

**Intercultural schooling in Greece: a study of schooling  
processes and teaching practices in four urban  
intercultural primary schools**

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## Abstract

This is a school based ethnographic style inquiry that took place in four intercultural primary schools in a major metropolitan area of Greece and extended over a period of a school year. Intercultural schools were introduced in Greece by Law in 1996 and that was the first official recognition of the educational needs of children coming from different cultural backgrounds. The overall aim of this thesis is to uncover teachers' beliefs and practices and explore by an in depth analysis, the everyday operation of intercultural schools in Greece by identifying both their explicit aims and hidden agendas in relation to the education of 'foreign' children. It aimed to unravel their everyday schooling processes and examine intercultural ideology in practice. The study used a mixture of qualitative methods that included observations, interviews with the head teachers, classroom and bilingual teachers and analysis of school based and educational policy documents.

The findings suggest that the educational practices identified, treated the diversity of 'foreign' children as an educational problem that hindered their progress and had to be altered in order to fit the school's culture and norms. As a result, 'foreign' children attended bilingual classes that focused mainly on the teaching of the Greek language and aimed to integrate them quickly into the mainstream classroom, in order to match the school's criteria of 'normality'. Children's previous educational experiences and cultural capital were neglected, as was their first language which was seen as a constraint to their integration in the mainstream classroom and, in effect, to Greek society more broadly. Overall the study suggests that intercultural schools, despite their rhetoric, still work within a monocultural and monolingual framework and act as sites for the reproduction of State ideology and culture. The study concludes by proposing a different model of education for all children, based on democratic values and citizenship education, aiming to prepare competent and active citizens with multiple identities to meet the challenges of the national, European and global context.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introducing the context of the study

During the 1980s and early 1990s there was a change of direction in the EU in dealing with issues of immigration, which until then followed an assimilationist philosophy to a more intercultural pedagogy. This was mainly a result of the realisation that many immigrants had settled permanently in the host countries and that most of the countries were ethnically and culturally pluralistic. It was realised that education systems should not only address the educational needs of some groups, but should be directed towards the inclusion of all children.

This was highlighted in a number of educational policy documents produced by the Council of Europe, like for example the 1984 Recommendation for the ‘training of teachers in the field of intercultural education’ and the 1981 Declaration regarding intolerance. Both these documents identified the multicultural nature of societies and recognised that as a source of enrichment for every community. The central role of education in promoting intercultural understanding was also evident, as it was believed that schools should develop and promote a climate of understanding and respect among cultures. Issues of cultural diversity as well as the role of education in multicultural societies became important (Perotti, 1994).

Greece, as other European countries, has begun to receive large numbers of people coming from different cultural backgrounds and has experienced a demographic change. These people are identified in the Greek literature as ‘immigrants’, ‘refugees’, ‘foreigners’, ‘minorities’ or ‘remigrants’ and their presence is also reflected in the

Greek educational system. The presence of large numbers of immigrant children in Greek schools as well as their apparent failure in the schooling system, has obliged the government to consider their educational needs and take the appropriate measures to meet their needs.

The first educational policy measures, which addressed this new reality, were taken at the beginning of the 1980's. It was realised that the 'melting pot' approach was not working and that the needs of these children could not longer be ignored. The measures that were adopted included first of all the development of 'Reception Classes', where children were mainly taught in the Greek language, in order to reach an adequate language level and be integrated into the mainstream classroom. According to the Greek Ministry of Education (1980, Ministerial Degree 173/24-11-1983) the aim of these classes was to help these children to be integrated into the Greek school and social environment and the Greek way of thought and behaviour. A second provision that was developed was the introduction of 'Tutorial Classes' the aim of which was to help children learn the Greek language, in addition to normal school time, in the form of private tutorials. This measure came with the realisation that the educational needs of 'foreign' children were not being met by focusing only on their linguistic difficulties. Finally, in 1996 the government introduced a new Law, (Law 2413/96) entitled 'Greek education abroad, Intercultural education and other provisions' and established within the Ministry of Education, the Office of Intercultural Education that focused specifically on the implementation of an intercultural pedagogy in primary and secondary educational settings. This signified for the first time in Greece an official recognition of the educational needs of children coming from different cultural backgrounds in terms of policy but, on the other hand,

could be seen by critics as no more than a response to EU regulations with which Greece, as a member, had to comply.

The new Law redefined the educational policy for all children coming from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds, by concluding that the intercultural approach is the official educational line in Greece that would be implemented through the development of intercultural schools. The Special Secretary of Education and Intercultural Education from the Ministry of Education advocated that intercultural education was a result of the need to reconsider and reform the relationship between the school and the multicultural society. He also argued that intercultural education should be addressed to both Greek and non-Greek people and is closely associated with the terms of equality, mutual understanding, solidarity and the suppression of discrimination (cited in Halkiotis, 2000).

During the last decade, there has been a substantial increase in the number of immigrant students in the Greek schools. Official statistics from the Ministry of Education, obtained during the time that this study took place, suggest that immigrant children comprise the 10.8 % of the total school population. However the educational progress of these children has been problematic, especially in their transition from primary to secondary education and their entrance to higher educational institutions. Damanakis (2000), for example, identified that there is a high percentage of drop-outs in children coming from immigrant groups, especially in the transition from primary to secondary education. That has been explained as being either a result of wider socio-economic factors relating to the needs of immigrant families (children had to start working, in order to assist their families economically) or of the Greek

educational system and schooling processes, which cannot cater effectively for the needs of these children.

As is identified in Chapter Two of the thesis, it seems that there is an absence of ethnographic based studies in the Greek context, focusing specifically on teaching practices and schooling processes in intercultural primary school settings. This study aims to fill in this gap in the literature, by exploring how the schooling processes in these intercultural schools advantage or disadvantage 'foreign' children in their education. It is concerned not only in understanding 'meaning' at the individual level of the participants, but also to identify the structural conditions that influence the educational programme of those settings and its pedagogic processes.

## **1.2 Rationale for the study**

My initial interest in intercultural education began many years ago as a result of my own teaching practice in Greece. At that time I was working as a preschool educator and I had under my care two 'foreign' children. The one came from Albania and a principal aim of his education, and his family's expectation, was to improve his Greek, while the other child came from the US and his family's expectation was that school would provide to their son with an environment in which he could play with other children. The father of this child played in the local basketball team and the family was given a kind of celebrity status. This was the first time I realised that children like these received differential treatment in schools as a result of the different attitudes of both the teachers and the other indigenous children. At that time I reflected on my own practice as a teacher to identify possible limitations in the way

that I treated children from different backgrounds and placed my own beliefs and values under scrutiny, as I was raised in a middle class family with a strong religious orientation and my education was always considered by the community I lived in as being of the upper class. During this process I recognised the importance of the teacher's role in this children's education and the effect that it could have for the development of these children.

Settlement and adaptation in a different socio-cultural environment is a complex process that involves stress and often it is the role of the school and especially of the teacher to help immigrant and foreign children to adjust and settle down in their new environment. Teachers are probably amongst the most important figures in these children's lives, as they have not only to support them educationally but also psychologically and emotionally, by helping them to adapt to their new environment. This centrality of the teacher's role in this process of schooling is at the centre of this inquiry, as it aims, not only to understand how intercultural education is implemented in practice, but also how the different school agents, head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers construct 'foreign' children differently. It examines teaching practices in intercultural schools and schooling processes for 'foreign' learners, in order to understand the ways in which schools in Greece deal with cultural diversity.

This thesis supports Grant and Tate's (1995) assertion, that research that focuses on teachers' experiences and attitudes in relation to cultural diversity is essential for our understanding of schooling processes and practices. Teachers' beliefs and practices towards culturally diverse children do not exist in isolation from the values and norms of the larger society, or from the educational setting in which the interactions take

place. It is argued that individual school cultures could have an influence on teaching practices within the school (Marshall, 1996). Based on this assertion, Chapter Three of the thesis reports research upon how teaching practices are influenced by personal teaching characteristics and other external factors. By collecting data from all four intercultural schools in Thessaloniki, this study makes a valuable contribution to research into the relationship between local cultures and educational practices, and also provides a different angle for viewing teaching practices as being influenced by a national context. In this thesis the national context is identified as a strong influence on local cultures and practices and that is explained by the centralised nature of the Greek educational system.

Research by Paleologou and Evangelou (2003) has shown that those children migrating from a number of different countries to Greece experience many difficulties in respect to achievement and psychological behaviour in their school settings. Apart from the issue of language, a number of other reasons have been proposed to explain the increasing drop out rates in these children's transition from primary to secondary education. Among them is the resistance of these children to assimilate; the content of the Greek books that are characterised as being ethnocentric; the non-existence of psychological support provision within the schools; and the fact that teachers were not adequately prepared to deal with diversity. By focusing on the everyday routines of the intercultural schools under study, I am able to identify the challenges teachers face on their everyday practice and also the limitations of the schooling processes in those settings affecting the education of foreign children.

### 1.3 Outline of the study and research questions

This study aims to describe, analyse and understand the processes and practices of intercultural schooling in Greece by exploring the perspectives of practitioners in intercultural schools. The empirical component of the research focuses on the four intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki, the second most populous city in Greece, a major commercial, industrial and political centre and one of the largest metropolitan areas in South-Eastern Europe. The educational policies, guidelines and provision that were in place for ‘foreign’ children coming to Greece, which provide the context within which practice has developed, are explored in Chapter Two of the thesis. This analysis aims to identify the formal position taken by the Ministry of Education in relation to the education of ‘foreign’ children in Greece and the philosophy that frames the operation of intercultural primary schools in Greece. The formal policy maps out the organisation of the intercultural school and its curriculum, as well as presenting expectations about and a context for the practices to be adopted and developed by practitioners, i.e. the mainstream teachers and bilingual teachers who work in the intercultural schools.

Following an exploration of research into teacher beliefs and perspectives (Chapter Three) and discussion of the research methodology and methods adopted (Chapter Four), the focus of the thesis moves on to the micro-analysis of the school settings and classrooms being studied. This examination, presented in Chapter Five involved the collection of school documents in an attempt to understand the organisation, curriculum and philosophy of the intercultural schools themselves. The empirical work involved fieldwork extending over one year, with substantial periods of time



spent in each one of these schools, in order to understand the teaching practices and the schooling processes. Through this process I aimed to understand life in these intercultural schools and the extent to which this resonated with or departed from the rhetoric of policy on intercultural schooling and common images of intercultural and mainstream schooling.

The research then focuses more precisely on teaching practices (Chapters Six and Seven of the thesis), as I strive to gain insight into the ways in which teachers interact with culturally diverse children in their daily educational routines. The relationship between the culture and ethos of the school, the practices and beliefs of the teachers and the schooling processes for 'foreign' children were examined. This contributes to an understanding of the move from policy to practice and how this is mediated by teachers' everyday practices and their understanding of interculturalism and inclusion.

The investigation thus addresses the following questions:

- What are the educational policies for intercultural education and intercultural provision in Greek primary schools?
- What support do teachers in the settings selected receive, through in-service training or advisory seminars, regarding the education of 'foreign' children?
- What are the teachers' beliefs about and understandings of intercultural education in Greece?

As stated above, these questions are addressed firstly by establishing the context in which intercultural primary schools operate, by exploring the policy framework, their curriculum and provision that these schools offered to their students through the analysis of policy documents and by interviewing head teachers and mainstream

teachers. Having gained a clearer view of the ways that intercultural schools operated, I then observed a number of classrooms focusing specifically on the reception classes and the bilingual teachers (Chapter Seven), since these were the only places that a distinctly intercultural approach was used. I aimed, in this way, to explore how bilingual teachers identified and addressed the needs of ‘foreign’ children in their classrooms and in what ways their approaches were different from those in the mainstream classroom. This realisation produced four further research questions that I aimed to explore:

- What are teachers’ beliefs about children’s bilingualism and the maintenance of their first language and what practices did they use to implement an intercultural pedagogy?
- How different are the discourses of the head teachers, the mainstream and the bilingual teachers concerning the cultural and linguistic needs of ‘foreign’ children?
- How do the different discourses of the head teachers, mainstream teachers and bilingual teachers construct ‘foreign’ children?
- What approaches and methods do teachers use in their classrooms to meet the perceived needs of these children?

Chapter Eight of the thesis presents a synthesis of the analysis presented in Chapters Six and Seven. It aims to develop a more theoretically informed analysis of the empirical work and make connections with wider social influences that have an effect on intercultural schooling and their schooling processes. It explores the relationship between discourse and pedagogy in the construction of ‘foreign’ children as insiders or outsiders and as a way of presenting the local culture of the schools under study

and their schooling processes. It also explores the influence of deficit thinking on teacher discourse, as much of the analysis presented in Chapters Six and Seven showed the prevalence of deficit thinking amongst teachers. I finally explore the relationship between language and students' identities and propose a different model of education based on democratic values and citizenship education.

The purpose of this inquiry is to develop an understanding of intercultural education as it is practised in Thessaloniki by examining teachers' experiences, beliefs and practice in the context of the intercultural school, in order to gain a better understanding of intercultural schooling in Greece more generally. A study such as this that looks into educational processes has at the centre of its analysis the voices of the participants themselves, in this case head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers, in order to give 'meaning' to the study itself. These personal orientations, based on personal or wider social influences that affect teaching practice, are significant in any interpretation or understanding of school processes.

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the development of intercultural education in Greece and to addressing issues of cultural diversity, as well as helping policy makers to understand the transition of the formal rhetoric, policy framework in practice and the ways in which it is operationalised by teachers. It presents a vivid picture of what intercultural education means in practice and how teachers construct 'foreign' children based on internal (school policies and school culture) and external influences (global and social influences on immigration). The study adds to the growing number of school ethnographies internationally and advocates the need to conduct further ethnographic style inquiries in educational settings in Greece. The

focus of the study is on the everyday realities of these settings and the challenges teachers are faced with, as well as the ‘meanings’ teachers attach to their practices drawing on the theoretical ideas of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism asserts that ‘human beings construct their realities in a process of interaction with other human beings’ (Meltzer, 1975: 54). As such, this thesis aims to identify how ‘foreign’ children are constructed in these school settings through their interactions with the teachers and the school environment. There has been very little empirical research of this sort in the Greek context and, more specifically, no school ethnographies that address the issue of intercultural schooling. This research has addressed this gap by presenting teachers’ voices and providing detailed descriptions from and analysis of life in the intercultural schools. This study also identifies the different constructions of the various agents within intercultural schools and their practices and how these might influence ‘foreign’ learners. This in depth analysis of intercultural schooling makes explicit the implementation of policy into practice and the hidden messages behind the mainstreaming of the schooling process.

#### **1.4 Research design**

The study takes an ethnographic approach, explored in detail in Chapter Four of the thesis. This involves sustained observations in schools and individual classrooms, structured and unstructured interviews with bilingual teachers, mainstream teachers and head teachers and examination of school policies and documents. Data were collected throughout the school year 2003/04 in the four intercultural primary schools. This study shares many characteristics with other school ethnographies as it focuses on a specific culture and it aims to present an insider’s view of intercultural schooling.

I have used an ethnographic approach to the collection and analysis of the data, in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

For Delamont and Atkinson (1995) ethnography in education is research on educational institutions that is based on participant observations and recordings of their everyday lives. It was chosen as the research approach in order to gain an 'emic' perspective of teachers' perceptions and practices in the selected four intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki. As a qualitative research approach rooted in anthropology, ethnography allowed me to immerse myself in the cultural lives of the participants in order to know their world from the inside, and gain an understanding of the realities involved in their everyday lives. One of the main tasks was to capture the meanings that formed that particular culture as the participants understood it, to learn their use of language and to understand their behaviour. The participants' perspectives were considered important in this thesis, as they construct the social reality of the school and are culturally and context based. This means that in a different cultural context or setting, the perspectives could be different. In this thesis I am not only concerned with the interactions between teachers and 'foreign' children but also between the ideology of intercultural education and the school setting and the implementation of this ideology in practice.

In order to unfold teachers' beliefs and values and enable them to describe and reflect on their previous experiences in relation to cultural diversity the study has made use of their personal narratives. Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 2) note that, 'humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world'. For them

the most important value of narrative inquiry is the fact that they can capture and describe experiences as they occur and give meaning to the actions and work of teachers (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Fieldwork involved being present at classes and school or staff meetings, with consent from the participants, taking observations and conducting informal or semi-structured interviews with the teachers and the head teachers. Long-term involvement in each of the schools, over a school year, was considered essential in order to gain an insider's view of the school and be immersed in the school culture. My presence extended for a two-month period in each of the three settings and for a month in the school in which I conducted the pilot work. More informal interactions and observations of practices have been recorded in daily fieldnotes, which had been indexed, coded and analysed. Before any interviews or observations took place, teachers were informed and permission from them was obtained.

### **1.5 Main findings and significance of the study**

My initial findings (Chapter Eight) suggested that even though intercultural schools provided a step forward towards the inclusion of 'foreign' children into the Greek society based on the ideals of intercultural education (equality of cultures, equal opportunities and solidarity), still the dominant ideology in Greece is monolingual and 'other' languages or cultures are not something that are being promoted, especially in the Greek educational system. There was an expectation by both Greek and bilingual teachers that 'foreign' children needed to learn the Greek language as soon as possible in order to be integrated into the mainstream classroom and be accepted as members

of the indigenous group and become successful in the Greek society. That showed that the dominant ideology in Greece was still one that promoted monolingualism. It seemed that intercultural schools had been mainly organised to provide 'foreign' children with language support until they reached a sufficient level in their spoken and written Greek to be integrated into the mainstream classroom. Thus the policy and practice of intercultural education in Greece can be seen as an element of the dominant ideology of monolingualism.

A major paradox between the policy and practice of intercultural education in Greece, is that even though the official policy framework expresses an intercultural ideology and recognises 'foreign' children's rights, in practice intercultural schools operate as assimilative mechanisms of the dominant culture and language to 'produce' a homogenised group of 'Greek' citizens. The question that should then be asked is how this 'Greek-ness' is defined in these intercultural settings and what are the consequences for those who are not successful in becoming members of the dominant culture.

This process of homogenisation through cultural and linguistic uniformity created the conditions for social injustice, as those who refused or were unable to accept the dominant ideology risk marginalisation, denied access to symbolic resources and in many cases were excluded (Bourdieu, 1998a). For Bourdieu (1998b: 46) 'cultural and linguistic unification is accompanied by the imposition of the dominant language and culture as legitimate and by the rejection of all other languages into indignity'. This unification of the cultural and linguistic element contributes to the construction of

‘national identity’ or ‘legitimate national culture’ that constitutes the ‘national habitus’.

It was also evident through my discussions with the teachers that they held a deficit view of bilingualism and that these children needed learning support. They described children’s bilingualism as being a problem not only for themselves but also for the Greek children, as it hindered their progress. Parental involvement of ‘foreign’ children’s families was another issue that was noted. Teachers did mention that communication with these parents was difficult due to language barriers and because of the parents working status and other commitments that required them to work many hours. There was, however, a belief among teachers that ‘foreign’ children were less effective learners because of their family’s linguistic and cultural background and not because of the school’s failure to integrate them successfully.

Even though many limitations could be identified in the schooling processes and organisation of intercultural schools, they do signal a change of direction in the Greek education system by recognising the educational rights of ‘foreign’ children. The educational needs of children coming from different cultural backgrounds have been acknowledged and some measures have been taken to meet their needs. Recognition of the importance to maintain ‘foreign’ children’s first language was also apparent in the study and that also signified a change of attitude from previous years. However, more measures need to be taken in the future that will strengthen the institution of the intercultural school, in order to empower all students and not discriminate against a minority of them. Teachers and head teachers have proposed a number of measures



that could be taken in the school that could challenge the current situation. These will be explored later in the thesis, in Sections 6.2 and 6.3.

It is not the intention of this study to present a comparative analysis of the four schools but rather to present a case study of intercultural schooling in Thessaloniki, in order to make the conclusions drawn more valid. That was the main reason that all four intercultural primary schools were included in this research study. In a wider context, this study also explored how the schools in Thessaloniki are influenced by other wider societal factors, not only within its national borders but also internationally. The schools' relationship with national and global influences and political ideologies of what is the 'best' way to educate 'foreign' children are central to this inquiry, as well as their influence on schooling processes.

Part of the significance of this study lies in its methodology and focus on the schooling processes. Educational research in Greece has failed to address the problematic issues with regard to schooling processes in intercultural schools, as it was only limited to individual school case studies which provided only descriptions of the specific school, but not a comprehensive analysis of what life in intercultural schools is all about. The review of the literature in the Greek context revealed that there were no studies that explored the schooling processes of intercultural primary schools and no studies in that field that adopted an ethnographic approach during data collection and analysis. This study aims to fill in this lacuna of educational and sociological research by linking macro and micro educational issues concerned with the education of 'foreign' children. Even though the study focuses on the Greek context, the arguments made could apply to other contexts as well, as it discusses key

issues that are concerned with **bilingualism and intercultural education**. That is a global issue that concerns all societies and is part of political and ideological debates.

The chapter that follows presents and discusses the key themes, issues and research that informed this study. The first section of the chapter identifies the Greek context in relation to migration and the educational responses adopted to deal with the educational needs of immigrant children. It then moves on to a presentation of international policies on intercultural education and other educational provisions, as the Greek policy for intercultural education was a response to EU policies. The chapter concludes by identifying theories of bilingualism and educational responses to it, in order to understand current practices in Greece and their focus on the issue of language.

## 2. The introduction of intercultural education and educational provisions for the teaching of immigrant children

### 2.1 Introduction

This part of the literature review will present how demographic changes transformed the Greek society into a multicultural one. It will then examine how the Greek education system responded to the challenge of integrating ‘foreign’ and immigrant children into the education system. This will be achieved by laying out the policy context and describing the provision available. The second part of the literature will examine the development of intercultural education in Greece and review relevant research. It will also examine theories of bilingualism and review models of educational provision for bilingual learners, in an attempt to understand current practices in Greece that focus mainly on the linguistic aspect of ‘foreign’ children’s education. The review will conclude by an examination of the connection between policy and practice.

Before beginning the review, it is necessary to clarify some of the terms that will be used throughout the thesis. The term intercultural education and intercultural schools will be used as opposed to multicultural, as this term is expressed in the official policy and provides the framework for the organisation of intercultural schools in Greece. The term intercultural is also preferred in the European context, while the term multicultural is used more widely in the US and English speaking countries. For Gundara (2000) the term ‘multicultural’ is increasingly seen to reflect the nature of societies and is used as a descriptive term to state a fact, the cultural diversity and the

pluralistic nature of our societies. On the other hand the term ‘intercultural’ emphasises interactions, negotiations and process and thus subsumes anti-racist activities. For Kanakidou and Papagianni (1998) intercultural education as a term refers not only to the education that is provided but also to the educational ideologies and practices that influence and guide its objectives. It is seen as an education that aims to prepare all citizens for participation in a democratic, multicultural society. The multicultural society is characterised by cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity.

Similarly the term ‘foreign’ children that is used in the text, refers to a number of groups who have a different ethnic and cultural background. This includes immigrants, re-migrants, repatriated, refugees and Roma children. It has been selected as a descriptive term since intercultural schools cater for the educational needs of all these groups and is also used by the official policy framework to describe all these groups of children. Throughout the text I have placed this term in inverted commas, as I am not adopting the use of this term myself. Rather my intention is to show how exclusionary this term could be, by giving an outsider status to these children and by placing all these diverse groups under one category.

## 2.2 The Greek context

There was a dominant view, until the late 80s if not still today, that Greece was a relatively homogeneous country in relation to ethnicity and culture. This belief was mostly based on and came as a result of the Lausanne Treaty (1923) that promoted the exchange of minority populations between Greece and Turkey on one hand and

Greece and Bulgaria on the other. The Treaty of Lausanne essentially established the boundaries of today's Greece and turned the country into an ethnically homogeneous state. This homogenisation was reinforced also by the fact that Greece did not experience any major immigration flows after World War II. On the contrary, many Greeks emigrated to other countries mainly for economic reasons.

However during the middle of the 70s, Greece began to receive large numbers of repatriated Greeks and in the last two decades large numbers of legal and illegal immigrants. Recent data and estimates suggest that over 600.000 immigrants are living in Greece which is 5% of the total population (Damanakis, 2000). If the Roma and the Muslim minority in western Thrace were included in this percentage then the percentage of the total population would be far greater. Until recently most of these immigrants were undocumented until the Greek state started a regularisation programme in 1998, which led to the legalisation of nearly 400.000 immigrants. According to the Labour Institute of the Greek Worker's Confederation for the 2000, the proportion of foreign workers has reached the 9% of the active population.

According to statistical evidence collected by Katsoridas (1994) the largest ethnic groups coming from non-EU countries are Albanians (150.000 to 300.000), Polish (80.000 to 100.000), Egyptians (55.000) and Philippines (15.000). Members of the Polish, Egyptian and the Philippino communities have developed their groups within their societies that advocate for their rights (Damanakis, 2000). This was really important because when the House of Commons was discussing the law for intercultural education, some representatives of these groups presented the educational problems of their children as well as their aspirations and expectations

from the Greek state. Some of these communities have also arranged and organised some mother tongue supplementary schools.

Concerning the presence of 'foreign' students in Greek primary and secondary education, statistical evidence from IPODE (Gotovos & Markou, 2004) for the school year 2002/2003, suggested that they comprised the 6.7% of the total school population for that year. The high numbers of drop outs in the transition of 'foreign' students from primary to secondary education is evident in those statistics, as their presence in primary schools was 8.6%, in Gymnasiums 6.9% and in Lyceums it dropped down to 3.2%. That statistical difference of the presence of 'foreign' children, between the different levels of the educational ladder, provides evidence for the argument that these children are dropping out of their education from an early stage, or, more importantly, it shows the failure of the educational system to educate these children<sup>1</sup>. This worrying statistic initiated the development of intercultural schools to provide a different model of education that would improve the educational attainment of these children. The research presented in this thesis aims to explore this different model of education that was developed by the State in an attempt to improve the education of 'foreign' students.

#### 2.2.1 Statutory framework for reception, preparatory classes and intercultural schools

As a result of the large numbers of immigrant children in Greek schools the government was obliged to consider their educational needs and take the appropriate measures to meet these needs. According to official statistics from the Ministry of

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<sup>1</sup> Statistical information about the presence of foreign children in Greek schools can be found at the appendices (Appendix 1).

Education, in 1995/96 there were 27.161 repatriated and 14.015 immigrant students attending primary and secondary education. It is also evident from these statistics over the years and a review by Damanakis (2000) that there is a high percentage of students leaving school, in the transition from primary to secondary education. Damanakis argues that this could be a result of wider socio-economic factors relating to the needs of immigrant families. He mentions as an example the fact that many children start working from an early age, in order to assist their families economically.

The provision by the Greek state for the education of repatriated and foreign children starts at the beginning of 1970, after large waves of immigration to Greece from Western Europe, America, Africa and Oceania (Nikolaou, 2000). The ministerial decisions resulting from the relevant legislation could be classified into three different periods. The first period began at the beginning of the 70's when the first steps towards the education of repatriated and 'foreign' children were taken. The second period involves the whole decade of the 80's until 1996, where a rapid demographic change was noted in Greece as a result of increased immigration. Finally the third and present period began in 1996 when a new legislative framework (N.2413/96)<sup>2</sup>, established new opportunities for the education of 'foreign' and repatriated children. (Nikolaou, 2000).

According to Nikolaou (2000) during the first period, the royal and the presidential decrees that dealt with the education of repatriated Greek children, had a humanitarian intention. This included measures such as the lowering of the passing mark in these

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<sup>2</sup> ΦΕΚ 124/17-6-96.

children's examinations, especially in the language module. At the same time the first school for repatriated children was established with the legislative decree 339/74. Initially children in these schools came from English and German speaking countries but later included Albanians and Russian speaking students. These schools, however, were not very successful in the implementation of their aims. The main reasons for this were the marginalisation and the ghettoisation of the school and their inability to prepare their students adequately to enter the mainstream school and curriculum. They also showed a high percentage of dropouts, but more importantly, they failed to integrate these children in the mainstream school curriculum. (Nikolaou, 2000)

### 2.2.2 Reception and Preparatory classes

The second period is characterised by the development of preparatory and reception classes. These were established by law for the first time in Greece in 1980 as a result of the large waves of immigrants that entered the country in the 70's and 80's. This was mainly because of the economic recession across the large industrial countries and secondly because of the social and political unrest of the countries that had been receiving immigrants until then (Markou, 1997).

According to the Ministerial Decree (φ.818.2/Z/4139/20.10.80) of the Ministry of Education, published prior to the law mentioned above, the aim of these classes was 'the cultivation of the skills that these children brought with them from their previous environment and the development of those skills that are essential for their future educational and professional advancement in the Greek context'. According to Mourelatou (1998:95) this Ministerial Decree for the education of 'foreign' and



repatriated children could be characterised as ‘assimilative and compensational and for that reason it could be regarded as having an attitude of being beneficial and generous to these children’. By reading through this Ministerial decree it is rather evident that the educational policies were very centralised and that their very content was rather vague, as there is no mention of the skills that are essential for children’s advancement in the Greek society.

This Ministerial Decree became law in 1983 (N. 1404/83), but the government changed their previous position about the educational role of these classes. It was now stated that the aim of these classes was the ‘smooth adaptation of the Greek emigrant children to the Greek educational system’ (N. 1404/83, art.45, par.1). According to Mourelatou (1998), this change of position in the Ministry’s discourse could have been a result of the realisation that the Greek educational system as a whole and teachers themselves could not respond adequately to the new challenges and respond to this growing diversity in schools and classrooms. Mourelatou believed that the Act viewed children’s educational abilities as deficient and followed an assimilationist ideology. The Act also suggested that in these classes, those entitled to teach were only active public school teachers (par.5). Major changes in the Act were made in 1990 (Act 1894/90, art.2) and included the transfer of responsibilities and statutory powers from the Ministry of Education to the local prefectures. It also covered not only the children of Greek emigrants but also those of repatriated Greeks who left the country after the 1945-49 Civil War.

In the same period special classes were established that would meet the educational needs of children of European Union citizens, who lived and worked in Greece.

Under the guidelines of the Council of the European Community the Presidential Decree (Π.Δ. 494/83)<sup>3</sup>, reception classes for the education of children coming from the European Union or those from countries outside the E.U were established. This Presidential Decree was an innovation as it was the first to introduce teaching in the children's first language, as well as arguing that all teachers who had to teach 'foreign' children, should be adequately prepared and receive extra training. Article 2 of the same Decree stated that the aim of teaching the Greek language to these children was to ease their adaptation to the school environment and social life in Greece. It also anticipated the teaching of the language and culture of the country of origin, in an attempt to maintain children's identity. Unfortunately all these provisions did not come into practice, as children coming from European Union countries could attend international schools, such as the American college that operated in Greece. However, this Decree was the first to legislate for the teaching of the language and culture of origin and made a breakthrough, as it was the first educational recognition of the importance of maintaining other cultures and languages (Mourelatou 1998).

Following the legal provisions of the 1980s, there was also the establishment of schools for repatriated Greeks. These schools, which were limited in number, were established for children whose parents had lived in EU countries or came from the former Soviet Union. According to Markou (1994: 37), these schools were based on the 'same theoretical concepts and dividing logic as reception classes'. The Presidential Decrees that organised these schools stated that the Greek language would be the basic instructional tool. Although children's first language could be used

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<sup>3</sup> "The establishment of reception classes for the education of children coming from the European Union or those from countries outside the E.U", Φ.Ε.Κ., 186/27.12.1983

during a transitional stage as a second language or could be taught as a separate subject but not as a learning tool (PD 435/84 and 396/95, art. 2, par.3). It also required the Greek textbooks to be the same as those used in the regular classes of mainstream education (PD 369/85, art.4, par.1). This kind of provision made implicit the objective of the official policy to assimilate these children into the mainstream educational system.

In 1990 a new law (N. 1894/90)<sup>4</sup> which rewrote the statutory framework for the reception classes, replaced the old one and is still active. The new law, which was influenced by an intention to decentralise the Ministry's responsibilities, gave responsibility for the establishment of reception and preparatory classes as well as the employment of teaching staff to the local educational authorities. However, the government, and more specifically, the Ministry of Education still had total responsibility for the organisation and operation of these classes, the curriculum, the required qualifications of the teaching staff, the teaching material - especially the books - finally the pay roll of the teaching staff. The law was also extended to include children of repatriated Greeks coming from the former Soviet Union and also gave responsibility to the local authorities to employ private teaching staff, since permanent staff were unwilling to teach in these classes.

During this period, school problems that were related with the children's linguistic abilities were not taken into consideration. All schools followed the same policy line by providing intensive teaching of the Greek language in separate classes, aiming to integrate these children into the mainstream classes as soon as possible. Any kind of

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<sup>4</sup> ΦΕΚ 110/27-8-90

methodological planning for the teaching of the Greek language was also absent, as well as research that would help teachers overcome these difficulties in their work, (Markou, 1994). As a result, the same teaching methods and the same textbooks used for native children were also used for the teaching of ‘foreign’ children. During the 90’s, reception classes started to use linguistic and cultural materials that were developed by university research programmes. Special in-service training seminars were also organised to help teachers in their work, as well as to raise awareness concerning issues of discrimination, racism, marginalisation and cultural identity. Mourelatou (1998) was critical of the measures that the Ministry adopted and characterised them as ‘poor’ attempts that lacked vision and did not result in the successful integration of children from different cultural backgrounds.

### 2.2.3 Introduction of intercultural education and schools

The third period that extends until now, 2008, was characterised by the introduction of a new law. This law (N. 2413/96)<sup>5</sup> attempted to redefine the educational policy for ‘foreign’ and repatriated children, which shows an ideological and social need to deal differently with the issue of cultural diversity. The Law stated that the intercultural approach is the official educational line of the Greek State for the education of children that come under its provisions. According to the Special Secretary of Education and Intercultural Education from the Ministry of Education ‘intercultural education came as a result of the need to reconsider and reform the relationship between the school and the multicultural society. Interculturalism is like a bridge that allows for a mutual approach and communication between two or more cultures on

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<sup>5</sup> ΦΕΚ 124/17.6.1996

the basis of equality'. It is further argued that intercultural education is closely associated with the non discrimination, equality, mutual understanding, mutual acceptance and solidarity and is addressed to both Greek and non-Greek people (Halkiotis, 2000). This view by the Special Secretary of Education and Intercultural Education summarised the ideals of intercultural education that were part of the official discourse for the implementation of the intercultural pedagogy in Greek schools.

This law consisted of thirty-seven articles that were divided in two parts. The first, and largest, contained thirty-three articles that were organised in nine chapters and dealt with Greek education abroad. The second part included only one chapter and four articles that dealt with the issue of intercultural education in Greece. This quantitative difference between the two parts of the law has been criticised by many researchers, as it showed two different discourses and approaches to intercultural education. The first one accepted the development of Greek schools abroad, so that children could maintain their first language, while within the Greek borders, a different approach was followed, where children were expected to be integrated in the mainstream as soon as possible, without any teaching in their first language. (Damanakis, 2000)

More specifically article thirty-four states that the aim of intercultural education is the 'organisation and operation of primary and secondary schools for the education of children with educational, social, cultural and learning particularities'. In terms of curriculum it is argued that intercultural schools will have the same curriculum, as

that of state mainstream schools but they should adjust their programme, in order to meet the educational needs of these children.

It should be noted that the law 2413 does not indicate clearly who those children with the ‘educational, social, cultural and learning particularities’ are and it does not mention foreign and repatriated children as in previous laws. Another criticism of the law argued that the usage of the word ‘particularities’ could probably indicate that an approach for a separate education is being promoted. By accepting that some groups of people have certain particularities and in that sense abilities and needs there is the danger of socially excluding those people or stigmatising them. Another widely held criticism suggests that the Law approached intercultural education only as pedagogy directed to ‘foreign’ learners and not as an ideology directed to all children. This might suggest a hidden agenda of the Ministry that seems to differentiate the education of ‘foreign’ children from that of the indigenous population (Skourtou et al. 2004).

The following article (Article 35) of the law legislates for state or private intercultural schools for the education of children with certain ‘particularities’. This term is what is officially used in the policy document for intercultural education and has come under a lot of scrutiny by many teachers, teacher educators and educational researchers. It also makes possible, under the mutual decision of the Ministry of Education and of IPODE (Institute for the education of repatriated Greeks in foreign countries and of intercultural education)<sup>6</sup>, the implementation of a special curriculum with the

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<sup>6</sup> Instituto Paideias Omogenon kai Diapolitismikis Ekpaideusis (IPODE). This institute was established with the law N.2413/96 and is currently in operation.

possibility of alternative learning material, fewer working hours for teachers and fewer children per class. In addition intercultural schools are established as a result of the mutual decision of the Ministry of Education and Economics, of IPODE and the prefecture council (Damanakis, 2000). Under the same article (35) intercultural education is to be provided in state schools that have been renamed as intercultural schools, based on their student composition.

In practice however, what was exercised during the time that the research presented in this thesis took place, was the renaming of some mainstream schools with high numbers of 'foreign' students as intercultural schools. At the time of the study there were officially twenty primary and secondary intercultural schools, including those that had previously educated repatriated Greeks. It should be noted that in those schools that were renamed, the national curriculum, the teaching methods, the proportion of students depending on their origin and the relationship between the school and the community remained the same. It seems however that the educational policy for intercultural education was not clearly defined, especially since the former schools for repatriated Greeks did not have any indigenous children. On the other hand intercultural schools had a diverse student population, mixed with indigenous children. However, it is also believed that the introduction of intercultural classrooms in mainstream schools might suggest a continuation of preparatory and reception classes but on the other hand might prove to be practical for those schools with small numbers of foreign and repatriated children. (Mourelatou, 1998)

The law also makes reference to the establishment of intercultural schools under the proposition of local self-government organisations, ecclesiastic foundations and non-

profit-making charitable establishments. These schools could be funded by the *Logiarismo Idiotikis Ekpaideusis* (Account of Private Education). According to Damanakis (2000:82) this could imply the legalisation of minority schools that were operating in Greece without licences. In this case there is the danger of creating minority schools instead of intercultural schools, with different educational aims and philosophies. It is also questionable the fact that the same law (2413/96, article 8, paragraph 14) on one hand discontinues private Greek schools in Germany arguing that they exclude and separate children from the host society, and on the other hand establishes private or state schools for 'foreign' children in Greece is also questionable (Damanakis, 2000).

It is believed that the present law for intercultural education, is likely to create separate treatment in the education of children with 'educational, social, cultural and learning particularities' and this could be explained through article five, which establishes the new organisation of IPODE. This organisation is responsible for the education of foreign and repatriated children in Greece and the Greek education abroad. With this intervention, responsibility for the education of these children was removed from the Educational Institute (*Paidagogiko Instituto*) which until then had been responsible for educational planning in Greece. In this way the formal rhetoric from the state proposes a separate education for 'foreign' children from that of indigenous children (Katsikas & Politou, 1999).

Summarising the different forms of educational provision that are outlined by the law for intercultural education, these include intercultural schools; preparatory classrooms



in mainstream schools; reception classes in mainstream schools; and finally children's full integration into mainstream schools.

The main differences between 'reception' and 'preparatory' classes can be summarised as follows: 'Preparatory' classes may be attended by a minimum of three pupils and a maximum of eight and can take place in addition to normal school time providing eight extra hours per week. The modules covered include Modern Greek, Greek History and any extra topics recommended by the teaching board and the school advisor. On the other hand 'reception' classes may be attended by a minimum of nine pupils and a maximum of seventeen and they can operate in parallel with the mainstream classes (same working hours). Moreover the teaching board and the school advisor provide some of the pupils the opportunity to attend some modules of the mainstream school. The modules covered are formed by the topics of the mainstream curriculum, changed in such a way as to meet the educational needs and the capabilities of these children. Finally children in these classes can be taught their language and culture for two or three additional hours per week. (Markou, 1999)

#### 2.2.4 Education of Roma and the Muslim-minority

Special reference should also be made to the education of two specific groups, the Roma<sup>7</sup> and the Muslim minority of Western Thrace, who come under the provision of the intercultural education policy.

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<sup>7</sup> The term Roma has become the generic term referring to a diverse group of Romani speaking people that in the past were more commonly called 'Gypsies'. The term encompasses groups with different names histories, dialects, and living circumstances such as Roma, Sinti, Gitanos, Jenische, Travellers, etc

As far as Roma children are concerned, the Greek State recognised them with the introduction of legislation in 1955. Their education was characterised by school failure or exclusion mainly as a result of their nomadic way of life or the threat of being culturally assimilated in the Greek society. The official Greek educational policy for this particular group could be characterised as assimilatory or charitable, even though from 1985 the ministry developed a number of research working groups that explored their educational needs and made attempts to develop learning material for these children. During 1994-1995 the Ministry of Education introduced a new policy framework for the integration of Roma children in the school system mainly with the creation of special reception classes for these children irrespective of age. They also introduced a 'card of school attendance for travelling students' that would certify the level of schooling that each student achieved and would enable them to enrol in a new school. However this measure was not very effective and did not improve the school attendance of Roma children due to bad organisation, bureaucracy, lack of supportive networks, as well as cultural and social barriers as a result of their acceptance by the local communities (Katsikas and Politou, 1999).

The existence of the minority in Thrace was officially recognised by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, according to which the Muslim population of Thrace and the Greek population of Istanbul, Imvros and Tenedos were exempt from the general exchange of populations between the two countries. The Muslim minority in Greece is mainly located in two prefectures that of Xanthi and Rodopi and their numbers approach or exceed those of the Christian population. This minority is not a racially, linguistically or a culturally homogeneous group as it is divided into three main groups: the Muslims of Turkish descent, which is the largest group; the Pomaks and the Roma.

According to research evidence by Kanakidou et al. (1998) and Vakalios (1997), one third of all schools operating in Thrace cater exclusively for minority children and only a small proportion of them continue to secondary education. The largest problem of dropouts, even at the earliest stages of education, is faced by the Pomaks whose first language is neither Turkish nor Greek but they are instructed in these two languages.

The educational protocol of 1968 is the main instrument that regulates the operation of minority schools in Thrace. The education of these children is based on a bilingual model of education that uses both languages, Turkish and Greek. However this case of bilingual teaching is different from other applied bilingual models in other countries. For example in France, Germany, Switzerland, Wales and Peru, they either use the substitute or the additive model. In the first model the mother tongue is taught in primary and the first 3 grades of secondary education and then gradually is substituted by the official state language. In the second model, mother tongue is continually taught so that students receive their education in both languages. However, schools in Thrace teach the mother tongue intensively in all grades of primary education and then they stop in secondary education (Kanakidou, 1998). The failure of the education system to accommodate the needs of these children has been linked to the living conditions of the families, the poor quality of the education offered, children's language difficulties, as well as an overall suspicion of the Greek state about the role of these minority schools.

### **2.3 Interventions organised by the Greek state and the academic community in relation to intercultural education**

In recent years the Greek state and the society as a whole seem to be more sensitised to issues of migration and more specifically to the education of 'foreign' children. The Greek state responded to this situation by introducing two new organisations that were set up by the law 2413/1996. The first one is the Special Secretariat for the Education of the Indigenous and of Intercultural Education and the second is the organisation of IPODE which was described earlier and began to operate in 2001. The state also assigned members of the academic community to investigate the living conditions of 'foreign' children, the educational and linguistic development of 'foreign' students, the production of special teaching material for these children, the organisation of teaching support for the teaching of Greek as a second language (in reception and preparatory classes), the organisation of further training for teachers, the organisation of a supporting network for 'foreign' children's parents, the need to intervene in local communities and make suggestions for the education of these children.

As a result of this growing interest in issues of diversity, a number of large-scale intervention projects were set up by universities and ran between the periods of 1997-2000 and 2000-2004. These projects were mainly supported financially by the European Union and came under the title 'Operational programmes of education and initial training' (EPEAK). These projects related mainly to the teaching of Greek as a second language and addressed a significant proportion of 'foreign' students in the Greek educational system. These programmes included three large initiatives. These were the 'Induction of Gypsies to the Greek school' undertaken by the University of Ioannina and the 'Education of repatriated and foreign students' and the 'Education of

the Muslim minority' which referred to those children who had a Greek nationality, and both of which were undertaken by the University of Athens.

The first of these two projects had a national orientation, in contrast with the third one that applied only to the localities in which the Muslim minority are domiciled (Thrace, Rodopi and Evros). An analysis of the information given for these two projects, as Skourtou et al. (2004) note, suggested that one of the major issues in their spotlight was the children's level of literacy in Greek. Even though there were references in the programmes' descriptions and targets on children's first language, there was no suggestion that this related to children's educational progress<sup>8</sup>. The major aim of these two projects was to include as many 'foreign' children in the schooling process that they could as quickly as possible. This could only be achieved by the learning of the Greek language that could be reinforced with the use of special educational resources in reception and preparatory classes and by organising an appropriate curriculum for those children. The end target of this effort was the integration of these children into the mainstream classroom and official curriculum.

Only in the project for the education of repatriated and 'foreign' children was there a brief reference to the issue of children's first language and their bilingualism and the use of children's first language in the classroom, to ease the transition to Greek. However there was no coherent strategy or development plan in the project to suggest how teachers should deal with the issue of bilingualism or how to develop children's first language or use it in the schooling process. On the other hand, the programme for the education of the Muslim minority in Thrace, which did not refer to 'foreign'

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<sup>8</sup> Information about these two projects can be found in: <http://195.130.114.39/ROMA/index.php> and [www.keda.gr](http://www.keda.gr)

students in general, but only those from the Muslim minority, followed a different approach. It recognised the close relationship between children's learning of the Greek language and the fact that these children were being taught in their first language in the minority schools. This relationship seemed to have a positive effect on the children's school record, as many of these children improved their school performance (Skourtou at al., 2004).

This project proposed a number of targets for each school level, to promote its objectives. The target for the preschool level was the learning of Greek as a second language and the acceptance of the children's first language; in the primary sector the further training of teachers that would help them with the teaching of the children's first language; and in secondary education the training of teachers in issues of bilingualism and in ways of teaching bilingual learners.

Considerable work for the education of the Muslim children in Western Thrace has also been carried out by Dragonas and Frangoudaki (2006). A large scale interdisciplinary project for reform in the education of Muslim children in Thrace has taken place between 1977 and 2004. The Ministry of Education initiated this project, called PEM, for Muslim children as part of the European Union policies against social exclusion. Results from this project confirmed massive underachievement of these children in their education and high drop out rates from primary to secondary schooling. Even though the project identified steps forward for the inclusion of these children through community work and involvement of parents in the schooling process, still one of the major burdens was teaching attitudes and beliefs that acted within a monocultural framework.

All these policy developments over the years, and the changes in their philosophy and rhetoric, as well as the organisation of training groups for teachers, constituted by academics in the field of intercultural education, show a change of direction by the Ministry of Education to deal with the issue of diversity. That is the main reason for the inclusion of literature on Greek educational policies, as it clearly shows the developments made in terms of the education of 'foreign' children over the years and the increasing interest in intercultural education. Intercultural schools operate under the umbrella of the educational policy for intercultural education. As such, it would not be possible to exclude this literature from my study without examining its limitations and criticisms and provide a background context essential for my understanding.

#### **2.4 Educational research in Greece in relation to migration**

According to Markou (1994) scientific research in Greece in relation to migration, could be distinguished in two periods. The first analysed and examined the repatriation phenomenon and the second was involved with the integration of migrant children in schools.

Previous research on migration in Greece was mainly demographic in nature and considered aspects of the repatriation of Greek immigrants from Europe and other countries, as well as social and economic factors of repatriation (Petropoulos, 1992; Kazakos, 1994; Emke-Poulopoulou, 1986; Drettakis, 1996; Petrohilos, 1985; Hasiotis, 1993). Research related to the settlement policies of foreign migrant populations in

Greece is not very extensive because this social movement has appeared only during the last decade of the previous century. (Katsoridas, 1994; Psimmenos, 1995; Petrinioti, 1993).

Special emphasis has been placed on studies of Greek refugees coming from the Balkans and the former Soviet Union where they lived for centuries (Fotiadis, 1995; Papadrianos, 1993) and a study focusing on problems of adaptation of Pontians and North Epirotes in Greece (Georgas & Papastyliauou, 1993). In this study the researchers adopted the acculturation model of J. Berry (1990) and they argued that while these groups were living as minorities in former Soviet Union and Albania they maintained their cultural characteristics and national identities.

Another research study that was administered by the Ministry of Education (1984) in Greece, looked at the experiences gained up to 1984 relating to the role of reception classes and their use. According to this research, reception classes did not succeed in improving the linguistic and educational level of the children or in promoting their social interactions with the indigenous children. According to the research this could be a result of the limited experience and training of the teachers who staffed these classes and not because of the type of integration that these classes promoted. Even if teachers had the appropriate training to teach in this classes, their effectiveness could be still questionable, since 'foreign' children did not interact with the indigenous children and were 'prepared' outside the mainstream classroom.

Similarly, an empirical study by Karakatsanis (1993) suggested that 'foreign' children who attended reception classes seemed to be isolated from the indigenous population



in the mainstream and this affected their communication with them and their smooth adaptation to the Greek school. Even though 'foreign' children expressed a feeling of security and safety in these classes, as they interacted with children from their own countries and could speak their language, in the long term when they had to be integrated in the normality of the Greek school, they faced many difficulties.

Research focusing on the educational problems of the children of repatriated Greeks is more widespread (Gotovos & Markou, 1984; Karavasilis, 1994; Touloupis, 1994). The study by Gotovos and Markou (1984) was the first attempt to research the educational needs of these children and suggested ways for the successful integration of repatriated students in the education system. They criticised the assimilatory educational policy of the Greek state and the development of reception classes and schools for remigrant children, as they believed it promoted segregation and discrimination. The researchers developed for schools pedagogical material that they believed could meet the educational needs of these children. These included teaching material for Greek language, physics, chemistry and maths. They also argued for the development of linguistic material for the teaching of Greek as a second language and the need for relevant seminars for teachers and student teachers at universities. They argued that there is a growing need to change the school curriculum in order to take into consideration the cultural and social capital of repatriated children and challenge any stereotypical views and prejudices.

The difficulties faced by children coming from diverse groups attending school, stemmed, not only from legal prohibitions, but also from bureaucratic barriers that started from the time they tried to enrol in the Greek schools. According to Markou

(1997: 56) 'children of the Greek Diaspora and from other linguistic and cultural groups living in Greece, experience a number of difficulties concerning their school and social integration during the period of socialisation, as well as by having to deal with the social reality in Greece'. A qualitative research study with Albanian pupils from the 6th grade in a primary school and the 1st Gymnasium in Rhodes by Kodakos and Govaris (in Govaris, 2001), noted that these pupils experienced the school and their integration into it, as offering more barriers than possibilities. They suggested that these children had developed personal strategies, such as 'submissive adaptation', in order to deal with the demands of the school. They believed that pupils experienced and confronted problems less as individuals and more as representatives of a national group that is, their experience in the specific school reality is often one of depersonalisation.

There is also a study on the education of minority Greek Moslems of Turkish origin in Thrace by Kanakidou (1994), where the researcher made suggestions for the improvement of their educational needs. However the study was criticised by Damanakis (1995) as not relating to intercultural theories and pedagogy and reaching arbitrary conclusions. There is also the national report on the education of children of migrants in Greece, which came as a result of an EU initiative that was directed by Papakonstandinou and Delasouda (1992).

An empirical research study by Mpompas (1995), focused on the views of primary school teachers concerning the education of 'foreign' children in Greece. More specifically, he examined teachers' views about the problems that 'foreign' children experienced, the organisational difficulties that the schools had to deal with as a result

of these children's presence, as well as how these children were officially approached by the state and their education as a whole. The study was quantitative in nature, as it made use only of questionnaires for the collection of data and gave only a very general idea of teachers' views and the daily reality of the schooling practices.

More recently, two more research studies were identified in the Greek literature that helped me to guide my own research, even though both of them used quantitative methods to collect and analyse their data. The first one by Nikolaou (1999) explored teachers' beliefs about the education of 'foreign' children in Greek primary schools and the ways in which these attitudes have been formed. He suggested that teachers are part of the wider social context, as they have grown, been educated and lived in it. As such their attitudes and beliefs have been formed and express the ideology of the majority. In a way, teachers reflect the norms and values of the larger society. His findings suggested that teachers felt that the integration of 'foreign' children into the Greek school is a 'problem' and it is part of their role to find ways to deal with this new situation. For Nikolaou, this attitude on the part of the teachers to accept the importance of their role in solving this situation and help these children in their education signifies a positive attitude towards the integration of 'foreign' children to the Greek school.

This positive attitude was also expressed in the classroom, as teachers in their own time attempted to find information about bilingual children and educational materials that they could use in the classroom to help the educational process. The need for the teachers to get extra help with appropriate teaching material and information about issues of immigration, bilingualism and teaching methodologies from the state and the

local education authorities was urgently expressed. The study also revealed that there is a changing attitude and an acceptance of the importance of maintaining 'foreign' children's first language, even though teachers believed that the learning of the Greek language is of utmost importance for children's educational progression. Data from this study were collected mainly with questionnaires and some interviews with teachers in the primary education sector, as it aimed to collect a vast amount of information. Even though the study gave an insight into teachers' beliefs about 'foreign' children's education, it did not provide any evidence of the teaching practices and schooling processes in the everyday routine of schools.

The second study by Zisimopoulou (2001) focused mainly on the in-service training that primary and secondary teachers had in relation to intercultural education and its relation to their initial training. This study was a survey and data were collected by questionnaire. The study also focused on the beliefs teachers held about intercultural education policy and ways forward that could help the educational process.

Data in this study were statistically analysed and the findings suggested that 'foreign' children should be actively involved in the educational process, as this would have a positive influence on them and would improve the communication and interaction between teachers and students. The active involvement of these children in social activities is something that should be promoted, as it could help their integration in the school unit and improve their interaction with the other children. The study also provided useful information about the content and limitations of in-service training seminars on intercultural education, as teachers suggested that their knowledge of dealing with the needs of 'foreign' children came through their experience of working

with these children, daily, in the school. The study aimed to give useful information about the knowledge and experiences of teachers relating to intercultural education and the limitations of in-service training programmes, hoping that this could bring change to the educational policy itself.

Greek research and literature in relation to intercultural education, seems to have been overdependent on large-scale projects and quantitative or pre-structured studies. The examination of the cultural aspect of school settings and the initiation of prolonged and extended observations and interviews with the participants, on site, seems to be a rare phenomenon. The reason for this is that it is very difficult to get permission from the Ministry of Education to conduct any kind of research that involves prolonged stay in a school. The study reported in this thesis, aims to fill in this lacuna in the Greek context of educational research and give new insight into intercultural schooling.

#### 2.4.1 Greek research on attitudes towards migrants

A number of studies in the Greek literature, in the field of intercultural education, explored Greek children's attitudes towards 'foreign' children and their families and that of public opinion towards migration. An attempt to examine public attitudes towards migrants was made by Hantzi (2001). The study looked at the beliefs held by Greek local residents and attitudes to different ethnic groups such as Americans, Albanians, Filipinos and other Western Europeans. Results showed that the country of origin was a factor that affected people's perceptions as well as revealing certain xenophobic beliefs that people held about certain ethnic groups. Albanians, for

example, were perceived less positively than other European groups. As a country, however, Greece was not characterised as being xenophobic, as a number of positive remarks about other ethnic groups emerged. One of the limitations of the study, however, was the fact that it was focused on certain ethnic groups and not on immigrants residing in Greece.

Bombas has also conducted two studies with school personnel who worked or had knowledge of working with 'foreign' children. In his earlier study (1996) he administered questionnaires, to examine the perceptions of directors working in local education authorities, all over the country. Questionnaires about immigrant children enrolled in the Greek education system were sent to fifty-four directors of elementary education directorates and a hundred and thirty two directors of the education offices that came under them. Two common responses were identified from the analysis of the data. First of all, there was a high degree of agreement between the respondents that immigrant children faced enormous adaptation problems in the schools they attended and had great language difficulties. The study also identified a belief that the presence of these children in Greek classrooms negatively affected and delayed the educational process of the indigenous children. However one major limitation of the study was the small number of returned questionnaires, as only thirty-seven directors agreed to participate.

The second study by Bombas (2001), interviewed a sample of thirty school principals, about immigrant children's performance and difficulties in school and their behaviour towards their teachers and other children. The principals identified two problems that these children had to face: the transition into the school environment and the lack of

knowledge of the Greek language which is the only language of instruction in the Greek school. Concerning children's language difficulties the head teachers noted that younger children who were enrolled in the first or second grade had experienced fewer problems than the older ones who were enrolled in the upper classes. They also believed that teachers did not differentiate their attitudes and behaviour between 'foreign' and indigenous children. Similarly they did not observe any negative or stereotypical views amongst the children themselves. All principals stressed the need for appropriate induction measures to be developed, in order to make the transition of these children to the Greek education system easier, as well as the need for the introduction of more training seminars for teachers relating to intercultural education.

A more recent study by Dimakos and Tasiopoulou (2003) looked at the opinions of Greek school children towards immigrants living in Greece in general, their immigrant classmates and their families. The sample consisted of fifty boys and fifty girls between the ages of 12 and 17 years old who completed a number of questionnaires. The results of the study showed that the Greek students did not think highly of immigrants, irrespective of their socio-economic background and educational level. A number of issues emerged from the analysis of the responses that the children had given. These related to the rising crime levels, high unemployment and loss of jobs, perceived to be a result of the increasing numbers of immigrants. Some extreme views were also expressed that created a negative profile for all immigrants. Immigrants were identified, as 'thieves', 'dirty' and 'criminals', but only a small minority of the respondents reported such views. Equally, only a very small number of children stated that people coming from different cultural backgrounds

contributed to the host society's culture and this was the only positive remark throughout the study.

The findings of all the studies, so far, support the view that the situation in the Greek schools is far from ideal when it comes to the integration and acceptance of 'foreign' children and their families. The challenges and dilemmas that teachers face in their everyday school practice, does not match the formal rhetoric of the educational policy for intercultural education, but rather paint a gloomy picture of the education provided to 'foreign' children. More active steps need to be taken and a more realistic discussion between all stakeholders should be initiated about the role of education in the new era. As both Nikolaou (2000) and Damanakis (1998) have suggested, the Greek society was unprepared to receive large numbers of immigrants and this revealed problems not only in its education, but also in its society. Further evidence relating to xenophobic and hostile attitudes toward migrants were found in a European-wide held study of young Europeans between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, in all fifteen member states (12 April-22 May, 2001). The study found, that Greek youths were among the most hostile and held negative views towards immigrants (European Commission, 2001).

Literature based on the Greek context argues that Greek families held negative views about foreigners, because of the ways that the media presented those people. For example the report on media racism by the European centre on migration and ethnic relations (2002), suggested that the main groups subject to verbal harassment and racist discourse in the Greek media are Albanian immigrants (usually characterised as 'dirty' and 'thieves'), the Turkish minority, Roma people and in some instances



religious minorities. As the report suggested this is mainly because of cultural differences, as it is presumed that it could threaten the cultural and ethnic homogenisation of the Greek state and its welfare. Pavlou (2000) also notes that it is common practice for parts of the press to reproduce police bulletins and recycle them in order to give the impression that these incidents happen more frequently than they actually do, in order to suggest that foreigners are a threat to the country. Even though there have been major improvements in the ways that the press reports and approaches issues affecting immigrants, such as their access to education, living and working conditions, still other issues such as their political rights are not part of the press agenda<sup>9</sup>.

This section on public attitudes towards migrants presents a picture of the beliefs held within the Greek society about ‘foreigners’ and the ways they are constructed and recognised. Schools operate within a given society and are influenced by its system of beliefs, as they are part of their local communities and in a way reproduce the dominant beliefs of their society. What I am arguing is that intercultural schools do not work in isolation from the dominant beliefs held by the society but are rather a micrograph of it. I have presented this literature as a factor influencing the practices in the schools under study.

## **2.5 International context for intercultural education**

This part of the chapter aims to identify the international context that led to the development of intercultural education and the different forms of provision that were

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<sup>9</sup> Information can be found at <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/english/articles/AIM26-12-98.html>

used before its introduction. This historical review of the development of intercultural education in the European context, will also show the relation to and the similarities with the policies that the Greek state adopted to deal with the issue of multiculturalism which was explored previously in the chapter.

### 2.5.1 The history of intercultural education and its European dimension

Intercultural education first appeared in the 1960's in the US, as the official educational policy and later on in Canada. It was developed in answer to the high levels of drop out and school failure of children of ethnic minorities. The introduction of intercultural education at that time coincided with the political movement that recognised the rights of ethnic minorities. The cause of school failure with regard to these children was found to be the limited knowledge of the official school language and, as a result, preparatory classes were organised to deal with the situation. Soon it was realised that the effectiveness of these classes was questionable and a different policy that recognised the importance of maintaining children's first language was followed. This recognition led to the development of bilingual classes (both languages were taught) but it was also realised that educational success was not related only to language competence in both languages. From the 1970's intercultural education programmes took another direction and focused on the interaction with other cultures that would lead to an understanding of the 'other'. This view, however, gave an exotic dimension of the 'other' and did not really boost the interaction and communication between different cultures (Zisimopoulou, 2001).

In Europe, intercultural education made its appearance in the mid 70's and dealt with the education of 'foreign' children in schools. These were the children of immigrants who came to European countries mainly for economic reasons. Each country followed their own educational policies that were related with the economic, social and ideological status of their countries. Some of the measures that were adopted were the teaching of the language and culture of 'foreign' children and the organisation of pre-service and in-service programmes and seminars for teachers who taught immigrant children. European societies however were multicultural in nature well before the arrival of immigrants from other countries, by having ethnic minorities within their borders. Their educational systems however were very slow to adapt to this reality and this was mainly a result of their will to protect their national unity and present their nation states as being unitary, uniform, monocultural and monolingual (Gundara, 1988).

The Council of Europe introduced intercultural education in an attempt to deal with issues of xenophobia and focus directly with the educational needs of children of migrants only (Campani and Gundara, 1994). As a result they introduced the experimental classes which were described as compensatory and they adopted an 'integration oriented pedagogy' (Perotti, 1994). In these classes, children's linguistic and cultural backgrounds were considered important to maintain, since there was a view that they would return back to their country of origin.

However, during the 1980s and early 1990s, there was a change of direction in dealing with issues of immigration at the European level and a move towards a more intercultural pedagogy. That was mainly a result of the realisation that many

emigrants had settled permanently in the host countries and that most of the nation states were ethnically and culturally pluralistic. Intercultural education had now a different meaning and was conceptualised as a 'process of reform with the transformation of the school and society as its final goal' (Markou, 1994:41).

It was realised that education systems should not only address the educational needs of some specific groups, but should be directed towards the inclusion of all children. This could be realised in the 1984 Recommendation of the Council of Europe's Committee 'The training of teachers in the field of intercultural education'. It argued that 'societies with multicultural features created in Europe by the population movements of recent decades are an irreversible and generally positive development, in that they may help to further closer links between peoples of Europe and between Europe and other parts of the world'. They also argued that the 'presence in schools in Europe of millions of children from foreign cultural communities constitutes a source of enrichment and a major medium and long term asset, provided that education policies are geared to fostering open-mindedness and an understanding of cultural differences'<sup>10</sup> (Perotti, 1994). The recommendation also calls for an intercultural approach to be adopted in all forms of teacher training and it applies to both host countries and countries of origin as it concerns all children.

Even though the Council of Europe had developed many recommendations and documents for the implementation of intercultural education, it had limited influence on national educational policies, as these were still controlled by powerful mechanisms within nation states (Campani and Gundara, 1994). Diversity was always

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<sup>10</sup> Council of Europe, 1984, recommendation (84) 18.

considered a threat to national identities and that was the reason that nation states preferred to identify themselves as homogeneous. Towards this end, the role of education was to develop a cultural and national identity that would provide nation states with a legitimate way to promote homogeneity. According to Gundara (1988) this attempt by nation states to present themselves as unitary and homogenised totals, was a consciously created construction, in order to ensure the continuity of established nationalisms. This provided the reason for the exclusion and marginalisation of certain groups by referring to them as immigrants, refugees or other.

It is argued that the European approach to intercultural education, instead of promoting and enhancing an intercultural approach to education based on equality and respect for all cultures, simply extended the closed borders of nation states to those within EU territory. This came as a result of the global market economy and the view that economic survival of the nation state is perceived as a function of the quality of its education system (Hansen, 1998). Consequently a gradual shift in national education systems is taking place according to which Green (1997:4) argues, that 'citizen formation has given way to skills formation, nation building to national economic competitiveness'. Green (1999: 56) believes that education and training are the two main areas over which nation states still have control and as a result they try to maintain it.

The European Commission (1997) argued that 'the challenges of the information society, employment and ultimately economic competitiveness all depend on the success of our policies for education and training' (CEC, 1997, cited in Hansen,

1998:7). This view however of developing a European identity comes in contrast with the ideals of intercultural education, as many groups that are characterised as ‘unprivileged’ such as ethnic, religious and other minorities, are being excluded.

Even though European education adopted an intercultural pedagogy, as an approach to education, it still excluded certain groups of people based on cultural and linguistic factors. It could be argued that a way forward could be as Jones and Street-Porter (1997) suggest, to ‘accept, not just the contingent, pluralistic nature of Europe and the pluralistic nature of the states and cultures within it, but also the notion of an extension of the concept of individual pluralistic identities’ (Jones and Street-Porter, 1997:9). It is also argued that European pluralism could only be understood when it is realised that multiple diversities exist within national and regional cultures, and within cultures of immigrant and other minority groups (Batelaan, 1995).

Perotti (1994) argues that the way to manage social diversity and migration is a key issue for the future of European societies. All societies, should find a balance between cultural diversity and social cohesion, not only because diversity in their societies is a reality, but also because real democracy is based on it (Banks et al., 2001). Intercultural education should give an answer to this challenge in educational and cultural terms. The purpose of such an education is not only to learn about different cultures but also to promote interaction and communication between them in order to reveal differences as well as similarities. As Levi-Strauss argues ‘the discovery of others is the discovery of a relationship, not of a barrier’ (cited in Perotti, 1994:91). This delicate balance between unity and diversity that all democratic nation states should reach was also identified by Banks et al. (2001). As he argued, all societies

should cater for the needs of all communities within their borders, but also for the unity of their society as a whole.

A number of international legal texts and policies<sup>11</sup> written by organisations such as the UN, UNESCO and the Council of Europe promoted intercultural education and were a major influence on educational policy developments in many countries. International developments in the field of intercultural education and working texts had an influence on the Greek context and the way that its policies were developed over the years. Many critics of the law for intercultural education however, expressed the view that this development was simply an attempt to comply with EU regulations and not a real attempt to deal with diversity. Nonetheless, international organisations pressed for the development of certain policies and definitely had an influence on the implementation of intercultural policies.

## 2.6 Educational responses to the needs of bilingual children in the UK

So far I have examined in detail the educational response in terms of policy that the Greek state adopted, in order to meet the needs of ‘foreign’ children. It is also evident in the literature that every society responds to linguistic diversity in different ways according to their needs. In the UK, (which is characterised as a multicultural society) for example, educational responses to the needs of language minority children had began to evolve with the immigration of many people from former British colonies in the 1950’s. According to Rattansi (1992) the issue of language came into focus in the evolving multicultural society of Britain, with the publication of English for

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<sup>11</sup> A description of these documents is presented in the appendices (appendix 7).

Immigrants (DES, 1963). This was the first official government paper that considered the teaching of children whose first language was not English. The ideology that prevailed was that the education of the white monolingual majority pupils, should not be disrupted by the presence of the newly arrived immigrant population.

The initial responses to the education of bilingual children in Britain focused mainly on their assimilation into the society (called host society) as quickly as possible, ignoring their language needs. The underachievement of ethnic minority children was a reality that had to be dealt with, as there was a growing concern for this new situation. A number of measures were developed such as the teaching of bilingual children in separate language centres or their withdrawal from mainstream classes for specialist English language tuition (Bourne, 1989). These educational responses ignored the children's first language and failed to meet their needs. From 1980's onwards, the approach that has been adopted is to teach the English language to foreign children in the context of other learning within the mainstream classroom. This however has placed extra demands on teachers who have had to carefully consider the needs of these children when planning their teaching.

According to Stubbs (1994: 207) 'schools had always been the most powerful mechanism in assimilating minority children into mainstream cultures'. His work included analysis of the work of committees that produced statements relating to language in the education system for England and Wales. He concluded that this ad-hoc language planning has created a 'sophisticated control which recognises ethnic diversity but confines it to the home, which pays lip-service to multilingualism but is empty liberal rhetoric' (p. 207-8). Bourne (1992) provides a historical overview of the



changes in language policy, as expressed in the Bullock Report (DES, 1975), the Swann Report (DES, 1985), the Harris Report (DES, 1990) and the Cox Report (DES, 1989) that led to the development of the National Curriculum for English. She also stresses the need in the context of British education to rethink their educational policy to support bilingual children in the mainstream.

A review of research into the achievements of ethnic minority children in England and Wales in the ten years following the Swann Report (DES, 1985) was conducted by Gillborn and Gipps (1996). One of their most important findings was that language problems many times were misinterpreted or related to learning difficulties. For that reason, these children were either inappropriately assessed or excluded from classroom life. They also found that negative stereotypes, especially for Asian communities led to lower expectations for this group of children.

The research reported in the present thesis, will also explore teachers' beliefs in relation to bilingualism, as it is considered an important aspect of their discourse in relation to the way they practised and understood intercultural education. Next I will attempt to define bilingualism and then provide an overview of existing theories of bilingualism and learning that could inform the implementation and development of educational policies for 'foreign' children. An understanding of theories of bilingualism was considered important at the time that this research took place, as teachers focused mainly on the language aspect of 'foreign' children's learning.

### 2.6.1 Defining bilingualism

There are a number of definitions of bilingualism that depend on the definer's purpose. The linguists' definition for example (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1982) is based on competence, while sociolinguists define bilingualism by the function of the two languages and view it as a characteristic of language use rather than a linguistic phenomenon. Baker (2006), on the other hand, expanded the notion of language functions and spoke about domains of language, that is, the context in which the language is used. He also argued that the term bilingualism is used to describe the two languages of an individual, while the term diglossia is used when referring to two languages in used in a given society, one usually of higher status than the other.

Romaine (1989) also used this definition of domains but for her, domains are not only the context in which language is used but also a combination of specific times, settings and role relationships. Sociologists and psychologists have also attempted to define bilingualism by the attitudes to the languages that speakers have or by other people's assessment for the speaker. What is evident is that there are a number of definitions for bilingualism that depend on the definers' use of the term, as well as the sociocultural and socio-political context under study.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) divided bilinguals into four categories according to the different routes to bilingualism. The elite bilinguals who have chosen bilingualism freely; children from linguistic majorities who have, for example, a high status first language and have been educated in immersion programmes; children from bilingual families in which parents have different first languages; and children from linguistic

minorities such as the children in this study. For Skutnabb-Kangas bilingualism has come to be seen as a problem by nation states and this has definitely influenced the debate on language policies. She argued that bilingualism has been historically associated with poverty and as something that the individuals had to move away from in order to reach a high status monolingualism. Similarly Siraj-Blachford (1994: 46) argued that 'being bilingual is still too often perceived as an aberration, or worse, as something children should grow out of'.

It seems however that in many societies there is a change of attitude towards linguistic minorities to become balanced bilinguals, but this is mainly a political and an educational decision. Balanced bilinguals are those who are almost equally fluent in both languages. Most bilinguals, as well as the children in this study, use their two languages in different contexts. They use their first language, for example, in their homes or in their interactions with children who have the same linguistic background and the second in their school. The status of the first language is another factor that influences the way that bilingualism is viewed in a society (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). This may affect the educational process itself, as well as the expectations teachers hold for these children.

Cummins (1986) introduced two models of bilingual proficiency which compete in decisions about best practice for bilingual pupils. These were the Separate Underlying Proficiency (SUP) and the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model. The first model, which Cummins argues is the 'common-sense' assumption, is that proficiency in the first language is separate from proficiency in the second language. In the second model, the CUP, which according to Cummins is supported by empirical

evidence, there is significant transfer of conceptual knowledge and skills across languages.

In the present thesis, the term bilingual or bilingualism is used to describe those children who come from a different cultural background and use two languages, their first language and that of the host country. Wiles (1985) provided a similar definition and identified bilingual children as those who use two or more languages in their everyday life and come from a minority language background. This thesis however is not concerned with 'foreign' children's bilingualism but with teachers' understanding of it.

#### 2.6.2 Bilingualism in education

By using the term bilingual education what is often realised is that two languages are used as the medium of instruction in the school. In the research presented in this thesis however, 'foreign' children's first language was used as an explanatory tool in the reception classes only, in order to help children acquire the Greek language as soon as possible. Thomas and Collier (1997), for example, in their study of the academic achievement of bilingual pupils in five school districts in the United States, found that the 'first predictor of long term school success (for language minority students) is cognitively complex on-grade level academic instruction through students' first language, for as long as possible and cognitively complex on-grade level academic instruction through the second language (English) for part of the school day'. This is something that supports the CUP model of bilingualism by Cummins. According to this model there is one central operating system that processes thought, irrespective of

the language that a person is operating. This suggests that if a bilingual child has to operate in the classroom with a poorly developed second language, their learning achievements will not match the rest of the classroom. On the other hand if bilingual children are allowed to develop their cognitive abilities in their first language, this knowledge and skills will be transferred to the second language as well. According to Thomas and Collier (1997) that sort of practice for bilingual children will improve their long-term school success.

In a similar vein, Danesi (1990) found through the 'Foyer Project' in Belgium (an experiment in mother tongue education for minority children) that proficiency in both the mother tongue and the school language are interdependent. He stated that 'literacy development in the mother tongue contributes the primary condition for the development of global language proficiency and the formation of the appropriate cognitive schemas needed to classify and organise experience' (Danesi, 1990: 65). Baker (1996: 148) also wrote that 'when children's both home and school languages are not functioning well, cognitive functioning and academic performance might be negatively affected'.

There are a number of typologies developed to describe bilingual education programmes. Baker's (2006) typology for example, has been influenced by the British context and developed in order to discuss the nature of educational provision for bilingual children. He categorises the ten types of education for bilingual children as being weak or strong in promoting bilingualism. Similarly Gonzales (1975) proposed a classification of five different types of bilingual education programme, on a sliding scale from transitional to cultural pluralist. In the present thesis, the language used for

all children was the majority language (Greek) and this definitely affected the educational aims of the schools under study. The analysis of the teachers' interviews suggested that teachers believed that the major educational aim for bilingual children was to socialise them, in order to enable them to participate fully in the monolingual school context, as well as to the monocultural Greek society. Observations from the classroom also showed that 'foreign' children's first language was not promoted in any way, but rather monolingualism in the majority language was the major goal. This showed that still the overall aim of the intercultural school was to assimilate 'foreign' children linguistically and culturally in the majority language and culture. This type of provision for 'foreign' children agrees with Baker's submersion type of education for bilingual children that is characterised as the weakest form of education in terms of promoting bilingualism.

The longitudinal study by Thomas and Collier (1997) described previously, suggested that the most favourable programmes for the academic success of bilingual children were those that provided maintenance of the first language alongside development of the second language. On the other hand, the programmes that were less effective on the improvement of the academic achievement for bilingual children were those that focused only on the majority language. They also argued that 'students being schooled all in English initially make dramatic gains in the early grades, whatever type of programme students receive, and this misleads teachers and administrators into assuming that the students are going to continue to do extremely well' (Thomas and Collier, 1997:34). Research in Greece (Vratsalis et al., 2000) also highlighted this issue that 'foreign' children's academic failure is realised later on in schooling, especially in secondary education, and not at early primary level.

I have argued previously that the type of education provided to ‘foreign’ children in the intercultural schools in Greece under study seem to fit Baker’s submersion type of education. Baker (2006) believes however that a basic limitation of all typologies is that ‘not all real life examples will fit easily into the classification’ and that each of the ten different programmes have ‘multitudinous sub-varieties’. The study reported in this thesis, however, due to its ethnographic nature, will go beyond simply describing the provision offered to ‘foreign’ children and provide descriptions of teaching practices and teacher beliefs in relation to multilingualism and the practising of intercultural education in Greece. The research thus provides a detailed examination of schooling processes and teaching practices.

It is important however to review some of the work that informs good practice for the education of ‘foreign’ children. It should also be noted that many teachers’ beliefs and practices seemed to be informed by dominant theories of language acquisition. Krashen’s (1982) theories of second language acquisition, for example, suggested that second language acquisition mirrors first language acquisition in many ways. Dodson (1985), on the other hand, believes that first and second language acquisition are different because the second language is acquired with a first language in place. Krashen also spoke about the comprehensible input hypothesis that made a distinction between the formal learning of a language, for example in a foreign language classroom and the acquisition of a language in a context rich environment. He believed that language is being acquired due to input and that language minority children should be taught together with their monolingual peers. This notion was behind the move to teach bilingual children in the mainstream classroom. It is believed that bilingual children in mainstream classrooms can take more than seven

year to reach language proficiency in the majority language. For that reason Baker (2006) argued that language scaffolding is essential to support these children in their language development. This could only be achieved by close cooperation between the teacher and the student. The idea of scaffolding derived from the Russian psychologist Vygotsky (Hobsbaum, Peters & Sylva, 1996), who believed that student learning occurs when a teacher understands the level of understanding of each child and moves that level further within the child's abilities.

The work of Cummins (1981, 1986, and 1996) has also been very influential in promoting good practice for the education of bilingual children in Britain. Cummins (1984) argued that classroom language development is much more complex to the model that Krashen proposed and that children's exposure to meaningful input alone will not be sufficient to develop their second language skills to the levels required for academic achievement. Cummins (1986) also argued that neglected aspects of language proficiency such as the 'ability to hypothesise, extrapolate and predict' in the second language seem to be more relevant for students' cognitive and academic progress than are the 'surface manifestations of proficiency' on which many educators focused. This was indeed the case in all four schools in the study presented in this thesis, as bilingual teachers focused mainly on pronunciation and tenses usage. As I have argued previously, the educational provision offered to 'foreign' children in the intercultural schools in Greece seemed to fit the Submersion or Monolingual Immersion type of model. Even though this programme seems to develop fluency in the majority language, Cummins suggests that it will also lead to a subtractive form of bilingualism, because of the lower status of the children's first language and the lack of exposure to it.



As a result of the continuing underachievement of bilingual children in Europe, Canada and the US, despite the efforts made to address the needs of these children, Cummins argued that the effects of provision for bilingual children need to be considered along 'a continuum of empowering bilingual pupils'. He spoke about four elements in the organisation of schooling that could have an affect on the empowerment of these children. These include the incorporation of minority students' culture and language; the inclusion of minority communities in the education of their children; pedagogical assumptions and practices operating in the classroom; and the assessment of minority students. (Cummins, 1986: 24)

The main feature in Cummins' model is that the school should have a positive attitude towards bilinguals and see bilingualism as a positive resource for the school and other peers and not as a problem. Wong (1996), on the other hand, argued that developing effective policies that would meet the needs of bilingual children is not the only requirement to help these children succeed. Rather, consideration should also be given to the micro level of classroom pedagogy, as well as teachers' beliefs and attitudes.

In a similar vein Baker (2006) identified nine elements that all schools with bilingual children should address, in order to become successful. This should be part, of every school that views change as a continuous process and school success as an interconnected activity that involves all these elements. These include a careful balance in the intake of 'foreign' and indigenous students; staffing that should include both bilingual and majority language teachers; a shared vision and mission among all staff; continuous training and staff development; effective leadership; a challenging

curriculum; a supportive environment; high expectations for all children and finally parental involvement.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented and analysed the development of intercultural education in Greece and examined the multicultural character of the Greek society. I have particularly focused on the Greek policy context for intercultural education that showed the different approaches that have been followed over the years, for the integration of re-migrant children and those with different cultural backgrounds. Even though there have been steps forward towards the successful integration of all children to obtain equal opportunities in their education, there are still many things to be done in terms of policy development and school change. There are still many gaps in the policy framework that create certain inconsistencies and there is still a notion of assimilating 'foreign' children into the Greek language and culture without respecting the cultural capital that children bring with them.

In reviewing educational research on intercultural education in Greece, it became clear that much of this is either quantitative, or based on pre-structured questionnaires with a limited qualitative component. There are no ethnographic studies of school settings and the 'cultural perspective' seems to be ignored in the literature. By 'cultural perspective', I am referring to the school culture in terms of rituals or ceremonies that characterise the daily routine of the school. Identifying the culture of the school provides a picture of the schooling activities and processes of learning that take place within it. There is no research that has sufficiently analysed the

complexities of school practices, the factors that shape them and how they relate to the policy framework. This reinforces the need for such research and the potential for this thesis, which uses an ethnographic approach to study the internal conditions and processes of intercultural schools in Greece.

The study presented in this thesis explores the theories that informed and influenced mainstream and bilingual teaching practices in the four intercultural primary schools and teachers' views of intercultural education and schooling. Individual pedagogical beliefs and practices, however, were located and influenced by wider social and political factors and that is why the official policy context has been explored within the context of international developments. I have identified the process and the context within which intercultural schools were developed in Greece to address the increasing numbers of drop-outs from the educational process of 'foreign' children.

In the last section of this chapter I have reviewed relevant literature on theories of bilingualism and bilingual education in an attempt to understand the schooling process of the intercultural school, as most of the in-service seminars that took place in the schools under study focused on 'foreign' children's bilingualism and whether intercultural schools should change in order to maintain children's first language. The thesis, however, is not concerned with the different approaches to bilingual teaching. Rather, it is interested to understand the process of working with 'foreign' children in intercultural schools and how mainstream and bilingual teachers are positioned within the schools and how they construct the concept 'foreign' children. The thesis is not so much concerned with teacher's views of bilingualism, but rather it is interested to identify if and how these notions act to marginalise the students. Through this

process, this study aims to help develop an understanding of how schooling practices and processes influence the educational experiences of ‘foreign’ children, further our understanding of the everyday school realities of intercultural schools and increase awareness that could lead to the development of meaningful guidelines for teachers that teach in multicultural settings.

The following chapter attempts to understand how teaching practices and beliefs are constructed and framed and how they are influenced by the school culture and teachers’ personal experiences. This was considered important for the present thesis as it specifically focused on teaching practices and beliefs. The following section aims to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the different approaches and views expressed by mainstream and bilingual teachers.

### 3. Understanding teaching practices and beliefs

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this part of the thesis I am exploring the interconnection between teaching practices and beliefs and how these relate to and are influenced by other external factors such as the school culture and teachers' personal biographies. The empirical work of the research presented in this thesis identifies one more dimension that influences teaching practices that builds on the conceptual framework that is presented in this section. What I am arguing here is that teachers' beliefs provide a framework for explaining teaching practices in the everyday routine of the school. This is an important element in this thesis as the empirical research focused on both beliefs and practices. Even though teachers' beliefs in the intercultural schools under study seem to conform to the official rhetoric of the policy for intercultural education, the actual school practices and schooling process for 'foreign' children followed a different philosophy. This section aims to provide a conceptual framework for understanding this difference between beliefs and practices, as well as current research on this.

There is a considerable amount of both theoretical and more empirical research (Nettle, 1998; Day, Pope & Denicolo, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shavelson & Stem, 1981) that explores teachers and their practices in classrooms. What these studies argue is that in order to gain an understanding of how teachers in their daily practice make sense of the tasks and challenges they face, one has to understand their belief system. This relates to more research by Pajares (1992), Nespor (1987), Kagan

(1992) and Fang (1996), who argue that teachers' cognition and behaviour is guided by and makes sense by a personally held system of beliefs.

What is stressed, however, by all researchers in this kind of research, is that 'beliefs' as a concept has a primary role in understanding teaching practices. This is particularly interesting in this specific thesis that investigates how teachers understand the policy for intercultural education and how this works out in practice in their everyday routine in the four intercultural schools. The way that the policy is implemented in practice through teachers' understanding of it, is of special importance.

Teachers make use of their own interpretive frameworks to make sense of the daily challenges and dilemmas they face in their practice. Berliner (1987) for example argues that teachers have an 'elaborate schema' and a 'repertoire of scripts' that they use in order to interpret a number of situations. Similarly Barnes (1992) uses the term 'frame' to refer to these sets of beliefs that teachers use to organise their knowledge. This is evident in the research presented in this thesis as well, as teachers took personal initiatives in their classrooms to accommodate the needs of 'foreign' children. The following sections attempt to identify some of the influences on teacher's beliefs and practices that were relevant to this thesis. Beliefs provide a framework for explaining how teachers negotiate the different challenges they have to deal with, in the everyday routine of the classroom. The connection between beliefs and practices is an important element in this study as it shows contradictions between what is said and what is done in practice.

### **3.2 Teachers' knowledge and its impact on their thinking**

There are a number of factors identified that could be used in order to gain an understanding of teaching practices. One of these factors that gained attention by a number of researchers (Kettle & Sellars, 1996; Donmoyer, 1996; Winitzky et al., 1994) is the significance of the knowledge teachers' have and the impact it has on their thinking. Researchers still try to understand the impact that both formal and practical knowledge has on influencing teaching practices in the classroom. There is little consensus between researchers in this field about what is meant by teacher knowledge or how this knowledge relates to practice. For the purposes of my study of teachers' practices in intercultural schools, engagement with this work does give some indication of the different kinds of knowledge that teachers might draw upon in their practice and how their beliefs, for instance about the relationship between language and learning, might influence their practice in this particular context.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) describe teachers' theories and beliefs about aspects of teaching, such as pedagogical principles, purpose of schooling, student perceptions and teaching techniques, as an educational platform. This platform supports teachers' actions and beliefs but it also describes a teacher's professional knowledge that influences and controls their perceptions, judgments and behaviour (Kagan, 1992). Kagan also believed that this knowledge, is situated in three important ways: in context, as meaning is related to specific groups of children; in content (material to be taught); and in the person (involves teachers' unique belief system).

In the classroom context, however, teachers may not be aware of using or adopting an ‘educational platform’, as in many cases they are not aware of having certain assumptions, theories or educational beliefs. This is well summarised by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988: 363) who argue that ‘publicly teachers may say one thing and assume that their classroom behaviour is governed by this statement but privately or even unknowingly they may believe something else that actually governs their classroom behaviour’. This suggests that there are two levels of understanding a teacher’s educational platform: one that includes their espoused theories, what teachers say they believe, assume and intend; and the other that includes their theories in use that includes the assumptions, beliefs and intent coming from their behaviour. ‘Espoused theories are usually known to the teacher, in contrast with theories in use that must be constructed from observation of teacher behaviour’ (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1988: 366).

Anderson (1985), on the other hand, believes that teachers’ practical knowledge is a result of their formal knowledge. This approach from Anderson suggests that practical knowledge derives from formal knowledge when it is practised. This approach was also traditionally adopted by many teacher education programmes that believed that teachers should have a standard knowledge base that they would bring into the classroom. Similarly in the research reported in this thesis, a number of initiatives were developed by the Greek Ministry of Education through in-service training seminars and conferences for teachers working in intercultural schools, aiming to inform their practice and update their knowledge on issues affecting their practice.



Other researchers adopted different forms and looked more closely at the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, which emphasised the ways that teaching is organised and how the school curriculum is translated into practice (Grossman & Richert, 1988; Shulman, 1987). More recently, another argument that added to this debate was that teachers require much more than formal knowledge when they teach. This is based on the fact that teachers acquire practical or what is called 'know-how' knowledge in the classroom, something that is not traced to their prior formal knowledge (Foss & Kleinsasser, 1996).

### 3.2.1 Teachers' practical knowledge

This type of knowledge that teachers use in the classroom and is understood to be built up in the classroom during the daily teaching and not as a result of teachers' formal knowledge, is called practical knowledge. A number of terms have been used by researchers to describe this form of knowledge: folkways of teaching (Buchmann, 1987); wisdom of practice (Shulman, 1987; Leinhardt, 1990); practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983); personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Golombek, 1998); and craft knowledge (Battersby, 1981; Tom & Valli, 1990).

Schon (1987) uses the term 'knowing in action' to describe the knowledge that teachers use, in order to understand their practices. He notes that 'knowing in action refers to the sort of know-how we reveal in our intelligent action. This knowing is in the action. We reveal it by our spontaneous skillful execution of the performance and we are characteristically unable to make it verbally explicit' (Schon, 1987: 25). As a result the challenge faced by many researchers was to make explicit this practical

knowledge that teachers seem to use in their everyday practices and that is not a result of their formal knowledge. As he believes, behind this notion of 'knowing-in-action', lies the 'reflecting-in-action', which is what teachers make part of their practice instinctively through feeling, seeing or noticing (Schon, 1995).

In his book 'educating the reflective practitioner', Schon (1987) argues that practitioners deal with challenging situations in different ways depending on their disciplinary backgrounds, organisational roles, histories, interests, and political/economic perspectives. As a result, teachers, most of the time identify, relate and reflect on a given situation based on their background. He believes that there are implicit rules and procedures and as a result we behave or reflect according to them.

As he argues:

*there are actions, recognitions, and judgements which we know how to carry out spontaneously; we do not have to think about them prior to or during the performance'; 'we are often unaware of having learned to do these things; we simply find ourselves doing them'; 'In some cases, we were once aware of the understandings which were subsequently internalised in our feelings for the stuff of action. In other cases, we may never have been aware of them. In both cases, however, we are usually unable to describe the knowing which our action reveals. (1995: 54)*

Research suggests that the process that helps teachers give meaning to their experiences is shaped by a number of influences. For example it is argued (Fullan, 1992; Kilbourn, 1993; Hand & Treagust, 1994) that the challenges and dilemmas that

teachers confront in educational settings could act as a salient stimuli in developing their practical knowledge. Similarly Lambert (1985) and Fenstermacher (1986) argue that teachers develop practical arguments when coping with the cognitive demands of teaching. What seems to be a major issue for many educational researchers that is much contested is how practical knowledge can be converted to formal conceptual knowledge. An answer to that, according to literature, is through reflective practice (Day, 1993; Griffiths & Tann, 1991). Even though it seems that through reflection practical knowledge could be converted to formal knowledge, its impact on teaching practices has been questioned. This is mainly because, as Barnes (1992) notes, teachers, when they teach, have to make choices where many times it is not clear what their aim or goal is. As teaching is very interactive and context based, teachers most of the time, do not have the luxury or time to reflect on every decision.

It can be seen from the discussion thus far that it is not entirely clear how teachers acquire their practical and professional knowledge from the experiences they encounter daily in their classrooms and schools. What the research suggests, however, is that teachers make use of a large inventory of knowledge that they have developed over the years of teaching from their day-to-day routines in their schools. The use of this kind of knowledge could be more easily understood by looking at research that explores the differences between expert and novice teachers.

### 3.2.2 Expert and novice teachers

Borko, Bellamy and Sanders (1993: 67-68), for example, in their study of expert and novice teachers found that expert teachers were able to teach more flexibly and

responsively to children's needs. They also concluded that the 'different patterns of strengths and weaknesses shown by novice teachers, corresponded to differences in their knowledge systems and pedagogical reasoning skills'. They found, for example, that one novice teacher had strong content knowledge, but his pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge were very limited. This was indicated by his inability to work with large groups of children and by being unaware, at times that children were off task. It seems that expert teaching is based on a knowledge base that consists in both formal knowledge and experiences. The question, however, that still remains is why teachers make certain interpretations of classroom processes, and consequently, certain decisions and not others, and how they can successfully undertake a new educational initiative, in this case the implementation of an intercultural pedagogy.

Some research (Munby & Russell, 1989; Barnes, 1992; Lambert, 1985) suggests that it would be more useful to consider teachers' constructions of their work, in terms of dispositions or personal frames that teachers impose on the situations they face. According to this view, teaching expertise should be considered as a set of dispositions or personal themes. Unlike knowledge, these dispositions are value laden, idiosyncratic and influence teachers' choices of content, pedagogical strategies and their perceptions of children's needs. These dispositions or frames can best be understood through the concept of beliefs or belief systems, which seem to influence and frame the knowledge and thinking that teachers use in schools.

A key question, in relation to the aim of this thesis to understand teacher practices in intercultural schools in Greece, is why teachers choose certain approaches to teaching

and learning and the extent to which they have a personalised approach to the challenges and dilemmas they are presented with in this context. To address this question I will explore the role of beliefs in how they affect the way in which teachers give meaning to and reflect on their knowledge and experiences. It seems that teachers work in schools is influenced by a number of factors that are not only dependent on their own personal characteristics and background but also on other external factors that are culturally and contextually based.

### **3.3 Teachers' beliefs and their definition**

There appear to be a number of factors that provide an understanding of the ways in which beliefs and belief systems, influence teaching practices. What is proposed is that beliefs are interconnected with coherent belief orientations, which adapt to a number of circumstances and the significance of personal biographies and experience in the development of beliefs and belief orientations. One of the points I was particularly interested in, when interviewing the teachers, was their view of the likely influence, seminars and in-service training had, on their practices. The beliefs teachers have could impact both on their judgments and perceptions, as well as on their behaviour in the classroom. These beliefs are an essential element in preparing teachers professionally, as well as improving their teaching effectiveness. For Kagan (1992) there is not a shared definition of the term 'teachers' beliefs' as it includes a variety of understandings such as perceptions, assumptions, implicit and explicit theories, judgments, opinions and much more. I do consider all of them as being part of a teacher's belief system that construct and frame their voice. In addition, I am not

proclaiming that the views expressed by the teachers during the interviews show an absolute truth, but rather I understand them as context and time based.

Studies by Nias (1989) and Triandis (1989) focused specifically on the significance of beliefs teachers have about themselves. This concept of 'self' has been particularly problematic for many researchers, especially when trying to investigate how and why it is difficult to change. Mead (1934) for example gave his own definition of 'self' as being both a social product, that is shaped by other peoples responses, and an independent actor who initiates actions and acts on them. Katz (in Nias, 1989) argued that every individual develops an inner self by having contact with significant others. Similarly Ball (cited in Nias, 1989) used the term 'substantial' to describe this inner self that he argued is highly resistant to change. Nias (1989: 25) who commented on that, argued that teachers' personal concerns are all expressions of their need to preserve their identity or substantial self in their teaching communities. The importance of maintaining this sense of substantial self was a priority, as 'this embodies self-defining values and beliefs'. For Pajares (1992) these beliefs are very often hard to detect and recognise, as they are disguised in many instances, like episodes, experiences, images, metaphors or dilemmas.

Other researchers (Connelly & Cladinin 1988; Johnson, 1994; Calderhead & Robson 1991) used the notion of image to uncover the personal beliefs teachers have about themselves, about what are the correct ways of teaching, what an ideal teacher is, and about how a lesson should be typically organised. What is highlighted by the research is that 'images' are reported by teachers with great ease and as a result reveal themselves and their beliefs. Johnston (1992) for example in her study of teachers'

practices in innovative settings argued that the self-defining images that they called upon played a significant role in understanding the personal nature of their actions. She noted that 'images are useful in studying curriculum decision making, because they focus on the teacher as a person. Images, first and foremost, allow us to study the teacher as a person and there is much evidence to suggest that this is where to find the key to all aspects of teaching practice. 'Images are the personal statements in which the individual features as the main actor' (1992: 253). In the present thesis much of the data collected were based on stories that could be described as 'images' or 'episodes' of teachers' daily practices.

Janesick (1992), in a case study of a primary school teacher, concluded that by identifying the teacher's personal and self-defining beliefs she was able to understand how the teacher gave meaning to day-to-day events and how he constructed the curriculum. There are also other core beliefs that can influence teachers' thinking and practice: one of these is teachers' epistemological beliefs. Thompson (1984, 1992), who explored the epistemological beliefs held by three junior high school mathematics teachers, found that there are consistencies between teachers' professed beliefs about mathematics and in the ways they typically presented the content in practice. What was concluded was the assumption that teachers' epistemological beliefs may provide a guide to classroom instruction and thus be interrelated with beliefs about the teaching and learning process. Similar conclusions were reached by Brickhouse (1990) and Glasson and Lallik (1993) arguing that teachers' beliefs could have an impact on the learning process itself.

Teachers' beliefs could also influence the uptake of professional development programmes (Kettle & Sellars, 1996). It is in this context that beliefs could be used to explain why some teachers are more willing than others to change their practice. Prawat (1992: 357) notes that in order for teachers to change their beliefs they should go through three steps. First of all they should be dissatisfied with their own beliefs in some way, then they should find new alternatives in extending their understanding of situations and finally they should find a way to connect their new beliefs with their previous ones. This is the case in many professional development programmes in which teachers experience tensions as they have to accommodate new ideas into their belief system.

A growing body of literature (Munby 1984, Richardson et al. 1991, Schumm et al. 1994) suggests that professional development initiatives need to take into consideration teachers' beliefs as they could influence their perceptions and judgments and, in effect, their behaviour in the classroom. It seems that teachers hold implicit theories about their students, teaching responsibilities and their subject matter, which in turn influence their attitudes to their teaching practices and teacher education. Hargreaves (1994) believes that the teacher is the key for school change and improvement, as teachers are not just delivering the curriculum to their students. It is their beliefs and practices that influence and shape the learning that takes place in their classrooms.

It is possible that when the beliefs and values that underpin a particular programme or curriculum change are different from those of the teachers involved, then the process of change can be very slow and in many cases ineffective (Richardson, 1992; Tillema,



1994; Hunsaker & Johnston, 1992). This was evident in the introduction of 'oracy' (spoken English) into the secondary English curriculum in Britain, which previously was not a compulsory part of the English syllabus. According to Barnes (1992) the implementation of this change in the curriculum was not successful due to the differences between the beliefs held by the teachers and those of the developers. It was also a result of the subject-oriented approach to teaching in high schools where language is the responsibility of English teachers and not of other departments. In primary education, however, the project was successfully implemented because teachers' beliefs were consistent with those of the project that both speaking and writing are part of the learning process. Similarly Rich (1990) argues that in order for an innovation to be implemented and sustained effectively, teachers' beliefs should agree with the philosophy underpinning the innovation.

This is particularly relevant to this thesis as one of the major areas of potential was the difference between the official policy framework that introduced intercultural schools in order to adopt an intercultural approach to education and the approaches followed by teachers. Reasoning explaining such a possible contradiction could be the different beliefs held between the rhetoric behind the policy and the teachers. It also seems from the literature that teachers' implicit theories of children's learning, their students and their approaches to teaching have a definite influence on their practices. Policy change should permeate all layers of the schooling process and teachers' beliefs, in order to be effective.

### 3.4 Factors influencing teachers' beliefs

Two of the main factors that seem to influence teaching practices and beliefs are the local school culture and teachers' personal biographies. This section particularly relates to the culture of the school that seems to filter and frame teacher's beliefs and teacher's personal biographies that include significant episodes, experiences and dilemmas and seem to construct a person's belief system. The present thesis identifies and explores the local school culture and local context as two factors that have an influence on the schooling process.

#### 3.4.1 School culture

Whilst it can be argued that beliefs play a significant role in understanding teachers' actions and choices in the classroom, there is a growing body of research studies that recognises the influence of culture on teachers' beliefs. This is well summarised by Olson (1988: 19), who argues that 'what teachers tell us about their practice, is most fundamentally a reflection of their culture and cannot be properly understood without reference to that culture'. For McLaughlin (1993: 83) the term 'culture' is used to signify 'those collective interpretations of social and material experiences that are more or less shared by members of a group'. In that sense culture provides a specific framework through which people can view their lives and interpret the world around them. Within this framework of the socially constituted nature of culture, beliefs play a very significant role as they can determine what is considered important and valued by a specific group. As such, culture provides the members of a specific group with shared values, understandings and meanings to act upon.

Sergiovanni (1994) presents a theory that identifies schools as communities in relation to the notion of culture. As he states: 'this theory of [community] can help schools become places where relationships are family-like, where space and time resemble a neighbourhood, and where a code of values and ideas is shared. This theory, in other words, can help schools become communities by kinship of place and of mind' (Sergiovanni, 1994: xvi). Another model for looking at school cultures was developed by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) who portrayed it as an 'onion skin' model of culture that includes belief and value systems, norms and standards and patterns of behaviour. According to this model belief systems consist of assumptions and understandings held by the people in the context and influence the value systems. In a similar way, value systems, the things that are considered important for groups of people, influence norms and standards which in turn influence patterns of behaviour. For Skrtic (1991) schools are human constructions that are grounded in values and could be understood as a shared system of meaning that includes beliefs, standards of practice and behaviour. It is stated that the organisational culture of the schools not only gives an identity to its members, but also creates commitment to the organisation's mission and certain standards of behaviour (Greenberg and Baron, 2000).

Both Rosenholtz (1989) and Hargreaves (1994) identify categories that describe school cultures. Rosenholtz (1989, cited in Coles and Knowles) identifies two distinct categories of school cultures. These are:

- 'High consensus' or 'collaborative' schools that work towards commonly defined and shared goals.

- And ‘low consensus’ or ‘isolated’ schools that have individual goals and have no common purpose.

On the other hand Hargreaves (1993, cited in Coles and Knowles) identifies four categories. These include:

- ‘Fragmented individualism’ that describe schools that are isolated and conservative as well as there is lack of enthusiasm and need for change.
- ‘Balkanised’ in which teachers sometimes form groups defined by attitudes, professional goal, subject orientations and personal interests.
- ‘Contrived collegiality’ in which teachers work together but without the will to do so.
- And finally ‘collaborative’ that describe schools where there is a general agreement on educational values and goals. Teachers work together and they are supported by school administration.

Some literature uses the term school climate in a manner that seems to be similar to school culture. Freiberg and Stein (1999: 11), for example, perceived the term of school climate as ‘the quality of a school that creates healthy learning places; nurtures children’s and parents’ dreams and aspirations; stimulates teachers’ creativity and enthusiasm and elevates all of its members’. Similarly Hoyle (1986: 131) describes climate as a changing condition: ‘climate is essentially concerned with the quality of relationships between pupils, between pupils and teachers, between teachers and between head teachers and teachers... it follows that a school’s climate is not a fixed or permanent condition’.

The term 'organisation' is also sometimes used to describe culture and climate and it is rather described as the internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another. In his examination of cultures in organisations, Schein (1985) described them as deep, complex and difficult to understand. He argued that the concept of culture could be rooted in theories of group dynamics and evolves with new experiences. He notes that the term culture 'should be reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously and that define in a basic taken-for-granted fashion an organisation's view of itself and the environment' (Schein, 1985: 6).

He also highlights six helpful dimensions of the concept, which were later related to school contexts by Hopkins et al. (1994: 88), as follows:

- 'observed behavioural regularities' when teachers interact in a staffroom - the language they use and the rituals they establish;
- the 'norms' that evolve in working groups of teachers in terms of lesson planning or monitoring the progress of students;
- the 'dominant values' espoused by a school, its aims or 'mission statement';
- the 'philosophy' that, for example, guides the dominant approach to teaching and learning of particular subjects in a school;
- the 'rules of the game' that new teachers have to learn in order to get along in the school or their department;
- the 'feeling or climate' that is conveyed by the entrance hall to a school, or the way in which students' work is or is not displayed.

All these dimensions of the school culture were part of the investigation of this thesis, as they were considered important to the understanding of teaching practices. What I am arguing is that teachers were influenced by the school culture and norms that aimed to integrate 'foreign' children to the mainstream route of schooling, irrespective of their cultural and language background.

Hargreaves' (1995) analysis is very close to the definition given by Schein. In a paper he wrote about school cultures, he formulates two typologies in order to explore their relevance to school effectiveness and improvement. Specifically, he argues that:

*'Cultures have a reality-defining function ... [and] through culture people define reality and so make sense of themselves, their actions and their environment. A contemporary reality-defining function of culture is often a problem solving function inherited from the past: today's cultural form created to solve an emergent problem often becomes tomorrow's taken-for-granted recipe for dealing with matters shorn of the novelty'. (1995: 25)*

The question that still remains, however, is how school cultures have an impact on teaching practices. Educational research in the United Kingdom gave emphasis to the use of sociological perspectives and theory to explain certain phenomena (Hammersley, 1990). A number of studies have turned their focus to an examination of the impact of culture on schooling processes. These studies examined different aspects of school life, such as children's sub-cultures (e.g. Hargreaves, 1967; Lacey, 1970); the influence of social class (Hargreaves, 1967; Willis, 1977); and the role of

structures (Woods, 1979; Ball, 1981). During the 80s and 90s, this cultural perspective was further investigated by a number of studies that looked into the cultural life in schools. Pollard's (1985) study, for example, argues that cultures are products of people in schools and influence the actions and choices of both children and teachers. Rosenholtz (1989) who looked into teacher's relationships, argued that they are the major factor in creating different school cultures. The study argued that schools differ in their culture because of the influence that the relationships between teachers have. The study identifies two working cultures that separate schools in 'stuck' and 'moving' schools. The first refers to schools that are 'learning impoverished' and the second to 'learning enriched' places, where teachers work and learn together.

A similar study by Nias, Southworth and Yeomans (1989) attempted to examine the organisational culture of primary schools by looking into staff relationships. The researchers became participant observers in six primary schools and, as a result, they developed thick (detailed) descriptions of collaborative cultures and how they are presented in practice. What the research suggests is that collaborative cultures create a more effective learning and school environment, as well as that the role of an effective leadership is important for the development and good maintenance of these cultures. One of the issues that all these studies stressed so far is that workplace cultures influence school practices and that failure to recognise them can affect any change in the school setting.

School cultures could also be influenced by the 'teacher context' and the 'educational context' as Woods (1983) identifies. These terms are also discussed by Pollard (1985)

in which the educational context represents the real life situation in classrooms that involves the teacher's routine, interaction with children and class activities and the teacher context that represents idealism, what teachers would like to do. This thesis explores both of these contexts in order to understand how teachers approach 'foreign' children in their practices and how they implement an intercultural education in their teaching. It seems that in order for teachers' beliefs to be consistent with their practice, teachers have to reflect on their practices, as it is believed that teachers gain an awareness of their beliefs and assumptions and how these relate to their practice (Thompson, 1984). Through this reflective process teachers can develop coherent rationales for their beliefs and become more aware of the influences on their practices (Jackson, 1986).

Burney's (2001: 35-36) argument reflects this notion of starting to realise and view schools as learning communities in which all participants involved reflect on their practices and listen to the voices of children and their families.

*'In public schools, we need to think about learning communities in ways that deepen teaching and learning-deepen our knowledge of content, of each other as adults, and of our children and their families and communities. Everything we do needs to focus on the core of schooling: how children learn, how teachers teach, what gets taught to whom and how schools are organised to support teaching and learning. Informed dissent means having the capacity and the will to confront issues without condemning each other as people. It is listening to the voices of the very people with whom we might not*



*agree and hearing them in deep and powerful ways. It means becoming comfortable with conflict in order to check our perceptions, look at our biases, examine our inferences and begin to discuss exactly what we observe in classrooms, based on what we know. It means discussing our points of view honestly and making our practice public.'*

In order for schools to create strong positive cultures, they should develop a shared meaning of what is important, a shared ethos of learning and a commitment of helping children. Peterson and Deal (1998: 28) wrote about the complexity of creating such an environment in schools, since there are a number of factors that could influence the development of such a culture in a school. They argue that:

*'culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions and rituals that have built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shape how people think, feel and act in schools. This highly enduring web of influence binds the school together and makes it special. It is up to school leaders-principals, teachers and often parents to help identify, shape and maintain strong, positive, student-focused cultures. Without these supportive cultures, reforms will falter, staff morale and commitment will wither and student learning will slip'.*

This section on school culture is an important focus of this thesis, as many of the arguments presented, become influential in the analysis for the present research. The

empirical part of the research explores the school culture and the dimensions affecting it, identified by Pollard and Woods, as an important factor that influences teaching practices but also as an important aspect for understanding the schooling process of 'foreign' children.

### 3.4.2 Personal biographies

Engagement with this type of work helped me to understand the differences identified between mainstream and bilingual teachers in their teaching approaches in intercultural schools. Their personal experiences and cultural background had an influence on their practices and understanding of interculturalism. What is argued is that the experiences, episodes and dilemmas that are part of a teacher's personal biography, play a major role in the development of their beliefs and belief system (Kagan 1992, Anderson & Bird 1995, Holt-Reynolds 1992). These beliefs are developed over a long period of time in a process of enculturation and social construction and serve as a blueprint for teaching practices (Kagan 1992, McDiarmid 1994, Pajares 1992, Calderhead & Robson 1991).

Buchmann (1987: 161) refers to these experiences that teachers develop as the 'folkways of teaching' that he describes as 'ready-made recipes for action and interpretation that do not require testing or analysis while promising familiar and safe results'. What is suggested is that this 'folkways of teaching' give to prospective teachers' orientations that when combined with experiences in the school seem to have successful results. As Britzman (1986: 443) argued, prospective teachers bring with them not only their desire to teach but also their 'implicit institutional

biographies... which in turn, inform their knowledge of the students' world, of school culture and of curriculum. All this contributes to well worn and commonsensical images of the teachers' work'.

One way to identify those beliefs according to Goodman (1988) is through the images that teachers use. These images are described as significant events that were created in the past and influence any new information that a person receives. Calderhead and Robson (1991) argued that the images teachers have about their practice, are mainly a result of their experiences as pupils in school and that these affect their interpretation of events in the classroom, as well as their teaching practices. One of the participants in the study by Calderhead and Robson suggested that her beliefs and associated images about teaching came from one of her school teachers, who was tolerant of children's difficulties in the classroom and tried to make work activities interesting for them. The study revealed that this affected her practice as she followed a similar teaching philosophy. Similarly Johnson (1994), who investigated the emerging beliefs and instructional practices of pre-service second language teachers, found that images from prior experiences in formal language classrooms influenced their beliefs of themselves as teachers and their practices.

What I am arguing is that teachers' prior experiences shape their beliefs in a number of ways in regard to teaching, learning and social relations. What this suggests is that the images that teachers have of themselves, which have been formed from experiences and episodes within particular cultural settings, may also be reflected in the beliefs that have shaped the type of teachers they would like to be and the approaches to learning they will adopt. For Pajares (1992) this interrelated nature

between experiences and beliefs that constitute teachers orientations, may be the reason why it is difficult to change teachers' beliefs. As he notes 'evaluations of teaching and teachers that individuals make as children, survive nearly intact into adulthood and become stable judgments that do not change, even as teacher candidates grow into competent professionals' (Pajares, 1992: 332).

This difficulty in changing teachers' beliefs has been identified by researchers and could explain why pre-service teachers tend to leave their university programmes with the same beliefs they brought with them (Kagan, 1992) and why curriculum initiatives and in-service programmes can be unsuccessful (Fullan, 1992; Rich, 1990; Calgren, 1990).

As will become clear below, the analysis of the fieldwork carried out for this thesis will explore these differences between belief systems among mainstream and bilingual teachers and will relate them, not only as being a result of personal biographies and school culture but also as being a product of social and cultural influences. However as has been stressed, teachers' beliefs and practices do not occur in a vacuum, but rather, are influenced by other contextual factors, such as the national context. This is explored later on in the thesis. Based on Pollards' identification of the 'educational' and 'teacher' context, I similarly explore these factors in the intercultural schools under study, in an attempt to identify the approaches followed for the education of 'foreign' children by mainstream and bilingual teachers and how these act to marginalise 'foreign' children in their schooling.

The next chapter explores a number of methodological and theoretical orientations that informed and guided the present research. It also identifies and explores a number of ethical concerns and dilemmas that were part of the research process and were considered essential for the conduct of this research.

## 4. Research methodology and methods

### 4.1 Introduction

This empirical research, in ethnographic style, aims to uncover teachers' beliefs and practices through an in depth analysis of the everyday operation and schooling processes of intercultural schools in Thessaloniki, in relation to the education of 'foreign' children. In Chapter Two, I explored the context of the study by critically engaging with literature in the field of intercultural education, especially in the Greek context, as I was aiming not only to gain knowledge but also to identify limitations that I could further address or pursue in this thesis. I have identified the limitations in the Greek literature in relation to the education of 'foreign' children and the absence of specific studies situated in or focusing on intercultural schools. This provided a starting point and pretext for my research. What the literature seems to agree on is that in Greece, the educational practice treats the diversity of 'foreign' children as a type of deficiency that needs to be altered into a monocultural one.

Similarly, I have identified very few qualitative studies in terms of data collection and analysis that looked into the everyday schooling realities and teaching practices in intercultural schools in Greece. With this study, I aimed to fill in this gap by using an inductive approach to my research and a qualitative approach in the collection and analysis of data. This kind of approach is very much influenced by the processes and techniques of grounded theory, as many of my ideas developed during fieldwork and especially during the pilot study.

Creswell (1998) argues that qualitative research is justified when the enquiry includes questions of what or how, where exploration of an issue is desirable, in this case the schooling process of 'foreign' children, where a detailed view is required and where the natural setting of a phenomenon is accessible. In this particular study all these questions were part of the research process as I aimed to identify what type of education was offered to 'foreign' children in these settings and how their schooling processes advantaged or disadvantaged these children and how they treated diversity. This requires detailed descriptions of the settings under study, teachers' beliefs and practices rather than general descriptions of them.

After initial fieldwork in one of the intercultural schools in Thessaloniki, I incorporated all four of them in the main study to constitute the case of intercultural schooling in Thessaloniki as an appropriate setting to explore the relationship between national policies and practice in schools. My approach to research aimed to capture the richness of the data collected in the four schools under study and to address my research questions. Therefore the fieldwork involved prolonged stay in the settings under study and focused specifically on individual actors and their perceptions, as well as on particular events evident within the case. The presentation of the analysis aims to give readers a clearer view of the research process and the richness of the data collected (Merriam, 1998: 30-31).

The ethnographic approach was tested in the pilot study, which took place in November 2003. During this stage I was able to refine some of my initial ideas about data collection; for instance, about making observations and conducting interviews and also about the scope of the study. Data collection was spread over the 2003/2004

school year with multiple visits to each of the four schools. The methods used for the collection of the data included fieldnotes made during the year with non-participant observations that provided the basis for developing detailed descriptions of all eight bilingual teachers and their classrooms and six mainstream teachers. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with all bilingual teachers and the head teachers of all four intercultural schools. Informal discussions with teachers in the staffroom about specific incidents that were relevant to the study, for example, an undocumented belief that the school was vandalised by ‘foreigners’, were also noted and provided essential information about beliefs and school processes. Observations were carried out daily over a two month period for each of the three schools and this helped me to experience the reality of daily classroom life, as I was involved in the schools’ daily routine. Interviews were conducted after a number of observations and initial discussions with the teachers. This helped me to gain a better understanding of the organisation and routine of the schools and to base my discussions and interviews on real life incidents.

It was important to employ these methods in this study to attempt to better understand the nexus between school culture, teachers’ beliefs and practices and ‘foreign’ students learning at the classroom level. Accessing this kind of information, means a focus on ethnographic data collection methods, namely observations of and fieldnotes on the culture in which all interactions between teachers and children take place.

The section that follows will discuss theoretical influences and the suitability of the ethnographic approach in this particular study, as well as a number of key themes that were considered important for the completion of the fieldwork. The following issues



are discussed: 1) suitability of ethnographic enquiry, 2) criticisms of ethnography, 3) ethnographic observation and recording, 4) interviewing, 5) ethical considerations.

#### **4.2 Theoretical orientations**

All social research is guided by theoretical frameworks that are influenced by the researcher's beliefs about the world and how it should be studied or understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The theoretical framework I have adopted in this study reflects my own worldview that influenced the way I conducted this study at every stage, during the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. It is commonly stated that there are three basic forms of educational research, the positivist, the interpretive and the critical. The present research adopted an interpretative approach as it looked for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the world (Crotty, 1998). This approach was used as I was aiming to explore the meaning of the participants' beliefs and practices in the intercultural educational settings, the school culture and their relation to the intercultural ideology (explored in Chapter Two) posed by the policy framework. The purpose of this kind of research is to advance knowledge by describing and interpreting the phenomena under study, in an attempt to understand the meaning other people place on these phenomena. Ethnographic interpretation is a search for complex knowledge of a particular event and for the possibility of developing theoretical insights and developing a grounded theory for the context. As such, the intention of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study. However, it is possible for the conclusions reached in this thesis to apply to other educational institutions as well, if other researchers were to adopt similar theoretical and methodological approaches.

Teachers' beliefs and practices reflect the wider cultural and political context in which teachers are working. An ethnographic approach was considered the most appropriate to answer the research questions posed at the introduction of this thesis, as it provides both an understanding of the macro context of the study by examining the educational policies as culturally and politically derived that framed the operation of intercultural schools in Greece and the micro context of analysis that includes the contextualisation of these policies in practice. One of the starting theoretical points in this study was that teachers constructed their own meanings (Ball, 1993; Woods, 1996) that they brought with them in the classroom. This included their personal beliefs and values that had been shaped over their life's course and influenced their practices and the ways in which they gave meaning to different incidents. I was conscious that the participants were not just passive products of their social world, but active agents of it. As such, the present study was very much influenced by the theories of symbolic interactionism.

Symbolic interactionism is an interpretative approach that focuses on the ways in which people interact, use symbols to carry their meanings and interpret the world around them (Schwandt, 1994). It also proposes that although each person has their own personal history, they are also part of a community and share a number of symbols like expressions, rituals, gestures and most importantly language. The researcher who adopts such a perspective, places primary importance on the social meanings people give to the world around them and their interpretations of it. As the primary source of data in this research were teachers and data collected while on-site, such a perspective seemed to be the most suitable, as it was mainly concerned with

identifying teachers' understandings and definitions of intercultural education and interpreting these in the context of wider influences.

I realised that only through every day interaction and dialogue with the participants themselves could I become aware of their personal beliefs and practices in the intercultural settings. Some of their responses, for example, focused on their understanding of bilingualism and issues affecting their practices or about the role of the intercultural school. Even though the study initially focused on individual practices and beliefs, it became evident after the end of the pilot study that the 'national' context penetrated and influenced the whole educational process, including teachers' beliefs and practices. The notion of the 'national' context is used in this thesis as an explanatory theoretical concept for understanding the educational homogeneity of the schools under study. Broadfoot et al. (1985) identified three key interrelated aspects that have a direct impact on teaching practices and children's learning and contribute to the creation and maintenance of educational homogeneity within a specific context. These aspects are the dominant ideological traditions and beliefs, the educational policies and priorities, and finally the institutional infrastructure (school settings). These influences will prevail throughout the analysis of the data and are also part of the analysis. Teaching practices and beliefs were influenced by ideologies, policies and school culture.

### **4.3 Qualitative approach**

The methodological orientation of the study is set within the qualitative research paradigm and more specifically takes a 'naturalistic inquiry' approach. This kind of

orientation to research involves focused and prolonged observation, recording, analysis and sustained reflection on the research process to achieve its trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 187-188) summarise the nature of this approach:

*Naturalistic inquiry is always carried out, logically enough in a natural setting, since context is so heavily implicated in meaning. Such a contextual inquiry demands a human as instrument, one fully adaptive to the indeterminate situation that will be encountered. The human as instrument builds on his or her tacit knowledge and uses methods that are appropriate to the humanly implemented inquiry: interviews, observations, document analysis, unobtrusive clues and the like.*

Qualitative research is more broadly defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as any research in which findings are not a result of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Within this broad qualitative or naturalistic paradigm there are many approaches that could be adopted. In this particular research, I have adopted an 'ethnographic' approach as it was considered the most appropriate to achieve the purpose of this study.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) identified five key elements of a qualitative approach: the researcher as the key instrument in the whole research process and a natural setting as a direct source of data; descriptive data; research is concerned not only with the outcome or product of study but also with the process; an inductive analysis of the

data; and meaning as an essential element to this approach. This study incorporates all five of these key elements of qualitative research, as it had as a natural setting the intercultural schools in Thessaloniki and a major part of the study was the time spent in each one of the schools and the observations collected by me as the researcher, in order to gain an understanding of the participants and their culture. Data were descriptive in nature and came from interviews, transcripts, fieldnotes, observations and reflections. I was able to record various communications and practices through which I gained rich, descriptive data. I also gave emphasis to learning through the process of research. Before any interpretations could be made, the analysis of the data went through many phases. This was mainly because there was not a hypothesis to be tested. Data were collected, analysed and interpreted, so there was a bottom up approach. Data were also collected by a variety of means to allow for triangulation and the time spent on site was extended over a school year, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' 'meaning'.

#### 4.3.1 Ethnographic Inquiry

The primary aim of the ethnographic fieldwork for this study was to investigate the teaching practices in intercultural schools in Thessaloniki and their schooling processes. As a result, I had to immerse myself in the school culture, norms and routines in order to understand the structural processes and interactions that took place in the school thus my data collection methods were relatively unstructured and data were collected from a range of sources. My main data collection methods involved observations of teaching practices, routines and school organisation and interviews

with key personnel such as head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers. I also examined school policies and documents that were related to intercultural education.

Ethnography in education can be seen as research in educational institutions that is based on participant observations or everyday recordings of life in the settings under study (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995). In this study, however, I am following a non-participant approach with respect to work in the classroom, as it is not permitted by Greek law for researchers to participate in any way in the teaching process. The present research is ethnographic in style as it involves immersion in and detailed engagement with day to day practice in the classroom. It was chosen as the research approach in order to gain an 'emic' perspective (Agar, 1986; Fetterman, 1989) of teachers' perceptions and practices.

As a qualitative research approach rooted in anthropology, ethnography allows the researcher to immerse himself/herself in the cultural lives of the participants in order to know their world from the inside, and understand the social phenomena involved in their everyday lives. One of the main tasks of the researcher is to capture the meanings that form a particular culture, as its participants understand it, to learn their use of language and to understand their behaviour. These understandings of cultural norms and meanings could later lead to the identification of relationships between the specific culture and wider social structures. It is believed that the values and institutions of any society have an 'internal logic of their own' and as a result could only be studied from inside by the 'immersion of the researcher in the society under study' (Seale, 1998: 218).

For me ethnography, coming from the Greek word 'ethnographia' means a detailed study of a particular culture, in this thesis the case of intercultural schooling in Thessaloniki. It also means immersing myself in that particular culture by prolonged stay and interaction with members of that culture. For Taft (1988) ethnography is naturalistic inquiry with an emphasis on subjective realities. This is consistent with the philosophical assumptions of naturalism, which suggests that 'there exist multiple realities, which are, in the main, constructions existing in the minds of people' (Guba & Lincoln, 1988: 81).

The ethnographer not only observes and records what is seen, aspiring towards what Geertz (1973) terms 'thick description' of data, but also becomes intensively involved in ongoing processes of analysis, interpretation and explanation. This was also the case in the present research as it was mainly exploratory in nature and was seeking to generate theory from data. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) this kind of theory is grounded in the social activity it aims to explain. Thick description also provides the means for the generation of new questions and theories that are grounded in empirical data, as it is primarily an inductive method.

As stated above, the approach of this study can be described as an 'emic' one, as it aims to capture the 'subjective meanings placed on situations by participants' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000: 139). It also challenges the positivistic view that an objective reality exists independent of the researcher. I have been influenced by a more post-modern kind of thinking that is more associated with relativism rather than realism. Most post-modern thinkers argue that 'for any issue or investigation there is a plurality of narratives, a multiplicity of language games, and a diversity of forms of

knowledge' (Hatcher, 1995). I accepted during this study that it is people (informants, myself and others) who construct the social world 'both through their interpretations of it and through the actions based on those interpretations' (Hammersley, 1995: 43-4).

Massey and Walford (1998) identify seven core elements in a study, in order to be termed ethnographic (Appendix 8, elements of ethnography). These elements are useful in constructing, as well as reflecting on, the research presented here. The study was mainly concerned with culture and the investigative processes constructed, in order to observe and understand this particular culture in the setting in which it occurred. The natural settings that provided the main source of data were the four intercultural schools and the teaching staff working in these schools. A major part of this study was the time spent on site, in order to gain an understanding of the culture and the participants themselves. Concerning the 'descriptive' nature of my data, this was a result of my daily recordings of what was said and observed in the settings under study. Daily observation allowed me to have access to valuable knowledge and information that could have otherwise been ignored. These included aspects of communication or behaviour that teachers expressed or showed or even in some cases the tone of their voices, their interactions in the setting, the culture of schools and the symbols or use of space in the school.

The study followed an inductive approach to the analysis of the data, as it did not start out with a theory that needed to be proved or disproved, but rather a set of questions and ideas began to emerge after the end of the pilot work. Data went through many phases of analysis before any conclusions could be drawn and new meaning was



given to many pieces of information after further analysis and links with other research or bits of information. Throughout the data collection there was a constant dialogue with the participants and personal reflection on what was observed. My overall goal and what best describes this aspect of the study, was the intention to gain an understanding of the specific culture and the meanings constructed by the teachers, who interacted within that culture.

#### 4.3.2 Criticisms of ethnographic inquiry

One of the main criticisms of ethnographic research is that it produces a weak basis for generalisations (external validity) to be made. It is often the case that many people consider the applicability of data coming from ethnographic or other qualitative studies to other cases. This was also one of my main concerns at the beginning of this study, as this was the first time I was entering such an unknown territory that required prolonged stay and immersion in a culture, a different genre of writing and a journey of continuous self reflection.

However there should be a distinction between internal validity and external validity. The former refers to the precision of the account being presented and the latter refers to the generalisation to other cases. Goetz and LeCompte (1984: 221) describe the high internal validity present in ethnographic research. They argue that the use of participant observation gives the 'opportunity for continual data analysis and comparison to refine constructs and to ensure the match between scientific categories and participant reality'. They also argue that because ethnography is conducted in

natural settings it presents the life experiences of the participants more accurately than other forms of research.

Moreover, Taft (1988: 61) describes validity as the ‘quality of the conclusions and the processes through which these were reached’, and depends on ‘the particular criterion of truth that is adopted’. He is arguing that the most appropriate criterion for ethnographic research is credibility that depends on the accuracy of the data and the way in which the study is communicated to all the participants. In this particular study, even though I was very sensitive to and understanding of the teaching practices I was observing, I reflected on these observations with the teachers themselves and initiated further discussion.

Concerning external validity, it should be noted that the aim of ethnographic research is not to make broad generalisations coming from the data gathered. However ethnography could apply to other cases, not necessarily through numbers or frequencies, but through the theory that is developed over time. The use of ‘thick description’ can improve the generalisability of a study, by applying to other cases as well, but it depends, not only on the detailed description of a phenomenon, but also on the social relations that underpin it. This study explored the particular context of four intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki, in order to both understand the dynamics of this context, and to understand how intercultural education policies relate to practice and how teaching practices dealt with diversity. It attempted to understand the schooling process of ‘foreign’ children in that intercultural context.

Another widely held criticism of ethnography is that ethnographic observations and interviewing are very unstructured and subjective, and as a result, it is very unlikely to replicate the findings of a study. Replicability, however, is not mainly concerned with exploratory studies like the present one, but rather with experimental studies. Hammersley's (1998) counter argument to this issue suggests that all knowledge should be understood as cultural and personal and relate to social background and circumstances. As a result the triangulation of data from a number of different sources should be used to improve and strengthen the outcomes of the study. For that reason I did manage to gather data from a range of sources, as well as to include all four intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki in order to identify patterns and make the arguments reached more valid for the case of the intercultural schools in Thessaloniki.

Another widely held criticism of ethnographic enquiries is that they lack scientific rigour and are subjective as the researcher is the main research tool (see Hammersley, 1998). Hertz (1997) addresses the issue of the self as the main research tool and argues that researchers must become more aware of how their own positions and interests affect the research process in order to produce more valid texts and research conclusions. The purpose of ethnographic research is not to produce an objective or value free account of the phenomenon under study as it cannot provide standardised results. This is argued by Ward-Schofield (1993: 202) who states that:

*'Qualitative research is very much influenced by the researcher's individual attributes and perspectives. The goal is not to produce a standardised set of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced.'*

*Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of the situation'.*

For that reason it is really important for researchers to continuously reflect at all stages of the research process, including data analysis, in order to improve the validity of the research itself as well as to better understand the data and establish relationships with the theoretical framework. This term 'reflexivity' refers to the researcher's conscious self-understanding of the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). A key issue is to inform the reader of the research stages, pre-conceptions and main elements of the conceptual framework brought to fieldwork and analysis.

In this study, I tried to be reflexive as much as possible by continually checking the interview and observational data, as well as reflecting on my fieldnotes. For Thomas (1993: 39) analysing fieldnotes from interviews is important as the interviewer's style of questioning and the prompts he/she makes can influence the participants' discourse. I also attempted to reflect on my own research values and the ways in which they could influence teachers' responses. This was achieved by encouraging the participants to ask questions or make comments about the study and also relying on their involvement in the study by giving them voice to explain and give meaning to a number of issues about which I needed further explanation. Geertz (1973) also argues that in order to accomplish thick description and to gain an understanding of the insiders' perspective, the researcher should carefully consider issues of reflexivity and voice so that both the data gathering process and the data analysis are inclusive of all those involved in the research process. In practice, however, it was not possible to

include the participants in the analysis of the data, as this took place after the end of the fieldwork. Participants, however, were part of the process during my stay in the schools and reflected on or added new ideas each day.

Similarly Helen Callaway (1992: 33) provides a perspective on reflexivity and its place in research. She argues that:

*'often condemned as apolitical, reflexivity, on the contrary, can be seen as opening the way to a more radical consciousness of self in facing the political dimensions of fieldwork and constructing knowledge. Other factors intersecting with gender - such as nationality, race, ethnicity, class and age - also affect the anthropologist's field interaction and textual strategies. Reflexivity becomes a continuing mode of self-analysis and political awareness'.*

The issue of reflexivity in ethnographic research, which encouraged researchers to include in the research process observations about their interactions with their participants, arose from post-modern ethnographers' questioning their traditional theoretical and methodological assumptions. This started from a growing scepticism about established theoretical metanarratives that encouraged those in the social sciences to find new ways of expression (see for instance, Lyotard 1984). Similarly French poststructuralists such as Derrida (1976) questioned the relationship between text and author and added to this a growing awareness of textual interpretation and authorship. It is clearly not totally possible to remove the author's voice from the text he/she produces, as the production of a transparent, unmediated account is rather a

utopia. Rather what is desired is a coherent account of the research conducted during all stages of the research process.

Geertz (1973: 9) also expressed his concerns about the position of the author. He argued that 'what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to'. Similarly Fontana (1994) believed that in many cases the researchers write about their feelings and the challenges they meet in the fieldwork and forget to write about the culture they intended to study. I was faced with similar challenges and dilemmas at the beginning of this study, during the initial fieldwork that was part of the pilot study. During the pilot work I was very much preoccupied with the problems of doing fieldwork and collecting the data and not with the actual focus of my study. By reflecting on this initial stage of the work I was able to narrow down my focus and develop the research further. By direct observations of the mainstream and bilingual classrooms I was able to identify that the intercultural provision of the schools was only available in the bilingual classrooms and that the power asymmetries between mainstream and bilingual teachers affected their practices. A number of themes and questions started to emerge during this stage and this helped me to sharpen and refine my theoretical framework.

It is argued that reporting ethnography is a separate task from doing ethnography as there are different styles of reporting and writing an ethnographic account (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fisher, 1986). Geertz stresses the importance of the ethnographer's writing ability to the validity of the account produced and its ability to convince the reader. While Geertz recognises the power of the author when writing an

account, postmodernists are critical of it. They are more concerned with the legitimacy with which the ethnographers can use their understandings of a particular culture as being the same as that of its participants. For this reason Crapanzano (1986) believes that it is important to minimise the author's voice in the text and give voice to the actual members of that culture. Even though I am critical of the argument that it could be possible to remove the author's voice from the text, I have attempted to present teachers' voices, by presenting extracts of our discussions extensively in this thesis, even though these are still part of my analysis. It would not be possible to remove totally my influence and voice from the text nor to neutralise my interpretation of the data as I am the analyst and present my own account and analysis of the data I have collected in the field. I did, however, attempt to be as clear and explicit as possible about how this account was constructed and how the analysis was carried out.

#### 4.3.3 Ethnographic observation

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) believe that the basic task of the ethnographer is to participate overtly or covertly in the participants' daily lives by observing and listening to what is happening and being said and generally by asking questions. This suggests that one of the main ethnographic methods for data collection is observation. In that way the researcher becomes the primary research instrument who observes, listens and interacts with the other participants and also becomes involved with the field context.

This method is well summarised by Becker (1958: 652), who states that the observer:

*'...gathers data by participating in the daily life of the group or organisation he studies. He watches the people he is studying to see what situations they ordinarily meet and how they behave in them. He enters into conversation with some or all of the participants in these situations and discovers their interpretations of the events he has observed.'*

This also supports the view that the main instrument for data collection in this kind of research is the researcher himself or herself. An early discussion by Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) on the role of the observers, suggested that they could be formal or informal, concealed or revealed. The observer could have a dual role and participate either actively or passively. In the first instance, the observer interacts as much as possible with the individuals in the setting to gather data, while in the second case the observer interacts as little as possible.

However, one of the major tasks that the researchers have to follow in field research is to evaluate and reflect on their roles and to consider the influence of their presence on the data they collect (Burgess, 1982: 46). Researchers have to consider the influence they may have in the setting in which they work, the influence their personal relationship with the informants could have on their perceptions and analysis of the data and they also have to consider how their personal attributes (age, sex, social class, ethnicity, speech) can affect the research. Another theme for the researcher to consider is the dual role of being both an insider, as well as an outsider, in the research setting. For Powdermaker (1966: 9) this is at the heart of the observation



method – involvement and detachment. This dual role can help the researcher with the data collection, from being over-identified with the research group and from having problems of over-rapport.

These issues were considered during data collection at different stages. For example I had to be very careful with my word selection when speaking with teachers, as sensitive issues such as their practices came under discussion. I was also aware that my own personal characteristics, such as my social class, could have an impact on them and my interpretations of events. I could not overlook, for example, that I am member of the ‘same’ culture that I was trying to examine and analyse, but also being brought up in a middle class family. I had to be vigilant not to impose my own experiences of schooling and not to be critical of those intercultural settings that were directed at working class families and immigrant children who came to Greece with their families to find a better future.

The extent to which it is possible for a researcher to become a full participant depends partly on the nature of the setting being observed. In this particular research it would not have been possible to become a full participant by working and being a member of staff or even volunteer to help with school tasks, as this was not allowed due to the state status of the schools under study. Not being able to participate actively in the school life meant that I had to spend as much time as possible in each of these settings, in order to develop an insider's view of what was happening and provide detailed descriptions of life at school and the practices adopted.

After returning from each session in the school, I wrote detailed notes of anything that happened. These included descriptions of people, objects, events, activities and conversations. I also included in the fieldnotes ideas, questions, reflections and patterns that started to emerge from the data. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 107) define fieldnotes as ‘the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study’. Mostly these notes were written at the end of the day or on-site when I was alone. All of my sessions in each school lasted for a full school day and in many instances I attended special events and joined staff for coffee in the staff-room or after school by invitation. I gained much insightful information on each school by simply being there, listening and observing. As Stenhouse (1973: 8) believes ‘it is by taking part in the communication system of a group that one learns about the culture’.

I aimed from the beginning to be part of that social interaction and gain valuable information from the communications that occurred between teachers. My fieldnotes were very critical of the school environment at the beginning and I made reflections on them in an attempt to understand my own biases in making sense of the school environment. I did, however, write a reflective section during the pilot work that helped me to identify issues that needed further investigation. Mainly my notes included descriptions of the settings, portraits of the participants and reconstructions of my dialogues with teachers. In many cases the notes focused on relationships and interactions rather than individuals.

In many cases I included in my fieldnotes informal conversations I had with teachers in my daily interactions, as well as conversations observed between staff members.

These conversations gave me insight into the experiences and understandings of the teachers, as well as into school routines. This information was used in the data section as direct quotations, to illustrate the emergent analysis of teachers' beliefs and practices and to show the breadth and quality of the information collected. This could only be possible by being present in the school settings for an extended period of time.

During the pilot study I developed a number of themes that were explored further in the main study. The purpose of the pilot stage of research process was to narrow down my research focus and refine my methodological framework. My observations were thus not totally unstructured in the main study, as I had actually conducted some initial planning that directed my thinking, otherwise the flow of data would have been immense. An index of observational themes that directed the collection of my initial observations can be found in the appendices (Appendix 2, observational index). I had focused specifically on the recording of the interactions between the bilingual teachers and 'foreign' children, as this was the only time in the school programme that an intercultural approach was identified. This meant observing the induction classes for a prolonged period of time. I looked at the teaching styles, the content of the lesson, the books they used, the environment in which the lessons took place and at certain points I recorded children's comments or expressions that I thought were relevant to the teaching practice. Observations also included the school organisation and its provision, its philosophy and school programme and also the relationship between mainstream classrooms and the induction classes. These observations were collected by writing fieldnotes of everything that described the school settings, their

curriculum and local context and by collecting school documents or material from the local education authorities.

As Ball (1993: 32) argues, the ethnographer not only needs to be engaged with the world under study, but also to suspend preconceptions by explicitly stating them at the start of the research process. During the initial stages of this research, after writing down some preliminary observations from the first intercultural school, I reflected on this statement by Ball and I realised that I was very critical of the context I was observing. I became aware that at certain points, I wrote critically about the school provision and practices through not having considered other contextual factors that influenced or, in some cases, determined those practises. This was a useful exercise, as it helped me to understand that I should gain a better understanding of the culture I was observing, before making any statements about the practises adopted in those settings.

#### 4.3.4 Interviewing

Parts of the data have been collected through semi-structured interviews, mainly with the bilingual and mainstream teachers and the head teachers in all four intercultural schools. An interview schedule that was used as a guiding tool during the initial interviews is presented in the appendices (Appendix 3, interview schedule). Kvale (1996) defines qualitative research interviews as attempts to understand the world from the participants' points of view, by revealing the meaning of people's experiences. I conducted a number of interviews throughout the year either on a one to one basis or with two or three teachers together. Both techniques of having a semi-

structured interview, with some pre-determined questions and having more informal conversations on a daily basis were used.

The semi-structured interviews were mainly used with the head teachers to elicit information about school aims and procedures, school organisation, selection of children and educational policies. In these interviews I had prepared questions in an interview schedule as a guiding tool and then as the discussion progressed, I would ask more open-ended questions so that they could elaborate their views. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 113) state, open-ended questions in an interview act 'as triggers that stimulate the interviewee into talking about a particular broad area'. Interviews with the head teachers were all conducted in their offices, during school time and were tape-recorded.

I did manage to get richer data from teachers in our daily informal conversations. Through them I managed to gather a range of information about teachers' understandings of school processes and views about intercultural education as well as their own lives and work in the school. I was also noting everyday discussions between teachers, in the staffroom that in combination with the interviews and the observations collected, helped me to identify the different teaching ideologies. These were based on teachers' perceptions of their roles in the school, recruitment procedures and teaching styles. As a result, I was able to identify different teaching ideologies in the schools under study and different practices.

These 'on the run' interviews that were collected, were recorded as soon as possible in my fieldnotes while some of the semi-structured interviews were tape recorded.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 97), who comment on the different forms that interviews take, argue that:

*Qualitative interviews vary in the degree to which they are structured. Some interviews although relatively open-ended are focused around particular topics or may be guided by some general question. Even when an interview guide is employed, qualitative interviews offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview.*

In this particular study, latitude was part of the interview process. Interviews were not tightly structured and controlled, and in most cases, by letting teachers talk, several of the areas planned through the questions were covered naturally in the conversation. Questions were mainly used as a stimulus to help the conversation flow.

I adopted a flexible, non-representative (in the statistical sense) approach to sampling in line with an ethnographic and inductive approach. There are a number of sampling methods in ethnographic research (see Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). These include ‘convenience sampling’, which means interviewing anyone who is available; ‘critical case sampling’ which involves taking interviews from those who have certain characteristics; ‘unique case sampling’ for those who focus on cases that are rare in certain criteria; and ‘snowball sampling’ which involves using informants to recommend others or give you access to the next one. Glaser and Strauss (1967) also mention the ‘theoretical sampling’ that involves collecting data according to their relevance in different theoretical themes that emerge during the research process.

My approach was flexible, as it changed and evolved over time to fit the needs of the research and for that reason, I adopted a theoretical sampling approach. For example at the beginning of the study I interviewed almost anyone I could find, as my purpose was exploratory in nature. I had to understand the setting and how things worked there, as well as to get to know the people and understand their interpretations of events. However, as the research progressed I narrowed down my focus and I had to explore and examine different questions and themes. This meant that my mode of selection of interviewees and settings had to change over time and I had to use different techniques to collect my data, as there were various themes that emerged at later stages in the research.

Concerning the analysis of the interview data, I adopted the view presented by Alvesson et al. (1999) that interview accounts are just glimpses of the world, which are subjective and mediated by a number of factors. I am not claiming that what is presented in this thesis is the only objective reality but I am, rather, aiming to present some kind of explanation of events and practices through interpretation. I have considered the criticisms or concerns that new ethnographic research influenced by postmodernism has identified. For that reason I tried, as much as possible, to involve the participants in the research process as well as to include their voices in the final account.

#### **4.4 Ethical concerns**

For Dockrell (1988), ethical considerations in research are related to the subjects and agents of the research, to colleagues and to the research community. The main

subjects of this particular research were the teachers in the four schools I have attended and as a result I had to be sure that they were fully informed about the research itself and my role as a researcher and not as someone who came to criticise their work or spy on them. When I applied to the Ministry of Education for permission to continue with the study in these four schools, I was asked to explain my role in the classroom to children as well, but that obtaining permission from them and from their parents was not required as they were not the focus of research. Children were not part of the study as they were not interviewed or assessed in any way and as a result, permission from the parents was not required, especially since the schools themselves granted me permission. Many children however were curious about my presence in their classroom, especially since I usually sat with them and observed the lesson taking notes. I presented myself to the children as a teacher and researcher who was interested in collecting information about intercultural schools and the provisions available for them.

A number of key ethical issues emerged during the various stages of the fieldwork that were considered essential for the research. Informed consent was one of these issues as it involved informing participants about the overall purpose of the study and it gave them the right to withdraw at any time from the study. According to BERA (British Educational Research Association) 'participants in a research study have the right to be informed about the aims, purposes and likely publication of findings involved in the research and of potential consequences for participants, and to give their informed consent before participating in research'. During my fieldwork, I fully explained the purpose and aims of this study by giving a briefing on the project plan (Appendix 4) to all teachers. All of them recognised the value of such research, as it



would present their voices and the everyday challenges and dilemmas they had to overcome in their daily practice. Nevertheless there were instances in the field where teachers who were not participating in the study had discussions with other teachers who were my informants. Most of the time these interactions were really critical incidents but it was not possible to obtain informed consent. It is not possible in this kind of study to isolate your informants from their everyday interactions and routines. As a researcher I do recognise the danger of covert research, but I tried to minimise harm for all subjects by guaranteeing anonymity for all people involved in the study from the beginning.

Before any interview, I always reminded teachers, about the purpose of the study and that their anonymity would be assured at all times. I also asked for permission to tape record our conversations. Some of them were willing to be recorded and others felt more comfortable with note taking. I also informed all the participants that all the data were part of a PhD thesis and I reassured them that their names would not be revealed and that the data would not be given to anyone else. I had also expressed my belief that the study would provide a valuable insider's tale of the life of an intercultural school and, as a result, would contribute to a better understanding of the schooling processes and teaching practices in intercultural schools.

One of the most difficult decisions I had to consider during my fieldwork was whether I should express my views freely to teachers and head teachers or whether I should let them believe that by not expressing my views I accepted their own. That was a difficult task, as all the head teachers and many teachers asked my opinion on a number of issues that were related to the schooling processes, the teaching practices,

the school organisation and policies. I did explain to them my research interest in intercultural schools and research aims, as well as my own background and education. I tried not to challenge their views, especially during discussions and interviews, as my main aim was to present their own beliefs. There were instances where I did not agree with certain views or organisational issues in the school, but I tried to keep a low profile and not challenge those views or practices.

The issue of anonymity and confidentiality that was guaranteed to all informants was one of the critical points in this study and was considered extensively. Powney and Watts (1987: 182) believe that 'interviewing has always to be accompanied by assurances about anonymity and practical confidentiality'. As a result I used pseudonyms and removed all identifiers from interviews and observations (BSA, 2000). However some of the teachers gave me permission to use their real names if that was needed. Nonetheless in the data analysis and report of the findings none of the people involved in the study were identified by their real names. According to the British Sociological Association (2000) 'the identities and research records of those participating in research should be kept confidential whether or not an explicit pledge of confidentiality has been given'. The main concern in this study was that since there were only four intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki and all of them were included in the study it would be fairly easy to identify the institutions and the people involved. For that reason, school names were also concealed. Teachers were informed of this problematic situation but still granted me permission to continue with the study, as the Ministry of Education was aware of the study and the participating schools. According to the BERA ethical guidelines:

‘Informants and participants have a right to remain anonymous. This right should be respected when no clear understanding to the contrary has been reached. Researchers are responsible for taking appropriate precautions to protect the confidentiality of both participants and data. However, participants should also be made aware that in certain situations anonymity cannot be achieved.’

I have also ensured all four participating schools, as well as the Ministry of Education that granted me the permission to do the study and gave me access to those settings that I would report my findings back to them. It was decided that findings would be disseminated after the completion of the thesis by submitting a smaller report to the Ministry of Education and through published material in academic journals. This process of disseminating research to stakeholders is a standard procedure for PhD theses and I do not consider that it could possibly have an influence on the presentation and analysis of the data, as part of it will be presented to the Greek Ministry of Education which is responsible for the operation of these schools. The dissemination of information to all interested parties is ‘an integral part of research strategy aimed at testing on a continuous basis the relevance, accuracy and comprehensiveness of findings as they emerge within the process of inquiry’ (BERA, 1992). I have decided to name the city in which this study took place, as this is important for understanding the context within which the schools and teachers operate. I consider that this would not compromise the anonymity of the participants since I am not relating the real names of participants with specific schools.

#### 4.5 Research Process

Before the beginning of any practical work in the schools, I firstly had to be granted official permission from the Greek ministry of Education to continue with the study, by providing all the appropriate documentation that included aims and objectives of the study, time plan for completion, methodology, ethical considerations, school names, dissemination of findings after completion and contribution to the Greek educational context. The application was successful and I was granted permission to start work in the schools selected in October 2003. The Ministry then notified the selected schools about my presence there throughout the school year. I then had to arrange meetings with all four head teachers to present an outline of the study and prepare a time schedule of my presence in each setting. However this was only the beginning of a long process of gaining access to people and information, as I also had to make all the arrangements with individual teachers.

Throughout this process, I was very much influenced at that time by the writings of Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990), who argued that all social phenomena, incidents or patterns of human interaction, are not given, but could only be realised by the presence of a researcher in the field. What I found particularly interesting and relevant to this thesis was, first of all, that the researcher should start from the everyday experiences and life of the participants and secondly that through the interpretation of the data, the actual experiences should not be lost (in this thesis, teachers' voices). The pilot work which started immediately after the permission had been granted was the beginning of this process.

#### 4.5.1 Pilot study

The pilot work marked the beginning of the research process and unravelled all the anxieties, difficulties and challenges I was faced with at the beginning of this journey, as a neophyte ethnographer in the field. Everyday observations and discussions with the teachers helped me to gain insight into the schooling processes and teaching practices and develop an initial understanding of that particular context and the research process itself. More importantly the pilot study helped me to narrow down my general interest in the field of intercultural education as my understanding developed over time. Before entering the field, I had a general belief that the intercultural provision was available to all students. I then realised that it was only available to 'foreign' students in separate classes. This affected the focus of the study, as it was consequently directed mainly at bilingual teachers and their practices in reception classes. Everyday interactions with teachers and their children in the intercultural school caused me to question intercultural and multicultural educational policies and literature, teaching practices and processes. More importantly, as my understanding evolved over the month I stayed in that particular setting, I was able to structure my observations and interviews for the main study and be prepared to deal with the everyday realities of fieldwork. A detailed description or memoir of the pilot work can be found in the appendices (Appendix 5). It describes the initial stages of the research process, personal feelings during fieldwork, challenges and dilemmas.

#### 4.5.2 Main study

Two levels of analysis were identified in this thesis. The first level of analysis focused on providing detailed (thick) descriptions of the methods and approaches used by bilingual and mainstream teachers in intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki, to meet the needs of ‘foreign’ children. The second level of analysis attempted to identify the factors that seemed to influence and inform these kinds of practices and the culture of these school settings. The process described below was followed for all schools during fieldwork.

Data collected each day consisted of morning observations in the two bilingual classes (one Albanian speaking and one Russian speaking) and one mainstream classroom that included ‘foreign’ children. It should be noted that ‘foreign’ children were not present in all mainstream classes. This process of data collection involved taking detailed fieldnotes of the teacher’s interactions with the ‘foreign’ children, the provision, the resources, lesson organisation, children’s interactions with other peers, and the use of space. Observations were not structured, as this is the case in many ethnographic type of works, and their purpose was to understand the context of the school and teaching practices. Delamont (1992) suggests that a general scanning of the classroom for a short period of time would be useful for the researcher in order to later select specific incidents or phenomena to observe. This was the approach I followed at the beginning of the research, as I had to gain a greater understanding of the settings under study and the Greek educational policies that affected them. I firstly gained a sound understanding of the ways in which these four schools worked (their

daily routine) and the context that influenced the schools' organisation and I then focused on the teaching practices and beliefs about intercultural education.

As I was mainly concerned with bilingual teachers' beliefs and practices, I did consider the list of issues that Baker (1996: 278-281) provided in relation to bilingual children's second language acquisition. He argued that there are ten interlinking issues that affect the ways in which language teaching methods and approaches are arranged. These include: a theory of what constitutes a second language; a theory of how children and adults best learn a language; second language classroom goals; language syllabus; classroom activities; teacher's role; learner's role; materials and facilities available; forms of assessment; contexts of second language learning. These aspects became naturally part of the research process as the issue of second language learning was identified by all teachers as being of special importance and relevance to intercultural schools.

I also kept a detailed record of time and space reporting the school and room layouts, timing of events and speech recordings. I also kept notes of the people present in a room, classroom displays, hallway displays and the school resources. I spent classroom intervals in the staffroom, which, I believe, gave me access to very useful and important information that otherwise it would not have been possible to collect. This information revealed aspects of the school culture and its philosophy, teachers' views about intercultural education in Greece and teaching cultures. Interviews aimed to explore teachers' beliefs about intercultural education and few of them were tape-recorded. Rather than simply observing teaching practices, I also asked for teachers' understandings of specific events that took place in the classroom. Discussions with

the teachers took place during the break in the staffroom, the school library or the hallway. As I wanted to cause minimal distraction to the teachers' work, I arranged to speak to them during school time. Teachers, however, were more willing to speak about the problems that 'foreign' children experienced or the limitations of the system itself e.g. limited funding, limited personnel or materials and textbooks rather than their own practices.

In depth fieldnotes collected during the year, helped to uncover how beliefs were realised in everyday practice. This was achieved by observing the micro context of the school (school life, routines, and schooling processes) that was influenced by the macro situation (educational policies, Greek context) that informed the ways in which teachers were working. Interviews and observations were very closely related and inter-related, as observations helped me to understand how teachers and the intercultural school responded to the perceived needs of 'foreign' children and the interviews helped to uncover the working theories that seemed to inform these teaching practices. Fieldnotes were regularly reviewed and were coded to make possible links with other themes, patterns and further literature. This preliminary review of the data was the beginning of the analysis in the development of a conceptual framework.

The analysis of the macro context in which Greek teachers were working came from the analysis of the education policy for intercultural education, school handbooks and documents and head teachers' responses, concerning the provision for 'foreign' children. At the time of the research there was very little provision catering specifically for the needs of 'foreign' children and there was no written school policy



that recognised the importance of maintaining children's first language. Those issues are explored in Chapter Five of the thesis, which explores the context of the study and introduces the reader to the Greek educational context. Cummins's (1986: 24) theoretical framework for the empowerment of minority students was also considered as a tool for the analysis of the macro context. The first three elements in Cummins model include the cultural and linguistic incorporation, community participation and classroom pedagogy. Assessment was not explored as it was beyond the scope of the present research.

#### **4.6 Data analysis**

The analysis of the qualitative field data collected involved a difficult process of interpretation and categorisation of the data. The aim of the analysis was to understand the challenges and constraints as well as the influences on teaching in intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki. The analysis of the data in the chapters that follow is the beginning of an explanation of the teaching practices adopted in intercultural schools in Thessaloniki that were influenced by the national Greek educational context through their policies. The data presented include extracts from interviews and observations that identify the main features developed through the analysis of the schooling processes and practices adopted in these settings, for the education of 'foreign' children.

In order to begin to understand the data and generate some kind of theory inductively from the data, I initially used what Jones (1985) calls a process of cognitive mapping. In practice this meant creating a model of each teacher's beliefs in relation to

intercultural education in Greece and the teaching of 'foreign' children that was mapped directly with interview and conversational data from the field. Teachers gave their own explanatory theories about the influences on their practices, the everyday challenges and constraints they had to overcome when working with 'foreign' children and measures that should be adopted in the future in order for intercultural schools to work more efficiently and cater for the needs of these children more effectively. Teachers' beliefs described a theory of 'foreign' children's needs. Each interview or conversation with a teacher was transcribed and was linked with other contextual data, relevant theory or questions that needed further investigation. This mapping of ideas with fieldnotes and interview data provided the initial data analysis that also showed my own inferences and interpretation of the data. For Jones (1985) this mapping process helps, not only to break down the data, but also to retain the connection between the respondents' ideas. This was a daily and continuous process that required transcription of the data and reflection on them. Through this process I was able to identify areas that needed further investigation or questions that needed further inquiry.

A number of themes emerged during this process. They were related to the monocultural nature of the Greek school; the assimilationist approaches followed in the schooling process of 'foreign' children; the constraints that the schools faced, in terms of their funding and the ways that this affected their provision; the miscommunication between the school and the children's homes; and the absence of any teaching methodology that seemed to be in place in order to cater for the needs of these children. These were some of the themes that were identified during the preliminary stage of the analysis, which were later developed as time progressed and combined

with new ones. All these themes are presented in Chapters Six and Seven of the thesis and show the different discourses, approaches and power asymmetries between the mainstream and the bilingual teachers, and also that of the head teachers who expressed the overall school ethos and culture.

It became evident, however, when I started writing up the analysis of the data, that I needed a way to present teachers' voices in the thesis and not descriptive material mixed with my own definitions and interpretations of their views and the context that influenced their practices. It was decided then that actual extracts from interviews or discussions with the teachers would be necessary, in order to give credence to the interpretation of the data. As a result I considered each transcript in its own right and I identified patterns and themes in order to reveal teachers 'craft knowledge' that informed their practice. All the material was then blended together as patterns were identified and different categories began to emerge. These categories, which are separated into three sections, are identified and analysed in Chapter Six that follows.

Craft knowledge is defined by Brown and McIntyre (1989: 5) as:

*'that part of their professional knowledge which teachers acquire primarily through their practical experience in the classroom rather than their formal training, which guides their day-to-day actions in classroom, which is for the most part not articulated in words and which is brought to bear spontaneously, routinely and sometimes unconsciously on their teaching'.*

That was very evident in the present study as well, as all the teachers recognised that practical knowledge was very important when working with 'foreign' children.

Teachers had asked for the seminars that took place in the schools, to be more practical and to be based on successful practices rather than having a more theoretical orientation.

Similar methodological approaches adopted in this study have been used by other researchers as well. Freeman (1996) for example, used an inter-textual discourse analysis to analyse teacher interviews, written policy statements and curricular materials. The research questions were very similar to those in this research, but the context was quite different as the focus was on one particular school with a very coherent bilingual educational policy. This thesis, on the other hand, examines a very vague educational policy under which intercultural schools in Greece are based, a curriculum that is identical with all other mainstream schools in Greece, and a provision that was identified as an intercultural approach to education, the use of bilingual classes that were only directed to 'foreign' children.

Another study by Battens (1993) explored teachers' craft knowledge and formed a pedagogical profile for each teacher. The study analysed the unstructured interviews of twelve Australian teachers who talked about and reflected on the positive aspects of their work and used similar data collection techniques. My study, however, is different in the sense that teachers had to talk and reflect on a specific area of their teaching that related to 'foreign' children's education and bilingualism. I also needed to find an analytical method that would not only focus on the experiences of the teachers most of whom lacked specific knowledge of working with 'foreign' children, but also on the schooling process itself.

I have used a form of discourse analysis as an analytical method to uncover and understand teachers' tacit knowledge. Hargreaves (1986: 149) understands this as the 'complex common-sense knowledge of members of society that provide a language for speaking about that which is not normally spoken about and that teachers skills rest upon to a great extent'. For Gee (1999: 23) discourses are 'out in the world and history, as co-ordinations of people, places, times, actions, interactions, verbal and non-verbal expression, symbols, things, tools and technologies that betoken certain identities and associated activities'. He defines discourse as 'a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network' (Gee, 1999: 3). Discourses are social, 'the statement made, the words used and the meanings of the words used, depend on where and against what the statement is made' (Macdonell, 1987: 1). For that reason, any kind of theorising should be based on empirical evidence and focus on the way people act and speak, take part in joint discussions and social interactions. In this thesis I am identifying the discourses of head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers in relation to 'foreign' children's learning, intercultural schooling and second language learning.

Discourse in this thesis refers to a 'regulated practice which accounts for a number of statements' (Foucault, 1972: 80). In practice, this meant that teachers spoke about 'foreign' children's education, first language, culture and home influences in particular ways, describing a specific domain with its own vocabulary and sets of meanings. In such a regulated practice, the interactions taking place have definable characteristics and features that govern what you can say or not and in what ways. Discourse structures social relations, knowledge and power. The work reported in this

thesis relates to all of these as all interactions in the schools under study followed similar patterns and were governed by specific rules, knowledge was part of inclusive and exclusive processes and there were identifiable power hierarchies and differentials between the different agents in the schools, head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers.

Gee, in his theory of language, literacy and schooling identifies cultural models that he defines as 'everyday people's explanations or theories' (Gee, 1999: 43), which are rooted in the practices of socio-culturally defined groups of people. These cultural models are commonly unconscious and help to explain why words and concepts have different meanings for different groups of people. This particular thesis examines how teaching practices and beliefs operate within an intercultural setting that is characterised by the absence of a coherent policy for intercultural education and is contextualised within a framework that promotes monoculturalism and monolingualism.

Gee provides a list of questions (see Appendix 6) that researchers could apply to their data to help them identify cultural models; in this particular case to identify the cultural models that mainstream and bilingual teachers held about 'foreign' children in their schools. These questions could help the researcher understand the interplay of language and reality. Reality, for Gee, is represented by five interconnected aspects: a semiotic aspect (sign systems such as language, images, and gestures); an activity aspect (the specific social activity or activities in which participants are engaging); a material aspect (the time place, bodies, and objects present); a political aspect (distribution of 'social goods', such as power, status, and possessions in the

interaction); and a sociocultural aspect (the personal, social, and cultural knowledge, feelings, values, identities, and relationships relevant in the interaction).

All of these aspects constitute the ‘situation network’ and all of them are interrelated. Gee’s approach to discourse analysis proposes a method that attempts to link micro and macro aspects of the relationship between language and reality. To understand how these two are connected to construct reality, Gee provides questions that the researcher could pose to the data, in order to uncover the associations involved with language as it is used in context.

In practical terms I applied some of these questions to the interview data to identify the cultural models that teachers held in relation to intercultural education and the teaching of ‘foreign’ children. Gee’s questions, however, were used as a tool to assist during the analysis of the data. The questions that were applied to the interview data were:

- What are the situated meanings of some of the words and phrases that seem important in the situation?
- What kind of discourses are produced or reproduced in the specific context?
- What cultural models and sign systems (e.g. speech, writing, images, and gestures) seem to be in place?

These initial questions then led me to ask the central question and examine how teachers’ cultural models influenced their teaching practices. As I later identify in the thesis, teachers’ beliefs were not always in agreement with their practices.

- Are there any differences between the cultural models that affect teachers' beliefs and those that affect their practices?

By applying these questions to the interview data I was able to identify certain cultural models that teachers had in relation to the teaching of 'foreign' children. I was then able to identify the relationship between beliefs (what was said) and the practices (what was done) by also applying these questions to the observation data.

The data analysis chapters that follow (Chapter Five, Six and Seven) give an insight into the daily routine and life of intercultural schools in Thessaloniki. I specifically tried to understand and examine how schooling processes and teaching practices, were involved in the exclusion or inclusion of 'foreign' children from the educational process. Data resulted from detailed descriptions of observational data, interviews with head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers, and analysis of school policy documents. The interconnection and relationship between the data through this process of triangulation, added to the validity of the study.

The analysis of data has revealed a number of beliefs and ideas that teachers held for 'foreign' children, the operation of intercultural schools in Greece and intercultural education in general. There was a pattern of agreement among the beliefs expressed by mainstream teachers, but on the other hand a number of differences were identified with bilingual teachers, in terms of practices and beliefs.

In his analysis, Gee (1999: 69) speaks about master models that he defines as 'sets of associated cultural models that help shape and organise large and important aspects of



experience for particular groups of people'. The analysis of the interview transcripts both from mainstream and bilingual teachers has identified a master model that influenced teaching practices in relation to the teaching of 'foreign' children. This master model, which is explored later on in the thesis, relates to the way that teachers identified children's first language as a form of deficiency that hindered their progress at school.

This part of the thesis explored methodological and theoretical orientations that were adopted in this research. I have used an ethnographic approach that involved observations and interviews, to shed light on the complex processes of schooling. I aim to understand how the mechanisms operating within intercultural schools, teaching practices and beliefs position and construct 'foreign' children. I also attempt to understand how these processes are influenced and linked to wider cultural or social factors. I focus mainly on teachers' voices and practices and the ways they construct 'foreign' children's identities in the school. The study included all four intercultural schools in Thessaloniki, in order to make the arguments reached more valid, and also in an attempt to reveal how wider social influences - the Greek educational context in this case - had a major impact on the mainstreaming (followed similar routines to that of mainstream schools) of these settings. The analysis of the schools, however, is not comparative as this was not part of the study, but rather they are used as a case study with similar characteristics to intercultural schooling in Thessaloniki.

The next chapter introduces the reader to the intercultural setting by presenting their educational philosophy, organisation, curriculum and provision. Data for the analysis

presented in this chapter, were mainly collected through detailed observations of the settings, analysis of school documents and discussions with the head teachers, in an attempt to identify the culture of the intercultural school.

## **5. Intercultural schools in Thessaloniki: Organisation, educational philosophy and curriculum**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with an examination of school policies and entry requirements for ‘foreign’ children that all four intercultural schools in Thessaloniki had in place to accommodate the needs of these children. It also examines the organisation, curriculum and philosophy of intercultural schools that is based on ethnographic research developed through the analysis of fieldnotes, discussions with teachers and examination of school documents. As an example, I am presenting the case of one of the intercultural schools, in order to describe the local context in which these schools are based. However, in terms of social and cultural composition of the schools, I introduce all four of the school settings as they had different characteristics. I am not describing all four schools extensively, as it is not my intention to present similarities or differences between the schools, nor to make a comparative analysis between them. Rather I am aiming to present a case of intercultural schools in Thessaloniki, in terms of their schooling processes, teaching practices and beliefs.

Through this presentation of the organisation and philosophy of the intercultural schools, I am also aiming to identify the different approaches followed within intercultural schools, between the organisation of the mainstream classrooms and that of the bilingual classrooms. It was as if two different approaches were followed for the education of indigenous and ‘foreign’ children. These two different approaches were rather isolated from each other and not an integral approach within the intercultural school, directed to the education of all children.

## 5.2 Entry requirements, school composition and organisation

The existing legislative framework explored previously in the thesis suggests that educational services are provided to all 'foreign' children aged 6 to 15 (primary and lower secondary education) independently of their parents' legal status in Greece. According to article 40 of L. 2910/2001 'all foreign children living in Greece are obliged to attend compulsory education schools on the same basis as Greek nationals'. The same article regulates for free access for 'foreign' students to all forms of school life through common procedures. It also obliges the school administration to enrol immigrant or refugee children, even when the necessary documents are not satisfactory. At the same time, it gives these children the opportunity to have optional instruction in the mother tongue of their country of origin in the form of additional, extra-curricular student support activities and programmes.

There are three categories of children catered for by intercultural schools:

- Children whose parents are citizens of another state migrating to Greece in order to stay for a limited period of time or in order to settle down permanently, independently of their legal status (regular/irregular immigrants).
- Children whose parents (or at least one of them) are ethnic Greeks or Greek nationals living abroad and migrating from a third country to Greece (repatriated).
- Children whose parents are or have been asylum seekers and have been given refugee or humanitarian status by the Greek authorities, or are irregularly resident in Greece.

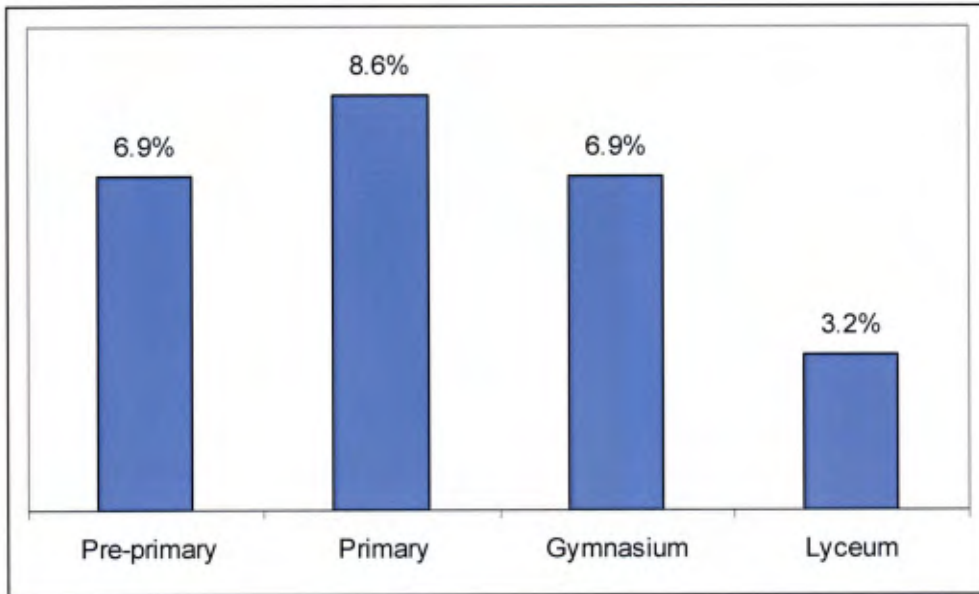
However, at the time I was present, none of the four intercultural schools in Thessaloniki enrolled refugee children; neither did they have in place specific policies

that would come in the form of special provision for this group only. The data presented below were part of a conference<sup>12</sup> that took place in Thessaloniki with all the intercultural schools being invited to participate. These were part of a general discussion about the context of immigration in Greece.

The main settlement areas where migrant families are located are related to their economic integration and this usually means metropolitan areas, like Athens and Thessaloniki. To date, the exact number of immigrant students in Greece has not been accurately recorded (Nikolaou, 2000), with many sources reporting different numbers for immigrant and repatriated students currently enrolled in elementary or secondary schools. Travasarou (2001) for example, suggested that immigrant and repatriated students comprised approximately 15% of the total school population. According to the latest evidence from IPODE (Gotovos & Markou, 2004) for the school year 2002/03, the percentage of 'foreign' children in primary schools was 8.6% (Figure, 1). Adding to this number the percentage of repatriated children as well, the total number of children coming from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds comprises the 10.6% (Figure, 2) of the total school population in primary education. The following figures visually represent the national picture for the presence of 'foreign' children, during all stages of the educational process, but also their dropout from primary to secondary education.

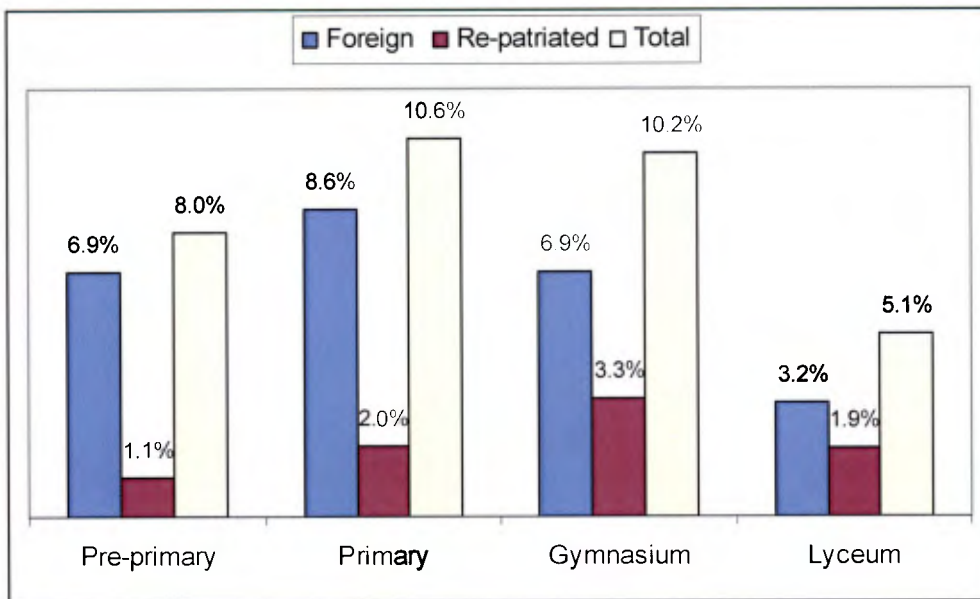
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<sup>12</sup> Conference for Intercultural Education, 2003, Thessaloniki: Office of primary education.



**Figure 1** Total percentage of 'foreign' children in each stage (2002/03)

*Source: Gotovos and Markou (2004)*



**Figure 2** Total percentage of 'foreign' and repatriated children in each stage (2002/03)

*Source: Gotovos and Markou (2004)*

Irrespective of the exact number of immigrant students, their arrival has brought to light several problems and difficulties associated with Greek schools and education in general. A large number of immigrant students are experiencing school failure and other school-related problems (Nikolaou, 2000). As Drettakis (2000) has pointed out, these students were immersed in a new language and culture without proper orientation, assessment of linguistic skills, academic instruction, and the necessary cross-cultural psychological services. Another problem that is closely related with the education of these children, is their high drop out rates from primary to secondary education, which is a mark that the Greek education system is failing those children.

In terms of organisation, intercultural schools have the same characteristics as all other mainstream schools in Greece. All mainstream schools in Greece are state schools and not self-governed. This means that, officially, they all have to follow the same curriculum and textbooks and adapt to the prevailing philosophy that is stated in the official policy framework. For this reason, I am presenting the analysis of the data from all four primary intercultural schools, as they all had a very similar organisational structure.

The curriculum of all schools in Greece, both state and private (including intercultural schools), is defined and mandated by the Greek Ministry of Education, and that applies to all schools nation-wide. The textbooks are approved by the Pedagogical Institute which is a central institution attached to the Ministry of Education. The Pedagogical Institute appoints *ad hoc* committees of people working in education, or academics who have the responsibility for composing and writing the textbooks for a specified subject area of the curriculum. Recently, the Ministry of Education

announced that in the future more than one textbook would be approved in each subject area, so that the teacher would have the possibility of choosing between two or three selected books. Textbooks are provided free of any charge to all students attending public schools.

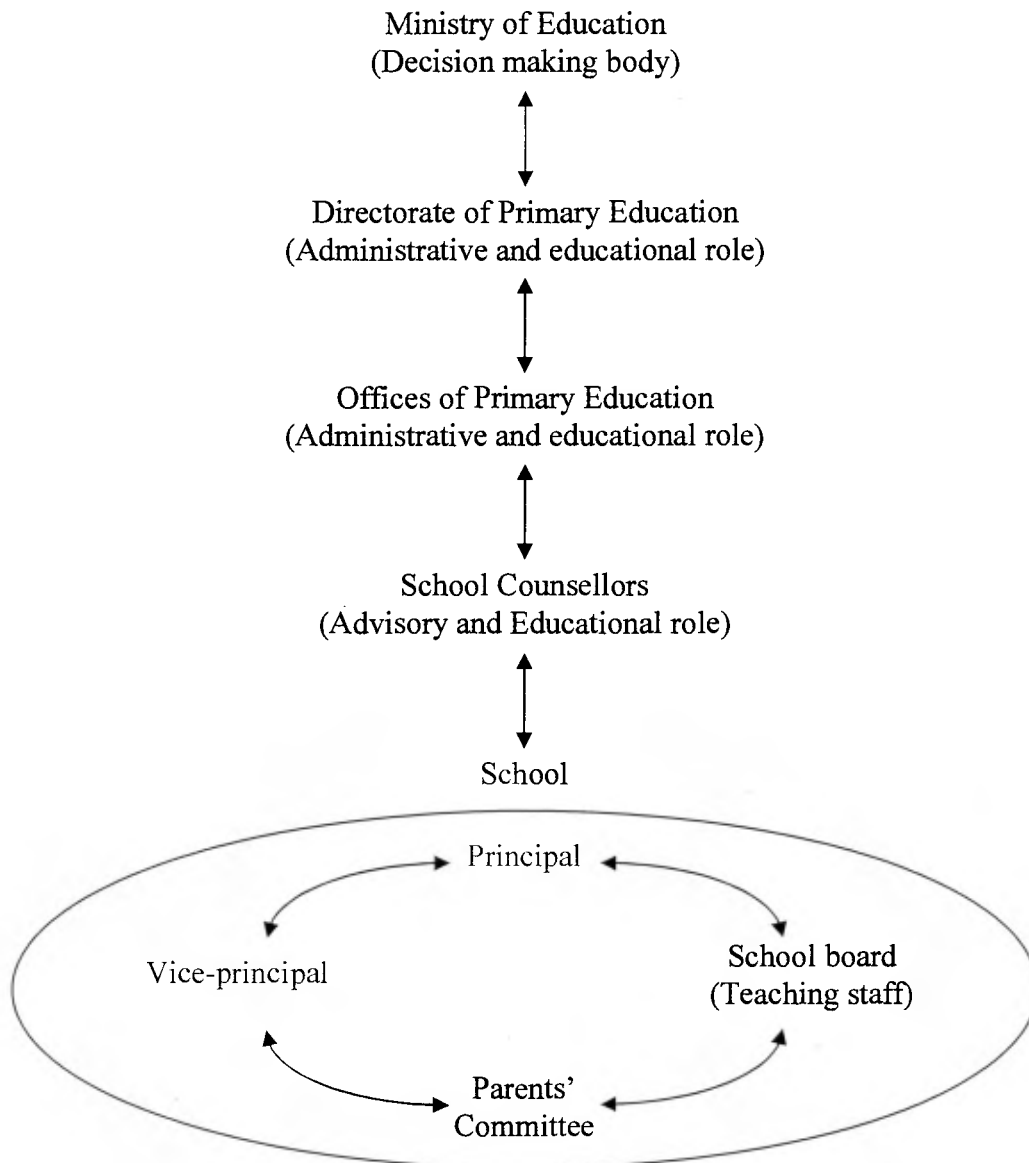
Textbooks for each subject are accompanied by a guidance book for teachers that gives them guidance and information about each theme of the book and highlights certain points that they could raise in the classroom. Although teachers are not restricted to limiting their teaching practice to the prescribed textbooks and are given the freedom to enrich the learning process by using a variety of other material, they are obliged to complete the prescribed curriculum within the school year. Because of this, teachers do not have the time to focus on the specific needs that children have. For example, children who are left behind or who have specific learning difficulties and require more attention from their teacher do not have the opportunity to catch up with their peers, because of teachers' tight time schedule. This is most recognisable in intercultural schools where bilingual children already have difficulties coping with the Greek language and their new schooling environment and they do not get the attention they need from their mainstream teacher to progress equally with the other children.

All four intercultural schools followed the same official curriculum, textbooks, organisation and provision for 'foreign' children. They provided bilingual classes that were only available to 'foreign' children for the intensive teaching of the Greek language. In terms of decision-making and the administration within schools, they all had the same structure and followed similar procedures. All primary state schools in Greece are governed by the principal, the vice-principal and the school board. The



school board consists of the teaching personnel and the president of the board, the head teacher. The school board meets regularly during the school year to discuss the implementation of the curriculum, the organisation of the school life, child protection issues and the schooling activities, as well as any significant issues. All schools, however, are regulated by the directorate of primary education (*dieuthinsi A/vathmias Ekpaideusis*), which is based in every prefecture and consists of offices of primary education that are based in different localities of the prefecture. Each office of primary education caters for the schools in its locality and allocates a school counsellor (inspector) to each school. Their role is mainly advisory but they also supervise the schooling processes and have to report any issues that affect the smooth operation of the school. Schools also have to report back any difficulties they experience, as the directorate needs to be aware of them in order to take the appropriate measures. These can include a number of issues such as staff shortages, limited funding, limited resources, and problems with the school accommodation.

However schools in Greece have very limited autonomy to develop their own initiatives, as any kind of deviation from the approved legitimate practice is not something that is allowed or applauded. This is part of the centralised process of the decision making, which suggests that the curriculum content, textbooks and policy formulation are all developed and disseminated by the Ministry of Education to all relevant bodies. It is for this reason that I included all four intercultural schools in the study, to present a case of intercultural schooling. The following chart represents the different layers of educational administration and decision-making and identifies the centralised nature of the educational system.



**Figure 3** Flowchart representing the flow of information between the layers constituting the administrative structure

### **5.3 The case of school D all day primary intercultural school**

In this section I present the case of the specific intercultural primary school, as an example of the schools attended. The selection of this school for more analytic description was something I had to consider and explain methodologically. As I argued previously, schools in Greece share similar characteristics, due to the centralised nature of the educational system and as such, there would be no point in describing all of them. Rather, by presenting one school from the case I aim to help the reader relate to and understand the context of study. I specifically selected this school, as all the head teachers described it as the most ‘representative’ of intercultural schooling, with a great deal of experience. All four schools, however, had a very similar organisational structure.

#### **5.3.1 School context**

The fourth school I had visited, is an intercultural all day primary school which is located in the western part of Thessaloniki. Data about the history of the local area and the school came from informal discussion with the head teacher and documents collected from the local education authority. The school belongs to a borough, which has a local history that makes it distinctive from other municipalities. The borough was established in 1924 by refugees who arrived from Asia Minor and other internal immigrants who had emigrated to the area. The majority of the people came from a small town located by the sea in Minor Asia the ‘Eleftherio’ in Smyrna. Other refugees coming from Eastern Thrace arrived in 1927-1928 and settled there. One of

the largest groups that also arrived in the borough, were the ‘Sarakatsanoi’<sup>13</sup>, numbering nowadays 6.000 and in the 90’s a number of repatriated Greeks. The borough kept the same name all these years, in memory of its native town in Smyrna.

The borough that is characterised by its large diversity of people and cultures, developed a programme in 2003 for the ‘sensitisation of children and the local community to issues of immigration’. The aim of the programme is to raise awareness, especially among children, about people coming from different socio-cultural backgrounds and to develop positive images and attitudes towards these groups. This shows an active engagement on the part of the borough, to raise awareness in the local community and to deal with issues of cultural diversity, as well as to find solutions that will lead to the harmonisation of the everyday relations in the community and also combat issues of xenophobia and racism.

During my initial discussion with the head teacher, I learned more about the history of the school and under what circumstances it was changed to an intercultural setting. Data came from fieldnotes based on the head teacher’s story. The school was firstly founded and opened during the school year 1983/4 with six classes in operation at that time. The school was accommodated in a rented building that was characterised by its very poor condition and could not guarantee the safety of the pupils. It remained in the same building until 1998, when it was finally decided to be accommodated in a new building, together with the 6<sup>th</sup> infant school and the 3<sup>rd</sup> secondary school. During the school year 1998/9 the school was upgraded to a twelve-class school and was also

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<sup>13</sup> Information about this particular group can be found in [www.sarakatsanos.gr](http://www.sarakatsanos.gr)

renamed as the 6<sup>th</sup> Intercultural All-day Primary School<sup>14</sup>. The reasons for the school's renaming, was mainly twofold. First of all because of the intake of pupils, as they mainly came from underprivileged groups and included a variety of 'foreign', refugee and Roma children, and secondly because a programme of intercultural education started in the school, in co-operation with IPODE (Institute for the Education of Repatriated and Intercultural Education). The programme ran in the school by bilingual teachers for 'foreign' and refugee children mainly from the former Soviet Union.

### 5.3.2 School population

Most of the children in this particular school came from underprivileged groups and from a working class background. The school was also characterised by its diversity, as it included 6.6% repatriated, 7.2% foreign and 6.6% Roma children together with indigenous children who comprised the 78% of the total school population. The total school population for the school year 2003/4 was 317 pupils. Among them twenty-one were repatriated Greeks, twenty-three foreign children, and twenty-one Roma. All these children experienced language difficulties and some of them had more serious learning difficulties. It was also very common that the parents of these children could not speak any Greek themselves and were unable to help their children at home. The table below shows the changes in the school population and its increase over the years.

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<sup>14</sup> All schools in Greece are numbered. This number is part of their official names.

School population						
School year	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Indigenous	67.5% (194)	71.4% (200)	79.6% (227)	78.7% (234)	77.96% (237)	78% (252)
Repatriated	23.6% (68)	18.5% (52)	11.9% (34)	9.42% (28)	8.2% (25)	6.6% (21)
'Foreign'	3.8% (11)	6.07% (17)	4.9% (14)	5.38% (16)	6.57% (20)	7.2% (23)
Roma	4.87% (14)	3.9% (11)	3.5% (10)	6.39% (19)	7.2% (22)	6.6% (21)
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>317</b>

For the school year 2003/4 the twenty-seven foreign children came from five different nationalities. The largest group came from Albania with twenty-one children, three came from Russia, one from Georgia, one from Armenia and one from Uzbekistan.

The three other intercultural schools had similar compositions in terms of nationalities. However, variations in the percentages of 'foreign' children were identified. For example, school A (described in more detail in the pilot study, see Appendix 5) was experiencing a decrease, in the overall number of 'foreign' pupils enrolled in the school. It had a percentage of 42% of 'foreign' and repatriated children of the total school population (204 pupils) in the school year 1997/8, but at the time I did my fieldwork this percentage has fallen to 18%. The reason for this was mainly the changing nature of the community with its regeneration plans that, as a result,

attracted more middle class families from the indigenous population and forced out lower working class families, as house prices were raised. The third school that I identify as school C shared similar characteristics with the school A. The local area was improving, the school was accommodated in a new building that was given to the school five years ago and there was a similar student composition.

Of particular interest in terms of pupil composition was the case of the intercultural school that I identify as school B. Seventy five per cent (75%) of the total school population were foreign and repatriated children. According to the head teacher, this carried the risk of isolating the school from the community and creating a ghetto environment, with negative effects for all children. However, as the head argued, he was not expecting this situation to change, because as there were increasing numbers of foreigners, Greek families were avoiding enrolling in this school. Even though these four schools showed variations in terms of their pupil composition, their organisation, provision and structure was similar. Moreover, the practices adopted and the schooling processes did not show any variations, based on my ethnographic analysis that was completed after the end of fieldwork.

### 5.3.3 School programme

I asked the head teacher to give me some more information about the intercultural programme and its aim. He described the aim of the intercultural programme as being twofold, to 'socially integrate foreign students and their families with respect to individual differences and their countries of origin and secondly to prepare students in

order to be able to deal with the multicultural reality and profit by it. This process is based on democratic social values and practices’.

He elaborated this by mentioning a number of methods that the school had in place to achieve its goals. These included: teachers training to raise awareness and ways to deal with cultural diversity; parent meetings to provide information and to provide an opportunity to discuss any arising issues; the school’s solidarity and understanding for ‘foreign’, refugee and Roma families; the emphasis the school placed on the freedom of multicultural activities through creative activities, during the extended school hours; and the school’s recognition of foreign children’s abilities and talents.

As the head teacher argued, the intercultural programme in place for ‘foreign’ children helped the children to have an easier transition in the mainstream classroom, as they did not experience great problems with language. As a result, teachers experienced fewer problems in their classrooms. The head teacher had also suggested that the communication bridges between the school and the children’s families had been improved compared to previous years that there was no such programme in place. However this progress did not seem to continue in secondary education, as there were very high drop rates in the transition from primary to secondary schools, especially among children coming from different cultural backgrounds. For the school year 2003/4, during the time of the fieldwork, the intercultural programme operated with two bilingual teachers, one Albanian and one Russian speaking.

The school also had in progress a programme that was organised by the University of Ioannina for the education of Roma children. It had started at the beginning of the



school year 2003/4 with a preparatory classroom that aimed to prepare these children for their integration in the mainstream. The lessons included in this class were similar to the ones included in the intercultural programme, as it involved language learning and subjects in which children were experiencing difficulties with the terminology, such as, for example, mathematics. All other subject areas were compulsory for all children and were taught in the mainstream classroom. Part of the teacher's role in this classroom was to assess children's educational level, as in many cases these children did not have a continuous educational background, and worked closely with the mainstream teacher to develop a plan of action that would meet children's needs. According to the head teacher, the attendance rate of these children was highly consistent and children's progress at school in mainstream subjects was good.

The school had an extended working timetable, as it operated as an all day school. The extended timetable started from 12:50 to 16:00 and all children could attend it, as it was not compulsory. All day schools were developed in order to offer high quality educational services and cater for children of working families. The curriculum of the all day programme was very flexible and it included supportive teaching in various curriculum subjects like language, mathematics and English, as well as a number of creative activities. These included a variety of artistic and athletic activities and games like theatrical games, video showings and computer games. Around one third of the total school population attended the extended timetable and these were mainly children with two working parents who had no other childcare option (involving, for instance, an adult family member such as a grandparent or older sibling). The other children finished schooling before that, as it was not compulsory to attend.

Even though all day schools were a good development in the Greek education and were supported by all stakeholders involved, it was believed that they were still lacking satisfactory funding that would improve both the educational resources and the schooling accommodation. One of the mainstream teachers, for example, commented that:

*'There is not a dining room with a proper canteen for children to sit down and enjoy their meal and this means that children have to bring their own food from their homes and eat it in their classrooms. The school also lacks other utility rooms like a proper library or an exercise hall that children could use for various activities like stretching and playing, especially during the winter time. The all day school is a good way forward as it offers great help for working families but there are many things to be done starting with more funding to improve the quality of education offered to children'.*

Another one suggested that:

*'It would probably be a better idea for foreign children to be taught by the bilingual teachers during the extended school hours. In that way they wouldn't have to leave their classrooms during the school day, to get the extra language support. I think also for the children it would be better, as they wouldn't feel stigmatised'.*

This was a common concern among all teachers, as they believed that it would be better for 'foreign' children to attend evening classes for language support and not during normal school hours. These were some of the teachers' thoughts regarding the extended school programme. All of them however agreed that funding was limited and it would not be possible to adequately support the provisions required for an all day school. However, during the time I was in the school, none of the 'foreign' children stayed after the compulsory school time. According to teachers, this was mainly because children had someone waiting for them in their homes and there was also a belief that some of these children might actually be working illegally, as they were under age or they were required to help their families at home. Teachers believed that, in some cases, children helped their families to learn the Greek language. Some teachers also reported that it would be a good idea to make some evening classes compulsory for these children.

The school has been involved in a new initiative, called 'children write and draw for children', developed by the European Educational Programme Socrates-Comenius 1. School D was one of the six European schools to participate in this programme. The initiative started on September of 2003 and would last for three years. Its overall objective was 'to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of school education, in particular by encouraging transnational co-operation between schools, contributing to the improved professional development of staff directly involved in the school education sector, and promoting the learning of languages and intercultural awareness'. During the first year of the programme, children learned about the uses of poetry and its different genres. Children then had to write their own poems and draw a related picture. At the end of the year, children selected the best poems and drawings

that were included in a book that each school developed, and were translated in a number of languages. With the help of the children, teachers translated the poems into Russian, German and English.

The participation of the school in this programme was described by teachers as being an important initiative undertaken by the head teacher and the school staff, which showed a common commitment and a shared vision to create links between the schools' microcosm and the wider community. It also showed the school's willingness to actively participate in a European project aiming to promote intercultural awareness and develop intercultural activities within the school, as well as to help teachers improve their skills and knowledge through training, but more importantly prepare them to deal with issues of cultural diversity in the classroom. These, however, were isolated attempts from individual people that had given much of their personal time and energy, based on their personal sensitivities to improve their schools and not to a collective activity with other schools and educational organisations. This view is based on the analysis of the data, as all schools made isolated attempts to deal with diversity and did not have a supporting network of other schools with similar dilemmas.

During the year 2003/4, the school also participated in the Flexible Zone programme (Evelikti Zoni), which is part of the school's weekly curriculum. This programme takes place during two teaching hours per week within the existing teaching curriculum. Its main goal is to give teachers the opportunity to use educational resources or themes that are of interest to the class and are not included in the curriculum. This gives teachers and children more flexibility and autonomy in the

learning process, compared with the mainstream curriculum, as well as aiming to limit the distance between children's interests and the schooling process. It also aims to integrate all children into the learning process irrespective of their cultural or socio-economic background and educational performance. This is initiated with the use of group work activities and the use of more open and flexible teaching approaches.

From the school year 1999/2000 and onwards, the school operated a programme for Olympic education, as a result of the hosting of the Olympic Games in Athens in 2004. The programme was run by a specialist gym instructor, who developed a number of activities for children to promote the Olympic spirit. The aim of these activities was to foster the ideals of fair play, international goodwill and personal excellence. The analysis of the fieldnotes showed a willingness to incorporate an intercultural dimension to the teaching of secondary subjects. As the teacher argued:

*'These ideals of the Olympic spirit could be used to foster equality and respect between and among cultures. Athletics could be a good way to promote the ideals of intercultural education as sports promote these ideals as well, especially classical athletics. During my lesson I have shown children videos from previous Olympic Games and we've talked about the achievements from athletes from around the world'.*

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter moves the analysis, beyond the formal rhetoric that is presented in previous chapters and introduces the reader to the four intercultural schools under

study, by presenting results of the analysis of empirical data that were collected during fieldwork and relate to the organisational structure of the intercultural school. The next chapter continues with the presentation of findings and is divided into three sections. The reason for this is that in every institution, in this case the intercultural schools, there is a hierarchy and distribution of discourses. I have identified the different power dynamics and discourses between the different agents working in the schools. For example, head teachers spoke differently about 'foreign' children from mainstream and bilingual teachers. There was also an obvious power asymmetry between the mainstream and bilingual teachers and because of this I had to present and categorise these different discourses.

## **6. Mainstream teaching ideologies and approaches to intercultural education**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I am presenting the analysis of findings from the empirical research into the complex field of mainstream teachers' work, as an important aspect of understanding teaching practices and beliefs in relation to intercultural education. Teachers' own accounts of 'foreign' students' education can also give an insight into the schooling processes of the intercultural schools and their process of mainstreaming. I have identified a number of practices, routines, hidden messages and processes that are produced and reproduced in and through classroom practices that impact on classroom interaction. I am hoping to understand how head teachers and teachers understand 'foreign' children's educational needs, intercultural education and issues of bilingualism, but also to identify how teachers constructed these children as students. As all discourses in an institution are not uniform, this was also the case in this research. The preliminary analysis of the data revealed that there were obvious power asymmetries between the different agents (head teachers, mainstream teachers and bilingual teachers) present in the intercultural schools.

Consequently, this chapter is divided in two sections to present these power differentials hierarchically. I begin with the beliefs expressed by the most powerful agent in the schools, the head teachers and then that of the mainstream teachers. In the next chapter, I present the voices of the less powerful, those of the bilingual teachers. The reason for this was to identify the power differentials between the different agents and their distinct pedagogies and beliefs. This chapter deals with the official rhetoric

of the intercultural school as it is expressed by the head teachers and the mainstream practices, as both of them relate to indigenous and 'foreign' children, while the next chapter presents the marginalised perspectives and voices of the bilingual teachers that are concerned with 'foreign' children. By examining these power differential practices, I am hoping to understand how inclusive or exclusive the schooling processes are for 'foreign' children in these intercultural schools, as well as to reveal how these practices relate to or diverge from teachers' beliefs. Data were collected in the form of field notes made during and after prolonged observations on site and the collection of interview data from formal and informal discussions with head teachers, bilingual and mainstream teachers.

The resulting analysis of the data collected during fieldwork aims to provide an understanding of how intercultural education and schooling developed in Thessaloniki, as a result of the increasing influx of immigrants and the perceived problems that were created in the schools that had to accommodate the needs of these children. The analysis of the interviews with the head teachers and of relevant policy documents that follows will also reveal the organisational culture of the schools, which in a way provide a context for the playing out of the identities of the people working there.

## **6.2 Head teachers' constructions of intercultural schooling**

The analysis of the interviews with the head teachers revealed a number of themes that are presented under five main headings: theoretical orientations to intercultural education in relation to policy development; curriculum issues and ethnocentric notions; bilingualism in intercultural schools; teaching qualities; improving the



quality of educational provision. Head teachers expressed their beliefs in relation to intercultural schooling, 'foreign' children's education and the quality of the education provided. The analysis of the interviews with the head teachers expresses the official rhetoric of the policy on intercultural education and how this is operationalised in practice in the daily routine of their schools. What the analysis also reveals is the organisational culture of the schools under study that give meaning to the practices of the teachers working in them.

The intercultural primary schools are referred to in the text as school A, school B, school C and school D. Even though all participants were willing to participate in the study, all of their names have been changed to ensure their anonymity. In the text I am referring to the head teachers, all of whom were male, as:

- Stilianos for school A
- Kostas for school B
- Nikiforos for school C
- Nikos for school D

All four participants were experienced teachers and have continued their education with postgraduate studies in a field of their interest. **Stylianos from school A** was an experienced teacher and had started a PhD in the field of intercultural education. He was probably the most politically involved of the four head teachers and an active member of the socialist party, as other teachers commented to me. School A (part of the pilot study, Appendix 5) had experienced a decrease in the overall number of 'foreign' pupils enrolled in the school in 2003, representing only 18% of the total

school population, due to the changing nature and improvements in the local community.

**Kostas from school B** talked about his experiences of working in Greek schools in Australia for a number of years and the experiences he had gained by working and living in a foreign country. He said that he could understand the difficulties that 'foreign' children experience in Greece, as they come in at a very young age and they do not speak the language at all. School B was located in a very deprived area and by re-reading my fieldnotes from that day, I did recall the amazement I felt when I first saw the school surrounded by grilles and old buildings. It is notable that seventy five per cent (75%) of the total school population are 'foreign' and repatriated children

**Nikiforos from school C** has a first degree in Religious studies something that he had also continued in his postgraduate studies. The school that Nikiforos managed was one of the largest, with 310 students and around 40% of the total school population being 'foreign' and repatriated children. The school had two induction classes, one Albanian speaking and one Russian, a class for Roma children and a class for children with special educational needs which was working, at that time, with ten children. School C also shared similar characteristics with school A, as it had a similar student composition of indigenous and 'foreign' children and they were both based in new buildings and were located in areas that were under development.

**Nikos from school D** was also a very experienced teacher and very professionally active, as he took part in a number of seminars and conferences relating to intercultural education. As a head teacher, he had succeeded in including his school in

a number of European and school-based projects relating to intercultural education, something that he was really proud of. School D was also characterised by its diversity, as 22% of the total school population consisted of repatriated, 'foreign' and Roma children. The total school population for the school year 03/04 was 317 pupils.

#### 6.2.1 Theoretical orientations to intercultural education in relation to policy development

All four head teachers agreed that the introduction of intercultural education in the Greek educational system was an absolute necessity, as schools already had to deal with the issue of teaching 'foreign' children and experienced certain dilemmas and difficulties. Kostas, for example, when asked about his views on the intercultural educational policy, talked about the necessity of introducing a new educational policy that would cater for the needs of immigrants and other ethnic minorities. The answer to the changing composition of nation states from homogeneous to multicultural was the introduction of intercultural education. He said that:

*'The international community started to deal with the issue of intercultural education at the beginning of the 70's and since then it's one of the major issues that the international educational community is dealing with. The development of intercultural education came as a result of the changing composition of many countries that accepted foreign workers, especially in Western Europe, but also in the United States, which are considered to be the traditional countries that accept immigrants.'*

*The immigrants were marginalised, it was not possible for them to participate in the wider social wealth of the community they lived in, and the need for and the kind of education provided for their children were some of the problems they had to deal with. The need for another kind of educational policy that had to deal with the above problems emerged. This kind of educational policy would have to acknowledge and respect cultural differences and create a teaching system of cultural pluralism. This would come in opposition to the assimilationist policies of the past and the philosophy of cultural homogenization.'*

Nikiforos also agreed that the introduction of intercultural education was a step forward for the integration of these children, but not as it currently operated. He suggested that what happened in practice, in every school, was to assimilate 'foreign' children into the Greek culture, without being interested in their cultural capital. In practical terms, this meant to teach them the Greek language and integrate them in the mainstream classrooms. He continued by arguing that this philosophy of assimilation could also be realised by just reading the policy for intercultural education that gives no specific guidelines for schools on how to implement the policy. This is completely the opposite to the lengthy text that provides the framework for the education of Greek children abroad. What is critical in this argument is that the policy itself creates questions and a blurred picture, by not providing a detailed framework of intercultural education and what it should mean in practice.

Each of the head teachers agreed that what happened in practice in schools showed that there was no real commitment to promote intercultural education. Nikos argued that *'intercultural provisions are only for foreign children and not for Greek students'*, and that *'intercultural education is not about the teaching of the host's country language, but an approach to education, directed at all children'*. A similar position was adopted by the other head teachers as well. For them, change should firstly begin by the official policy framework providing clear guidelines for schools and show commitment to promote the intercultural philosophy in the schools. The intercultural ideology should permeate all subjects in the curriculum and should involve all children in the Greek school. More specifically Nikos talked about changes that should be made to the subjects of Greek Language, History, Geography and Religious Studies, if they were aiming to promote an intercultural ideology and respect for other cultures. Change, however, is something that Nikiforos believed would come soon, as almost 10% of the total school population were foreigners and would form the future citizens of this country. As such the society would be obliged to reconsider its educational policies, in order to meet the needs of its citizens.

According to the policy for intercultural education, the main objective of intercultural schools is to promote intercultural education in Greece by using effective teaching practices. The analysis of the interviews and the discussions with the head teachers, concerning the organisation and aim of intercultural schools has revealed five main issues. The first one was a general agreement that concerned the basic characteristics that made a school intercultural. These were summarised as the following: to operate as an 'all day' school; to provide a selection of classes for children to select from according to their interests; to provide education for all children both 'foreign' and

indigenous; to operate with specialised teaching staff that could speak a second language and would have flexible teaching practices; and finally to provide an optional module for 'foreign' children to be taught their own language and history, as well as to offer other specialised modules such as computer classes and other innovative lessons.

Some of these points, however, were not part of everyday practices or common practice in any of the schools, but rather some ideas and aspirations that the head teachers expressed they would like to see in the future. One of these points refers to the children's ability to select classes according to their interests and the opportunity for 'foreign' children to be taught their language and history. Neither of these points were part of the current curriculum, but issues that head teachers believed would improve the 'quality' of education offered to all children.

Nikiforos summarised the goals of intercultural education and how it could affect the goals of traditional schooling. He argued that intercultural education is about the education of all children and to be effective does not only involve the education of 'foreign' children.

*'It is a fact that intercultural education is facing many difficult issues that need to be solved. Despite all that, the intercultural perspective for education is considered by many to be as the most suitable answer in order to achieve the goals schools have, for democratisation, for equality of opportunities and for cultural development.'*

He further argued that the intercultural character of education could be summarised in four points: *'in forming positive perceptions of the differences between cultures; in solidarity; in the respect for other cultures as equals; and the education for peace'*. Nikiforos believed that all these could promote changes in schools and their goals, as children would be prompted to be in contact with each other and would learn to have respect for other cultures, traditions, religions and ways of life. For him the intercultural idea is not only confined to the education of immigrants, but it is also concerned with the native students with the hope that *'through a cultural meeting new ways of co-existence will rise that will respond to the multicultural era'*.

Head teachers described the changing nature of the Greek society and the introduction of intercultural schools. All of them agreed that the changing composition of the Greek society was a reality and for that reason the introduction of intercultural education became a necessity. This was manifested in the development of 'reception' classes initially and the introduction of intercultural schools later on. Stilianos for example summarised the changing nature of the Greek society by saying that:

*'Greece was not considered to be a country that accepted immigrants. However during the last years, a massive wave of repatriated Greeks from former Soviet Union and Albania and a constant inflow of immigrant workers also from Albania and other countries of the Middle East has been noticed. There is also the existence of other dense social groups, such as Roma and the minority of Muslims in Thrace.'*

He further continued by identifying the beginning of intercultural education in Greece with the introduction of 'reception classes' as it *'solved many of the problems that were created when children of different cultural backgrounds came in school'*. He was also critical of previous measures that were followed for the education of 'foreign' children as they were characterised by *'the lack of any educational planning since the methods of teaching of Greek to 'foreign' students was the same as the indigenous children and the same teaching textbooks were used'*.

Similarly, all of them did identify an increased interest over the years, by many educationalists, about the culture and language of other people and especially 'foreign' children who were being educated in Greek schools. This was also the case for the Greek society as a whole, as attitudes towards migrants seemed to be more accepting and open to them. Nikiforos believed that this increased interest for other people's language and culture has led to the development of intercultural schools. As he suggested the:

*'Realisation of the role of cultural and language differences and an increased interest in the language and the culture of the repatriated has led, during the last years, to the creation of intercultural schools in primary and secondary education. That was a step forward that would help 'foreign' children to be included in the Greek society more easily, as well as to succeed to the Greek education system.'*



### 6.2.2 Curriculum issues and ethnocentric notions

One of the critical issues that all head teachers raised in their interviews was that of the curriculum and the changes that should be made in order to include and cater for the needs of all children. They spoke about the necessity, on the part of the Ministry of Education and the Pedagogical Institute, to create new teaching material that would satisfy the needs of all children. Kostas argued that:

*'Starting from the programmes of schooling education, I would like to mention that the curriculum that addresses population groups with different mother language and different status is not organised on a multicultural and even less on an intercultural base. The existing curriculum does not give the ability to the educator to evolve. Also it does not provide the educator with the help necessary for him to be active and to apply with efficiency and success the principles of intercultural education. That leads to a cultural uniformity. But, because the school should be a place in which different cultures are recognised and should be taught, it is highly necessary to make drastic changes in the curriculum of the intercultural schools and education in general. These changes should be linked with the acknowledgement of the cultural differences and with the values of each civilisation'.*

Nikiforos and Nikos also believed that change in schools should firstly begin by making changes in the curriculum and, in effect, the textbooks, as they do not reflect

the changing nature and needs of the society. This is well summarised in the following extract of the interview with Nikos.

*'At the same time as making changes in the curriculum, it is necessary to promote the writing of new manuals adjusted to the principles of intercultural education. The school manuals should not be far from reality and far from the things that children experience every day. Combined with the intercultural ideals that should be transmitted to all children, this could be one of the most important aids for teachers in order to develop children's judgement and selective ability. 'Foreign' children should also feel accepted in their school environment and not devalued. Equally necessary should be the development of new special teaching material for the deliverance of those lessons in which it is known that the repatriated or the immigrants have difficulty.'*

This view by Nikiforos and Nikos is critical for school change as they promote a restructuring not only of the curriculum but also of textbooks. It also shows a positive relationship between children's social acceptability (popularity) and their social abilities, as well as a link between their academic achievement and feelings of being accepted by other peers in the school. Especially for children coming from cultural minority backgrounds it seems that the school and classroom climate affects their academic performance. These children achieve better in classrooms where there is a climate of acceptance. This positive climate in multicultural schools can help children develop cross-cultural friendship patterns and positive self-images. Conversely, in schools where there is a climate of non-acceptance, ethnic differences are very

prominent and children tend to socialise within groups of the same cultural or ethnic origin.

Nikiforos gave another dimension in this issue of changing the curriculum and textbooks in Greek schooling, as he was the first to talk about the national character of the Greek school. As he argued:

*'the content of many lessons as well as that of the teaching materials aim to reinforce the national character of the school. As a result, teaching focuses mainly on the Greek culture, which is shown to be superior to other cultures. This stigmatises the culture and language of 'foreign' children since it is either ignored in the school life or devalued'.*

This was a critical instance as the interviewee raised a new theme that initiated a new discussion with the other head teachers about the character of the Greek school and the emerging discussions about its ethnocentric nature. All of them agreed that a number of textbooks had to be changed by the Ministry of Education, as they were very ethnocentric. Kostas for example argued that:

*'history textbooks have to be reformed and be more open to other cultures. They should promote a respect for other cultures as well and not be so focussed on the achievements of our culture only, as some of these children may feel that their cultures are inferior to the Greek one'.*

Stylianos also argued that:

*'a number of textbooks like the ones from the history and religious modules have to be updated. There have been numerous research studies that have identified their ethnocentric orientation and have argued that changes are needed. I do think that these books need changes'.*

### 6.2.3 Bilingualism in intercultural schools

Each of the head teachers agreed to the importance and the key role that the children's first language plays in their development. It became quite clear through my discussions with the head teachers that there was an understanding that has started to build up over the last years about the importance of children's home language development. There has been an increasing interest, in Greece, about bilingualism that has been expressed in academic research and in education in general. More and more teachers and researchers are interested to research and learn more about this phenomenon and practical ways to tackle it in the classroom. To quote Stylianos:

*'We can see this change of direction in Greece, as ten to fifteen years ago and maybe less, no one was interested in 'foreign' children and their education. They were expected to learn the language and continue their schooling like everyone else. But now there are conferences, seminars, new initiatives from the universities that have even included an intercultural module for training teachers who deal with immigrants and interculturalism. There is a feeling of changing things in our education.'*

The importance of maintaining 'foreign' children's first language has been recognised as a valuable asset for these children. Kostas for example argued that:

*'Many educationalists and researchers have pointed out the importance and the role that the native language plays in the development of the personality of a person that occurs in the early age. The child entering a school where a different language is being used has to deal with a different reality. He or she realises that his/her native language is not important and that affects the child's emotional and social well being. Good knowledge of the native language is the foundation for the learning of the second language because through the learning of the native language the thought is being developed and evolved.'*

Nikos also believed that maintaining children's first language should be a priority for schools. He did, however, argue that the employment of bilingual teachers to teach children's first language is something that the Greek Ministry of Education could not afford. In his view *'the Greek Ministry should come to an agreement with the educational ministries from other countries that we have children from, such as Albania and Russia, in order for them to give part of the funds that are needed for the employment of bilingual teachers'*. He further argued that this is the case with Greek schools abroad that are funded by the Greek State aiming to maintain children's Greek language. As he believed:

*'According to the intercultural perception, in a multicultural society at the same time as the teaching and learning of the main language, the learning of the native language should be offered. It should be planned*

*in such a way so as to enrich the curriculum and to offer the ability to look more closely at the multicultural elements and the importance of being different. In Greece, only in schools of the minority of Muslims in West Thrace, is the native language being taught at the same time as the main language, that is based on the aims of Intercultural Education. In recent years, some Intercultural schools are being strengthened by the State by employing bilingual educators with the objective of reinforcing the teaching of the Greek language to repatriated and foreign students who face difficulties in their learning of the Greek language. In that way, however, the school promotes lingual (language) uniformity. I believe, that bilingual educators could become more useful if they could dedicate a part of their teaching programme to the teaching of the native language of the repatriated and of immigrant students, which seems to be a need for both the children and their parents.'*

Even though head teachers did realise the importance of children's first language development, this was something that was not happening in practice in their schools and monolingualism was something that was being promoted. There was no kind of school language policy to reflect the multicultural intake of the schools and to show the importance that the schools placed on the minority children's cultural and language background. Rather, what was happening in practice was to promote monolingualism by having classes for the intensive learning of Greek in order for these children to be assimilated as soon as possible in the mainstream classroom. Even though these schools presented a multicultural reality and a diversity of languages were spoken there, the curriculum offered, was offered to all children in the

same way and that presented a 'monolingual habitus'. Based on the analysis of observations collected during field work, the school culture promoted monolingualism, as any kind of intercultural provision was limited to the teaching of the Greek language in special classes for 'foreign' children. It was also the case that even though 'foreign' children were expected by the school system and their teachers to learn Greek, it was not expected by the Greek children as part of an optional module to learn any of the other languages present in the school.

#### 6.2.4 Teaching qualities and teachers' role in intercultural schools

One of the themes identified in the analysis of the interviews with the head teachers was related to the qualities that a teacher should possess, in order to work in an intercultural school; the kind of principles and values they should possess and the kind of knowledge they should promote to children. Nikiforos argued that what happened in practice had nothing to do with how things should be. He believed that the educator has a significant role in the educational process, as it is he/she who expresses the educational goals through his/her practice. He also related formal knowledge to practical knowledge that is gained by working with children and also with the process of self reflection. For him:

*'The educator who is about to work in an intercultural direction has to be relieved of any kind of prejudices and stereotypes towards different cultural groups. The educator has to lead a way of life based on tolerance and respect towards difference, in order to be able to pass*

*these values on to the students, through experiences. In no way it is enough to possess only the knowledge of it academically.'*

Similar views were also expressed by the other head teachers, who also identified the need for participation in seminars and for schools to provide in-service training for those teachers working with diverse groups of children.

According to Kostas:

*'The educator who is about to undertake such work, should gain knowledge and develop intervention strategies which will be related to the co-existence of the different cultural groups and the collaboration in a multicultural society. So, it is necessary to provide an organised, suitable in time and in depth, professional development for teachers, in order to help them teach to 'foreign' children, based on the principles of the intercultural education and also on the principles that are based on the knowledge of people in modern societies.'*

Nikos also talked about the need for improving the quality of undergraduate studies for teachers, by providing modules that would incorporate and deal with the new realities of schooling present in modern societies. As he argued:

*'There should be a restructuring of teaching educational courses as well, as it seems that teachers should be equipped with more skills and knowledge in order for them to be more qualified and ready to teach in modern classes. That is the case especially in multicultural classrooms, where teachers have to deal with a diversity of students and overcome language difficulties. Even though undergraduate courses have*



*developed a module for intercultural education, it is still very theoretical and not based on teaching practices and practical ways to overcome the everyday problems.'*

In this section, head teachers raised a number of critical issues about the qualities and knowledge of teacher educators, working with 'foreign' children. Teachers themselves should be free from prejudices and stereotypical views, in order to be able to promote ideas of tolerance and respect for other cultures. Otherwise, it could not be possible to pass these ideas to their students, if they do not believe them themselves. This argument is closely related with the process of self reflection, as teachers need to be aware of their own beliefs and practices in order to be able to deal with discrimination in their classrooms. As Nikiforos noted, formal knowledge, alone, can bring no right answers to the dilemmas teachers face daily in their classrooms.

#### 6.2.5 Improving the 'quality' of educational provision

Head teachers identified the necessity to improve provisional and structural issues of intercultural schools and increase their funding. They also talked about the need to introduce new ways of working in the classroom, through new technologies and art lessons, that could open up new possibilities of learning in the intercultural school. The literature has also identified these possibilities as a way forward. As Kostas summarised for art lessons *'children can express themselves through art, as they realise that this is a place that can express themselves without limits. They can also learn about the culture and lives of other people, in other parts of the world, in a more enjoyable way than through more anthropological based lessons'*. Nikiforos similarly argued that *'the main problem for foreign children is to express themselves*

*through language; art gives them the opportunity to make use of another medium for communication and this is important'.*

Each of the head teachers gave emphasis to the creation of an art room in their schools, as it could bring children together in a more relaxed learning atmosphere and provide students with culturally relevant experiences and promote respect for all cultures. They also talked about the necessity on the part of the state to increase funding for intercultural schools, in order to improve the education offered to children. Nikos for example suggested that:

*'One of the major issue-problem that the majority of the schools have to deal with is that of the structural provision and the funding that is being provided to schools. In order for intercultural schools to operate to a better standard, libraries and special teaching material are extremely important; for example, the existence of organised and easy to use libraries, both for the students and the educators. These should include books written in the children's native language along with appropriate information for the educators that would help them organise the intercultural lesson and apply the values of intercultural education. Also multi-purpose rooms and experimental labs are necessary if we want to apply the goals of intercultural education. I would like to point out that the existence of an art room in the intercultural school is essential because with the intercultural lesson of art, students can learn through music, theatre, painting, the expression of other cultures much better than through other lessons.'*

He further continued by identifying as a major problem the limited funding that schools get from the state and especially intercultural schools. The following extract identifies the problem of funding for these schools.

*'Regarding the issue of the extra funding for Intercultural schools, I have experienced it myself in the school as I had to deal with the coverage of the expenses of 'foreign' children for educational visits. Their participation was less than 50% due to the financial difficulties their families were dealing with. Better funding could help us improve our facilities and develop experimental labs, an art room, libraries and many more'*

Kostas also identified the problem of funding that his school experienced. This was evident from the building that the school was based in and its poor condition, as well as the limited and poor condition of the teaching material. As he argued:

*'The school has a lot of financial difficulties due to the limited funding. This has a general effect on the education the school offers to children, as educational materials that teachers use in their classes are very limited. The same applies with the upgrading of our library, which, at this stage, is in a poor condition. Structural limitations are another issue. The old buildings need new developments to keep up to date with the new challenges. Experimental labs, an art space, libraries and more are needed if we want to improve the quality of education.'*

The head teachers also identified the main problems that 'foreign' children experienced at school. One of the first things that they all mentioned was the language difficulties that foreign children experienced in the classroom. In most cases, this was identified by the teachers as being the main reason that these children failed to make use of their cultural background and previous life experiences from their families and schooling experiences. A second set of difficulties was also identified and those difficulties were related to financial problems that families of 'foreign' children experienced and adaptation problems created by living in a new environment. Kostas also mentioned that in some instances *'children feel stigmatised and experience racism because of the lower social status they are given by the society, especially for those coming from Albania'*. Finally the head teachers argued that 'foreign' children are being taught in a school that alienates and excludes them from the schooling process. Teaching practices are based on personal effort and improvised measures and are characterised by *'everyday practical difficulties, and minimal further training'*.

The head teachers proposed a number of measures that could be taken, in order to improve the operation of intercultural schools. These included more specialised teaching personnel such as the presence of a psychologist and a social worker who could work in the school or could co-operate closely with the school in order to meet the needs (psychological support) of every student. The state should also take further initiative and motivate teachers to learn more languages that are used in their schools and provide these schools with permanent teaching personnel (this mainly means bilingual teachers). I am exploring in the next chapter, the work status of these teachers, but what seems to be one of the main difficulties is that these teachers are not employed permanently in the schools, but rather on a part-time basis. This affects

the continuity of the children's learning, as well as the teachers' work, as they are not given the same employment status as the other mainstream personnel. The following view by Stylianos is indicative of the above:

*'It would be, I believe, extremely useful and important both for the student and the educator to be familiar with another language and specifically with a native language of a different cultural group that exists in the classroom. That fact could help the teacher in the classroom to apply the principles of intercultural education. I believe that the government could also organise language classes for teachers who wish to learn another language of another cultural group from those that exist in the Greek area. At the same time, they could be placed to teach in intercultural schools or in schools that have a large number of such students. That could be the solution to finding permanent and stable personnel who could teach in the above schools, most of which have to deal with the frequent movement of the teaching staff.'*

Kostas spoke about the difficulties that these families experienced and their social exclusion and how this affected their children's education. As he suggested:

*'An important subject that I'd like to talk about is that of the imperative presence of a social worker and a psychologist in the intercultural school. The problems that the immigrants or the minority groups have to deal with - usually these groups belong to the lowest social and*

*economical layer of the country, are more or less known; their marginalisation, their exclusion from participating in the wider social goods of society they live in and many other problems of intercultural nature. Because of the many problems they experience, they believe that the fate of their children is already predetermined and as a result, their participation in the schooling process is from minimum to non-existent. Regarding the children of these groups, most of them feel degraded and that causes them social and emotional insecurity. That, in turn, causes the learning difficulties of the children and causes them to be left out of the educational process. Also, some of the students have to deal with difficult situations in their family environment (alcoholic father, divorced parents, single mothers) and that is something we should consider.'*

Each of the head teachers did acknowledge the contribution and help that a child psychologist and a social worker would provide to the school and the children themselves, as they are the ones who experience these difficulties along with their parents. This realisation shows the importance of the liaison between different services and its contribution to children's overall development.

Nikiforos believes that the existence of a social worker and a psychologist, who would be in contact with both parents and children, would be extremely helpful in solving many different problems that they have to deal daily in the school. He further argued that it would also help parents understand the

important role that the school can play in the improvement of their children's lives, since they now live in a multicultural society and have to become active and responsible citizens.

Another problem that was mentioned by Kostas, was the concentration of a high percentage of 'foreign' children in this particular school, as in this case, we could not talk about intercultural schools but rather a school for 'foreign' children. This, however, seems to be in contradiction with the policy and philosophy that the Ministry of Education seems to adopt in its policy framework. One of the schools, for example, included high numbers of 'foreign' children and as a result became 'unattractive'<sup>15</sup> to Greek children. There was this belief among Greek parents that their children would be left behind in their education in contrast with other Greek children who attended other schools that had no 'foreign' children. Kostas believed that *'Greek parents believed that 'foreign' children were 'bad' students who created problems at school and needed constant attention from their teacher'*. The following extract from the interview with Kostas, is indicative of the attitudes of Greek parents towards the high numbers of 'foreign' children in that particular school.

*'In the end I would like to mention a problem that my school is dealing with and that is keeping the school from having a good and efficient operation. The percentage of the repatriated and of the immigrant students is the 75% of the total school population. As a result the school is in danger of becoming an isolated ghetto of immigrants and that could have the known results. With the existence of such a large percentage of*

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<sup>15</sup> This term was used by the head teacher, while describing the situation in his school.

*students of different cultural background, the parents of these students are complaining, as they believe that this is a deliberate discrimination against their children.[the school is near another school with a much lower number of repatriated and immigrant students]<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand, the parents of local children are avoiding enrolling them in the specific school. Greek parents of the children who are already enrolled in my school are complaining about the high number of 'foreign' students. They are afraid for their children's education.'*

This extract identifies the concerns of both 'foreign' and indigenous families as well as their attitudes to intercultural schooling. What is common, however, in both groups is their concern about their children's education. Head teachers believe that the concentration of high numbers of 'foreign' children, above 50%, affects the quality of the education offered.

#### 6.2.6 A discussion of the findings on the head teachers' beliefs

This section of the thesis presents a discussion of the main findings that construct head teachers discourse and the main themes they have identified. The analysis of the interviews with the head teachers revealed a number of issues about the practice of intercultural schooling in Greece and measures that need to be taken to improve the current situation. Intercultural schools are dealing with many problems that need to be resolved, in order to attract more Greek children and provide a more suitable learning environment that would cater for the needs of all children. It became quite clear from my discussions with the head teachers that there is a real concern about the needs of

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<sup>16</sup> I am using square brackets to use personal comments.



'foreign' children in their schools and a positive attitude to taking active steps and measures that would improve the education offered to all children. They have identified a number of problems 'foreign' children experienced and limitations in the schooling process or practices adopted. That mainly concerned children's language difficulties in Greek language learning that these children had to overcome in separate classes (reception classes), in order to succeed and be integrated in the mainstream classroom.

It was also evident that there was recognition of the importance of developing special teaching and training material, as well as the organisation of special in-service teacher training seminars. There was also recognition of the role of linguistic and cultural differences, as well as an increased interest and appreciation of the culture and language of 'foreign' children. It is important to stress, however, that language diversity, in the schools I have attended, was not presented as a positive element that the schools have invested into. The curriculum offered in these schools was the same as all other mainstream schools and that signifies the monolingual habitus of the educational pedagogy (Bourne, 2001), or the monocultural nature of the educational process as they promoted the language and curriculum of the mainstream school that was considered the norm. It was part of the school's culture that 'foreign' children should learn the Greek language, as soon as possible, in order to succeed in the educational process. It was also obvious that in these schools Greek children were not expected to learn any of the languages that other children used, as this was not part of an optional module. It was rather believed that 'foreign' children had to learn Greek, in order to 'fit' in the Greek monolingual school environment.

Even though there is now a recognition of the importance of the children's first language development, in practice there was still the assumption that these children experienced difficulties because of their bilingualism, rather than because the school or the official educational policies did not provide an appropriate educational response to bilingualism. This belief was based on the assumption, to use Cummins' (1981) terminology, of separate underlying proficiency of languages. This suggests that proficiency in the first language is separate from proficiency in the second language as there is no connection between the two languages.

None of the schools presented any coherent language policy that would recognise the cultural capital that these children brought with them to their new school and their bilingualism. As the head teachers identified, the whole responsibility for the education of 'foreign' children relied on the bilingual teachers. The practice that exists in this policy is to ensure that schools assimilate linguistic minorities into the linguistic majority (Stubbs, 1994). Thus the overall schooling process is constrained in an assimilationist educational structure that influences the teaching practices and learning itself and focus on the development of Greek at the expense of other languages.

Nevertheless the institution of intercultural schools is considered by the head teachers, to be an important step forward for the education of all children. These schools, which aspire to the ideals of intercultural education, should be based on the following principles<sup>17</sup>: *equality of civilisations, equality of educational opportunities, and equality of educational backgrounds for children from diverse cultural environments.*

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<sup>17</sup> These principles are part of the official policy for intercultural education in Greece.

Such a school should benefit not only 'foreign' children but also Greek children, as it does not discriminate between their cultural and educational backgrounds and provides all students with opportunities to explore the cultural richness of both cultures. There was a realisation that a better approach to the integration of 'foreign' students, should include certain necessary educational services and the proper psychological support for them and their families. For example, towards that effect, a specially designed curriculum would allow immigrant students to learn their native language, history, and civilisation, and at the same time follow the curriculum of Greek students (and thus learn more about their host society).

The essential confrontation of the problems that the intercultural schools are dealing with has to be the starting line so that such schools will be more attractive and more creative for all students, native or not. As has already been argued, the intercultural school not only has a reason to exist, but it is a necessity for the successful integration of 'foreign' students into their new environment.

### **6.3 Approaching the multicultural classroom. Mainstream teachers' beliefs and practices**

In this section of the chapter I present the outcomes of the analysis of the mainstream teachers' practice based on sustained observations and interviews. I will firstly describe the routine of the mainstream classroom that was similar in all schools, to set out the context of study. This information was collected during fieldwork by making detailed observations that were compiled and analysed by the researcher. The routine of the mainstream classroom constitutes a process of mainstreaming that was common

for all children, indigenous and 'foreign'. The chapter continues by constructing mainstream teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to 'foreign' children's education.

### 6.3.1 The routine in the mainstream classroom

After the end of fieldwork, a process of analysing and interpreting the numerous field-notes began. Each mainstream classroom in all schools was almost identical, in both the ways they were organised and in their daily routines, including the routines that teachers followed. In this section I examine the routine of a mainstream classroom that was typical, based on the observations made for all the classrooms. The purpose of this examination is to provide readers with a vivid picture of the routine in the mainstream classroom and the role of the teacher in organising and structuring the lesson. While this description is compiled from notes collected over the year, I am incorporating some more general comments to highlight features of the daily routine that was typical for all the schools.

All schools consist of six grade classrooms and each one has its own teacher who is responsible for the whole class and the teaching of all main subjects. Secondary subjects, such as gymnastics and foreign languages, are taught by other teachers on an hourly basis, based on the school's programme. All children are gathered early in the morning, around eight o'clock, in the school's playground and attend the Morning Prayer and listen to any school announcements from the head teacher before the beginning of their lessons. The head teacher assigns one of the children at the front, to

recite the prayer. Based on my observations during the year I noticed that ‘foreign’ children did not participate in this religious Morning Prayer. An extract from my diary speculates that ‘this is another exclusionary process for foreign children. This is a common everyday school routine that excludes these children by neglecting their religious background. After this, all children enter their classrooms and sit at their tables, waiting for their teacher to enter. Entering the classroom one can see the teacher’s desk at the front of the classroom, facing the children’s desks that are usually arranged in three columns and are facing the blackboard. The wall decoration usually consists of a map, children’s work and an image of Christ that is situated in a frame just above the blackboard and that was a common feature in all classrooms’. As I have written in my journal, the presence of religious images was evident within all schools as there is a close relationship between ‘Greeknness’ and religion.

Just before the beginning of the lesson, children (all children did that by taking turns), wrote on the blackboard the date and spelled it aloud. In cases where the child made a mistake, usually the teacher asked someone else from the class to find it and correct it. The same teacher does most of the teaching in his/her classroom, and in this way becomes a familiar figure to the children and a special bond is developed. From this the teacher can become aware of the children’s individual needs, strengths and weaknesses. Specialised teaching personnel are employed for the teaching of foreign languages such as English and French, physical education, arts and the bilingual classes. The average school lesson extends over a period of forty-five minutes but for some lessons such as language and maths, the school lessons extend over two school periods. All lessons are based on state schoolbooks that are given free to all pupils and

are the same in all schools in Greece. The ways that these books are used is instruction oriented, where the teacher holds the dominant position and gives instructions during the lesson. The books contain a number of themes in each learning unit, as well as a number of activities and exercises for pupils.

When the lesson begins, the first ten or fifteen minutes are spent on the examination of the previous day's lesson, in order for the teacher to be able to assess children's understanding or difficulties. In cases where certain difficulties are identified, the teacher explains it further or uses exercises on the blackboard as examples. This examination is orally based and the teacher selectively address different students each time. In the language lesson, for example, this usually involves grammar or spelling exercises, or during mathematics children are required to solve problems on the blackboard or just to simply answer questions. After this examination process, the usual routine of the classroom involves the teacher introducing a new learning unit. The whole teaching routine is very teacher-centred as it places on teachers a central role in the overall process of learning. Teachers are doing most of the talking, analysis and explaining and the children are allowed to speak only when the teachers allow them to do. This routine is consistent on a daily basis in each school and after the teaching of a new learning unit requires children to complete the exercises set out in the book, in order to test their understanding and learning. During that time, the teacher moves from desk to desk to check children's progress and give feedback. In terms of children's evaluation, there is no standardised evaluation test, but rather teachers have total responsibility for children's assessment and progress to the next school level at the end of each year. That is based on oral testing of children in the

classroom, their homework, personal effort and involvement in the classroom during this process of learning. This central role and power given to teachers is evident in every aspect of the learning process.

An important aspect of the interaction in the classroom is the teachers' concern about keeping order and discipline in their classrooms. This, however, is part of a process of socialising children into a set of rules that they have to follow during the lesson. As such, children have to conform to this set of rules by adopting an 'appropriate' classroom behaviour that is not part of a formal rhetoric but rather part of a hidden curriculum that expects students to behave accordingly in the classroom. Part of the teacher's control routine in the classroom is their instructional behaviour and the fact that they initiate most of the talking and control all other interaction in the classroom. The following extract is from an observation taken during maths time in one of the schools, but similar observations were collected from all schools:

'The teacher walked into the classroom and tells children to *'be quiet'*. She then asked one of the children to remind the class what they have learned the previous day. When the child finished she said *'very good'* and then wrote a problem on the blackboard and looked at the children saying *'who's going to solve this problem?'* A number of children raised their hands insistently and said *'Ms.. Ms?'*. The teacher then said *'keep order children. I want Kostas to solve this problem. Be quiet.'* She immediately then continued by presenting the new lesson to the children and she then wrote examples on the blackboard. As some children in the back rows were noisy, the teacher turned around

and said angrily *'be quiet, I want you to be careful, otherwise you won't understand what I am saying'*. When she finished with the examples, she asked the children to look at their books and solve the exercises there. She then walked around the tables to see how children progressed. She stopped at one of the tables where two boys from Georgia were seated and asked them if they were having any difficulty with the exercises. They said 'yes' and she tried to explain briefly what they had to do. She then came back to me and said *'they have gaps from previous years and there is no time to help them during lesson'*. She immediately then calls two Greek children to solve some of the exercises on the blackboard and just before the bell rang gave homework for the next day.'

This incident was similar to those observed in other classrooms. There was an overall feeling that there was no time during the lesson to provide extra help to 'foreign' children. Teachers usually proceeded with their usual routine and this typifies the process of mainstream teaching. In the next section, I continue with the analysis of mainstream teaching practices and beliefs.

An analysis of the interviews and the fieldnotes collected during the year, from observations in the schools, revealed a number of actions that teachers used in the classroom in order to integrate 'foreign' children in the schooling process. As teachers suggested, most of these actions were undertaken in a spontaneous and instinctive way, by taking personal responsibility and initiative in order to help these children in the classroom. I consider these practical measures that were brought to the surface by the teachers themselves, as being important for our understanding of their interactions



with the children and their attempts to deal with the diversity present in their classrooms.

When describing actions that mainstream teachers used in their classrooms, I consider not only their attitudes in the classroom, but also the application of practical teaching methods. These actions teachers followed were considered effective for the integration of 'foreign' children in their classrooms and were used either alone or in combination for a certain period of time by some of the teachers. These teaching practices that have been identified from the interviews and the fieldnotes fell into two distinct categories. The first one relates to the ways teachers used the culture and ethos of the classroom to create a positive climate for 'foreign' children and the second relates mainly to 'foreign' children's knowledge level in their new environment, the process of learning and teaching. Teachers also identified a number of other issues that could possibly have an effect on 'foreign' children's learning and education such as their use and understanding of language, parental involvement and societal influences.

### 6.3.2 Mainstream teachers' beliefs about policy and intercultural seminars

Part of the analysis of the interviews with the mainstream teachers related to their views on the policy for intercultural education and the support they get from the Ministry to improve their practice. Teachers were critical of the policy and characterised it as being very general and failing to provide specific guidelines for teachers to use in their practice. As teachers commented:

*'The policy in its own right is very vague. It establishes intercultural schools to provide education to foreign children and acknowledges their educational right, irrespective of any cultural differences. There is no connection with the everyday practice. They are two different things.'* (Marina)

*'The policy is very general and does not give us specific guidelines of how to treat the diversity in our classrooms.'* (Maria)

*'So far the policy recognises the intercultural nature of schools and the educational rights of these children. In practice, however, we are left alone to find solutions as there are no specific guidelines to help us in this difficult task. Even if we try to make changes, we may be blamed for not covering the curriculum as we should have. Unfortunately we are very restricted.'* (Anna)

The teachers' comments show that they consider there to be a discrepancy between policy and practice, with little connection between the two. The policy does not make any reference to teaching practices or educational provision and the practices are not based on an official framework of teaching 'foreign' children. Teachers could not speak about the implementation of policy into practice as there are no guidelines to use or reflect on them. They use their own initiative, effort and personal good will to deal with the everyday challenges, not an official framework of good practice.

During the time of the study, a number of conferences took place, which aimed to inform and provide extra support to teachers within intercultural schools, who face a number of problems in their daily practices. This was a critical instance that initiated a

discussion with the teachers about the usefulness of these conferences that were organised by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and local education authorities. Each of the teachers believed that these conferences were mostly useful as a background theory to improve their knowledge about a specific issue, but not related to their practices in the schools. One of them, for example, reported that:

*'You attended the conference yourself, we listened to statistics, theories of bilingualism, language education, experiences of other schools that mainly related to the problems and general discussions about the introduction of intercultural education. Where are the practical measures that we can use in the school to help these children? How we are supposed to deal with the problems of foreign children in the mainstream classroom, when they are not able to speak, interact with other children and write. How I am supposed to proceed with lesson when I am aware of these difficulties. These children have many gaps from previous years and I have no time to help them. The curriculum is very specific and there are time constraints. The Ministry has to find a solution.'* (Pavlos)

What is rather interesting in this vignette is that even conferences are not able to fulfil teacher's expectations and provide practical solutions to the challenges they have to face in their daily practices. As teachers argued, training is important, but it should come closer to the schooling reality and relate more to their practices.

### 6.3.3 Teaching practices for the integration of 'foreign' children in the classroom and their relation to policy

One of the initial themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews and observations with mainstream teachers was their methodological approach to welcoming a newly arrived 'foreign' child to the mainstream classroom. They all suggested that one of the first things to do was to introduce the new child to the whole class by giving his/her name and country of origin. In the classroom, teachers adopted certain attitudes that they also tried to promote amongst the indigenous children, in order to secure the emotional and psychological well being of the newcomers. Teachers attempted to sensitise native children by encouraging them to bring themselves to the position of the new incoming children, in order to understand their problems and feel like them. However during the time of observation in all four schools, I did not witness any incident that moved towards that direction of sensitisation.

For example, one of the teachers from school A explained to me that this was a common practice for mainstream teachers to follow this process of 'sensitising' native children, to make them feel the difficulties that 'foreign' children experience in their new schools and accept them in the classroom. The aim of this process is to develop children's awareness of other cultures and languages and make them more open and accepting. However there is always the danger, as was suggested, to create feelings of 'pity' for 'foreign' children, something that could stigmatise them and make them feel isolated from the other children. In terms of understanding the problems and experiences that 'foreign' families brought with them, teachers mentioned the fact that

they tried to communicate with those families and listen to their experiences and anxieties about their children's future. However, as most teachers mentioned, they only saw and had the opportunity to speak to the parents of these children at the beginning of the school year. Very few 'foreign' families came to school on a regular basis to learn about their children's progress and speak with the teachers. As a result teachers felt that they do not have the opportunity to develop closer links with these families and, in effect, to have a better understanding of the children's background and learning experiences from their previous schools.

There was an attempt in school A to develop this link with foreign families that took place in out of schools hours, during evenings, but this was based on the personal effort of the teachers in that school. This however was not part of a coherent school policy aiming to develop communication bridges with 'foreign' families but an isolated attempt by the school staff. The school participated in a small festival, like an open market, that was organised by the local community, and invited all families from the school to attend. What teachers suggested the following day was that they had the opportunity to meet a number of parents, including those of 'foreign' children and this gave them the opportunity to socialise with them in a more relaxed atmosphere. They concluded that events like those that are organised by the local community or even organising events for families in the school, in out of school hours, could improve the relationship between school and 'foreign' families, by bridging this gap but could also help these families to become integrated into their local communities.

Another method that teachers used in their classrooms to integrate 'foreign' children and which was common practice for all of them, was to use certain kind of games that

aimed to bring native and 'foreign' children closer. This however was something that happened in the first classes of the primary school and not in the later stages when children were being prepared to enter high school. One of the teachers in school A, for example, argued that:

*'I am using games for children in the class in lessons that are more relaxed and we can spend some of our time, 10 minutes or so, so that children can feel more relaxed and play in groups. This exercise, however, is not something I am required to do as being part of the curriculum, but rather because the children seem to enjoy it. I do feel that all teachers could spend some time, especially in secondary modules, on other activities.'*

Teachers used simple games that targeted both 'foreign' children's language and at the same time the learning of Greek words and expressions. For example, some of the teachers, while presenting a theme to the class or reading a story, tried to integrate 'foreign' children by asking them to repeat the same, in their own language. I observed many instances where mainstream teachers used this kind of method, in order to give these children the opportunity to express themselves in the classroom. It was common in all observations that these children did not raise their hands to contribute to any discussion, unless they were asked by their teachers.

In the development of the analysis, I considered this method that teachers used as a critical event that I could further explore, by questioning teachers about the usefulness of this method and its effectiveness. Teachers expressed the view that this method had many positive effects for all children and especially the 'foreign' children. They felt

that by including 'foreign' children in such a way in the classroom, it made them feel that their language and culture was valued and that they were part of a friendlier environment. Also because these children did not contribute in the lesson orally, as they did not feel confident, teachers felt that they could participate in the learning process in that way. Similarly, as teachers suggested, this was a good process for the native children as well, as they had the opportunity not only to be introduced to and listen to a new language, but also to listen to the experiences that children of the same age had in other countries.

As teachers reported, this method can be effective when the teacher takes an active role in the whole process of sensitising the children, in order to make them value other cultures and languages. There was an instance, for example, where in one particular module called 'finding out about the world', I observed a teacher who asked one of the children (Nikos), who came from Georgia, to describe his city and way of life. The following comes from my observation diary:

'While the child started to talk, very shyly, with a low voice, the teacher kept interrupting him by making remarks to the other children to stop talking. These interruptions continued and after that the teacher continued with the lesson, saying nothing to Nikos who kept talking'.

I wrote in my diary immediately afterwards my feelings of the event. The following is the exact extract:

'I am amazed by the way the teacher handled the whole situation in the classroom. She showed no interest in listening to what Nikos had to say nor did she attempt to initiate any further discussion with Nikos and involve the other children. I came away with the impression that

the teacher started the whole discussion with Nikos because of my presence in the classroom’.

After the lesson I initiated a follow up discussion with the teacher, about the previous event and her opinion of involving all children in a discussion or involving children in-group work. She reported that:

*‘Now you had the opportunity to observe the difficulties that these children experience in the classroom. Not only do they have difficulty with the language but also every time I ask them a question in order for them to feel included, the other children start talking with each other and making noise. As a result, the lesson cannot progress, the foreign children feel that the other children are laughing at them because they can’t speak properly, so my only solution is to stop any activity and continue with the lesson’.*

We then discussed the specific style of teaching that she pursued in the classroom and children’s learning. She believed that children learnt better when she followed this kind of teaching, where she had the authority, structuring and transmitting knowledge to children. Children were seen as passive learners who received transmitted knowledge and not active constructors of knowledge who learned through experiences, interactions and collaborative work. In her own words she felt that *‘work in groups is not something that I feel is working and adds something to children’s learning. I think that children can get very easily off task as you have seen. I think it is better when I give them specific tasks or I ask the questions’*. This example of teaching in the mainstream is one of the many I have observed, from all the six



teachers. They adopted more traditional styles of teaching and identified children as passive learners in the learning process.

In a similar vein, teachers reported that one of the actions they believed had a positive effect for the integration of 'foreign' children in the mainstream was to initiate discussions and activities that were related to the children's culture, customs, art and habits. The aim of this was to bring new interests into the classroom that would prevent the marginalisation of 'foreign' children and promote their acceptance in the classroom. Usually teachers presented maps, pictures, listened to songs and music and in some cases asked 'foreign' children to bring some traditional food. Some teachers commented that this was not exactly a mutual cultural exchange and ran the risk of being described as a shallow approach to introduce new cultures and not a real attempt to show their real way of life. The following observational extract was written during a school celebration and is indicative of the above:

'A number of foreign children participated in the school's celebration and they presented poems from their countries. Greek children then made the translations into Greek and then all together in circle danced folkloric songs. Two of the teachers, who sat next to me, did comment that they were trying as a school to integrate and value the diversity of cultures present in their school through this kind of activities, but more had to be done in the mainstream programme of the school.'

Part of the discussion with the teachers was about the use and value of group-work activities, for the smoother integration of 'foreign' children into the mainstream classroom. The majority of the teachers did comment that they believed in the use of

these kinds of activities in the classroom, as they believed that it was a good way for children to co-operate with each other, share their ideas and come closer to each other. Anna, for example, argued that *'group work is something that should be promoted in all forms of school life, either it concerned teamwork or athletic games, educational visits or outdoor activities or just learning activities in the classroom'*. All teachers recognised the value of group-work activities and as Marina argued it *'develops the communication skills of all pupils and creates a sense of community in them'*. Even though teachers recognised the value of group working and the positive effects it has for children, in practice it was not something they favoured in their daily routines. Group work activity, in all four schools, was observed only during the gymnastics lesson, where children played in teams and had to co-operate with each other.

This observation provided another critical instance that I explored further in my analysis, by interviewing the gymnastics teachers about the role of group work activities and 'foreign' children's integration to the team and acceptance by the native children. All of them used team-work activities and recognised their value for children, as it developed their team spirit and 'good' competition. They defined 'good' competition as *'creating in children both the concept of team playing and competitive skills in order to defeat the other team'*. Concerning the integration of 'foreign' children into the team activities, all of them agreed that they did not experience any particular difficulties with the acceptance of 'foreign' children by the natives. On the contrary 'foreign' children were fully accepted by their team members and that was not only because they were competent at sports, but also because sport activities were not related with language fluency.

However, in one of my discussions with Dimitris, one of the gym teachers who was singled out from the others because he added a different perspective for the integration of 'foreign' children, expressed the view that *'children showed greater interest and seemed to understand better a number of themes and interact better thereafter when working with animations and cartoons'*. Due to structural limitations and limited space in his school, they did not have a sports ground or assembly hall that children could use during the winter time for their gym lesson. As a result Dimitris gathered the children, during his lesson, in the staffroom watching videos, cartoons, children's movies, historical documentaries or documentaries of a more general nature such as the Olympic Games. He usually then discussed with the children the rules of playing a game such as basketball or volleyball. Dimitris told me that, from his experience of working with all children in the intercultural school, he believed that *'new technologies in all its forms should be used in the learning process'*. Children really seemed to enjoy all activities that were related with animations. In his view:

*'Schools could use computers in the learning process, especially with 'foreign' children who could work at their own pace and learn the language by using fun activities. Educational software specifically designed for children learning Greek as a second language could combine both learning and fun for those children. Unfortunately, the use of computers in the primary school in order to form part of the curriculum or to be used in the daily routine of the classroom is still at a primitive stage'*.

#### 6.3.4 Indigenous constructions of 'foreign' children based on race and class

Concerning the beliefs children held for each other and how their interactions were affected by those beliefs, teachers suggested that in many cases they were affected by the stereotypical views that Greek children held about 'foreigners'. These stereotypical views were mainly developed, as teachers commented, from the children's family environment or other societal influences such as the media, which might present immigrants as being inferior and less able.

Teachers agreed that native children held stereotypical views about the ability of 'foreign' children but also for their families' socio-economical status. They supported this based on comments they heard from Greek children and also from the fact that children developed friendships based on cultural factors. When I discussed this issue further with the teachers, they seemed to unconsciously accept this as normality. The reasons they used to support this was firstly the language issue, in that 'foreign' children could not communicate effectively with Greek children and, as a result, developed friendships within their own cultural groups and then the fact that Greek students viewed them negatively because of their families' influences. Stavros for example argued that:

*'I would rather say, from what I have seen that foreign children prefer to be with children that speak the same language as them and I totally understand that, as some of them that still have language difficulties cannot communicate effectively with Greek children and develop friendships.'*

Marina also expressed views similar to those of Stavros but she also reported that Greek children were influenced by their parents as well. She justified that by saying that:

*'In a school meeting many Greek families expressed their concern about the possible influence of foreigners on their children's education. They worried because they believed that mainstream teachers spent more time explaining things in the classroom because of the children's language difficulties and the whole class was left behind. We explained to them that their children are not left behind and that the bilingual teachers are doing their best to help these children with their language problem.'*

Teachers indicated that they thought Greek parents also believed that the level and quality offered to their children was not of the same quality as the education offered in other schools in their communities that had a very small percentage of children from other countries. That was mainly a result of adjusting the conditions of learning to include all children and, as such, the whole educational process was much slower. They considered that many middle class families took their children to private schools as a result of the increasing numbers of 'foreign' children, and others, who could not afford private education, moved their children to other state schools in better neighbourhoods.

One of the emerging themes in the analysis of the data related to teachers' views about the acceptance and the different attitudes adopted by Greek people towards immigrant children coming from European countries and speaking more widely

known languages such as English or French, for example. What teachers suggested was that there is definitely a prioritisation of foreign languages in the Greek education. High status languages such as English, French, German and Italian are valued more in the Greek society and are promoted in the school system as well. Anna, for example, reported that:

*'Children start to learn English in their early primary years and in some cases even in their infant schools. Also, in schools where there are children from European countries or the US, where the level of education is considered very high, these children are not reported to have any significant adaptation problems, and there are no complaints from Greek parents about their presence, as they are valued and given a high social status'.*

Since teachers were aware of the negative stereotypes and attitudes towards 'foreign' children, I asked them to describe measures they had adopted to change these attitudes. What they described were some practical measures that they considered as having 'good' results and were able to change this situation. Depending on the age of the children, teachers used a number of role play games in order for children to understand, through drama. They also used the different life experiences of other people, the narration of stories, including those from the intercultural programme and the use of historical examples or the reading of articles from newspapers in order to show the achievements of other countries, as well as to stress their contemporary way of life which is different from the 'exotic' images that some children might have on their minds.

Teachers, however, believed that all these measures could not have a result on their own, irrespective of their effort and good will to develop a sense of co-existence amongst all children, in order to live harmoniously in their school and communities. What is needed, as Marina believed, is the '*co-operation and active engagement, in this process of changing, of the children's families*'. If real change is to occur in the attitudes towards 'foreigners', change should begin from the family unit which the teachers believed is the source of many of the negative images that Greek children may hold. For that reason, teachers believed that parents should be included in the schooling process and suggested the development of in-school seminars. This, however, was not part of any school initiative at the time I attended the schools under study, but teachers believed that it could be a starting step forward, not only in order to change negative attitudes and stereotypical views, but also to improve children's learning, since these seminars should also aim to give guidance to parents when helping their children with homework.

#### 6.3.5 The schooling process of 'foreign' children and the issue of language

This section presents the analysis of findings coming from interview notes and the observations collected, and relates to 'foreign' children's level of knowledge and classification in the Greek school system, as well as these children's learning in their new environment. What came out of the analysis of the interviews with the mainstream teachers was that they adapted and used in the classroom a number of techniques and methods that they believed could have a positive influence on the successful integration of 'foreign' children into the Greek school and, more specifically, to the mainstream classroom. What has been identified as a major

weakness of the Greek public school, during the induction process of 'foreign' children when registering in a school, was the fact that there is no system of allocating these children to the appropriate level of education. What happens in practice, not only in the schools I attended, but also as a general practice as teachers explained to me, was to allocate these children to the equivalent age group classroom. So, for example when a 'foreign' child at the age of eleven was registered in an intercultural school, he/she would be allocated immediately to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade of the primary school that includes children of the same age group.

These children comprise two categories of students: The first one includes those who speak, even at some level, the Greek language, as they can be children of repatriated Greeks or children who have attended Greek schools abroad for some time (children from immigrants in Germany, Belgium or Sweden); the second category includes those children who do not speak the language at all, such as children from Albania or the former Soviet Union. For children in the first category, teachers believed that it was a good solution to allocate them to the same age group as they attended in their schools abroad, in order to have continuity in their learning. Language classes would be used in addition, to provide extra support to the children and improve their language skills.

However, during the time of the study, the vast majority of these children did not speak the Greek language at all and as a result the main focus of their education was on their rapid learning of the Greek language. All the teachers believed that this was a very important process for these children if they wanted to proceed successfully with their education and integrate fully into their communities. In the meantime, while the



main target of 'foreign' children's education was the intensive learning of Greek, they were cut off from the knowledge and education they had received from their former countries. As a result, the knowledge and education of these children remained stagnant and their learning focused mainly on the learning of Greek, rather than progressing in parallel with their previous school education.

There were a number of instances in my observations that I reported that some 'foreign' children remained in the same grade, as their progress and level of knowledge appropriate for that grade was minimal. In some instances these children remained in the same grade for more than two years. The reason teachers gave as a justification for letting these children progress to the next level, as Pavlos summarised, was that *'children would feel stigmatised not only because of their knowledge level but also because they were older than the other children. As such teachers felt obliged to pass them on to the next grade'*. However as Aggeliki commented, *'this might be an indication that the system is failing those children, who seem not only to progress very slowly with their learning of the Greek language, but also with their education.'*

Teachers were aware of the difficulties that these children experienced in the classroom and aimed to change that by developing ways to help them progress both with their lessons and language learning. In some cases, they used a third language like English to communicate, but this only occurred when both parties could speak at some level. In other cases teachers started to learn the children's language in order to be able to use it as a helping tool in the class. In that way teachers attempted to help the children continue having everyday contact with their lessons and not interrupt

their learning that would then have an effect on their future progress in school. Teachers believed that a good way to improve a 'foreign' child's language learning, is by giving them extra support, by assigning them to another child from the same country who had made good progress in school and who could undertake the responsibility to provide extra help. This technique is based on the co-operative children's learning method that was considered to have good results for all children. In practice, however, none of the mainstream teachers used that method in their classrooms, even though they did comment in our discussions that it could have positive effects on children's learning.

This was another critical instance that initiated further discussion with the teachers, as there was an obvious difference between what they believed and what they did in practice. They argued that in most of the cases, a minimum level of language competence in Greek would be required to do those things in the classroom and this was not often the case. They also believed that in the mainstream classroom the curriculum should be followed strictly and that meant that there were time constraints that all teachers should follow, in order to cover all learning units set out by the curriculum. As a result, spending more time in the classroom with activities, focusing specifically on 'foreign' children was considered 'time consuming' and these activities were preferably practised out of 'normal' school hours or mainly with the bilingual teachers. For those reasons, teachers believed that having good communication and co-operation with the bilingual teachers was essential for achieving these school targets. For mainstream teachers this meant that they could continue with their work in the classroom, by focusing on the curriculum for primary education, which is the same for all primary schools in Greece, and for 'foreign'

children to get their language support and extra help with their homework from the bilingual teachers in smaller groups.

There were many instances in my observation notes that mainstream teachers required the bilingual teachers to help 'foreign' children with their modules because they experienced difficulties. This was a result of the limited time available in the mainstream classroom, as teachers would have to help a minimum of twenty-five children and could not specifically focus on two or three children. In practice 'reception' classes in intercultural schools under study were mainly used both as language classes and to provide supportive teaching for the mainstream curriculum.

However the analysis of the findings with the mainstream teachers, revealed a major contradiction in their beliefs about the use of reception classes. On the one hand they believed that the use of these classes made their work 'easier', especially with 'foreign' children and on the other, that these classes were not good for 'foreign' children. The following views by Maria and Anna describe this:

*'By re-allocating these students from their mainstream classroom environment to another one, could stigmatise them in the eyes of the other native children'.*

*'Foreign' children are getting used to a daily routine of moving from their mainstream classroom to the reception class and as a result cannot be fully integrated to the mainstream, but rather feel as a foreign body'.*

I observed this reality in practice, in the daily routines of the schools' where 'foreign' children had to attend the reception class, for one or two school hours per day, mainly during the Greek language module or during maths. This was a routine for all schools under study and I queried teachers' views on this aspect, in order to understand the reasons why 'foreign' children had to leave their classes in such an important lesson, which involved language learning. Teachers reported that it was considered easier for those children to receive language support in the reception classes, where the teaching took place in small groups of two or three children. As Stavros reported: *'in the reception classes, children had the ability to work on specially designed teaching materials that aimed to teach them Greek as a second language'*. This specially designed teaching material included a series of new illustrated books that were only used in the reception classes, even though they have been characterised by many teachers as a good effort that could also be used in the mainstream. For example, Maria noted that *'the new books are very well written and could be used in the first grades of the mainstream school as well'*. Something like this, however, has not been legislated for, neither is it being practised in any of the schools, as they are required to use the same textbooks that are prescribed by the Ministry of Education. That was criticised by many teachers, because they were not given the freedom to use other resources in their classrooms.

At the beginning of my observations in each school in the mainstream classrooms, all teachers seemed to interact more with 'foreign' children and showed greater interest in involving these children in the learning process. However, as time progressed, after approximately two weeks of constant observation and I compared my observations, I realised that there were fewer instances of interactions between teachers and 'foreign'

children. My later observations, reported more traditional models of teaching, as the overall target of teaching was to complete the prescribed aspects of the curriculum. As Pavlos argued:

*'It is not good for anyone to deal with the difficulties of 'foreign' students that mainly involves language problems, in the mainstream classroom, as these children could get extra support in the reception classes. It is also not fair for the Greek children, who are left behind in their education, as their teachers do not have enough time to complete the curriculum properly and they are compelled to teach, in one lesson, a number of different themes in order to finish the curriculum by the end of the year'.*

As teachers reported, a number of complaints were presented to the teaching board by Greek parents, as they expressed their concerns that their children were left behind in their education. This was more evident in school B, where almost 60% of the school population were foreigners and there were far more complaints by parents.

A different category of teaching beliefs emerged from the analysis of the interviews with the younger teachers (Anna, Marina, Maria, Aggeliki), concerning a different teaching approach used within multicultural classrooms. They believed that cultural differences and the fact that some children spoke another language should not be treated as a 'handicap' or a 'problem', but rather as a valuable resource that could be used in the classroom. Their experiences of working in intercultural schools identified the need for teachers to adopt different methodological approaches in the classroom that would be based on the active co-operation of all of its members. All teachers agreed that this method of teaching should come under discussion not only with all

agents involved in this process of education, but also for change to begin from the university programmes for teachers. Teachers believed that if they could minimise the initial difficulties of teaching children to work in-groups, a general improvement in the culture of the classroom and the quality of knowledge could be realised.

The importance of using different methodologies in the classroom to approach children's learning has been reported by these younger teachers. Most of these approaches are based on co-operative learning and group work. Teachers mentioned the use of the 'Project' method, as they believed it could have very good results in improving children's learning through group work and research. This method was used by the schools in certain areas of the curriculum such as Geography and History where children had to work in small groups, for a certain period of time and present their outcomes. Even though this method was believed to produce good results, it was mainly used with the older children in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and was not part of the regular routine of the schools under study.

The Project approach or method that has been influenced by the co-operative and group work models that John Dewey 1859-1952 developed has started to receive a growing and developing interest by a number of educators. As teachers explained, this method involved the in-depth research of a particular topic by a group of children, or in some cases by the whole class. The main target of the project method is for children to learn how to work in groups, in order to research a particular theme. It is about the process of investigating, rather than finding the correct answers. As Aggeliki commented *'this method should be used complementary to the regular teaching and not for the overall teaching of the curriculum. It should be used in*

*different aspects of the curriculum, in order for children to practice and learn different skills and develop others*'. This view is indicative of the beliefs expressed by all teachers.

#### 6.3.6 Teaching approaches

So far the findings identified a great divide between beliefs and practices used within the settings, by mainstream teachers. Actions that teachers could use and could be described as having an intercultural perspective were not something regular in the mainstream classroom and this stands in opposition to what teachers described in their interviews. Observations also revealed two different approaches adopted by the mainstream teachers to approach 'foreign' children and different justifications used by them to account for their actions. I will argue later on in this thesis that these practices are influenced by a number of other factors that are related, not only with school factors (organisation, philosophy, curriculum and assessment), but also with wider societal influences that are above personal characteristics of individual teachers.

The first teaching approach I have identified in the analysis of my observational notes included those teachers who felt that they had to develop a special and closer relationship with 'foreign' children, in order to help them with their difficulties and make them feel more secure and welcome in their new environment. In practice, those teachers spent more time with the children in and out of class, speaking to them about their difficulties with the different tasks and explaining. In the classroom it was also observed that these teachers, when examining children's homework, laid more emphasis on correcting 'foreign' children than they did for the indigenous children.

As teachers reported - and I am using Anna's quote - *'these children needed their attention more than the indigenous children did'*. This was mainly because teachers believed that in most of the cases, these children had *'no support in their homes in contrast with the majority of the Greek children who were supervised in their homework by their parents'* (Aggeliki). This justification, however, seemed to me to be based on personal stereotypes, as it could not have been possible for anyone to be aware of the routines of each family, because of the limited communication they had with them. I did question that perception and teachers argued that this belief was based on the families' educational background, the children's slow progress at school and the fact that they had limited communication with these families. Some of these teachers attempted to develop closer links with these families and in certain cases provided them with school handbooks, in order to both improve their language skills and also to help children with their homework.

These teachers who adopted this special treatment towards 'foreign' children also reported that in certain cases this differential treatment could lead to problems of discipline in the classroom. Teachers believed that this spirit of tolerance that was promoted in all aspects of these children's education could be exploited by some of them, especially in terms of their assessment that was, at the time I attended the schools, non-existent. For example Aggeliki argued that:

*'I am not totally sure that the current situation of not having any form of assessment for these children is good for them. We don't give them any motive to try with their education and I also think that they might feel excluded. For some of them it is definitely an easy solution, as*



*they are not assessed at all, as everyone else is and they don't have to read for tests and exams.'*

Following these comments by some of the teachers, I wrote in my diary as a personal reflection that:

'There is a vague and weak definition of education for foreign children within mainstream classrooms. Teachers seem to ignore them by following their usual routines and practices. Since there is no definite framework for integrating these children into the mainstream classrooms, teachers could possibly exploit the situation as well'.

(Fieldnote extract 18/05/04)

The practice, in all four schools, was for those children to take no part in any oral or written examination and not be formally assessed, unless they were fully integrated into the mainstream. A child's mark was agreed between their class teacher and the bilingual teacher and that was based on the child's effort to learn and integrate to the new environment. This meant their quick learning of the Greek language and integration to the mainstream system. I wrote in my diary about 'foreign' children's presence and interaction in the mainstream classroom that it was a 'silent presence'. Teachers followed their usual teaching routines and had limited interaction with foreign children, in an attempt to avoid dealing with the difficulty in communication.

The second teaching approach included those teachers who believed that their teaching was the 'same' for all children. Nonetheless this practice did not involve the assessment of 'foreign' children as they were excluded from this process due to the 'language problem', as teachers described it. As a result of this equal treatment

approach, teachers argued and I am using Maria's quote '*due to the limited time in the class, we did not prepare the native children properly, in order to accept their 'foreign' classmates*'. In a way, they believed that the first priority for these children was to learn the Greek language, before anything else, and not to improve the interactions with the other children. An alarming incident with a teacher that took place in the relaxed atmosphere of the staffroom could possibly characterise a small minority of teachers who work in intercultural schools. What characterised that particular teacher were his biased views of the culture of a specific cultural group, Albanians. I wrote about the incident in my journal, as I was particularly surprised by the attitude of the specific teacher:

'I am having a coffee break with most of the teachers in the staffroom. The climate is very relaxed. One of the teachers starts a discussion, about the educational right of 'foreign' children to be taught their culture and language in their schools. The discussion was initiated by a conference for intercultural education that had taken place and in which most of the teachers had participated. Most of the teachers agreed that the *children's first language should be taught in the school*. They based this on research findings that report the importance of the child's first language for their later development. They also agreed that funding is definitely an issue for something like this to happen but also a general discussion about the role of the school and education. At that point one of the teachers stood up and said: *What do other cultures have to teach us in our schools? What culture do the Albanians have that could compare to ours?* I was

amazed by his argument as he was very sarcastic and pejorative as if devaluing totally other cultures. Everyone looked at him and the discussion ended. Then the teacher turned to me and, as he was laughing, he said to me '*we hope you did not come here to spy or have anything to do with the education supervisors?*' Then one of the other teachers intervened and said '*she looks like a good lady, she is only here to do her research*' (Fieldnote extract 01/11/03)

Teachers in the second approach felt that all children should feel equal and not be stigmatised because of their culture and language. They believed that giving more attention to 'foreign' children would make them feel insecure and less confident because of their language limitations. It would also make them feel more excluded, as they would be noticed by all children, because of their language difficulties. For those reasons, teachers believed that all children are the same and that sameness is sufficient for all, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or social class.

In both cases however, the analysis of the observations from the mainstream classrooms revealed that teachers interacted less frequently with 'foreign' children than with the natives. This was based on observations made during the lessons, by noting down every interaction that occurred between teacher and 'foreign' children or between 'foreign' children and Greek children. In all cases, when teachers posed questions during the lesson or when they orally examined students, they addressed mostly Greek children. There were a few instances, however, where they asked 'foreign' children questions, but these interactions were very short in duration, the

language used was simpler, and in many cases the teachers were impatient and they were either correcting the language or gave the answer themselves.

### 6.3.7 Limitations that teachers identified in their everyday practices and the experiences of in-coming teachers

Generally, mainstream teachers identified a number of limitations not only in the schooling process of 'foreign' children but also in their teaching practices when they had to approach this particular group of children. The analysis of the discussions with the teachers brought to light the stress they experienced in the classroom, as they did not know how to approach the multicultural classroom. This was mainly because some of them did not have any previous experience of working with foreign children, but also as a result of the limited specialisation they had on issues of intercultural education through in-service training or seminars.

Teachers variously described the situation as:

*'Foreign children's main problem is that they don't speak the language'* (Stavros).

*'The school's main priority is to teach these children the Greek language and integrate them quickly to the mainstream classroom'* (Pavlos).

*'I didn't know what approach to follow in the classroom, as I didn't know what's best for them'* (Anna).

*'No one told me what kind of teaching methodology to use in the classroom'* (Marina).

*'I was inexperienced and didn't know what kind of activities to use'*

(Aggeliki).

*'I didn't know how to assess them or what to expect from them'*

(Maria).

These kinds of difficulties were identified by all teachers as adding to the problem of educating 'foreign' children. Especially for those new and inexperienced teachers who had to deal with the reality of working with a number of these children in the mainstream, without having any previous experience or any special training, added to their stress to show that they are 'good' teachers. The story of a young teacher who had just graduated in the previous year to the beginning of this study, and had just started to work in the intercultural school, shows the reality that many teachers have to face in similar situations. I am quoting Aggeliki at some length to show the turmoil she felt when she came to the school.

*'This is my first year in this intercultural school and my second year of teaching. As you understand this is also the first time I have had foreign children in my classroom and had to deal with their problems and difficulties. I also realised that I had no special training to work with these children in practical terms, I mean in the classroom. Even the courses that were part of our training in the university were very theoretical and around general issues of intercultural education. Even when I came to the school, no one informed me about practical steps I could adopt in the class to make learning for these children easier or what kind of attitude or special treatment I should have towards these children. Even the school advisor did not suggest anything specific,*

*but rather spoke generally about the difficulties of these children. For me this was particularly stressful at that time, as my only help were the ideas and suggestions of the other teachers who had previous experience. I also made use of my free time in order to be informed about practical measures and activities that I could use in the class. Overall, I believe that there is no intercultural education in Greece, but rather pilot intercultural schools that aim to teach foreign children the Greek language and integrate them to the mainstream. However the establishment of these schools is a first step to the development of the intercultural idea, but things in the school's operation have to change.'*

What Aggeliki reported clearly shows what it really means to work in intercultural settings, as well as summarising the difficulties teachers have to face in their daily practices. More importantly, however, it clearly shows the personal effort and interest on the part of a number of teachers to become informed about the difficulties of 'foreign' children and also about other teaching methodologies and methods that could be applied in the multicultural classroom.

One of the major difficulties that were identified by the teachers as hindering the educational process was the limited funding that affected the teaching resources, as well as the poor structural provision of the schools that did not allow the use of other types of activities, such as, for example, artistic activities. Further training was also identified as most teachers were inexperienced or had no practical knowledge of how to approach the multicultural classroom. Anything beyond the teaching of the formal

curriculum was based on teachers' personal efforts, rather than a well-structured school policy document or an organised attempt on a school level.

In terms of learning, there was a general agreement that 'foreign' children's education was mainly based on the teaching of the Greek language that was considered as the major medium for their smooth integration into the mainstream classroom. Based on the analysis of observations, emphasis was given mainly to the teaching of the grammatical rules and structure of the Greek language, rather than the development of children's oral language. It seems that this is a major contradiction of the school system, since school philosophies and teachers' beliefs stressed that the major condition for the integration of 'foreign' children to the mainstream classroom was their learning of Greek. This was mainly identified as a condition, in order for them to be able to communicate with the other children and develop a level of understanding, in order to participate in the schooling process.

Similarly, teachers agreed that the emphasis that the school system placed on the learning of Greek in the education of 'foreign' children had negative effects on their overall learning. The emphasis on language meant that other courses, equally important, were neglected. The most common module that teachers identified was mathematics. Marina for example argued that:

*'Children are left behind in their maths, mainly because they cannot fill in the gaps from previous years and catch up with the other children. There is not much you can do, as we have to keep up with the programme and there is no time to spend on repeating previous lessons'.*

### 6.3.8 Summary of mainstream teaching practices and beliefs

The analysis of the interviews with the mainstream teachers who had to work with a culturally diverse group of children in their classrooms, revealed that they had to reconsider their teaching approaches and methodologies used, if they were aiming to integrate 'foreign' children in the learning process. Despite the fact that, as I had observed and have described, in their everyday practices, teachers did not use any different approaches to their teaching methodologies, all of them recognised the importance of change. However, as they had to deal with a diverse group of children and their needs, they were obliged to inform themselves of the issues that affected these children's education and adaptation problems. They had, first of all, to be informed about children's background experiences and issues affecting their education and this mainly related to the importance of developing and maintaining the children's first language. Most of them also had to go back to their academic literature and read about current issues of intercultural education and its practice, as well as looking for new educational activities on the internet or from other resources to accommodate the needs of these children. The need to develop and organise in-service training for teachers and conferences relating to issues affecting the education of 'foreign' children has also been reported.

It was also evident from the analysis of the data collected that the mainstream teachers' main concern was for 'foreign' children to learn the Greek language at an adequate level in order to be fully integrated into the mainstream. There was a commonly held belief among teachers that children's school progress in the Greek education system is closely related with their mastery of the Greek language and their



full integration into the mainstream schooling process. In practice this meant that children had to suppress their bilingualism in order to succeed both academically and socially, even though this is in opposition to what teachers believed. They would have to 'fit in' in the dominant culture, language and values that the school promoted in its everyday practice. The progress of those children, who could not 'fit in' in the mainstream, was characterised as being problematic and thus required further learning support in the 'reception' classes. The support that children received in these classes was mainly language based, as their aim was to improve children's Greek language competence.

Mainstream teachers also seemed to relate 'foreign' children's failure to proceed with their education, especially in the transition from primary to secondary, with their parents' linguistic and socio-economical background. Teachers identified two major factors as hindering children's school progress: the parents inability to speak the Greek language that minimised any help with the children's homework or being able to practise using of the Greek language; and secondly the families' working status which teachers believed affected the children's education, both because parents, most of the time, did not have time to help their children, and also because, in certain cases children had to work as well. Teachers also identified a number of practical measures that could be used in the classroom and could help children in this transitional period. The implementation of these practices could help teachers overcome the challenges in their mainstream classrooms.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the outcomes of the analysis of the interviews with the head teachers and the mainstream teachers and the observations collected from the mainstream practices. The aim has been to make an analysis of the head teachers who have laid out the official discourse of their schools and, as such, have presented the ideological realm of intercultural schooling in Greece and also the mainstream teachers that represented the dominant school culture and the process of mainstreaming. Mainstream teachers presented the reality of working in intercultural schools and the education provided to ‘foreign’ children. While the head teachers presented the ideological apparatus of the intercultural school, the mainstream teachers identified the practices they followed to include all children, both indigenous and ‘foreign’ to the mainstream route of schooling.

The next chapter presents the marginalised perspectives and practices of the bilingual teachers, as they were left alone in this process of mainstreaming to accommodate the needs of ‘foreign’ children. Throughout the chapter I am identifying their marginalised position in the schools and their different perspectives. The exclusionary schooling processes for ‘foreign’ children are evident in both these chapters.

## **7. Teaching in the bilingual classrooms. Bilingual teachers' beliefs and practices**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from all eight bilingual teachers that were teaching in the four intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki. Each school employed two bilingual teachers, an Albanian and a Russian speaker, in order to help children with their learning of the Greek language and to provide curriculum support in any of the mainstream modules (mainly language and maths), in which children experienced difficulties. The chapter constructs bilingual teachers' position and role in the school as well as the role of 'foreign' languages in the school settings. The analysis continues with teachers' views on the practising of intercultural education and the relation of bilingualism and school progress. Bilingual teachers constructed 'foreign' children as problematic learners and analysed their use of first language and home influences that affect children's learning. What is also evident in this part of the thesis, is the overall influence of the school culture and philosophy in the 'reception' classes that aimed to promote monolingualism (this term refers to the use of Greek, as the only language accepted within the settings), by using the dominant language (Greek) as the only medium of instruction and using children's first language only as a tool to help in this process of learning.

Before beginning with the analysis of the data, it is essential, at this stage, to identify the characteristics of the bilingual teachers necessary in this specific context, to hold this position in Greek primary schools. All of them had some kind of teaching qualification from their country of origin and were qualified teachers in primary or

secondary education. Two of these teachers had also started their PhD's in their countries, but were unable to continue their studies in Greece due to financial difficulties, as they had to start working and were unable to find supervision in Greek universities. All of them had previous experience, in Greece, of working with 'foreign' children in 'reception' classes, extending from two to four years. None of them were part of the permanent school personnel, but were employed on an hourly basis at the beginning of each school year, whenever they were needed. As a result of this, their payment rights were not equal with that of the other teachers in the schools, nor with that of the other language teachers (English speaking) who were given equal status with the mainstream teachers who were employed on a permanent basis.

## **7.2 Bilingual teachers' position and role in the school**

One of the emerging themes in the analysis of the interviews with the bilingual teachers that affected their practice was that they felt that their work in the school was not recognised to its full potential and was undervalued. Veta for example commented that:

*'The way in which schools employ us, and that means when they have the appropriate funds to pay us and when a number of children experience major language difficulties, they request us from the local education authority. We are paid on an hourly basis for a few hours per week, which means that we work on a part time basis with very little money. This means for many bilingual teachers that if we are able to find something on a more permanent basis we stop our work in the school. The work we do with foreign children requires everyday*

*commitment to their needs and difficulties. As we work for only a few hours per week, there were many instances when I worked with these children in the school without being paid. I used my free time, and personal effort in order to help these children. I do not feel that this effort is recognised by anyone, as I feel that if that were the case we would have better working conditions.'*

Similarly, Niki felt that her work in the school was not valued, as she felt that many mainstream teachers spoke to her in a depreciatory way and she was not involved in any decision-making processes in which all the other teachers participated. Niki argued that:

*'The way we are employed in these schools definitely affects our practices. With the end of each school year, we experience this uncertainty of where we will be in the next one. It is not certain that we will work in the same school the following year. This means that children do not have continuity and a physical progression to their learning. I know my children better than anyone in the school, their needs, individual difficulties, their home background and how to communicate effectively with them. However, with the beginning of the new school year, these children are very likely to have a new teacher who will have to gain all that knowledge from the very beginning. I think these very facts show that we are not given equal status with the other teachers and the role we have in the school.'*

These aspects that clearly identified the relationships between mainstream and bilingual teachers were also evident in their everyday interactions in the staffroom. Also, the schools made no provision for them in terms of space which meant that they had to take their lessons in the staffroom or in the gym. My field note observations collected from inside the staffroom, during coffee breaks, suggested that there was a clear distinction between bilingual and mainstream teachers. They were seated at opposite ends of the room; bilingual teachers spoke with each other most of the time and their interactions with the other teachers were minimal. I only observed and recorded interactions between them and the mainstream teachers on very few occasions. These instances were included only occasions where mainstream teachers required information about the progress of specific children or informed bilingual teachers about specific difficulties that individual 'foreign' children experienced and wanted them to give the children extra attention and support. The only other interaction that I recorded took place in school A, where mainstream teachers had a discussion about a number of local robberies that were arbitrarily imputed to Albanians, without any justification. I recorded the incident that day:

'I am sitting in the staffroom next to the bilingual teachers and we are drinking our coffee. At the opposite end of the room, the mainstream teachers are talking to each other and in the right corner four teachers are having a smoke near the window. One of them then turned, in order to face everyone and told them about the recent robbery in a house close by, that added to a number of local robberies. Then the teacher, next to her, asked *'have the police found them or have they any clues about the crimes'*. She replied that *'the police are looking*

*for them, but I believe that the robbers are Albanians*'. She said *'since the numbers of Albanians increased in the area, local crime has risen*'. One of the bilingual teachers then intervened, as she was furious about the comment. She said that *'we don't know who committed these robberies. It could easily be anyone including local people. It is not right to say something like that*'. Then the discussion ended, the mainstream teacher continued with her cigarette and the bilingual teacher looked at me and changed the subject.'(Fieldnote extract, November 2003)

Bilingual teachers viewed their role as not being equal with that of the other mainstream teachers, including those of the foreign language teachers, who were also full time employees of the school and were given equal status with the other mainstream teachers. It is interesting to note that all schools viewed English, as a 'foreign language' that was part of the official curriculum and the schools' weekly programme that was directed to all children in their last years of the primary school as a compulsory course. On the other hand, none of the schools recognised the value of migrant languages that those included Albanian, Russian and Georgian. As such, migrant languages were not being promoted in the schools in order to be maintained, but rather as a helping tool during this transition period of learning the Greek language.

The teaching of migrant languages was not part of the curriculum and there was no reference to them in their own right in the daily school programme, as was the case for the English language. Rather, schools' provision for the use of these languages was

within ‘reception’ classes only. The following table summarises the observed differences between foreign language teaching and what happened in the reception classes. It clearly identifies the unequal status between the two categories, but also adds to the view expressed by the bilingual teachers that they were not given the same status as the other teachers in the school.

<b>Foreign language teaching</b>	<b>Reception classes-Migrant languages</b>
Compulsory for all children	Only for ‘foreign’ children
Part of the curriculum	Takes place during other school activities
Starts at the final years of primary school	Starts when children enter the primary school
Full time teachers - part of the mainstream teaching personnel	Part time teachers - hourly paid
Lessons took place in the classroom	Lessons took place in the staffroom, gym and in few cases in classrooms that were empty

**Table 1:** Differences observed between foreign language teaching and reception classes.

Bilingual teachers worked in a school environment that emphasised the use of migrant languages only as a medium to help ‘foreign’ children in their transition to Greek and for supportive reasons, mainly to develop links with the children’s families. Even though these languages were presented as a rich resource for children, this was only evident during this transitional period, until children gained a good level of Greek so that they could be fully integrated in the mainstream classroom. This view about the role and use of languages other than Greek permeated all layers of the schools’ culture and philosophy and was present in all schools, even though it was not part of any school policy document. This affected the bilingual teachers work, as they did not receive any encouragement to expand their role with the teaching of foreign children



and go beyond the scope of their specified role in the school. They were engaged primarily to play a supportive role in curriculum learning and were employed to use their first languages to ease the transition to Greek in monolingual subject-focused classrooms. They were not employed to teach the curriculum bilingually, as in Greek education there are no bilingual or dual immersion programmes.

From the analysis of the interviews with the bilingual teachers and the observations taken from the 'reception' classes, I identified a dual role that these teachers seemed to have. Their primary role in these classes was, first of all, to teach the Greek language to 'foreign' children, aiming get them to a good level in their oral and written skills so that they could be integrated into the mainstream. Secondly, these teachers viewed themselves, as having a supportive role in helping children with their curriculum subject lessons and as explainers of information. The following extracts identify this dual role, as bilingual teachers described it.

*'Well, the work I do in the school is to help these children learn the Greek language as soon as possible. It is essential for these children to know the language if they want to succeed in their education and be integrated into the Greek society. I'm also expected to help these children with their lessons, mainly maths and grammar, as they have major difficulties and we don't want them to be left behind.'* (Elsa)

Another one stated that:

*'What we do in reception classes is not intercultural education, but rather Greek language learning. For those children who have just arrived in Greece and cannot speak or have any understanding of the language, we start from the beginning. Letter learning, sounds, then reading small pieces of text and then at a later stage we continue with grammar. When I teach these children, the only medium to communicate with them is Russian, as I have to translate everything. When children develop some kind of understanding, most of the talking is in Greek as this is what we are trying to achieve. The aim is for these children to be integrated into the mainstream classroom. I do believe that it's vital for them to learn the language if they want to succeed and live and work in this country.'* (Veta)

What these two extracts clearly show is that, in practice, the primary role of the bilingual teachers in intercultural schools is to teach the Greek language by using as a medium of instruction the children's first language. Teachers also used their knowledge of both languages to translate and interpret mainstream subject lessons, in order to help children with their lessons. However, what this practice may suggest is an overall hidden message that the focus of education is on the mainstream curriculum and the only language promoted is that of the host country. All four schools encouraged the use of other languages, but only for transitional purposes. That was until children were proficient enough in the Greek language to be fully integrated into the mainstream classroom. The learning of Greek was considered a priority for all

bilingual teachers, as it was considered the main condition for learning in the mainstream classroom. As Theodora stated:

*'Children's learning is closely related with the level of proficiency that these children have in Greek. That is why teaching in the reception classes with these children is a continuous process that usually extends over a period of three years. These children are not expected to learn immediately in the mainstream class since their level of Greek is inadequate.'* (Theodora)

Eleni also made this kind of connection between formal learning in the mainstream classroom and the level of children's proficiency in the Greek language that, in effect, also showed her role as a bilingual teacher.

*'My main goal is to help children improve their language level in Greek, in order for them to be able to complete their learning in the mainstream classroom. This is something that I very often say to my students: if they want to become successful and good students they have to learn the language. This doesn't mean, of course, that they have to forget their culture and language that they can maintain in their families, but since they are now living in this country they should learn the culture and language of this country as well.'* (Eleni)

Bilingual teachers' beliefs about their role in the intercultural schools showed a rather clear divergence from official policy and rhetoric of what an intercultural primary

school should be. Bilingual teachers constructed themselves as language teachers and not as those responsible for the implementation of an intercultural approach in their teaching and the learning promoted.

### 7.3 Bilingual teachers' views about the practising of intercultural education in their schools

Each of the bilingual teachers expressed the view that intercultural education, as it is currently practised in intercultural schools in Greece, means something totally different from what they seemed to understand by the term intercultural education. They expressed their views about what intercultural education means for them and how it could be approached, but they were also critical of the ways in which mainstream teachers viewed their role in the school.

All of them expressed the view that intercultural schools did not offer any kind of intercultural learning but that they were just named so, because they offered Greek language classes to a number of children coming from diverse cultural backgrounds. The following two extracts from my discussion with Eleni and Theodora summarise the views expressed by all teachers. I specifically chose to include the extract from Theodora as it provided another dimension that prompted another issue for discussion with the other teachers.

*'There is no such thing as intercultural education in anything we do in the school. It could be better described as Greek language classes for foreign students. We aim to teach them the Greek language in order*

*for those children to be integrated in the normal class. This is what we do in these schools and what is required by us. I am not suggesting however that this is something bad for these children, but I'm only describing what is happening in practice.'* (Eleni)

*'The education offered in this school and also in all others that are called intercultural, as I have worked in some of them, is not intercultural. Foreign children can attend reception classes in these schools in order to learn the Greek language and be able to attend the mainstream classroom. These schools cannot be called intercultural since any kind of different provision is directed only to foreign children and the curriculum is the same for all schools, intercultural or not. Another issue is that of religion in these schools and what the images they portray are trying to achieve. We should not forget that many children are not Christian Orthodox but the only religion promoted is this one, with the images visible around the school, classrooms, the assembly and even the Morning Prayer. This is the most obvious thing that excludes foreign children.'* (Theodora)

Theodora brought to surface the issue of the teaching of the Religion module in intercultural schools, as a major factor in the development of exclusionary practices in the schools and the stigmatisation of some 'foreign' children as it was their choice to be excluded from this module. It should be noted that the aim of this module in all schools in Greece, under the Law 1566/1985, is the 'cultivation of the Orthodox conscience', while those who have different beliefs or declare themselves to be

atheists, have the right to be excluded from it. This is the official position of all schools in Greece in relation to the teaching of this module and its relation to 'foreign' children. What the teachers suggested was that, in practice, what was happening in their schools was that many 'foreign' children attended this module because of their 'fear' of being excluded by the schooling process or being stigmatised by their absence from their classrooms. Another reason that teachers mentioned that was pressing these children to attend this module was the fact that there was no alternative provision during that time for these children.

As Eleni and Veta stated, these contradictions between the aims of the Religious module and that of intercultural education, could lead to the development of certain 'cultural and social conflicts' as well as divisions in the schools. What all the teachers agreed upon was that a change of direction in the very philosophy of the module itself (the module was described as having a rather indoctrinating role) and its content, was essential in order to reflect the changing composition of the society and the schools that are now characterised as multicultural and include a diversity of people, cultures, beliefs and languages.

Bilingual teachers recommended the development of this subject as a 'module of culture' or a 'module of morality'. It was believed that the way that the current law (1566/1985) approached the specific module, came in direct opposition to the aims and philosophy of intercultural education. It was also responsible for the development of a feeling of indifference in students towards the module or to the reproduction of certain conditions that promoted inequalities in the school setting. This was raised by the bilingual teachers who expressed the belief that this module promoted inequalities,

as it created stereotypical views and attitudes to children. Theodora's view was indicative of this as she expressed it in the form of a rhetorical question:

*'How is it possible for Greek children to live, communicate and co-operate harmoniously with heterodox people in the future as future citizens, since their schools seem to reproduce certain stereotypical views about those people and present their religions as secondary and subordinate to their own?'*

One of the emerging themes in the analysis of the interviews was bilingual teachers' beliefs about intercultural education and language classes, as they have been described. Teachers argued that their views of intercultural education have been formed and been influenced by their training and from seminars and conferences that dealt with this issue. A number of ideas were expressed about what intercultural education meant for bilingual teachers, which, in effect, suggested what it should be:

*'An education that promotes equal opportunities for all children and doesn't view foreign children's culture and language as something that hinders children's progress in the school.'* (Veta)

*'Intercultural education should be about respect for all cultures and this should be part of the educational provision offered to all children and not only foreign children.'* (Eleni)

*'Intercultural education should be part of the overall school philosophy and should be part of the curriculum for all children. This also means that the curriculum should change in order to portray the multicultural composition of the Greek society.'* (Theodora)

*'Intercultural education means bringing children coming from different cultural background and who speak different languages closer. This could only happen by designing a curriculum that respects the needs of all children and gives them equal opportunities to succeed in life.'* (Lia)

Concerning their views about 'reception classes', bilingual teachers expressed the belief that these were Greek language classes and they did not promote an intercultural philosophy and pedagogy. The use of a second language in them was only part of a transitional process, in order for those children to reach a satisfactory level of understanding in Greek, until they were ready to follow the mainstream curriculum. They also believed that children's needs were not being met under the current educational provision, as they experienced a number of problems that did not only concern language difficulties. The following extract from Maria is indicative of the views expressed.

*'The education offered in reception classes is not intercultural by any means, but rather what we are trying to achieve is to help children with their Greek language difficulties and provide them with extra support in mainstream courses, such as maths and language, when it*



*is needed. Children's problems, however, are not only their language difficulties, but much more and the school as it currently operates can't meet their needs. A number of children I have worked with in some intercultural schools in Thessaloniki, experience learning difficulties or have problems at home. All schools should have a child psychologist and a special needs advisor that would work with these children closely, as well as a social worker that would work with families that experience difficulties. Especially with families that have just arrived in a new country, close liaison with them could make the adaptation of their children in their new local communities and their new school environment easier.'* (Maria)

Bilingual teachers also believed that there was a clear distinction between what they considered their role should be and what mainstream teachers believed their role in the education of 'foreign' children was, as they considered that the education of these children was not their responsibility. Mainstream teachers placed the responsibility for the education of 'foreign' children solely upon the bilingual teachers. As bilingual teachers suggested, they had the responsibility for the education of 'foreign' children, children's good progress in the mainstream class, as a result of improving their Greek language skills and the implementation of any kind of intercultural pedagogy in their schools. They also believed that mainstream teachers thought of the education of 'foreign' children as an extra demand in their workload. There was an overall assumption among bilingual teachers that mainstream teachers were only responsible for the completion of the prescribed teaching content of the curriculum. In practice mainstream teachers did not adopt the role of facilitators of language learning but

rather left that role to the bilingual teachers, even though this was not part of any official policy document. This was evident in the following extract from one of the bilingual teachers who suggested that:

*'I think that mainstream teachers see themselves as being there only to teach the curriculum to children and not to adjust their teaching to accommodate the needs of individual pupils. From what I have experienced in the school, mainstream teachers do not see themselves as having any part in the education of foreign children beyond the mainstream classroom.'* (Anna)

This was a common view expressed by all bilingual teachers. They believed and suggested that all the responsibility for the education of 'foreign' children and the use of any kind of intercultural teaching was part of their role.

This positioning of the bilingual teachers in the school, as being the helpers of the mainstream teachers was part of the teaching culture, since these teachers were responsible for the education of 'foreign' children but without having a specific subject content to teach and by focusing mainly in the support of these children in their mainstream lessons. My observational analysis concluded that bilingual teachers were marginalised in their schools as their areas of expertise were only limited to the work they did in 'reception' classes. Their role was not developed to its full potential nor was it valued, but rather was described as supportive role. In a way these teachers were seen as having a seemingly less important educational role in the overall schooling process. This role that bilingual teachers had in their settings was part of a

broader picture of deficit, as the mainstream educational discourse was more dominant in the everyday classroom life.

Observations also revealed that bilingual teachers adopted different approaches to their teaching that were dependent on the language level of their students. In those cases where children had reached an adequate level of Greek language learning and were able to communicate with their teachers, most of the interactions that took place in the 'reception' classroom were in Greek. In all other cases bilingual teachers translated and interpreted words and phrases, from Greek to their languages and the teaching materials used were not part of what children were taught in their mainstream classroom. The following two field note extracts are indicative of the different approaches bilingual teachers adopted in their teaching. The extract comes from school C:

'Today I am observing one of the bilingual teachers Theodora, who is a Russian speaker. The lesson takes place in a corner of the staffroom that is separated by a cupboard from the main coffee area. The teaching area consisted of two small round tables with children's chairs around. Both bilingual teachers had their lessons at the same time. One table was used for the Russian-speaking children and the other for the Albanian-speaking. Theodora was teaching a child from Georgia, who was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and required extra support, as the child was not able to attend his lessons in the mainstream classroom. The child experienced major difficulties in his Greek language course, as he had major gaps in his learning and could not attend. Theodora in

this case adopted a role of assisting the mainstream teacher in order to help that child with that module. The teaching included spelling, reading and grammar exercises from the language textbook used in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade of the mainstream classroom. As Theodora told me after the lesson, her role was to provide extra support to that child who experienced difficulties with a mainstream subject and not to teach him language. During the lesson most of the teaching and the interactions with the child were in Greek.’ (Fieldnote extract, May 2004)

‘After the break I observed the lesson with Eleni, the Albanian speaking teacher. She is teaching two children, one of them knows very little Greek and has just arrived in the school and the other one needed extra help as well. Eleni firstly examined some grammar exercises that children prepared at home. Most of the talking was in Albanian, as children could not understand Greek. As Eleni later told me the reason for using children’s first language during the lesson was not in order to maintain their language but because she had to explain most of the things they were reading. As part of the process of learning Greek, Eleni used two books in her teaching. The language textbook used was the one used in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of the mainstream, as children needed to start from the beginning and the language textbook was developed as part of the intercultural programme. The lesson then continued with a recap of previous exercises on present and past tense and then with the teaching of the future tense. After Eleni explained

and translated all the words, children then had to read a text in Greek, taking turns, in order to understand the use of the tenses they had been taught.’ (Fieldnote extract, May 2004)

These two extracts identified the role that bilingual teachers held in their schools, which showed, in effect, that their task was not just limited to the teaching of the Greek language. In many cases they had not only to interpret and translate mainstream modules but also to teach them to the children, as the mainstream teachers were not sure that the children were understanding during the lesson. What could be then argued, as a result of the different roles and approaches adopted by bilingual teachers, is that there is no clear educational and school policy that caters for the inclusion of all children equally in the schooling process. On the contrary, what became evident is that there were different routes for the education of native and ‘foreign’ children in intercultural schools in Thessaloniki.

#### **7.4 Bilingual teachers’ constructions of bilingualism and their relation to school progress**

The analysis of the interview transcripts with the bilingual teachers, revealed a generally held belief that ‘foreign’ children had to suppress their first language, if they wanted to succeed both educationally and socially in the Greek society. It was also interesting to identify, during the analysis of the data, that each time bilingual teachers spoke about the children they were teaching in reception classes, they referred to them by their nationalities, for example Albanians or Russians, and not by using the term ‘foreign’ children or bilinguals as did the mainstream teachers. As the bilingual

teachers suggested, this was partly due to the fact that they considered themselves to be members of that national group as well and, secondly, because there was not an agreed definition at a school level that could be used to describe them.

As they noted there was no written school policy document that would refer to those children by a specific term and would recognise their status as bilinguals. When I questioned them about the use of the term 'foreign' to describe these children in reception classes, they expressed different views, but most of them said that this was a formality. I have selected three extracts from Veta, Eleni and Theodora to show the variety of different beliefs expressed by the teachers in the interviews. Three categories were identified: those who expressed the belief that it is better to use the term bilingual, those who believed that there should not be a special term in use and finally those who said that 'foreign' is just an official term, but with no special meaning.

*'I don't agree with the use of this term as I think that in a way shows that these children are excluded. I would prefer the term bilingual.'*

(Veta)

*'I don't think that this term has any effect in the school or on the teachers, as we don't use this term to refer to children. We refer to children by their names.'* (Eleni)

*'This term was firstly used by the Ministry of Education to describe all these children who had to attend reception classes in order to learn*

*the Greek language. This term refers to all these groups of children, but it's not a term we use orally in the school. It is only part of official documents or formal discussions in conferences or seminars.'*

(Theodora)

None of the bilingual teachers had any pre-service training that dealt with issues of intercultural pedagogy. They did receive in-service training, as part of the intercultural education programme, through in-service seminars and specialised conferences that were organised by the universities responsible for the supervision and implementation of the programme. The entire curriculum in intercultural schools as well as the educational provision (teaching material, assessment and delivery) was monolingual, as the only language used and promoted was Greek. This pedagogy, in all four intercultural schools, signified that all children had to operate monolingually, in order to become members of the school culture and be accepted by its members.

This was a common categorisation of the students in all the intercultural schools. Children received this intercultural pedagogy (language classes), when they were identified as having difficulties operating monolingually in the mainstream classroom. The students' ability in other aspects of their learning or their level of learning in their first language was not considered at all by their teachers and the school itself. This belief that 'foreign' students had to operate monolingually was part of the bilingual teachers' discourse as well. For example, one of the bilingual teachers commented that:

*'I only teach those children who experience language difficulties in the mainstream, but there are other Albanian and Russian speaking children who are fully assimilated in the mainstream and their progress is very good.'* (Eleni)

This categorisation was part of the official school discourse that separated 'foreign' children into two categories: those who were fully integrated into the mainstream classroom and as a consequence were not recognised as a special category of students and those who experienced language difficulties and needed language support that was provided by the bilingual teachers. For those children who fitted the first category and could attend the mainstream classes, no special provision was made, but rather they were identified as belonging to the indigenous group of children. Even when bilingual teachers spoke about the difficulties that 'foreign' children experienced, they only referred to these children who attended the 'reception' classes and not to those who were fully integrated into the mainstream. All the bilingual teachers felt that children had to become good learners of the Greek language in order to succeed both in school and society.

What was also identified as a pattern after a prolonged period of observations in the 'reception' classes was that the majority of the work that children had to complete was text based, as it involved completing grammar exercises, reading texts and maths. All this work was written in Greek and children had to complete these exercises in Greek as well. As the work done in these classes was mainly in Greek, except those few cases where bilingual teachers had to explain something in the children's first language and the majority of the interactions were in Greek as well, it provided further



confirmation that the major requirement in these classes was the teaching and learning of Greek. In terms of images present in the classrooms and the school corridors, there was no evidence that other languages, except Greek, were in use in any of the schools. Classroom resources, posters and children's work were all in Greek. Some attempts to integrate other languages were made only in school celebrations where 'foreign' children had the opportunity to present poems and songs from their countries.

What was also identified in the interviews with the bilingual teachers was that even though all of them agreed that 'foreign' children had to be included in all areas of school life and their needs should be valued, when they were required to discuss specific teaching practices, they agreed that in order for these children to be fully integrated and accepted they had to have good knowledge of Greek and be integrated into the mainstream classroom. What this suggested was that bilingual teachers, recognised that 'foreign' children had to operate within a monolingual framework, if they wanted to succeed and be included as uniform members in the mainstream classrooms. It was evident that even though they came from a different cultural and educational background and followed different approaches to the education of 'foreign' children, they totally accorded with the view expressed by the mainstream teachers that children had to become monolingual to succeed.

### **7.5 Children's use of their first language and home influences**

Part of the analysis of my discussions with the bilingual teachers involved the way children used their first language in the 'reception' classes and the context in which it was used or promoted by the teachers themselves. This aimed to support one of the

main arguments that came as a result of the analysis of the observations and interviews with the bilingual teachers that intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki, worked within a framework that promoted and accepted monolingualism as the only model of integration in the Greek context. Through the use of this model there was an overall belief identified by all bilingual teachers who were members of the school culture that monolingualism is the only 'accepted' way for 'foreign' learners to succeed, not only in their education but also socially as members of the Greek society.

Bilingual teachers reported that the only instances they heard children use their first language, was in reception classes or in some cases in the playground and corridors during the break. However, in the first instance, the first language was used by children who had very limited knowledge of Greek, therefore their only medium of communication was the use of their first language, while in the second instance, children used their first language to develop friendships within their own cultural groups. What bilingual teachers suggested was that the instances where children used their first language was not part of any organised teaching practice or intervention aiming to maintain the children's first language but was rather a result of the children's own need to communicate. For example, when I asked Elsa to describe specific instances in her classroom where children were able to speak in their own languages she noted that:

*'This is not something that is promoted in these classes (reception), as our main goal is to reach an adequate level of language proficiency in order for these children to be included in the mainstream classroom. Of course, I do not believe that it is good for children to forget their*

*first language; it's a pity, since they could have the advantage of knowing two languages. However in certain cases when we have free time in the class I talk to the children in their first language. What I usually do is to use individual words in both languages, as a translation for children to understand.'* (Elsa)

When I asked Elsa to describe certain instances when she had heard children using their first language spontaneously in their everyday school interactions, she instantly said 'no' but after some thought she said '*only when they play with children within their own cultural groups*'. I then decided with Elsa to observe an Albanian child, called M. and observe her interactions during the breaks that day, in relation to the language she used. What we had noticed was that M's friends were all Albanian girls of different ages and that was a point that Elsa stressed as important, as usually children develop friendships from their own age groups. As she said:

*'Look how they are all gathered together. They are not the same age but they are playing together. You won't see that with native children, they play with children from their own age group or even their own classroom. I believe that they feel safer like this. These children seem to believe that the older ones will guide and protect them. Possibly they help them with language or homework, I am not sure. But I am happy to see that. They are being supported.'* (Elsa)

Another interesting point that we had noted was that the girls spoke Albanian all the time, but when teachers came closer they immediately stopped their conversation and started speaking in Greek or when someone approached them, they lowered their

voices. We observed that when a teacher approached them, instantly they started speaking in Greek so that the teacher could hear them and stopped as soon as they thought they were out of earshot. At the end of the day we discussed the incident we had observed earlier and Elsa argued that:

*'These children may feel constrained or have some kind of fear of using their language overtly, when other people are listening to them. I think that maybe unconsciously they believe that it is not acceptable to the school or the other Greek children to use their language. Maybe this is the case, I don't know, what I do know is that maintaining their language is not something that is promoted or being considered by the school.'* (Elsa)

All the bilingual teachers noted that one of the reasons they used children's first language during their lessons, was that they believed this would help them emotionally and helped them to feel more relaxed. Secondly, they felt that if the children had someone to whom they could feel more attached to they would be able to express their difficulties and anxieties. Eleni, for example, stressed this dual role in her approach to these children, both as a teacher but also as an advisor to them. She specifically noted this inability or weakness of the intercultural school, as it is currently operated, to meet the needs of these children holistically. She felt that it was her role to act as a school advisor and provide the '*link between the child in need, the school and the children's family*', even though this was not part of her official role in the school. As a result of this, during the breaks, she approached the children and listened to their difficulties, all of these interactions being in the children's first language.

The only other instances that bilingual teachers and the children from the 'reception' classes had the opportunity to present part of the children's own culture and languages were in school celebrations that took place during the year. As bilingual teachers noted, this was part of the intercultural education that the schools promoted and aimed at the identification of these languages and cultures. This was done through poems that children could select from their countries and role-plays that might relate to historical facts or stories from the children's own countries. I was amazed at one incident that took place in the staffroom two weeks before a school's celebration, an incident that I thought signified and, in a way, summed up the school's culture in relation to the presence of 'foreign' children's presence. The following is an exact extract from my field note diary that day:

'It's almost 12 o'clock, I have completed my observation session in the reception class and I am with the two bilingual teachers heading towards the staffroom for coffee. In the staffroom there is a discussion between the teachers about the set up of the celebration and the way they will approach it on stage. At that point one of the mainstream teachers turned to us and asked whether the local television network will record the school celebration as in the previous year. Some of the teachers started to laugh. The bilingual teachers then turned to me and said that *'this is the reality, last year our children presented poems from their countries but we knew that TV cameras would be present and so we prepared something intercultural to justify the role of the school'*. (Fieldnote extract, May 2004)

It seemed that in this school there was an effort to present an intercultural image to the world outside. That was part of its attempt to justify its existence based on the belief that it offered an intercultural pedagogy. This intercultural image was not part of its every day practice, as it operated within the lines of the dominant culture and ideology. It seems that even though the schools were intercultural and they were supposed to offer their students a different model of education, in practice they were part of a mechanism of mainstreaming that aimed to 'assimilate' all students to the Greek culture and language. What is also contradictory in the philosophy of the intercultural schools is that although they were supposed to integrate all children into the mainstream, they also attempted to maintain the cultural difference within their schools in order to justify their intercultural status.

Another dominant belief that forms part of the bilingual teachers' discourses and was identified in the interviews and observations with them, was that they related children's progress in their classes, with children's level of using and understanding the Greek language. Greek language acquisition was considered as the only factor of progress recognised by the school. This was part of the mainstream teachers' discourse as well, since in every case they related a child's successful inclusion in the mainstream classroom with their language proficiency in Greek. This was evident during the interviews with the bilingual teachers, as, when I asked them to describe their understanding of children's progress, their answer was very explicit. For example Anna told me that:

*'Since there is no kind of assessment for foreign children, the only assessment that shows their progress is their level of Greek.'* (Anna)

Similarly Maria described children's progress in her class as:

*'The majority of my children have shown great progress in their Greek and they seem to attend their mainstream modules satisfactorily. There is only one new incoming child that I have had to work with intensively to improve his Greek, in order to prepare him to attend the mainstream classroom.'* (Maria)

Another commonly held belief among the bilingual teachers was their view that children's progress was hindered by two major factors as defined by them. The first was related with the social status of the children's families and the second with the fact that many of these families could not speak the Greek language at a school level or preferred to use their first language in their home settings. It was believed that children's progress was affected by the fact that their parents were working class and had to be away from their homes for many hours, as they could not help their children with their homework. As Elsa explained most of her children could make *'better progress, if someone from their home had the time and knowledge to help them with Greek and their lessons'*. Similarly Lia, the Russian-speaking teacher noted that:

*'Most of the families are working class and have more than one job. They usually move between two or three jobs to collect their daily wage. This means that they are away from their homes for the most of the day. During this time the children are usually looked after by their grandparents and in some cases we believed, as a school, that some of these children might themselves work, to provide some extra income.'*

*Some of the older children came into school in the morning very tired and were sleeping during the lesson and we suspected that they might be working until very late. Unfortunately, as a school, we do not have any power to do anything but only to arrange to speak to the parents themselves. As a result, children do not have anyone with whom to practice their languages or get any help with their lessons.'* (Lia)

Similar views were expressed by all the teachers in relation to the factors that hindered 'foreign' children's progress, but what was evident in all of them, was that any kind of responsibility about the failing educational results of these children, did not lie with the school. It was rather implied that children's failure to comply with the school norms and their poor schooling performance was a result of children's own deficits and not a result of the school's structure and provision. As one of them argued:

*'I do believe that if their parents were more involved in their children's education, the children could do better at school. If there is no one at home to help them with their reading and the practising of the Greek language there is not much the school can do. Why do other schools with foreign children but from middle class families not have this problem? Possibly because they get help at home, as well.'*

(Maria)

A number of teachers also recognised that children's limitations in their first languages, might well limit their ability to acquire the second language satisfactorily. It was also suggested that since children experienced major limitations in their first



language, this would also have an impact on their progress in the learning of the second language. As Theodora argued:

*'These children experience many difficulties as some of them came to Greece at an early age without having developed their first language and now they have to cope with the difficulties of learning a second language. They are probably listening to their parents and close relatives speaking in Russian for the most of the day and I have to teach them for a couple of times during the week to write and speak in Greek. These children also have not received any formal schooling in their first languages and most of my children can only speak or use everyday words, they cannot write on their first languages. They have many gaps in their first language as well. For me it is very logical to expect these children to have major gaps in their learning and difficulties with their adaptation to the new environment, as this is a period that we are aiming to teach them the language in order to be able to attend the mainstream curriculum and continue with their education like all the other children and not so much the attainment and progress on their everyday modules.'* (Theodora)

The analysis of the interviews, however, presented another dimension of the use of children's first language. Even though everyone recognised that the development of the first language could have an impact on children's learning and progress on acquiring the second language, the role of the school in this process was not recognised or mentioned. On the contrary, what was mentioned was the contribution

of the children's family to the children's improvement in their literacy skills, especially on their first language. However it was also believed throughout the school that it is part of the parent's responsibility to help children become more fluent in Greek and more generally to fit into the school culture and norms. This contradiction seemed to emerge in the interviews, as it was argued that children's families had to develop children's first language on one hand but also to speak to their children in Greek as this is the only way for them to 'progress' in the Greek society. Anna noted that:

*'I have realised that these children have no understanding of a number of concepts that we use from time to time and I have to explain them and describe them from the very beginning, even for very simple things, like names of animals. This, I believe, is a result of children's illiteracy, as there are obvious gaps in their learning in the first language, since they do not get the support needed from their parents at home and in the Greek school they cannot attend normally as other children do, since they do not know the language.'* (Anna)

In another discussion, however, Theodora believed that children's parents should try and use the Greek language in their homes as regularly as possible, in order to help their children improve their language skills in Greek. She also linked Greek language learning with success, a term used by her, in every aspect of the children's lives. All teachers made this connection between 'success' that for them meant to pass the national exams and enter a university that would lead to a better life and recognition by the society. They all stated that these children should try harder to overcome their

difficulties with language and reach this target, rather than stay uneducated. Veta did mention the word 'failure' for those children who would not be able to reach this target and follow in their parents' footsteps and work as unskilled workers. As it was argued:

*'It would be great for these children to be able to speak two languages but unfortunately I should recognise that if children want to succeed in this society they should learn the language very well and be fully integrated not only into the school but also into the society.'*

(Theodora)

Concerning the bilingual teachers views about possible ways to further support 'foreign' children in the intercultural school, two interventions were proposed, as it was believed that they could have a positive impact on children's progress in the school. The first intervention proposed the use of reception classes throughout children's primary and secondary years, but with a more supportive role and being offered as an optional module. Secondly, they proposed the integration of 'foreign' children's families in the schooling process that would be twofold: their own education, support and advice from specialists and, secondly, their involvement in their children's education by developing, for example, language classes themselves or by developing certain events for the local community that would reflect their cultures and languages. The following extracts from Elsa, Maria and Lia are indicative of this.

*'I think that parents should be included in their children's education and have an active role in the school. I believe it would improve their progress in all aspects of their education.'* (Elsa)

*'I think something that would improve children's progress could be if we developed supportive groups consisting of children who had been fully integrated into the mainstream class. As a result children would be able to have contact with other children from the same culture and develop supportive networks between them.'* (Maria)

*'I think that developing some kind of supportive network from specialists, such as social workers, psychologists and counsellors targeting those families in need, by providing them, for example, parenting skills, psychological support and further education, would affect their children as well and probably improve their progress in school.'* (Lia)

Teachers also agreed that children's needs were best being met, as a result of how the intercultural school operated, within the 'reception' classes. This was justified as being a result of the way that these classes were structured, as they offered a more relaxed teaching environment in which it was easier for children to express themselves, in a more informal way. These classes also worked with small groups of four or five children, and there were instances where the teacher worked with just one child. In this way, such children had all the attention from their teachers and their limitations were instantly recognised and worked with. Finally, they offered the children a more supportive environment that resulted in the development of closer relationships between the teachers and the children because the teaching was more informal and also developed better interactions between the participants.

However, all of them seemed to agree that even though there was an increased awareness of the needs of 'foreign' children in the school as a whole, there was no official knowledge base at all levels, from the Ministry of Education down to the school level, that could translate this awareness to practice. This awareness of issues of equality and the educational needs of 'foreign' children increased from 2000 onwards, especially with the development of seminars, conferences and in service training for teachers who had 'foreign' children under their care. Teachers, however, criticised this help as being very theoretically based and not closely related with what teachers should do on their everyday practices. As Theodora argued:

*'Even though the seminars organised by the universities of Athens and Ioannina, which have complete responsibility for the implementation of this programme and the organisation of the intercultural schools, helped us a lot as they kept us up to date with issues affecting the education of these children, I think that learning more practical skills that a teacher could use in the classroom would be more helpful. This is why many mainstream teachers adopt this pedagogy of treating all children the same, as nobody has shown them a different approach to their teaching. Even with the books that were developed specifically for 'reception' classes which are up to date and their philosophy is to teach Greek as a second language, there were many delays in their delivery. We still haven't received our copies and we haven't received any training on how to use this specific material in our classes.'*

(Theodora)

It was also very interesting to note throughout the interviews with the bilingual teachers and also from my daily field notes that bilingual teachers, similarly to the mainstream teachers, did not recognise 'foreign' children as a special group after they were integrated into the mainstream class. They were only concerned about those children who could not speak Greek and who received language support in the 'reception' classes and not about those 'foreign' children who had been fully integrated into the mainstream. In all my questions that were related to the needs of 'foreign' children, teachers spoke only about those in the reception classes. Problems with language were also closely related with problems affecting children's behaviour and participation all aspects of the school life. I think that signified once more that the established practices aimed to promote monolingualism, without showing any real intention for change.

### **7.6 Greek language teaching and issues of bilingualism**

As I have identified previously in the thesis, the main part of the work done in reception classes was text based and closely related with language, especially in the written form, since the mainstream school assesses children's progress through written examinations. When I questioned teachers about the form of examinations in the mainstream class as it currently operated, they suggested that they viewed their role as being responsible for the preparation of these children to be able to take part in written exams, as well as to participate orally in the class. Again, there was a connection between children's ability to operate monolingually in all forms of school life and children's progress and success throughout the education system. As Maria noted:

*'It is part of my responsibility, not only because it's part of my work, but also ethically, to prepare those children to reach a good level in their writing skills in Greek as the examinations are in written format throughout their school life. My first priority is to teach them how to express verbally in Greek as a first step, in order to participate in the class and communicate with the other children and then to start writing in Greek. This is very important as they have to take written tests in order to progress from one class to another.'* (Maria)

The major difficulties that children experienced in written Greek that were identified by all teachers were related to children's use of tenses and the closure of genders. Children needed substantial help with the learning of grammatical rules and writing skills that led, as it was observed throughout the study, to an unequal distribution of time spent on different activities in the reception class. Most of the time spent in the reception classes was dedicated to activities of Greek grammar learning and then to reading texts from the language book. I did not observe any different type of activity taking place that could possibly have a different orientation and a more intercultural approach. Only at certain instances at the beginning of the lesson, teachers interacted with children in Russian or Albanian or in special school celebrations where there were more activities in place. The following extracts are observational notes collected during field work and reflect these differences.

'The lesson started at 8:30. I am observing both bilingual teachers as they work at tables next to each other in the staffroom. I am sitting

somewhere in the middle. The Albanian teacher begins the lesson by checking the children's homework that included grammar exercises. On the other table the Russian-speaking teacher is showing children where the area of the Black Sea is. As Theodora told me the lesson today was about 'Minor Asia Catastrophe' and most of the interactions with children were in Russian. Today (19 May) was the national Remembrance Day in memory of the Pontus Genocide. When I first came to the school, a group of children were dressed in their national costumes; they carried the Greek flag and they were going to a parade with other schools. The activity in the class lasted for eight minutes and then the teacher continued the lesson by explaining a new grammatical rule, writing examples on the blackboard. She then gave the children an exercise where they had to find the verbs in the text and find different tenses. On the other table the bilingual teacher was reading a text, so that children could hear the spelling of the words and then gave them a grammar exercise.' (Fieldnote extract, May 2004)

There were also a number of instances in the reception classes where bilingual teachers tried to transmit notions of Greek culture by teaching the children Greek history, as it is presented in Greek history books<sup>18</sup>. This included national anthems, Greek celebrations, customs and language. It was expected that 'foreign' children

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<sup>18</sup> There is a big debate in Greece about the ways that historical facts are presented in schoolbooks that are characterised as being ethnocentric (see for example Kostandopoulou et al., 2000).



would have to internalise all these and make them part of their belief system and life, if they wanted to succeed educationally and also as members of the society in which they lived.

What was striking through the analysis of the discussions with the bilingual teachers was that they were far more revealing about their views of 'foreign' children's progress in school and society than the discussions with mainstream teachers. The following observational extracts are indicative of these and show their different approaches compared to mainstream teachers, who had a rather indifferent stance towards 'foreign' children and their problems at school.

*'Theodora, the Russian speaking teacher asked the children who wrote the Greek national anthem. She addressed specifically to one of the girls. She did not know the answer and the teacher became really angry with her and said that she expected everyone to know it the next time. She then continued by saying that: it is not possible to listen and sing the anthem every Monday and not know who wrote it. She then said to the children in a milder tone that it is really important to know the history of the country you live in, in order to understand the people and become closer to them.'* (Field note extract, May 2004)

In another instance Eleni said to a child during the lesson:

*'I have seen some things in your behaviour in the school that I think you should consider changing. I am not saying that you should forget*

*your country, nobody is saying that, but you should understand the people here and get to know them. If you are going to live here you should know the people really well, the history and the language, you should love them in order to make your life easier. They then continued with a language exercise by taking turns with another child, but Eleni was not satisfied with the children's performance and said in a loud voice: I expect you to be better tomorrow, you were not good today.'* (Field note extract, May 2004)

Throughout the observations collected from the 'reception' classes it was evident that the teachers gave most of their attention to and spent most of the time on activities based on writing skills and orthography. They also showed great zeal during their teaching and aimed to prepare their children for the mainstream classroom as soon as possible. However, it became evident and teachers themselves recognised that this commitment they showed for their work was mainly part of the fact that they were not in a permanent job position but rather on a temporary basis as the schools applied for them at the beginning of each school year, depending on their needs. Most of the observations with Lia, for example, were writing grammar exercises and this was part of her routine each day.

Lia is checking the orthography of one of the boys, *'You are not writing nicely'*. *'You make small l as a capital L in Russian'*. The boy looks down at his book, he seems to be sad. Lia then looks at the exercises of one of the girls, she is really proud of her, *'Great work you write very nicely'*. They continue with grammar activities and

tenses. One of the girls forgets to place the tones on words. Lia asks her to *'place the tones in words and try not to forget it each time'*. She also asks the boys at the end of the lesson to stop speaking in Russian during the lesson. *'You can do that when we finish the exercises'*. After the break Lia helps a girl from the fifth grade with her essay. It is really difficult for her as she cannot express her thoughts in Greek. Lia advises her to write it in Russian and then translate it in Greek. (Field note extract, February 2004)

When I further questioned teachers about the difficulties 'foreign' children experienced in the school and the high drop out rates of these children during the transition from primary to secondary education, they indicated that this was mainly a problem of not knowing the language and the huge gaps created on their knowledge level as a result of this. This was another indication of the way teachers viewed children's bilingualism as a hindrance to their progress in school, but there was also no indication of blaming the school system for not responding to these children's needs. For example Niki argued that:

*'Language is the only problem I think that in a way slows down children's progress in school. There are many examples of foreign children who are doing great in school and that is because their language level is very good and they are fully integrated as all the children in the mainstream. When they reach a good level of language and are ready to be integrated into the mainstream from their early years they have the same abilities as all the other children.'* (Niki)

## 7.7 Conclusion

The analysis of the data collected through long-term observations and interviews with the eight bilingual teachers of the four intercultural schools in Thessaloniki revealed the monolingual and monocultural character of the Greek school and its orientation to the schooling of all children within the mainstream norms. Even though the data collected through observations in the four schools were consistent with the views of the mainstream teachers, a number of differences in their approaches to teaching and views about intercultural education were also identified. Bilingual teachers identified their role in the school as teachers, helpers, supporters, social workers in some cases and even friends of these children. These additional roles, however, were not part of any official school or policy discourse but were, rather, based on the teachers' own personal beliefs about how best to support and help these children to succeed in their school lives.

More specifically, four different roles were identified during the observations and interviews with the bilingual teachers. The first one was identified as being the 'helpers' in mainstream subject delivery, as they had to help 'foreign' children with their mainstream lessons and act as translators of any difficulties in children's understanding. They were also identified as providing the link between the school and the children's families. In many cases, teachers identified problems with children's behaviour in the school that they communicated to their parents. As all the schools worked with limited resources and the appointment of a social worker or psychologist was not available in any of the settings, bilingual teachers provided this assistance of communicating expectations between children, their families and the school.

Teachers, also, in many cases attempted to promote themselves as role models to these children. They wanted to show that it is possible for everyone, even 'foreigners' to succeed in the Greek society by following the norms and that mainly included the level of language proficiency. However, this specific role that some of the teachers tried to promote was problematic, as bilingual teachers had minimal power in the school hierarchy and decision making process and were identified as subsidiary teachers as their remuneration level was very low and they were employed on a temporary basis. Finally, bilingual teachers had to undertake part of the mainstream teachers' role in terms of assessing 'foreign' children. Because of the language difficulties children experienced in the school, they could not take part in any kind of examination, oral or written. As a result, the monitoring of 'foreign' children's progress in the school was part of the bilingual teachers' responsibility and they had to cooperate closely with the mainstream teacher and identify children's limitations, needs and progress throughout the year. This was probably one of the most important roles that bilingual teachers performed, but again, the unequal power relations developed between mainstream and bilingual teachers made this role problematic.

Bilingual teachers were also shown during their teaching to give specific emphasis to subject knowledge of the mainstream curriculum by using children's first language, as a medium for transmitting this knowledge. This is another indication of what the intercultural school and mainstream teachers themselves see as the primary purpose of the 'reception' class and the pedagogy that characterizes it. What seems to be in contrast in this pedagogy is that even though bilingual teachers were working towards the fulfilment of certain aims of the dominant school culture such as to prepare

'foreign' children to be integrated through a process of homogenisation into the mainstream classroom, they also worked outside this status quo of established practices by using other languages in their teaching, even though the school settings did not promote their use.

Overall, however, bilingual teachers and the support they provided to children seemed to be productive, since, undeniably, they provided psychological and educational support to 'foreign' learners and helped them with the difficulties they experienced in their new environments. On the other hand, the unequal power relations identified in each of the four school settings between mainstream and bilingual teachers did not allow the implementation of different pedagogies or new forms of teaching that would target all children and not only 'foreign' learners. A possible re-examination of the bilingual teachers' role in these settings would make their presence more effective.

So far, I have presented the main findings and analysis of the empirical research. The thesis now moves on to draw conclusions and implications, all in the light of the main research questions set out at an earlier stage. The next chapter presents a discussion of these topics, in an attempt to gain a more analytical understanding of them.

## **8. Greek education and intercultural schooling: a synthesis of findings**

### **8.1 Introduction**

In the previous two chapters I mainly explored the essence of my inquiry and dealt with a number of issues that were related to the philosophy and everyday practices of intercultural schools and teachers' constructions of 'foreign' children and their bilingualism. This chapter presents a discussion of the main findings of the empirical research, blended in with relevant literature. The analysis of the data collected from head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers identified four main issues that influenced intercultural schooling and its practice. The analysis of the data presented in the previous two chapters, related to the schooling processes and teaching practices of the intercultural schools under study that were influenced by the homogenised nature of Greek schooling; the effect of power asymmetries between mainstream and bilingual teachers on their practices and role in the school; the effect of deficit thinking on teachers discourse; and finally the effect of language development and issues of bilingualism on children's identity formation. The aim of this chapter is to present a theoretical understanding of the main findings of this study and their relation to other external factors.

The first section of the chapter explores the homogenised nature of Greek schooling and its effect on the construction of student identities, in order to gain an understanding of Greek schooling, as all schools in Greece share similar characteristics due to the centralised nature of the educational system. The next

section presents the power asymmetries between the different agents of the intercultural schools under study, as the analysis of the data revealed the different perspectives expressed by the head, mainstream and bilingual teachers and the marginalised practices of the latter. This section aims to understand these differences and their effect on schooling processes. The following section presents theories of deficit that seemed to influence teachers' beliefs, in their attempt to explain the high drop-out rates of 'foreign' children and thus their failure to be properly educated. The chapter then presents a discussion on the issue of multilingualism and its effect on children's identity formation, as teachers referred to it as being the major problem in 'foreign' children's education.

The chapter concludes by making an argument for the introduction of a different model of education, based on democratic values and citizenship education. Teachers in the study recognised the need for change to improve the quality of the education offered to children. They proposed changes, not only in the official policy framework that should provide specific guidelines for teachers, but also within the school context and the teaching pedagogies that should be more child oriented.

## **8.2 The homogenised nature of Greek schooling and its effect on the construction of intercultural schooling and student identities**

The analysis of the data collected in the previous chapter suggested that all four educational settings shared similar characteristics, as all schools in Greece have the same organisation, philosophy, curriculum, structure, provision and textbooks.



Schools, however, also showed a variation in the total school population with more or fewer 'foreign' students in their intake. All of these however have a marked effect on the teaching practices, as most of the teachers followed similar routines in the four intercultural primary schools under study. The main reason for this homogenisation in educational settings in Greece is an overall belief that is also present in educational policies that all children are equal and no differential treatment should be promoted in relation to their social, economic, religious, political or ethnic background. This homogenisation is also promoted through the use of a standard language in the education of all children. 'Foreign' children's first language for example, was only used during the transition period from reception classes to the mainstream. This study, however, revealed ambiguities in this homogenisation theory as teachers recognised the importance of maintaining children's first language and teaching it in the school. This realisation, however, was part of the teachers' ideological belief system and not part of their teaching practices. Homogenisation theory was also promoted by the structural elements of the actual buildings themselves that aim to promote specific and acceptable attitudes to its students.

This homogenisation was also identified in a different context, however, by Sharpe (1992) who described it as being a result of the 'national context' that seems to influence and construct every aspect of the educational process. Broadfoot et al. (1985) identified the national context as consisting of three different, but at the same time, closely interrelated, aspects: ideological traditions, educational policies and priorities and institutional infrastructure. In the specific Greek context, the national aspect, as has been previously defined, is very strong, as every stage and process in the educational system is state controlled. Schools in Greece are national institutions

that are state regulated and inspected and, as such, they lack individual identity and that is the reason for their homogeneity. At the micro level, children receive the same treatment by their teachers, who mainly aim to have completed the requirements of the prescribed curriculum by the end of each school year. One of the points made in this thesis was that children from different cultural backgrounds were treated, in relation to the official curriculum and established pedagogic practices, similarly to the indigenous children, and only their language differentiation was formally addressed by the school, mainly because it was considered a problem. However, even though 'foreign' children were officially treated the same by their mainstream teachers, in practice their experiences of schooling were very different. This is inferred from observations of the marginalisation of their first language and culture and the marginalised position and unequal treatment, within the schools, of the bilingual teachers compared to the other teachers.

From the observations taken from the four schools, what was evident from an early stage was that all of them had almost identical architectural constructions and structural lay outs, not only in terms of how they looked from the outside, but also from the inside in terms of colours and classroom organisation. Space, and the way it is organised is clearly closely related to the way children are constructed as students and the ways they behave in that specific context (in this case the Greek state school context). As research by Germanos (1993) in Greece suggests, there is a close relationship between the structural elements and organisation of the school and the children's process of identity formation and self-image. The reason I am exploring this connection between space and students' identity is to reveal how forces external

to the schooling process, aimed to promote specific attitudes to 'foreign' children and bring them closer to the homogenised total of Greek students.

The basic characteristics of school buildings in Greece are based on the law of 1985 (Solomon, 1992) and were confirmed by my observations of the four settings. These were: the identical and standardised structure of all school buildings, which have to follow simple lines and patterns, with limited use of colours; the school space that is organised by following a specific pattern; the school entrance that leads through the corridor to individual classrooms that are isolated from other school spaces; the identical organisation of all classrooms with the teacher's seat in front of the blackboard facing the children and the children facing only in the direction of the teacher and the blackboard. According to Germanos (1984) the specific positions of the teacher and the children in the classroom and the way that the space is organised, acts to reinforce the character of the teaching process that focuses on the teacher. Finally the classroom décor is limited to pictures and maps. The themes of the objects that were used to decorate the classrooms had a symbolic meaning that were mainly related to the promotion of certain ideals related with the concept of nation, religion, politics, values, the physical beauties of Greece and students obligations in school. The children's voice is absent from the process of selecting the materials used for the decoration of their classroom. This was closely related with the ideological values that the education attempted to infuse in its students and the development of their national identity (Germanos, 1996).

Other researchers such as Mauros Koufis (1997) also identified this limitation of Greek schooling and education in general, to develop and present new ideals, such as living and growing in a global world and incorporating the ideals of interculturalism, based on the conditions existing in modern societies and modern ways of life. This occurs because Greek education is experiencing major difficulties in finding a balance between conservative ideals and views of teaching and progressive values in education. It is further suggested that all these structural characteristics of Greek schooling described previously, are designed to construct the identity of all students, indigenous and 'foreign', based on national ideals (Germanos, 2000).

What the research suggests (Germanos, 1984; 1993; 1996; 2000, Maurogiorgos, 1986) is that the way that space is organised and its overall lay-out, have a major effect in the way children behave in the classroom and how they participate in it. What I have identified in the analysis of the observations was that, even though Greek schooling tried to move forward from this standardised procedure of teaching and learning and give more emphasis to the 'mutual teaching method' so that children could have a more active role in the learning process, still teaching practices were observed to be based on traditional views of teaching. This meant that children had to behave in certain ways during the lesson, in their interactions with the teacher and other children and their position in the classroom and in every aspect of the school's life. Teachers for example, identified the value of co-operative group learning with the use of the project method for all children, but in practice they adopted different teaching approaches that were more teacher oriented.

Maurogiorgos (1986) for example suggested that the organisation of the school, the classroom space and the ways it is used, is part of a hidden curriculum that guides and leads to specific pedagogies that work in parallel with the official curriculum. More recent research by Germanos (2000) also identified that Greek primary schools and their schooling processes limit the creativity and potential of students to predetermined attitudes that are acceptable by the school system. As such, the whole educational process focuses mainly on the teacher and limits children's initiative and creativity to adopt a more passive role in the learning process. This was evident in the present research as well, as teachers took the most active role in this process of schooling by giving instructions and asking questions, while children, on the other hand, had a more passive role as they followed instructions and adopted specific behaviour in the classroom, in order to be acceptable. This was evident especially with 'foreign' children, as they were mainly passive recipients of the schooling process and followed specific norms promoted by the school system, most especially by suppressing their potential for bilingualism.

The influence of space is not only in terms of school organisation and lay-out, but also in terms of the regulatory control it has on the body, in the construction of children's identities. This dual role of space and its interaction, frames the identity of the model student that is required by the school. It is what Miller and Ross (1975) suggested, constitutes the 'public identity' of the student that is developed by schools, and influenced by the use of space. In this way, Greek schools, through the use of its space and organisation, aim to promote a 'hidden' code of behaviour to its students, in order to frame these behaviours to what is 'accepted' by the school, aiming to limit children's personal initiative. As Touraine (1974) argued, it aims to 'eliminate the

identity of the subject and alienate its personality' (cited in Konstandopoulou ed., 2000: 277). In the specific context of this thesis, this related to the identity of 'foreign' children, who had to suppress their personal characteristics, language and culture, within the intercultural schools as these promoted their difference from the school norm.

Children, however, have the ability to develop systems of resistance and develop their own identities and strategies of adapting to a new environment, without reproducing the existing patterns of behaviour that are promoted in their schools (Germanos, 2000). What seems to be a major problem, however, in this process of 'resistance' for 'foreign' children, is their increasing drop out rate from the school system and their general underachievement in their education. The analysis of the interviews with mainstream and bilingual teachers, carried out for this thesis, has identified a number of positive actions, such as the 'project' method, learning through new technologies and the use of art that could be used by the teachers in an attempt to improve the education of all children in intercultural schools. Teachers in the study have identified the problems faced in intercultural schools and suggested new methods of teaching and learning that differ from this homogenised pattern of schooling described previously. Greek schooling should be more flexible and able to take on new initiatives. Change cannot start from isolated teaching practices and the personal good will and imagination of individual teachers that this study has clearly identified, but through an organised attempt that will permeate all layers of the educational and schooling process.

### 8.3 Power asymmetries between mainstream and bilingual teachers

What the present research identified very clearly through the analysis of the data collected, was that the way that bilingual support was practised and being used in the intercultural school settings under study, was not similar to the practices of mainstream teachers. As was identified earlier, it was not necessary for bilingual teachers to have qualified teaching status in order to teach in primary education<sup>19</sup>, Theodora, for example, had a background in Physics education. This constructed how their role was defined and valued in these settings and fell into four different categories of bilingual support:

- Being the ‘helpers’ in mainstream subject delivery.
- Providing a connecting link between the school and the children’s families.
- Providing a good role model for ‘foreign’ children.
- Assessing ‘foreign’ children’s progress, especially in Greek language learning.

It is part of the official curriculum for language learning that teachers should provide a stimulating learning environment for all children, in order to help their language development. In practice, however, bilingual teachers were expected to provide both language-learning opportunities and mainstream curriculum learning, mainly in language and mathematics.

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<sup>19</sup> Qualified teachers in Primary education teach all subjects of the mainstream curriculum, except those characterised as specialist secondary modules like, for example, gymnastics.

It became part of the daily school practice for bilingual teachers to teach the Greek language module that was part of the mainstream curriculum, as all the responsibility for the teaching of language was given to them. Because of this, bilingual teachers mainly used the textbook of the mainstream classroom and not the one developed by the intercultural education initiative for learning Greek as a second language.

This was also evident from the educational advisory document developed by the University of Athens (1999) for the Ministry of Education and was given to all intercultural schools in Greece. It summarised the role of language learning for 'foreign' students. This document stated that the intensive teaching of the Greek language is very important for 'foreign' children at least at their first year of schooling. For that reason children have to undertake intensive language classes for three to six months which, in practice, means twelve to fifteen hours per week away from their mainstream classrooms. The document also mentions that teachers should provide children with a number of opportunities to listen and read different styles of Greek language in a rich language-learning environment, but it does not refer to children's first language development and its maintenance.

Bilingual teachers' use of specific subject content for the teaching of 'foreign' children was not part of any school document or official policy, but rather it was left to their own personal initiative to develop appropriate material for the children. In practice, however, bilingual teachers used the same language books that were used in the mainstream. Even though IPODE (Institute for intercultural education), had developed some educational material and books for bilingual teachers, these were not used by the schools, as bilingual teachers had to cover the mainstream textbook. This in certain



ways devalued the role of the bilingual teacher, from being an autonomous teacher with a specific subject to teach, to a teacher who was mainly viewed as being the assistant of the mainstream teacher. In a similar vein, studies by Arkoudis (2000) and Creese (2000, 2002) argue that bilingual teachers who adopt this role of providing help to the mainstream teacher, are marginalised within their settings, as their work is devalued. Creese (2004) noted that this support role held by bilingual teachers is part of a broader picture of deficit, not because of what the bilingual teachers are doing, but because there are other educational discourses and beliefs more dominant in classroom life.

In the analysis of the findings, I have identified the miscommunication between mainstream and bilingual teachers (Section 7.2), as any kind of cooperation between them was very limited. This could probably be one of the main factors that hindered the educational progress of 'foreign' children. Bilingual teachers were responsible for language learning and for providing support work to the mainstream teacher. It seems that this role was constructed as common practice and was viewed as less important than the work done by mainstream teachers who had to deliver curriculum subject knowledge (Lee, 1997).

Even though it was part of the mainstream teachers' responsibility to integrate all children equally in the learning process, there was unwillingness on their part to work with 'foreign' children, especially on those modules like mathematics where children needed extra support. This was a result of children's language limitations and the fact that the language module required individualised teaching to match the individual needs of the children. This unwillingness by mainstream teachers to provide extra

support to 'foreign' learners placed extra responsibilities on the bilingual teachers who had to work with these children on mainstream subject modules. It also showed that this was a form of excluding 'foreign' learners from the mainstream, limiting their educational opportunities and devaluing the role of the bilingual teacher, who were not presented as equal members of the schooling process, but rather were described as being the 'helper' or the 'language' teacher. Similar findings were identified in Valdes' study (1998), who argued that school processes could work against immigrant children, in order to make their transition to mainstream classes more difficult. It was also reported that mainstream teachers were unwilling to work with immigrant children, as they faced a number of dilemmas in their everyday practice.

It was realised during the fieldwork that bilingual support and provision at the four intercultural primary schools were all part of the mainstream school life and schooling processes, including notions of what counted as accepted school knowledge and learning. What I am arguing is that the schooling processes in the intercultural schools acted as a mechanism of mainstreaming, aiming to develop a homogenised totality from the student population. Walkerdine (1988) similarly showed how pedagogic discourse constitutes the pedagogic subject and through this process it becomes not only the message or medium of knowledge, but an instance of social construction. In this thesis I am arguing that the ways that the participant mainstream teachers acted and spoke to children in their classrooms and schools reflected their local culture and how those who were considered insiders or outsiders were defined.

Bernstein (1990) also identified patterns of pedagogic practice consisting of discourse conventions and protocols that frame an agenda often invisible to the participants.

These agendas play a role in the construction of the pedagogic subject, as these pedagogies or ‘message systems’ as they have been described, construct what counts as school knowledge (Ball, 1997). As I have demonstrated in Chapter Six, when teachers were prompted to describe the intercultural pedagogies and provision in their schools, they replied that there is no intercultural pedagogy but rather Greek language classes for ‘foreign’ children. There was an overall belief that what happened in ‘reception’ classes was not ‘real’ teaching that had specific subject content based on intercultural pedagogies, but rather a necessary process of Greek language learning for ‘foreign’ students. That was because there was a dominant pedagogy in all schools under study that was founded on the assumption that all knowledge comes from the transmission of the curriculum content in mainstream classrooms and school success for ‘foreign’ children could only come about by acquiring a good level in Greek language learning. This dominant ideology in all schools affected the role that bilingual teachers had in their schools and the ways they were viewed by mainstream teachers.

In this thesis, I have reported that even though the development of intercultural primary schools in Greece aimed to promote successful practices for the integration of ‘foreign’ children into Greek education and society, the everyday practices and limitations in the policy framework encouraged the use of migrant languages, only for transitional purposes and not in order to maintain them. That was until children were proficient enough to be taught in Greek and be fully integrated into the mainstream classroom. Thereafter there was no provision for their first language maintenance or any kind of bilingual support. What could be then concluded is that even though first language maintenance was considered by both mainstream and bilingual teachers to be

an essential skill and educational function that could help the learning of the second language, it was believed that its maintenance is the responsibility of the children's families or others within children's communities. There was an overall assumption that bilingualism is not desirable in mainstream schooling, but only essential for the transition period. It was reported, however, by both mainstream and bilingual teachers, that if children could maintain their first language, this could be a valuable resource for them. This was clearly documented, as there was no official policy document or school practice that promoted the use of other languages other than during the transitional period children needed to reach an adequate level of Greek. This was further evident from the fact that bilingual teachers were not employed to teach the curriculum bilingually, but were rather employed to help children in their transition from their first language to Greek.

Another dimension that was identified in the study and was documented from an early stage was the power asymmetry between bilingual teachers and language teachers (such as teachers of English). Even though second language learning is being promoted in Greek primary schools, there is an established hierarchy of languages that gives more importance to the learning of languages within the European Union and more specifically to the English language and not to minority languages. The Greek school gives a very strong priority to the learning of English, while minority languages that are spoken by a number of students are only acknowledged, as we have seen, during the transition from reception classes to mainstream.

As Helot and Young (2002) suggest, the failure to support the bilingualism of children from minority backgrounds is part of the European picture, as all the efforts in the

European context and investments are towards the teaching of European prestigious languages (English, French, German, Italian). There is a strong perception in Greece that the learning of prestigious European languages is a highly valued social and economic skill. The distinction between prestigious and minority languages, is evident in the curriculum itself as the teaching of English, German and French is considered essential and part of the mainstream curriculum. This contradiction of Greek schooling in terms of promoting certain languages has been reported in this thesis. It is considered important to promote English language learning from the early primary years, while migrant languages are rather neglected and are only used in reception classes.

#### **8.4 Deficit thinking in teacher discourse**

Critical research into deficit thinking originated in the early 1960s and investigated the belief that people of 'colour' and those from the lower economic levels, as a result of their culture and circumstances, were seen as lacking in comparison with the white middle class. This lack or deficit was seen as the root of their underachievement and a number of compensatory programmes were used to address this perceived deficit in an attempt to increase the educational attainment of these groups. Other theorists used relevant terms like 'deficiency approach' (Boykin, 1986), 'deficit theories' (Nieto, 1996), and 'deficit model' (Swadener, 1995). What the present study identified through the analysis of the head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers discourses, was a belief that 'foreign' children's difficulties and school failure was a result of the children's own deficiencies and not of their own limitations or school structures, except limited funding that failed to accommodate children's needs.

Teachers justified themselves by identifying a number of reasons that explained children's failure at school that mainly related with language and socio-economic factors. I am presenting deficit theories in this part of the thesis, in an attempt to understand and theoretically analyse part of the teachers discourse. These were not presented earlier in this thesis, as they originated after the completion of the fieldwork and were not part of any initial conceptual framework.

These were firstly linked with children's internal deficiencies such as, for example, cognitive and motivational problems and secondly with deficits that described the home background of 'foreign' children. It was striking that throughout the interviews teachers did not identify their own practices and school processes as being part of the problem, except in the case of the limited funds they received as schools, which, they believed, limited the quality of education offered. Some of the teachers identified children's slow progress at school as being a result of their cultural, linguistic and economic background. Another aspect that was closely linked by the teachers to 'foreign' children's progress at school was their family's educational and social background. Teachers in the interviews described them as '*working class families*', '*poor families*', '*unskilled workers*', '*doing low paid jobs*', '*doing two or three jobs to earn their living*'. The social status of the families was closely linked to children's progress at school, as the more they worked to earn their living the less they helped their children at home with their homework. Even in cases where a member of the family was at home and could help children with homework, their education and language ability in Greek was described as poor. It could be argued that these statements were not based on real knowledge of 'foreign' families' child rearing

routines, but were rather biased views, as teachers acknowledged in their interviews that they had limited communication with these families.

Bourdieu (1984) wrote about 'taste cultures' and the differences between working and middle class cultures. He conceptualised class cultural differences forming terms of 'symbolic culture' that schools and other institutions reproduce unequally in its members. As schools are part of the dominant culture they impose the culture and language of the middle class to the working class through 'symbolic violence'. As such, schools are sites of reproducing culturally, social class inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). In a similar vein, Foucault (1980) argued that the 'elite' (political and public policy makers) achieved order in their societies by using cultural institutions, schools for example, to construct national identities and to develop beliefs that the homogenisation of their societies were threatened by those who did not fit the criteria imposed by the dominant groups.

Teachers in this study identified children's home background as a factor that was seen as creating obstacles to their successful integration in school. Pearl (1997) described this type of deficiency as the 'cultural deprivation' model, also known as the 'cultural disadvantage' or 'social pathology' model. This type of deficiency sees the child's family as the transmitter of these deficiencies. In this study, teachers have identified these type of influences on 'foreign' children's ability to learn. Children coming from these type of families were described by deficit theorists as intellectually and linguistically impaired, having limited vocabulary and communication ability, as well as suffering low self-esteem and cognitive problems (Pearl, 1997).

As an answer to the problem, deficit theorists perceived the development of language programmes based on verbal stimulation, in order to help children adjust to the curriculum. According to Pearl (1991) these were early interventions with a clear deficit thinking orientation. It was believed that:

The dominant theoretical explanation for disproportionate school failure of the poor and the minority was 'accumulated environmental deficits' - that is, students entering school with a build-up of handicaps incurred in early formative years that would be irreversible unless significant action was taken when children were very young... If, however, intervention begins early enough the child can recover from the lack of intellectual stimulation at home and the dearth of language... (Pearl, 1991: 285)

Pearl's argument understands deficits as 'organisations of the environment that biases the opportunity structure to increase the likelihood of certain groups to succeed at the expense of others' (cited in Valencia, 1997: 134). In practice this means that children who are identified as being at risk will not have the same opportunities as the other children.

It seems that the intercultural schools under study, not only worked within an assimilationist philosophy but also within a deficit thinking framework, which identified children's cultural and home background and their families' social status as a form of deficiency. These three types of deficiency were identified by the teachers as having a negative impact on children's progress at school and it was implied that these



children came into school with less capacity to take advantage of opportunities compared with indigenous children, because of their linguistic, cultural and social background. Moreover, this study, by making a detailed examination of teaching practices, has unravelled the relation between beliefs and practices and how these related to deficit theories and how teachers constructed 'foreign' children as deficient learners. This focus on practices is also highlighted by Pearl (cited in Valencia, 1997: 148) who noted that 'when school failure persistently correlates with class, race and ethnicity, an exhaustive examination of the school practices is vitally needed before conclusions about student deficiencies can be advanced'.

It was interesting to note, however, that while teachers initially spoke about the absence of 'foreign' children's families from the educational process, when they were later interviewed on the same aspect, they noted that this should not be generalised to all the families, as there could be exceptions. It could be argued that teachers had subconscious views that were expressed in the first interview and were based on stereotypical views about 'foreign' families. Greek education in general, has been left behind in terms of developing programmes for parental participation in the school process, but rather adheres to more traditional ideas that see parents as the helpers with children's homework and those who will monitor their progress at home. Fine (1995) wrote about the relation between low income families, their educational role and school policy. She noted that:

*Little is being said or done by policy-makers or educators that truly incites parental participation, empowerment and critique...To the extent that parent involvement is noted as essential to school improvement, the strategy is typically one in which parents are*

*trained as homework monitors or 'better' parents – not as collaborators, sources of critical information, innovators or critics...Unless this power differential that marks the relations between schools and low-income communities is addressed as controversial and inside public policy, the relationship will continue to be educationally bankrupt. (Fine, 1995: 86-87)*

This form of deficit thinking that mainstream teachers in this study used to explain 'foreign' children's limitations at school was both related to the families' cultural and linguistic background and to their social status. This, however, seemed contradictory to the views expressed by bilingual teachers who identified no learning difficulties in the children of middle class 'foreign' families who attended Greek private schools.

Another form of deficit related to the cultural and linguistic background of the families and the children themselves. Teachers believed that children did not get the same verbal stimulation at home as at school and this limited the overall support they could get to improve their language skills. Similarly, these families could not provide their children with rich textual experiences by reading books to them, for example, or involve them in language-rich discussions. As a result of this, it was believed that children brought to school certain deficiencies and unless these were changed, these children would persist throughout their school life and their progress would be limited. These stereotypical views were not based on real facts or direct experiences, as teachers themselves reported that they did not have communication with those families and even in cases where they did, they could not be certain about the child-rearing patterns of each family. Therefore the statements made were, rather, based on

stereotypical views that teachers held about the environment in which ‘foreign’ children grew up.

An overall absence of any kind of positive discourse about the abilities of ‘foreign’ children and their cultural and language background was notable in the analysis of the data collected for this study. Teachers constructed the profile of these children based on personal beliefs and attached those to all ‘foreign’ learners. These children were mainly identified as being deficient learners, based on their learning ability, language limitations, their families background and socio-economic status. Valencia (1997) believes that these kind of constructions for certain groups of children as being ‘at risk’ is at the core of deficit theory, as it only describes what children cannot do. It is also very common for those describing these deficiencies to leave out of the equation personal practices, as teachers did not reflect or were critical of them or the schooling processes and how exclusionary these could become to specific groups of children.

### **8.5 Multilingualism and identity formation**

It was evident throughout the study that Greek classrooms are multicultural in their composition and face a number of dilemmas daily, as a result of this diversity. Schools however, only seem to address the issue of language, as they consider it to be the main problem or the only problem that creates obstacles to children’s schooling process. The aim of this section is to provide a theoretical understanding of the reason why schools in Greece and more specifically intercultural schools in Thessaloniki, dealt only with the issue of language, when concerned with ‘foreign’ children’s education. I am aiming to understand why the intercultural schools under study worked within a

monocultural and monolingualistic framework and treated 'foreign' children's language capital as a problem and not as a valuable resource.

As I have identified previously in Chapter Two of the thesis, all European countries have experienced cultural diversity in their schools and have taken measures to deal with the issue of multilingualism. The norm that was followed in all European countries was the use of a common language and the medium of delivery to children was through their formal education. The use of a common language by nation states was an attempt, and still is, to create a homogenised totality by reducing diversity as much as possible in the public sphere. Govaris (2001: 29) defined this homogenisation as the 'process of integrating members of a society into solid groups of people, based on social and structural criteria that are summarised in culture, language and religion'. This is only one side of the coin, however, the other being the process that excludes those individuals who do not fit the norm. This could create certain social inequalities in nation states, as well as leading to the construction of minority groups. Educational policies in Greece are being characterised as assimilative. These assimilative policies are evident in many countries and aimed to eliminate the cultural differences in an attempt to protect the nation's identity. These policies however, have been widely criticised as being culturally racist (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994; Kostopoulos, 1999).

The more conservative voices of policy makers in nation states see diversity as a problem and a potential threat to their country's unity and therefore they believe that the use of a common language is an answer. Other more liberal voices however, that similarly believe that a common language system is the norm, base their argument on issues of equality of opportunity and the equal participation of all citizens in public

life. Participation in public life is a right that all citizens should enjoy, but this could only happen by using a common language system that is spoken and understood by the majority (Gotovos, 2002). Teachers in this study seemed to adhere to these more liberal voices, as they both recognised the importance of maintaining ‘foreign’ children’s first language, but also the use of a common language for all.

In practical terms the question that needs to be considered in terms of education is to identify the role of minority languages (those spoken by ‘foreign’ children) in the Greek educational context and what are the consequences for an educational policy that encourages the use of other languages (not foreign, as this term is only used for high statuses languages, e.g. English). Two different positions were identified in this thesis and, even though they were contradictory, both of them were valued by their supporters and that makes the discussion for multilingualism in the school context even more difficult.

The first approach recognised the value and importance of maintaining ‘foreign’ children’s first language and transmission to other generations. Teachers in the study very clearly expressed the belief that maintaining children’s first language is positive for their overall development and, ultimately, progress in school. On the other hand, it was also recognised that ‘foreign’ children should reach the same level of language competence as the indigenous children in order to be able to compete with them in written examinations, especially in undertaking examinations for entrance to higher institutions, since there is great competition and time constraints in the exam itself. According to this view the child’s first language is considered an obstacle to his/her progress both educationally and socially. For both of these views I have identified a

number of criticisms that I am exploring in an attempt to understand intercultural schooling processes and practices.

Literature identifies the relationship between language, children's identity and school progress. Children's progress at school is closely linked to the quality of interaction that is developed between them and their teachers. This interaction could have a positive effect in the children's progress when the child's identity is being valued and positively reinforced (Cummins, 1999). According to Cummins the presence in the school of a child's first language could improve their interactions with their teacher and the other children, as they would feel more valued in the school setting. They would be encouraged to bring their previous experiences in the school, not only in terms of their language, but also cultural aspects from their communities.

Skourtou (1999, cited in Cummins) on the other hand, who applied Cummins' theory in the Greek context and Greek schools, believed that reinforcing children's identities in the school could also be possible without the teaching of minority languages and without their presence in the school. Cummins, however, argued that when 'foreign' children's language, culture and previous experiences are not present in the school life, these children feel devalued and start their education from a lower level compared to the indigenous children. In relation to Cummins' view, Gotovos (2002) raised for discussion a number of critical questions that were very relevant to the present study in terms of examining the status of languages in Greek education and their presence in school settings. The questions he raised were first of all to understand why schools need to reinforce children's collective identity and, more specifically, their ethnic

identity, and secondly to understand why this has to take place in the school through the teaching of minority languages.

These questions were proposed by many supporters of the view that the teaching of minority languages in the school is not a necessary process or related to children's educational progress. The supporters of this view based their argument on the high percentages of school failure among those students who attended bilingual programmes, while, at the same time, they reported increasing numbers of 'foreign' students who showed good progress and better grades than those who attended schools that did not have any bilingual programme or first language teaching (Cambell, 2000). This however is an issue that is not within the remit of the present study and further research is needed, to throw light on this discussion.

Another argument suggested that an early co-existence of the child's first language and that of the host country would create many problems in the children's language development. As a result, it was believed that separate schools or bilingual schools were needed to deal with this language problem of foreign children (Baker, 2001). On the other hand Baker (2001) argued that new research in the field of psycho-linguistics suggests that an early co-existence of the two languages does not negatively affect the child's language development and also that being a bilingual child cannot have an effect on their personality. He also argued that in cases where a child is being taught in two languages from an early age, there is always the fear that the minority language, because of its lower status, will be abandoned and forgotten at a later stage.

Another widely held view that supports the teaching of children's first language in the school argues that children learn better and are better learners themselves when they are being taught in their first language. As a result they show better progress in school and higher marks. Supporters of this view also believe that the teaching and learning in a second language should begin when children gain competence in their first language. This applies to the education of Greek immigrants abroad, especially for those in Germany. Gotovos (1997) negatively criticised the use of such a policy by the Greek state and presented research evidence from schools in Germany to support his view. According to his analysis, these schools had exactly the opposite effects from those expected, as most of their students showed slow progress, low marks and failure to enter institutions of higher education.

Gotovos clearly suggests that the teaching of minority languages in the classroom is highly problematic, especially since in the case of Greece, all children have to take written exams throughout their education. It is really a paradox to expect children from diverse cultural backgrounds, in cases where they have not gained full competence in Greek, to take the same exams as the indigenous children. This justifies the high numbers of 'drop-outs' in secondary education among those children, especially since their educational needs throughout their primary years, have not been covered. This argument is based on the official statistics given by the Ministry of Education which showed the low attainment in 'foreign' children's education, but it is also based on interviews with the teachers, who spoke about the performance of these children in their classrooms. Based on the research for this thesis, I have identified that even though reception classes, in the intercultural schools under study, operated as Greek language classes and they were supposed to improve 'foreign' children's language



level in Greek, they did not reach their full potential due to a number of other parameters that I have presented throughout the thesis. It seems that reception and mainstream classrooms worked in isolation from each other and they did not have a common plan or strategy that could deal with the individual needs of each child.

So far, I have attempted to present the two contradictory views concerning the presence or not of minority languages in the school and the reported effects on children's progress and identity. What I would like to argue, however, based on the experiences I gained during my time in the four intercultural schools throughout that year, is that there were a number of factors that had an impact on children's progress, beyond the issue of language. These not only related to the interaction between the children and the teacher, but also related to the children's families' stance towards education, their integration into their local communities, the communication between home and school, the families' participation in their children's education and school, teachers' beliefs and perceptions about children's abilities, methods of assessment, teaching practices, teachers' education, the organisation of the school-classroom, educational provision, and finally the ways of dealing with children's knowledge limitations, as a result of their first period of integration into the new environment. All these had a definite impact on and influenced 'foreign' children's education.

The following argument addresses the presence of minority languages in schools, as a basic human right for all children. According to Tsitseliki (1996), this right is above the national policies of each country and is part of international and EU legislation that supports the rights of minorities. This right was presented as a necessity for education, as being opposed to any assimilative policies. Based on this belief, the presence of

minority languages in schools is considered both a tool against assimilative policies and also an asset for immigrant students and the host countries (Tsitselikis and Hristopoulos, 1997).

The supporters of this view call for changes in the curriculum to include in it the teaching of minority languages. This could be implemented by adding extra hours to the curriculum for 'foreign' children or by having a system similar to the one taking place at the moment where children attend reception classes at the same time as other mainstream modules. This, however, creates other problems of exclusion from the mainstream and children feeling stigmatised and different from the school 'normality'. Another option that was promoted by teachers in this study, was for these language lessons to be optional in the curriculum and the children or their parents to decide whether they would like to attend them. This optional route of minority language teaching has many supporters, but the main problem is finding the appropriate funds. Teachers in the present study supported this route, but they also believed that minority language classes should be funded by parent groups who want their children to attend them or their communities or even their mother countries. That is the case with Greece. Greece funds Greek schools abroad to fulfil the needs of Greek immigrants. In the UK context, for example, as Bhatti (2006) describes, the funding for the operation of minority language classes lies mainly with the communities themselves and that is something that most Greek teachers identified as a possibility, in order to maintain children's first languages.

So far I have presented the different arguments proposed for and against the teaching of minority languages and their maintenance in schools. However, as in every country education is part of its responsibility, the educational philosophy and stance adopted towards minorities and their languages is part of their rhetoric. In the case of Greece, for example, its stance towards education has been characterised as being ethnocentric therefore any discussions about equality of cultures, religions and languages, sound rather utopian and, in practice, impossible to implement. For Gotovos (2002), the operation of a language plural school is not possible in the Greek context, as it would create cultural clashes, leading to inequalities in the school. Also, there is the possibility and fear that minorities would attempt to reproduce ideas coming from their mother countries and threaten the sovereignty of nation states. Gotovos supports the idea of teaching minority languages in school, but only during the transitional period or as an optional module, to satisfy the children's and their families' needs.

I have described, so far, the status of other languages in the Greek mainstream curriculum and the reasons they are being excluded from it, through this process of mainstreaming. There is an ongoing discussion about the use of the term identity and its relation to modern societies and that leads to my argument that changes in the curriculum are a necessary step forward for modern societies. Campbell (2000) contends that individuals are able to relate and identify to more than one group of individuals and are able to change their cultural identities when moving into a new cultural environment. He also notes the ability of certain individuals to move easily between different cultural contexts, without losing their personal identities. For Campbell, the development of multiple identities is possible for citizens living in modern societies. A curriculum based on this argument not only gives children the

appropriate vocational knowledge and skills, but also prepares them to be active citizens in a global world. As Skelton (1997: 187) believes, it should encourage a 'respect for perspective, uncertainty and provisionality as a preparation for living in an increasingly pluralistic, fragmented and rapidly changing society'. Education should be a place where children can develop their multiple identities in a 'decentred, post-modern world' where 'even the self no longer has singularity' (Hargreaves 1994: 70). Having this in mind, the school should not be a place of exclusion by identifying individual differences, but a place where all children are viewed as future citizens with equal opportunities. It is possible for individuals to have multiple identities and belong to a number of collectivities, as a result of living and growing in a globalised world.

It is exactly this notion of 'being Greek' and 'feeling Greek', this nationhood that governments tried to transmit to their citizens in order to protect their 'national' identities. As a result of this process of belonging, division lines were developed between those who fitted the criteria developed by nation states and those who did not. According to Golby (1997: 133) identity is achieved through 'membership of constitutive communities through which the individual can make sense of itself and its place in the world' and not through pre-determined, prescribed criteria. This definition of identity moves away from traditional and conservative views that see identity as being defined on the basis of a shared history, heritage, language, and in certain cases, religion and develops a new form of identity based on shared experiences, values and beliefs held within communities. The next section proposes the development of a new model of education that is based on democratic values, intercultural ideals and citizenship education. This is the researcher's contribution to this growing body of

literature that supports the development of multiple identities in children living in modern societies.

### **8.6 Moving towards a new model of education based on democratic values and citizenship education**

So far, I have explored how the different forms of deficit theories, constructed ‘foreign’ students as being at risk, their marginalisation in their school settings, the issue of multilingualism in schools and the rights claimed by many minorities for the maintenance of their languages, as well as how language and education is used by nation states to construct and maintain their national identities. I have similarly explored how individuals can have multiple identities that move away from the closed boundaries of national identities and that have created a number of divisions present in all modern societies. In this part of the thesis, I am arguing for the development of a different model of education that would be based on democratic values and citizenship education. For every society, schools are the primary institutions that have the responsibility to educate its future citizens. They have to prepare and educate young children for their participation in their societies. However, as this thesis has shown, an increasing number of children who are identified by their schools as ‘foreign’ are dropping out of school and fail to become educated citizens. For that reason, a new definition of citizenship education is needed to serve the needs of all children, irrespective of their differences, in this changing global world.

John Dewey (1859-1952) was one of the first to propose a turn away from conservative ideas in education to a more democratic process, aiming to prepare

students to be competent and active citizens. What all students would share in such a school would be a common citizenship and not their individual differences. I am adopting Pearl's (1997) four requirements for democratic education that can be summarised as knowledge, rights, participation and encouragement. The linking concept for all of them is equality in all its forms, in knowledge, rights – such as freedom of speech and expression, decision-making and participation in all aspects of public life.

Concerning the issue of knowledge that Pearl addressed, this also involves the school curriculum and the knowledge it requires the students to learn. What this thesis has clearly identified was that the curriculum itself created inequalities in the educational process by excluding 'foreign' children from it. This was either created by providing a form of different provision to 'foreign' children which meant that they were segregated from the mainstream and by providing modules in the mainstream, such as the religion module which meant that these children had to withdraw from it because their family religion was something other than Greek Orthodox.

Similarly, many teachers identified the ethnocentric nature of the history textbooks that presented the achievements of ancient Greece and its cultural advancements and superiority to other nations. The ethnocentric character of the Greek school has been explored by many researchers (Azizi-Kalatzki et al. 1996; Papahristou, 1999; Flouris et al. 1996) who noted that this was an attempt to develop a strong national identity for the students, by developing a feeling of superiority based on the advancements of the Greek society over centuries. This, however, is against what Pearl suggested as being part of a democratic education that values and treats equally all its citizens. The aim of

such an education would be to create informed and active citizens who would be prepared to deal with different challenges in the national, European and global context. This accords with Mouffe's (1993: 83) definition of citizenship that aims to 'foster an allegiance to a set of democratic rules and practices', whilst at the same time, 'allowing for a plurality of specific allegiances and for respect for individual liberty'. Kymlicka (1995) also made a call for multicultural citizenship. He believed that it is the right and need of every citizen, to maintain commitment both to their cultural communities and to their national civic culture.

A modern curriculum should have an anti-discrimination module, designed to bridge individual differences through interaction and communication between children and not by ignoring the need for discussion and critical reflection upon the 'Other' and one's own culture. It should help children understand their relation with their cultural communities, their nation states, and also to deepen their understanding about their role in the global community. Children have to develop an understanding of how their lives within their communities and societies influence other nations, and also the interdependence among nations in the world today. Banks (2004) identified this triplet of identities that children living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, should develop. These identities or identifications, as they are also called, are the cultural, the national and the global. Global identifications can be developed by the introduction of a global curriculum that would aim to develop in children those skills and attitudes needed to function in a variety of contexts and situations with a diversity of types of people. Teachers in this study identified a positive use of the Project method for the inclusion of all children, to open up the possibilities for children's analysis and discussion. Nussbaum (cited in

Banks 2004: 295) argued that ‘to be a citizen of the world one does not need to give up local identifications, which can be a source of great richness in life’.

A number of researchers talk about the necessity of changing the ethnocentric nature of the curriculum in Greek education, as an answer to the changing composition of modern societies and the challenges present in a globalised world. Bloom (1994) talked about a democratic multicultural education as a new model of education that would not just celebrate difference through isolated and out of context activities, but through a curriculum that would prepare and equip all students to become competent citizens in diverse societies. At the centre of such a curriculum is a shared understanding and communication between all cultures through which all voices are heard (Pearl, 1997).

As I explored previously, maintaining one’s own language is a right for all. Language is not just communication of ideas and feelings, but is also part of a person’s identity. I have also argued that the use of a common language among all citizens of a country is also very important, as it provides equal opportunities for all in accessing all activities in public life and a common code of communication. For this reason, a democratic education does not understand children’s first language as a type of deficiency that hinders their progress, but as a future skill that could be a useful resource. Teachers should find other ways to promote fluency in Greek without treating children’s first language as a problem. Valuing one’s own language and cultural background does not necessarily mean the development of multilingual schools and their inclusion in the curriculum. Other ways have been identified for the maintenance of children’s bilingualism. Democratising the school means giving voice to all students and



providing a number of free options from which children can select. Through this process of optional modules in education children could not only express their personal choices and fulfil their individual needs for learning, but it would also make the school settings more attractive and desirable for all learners. In terms of participation the present study has identified how 'foreign' students were excluded from the educational process and were also constructed as passive learners in their mainstream classrooms. One exclusionary process was the assessment system itself which constructed these children as not being competent to undertake any written or oral exams. All these are opposite to the values and beliefs of a democratic school that aims to give equal access and participation to all children irrespective of the activities taking place.

A curriculum based on intercultural learning should aim to develop reflexive and competent individuals who would have an understanding for 'other' cultures and individuals. In order for intercultural learning to show its full value and importance it should be integrated into the whole school curriculum and influence all aspects of school life, schooling processes and teaching practices. Such an intercultural curriculum should give opportunities to all students to develop their personal and multiple identities, to become 'active agents' and 'critical thinkers' (Quicke 1997: 145). An active citizenship 'combines not only the public and the social, but also the individual aspects of political life' (Hall and Held 1989: 177). All these new directions for changes in the curriculum, however, should be part of future research that would propose new initiatives that aim to include all children in the educational process.

The next chapter of this thesis summarises the outcomes and conclusions drawn out of this study.

## 9. Conclusion

### 9.1 An overview of the thesis

This chapter aims to present a description of the main study and its outcomes, as well as to identify its contribution to academic knowledge and propose areas for future research. This work set out to examine the relationship between policies, schooling processes and teaching practices. I explored how the schooling processes and educational practices in intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki affected the education of ‘foreign’ children and their position in them. This study was a result of a growing concern, evident in many documents presented by the Ministry of Education and reported by the media, that ‘foreign’ children not only fail in their education but also fail socially. The high number of drop-outs in their transition from primary to secondary education, their limited presence in higher educational institutions, their high unemployment rates and the increasing numbers of criminal offences committed by people coming from different cultural backgrounds presents a gloomy picture of the ‘quality’ of education and its effectiveness in educating these children. This thesis contributes to the development of this debate in Greece as it presents an account of the everyday reality of the schools under study and their practices, as well as developing a critical analysis of the ways that schooling processes and teaching practices construct and position ‘foreign’ children and their languages within these settings.

The development of intercultural schools was the first official recognition of the educational rights of all children, irrespective of any cultural or linguistic differences, as well as the first official state acceptance of the intercultural approach to the

education of all children. Even though intercultural schools were provided with new textbooks, bilingual teachers to help in the communication with ‘foreign’ children and guide books for the teachers, so that they could present practical ideas that could encourage children to communicate in their first language and describe their previous experiences, in practice these schools acted as mainstream schools that promoted a monocultural and monolingual philosophy and pedagogy, based on ideas of homogenisation. The official discourse of the Greek State placed all groups of children coming from other cultural backgrounds, except the Muslim minority in Thrace and the Roma, under the same heading of ‘foreign’, which, by definition, alienated those children from the indigenous population and stigmatised them as being different from the very beginning.

The research questions therefore emerged from the need to understand how these schools worked in their everyday practice and what kind of intercultural provision was available to their students. The primary aim of this study was to gain insight into the ways in which teachers interacted with culturally diverse children in their daily educational practice. It examined the relationship between the culture and ethos of the school, the practices and beliefs of the teachers and the schooling processes for ‘foreign’ children. The study has given answers to the following research questions, during the initial stage of the research:

- What were the educational policies for intercultural education and intercultural provision in Greek primary schools?
- What support did teachers receive in the settings selected, through in-service training or advisory seminars, regarding the education of ‘foreign’ children?

- What were teachers' beliefs about and understandings of intercultural education in Greece?

I firstly established the context of study, by investigating the educational policies, the curriculum, and provision of the intercultural primary schools and I then moved on to an analysis of teaching practices and beliefs. Once the context has been established, I then observed a number of classrooms in the selected settings and focused specifically on the reception classes and the bilingual teachers, since these were the only places where a distinctly intercultural approach was used. I aimed, in this way, to explore how bilingual teachers identified and addressed the needs of 'foreign' children in their classrooms and in what ways their discourses and practices were different from mainstream teachers. This second stage of the research provided answers to three more research questions.

- What were teachers' beliefs about children's bilingualism and the maintenance of their first language and what practices did they use to implement an intercultural pedagogy?
- How different were the discourses of the head teachers, the mainstream teachers and the bilingual teachers concerning the cultural and linguistic needs of 'foreign' children?
- How did the different discourses of the head teachers, mainstream teachers and bilingual teachers construct 'foreign' children?
- What approaches and methods did teachers use in their classrooms to meet the perceived needs of these children?

To begin with, Chapter One gives an outline of the thesis by presenting the different stages of the research. It presents the context and rationale for the study, the research questions and methodology, the main findings and its contribution to research and knowledge. In Chapter Two, I explore the development of intercultural education in Greece over the years and the initial attempts of the Greek State to respond to the challenges of integrating immigrant children into its educational system and the criticisms of the measures adopted. I also explore relevant educational research in the Greek context, in order to identify limitations that could be further explored in this thesis, but also to acknowledge what other researchers had written in the field of multicultural schooling. The chapter concludes by exploring theories of bilingualism and educational provision in an attempt to understand current practices in Greece.

At the core of this thesis is an examination of the teaching practices and beliefs in an attempt to understand how intercultural schools dealt with diversity, but also in order to understand the interplay between beliefs and practices, what was said and done. Chapter Three explored relevant literature that provided an understanding of how teachers developed their belief systems and, in effect, how these belief systems had an impact on their practices. The vast majority of the data collected in this study came from interviews with the teachers and observations of their teaching practices. For that reason, it was considered essential to gain an understanding, through this literature, of how teaching practices and beliefs were framed and influenced in order to be able to interpret them and understand them. Based on that, I argued that teaching practices and beliefs do not occur in a vacuum, isolated from the context in which they have been developed, but are, rather, influenced by the norms and values held by the larger society.

One of the major strengths of this study was the qualitative approach used in the collection and analysis of the data. The review of Greek educational research identified an absence of ethnographic style studies that focused on the socially constructed structures and cultures of schools. Rather, the focus of the majority of the studies was mainly large intervention projects that could be applied to the entire educational system. Angelides (2001) also reached similar conclusions, after reviewing educational research in Cyprus, and suggested that there should be a change of focus in educational research in order to take into account local cultures and social structures and their influence on schools and practices. There is no point in having large scale projects to improve national educational systems unless cultural factors are taken into consideration (Fuller and Clarke, 1994). The majority of the educational research studies in Greece were based on quantitative approaches or pre-structured qualitative methods that were quantitatively analysed.

The present research attempts a change of focus and aims to fill this gap identified in the Greek literature. It examines the schooling processes and teaching practices in four intercultural primary schools in Thessaloniki and the different discourses presented by the head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers. As such the use of a more inductive approach was considered as the most appropriate for the present research and was very much influenced by the processes and techniques of grounded theory. The research orientation that is explored fully in Chapter Four was towards the naturalistic paradigm as there were no predetermined agendas before the beginning of the empirical research and the researcher's presence in the schools.

Chapter Five presents an ethnographic account of the initial stages of the research process. It identifies the organisation, philosophy, provision and schooling processes of the intercultural schools in Thessaloniki. It aims to present intercultural schools in Thessaloniki as a case for exploring intercultural schooling in Greece. Data in this chapter were collected through the analysis of school documents, policies, observational field-notes, and initial interviews with the head teachers. The analysis of the findings in this chapter, report the dichotomy present within intercultural schools, between the organisation of the mainstream classrooms and that of the bilingual classrooms. These two different approaches were somewhat isolated from each other rather than taking an integral approach which should be the aim of the intercultural school directed at the education of all children.

Chapter Six and Seven presented the results of the analysis of the data collected throughout the year with the head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers, as well as observations collected from mainstream and reception classes. Chapter Six dealt with the beliefs and practices of the head and mainstream teachers as they related to indigenous and 'foreign' children and presented the official culture of the intercultural school and their mainstream practices. On the other hand, Chapter Seven presented the marginalised perspectives and practices of the bilingual teachers who were the mediators of the intercultural pedagogy. The analysis of these data clearly showed the different discourses identified by the different agents in the four schools under study and the power asymmetries between them. The analysis of the findings was presented in that order, as it reflects the different discourses in terms of diversity in the schools and the intercultural orientation to the education of their children.



The analysis of the data also showed that there was a clash, not only between the different discourses of the participants, head teachers, mainstream and bilingual teachers, but also between them and the policy framework that presented an ideology based on intercultural ideals. This created a gap between the policy for intercultural education and its practice in intercultural schools, as change was not yet internalised by schools and teachers themselves. This was identified by teachers themselves as they recognised that more steps are needed in terms of policy development if schools are aiming to develop and aspire to the ideology and ideals of intercultural education. For example they reported that the policy should be more specific and provide teachers with guidelines to follow in their practices. Isolated attempts, such as the one for the development of intercultural schools through the law for intercultural education, could not possibly have a positive impact on the education of 'foreign' children or bring change in the attitudes and practices of teachers.

It became rather clear that even though teachers recognised the challenges of working with 'foreign' children, they were constrained by an assimilationist educational philosophy that influenced their beliefs and practices or their cultural models, as Gee (1999) described them. They believed that fluency in Greek was closely related to these children's educational success and social integration, at the expense of their first languages. In that context, children's first language was viewed as a problem that hindered their progress in school. This finding echoes Siraj-Blatchford's (1994) definition of who are bilingual pupils. She argued that bilinguals are only defined as such, when they do not have fluency in English. In this study children were only identified as bilinguals during the transition period and while they attended 'reception' classes and not when they were fully assimilated into the mainstream classroom.

I believe that education should reflect and accommodate the changing needs of the local, national and global context. Many minority activists proclaim and demonstrate for the recognition of their rights, by claiming their fear of being assimilated to their host societies and losing part of their identity. However, what the present study identified in most of the teachers' discourses was a strong and genuine belief that policy makers and schools should find ways to maintain children's first language as a useful resource. Maintaining children's first language would be useful, not only for children's progress at school but also for the society as a whole, as language learning is viewed as a powerful asset. Education should not stigmatise and exclude children from the educational process by providing them with different provisions, but rather build on a common curriculum that would provide equal opportunities for all children.

Chapter Eight attempts to theoretically analyse how the Greek educational system dealt with diversity and re-contextualise how policies and practices intersected with wider social influences. The analysis developed around the themes that evolved from the ethnographic research. I firstly explored the homogenised nature of Greek schooling and its effect on the construction of certain student identities, as well as the role of 'space' in this process of identity building. I have similarly identified the power asymmetries between mainstream and bilingual teachers that effectively disadvantaged 'foreign' children in their education. This was a result of the 'poor' partnership between the two of them, as they had limited communication about children's needs in the classroom and no plan or strategy to overcome their difficulties and deal with their needs respectively. It was notable that, even though both mainstream and bilingual teachers recognised the importance of working together in partnership in an attempt to overcome the difficulties with the education of these children, in practice they had

limited communication and followed their usual daily school routines that were isolated from each other.

The study also identified the different roles bilingual teachers adopted in their practices with 'foreign' children that were contextualised in their classrooms, the school and in the children's families. A large part of the analysis was based on teachers' discourses in relation to these children's performance, language use and home background that were based on theories of deficit. I also explored the issue of multilingualism in relation to theories of identity formation, as it was evident from the study that these intercultural schools only seemed to address the issue of language during the transition period of these children from reception classes to the mainstream. The chapter concludes by providing an argument for curriculum development based on citizenship education. This was a result of the discussion presented in this chapter as well as of the teachers' beliefs that argued for changes in the curriculum. Such a curriculum should aim to develop educated citizens living in democratic societies who are able to live and work in the interconnected global context.

## **9.2 Outcomes of the study**

In relation to the research questions, this research has reached useful conclusions for the practising of intercultural education in the Greek context and its limitations, as well as arguing for the need for a new model of education based on citizenship education that would reflect the multiple and shifting identities of global citizens. This research has identified that even though intercultural schools were developed in order to cater for the needs of children coming from different cultural backgrounds, the

dominant ideology present in these schools promoted monolingualism, as it diminished the use of other minority languages and promoted a discourse of homogeneity. This process of homogenisation through cultural and linguistic uniformity created injustices within the schools, as those children who were considered unable to comply with the dominant ideology and schools norms were marginalised and effectively failed in their education.

Intercultural schools, at least during the time that this research took place, failed to provide a different model of education that could provide a credible solution to the educational failure of children coming from different cultural backgrounds. Rather, these schools operated as mainstream schools in their curriculum and philosophy and this was evident in the interviews and observations with the teachers, who suggested that there is no intercultural pedagogy in their schools but only Greek language classes. This cultural and linguistic homogenisation which was promoted in these schools aimed to construct 'foreign' children's 'national identity' or 'legitimate national culture' that constituted the 'national habitus'.

Against this monolingual habitus the European Cultural Foundation (cited in Helot and Young, 2002: 109) wrote the declaration of 'Moving away from a monolingual habitus' which stated in Article 1 that:

'Affirmative conventions and action programmes on regional, minority and immigrant languages within the context of a multicultural Europe should be based on a non-exclusive acknowledgement of the existence of all these languages as sources of linguistic and cultural enrichment. Regional, minority and immigrant

languages should be offered, supervised and evaluated as part of the regular curriculum in preschool, primary and secondary education.’

This move from the Ministry of Education to establish intercultural schools as an answer to the changing composition of the school population with its cultural diversity and its official recognition of the educational needs of ‘foreign’ children, was probably because of pressures from the European Community and other international organisations to recognise the educational needs and the plurality of languages within multicultural Europe. That could be part of the reason for this difference between policy and practice, as the Ministry of Education did not promote a coherent policy framework that could bring about change in the educational system, but rather made a first step towards the establishment of intercultural education. This lack of strategy and official guidelines from the Ministry of Education left teachers to improvise in order to deal with the cultural diversity and the plurality of languages in their classrooms. The analysis of the observational and interview data, have shown that, if teachers were given more freedom in their classrooms, they could employ a number of practical ways to integrate all children into the schooling process. Teachers identified activities and strategies based on their creativity and personal willingness, that in some cases they used in their practice with the aim of helping all children succeed in their education. Teachers asked for more support from the State, especially financial support, so that the problems of education could be looked at holistically and not through isolated attempts that eventually created more problems than it attempted to solve.

The study has identified a number of cultural models inherent in teachers' beliefs and practices that disadvantaged 'foreign' children in their education and identified them as deficit learners. Three cultural models were described that not only worked within an assimilationist philosophy but also within a deficit thinking framework, as children's cultural and home background and their families' social status were identified as a form of deficiency.

- The first cultural model linked 'foreign' children's slow progress at school with their cultural and social background.
- The second, identified children's parents as poor learners who hindered their children's progress at school.
- A final model viewed children's bilingualism as an obstacle to their education and integration to the society.

These cultural models also influenced teaching practices, as teachers had lower expectations of 'foreign' children and there were times it felt like they ignored them in the mainstream classrooms. Within this context of teaching, these children were not given cognitively challenging tasks, for example in relation to language development, which Thomas and Collier (1997) identified as a necessary feature for any bilingual children's academic success. Within the schools there was also a hidden discrimination against minority languages that were given a 'low' status compared with other European Union (especially English) languages that were part of the mainstream curriculum. The literature has suggested that when a child's first language is ignored or when a child feels that his/her language or culture are not being valued, it could have a negative impact on their self image and school progress (Bourne, 1992, 1997, 2001). This realisation was not part of the school discourse or any school

document in terms of promoting the use of other languages other than Greek. Even though teachers recognised the challenges of working with 'foreign' children, they were constrained in an assimilationist educational structure that influenced their beliefs and practices as they internalised the view that academic success should come by the development of Greek at the expense of other languages.

Bilingual teachers identified their role as teachers of Greek language and not as teachers of a second language. This finding has important implications both for bilingual teachers and for children themselves. The aim of second language learning is bilingualism, but the data revealed a quite different picture. Maintaining children's first language was not something that was being promoted in the school settings, but rather the children's first language was used during this transition period, until children gained competence in the second language. Because of this, bilingual teachers viewed their role as being the teachers of the Greek language during this transition period. Similarly 'foreign' children were constructed as incompetent bilinguals, as they had difficulties in both languages. The schools aimed to help them improve their second language, in order to integrate them into the mainstream in an attempt follow the school's 'normality' by rejecting their first language that, according to the teachers, hindered their progress at school.

It was important to identify throughout the study that the presence of bilingual teachers in the schools under study did not necessarily mean the use of a second language, other than Greek, in the classroom. Most interactions between these teachers and 'foreign' children took place in Greek. Also of importance is the realisation that the power asymmetry between the qualified mainstream teachers with their permanent

job positions and that of the low paid temporary contract bilingual teachers, might give pejorative messages to children about the positioning of 'foreign' people and the status of their languages in the Greek context. Similarly, this could possibly have a negative effect on the way that 'foreign' children are treated or perceived by their teachers and other children. The positioning and status of bilingual teachers in Greek schools could have an effect both on the self perception of 'foreign' children and on the image that others have of 'foreign' people. This positioning of bilingual teachers does not help to minimise or even eliminate stereotypical views of 'foreigners' in the Greek society.

The conclusions reached through the analysis of the interviews with the teachers and the classrooms observations, provide a useful analysis of the schooling processes in place for 'foreign' children that could help practitioners reflect on their practices and help policy makers to improve provision that would cater for the needs of all children.

### 9.3 The significance of the present research and future implications

The present study, through its analysis of schooling processes, addressed the lacuna of sociological studies of schools in Greece and should contribute to increased awareness in the field of intercultural education and its practice in that specific context. I presented an extended analysis of the micro context of schooling by exploring schooling processes, teaching practices and beliefs, the structural and cultural element of the intercultural schools under study and also made links with the macro context of analysis that included wider societal influences and ideologies that affected the process of schooling itself. The knowledge gained in this study however, could be linked to other research studies internationally and not only be used in the Greek context, as it



not only provides an analysis of schooling processes and teaching practices, but also reaches useful conclusions about the practising of intercultural education and children's bilingualism. I am arguing that in the case of Greece the 'national habitus' permeates all layers of Greek schooling and education and, as such, has an overall influence on local school cultures and individual teacher's beliefs. Through this process of homogeneity the Greek State attempts to construct a national identity for all students that is based on language, history and religion.

I have reported and analysed the ways in which these schools were institutions that reproduced the dominant ideological traditions based on an assimilationist philosophy that promoted monoculturalism and monolingualism. Even though these schools were intercultural, they provided the same curriculum and pedagogy for all children irrespective of their background, and operated within this framework of equality of treatment. One more reason that added to my initial argument for the existence of a national habitus within all Greek state schools and their homogeneity was the centralised nature of Greek schooling that is based on a national system of regulations and inspections for all schools. The study identified that migrant languages were given a lower status, as they were not promoted in order to be maintained, but rather, were used for transitional purposes. The content of the curriculum that was very much based on Greek language and literature, Greek history and religion, as well as the organisation of the school, aimed to infuse children with a feeling and a sense of being Greek. Bourdieu (1977) theorised that this equality of treatment for all citizens could mask, but at the same time legitimise, the way in which structures of power, status and privilege are reproduced. In this case the equal treatment approach of 'foreign' children in the mainstream classroom is used by mainstream teachers as a scapegoat to

explain the inconsistencies of the school structure and failure of the teaching practices to deal with the diversity in their schools.

Although this research was conducted in a small number of schools, it presents an analysis of intercultural schooling in the second largest city in Greece which as a study of an example, or case, of intercultural school will enable readers to make connections with their own experiences and practices in similar settings. It is also hoped that the amount of information and data collected, due to the ethnographic nature of this study, will enable readers to understand the phenomena under study and that it may be useful in helping them to understand practices in other settings or reflect on their own. I believe that the evidence I have provided, from extended observations from mainstream and bilingual classrooms and interviews with the teachers, support the findings and conclusions I have reached and could be used by other practitioners to improve their practices in intercultural settings and policy makers to improve educational policies for the education of 'foreign' children.

#### **9.4 Personal evaluation**

At the end of this research journey I feel that I have gained both as a teacher and a researcher. I was professionally interested to learn more about intercultural education and what it means in practice. What I have learned in the process, however, was much more, as I understood that intercultural education does not only concern 'foreign' children but it involves all children, as it is an educational philosophy that should be part of every school. I did explore and understand the international influences in educational policies and how they are being translated in the national context of each

nation. I also had the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge on a number of different issues such as children's bilingualism and identity, the interplay between policies and practice, as well as teaching practices and beliefs. In addition, I have reached useful conclusions about the role of education in constructing student identities and the possibility of democratising the curriculum with the introduction of the citizenship module. I have also learned how school structures sometimes work against some groups of children, by disadvantaging and excluding them from their processes.

I have now a much clearer view of the importance of providing more pre-service and in-service teacher education to help teachers respond to the challenges they have to face in their multicultural classrooms. Teachers in the study received in-service training but they have identified limitations and suggested changes to incorporate their needs. This needs to be in the form of more practical measures that teachers could use in their classrooms. I intend to contribute to the development of this ongoing discussion on bilingualism and intercultural schooling by disseminating the findings of this research to the educational community in Greece, in the form of research papers and conferences.

This research, however, did not consider 'foreign' children's beliefs about their education and the way that they felt within those settings. There is important work to be done in this area, by giving voice to the main recipients of this intercultural pedagogy, children themselves. There is also work to be done in relation to these children's work at school, their use of language and their families' biliteracy and expectations of their children's education. Moreover, a very interesting follow up of the present research would be to examine the progress of some 'foreign' children who

attended primary intercultural schools, in their transition to secondary education and the challenges they face. I feel strongly that the Greek context offers great potential for future research into issues surrounding the education of 'foreign' children, as the implementation of an intercultural pedagogy for all children is still at an early stage.

I should also reflect, at the end of this research endeavour, on how the whole process of research, changed my initial values and improved me both professionally and as a person. Even though, as a researcher, I entered the field without having any first hand knowledge of intercultural schools, I did bring with me my own values and preconceptions about 'foreign' children's education and the practices I was observing. I do not contend that this research is value free and I do not believe that any research could claim that, but I have attempted to be honest and open about the decisions made and how my own values have influenced the research. During the initial stage of the research, I was critical of my own judgements and interpretation of events that took place in the intercultural schools and I believe that this process of reflection made me more understanding of the practices I was observing and less judgemental. This was the main reason I decided, in this thesis, to maximise the presentation of teachers' voices and, as far as possible, minimise my own.

### 9.5 Afterword

At the end of this thesis I would like to draw on the conclusions of the Innsbruck conference on 'linguistic diversity for democratic citizenship in Europe', which suggested that every European country should not only promote multilingualism among its citizens but also help them develop a multilingual identity (cited in Helot

and Young, 2002). I have explored previously the way in which individuals could have multiple identities and could shift between them when they have to adapt to and respond to a new situation or context. Our identities are part of a moving mosaic as Toffler (1990) described it and, as such, education should provide children with a number of opportunities to develop this diversity of roles in a 'decentred, post-modern world' where 'even the self no longer has singularity' (Hargreaves 1994: 70).

Most nations in the world are characterised by cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity and are faced with the challenge of creating the appropriate conditions under which all of their citizens could live harmoniously with each other, by recognising and respecting their experiences and personal background. The aim of education in democratic nation states should be to achieve this balance between unity and diversity. The unifying concepts that all citizens should comply with should be a set of values based on democracy, equality and justice (Gutmann, 2004; Banks et al., 2001). For that reason I have argued that citizenship education should take a new role in this new era that is characterised by its diversity, allowing citizens to maintain their cultural capital, if that is what they desire, but also be active citizens and share the national culture of their host countries. Such a culture should be based on democratic values and beliefs in order to be effective and should also be reflected in the education that should aim to prepare students to become global citizens. There should be an introduction of multicultural citizenship education in all levels of education and a real commitment from the State as well, to proceed with change by providing a holistic and coherent vision of what education should be and look like.

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Appendix 1.

School population for the school year 2002/2003.

<u>Educational level.</u>	<u>Total of students.</u>	<u>Total of foreign students.</u>	<u>%</u>
<b>Nursery schools</b>	138.304	9.503	6.9
<b>Primary schools</b>	633.235	54.570	8.6
<b>Gymnasiums</b>	328.309	22.693	6.9
<b>Lyceums</b>	360.616	11.475	3.2
<b>Total</b>	1.460.464	98.241	6.7

*Source: Gotovos and Markou 2004.*

Presence of foreign students from 1997 to 2002.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Nursery schools.</u>	<u>Primary schools.</u>	<u>Gymnasiums.</u>	<u>Lyceums.</u>
<b>1997</b>		4.026		
<b>1998</b>		6.020		
<b>1999</b>		7.656		
<b>2000</b>		9.232	5.338	2.252
<b>2001</b>	2.538	12.532	6.984	3.422
<b>2002</b>	5.376	14.140	8.684	4.855

*Source: Gotovos and Markou 2004.*

## Appendix 2.

### Observational Index

The following is adapted from Murray's 'Low Inference Teaching Observation' index and was used as a guiding tool while observing teachers teach.

#### Part I: Speech

speaks slowly  
speaks in monotone  
stutters, mumbles, slurs words  
speaks expressively or emphatically  
speaks softly  
speaks loudly  
speaks clearly

#### Part II: Nonverbal behaviour

smiles or laughs  
moves about while lecturing  
shows energy & excitement  
gestures with hands and arms  
relaxed and confident  
avoids eye contact with students  
shows facial expressions  
shows distracting mannerisms

#### Part III: Explanation

uses concrete examples  
repeats difficult ideas  
uses graphs and diagrams  
stresses important points  
suggests mnemonic aids  
writes key terms on board  
uses audiovisual aids



gives multiple examples

#### Part IV: Organization

uses headings & subheadings  
gives preliminary overview of lecture  
summarizes periodically  
signals transition to new topic  
puts lecture outline on board  
explains how each topic fits in  
writes key terms on board

#### Part V: Interest

uses humour  
states own viewpoint on issues  
uses variety of media  
reads lecture verbatim from notes  
suggests practical applications  
presents thought-provoking ideas  
relates subject to current events  
shows strong interest in subject

#### Part VI: Task Orientation

states teaching objectives  
advises students re. tests  
dwells on obvious points  
provides sample exam questions  
proceeds at an appropriate pace  
digresses from topic of lecture  
sticks to point in answering

#### Part VI: Rapport

shows concern for students  
tolerant of other viewpoints  
addresses students by name

offers help with problems  
talks with students before/after class  
sensitive to student needs  
friendly easy to talk to

#### Part VII: Participation

Praises students for good ideas  
Encourages questions and comments  
Fails to take initiative in class  
Asks questions of individual students  
Provides opportunity for participation  
Asks questions of class as whole  
Repeats students' questions for whole class

#### Part VIII: Students

Students are attentive and involved  
Students ask questions, participate  
Students "trickle" into class, leave early  
Background talking among students during lecture  
Students are relaxed, comfortable  
Students uninvolved, look bored

### Appendix 3.

#### Interview Schedule

Before the interview takes place I will inform the teacher about the aim and purpose of the study and his/her valuable contribution to the completion of this study. I will also ask for permission to tape record all our interviews and I will explain the importance of it. Moreover I will let teachers know that they can look at the transcribed interviews at any time and make comments or add things. Finally I will inform them that anonymity will be kept strictly at all times and that they could have access to my final report.

The first part of the interview will include introductory questions about teachers and their background.

- How many years are you a teacher?
- How long have you been teaching in this school?
- Where there any particular reasons for deciding to teach in this school?
- What sort of training have you got?

The next part of questions will explore teachers' beliefs in relation to policy, curriculum and aim of education.

- What do you think is the aim of education in this setting?
- Do you think that it is different from mainstream schools?
- Do you use the curriculum to plan your lessons? In what ways?
- How would you describe your practice? What are you trying to achieve?
- What was your reaction to the introduction of intercultural education and schools?
- Do you think that the educational needs of these children are met by the curriculum?

The next part will explore teachers' perceptions of the intercultural school and classroom.

- What were your first impressions and experiences when you came to the school? Were they different from what you expected?
- How would you describe your classroom?
- How would you describe the climate of the school?
- What are the main problems that you have experienced in the classroom? How you have dealt with them? (language, racist incidents, control, discipline)
- What is your view of the intercultural school as it currently operates?
- What changes would you like to see?

The next part will consider issues of cultural diversity.

- What are your views of cultural diversity in the Greek society? Do you consider it to be a problem?
- When you are teaching in the classroom do you think that cultural differences are important or not? How you address the issue?
- When a new child arrives at school how do you integrate it in the classroom?
- As a school what is your policy for integrating newly arriving children?

Consider issues of teacher training and knowledge.

- What kind of skills and knowledge do you think that teachers should have when teaching in a multicultural school?
- Do you think that you have developed these skills? How? (experience, training)
- Would you like to have additional training? In what issues?

Consider issues relating to educational problems.

- What do you think are the main difficulties of these children at school?
- Do you think that because of these difficulties the quality of education offered is not adequate?
- What would you do to change that?
- How do you cope with communication difficulties?

- Do you think that language should be taught differently?

Consider issues relating to children's previous experiences and family.

- Do you consider children's previous experiences and knowledge important aspects? How do you take them into account?
- Do you think it is important to involve parents in the schooling process? Why?
- How often do you come in contact with them?
- What sort of expectations they have for their children?
- Do you think there is a gap between the schools expectations and the family values?

## Appendix 4.

### Project Outline

This research project is an ethnographic study of a primary school for intercultural education in Greece. It will examine the relationship between the culture and ethos of the school, the practices and perceptions of the teachers and the policy framework of intercultural schooling. In doing this it is hoped to better understand the move from policy to practice and how this is mediated by teachers' everyday practices and their understandings of interculturalism and inclusion. This will be of value to both policy makers and practitioners in Greece as well as contributing to the understanding of interculturalism and schooling more generally.

The study will make use of an ethnographic approach that will include in depth participant observations of the classrooms and school as a unique case, unstructured interviews with the teachers and ongoing discussions throughout the year and examination of school policies and documents. The researcher will make use of narratives in order to unfold the values, assumptions and understandings that lay behind the teaching practices. This is inspired by Connelly and Clandinin's work in which narrative and story telling provides a mode of inquiry, which gives a central place to the study of experience (see Clandinin, 1992). This approach is also advocated by Cortazzi (1993, 2001) who stresses the value of narrative analysis as a key element in ethnographic research that aims to understand the world of teachers and teaching. This triangulation of research methods and a reflexive data analysis will facilitate an understanding of the complexity that characterises school culture and how this relates to the cultures of the teacher and of the children.

It is intended that this study will contribute to the deeper understanding of school cultures and will present teachers' voices as a central to school change. As noted by Cortazzi, for real change to occur in curriculum and pedagogy, teachers' experiences and thoughts must be taken into account and consequently research should be aim to learn more about their perceptions and classroom practices. School ethnographies of the type proposed here are needed in order to illuminate relationships between cultures, structures and practices in schools. Whilst this kind of study provides a

detailed account of the daily life in a school, rather than make broad generalisations between the micro level (school, practices, values, beliefs) and the macro (policies, curriculum), it will inform our understanding of schooling and its relationship to the cultures of teachers and children, and the relationship between policies and practices.

## Appendix 5.

### Description of pilot study

#### Introduction

I firstly began my pilot work in one of the intercultural schools, in an attempt to understand how a particular ideology was implemented in practice, the intercultural ideology in this case, and affected the schooling process for 'foreign' children. I was interested in reaching an understanding of the intercultural school, by observing and interacting with the everyday reality of the school. Throughout this process of the initial fieldwork, a number of questions were raised about the problematics of doing fieldwork, the censoring of information and the disclosure of sensitive information and a number of other issues that were concerned with the focus of the study. This process, however, was an essential part of the main study as it helped me to develop further my initial plan and refine the focus and methods of study.

#### Gaining access

One of the first tasks I had to deal with at the beginning was to gain access to schools to conduct the research. I firstly had to do an initial inquiry in the educational authority of Thessaloniki (grafeio protovathmias ekpaideusis) to identify the number of intercultural schools currently in operation, as well as their telephone numbers and addresses, so that I could get in contact with them. I spoke with one of the head teachers and I explained to him that I was very interested in doing research in his intercultural school and asked for his permission to enter the school. He explained to me that he had no objection to that and he even offered his help to answer any questions I would have or even introduce me to other schools. He also explained to me that there is a formal procedure that everyone needs to follow to have access in the classroom. No one is allowed to be in the classroom, apart from the teacher or other member of staff, on a permanent basis unless he/she has official permission.



A formal proposal was written at the end of June 2003, and applied to the Ministry of Education asking for permission to be admitted in two state intercultural schools in Thessaloniki. My proposal included the exact title of my research project, a literature review that identified some similar research as well as the reasons that led me to do this kind of research, the aims and importance of the research and its contribution to knowledge, especially in the Greek context, my methodology and data collection techniques, and finally some ethical issues that were considered important for the completion of the study.

The authorisation was signed by the Ministry of Education and allowed me to start my research in the mid of October 2003. However this was only the beginning of a long process of gaining access to people and information. I still had not yet negotiated my role and presence at the school with any of the head teachers and then with the staff.

#### My first day to the school

I first called the head teacher to arrange my arrival at the school. I arrived at the school around 11.30 where the large break took place and most of the teachers were in the staff room having their coffee. When I entered the main building one of the teachers told me that the head teacher was out of school on a meeting and that he had not informed any of the staff that I was coming. The teacher was really welcoming however, something I did not expect at that time as I was a total stranger, and she offered to introduce me to the rest of the staff. As we entered the staffroom I felt really anxious, but I realised that teachers were really friendly and appeared not to be concerned of my presence to the school and their classrooms. I briefly spoke to them about the nature of my work and asked for their co-operation and assistance and also I explained the important role and contribution they would have in this study.

When I finished my introduction, some teachers asked me more specific questions about my PhD, relating to the aims of the research, my role in the school, and whether I would present my report here in Greece or only in London. I explained to them that as a PhD student I am working independently, I am self-funded and I am not obliged to report back to any professional or academic body here in Greece. In relation to their

question about the aims of my research, I answered that it is mainly twofold: firstly to understand the introduction of intercultural education in Greece and how it is operationalised in practice and secondly to explore and understand the teaching practices and organisation of the school. Every effort was made to provide the participants with full information about the research project and to be sure the participants understood it. Teachers were also encouraged to review all of my data at any time during the research process. I also informed them that I was granted permission to observe classroom activities and collect school material by the Ministry of Education that also informed the school district.

I arranged with the head teacher and the teachers to spend a month in the school, during November 2003, in order to observe the bilingual teachers and two mainstream classrooms that included foreign children. I went in the school almost every day and the reason for this was that I wanted to allow teachers to get used of my presence and to learn as much about the school, teachers and classroom practices as I could. I knew from the beginning that this would be an important process for my research as my main task was to gain their confidence and trust so that they would talk to me more freely about the culture of the school and even their own practices.

I realised from my first days at the school that I would need time to immerse my self into the school life and routine, so that I would be able to understand the schooling process. This was a large task however since my main objective, at this stage was to test my methods and prepare for the main study. However my aim changed over the first week and I became more interested to explore the differences between mainstream and bilingual teachers, in terms of their beliefs and practices, the organisation of the intercultural school and its provision. For this reason I extended my presence to the school and I stayed for a period of one month, two weeks more than the initial plan.

Before the beginning of the fieldwork, I was planning to participate in certain school activities or even help teachers in the classroom. This, however, was not possible as it was not allowed to participate by any means to the educational process. Some teachers however allowed me to join in the lesson if I wanted to participate, but I felt at that time that they were just being polite. I explained to them that this is not

something compulsory for my study but that I would be more than willing to help if it was needed. I also realised at this first day at the school that gaining access is a long process that requires negotiations and arrangements with the teachers almost on a daily basis. I had not realised at that stage that gaining official permission from the Ministry of Education was only the first stage of a long process, and that I had to negotiate my presence at the schools throughout the research.

Being part of the school I could easily have access to information about seminars and conferences in intercultural education that took place and were directed mainly to teachers and academics that were involved in this area. I have been present in two conferences and a seminar during the time I have been at the school and had the opportunity to meet most of the head teachers of the other intercultural schools. This was really valuable for me as I had the opportunity to speak informally with them and in a way I was allowed to visit their schools. I felt really excited at that time to be part of a network of people, not only teachers but also academics and members of the Ministry of Education, who were involved in the formulation of the formal rhetoric and the practice of intercultural education in Greece.

Teachers were really friendly and helpful with me, during my time at the school. I did feel, however, from some teachers, especially of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, an unwillingness to let me enter their classrooms. One of them later told me that teachers in the school usually prefer to let researchers observe lower grades, as children in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade are preparing for the high school and this requires no interruptions. I explained to the teacher that I could totally understand her concerns and that I was willing to enter only the lower classes. This is what I wrote in my fieldwork journal when I left the school that day:

*I am amazed from the way people treated me today. They were really friendly and helpful. My stress just disappeared; they offered me a coffee and showed me the school. Some of the teachers however kept a distance and were just listening. I feel that they probably have some reservations about my presence there or they are unwilling to participate in the study.*

At a later stage I found out that some teachers were feeling really uncomfortable with me being present in the staffroom where I could listen to their everyday conversations. They felt that I could report back to the school inspector (*sholiko simvoulo*) certain events that happened in the school. I kept reassuring them however that I am not obliged to report back to the school district and that issues of anonymity and confidentiality would be kept strictly at all times.

I had managed to interview two mainstream teachers during my initial stay at the school. This required lot of planning with the teachers involved, as they needed to find free time, something which was not very easy in a busy school. Out of school hours were also not feasible for the teachers as they had families and children to take care of and there was also the problem of distance. During the interviews I have observed teachers' change of attitude as they became much more formal and one of them really felt uncomfortable with the tape recorder, even though she agreed to be recorded. I also felt at certain points that they wanted to move on with some questions, especially those that were directed to their own views and the ways that intercultural education could be applied in practice. I realised at that time that I could get much more in depth information through informal everyday discussions while in the staffroom or in the corridors during the break time, rather than taking an interview even in a semi structured format, which is more informal. I decided that I should plan my interviews in the main study later on the year so that teachers could have more time to feel more relaxed with my presence in the school. I also tried not to express my own views as I wanted to keep a low profile and did not want to come in opposition with any of the teaching staff in the school.

My interviews included questions about the aims and organisation of the school, the provision, teachers' beliefs, schooling processes and school policies. I started the interview initially from a prepared list in order to obtain specific information about the school and teacher's training, but I also had more open-ended questions or what Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:113) call 'non-directive' questioning to prompt teachers to express their own views about a particular subject. It was through my everyday interactions with the teachers that I managed to construct a clearer idea of the organisation and culture of the school as well as to deep into the intercultural programme the school provided and the teaching ideologies. It was almost impossible

to obtain information from the head teacher as most of the times he was very busy with school work or out of school in meetings with the education authorities. I do realise however that if things were different he could have given me much valuable information about the culture and ethos of the school. This is an issue that I will pursue further in the main study.

I managed to develop good personal relationships with some members of the staff and this helped me to have access to valuable 'inside' information about the school that I could not have accessed otherwise. However one of the problems I encountered was when at certain points I witnessed conversations that turned into gossips about other staff or the head teacher. I must admit however that at times these conversations were very insightful and helped me to understand the way people of the same culture interacted with each other informally. At certain points a number of teachers talked to me about the performance of one of the bilingual teachers and were expressing their complaints about the fact that she was not coming to the school on an everyday basis even though she was required to do. This was a really sensitive issue as most of the teachers were complaining to me about that teacher's performance, but on the other hand they did not want to report the issue formally to the head teacher. I really felt at times that someone had to do something and report the issue, as I felt that children's education was being jeopardised when their teacher was absent most of the time and that someone took advantage of the fact that the head teacher was busy and was not informed about the absence of the teacher from her duties. Even though I tried not to express my own view and keep a low profile, I had some private discussions with some teachers to encourage them to report the issue. Unfortunately no one was willing to make a formal complaint and in a way I realised that there is an unofficial commitment to backing up the members that belonged to the same group and community (the school). At the same time I realised that the members of this group have drawn a boundary between what they considered to be their own local knowledge and that of the head teacher, even though they were all part of the same unit, the school.

This was one of the issues I had to consider further in the main study, as I was the witness of sensitive information that involved school teachers and I had to keep the anonymity of the participants in tact and confidentiality. One of the issues I had to

consider at this first stage of the research was the way I would interpret the data I would collect, without being subjective and influenced by the close relations I would establish with some teachers who would become key informants. During his initial stage of the research I have not selected these teachers as key informants, but this role has developed over time and I was able to gain valuable information about the school and the teachers themselves. I considered a number of issues considering the content of informal conversations with teachers. At times I was listening to private talks or gossips that involved other teachers in the school and these were based on personal likes or dislikes that I had to separate from data and at times I was listening to sensitive information about children and their parents and the work of other school members. Similarly, many times I was asked to give my personal view about issues that involved the implementation of the intercultural pedagogy and provision. In these cases I had to be really careful about expressing my own views and their effect on teachers and distance myself as much as possible, as I was not aiming to be critical of the practices I was observing. A major ethical question in studies like this, is how the ethnographer uses sensitive information obtained in the field, as he/she has to both break the barrier of distance with the informants, but also has to keep confidentiality and anonymity at all times.

During the month I stayed at the school my main task was to understand what it meant for teachers to work in an intercultural school, what were the dilemmas they were faced with in their everyday routine and what intercultural education in Greece actually meant in practice. To give answer to these questions I conducted two semi-structured interviews towards the end of my stay at the school and I observed selected members of staff and made detailed observations of their activities in and out of the classroom. In the classroom I sat at the back and observed without interrupting. I took very brief notes in there as I did not want to make teachers feel uncomfortable, but I did recollect my experiences at the end of each lesson during the break. My observations included descriptions of what I have seen, the organisation of the classroom, things that I felt were part of the routine or even bits of conversation between the teacher and the children. I also noted down conversations I had with the staff of discussions they had between them and felt they were describing their ideologies, the climate and organisation of the school. I also tried to write down

feelings and problems I have experienced as I felt that they are an important part of the research process.

### The local community

In order to gain knowledge of the local school context and gain an understanding of the context that intercultural schools were developed, I collected information about the local area and their composition in terms of immigration movements. This information was collected by speaking to the head teacher and teachers, but also by collecting documents from the local prefecture.

The municipality of Thermaikos was formed in 1999 after the unification of the towns of Peraia, Neoi Epivates and Agia Triada, which now retain their names as districts of the overall borough. Geographically, the municipality is situated next to the sea, at the eastern part of the prefecture of Thessaloniki, in the central part of the Thermaikos gulf. The distance from Thessaloniki city centre is 20km and the area occupies 21 km<sup>2</sup>, 5 of which form the main city plan. The seashore is 7.4 km long and is considered the most important spot of natural beauty and tourist attraction of the region. The majority of the inhabited zones are situated mostly along the shores and the building density is highest within the Peraia region, where the buildings have more urban characteristics. The character of N. Epivates and Agia Triada, the other two districts, is more sub-urban.

During the last few years the development and the building activity of all the three regions has increased greatly and the population has increased from 5,800, based on the 1991 census, to 20,000 permanent inhabitants in 2001, when the last census took place. As a result the population increase of the municipality has been the greatest, not only within the prefecture of Thessaloniki but in the whole country, with an increase of approximately 350%. The population doubles during the summer months, exceeding 40,000 inhabitants, as tourists and people with summer houses arrive in the area.

The history of the area essentially begins in 1923, when the first inhabitants came as refugees following the so-called "Disaster of Asia Minor" (event during which Greek

inhabitants were driven out of the eastern Aegean shores and eastern Thrace by Turks). In the greater region of Thessaloniki, 75 settlements were formed by 37,387 refugees, 1,754 of which formed three districts in the southeast shores of Thermaikos gulf, named Peraia, N. Epivates and Agia Triada.

The families that settled in Peraia, which was previously property of a Turkish bey (ruler), were 204, 132 from Asia Minor and 72 from Eastern Thrace, a total of 740 people. The difference in the origin of the families resulted in disagreement on the name to be given to the settlement and the decision was finally taken by a draw between three proposed names. The draw pointed out the current name, which had been proposed by the then Director of Colonisation of Macedonia. Western of Peraia, along the seashore, there was a region, which had previously been a Turkish manor, called "Bahtse Tsifliki". This was inhabited by 159 families coming from the coastal city Epivates, which was situated to the north of Propontida, and they name their settlement Neoi (New) Epivates. More to the west, there was a region called "Lefki Vrisi" (White Spring) and this was inhabited by 40 families from Xastero and 45 families from Oikonomió, which had been situated close to Epivates. The settlement was named Agia Triada (Holy Trinity).

The refugee settlements were soon organised and the area started developing very quickly. In the 78 years since then, there was rapid development and progress in every aspect. Undoubtedly the geographic position of the municipality as well as its small distance from a major city (Thessaloniki), contributed to its development and its significance as a participant in the social and cultural events of the greater region. The district of Neoi Epivates is inhabited by 7,500 people, over one third of the population of the borough. One of the basic characteristics of the district is the large numbers of repatriated and economic immigrants, due to the low cost of life mainly maintained by low rates in residential properties. The repatriates constitute the 25.8% of the residents, while 12.59% are economic immigrants. Regarding employment, 73.8% of the residents are wagedworkers based on short-term contracts, 15.9% are employers and 4% are self-employed. The employed constitute of 75.4% with permanent employment, 19.8% with occasional and 4.8% with seasonal employment. The unemployed comprise 5.6 % of the financially active population, 69.2% of which are women, 46.2% are repatriates and 38.5% are economic immigrants.



## The school

The story of the intercultural school in N. Epivates that follows is my construction of events, as I have experienced them during my presence at the school. I will firstly present a physical description of the school and I then discuss the programme, philosophy, and values of the school as the head teacher presented them to me. The preliminary conversation with the head teacher is supplemented with additional field notes, interview material, and documents collected in the school.

I present the extract from field note journal during my first visit at the school.

*The school was based on two buildings, the old section and next to it a newer one probably renovated. I entered the hall and I looked around until I saw a sign that read 'head teacher office'. I approached the open door and saw the head teacher speaking on the phone, he told me to wait outside for a few minutes until he finished his work. This gave me some time to look around the new building. There were three classrooms down the hallway, clean but empty walls from pictures or drawings, a kitchen room next to the head teacher's office, just above the kitchen there was a stairway leading to the second floor and on the other end of the hallway there was a large room with many amenities. I looked inside and there was a TV, a video and in a circle there were many desks and chairs. There was also a small library, a printer and a photocopying machine and on the other end there was a very comfortable couch. At that moment I heard the head teacher calling me in his office. I felt this was the beginning of a new adventure.*

*The head teacher offered me a seat and he started talking about the school for a couple of minutes. He explained to me that the school used to have higher numbers of 'foreign' (repatriated and immigrant) children but currently there was only a small number of around twenty children while the overall school population was around two hundred children.*

This steady decline over the years, in the numbers of 'foreign' children, came as a result of the development of the area and the increase in land prices and rental properties. This led many families from poorer backgrounds out of the area in search of other opportunities. The head teacher also argued that almost all of the 'foreign' children were fully integrated to the mainstream classrooms and were working normally with the other children, without having too great difficulties. As a result of this the school did not have reception classes for this year, but it had rather employed two bilingual teachers, one Russian speaking and one Albanian that offered tutorial (complementary teaching) classes. However the payment status of these teachers was not the same with that of the other staff, as they were hourly paid. This was not the case for other supporting personnel like the English and the arts teacher that had other payment rights.

The school participated in a university (Ethniko and Kapodistriako university of Athens) programme (Education of repatriated and foreign school children) that was being funded by the Ministry of Education and aimed to achieve equal educational opportunities for all children and to make the most of the potential for knowledge in a society with an increasing multicultural character. The main objectives of this programme were the following: The development and application of certain measures for promoting the efficient integration of the repatriated and foreign children in the educational system; the creation of educational policies to ensure 'quality' education of these children; the prevention of educational failure; the sensitization of teachers, pupils and parents regarding the principles governing a multicultural society as well as the training of teachers in issues of intercultural education; the development of intercultural teaching material for the enrichment of educational curriculum.

The school was also working as an "all day school" (oloimero) and that was an attempt to provide additional support and learning opportunities to children and to accommodate the needs of working parents. The school worked from 08.00-16.00 with set curriculum work offered in the morning and afternoon activities that included environmental education, creative activities, homework support, general extra curricular activities etc. It has also been decided in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and the school council that from the school year 2003-2004 the programme

of 'Euelikti Zoni' (flexible zone) would be implemented. This programme operated for two teaching hours per week within the existing teaching curriculum. Its main goal was to give teachers the opportunity to use educational resources or themes that were of interest to the class and are not included in the curriculum. This gave teachers and children more flexibility and autonomy in the learning process as well as it provided a link between children's interests and the schooling process. It also aimed for the integration of all children into the learning process regardless of their cultural or socio-economical background and educational performance. However this required the use of group work activities and the use of more open and flexible teaching approaches.

The head teacher also mentioned the difficulties they had as a result of the limited space in the school. As a result some teachers did not have their own class and were required to move around the school. This was the case with the bilingual teachers, the teacher of English and art and the gymnastics teacher who usually took children to the staff room. This created a physical marginalisation in terms of space, as language teachers most of the time did not have their own rooms and had to move from room to room (Feuerverger, 1997). The bilingual teachers also used the staff room most of the time or even the head teacher's office. Moreover the school also did not have an equipped library that children could freely use any time of the day and an assembly for school celebrations and other activities. Apart from the two buildings the school had, they have also created individual classrooms, prefabricated, around the playground to cover the schools increasing needs of space.

### Schooling process

The school had a strong educational orientation, as there was an overall emphasis on educational outcomes and teaching was mainly concentrated on language and literacy. Unfortunately the school did not manage to create strong links with the 'foreign' children's families and did not have a plan that would bridge this gap. Most teachers expressed their concerns regarding this issue, as they did not have any opportunity to communicate with those children's families and build a common learning plan that could help these children. Teachers experienced unwillingness and even a reservation from these families to co-operate or even communicate with the school on a regular

basis and this was something that affected children's educational progress. During my presence at the school and the discussions I had with the bilingual teachers the main problem that these children had was in their writing skills and oral ability in the second language at the level that the school required them to have. During my presence at the school I did not observe the use of the mother language in the teaching process, not even in the reception classes. In those classes the role of the bilingual teacher was to help children with their Greek language exercises or at times with their maths. The teacher told me that from time to time she spoke to children in their mother tongue, but this was mainly because she wanted to make them feel better emotionally. In one instance for example that the teacher spoke in a Russian dialect the children seemed to really enjoy that. The following extract signified that change: *'the bilingual teacher is reading a Russian story that has been translated in Greek. The child looks very excited and he is looking at the pictures. He then starts to sing a traditional song and is smiling'*.

After the lesson I had a discussion with the teacher about her teaching practice and aims during the lesson. She told me that her main goal was to develop a very close relation with children, so that they could feel comfortable to express their concerns and problems, as well as, to provide a good role model for them. She also expressed her commitment to the welfare of these children and their educational progress.

Through the teaching of 'foreign' children in different classes, it became apparent to me that the school promoted their separation from the indigenous ones, a separation that was based on cultural and language differences. All the school's efforts to apply an intercultural programme were only directed to these children and in effect they were treated differently from the indigenous. In a conversation I had with one of the teachers from the third grade, she expressed to me her concern that 'foreign' children probably felt stigmatised when they got separated from their classroom in the language lesson. The school followed the policy that reception classes for 'foreign' children took place during the language lesson of their mainstream classroom. She suggested that it would be better for reception classes to take place after the normal school hours so that children would not feel stigmatised. But then again she told me that many of these children did not stay after the normal school hours and that it would probably create problems in the classroom, as these children had many

knowledge gaps and could not concentrate. This segregation however comes in opposition with the principles of intercultural education that are aiming to promote a respect for cultural diversity. The school should be the meeting point of different cultures and languages that are presented as equal, through an enriched and flexible curriculum that considers the needs of all children.

### Teachers' Concerns

One of the main problems teachers expressed was that of space and more importantly that of the limited funding. This affected the educational process, as teachers did not have enough resources to supplement their work and offered a restricted environment to children and especially those from different cultural backgrounds, who already experienced a number of difficulties. All the teachers agreed that the school needed increased financial support to cover its needs and fulfil everyone's expectations and especially those of children. Due to the fact that the school had limited educational resources, teachers had to be really creative and develop their own exercises. During their free time they searched the Internet for activities and in many cases they brought photocopies from books they used with their children at their homes.

### Conclusion

Summarising my experiences from the intercultural school in N. Epivates I could say that it does not follow a specific intercultural policy and that its curriculum is essentially the same with that of other primary schools. The only variation from a mainstream school is the employment of the two bilingual teachers and the importance the school gives to the integration of foreign children to the mainstream classrooms through the development of their linguistic abilities in the Greek language. This suggests that the school applies an assimilative philosophy to the education of 'foreign' children and it does not comply with the aims of intercultural education. Even though the school provided two bilingual teachers to promote a bilingual education, in practice they were trying to minimise the use of children's mother tongue and promote the use of Greek as the only accepted language. It seems that the operation of reception and tutorial classes are measures that are preparing 'foreign' children for their integration to the mainstream classrooms and not to promote an

intercultural or bilingual education. There is an obvious gap between academic rhetoric, political reasoning and policy development and what is actually happening in practice in the school context. Even though there is an ongoing debate that supports the internationalisation of education and its intercultural orientation, Greek education still promotes a monolingual and monocultural orientation as it is characterised by its ethnocentric nature.

The pilot work marked the beginning of the research process and unravelled all the anxieties, difficulties and challenges I faced at the beginning of this journey as a neophyte ethnographer in the field. Everyday observations in the intercultural school alongside with personal reflections from my field journal helped me to gain great insight into the schooling processes and teaching practices and develop my understanding of that particular context and the research process itself. More importantly the pilot study helped me to narrow down my general interest in the field of intercultural education and focus more specifically into teaching practices and how these practices attempt to operationalise an intercultural ideology. Everyday interactions with teachers and their children in the intercultural school, caused me to question intercultural and multicultural educational policies and literature, to think critically about approaches that seem to be part of curriculum materials and finally to query about what it is we are trying to achieve in this kind of schools.

My stay in the school for a month during the pilot work and the personal relationship I had developed with the two bilingual teachers helped me to realise the possibilities of their teaching that until then I only identified as having limitations. This affected my way of thinking, at that time, as I started to realise that the practices I observed were not isolated from the context they took place. Even though I identified aspects of good practice, overall I was critical of the school's approach to the education of 'foreign' children as being assimilative aiming to integrate these children to the mainstream classroom. What I then realised, at the end of my stay in the school, was that the teachers I spent time with, were caring individuals that wanted to help these children succeed in their education. The constraints and limitations that the system offers to schools, due to limited funding and the centralised nature of the educational structure that left any kind of creativity to teachers and schools, affected the education offered.

I have experienced the personal effort of individual teachers that used their free time in school breaks or after school times to develop material that they could use the next day in their classrooms with ‘foreign’ children. There were also many instances that some teachers bought educational material or made photocopies for children to use in the classroom from their personal incomes. It was these personal efforts made by many teachers that showed their willingness to help ‘foreign’ children succeed in their education. I realised then that only by having everyday interaction with the teachers in the settings I could witness this kind of incidents that no theory refers to. The structure of my research methodology was very much influenced during my presence at the school and aimed to unravel the teachers’ personal practical knowledge.

I focussed specifically at the beginning of my research process with all the challenges, dilemmas and contradictions I encountered at that time. I also started to describe and discuss teaching practices, school programme and philosophies as well as the socio-political context that influenced all the above. I have gained an initial understanding of how the research process evolved over time but also have learned about the practicing of intercultural education in Greece. By spending long periods of time in the class and in the school and by having both formal and informal conversations with the teachers, I started to realise that their practices were very much influenced by other contextual factors. For me this meant that I should be less judgemental and more open and compassionate with what I was experiencing. This also affected my research approach as it was open and fluid in order to accept new ideas and experience new situations. As a final reflection at the end of this initial stage of my inquiry I wrote in my journal that:

*‘due to the nature of the study and my prolonged stay in the school, I developed close relationships with some teachers that for me were not just participants in the study in an abstract way but real people like Veta, Stergios and Anna who became part of my life at that time’.*

## Appendix 6

### **List of questions based on Gee's theory of discourse analysis.**

#### Semiotic building

1. What sign systems are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation (e.g.) speech, writing, images, and gestures)? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?
2. What systems of knowledge and ways of knowing are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?
3. What social languages are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?

#### World building

4. What are the situated meanings of some of the words and phrases that seem important in the situation?
5. What situated meanings and values seem to be attached to places, times, bodies, objects, artefacts, and institutions relevant in this situation?
6. What cultural models and networks of models (master models) seem to be at play in connecting and integrating these situated meanings to each other?
7. What institutions and/or Discourses are being (re-)produced in this situation and how are they being stabilized or transformed in the act?

#### Activity building

8. What is the larger or main activity (or set of activities) going on in the



situation?

9. What sub-activities compose this activity (or these activities)?

10. What actions (down to the level of things like “requests for reasons”) compose these sub-activities and activities?

Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building

11. What relationships and identities (roles, positions), with their concomitant personal, social, and cultural knowledge and beliefs (cognition), feelings (affect), and values, seem to be relevant to the situation?

12. How are these relationships and identities stabilized or transformed in the situation?

13. In term of identities, activities, and relationships, what Discourses are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?

14. What social goods (e.g. status, power, aspects of gender, race, and class, or more narrowly defined social networks and identities) are relevant (and irrelevant) in this situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?

15. How are these social goods connected to the cultural models and Discourses operative in the situation?

Connection building

16. What sorts of connections – looking backward and/or forward – are made within and across utterances and large stretches of the interaction?

17. What sorts of connections are made to previous or future

interactions, to other people, ideas, texts, things, institutions, and Discourses outside the current situation (this has to do with “Intertextuality” and “inter-Discursivity”)?

18. How do connections of both the sort in 16 and 17 help (together with situated meanings and cultural models) to constitute “coherence” – and what sort of “coherence” in the situation? (Gee: 93 – 94)

## Appendix 7

### **International policies on intercultural education.**

There have been several international legal texts that promoted intercultural education from 1948 onwards. Most of them are human rights instruments and were written by organisations like the UN, UNESCO and the Council of Europe and came as a result of the rapid demographic and cultural changes of all societies with the movements and migration of people.

The beginning of all international texts on education comes with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. This Declaration is closely related with intercultural education as it promotes respect for all humans that is based on understanding, tolerance and friendship. It stated that: 'Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.' (The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 26, paragraph 2)

Also the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education as well as the International Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination<sup>20</sup>, which claims that state parties must adopt effective measures in the fields of teaching, culture and information.

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<sup>20</sup> Article 7: State parties undertake to adopt immediate and effective measures particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which lead to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or ethnic groups as well as to propagating the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and this Convention. (The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 21 December 1965, in Batelaan, 1995)

The next year the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>21</sup> is published and deals with the right to education for all as a fundamental condition for the protection of human rights.

During the 70's, UNESCO has developed a number of documents that promoted intercultural education<sup>22</sup>. These included principles for educational policies and required by member states to draft relevant legislation. These principles guided educational policies to include recommendations that respected all people, their cultures, civilisations and ways of life. The provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief also made links to intercultural education as well as the Universal Declaration the Education for All that promoted the implementation of equality in education.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' 1984 Recommendation reflected a change of approach for the introduction of intercultural education that would address the needs of all children. Before then, the Council of Europe was mainly concerned with the needs of children of migrant workers. They developed experimental classes to incorporate the needs of these children, as they believed that this phenomenon was only temporary and that these children would return to their countries. However, recommendation 18 of 1984 argued that 'societies with multicultural features created in Europe by the population movements of recent decades are an irreversible and generally positive development, in that they may help to further closer links between people of Europe and between Europe and other parts of the world'.

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<sup>21</sup> Article 13: The state parties to the present covenant recognise the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 19 December 1966, in Batelaan, 1995)

<sup>22</sup> In 1974 the General Conference of UNESCO agreed upon a recommendation related to Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace as well to Education concerning Human Rights and Fundamental freedoms.

They also argued that ‘children from foreign cultural communities constitute a source of enrichment and a major medium and long term asset, provided that policies are geared to fostering open-mindedness and an understanding of cultural differences’.

## Appendix 8

### **Elements of ethnography.**

- That it involves the study of a particular culture that includes certain values, practices, relationships and identifications.
- It uses more than one method of data collection in order to generate different kinds of data.
- It involves a personal and 'long-term' engagement with the participants.
- It recognises the researcher as the primary source of data, and an integral and unavoidable feature of the research process, who needs to be continually reflexive.
- The accounts from the participants are given a high status, but as the researcher's own constructed account has the highest authority there is an expectation that he/she will reveal the principles of selection that have led to particular statements and claims.
- There is an ongoing cycle where hypotheses and theories are modified in the light of further data and theoretical readings and interpretations.
- And, finally, it has the intention to provide a set of understandings of a specific culture, people, or setting.

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