social or public goods (housing, work, income, education, social security). They have been led to this situation due to natural disasters or social discrimination and are unable to have a stable quality of life. Internationally there is a set of variables that are accepted as specific aspects of social vulnerability and are a compass to describe its phenomenon and understand its meaning. These groups include, among others, immigrants - refugees, gender, people with socio-economic disadvantage, people with disabilities. homeless people, drug addicts, etc. Although these are heterogeneous groups, they nevertheless have a common characteristic, that of marginalization. (Vasta 2004; Zimmermann, 2017; Karras, 2014).

In general, social vulnerability is a form of indefensibility which includes those factors that determine the context in which someone can live and survive, i.e. join society or be marginalized. (Vasta, 2004; Zimmermann, 2017; Werner E et all, 2017)

The study of social vulnerability, therefore, acquires special importance, especially in a volatile era, which is characterized by multiple attempts to regulate the phenomenon. The challenge for modern states lies in the integration of vulnerable groups into society, and this is, sometimes, advocated through state legislation, international texts and treaties (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, United Nation Human security handbook, Europe 2020-Europe 2030, Lisbon Treaty, Bologna Treaty) that aim at integration, acceptance, resolution, i.e. identifying the exact problems and promoting an inclusive society with equal opportunities.

### **2. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM TODAY**

The school in today's liberal society plays an important role. It aims at the professionalization and social training of individuals to join society. Therefore, it is the natural environment in which everyone revels the right to education and at the same time is socialized to respect the different by learning to live in a democratic society of tolerance and variability.

The origin of the basic values of the modern school trace their origin to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the nation-state in the 19th century where they established the compulsory education of all citizens. The state undertook the obligation to provide education to its citizens with

the intention, progressively, its citizens to take responsibility for themselves and be useful to society. Thus, the concept of equality acquires concrete content through universal education. The education following those principles stops being a privilege based on ancestry or religion and everyone has access to it. In this way, pedagogical science abandons a dogmatic approach and favors the cultivation of critical thinking based on humanism. (Croethoysen, 1985)

Newer economic and liberal theories proceeded with a constrictive interpretation of the precepts of the Enlightenment, as a result of which they linked education with economic productivity. The economy determines the content of education, the development of the skills of the learners and it evaluates the quality of education in every modernizing reform. It narrows education to a certain field and makes the mission of education to increase the abilities of learners to respond to the labor market. In a way, it transforms knowledge into training, presuming that the educated can more easily integrate into society through participation in the labor market. (Frangoudaki, 1985; Diego Lanzi, 2007)

The history of advanced states has clearly shown that neither equal access to education, nor training, has reduced inequalities in the labor market and society. The internal social and economic parameters of each country determine the educative operation in an unequal way, leading to as reproduction of the existing social inequalities.

Under the influence of Marxism, newer theoretical understandings question whether equality of access contributes to the reduction of social inequalities. Research in many countries overturned this perception and showed that the school institution contributes to the reproduction of the structural composition of the values of each society and cultivates a new form of social inequality within the school classrooms (Lamnias, 2002)

Using empirical data, Bourdieu showed that education contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities through legitimization (Lamnias, 2002; Sullivan, 2002). His interpretation, certainly, did not focus on the study of social classes but linked pedagogical results and school failure to the educational level. of the family, i.e. a person bears a specific cultural capital.

The subject of subcultures assumes a dominant function to understand the context of reproduction of social inequalities through education. Two types of culture meet in the school. The legitimized culture of the school, which is also the legitimized culture of the groups and the differentiated cultures that the child has acquired effortlessly. The possibilities that the child has to respond to the culture of the school depend on the culture or cultural capital of which he is a bearer (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990)

Bernstein's sociology of cultural reproduction demonstrated, through linguistic and empirical research, the theoretical process of reproduction of class-regulated power relations and principles of social control. In other words, within families of different social classes, different language codes are cultivated that regulate different ways of communication and social relations. The middle social classes respond to an elaborate code that is usually adopted by schooling, while the lower class corresponds to a restricted code that does not help children from vulnerable groups to respond successfully to school, thus perpetuating social inequalities. (Bernstein, 2000; 1991)

The connection of equality in education with human capital and therefore with the opportunities that weak social groups have in relation to strong ones, through education, in order to improve their economic situation, contributing at the same time to the development of the economy seems to be a response to cultural tensions, according to Rawls. This perception favors the association of education with the economy. (Rawls, 2002)

Therefore, a research of vulnerable social groups, in the scope of social policies, should not be approached only in terms of direct benefit policies of the welfare state to deal with social problems, but the educational policies that are the only factor in alleviating the problems of social vulnerability should be also emphasized in order to strengthen social cohesion.

"Thus, the concept of equality is refined and acquires nuances that are consistent with the principles of social justice. It is not enough for the state to provide schools and teachers, but it must also protect the poorest groups. Through social benefits the state seeks to increase the material assets of the weak so that universal education becomes a concrete possibility and not an abstract one. It

tends in this way to reduce in practice the negative consequences of class conflicts in education. Public social policy is the prerequisite for connecting the school with the labor market and in general with economic development. (Karras, 2014)

The theory of equal opportunity wants to respond to the contradictory needs of modern society: On the one hand, it wants to ensure the fair functioning of the school in a democratic society that recognizes all individuals as equal. On the other hand, it accepts at the same time that these people are distributed in unequal positions because of their different specialization. The theory of equal opportunities formally ensures access to education without being able to cancel labor inequality, because by its nature it is hierarchical (Karras, 2014). In this way, however, the state recognizes that there is no other solution than education to combat social inequalities.

### **2.1 THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION**

Recognizing the need of social inequalities to be reduced and the necessity of social integration, through education, as the highest fundamental European value, the EU drew policy guidelines that define national, educational and social policies in order to converge on a single point a new modern European educational concept.

Thus, from its first founding texts, the EU defines that education is the foundation of a democratic and equal society. In its last two strategic frameworks "Europe 2020" and "Europe 2030" Europe aims for sustainable and inclusive development. In particular, the context of Europe 2020 framework pertained to the rationalization of public administration, enabling at the same time the states to achieve better levels of employment and participation in education, as well as aiming to a better integration into society (European Commission, 2010).

The 2030 Agenda aims to provide answers to the new social situations created in all EU countries, bearing in mind the 2010 financial crisis, as well as the massive influx of immigrants. In order to achieve these goals, the above framework places education as a key component, but not only as a laboring/economic developing skill, but also as an awareness target demonstrating that people's problems are global and common. (Roth, 2003)

Education is thus the main instrument which is used to surpass the challenges facing the modern European world. From Europe 2020 to Europe 2030, the term education acquires a new content. In the "Europe 2020" framework, the main goal of education and educational policies is to reduce early school leaving and to complete primary education for at least 40% of the 30-34 age group (Papadakis, 2018). In the 2030 agenda, the goal of educational policies is a qualitative one, namely to reduce inequalities, to ensure human dignity, the standard of living and the fight against poverty. (Hellenic Republic, 2017)

### **3. THE CASE OF GREECE**

Greece follows the general trend and tackles the problem of social inequalities through the modernization of the educational system. From the post-colonial period onwards (1974), Greece accelerated the reforming steps to converge towards the European mass education model. Certainly, it is not disregarded that the Greek education system represents a case of a Southern European model of social welfare that faces structural issues with regard to social and educational policy. But this does not mean that its educational system does not recognize the universal agendas and the importance of education for the integration of the labor market as well as for the integration of the trainees in the modern democratic society of equality and freedom.

In short, the principles of the Greek education system are defined by the Greek constitution. Education is defined as the basic mission of the state (Article 16) with the aim of the all-round development of citizens (Article 16§2). In addition, the development and promotion of free education for all citizens at all levels is guaranteed (Article 16§4). The highest administrative and legislative authority is the Ministry of Education. At the regional level, the directorates supervise the national education policy and at the local level the directorates of primary and secondary education supervise all the schools in their area of responsibility. It represents a state-centric system that controls both the administrative function of education and its content through the delimitation of the curriculum by the competent committees of the ministry. It supervises and directs, adapting the educational work to international developments and the European obligation of the country. (Σωτηρέλης, Ξηρός: 2011) It

constantly tends to converge to the needs of a European productive economic model that requires the development of new learning skills and the cultivation of humanitarian values that respect the identity of the different in order to gradually integrate vulnerable groups. (Pantidis, Pasiadis, 2004)

Regarding the integration of vulnerable groups, Greece established a series of laws for equal education in order to integrate them into the economic and social environment. In order to respond to the challenges of the new societal and educational reality, Greece introduced the institution of adult education, the establishment of full-day kindergarten and elementary school (L.2325/1997) which are considered successful.

Furthermore, to cope with the new cultural reality due to the reception of a large immigrant flow, laws (2413/1996, 1404/1983) were enacted that regulate intercultural education, reception classes as well as the creation of tutoring departments to deal with social problems. Finally, the Greek state instituted the evaluation of teachers and the new educational system in order to judge if the goals of the educational program have been achieved. At the same time, the state introduced the necessity of teacher training to improve the educational work provided (Sotirelis, Xiros, 2011)

### 3.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER TRAINING

The role of the teacher in modern society exceeded the traditional standards that gave him the role as a holder and a transmitter of knowledge exclusively (Grolios, 2001). Social conditions change the school reality and therefore the role of the teacher (Pliogou, Karakatsani, 2020). The socio-cultural changes, the development of technology and the speed of information circulation, combined with the continuous increase in knowledge, which form a different perception shape the role and the work of the teacher, also emphasize the social dimension of his role. The modern globalized learning environment requires the teacher to be a global personality promoting knowledge for-all despite their particularities, as well as socialization required by the challenges of a democratic society. Therefore, the role of the teacher in the modern globalized learning environment is complex and multidimensional and he is called upon to perform many individual roles at the same time, which are often in conflict with each other (Grolios, 2001). More specifically, through his new role, the teacher becomes the agent of changing perceptions, attitudes and behaviors, taking responsibility both for his attitude in the classroom and for what he teaches (Karras, 2001, 2014).

So the issue that arises is what the teacher's training should be in order to respond to the pedagogical needs of the children, to plan and concretize the learning programs according to the needs of his class. This means that he will be in constant training and communication with the new trends and proposals to improve learning results. He will be a trainer who is also a trainee. Naturally, his role is not only limited to learning, but also pertains to his social and political presence. In other words, he is the one who must promote an attitude of respect for diversity both within the school level among students and externally through his relationships with parents, students and other social groups. (Karras, 2014, 2001)

In the 21st century, teacher training is therefore a prerequisite to respond, in the long term, to the effective reduction of social inequalities and must be interdisciplinary. The vulnerability of modern weak social groups is not distinguished only by economic backwardness but also includes tendencies and morals that need to be understood in order to be smoothly integrated into school environment serving the goal of equal education for all and at the same time they must consolidate common humanitarian values regardless of the differences. The modern trends of Comparative Pedagogy (CP) converge towards this direction by emphasizing the comprehensive training of the modern pedagogue. The CP allows the integration, in specific conditions, of other countries cultures and experiences. In this sense, it decisively contributes "to the liberation of studies from comparisons and attempts to interpret the stereotyped collective perceptions and dominant forms associated with the process of building national consciousness" (Kalogiannaki, 2011: 469-471). In conclusion, it is the basis not only for comparing educational policies and institutions to prepare the necessary reforms but it is a field of study that seeks universal concepts of the educational phenomenon. In other word, CP give prominence to the twofold role of the modern school and defends its necessity.

At the same time, however, we must point out that CP ensures the synthesis of social and pedagogical sciences. Essentially, CP concretizes the interdisciplinary connection of theory and



practice. It aims to create a curriculum that will simultaneously develop student skills and respect for diversity. In other words, CP highlights the importance of the dual role of the modern school and defends the necessity of its development. (Kalogiannaki, 2011)

The Greek pedagogical departments, accepting the newest findings of the CP in the scientific composition of the future teacher, enriched their curriculum (Kalogiannaki:2015). The science of sociology, psychology, anthropology, politics framed that of pedagogy so that the educator is equipped with the necessary humanitarian and social knowledge, not only to face the problems of students from vulnerable groups within the school but also to respond in its educational mission of shaping young future citizens, far from extreme dogmatic concepts.

Thus the curriculum of all pedagogical departments is structured interdisciplinary to ensure the participation of vulnerable groups. It aims to the all-round training of the teacher that will combine the necessary epistemological and socio-political knowledge that will allow the student to be gradually integrated into the classroom and prepare for his integration into modern reality. The connection of pedagogy and social science has been deemed in the formation of the profile of the modern teacher necessary so that it is included in both courses, namely the compulsory and the optional ones. A quick quantified analysis shows that, on average, the total number of courses related to the mandatory training program for current teachers in understanding the phenomenon of vulnerable groups is around 15% (eg Rethymnon 10%, Thessaloniki 35%, Athens 13%, Patras 2 % etc). In elective courses aimed to deepen teacher's understanding, the percentage rises by at least 3 to 4 units (eg Thessaloniki 50%, Athens 24%, Ioannina 13%, Democritus 5%, etc.).

Regardless of the disproportion between pedagogy and social science presented by the curricula, it is certain that everyone approaches education as a humanitarian and social science that must respond to the needs of society and the solidarity of individuals.

Thus, the introduction to the basic concepts of sociology and the sociology of education forms the necessary basis of understanding vulnerable groups. Usually, the departments are not satisfied with simple introductions but try to systematize and deepen their approach. Thus, they have stipulated specific lessons concerning social discrimination, the phenomenon of social exclusion, gender discrimination as well as, in general concerning the importance of understanding social and educational exclusion which exacerbates marginalization and the increase of social inequality.

Psychology, too, is not only the basis of the modern mental mechanism in the acquisition of knowledge, but connected to sociology it provides a set of indications; the teacher must take all those variables into account in order to be aware of the psychological state of vulnerable groups as well as the ongoing process that leads to social and educational exclusion. Courses such as "introduction to social psychology", "social psychology and education", "social psychology and gender", help in this direction.

## CONCLUSIONS

We live in the era of globalization, immigration, and social coexistence of different cultures and religious doctrines, which challenge the stereotypical perceptions of society. Phenomena of nationalism, racism, fascism are endemic in modern societies and affect social peace. The institution of education and the role of the teacher were and will continue to be the instrument for mitigating extremes, for promoting the culture of respect for the different, but also for establishing communication between different social groups based on people and their values.

The modern educator therefore faces the challenge of continuous training and must almost necessarily follow the itinerary of lifelong learning in order to be able to respond to the modern school diversity and the various functions he faces in the new school reality. And in this direction, the study programs of PTDE recognize the importance of cultural studies and try to treat them with a curriculum. Through the course of modern history, progressively the programs diverge from the religion standpoint and are based on the multicultural environment (languages) and learning of new technologies, recognizing the needs the new society. (Karras, 2014)

Summarizing, we could say that the pedagogic departments in Greece follow the modern trends of European education, which make education not only a learning tool but also a means of shaping the citizen of the future. Their strategy is oriented towards both strengthening the educational

potential of teachers and promoting European values. They prefer a teacher education that could be characterized as progressive, flexible and open which prepares the continuous personal or postgraduate training of teachers, that is lifelong with the aim of becoming the real workers who defend the respect and dignity of human existence.

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