

National Holidays in Greek Multicultural School: Views of Pre-Service Teachers

Mirsini Michalelis

Kindergarten teacher, Postgraduate Student

Kostis Tsioumis and Argyris Kyridis

Professor, School of Early Childhood Education, Aristotle University of
Thessaloniki, Greece

Despina Papageridou

Kindergarten teacher, M.Phil., School of Early Childhood Education,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Elena Sotiropoulou

Ph.D. student, School of Early Childhood Education, Aristotle University
of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract. In early childhood education pupils have the opportunity to come into first contact with the historical events and acquire the first historical knowledge. However, research has shown the existence of strong nationalist elements and the viewing of the nation as a homogeneous entity and an unchanged Hellenism. The Greek educational system does not take into account the cultural background of students coming from other countries. This issue is the reason for conducting this survey, which studied the views of prospective teachers on national celebrations, namely their role and content. Their views on speeches, on the reproduction of national identity, on national and political education and the institution of parades in the context of the multicultural school are also explored. The issue of research considers that prospective teachers agree with the conduct of national celebrations in multicultural schools, but in a way that should include other cultural groups as well. The survey was conducted in spring of 2014, using a questionnaire with sixty close questions. The sample of research consists of 120 students of the departments of primary and pre-school education in the Faculties of Education in Thessaloniki and Alexandroupoli and the department of Early Childhood education in Thessaloniki (A.T.E.I.). According to the research results, the celebration of national holidays in schools should not be abolished as national holidays contribute to pupils learning about the history of the country and maintain historical memory. What should be done, however, is to change the way national holidays are presented in schools and the specific values they promote to pupils.

Key words: National Holidays, multiculturalism, teachers

Introduction

Celebrations are important events in the school life of the kindergarten, as there is a multitude of standard or non standard ones. At the same time, they can be of significant educational importance, since «the value of celebration of important events and their dates is found both in the concepts, information and messages we can pass to children, and the benefits they derive from their participation in preparing and implementing them» as Birbili & Kamberi point out (2007:153). However, recordings from kindergartens reveal that, the way celebrations are mostly held make children anxious, because they upset their "routine", engage them in activities that are not consistent with their capabilities, oblige them to spend time in standardized, identical constructions, provide incorrect or inaccurate historical and cultural information and make it difficult for children and parents, who do not wish to participate for social or religious reasons. This situation raises questions about the views and attitudes of teachers on issues concerning the choice as well as the organization of celebrations realized in the modern, multicultural kindergarten. The teacher is the one who selects and determines not only which holidays will be celebrated in the classroom or in the kindergarten, but also their place in the daily schedule, the degree of participation and the role of children and parents to them and the knowledge and messages that will pass to children (Birbili, Kamberi, 2007).

In Greece, the national holidays, which are considered the most important and are celebrated with solemnity in schools of all levels, are March 25, 1821 and October 28, 1940. The first one was established as a national holiday by the Royal Decree of 1838, which put forward two reasons, the "independence struggle of the Greek nation" and the "feast of the Annunciation", as highlighted by Koulouris (1995) and Asdrachas (1995). Their presence is therefore recorded in Greek education mainly in the early 20th century (Bonidis, 2004, 2008).

The decorative material used on national holidays and the general style of national holidays, such as ritual and content of texts, have both been the subjects of research in Greek schools (Bonidis, 2004, 2008, Halaris, 2005). Moreover Golia (2006) dealt with the national holidays at schools at doctoral level. Research results from these few studies on Greek national holidays, reveal the strong presence of nationalistic elements and references. Specifically, the spirit that pervades the whole ritual of national holidays are festive speeches, dramatizations, reciting poems of nationalistic and patriotic character, wreaths deposit, parade accompanied by patriotic marches and aims to the eternal and undisturbed bond of participants with their ancestors and their initiation in a timeless ethnic group (Bonidis, 2004). At the same time, it is revealed that national holidays in Greece present the nation as a homogeneous entity, united and uninterrupted through time (Avdela 1998), i.e. the image of a homogeneous and unchangeable Hellenism is shown and the Greek nation is "made" as a biological entity (Fragoudaki, Dragona, 1997 Bonidis, 2004, 2008). Moreover, the nation's bond with Orthodoxy is observed, with frequent references to the role played by the church through its representatives mainly in the 1821 period. The influence, therefore, of nationalist ideology is clear on the organization, the subjects, the messages and generally the entire philosophy behind national holidays.

Moreover, under the influence of nationalism, national holidays in Greece aim, in an indirect way however, to the forging of national identity (Avdela, 2001 Bonidis 2004, Golia, 2006), or its perpetuation and strengthening. Nationalism contributed to the making of national identity forming the official national word, of which the educational system is a key vehicle. Via these celebrations, which take place in schools, the sense of ethnically superior and fearless Greek warrior (Halaris, 2005) is reinforced compared to the ethnically inferior "other", unrighteous and evil, always threatening and lurking. In addition, school national celebrations aim to national and political education of pupils (Fragoudaki, Dragona, 1997, Golia, 2006), mainly through their ritual, formal part (Koulouri, 1995), but also to the cultivation of national pride, cohesion and unity (Lentz, 2013), as they carry ideologically charged messages that are "submitted" by the dominant socio-political group and its ideology and project specific standards of political behavior that must be followed by pupils as future citizens. Also, the status of teachers in the educational process dictates to some extent the role of vehicle of national education within the school (Avdela, 1997a: 34). Little room is left to teachers to differentiate the conduct of national education of their pupils, especially if, as in Greece, the centralized nature of education systems is strong in terms of pedagogical methods, assessment and determination of teaching content. On the other hand we cannot nominate teachers as docile providers of national education (Safran 2008, Avdela, 1997b: 50). "Teachers are not just executive bodies" (Avdela, 1997 a: 34); they have an opinion on all matters of education policy such as the curriculum, the contents of school knowledge, evaluation of students, the citizen standard formed by the school. So the question remains unanswered: how and to what extent teachers exercise the role of provider of the national education in everyday practice at school.

The use of national symbols and ceremonies mainly aims at mobilizing the emotional ties and the reinforcement of the national sentiment of "belonging» (Becker-Lentz, 2013). Concerning parades held during national holidays, they transmit core values and principles of the state, while overwhelmed by symbols (Bonidis, 2004, Unlu, 2007, Golia, 2007). So the main features of parades are the following: they take place in a neuralgic point, in terms of city planning, where the national flag usually dominates. Students are dressed in traditional or student uniforms, soldiers march with characteristic military gait, while marches are heard from bands or loudspeakers. Comments are also heard from the speakers, and even the course of the parade itself takes symbolic significance for the state. According to Firth (Firth, 1973:81) the identification and clarification of the symbolic value of a ritual is not always something achievable, because symbols by nature allow room for interpretative maneuvers by those who use them.

There is a close relationship of national holidays with management of history, as Kremmydas (2004) characteristically states, the anniversary celebration is a history lesson. In particular, national holidays refer to important events of a nation-state's history and thus revive glorious historical moments of its course over time (Lomsky-Feder 2011). Therefore, as Golia (2006) states, the celebration of national holidays helps to enhance historical education of students in the Greek educational system, as they focus on timeless values and historical

events presented in such a way as to highlight their catalytic role in society. In kindergarten, a first approach of pupils to historical concepts takes place through national holidays (Kokkinos, 2002). However, these celebrations, like any kind of celebration, constitute a form of education and cultivate attitudes and behaviors, since they primarily transform experiences and actions into knowledge, contribute significantly to the development of social sentiment and social adaptation of toddlers, while aim at the same time to the spiritual, artistic and moral development of young pupils (Golia, 2006).

However, social reality at international level has changed radically. The profile of Greek society differentiated significantly during the 1980s, following the influx of economic migrants from other countries mainly of the Balkan Peninsula, and the return of expatriates from the countries of the former eastern bloc states. A variety of definitions were used for the characterization and the subsequent integration of these people into cultural categories, with different however semiology, such as foreigners, migrants, repatriates, returnee's expatriates, which aimed primarily at overstressing their deviation from what is defined as "normal" and socially acceptable as pointed out by Paleologou (2004).

Within the new social context of changes and increased demands, the role of the teacher becomes of increased importance, especially when dealing with pupils on the subject of the national holidays school celebrations. However, the teacher cannot be considered politically and socially neutral, as he operates within an educational system that clearly fulfills a political act (Freire, 1977). Therefore, consciously or not, he chooses a political stance and participates in a political process. This political stance, based on which he interprets and then presents the national holiday school celebration in class, is the result of his own personal theory, experiences, his personal history and course, beliefs and perceptions on national state and his attitude towards the "other". At the same time, other factors affect him, such as social and political demands of the specific time period in which he belongs and lives (Stigler, Hiebert, 1998, Dimitriadou, 2004), his cultural background (Pine, Hillard, 1990), his views on the learning needs of pupils and the general professional training (Day, 1999). These personal beliefs and perceptions of the teacher, although often covered, are nevertheless powerful, as they determine every behavior and action and his teaching approach applied in class (Cummins, 2001).

Following the above, the way celebrations are arranged in modern kindergarten turns the focus of research and hence of training, on the views and attitudes of teachers, as they seem to be those who, for the most part, decide which celebrations will be celebrated in class, apart from the established ones, their place in the daily program, the degree of participation and the role of children and parents in them and, finally, the knowledge and messages to be passed to children. Effort is often made to express broader messages (Poimenidou-Kakkana, 2012). Nonetheless, national celebrations in Greek school cannot be regarded as less useful and effective, but as a supplement of historical knowledge of pupils, as they focus on timeless values and aim to focus the pupils' attention on a "symbol" or event so as to enhance the social value, the importance and their role (Golia, Vamvakidou, Anastasiadou, Kyridis, 2007).

Methodology of research - Research objectives

The purpose of conducting this research is to investigate the perceptions of future primary school teachers on the celebration of national holidays in the multicultural school. The problematic of this study examines the views of prospective teachers on issues related to the formation of a national identity in the context of the class as according to research carried out, such as by "K. Bonidis" (2004, 2008), issues related to the decorative material and general style that dominates national celebrations have been explored and through the doctoral thesis of "P. Golia" (2006) on the issue of national holidays, the result has turned out to be the existence of strong nationalist elements and the projection of the nation as a homogeneous entity and an unchanged Hellenism (Mousiadou, 2014).

Therefore, the research aims to study the values expressed by prospective teachers in order to investigate the problematic of integrating children belonging to minority groups.

Research assumptions

Data collection means

A questionnaire was used as a research tool in order to record the attitudes of prospective teachers towards the celebration of national holidays in the multicultural school. The questionnaire contained 8 questions on demographic data and 60 closed type, tiered scale questions, in which students had to indicate the degree of agreement with each question. For the rating of questions a regular five-point (1-5), Likert (1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree. 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: I completely agree) type scale was used for accurate and reliable results. The questions concerned five thematic sections: "The role and content of school celebrations", "The anniversary speeches", "The reproduction of national identity", "The national and political education" and "The institution of parades".

The quantitative method for data analysis was followed and the processing of responses was done with descriptive statistical analysis, using the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics 22, for the questionnaires for prospective teachers. The questionnaire was weighted by measuring the reliability of values and the internal validity index of the instrument showed that Cronbach's Alpha reliability value is 0.847, which proves that a reliable set of questions on the questionnaire was used for the research.

The survey was conducted during the academic year 2013-2014.

Research sample

The sample of the research consisted of the responses of 120 undergraduate students of the departments of primary and pre-school education in the Faculties of Education in Thessaloniki and Alexandroupoli and the department of Early Childhood education in Thessaloniki (A.T.E.I.). The sample was selected randomly without prior stratification of subjects. The demographic characteristics of the subjects requested are the following: gender, occupation and education of parents, educational institution, faculty, residence and ideology.

Table 1. Distribution of reports by gender.

GENDER	Frequency	Percent age
Men	20	16,7
Woman	100	83,3
Total	120	100,0

Table 2. Distribution of reports by occupation of fathers and mothers
FATHER'S OCCUPATION

	Frequency	Percent age
Freelance professional-Scientist	8	6,7
Public Servant	36	30,0
Private sector employee	29	24,2
Freelance professional-Technician	22	18,3
Merchant	8	6,7
Worker	4	3,3
Farmer	13	10,8
Total	120	100,0

Table 3. Distribution of reports by occupation of mothers.
MOTHER'S OCCUPATION

	Frequency	Percent age
Freelance professional-Scientist	4	3,3
Public Servant	40	33,3
Private sector employee	19	15,8
Freelance professional-Technician	4	3,3
Merchant	4	3,3
Worker	6	5,0
Farmer	11	9,2
Housekeeping	32	26,7
Total	120	100,0

Table 4. Distribution of reports by education of fathers.
FATHER'S EDUCATION

	Frequency	Percent age
Primary school	16	13,3
High School	47	39,2
Higher Technical education	32	26,7
University graduate	20	16,7
Postgraduate	5	4,2
Total	120	100,0

Table 5. Distribution of reports by education of mothers.
MOTHER'S EDUCATION

	Frequency	Percent age
Primary school	8	6,7
High School	62	51,7
Higher Technical education	18	15,0
University graduate	30	25,0
Postgraduate	2	1,7
Total	120	100,0

Table 6. Distribution of reports by educational institution.
EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENT

	Frequency	Percent age
UNIVERSITY	115	95,8
TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTION	5	4,2
Total	120	100,0

Table 7. Distribution of reports by place of residence.
Place of residence

	Frequency	Percentage
Athens - Thessaloniki	66	55,0
Urban center	22	18,3
Small town	22	18,3
Rural area	10	8,3
Total	120	100,0

Table 8. Distribution of reports by faculty.

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage
Early childhood	87	72,5
Primary Education	33	27,5
Total	120	100,0

Table 9. Distribution of reports by years of study.

Years of Study	Frequency	Percentage
2 nd	4	3,3
3o rd	21	17,5
4o rd and senior	95	79,2
Total	120	100,0

Table 10. Distribution of reports by political ideology.

Ideology	Frequency	Percentage
Extreme right	2	1,7
Conservative	14	11,7
Centre	36	30,0
Left	18	15,0
Extreme Left	8	6,7
No answer	42	35,0
Total	120	100,0

Research Results

The analysis of the responses of future kindergarten teachers resulted to the following tables.

Table 2. Presentation of research results by question

No	QUESTION	Mean	S.D.
1	Our national holidays help us realize how important the struggles of our ancestors were.	3.8667	.78786
2	National holidays cultivate historical awareness.	3.7333	.95031
3	On national holidays we celebrate the end of wars.	2.7750	1.17725
4	National holidays help pupils realize the debt to their homeland.	3.2000	1.19944
5	National holidays highlight eternal values.	3.6667	1.18345
6	National holidays teach us past achievements.	3.7167	.91838
7	National holidays promote cooperativeness of pupils.	3.4250	1.00136
8	Only our ancestors made history.	1.9250	1.39725

9	National holidays contribute to shaping the pupil's personality.	2.8250	1.06639
10	Our national holidays remind us the course of our nation.	3.8167	.82994
11	National holidays contribute to the consistency of the Greek nation.	3.4333	.99354
12	National holidays help pupils learn about the history of their homeland.	3.9500	.88735
13	National holidays highlight Greek virtues.	3.0667	1.04305
14	The participation of pupils in school celebrations is obligatory.	2.4917	1.20221
15	National holidays emphasize the relationship of Greeks with Orthodoxy.	3.0667	1.03496
16	National holidays preserve the cultural heritage of our race.	3.6667	.91057
17	National holidays help pupils become responsible citizens.	2.3250	1.01387
18	The parade is the highlight of the national holiday.	2.9667	1.14447
19	Heroes are models for imitation by children	3.1500	1.00962
20	National holidays strengthen the national morale.	3.6333	1.00363
21	We ought to teach history objectively.	4.5583	.64555
22	National holidays strengthen patriotism.	3.6500	.93170
23	Our national holidays remind us the glorious past.	3.7000	.95794
24	National holidays teach the important events of Greek history.	3.7500	.89113
25	National holidays promote certain values among pupils.	3.4000	.82401
26	National holidays "build" national identities.	3.2500	.94602
27	The national holidays are a tribute to their heroes.	4.0250	.79349
28	National holidays help us avoid the mistakes of the past.	2.4000	1.01584
29	National holidays contribute to the socialization of pupils.	2.9250	.96286
30	Parades generate sentiments of patriotism.	3.6667	.89192
31	On national holidays the pupils learn to respect their heroes.	3.3167	.96130
32	Parades are outdated.	2.7333	1.19335
33	The national holidays are a necessary evil.	2.0000	1.08465
34	National holidays are an opportunity for vacation.	2.4500	1.13648
35	The festive decoration of national celebrations is outdated.	2.9000	1.03225
36	National celebrations are an integral part of school life.	3.5667	1.05904
37	The parades are simple demonstrations of pupil skills.	2.2083	1.22231
38	National holidays contribute to the preservation of historical memory.	3.8833	1.07049

39	National holidays contribute to identity formation.	3.0833	1.02558
40	National holidays serve political expediencies.	2.6667	1.01529
41	The parades are performed simply out of habit	2.9083	1.08462
42	National holidays teach history.	3.5333	1.01197
43	National holidays raise pupils' morale.	2.7333	.98504
44	The parades are performed so that parents take pride of their children.	3.0000	1.00419
45	National holidays anniversary speeches are outdated.	3.1333	.95207
46	The participation of pupils in the parade is mandatory.	2.5250	1.30907
47	National celebrations contribute to the political education of pupils.	2.5917	.86477
48	National celebrations are entertaining.	2.6000	.99071
49	National celebrations are an opportunity for social activities.	3.1500	.85651
50	The celebration of national holidays at school should be abolished.	1.9333	1.14300
51	The festive atmosphere on national holidays is symbolic.	3.6000	.86384
52	Parades should be abolished.	1.9917	1.21265
53	It is the teacher's duty to deliver the festive speech of the day.	2.6500	.85651
54	The Polytechnic anniversary is a national holiday.	3.4333	.94142
55	Anniversary speeches reproduce ideology.	3.2833	.91838
56	Nowadays teachers no longer write anniversary speeches.	3.3250	.90899
57	National celebrations are repeated every year without differentiation.	3.7667	.92340
58	National celebrations contribute to the national education of pupils.	3.4000	.91118
59	Anniversary speeches are based on stereotype national perceptions.	3.0333	.95207
60	Anniversary speeches should be abolished.	2.6667	.89192

Table 3. Distribution of sample responses depending on the degree of agreement
1= Strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5= I agree completely

N	QUESTION	1	2	3	4	5
1	Our national holidays help us realize how important the struggles of our ancestors were.	1.7	3.3	18.3	60.0	16.7
2	National holidays cultivate historical awareness.	1.7	11.7	16.7	51.7	18.3
3	On national holidays we celebrate the end of wars.	14.2	30.0	30.0	15.8	10.0
4	National holidays help pupils realize the debt to their homeland.	9.2	24.2	15.8	39.2	11.7
5	National holidays highlight eternal values.	10.0	3.3	21.7	40.0	25.0
6	National holidays teach us past achievements.	1.7	10.0	20.0	51.7	16.7
7	National holidays promote cooperativeness of pupils.	3.3	13.3	35.0	34.2	14.2

8	Only our ancestors made history.	60.8	15.8	3.3	10.0	10.0
9	National holidays contribute to shaping the pupil's personality.	12.5	24.2	36.7	21.7	5.0
10	Our national holidays remind us the course of our nation.	0	9.2	17.5	55.8	17.5
11	National holidays contribute to the consistency of the Greek nation.	3.3	15.0	28.3	41.7	11.7
12	National holidays help pupils learn about the history of their homeland.	1.7	6.7	11.7	55.0	25.0
13	National holidays highlight Greek virtues.	5.0	25.8	36.7	22.5	10.0
14	The participation of pupils in school celebrations is obligatory.	23.3	33.3	20.8	15.8	6.7
15	National holidays emphasize the relationship of Greeks with Orthodoxy.	6.7	23.3	33.3	30.0	6.7
16	National holidays preserve the cultural heritage of our race.	1.7	8.3	28.3	45.0	16.7
17	National holidays help pupils become responsible citizens.	15.8	55.8	12.5	11.7	4.2
18	The parade is the highlight of the national holiday.	8.3	30.0	30.0	20.0	11.7
19	Heroes are models for imitation by children	8.3	10.8	46.7	25.8	8.3
20	National holidays strengthen the national morale.	3.3	10.0	25.0	43.3	18.3
21	We ought to teach history objectively.	.8	0	3.3	34.2	61.7
22	National holidays strengthen patriotism.	3.3	5.0	31.7	43.3	16.7
23	Our national holidays remind us the glorious past.	1.7	11.7	20.0	48.3	18.3
24	National holidays teach the important events of Greek history.	1.7	6.7	25.0	48.3	18.3
25	National holidays promote certain values among pupils.	5.0	3.3	41.7	46.7	3.3
26	National holidays "build" national identities.	5.0	13.3	40.0	35.0	6.7
27	The national holidays are a tribute to their heroes.	0	3.3	20.0	47.5	29.2
28	National holidays help us avoid the mistakes of the past.	14.2	50.0	24.2	5.0	6.7
29	National holidays contribute to the socialization of pupils.	7.5	25.0	37.5	27.5	2.5
30	Parades generate sentiments of patriotism.	3.3	4.2	29.2	49.2	14.2
31	On national holidays the pupils learn to respect their heroes.	5.0	11.7	38.3	36.7	8.3
32	Parades are outdated.	22.5	15.0	34.2	23.3	5.0
33	The national holidays are a necessary evil.	41.7	30.0	18.3	6.7	3.3
34	National holidays are an opportunity for vacation.	26.7	25.0	26.7	20.0	1.7
35	The festive decoration of national celebrations is outdated.	10.0	23.3	38.3	23.3	5.0
36	National celebrations are an integral part of school life.	8.3	5.0	21.7	51.7	13.3
37	The parades are simple demonstrations of pupil skills.	36.7	30.0	14.2	14.2	5.0
38	National holidays contribute to the preservation of historical memory.	6.7	5.0	8.3	53.3	26.7
39	National holidays contribute to identity formation.	7.5	21.7	30.0	36.7	4.2

40	National holidays serve political expediencies.	12.5	32.5	34.2	17.5	3.3
41	The parades are performed simply out of habit	15.0	15.0	37.5	29.2	3.3
42	National holidays teach history.	3.3	15.0	20.0	48.3	13.3
43	National holidays raise pupils' morale.	10.8	28.3	41.7	15.0	4.2
44	The parades are performed so that parents take pride of their children.	7.5	22.5	37.5	27.5	5.0
45	National holidays anniversary speeches are outdated.	5.0	18.3	40.8	30.0	5.8
46	The participation of pupils in the parade is mandatory.	20.0	45.8	10.0	10.0	14.2
47	National celebrations contribute to the political education of pupils.	10.8	33.3	41.7	14.2	0
48	National celebrations are entertaining.	16.7	26.7	36.7	20.0	0
49	National celebrations are an opportunity for social activities.	4.2	17.5	37.5	40.8	0
50	The celebration of national holidays at school should be abolished.	48.3	26.7	11.7	10.0	3.3
51	The festive atmosphere on national holidays is symbolic.	0	10.0	35.0	40.0	15.0
52	Parades should be abolished.	47.5	25.8	12.5	8.3	5.8
53	It is the teacher's duty to deliver the festive speech of the day.	8.3	33.3	45.0	11.7	1.7
54	The Polytechnic anniversary is a national holiday.	1.7	18.3	23.3	48.3	8.3
55	Anniversary speeches reproduce ideology.	5.0	13.3	33.3	45.0	3.3
56	Nowadays teachers no longer write anniversary speeches.	1.7	15.0	42.5	30.8	10.0
57	National celebrations are repeated every year without differentiation.	3.3	6.7	16.7	56.7	16.7
58	National celebrations contribute to the national education of pupils.	3.3	12.5	31.7	45.8	6.7
59	Anniversary speeches are based on stereotype national perceptions.	6.7	18.3	45.0	25.0	5.0
60	Anniversary speeches should be abolished.	10.0	28.3	50.0	8.3	3.3

A particularly high degree of agreement is noted in the average value (4.5583) of the statement "we should teach history objectively", which proves that the largest percentage of students who answered consider that it is essential to teach history objectively. A remarkable 95.9% agrees with the specific statement, while only a 0.8% disagrees. Also the average value (4.0250) of statement "National holidays are a tribute to heroes" is significant as it is found that the majority of surveyed students consider national holidays as a means of pay tribute to heroes. A significant 76.7% agree with this statement, while only 3.3% disagree.

Also, the answers of students to statements 1,5,6,10,11,12,13,15,22,23,24,25,28,42 and 51 present the significant role of school celebrations and their contribution to the promotion of knowledge of local history and to the teaching of the significant events of Greek history and the achievements of the past. Through their answers in statements 3,14,33,34,35,36,48,50,54 and 57

the content of national holidays is shown and the view that they are an integral part of school life and that they themselves seem to wish the continuation of their celebration in schools is derived.

In addition, the answers of students to statements 7,9,17,21,29,40,43,47,49 and 58 reveal that

even if they do not appear entirely confident on the contribution of national celebrations to promote socialization, political education and the formation of pupils' personality, most of them seem to consider that national celebrations contribute to national education of pupils and constitute an opportunity for social.

Via the answers to statements 45,53,55,56,59 and 60, students support the reproduction of ideology through anniversary speeches, while in statements 18,30,32,37,41,44,46 and 52 their answers show that anniversary speeches cause feelings of patriotism and that they should be continued.

With statements 2,4,8,16,19,20,26,27,31,38 and 39 students argue through their answers that national holidays contribute to the preservation of historical memory and cultural heritage of our race and to the formation and reproduction of national identity cultivating historical awareness, boosting the national morale and helping pupils realize the debt to their homeland.

Correlations results

In order to draw conclusions eight independent variables, which constitute a number of factors from demographic data, were used in this research. These variables are: "Gender", "Father's Occupation", "Mother's Occupation", "Father's education", "Mother's Education", "Faculty", "Place of residence", "Ideology".

Regarding the independent variable of "Gender" significant correlations were observed, of which male undergraduate students appear to be more positive about the role of national celebrations, as 80% of them believe that national celebrations promote eternal values ($F = 5.040$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.05$) and 50% believe that national celebrations bring out the virtues of Greek ($F = 5.341$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.05$). The corresponding percentages for females were 62% and 29%.

Also on the views that national celebrations remind us of the glorious past ($F = 5.496$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.05$) and that they are an integral part of school life ($F = 5.174$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.05$), 85% and 75% of male students respectively agree and 63% of female students agree with both. Furthermore, 75% of women surveyed oppose the view that national celebrations help pupils become responsible citizens ($F = 8.185$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.05$), while only 55% of men disagree. Also 90% of men and 72% of women disagree that celebration of national holidays at school must be abolished ($F=3.523$, $df=1$, $P<0.05$).

Undergraduate students, whose fathers' occupation is merchant (62.5%), free-lance professional/technician (40.9%), free-lance professional/scientist (40%) and private sector employee (51.7%), seem to oppose the view that national celebrations contribute to the socialization of pupils ($F=3.201$, $df=6$, $P<0.05$), while 50% of students, whose fathers' occupation is worker do not believe that national celebrations contribute to shaping the pupil's ($F=2.932$, $df=6$, $P<0.05$) and 51.7% of students, whose fathers are private sector employees disagree with the statement that national celebrations "build" national identities ($F=2.512$, $df=6$, $P<0.05$). It is remarkable that all undergraduate students (100%), whose fathers' occupation is free-lance professional/scientist oppose the view

that parades are simple demonstrations of pupil skills ($F=3.957$, $df=6$, $P<0.05$) and all students (100%) whose fathers' occupation is free-lance professional/technician disagree with the view that parades should be abolished ($F=2.469$, $df=6$, $P<0.05$). Moreover, 50% of students whose fathers' occupation is merchant and worker do not believe that anniversary speeches reproduce ideology ($F=4.402$, $df=6$, $P<0.05$).

Moreover, regarding the variable of mother's occupation, it is indicative that 84.3% of undergraduate students whose mothers' occupation is private sector employee and 81.3% of undergraduate students whose mothers' occupation is housewife believe that national holidays cultivate historical awareness ($F=2.240$, $df=7$, $P<0.05$) and 85% of students whose mothers' occupation is public servant have the view that national holidays help pupils learn the history of their homeland ($F=2.251$, $df=7$, $P<0.05$). It is remarkable that 81.8% of undergraduate students whose mothers' occupation is worker and 75% of undergraduate students whose mothers' occupation is freelance professional/scientist believe the parades are outdated ($F=3.130$, $df=7$, $P<0.05$), while 75% of undergraduate students whose mothers' occupation is merchant disagree with the view that national holidays are an opportunity for vacation ($F=2.177$, $df=7$, $P<0.05$) and 100% of undergraduate students whose mothers' occupation is freelance professional/technician disagree with the view the national holidays serve political expediencies ($F=2.429$, $df=7$, $P<0.05$).

Concerning the father's education, it is observed that undergraduate students whose fathers graduated primary school and higher technical education are more receptive to the contribution of national holidays towards pupils. In particular, 62.6% and 65.7% respectively, believe that national celebrations promote cooperativeness of pupils ($F=2.640$, $df=4$, $P<0.05$) and 68.8% and 65.6% respectively accepts the statement that national celebrations contribute to the national education of pupils ($F=4.396$, $df=4$, $P<0.05$). Additionally, the supportive role of national celebrations on the acquaintance of pupils with the history of their homeland ($F=5.425$, $df=4$, $P<0.05$) is accepted by large percentages of students regardless of their fathers' education, except for those whose fathers are university graduates, of which only 50% agree. The same applies to the contribution of national celebrations to the political education of pupils ($F=5.913$, $df=4$, $P<0.05$), on which only 5% of them agree.

It is also found that students whose fathers graduated from primary (75%), secondary (65.9%), higher technical (75.1%) and postgraduate (100%) education consider national celebrations an integral part of school life ($F = 8.277$, $df = 4$, $P < 0.05$), as opposed to those whose fathers are university graduates where only 30% agreed and only 40% of them consider it necessary to repeal the celebration of national holidays at school ($F = 6.378$, $df = 4$, $P < 0.05$).

Undergraduate students whose mothers graduated from secondary education (75.8%), higher technical education (83.3%) and universities (56.7%) support the view that national celebrations teach the important events of Greek history ($F = 5.769$, $df = 4$, $P < 0.05$), while those whose mothers graduated from primary education (62.5%) express a neutral attitude, and those whose mothers have acquired postgraduate degree (100%) also show a neutral attitude to the

view that national celebrations teach history ($F = 5.312$, $df = 4$, $P < 0.05$) and disagree on the role of national celebrations in the preservation of historical memory ($F = 8.456$, $df = 4$, $P < 0.05$). Moreover, it seems that students with mothers higher technical education graduates (67.8%) claim that national festivals promote certain values among pupils ($F = 7.228$, $df = 4$, $P < 0.05$) in contrast to those whose mothers are postgraduate education graduates (100%) who disagree with this view.

Regarding the independent variable of the educational institution, 75.7% of undergraduate university students and 100% of higher technical institutions consider that the national celebrations contribute to the awareness of the significance of the struggles of ancestors ($F = 4.659$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.05$) and 79.1% and 100% respectively, consider that national celebrations help students learn the history of their homeland ($F = 4.946$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.05$).

According to the place of residence of undergraduate students 77.3% of those who live in a small town believe that national celebrations teach past achievements ($F = 3.087$, $df = 3$, $P < 0.05$) and 81% of undergraduate students residing in Athens-Thessaloniki believe that national celebrations remind of the nation's course ($F = 3.250$, $df = 3$, $P < 0.05$). Also, 72.7% of students who live in an urban center does not consider national holidays as a vacation opportunity ($F = 5.334$, $df = 3$, $P < 0.05$) while 45% of students who live in a small town have a neutral stance.

Regarding the independent variable, the ideology, 100% of undergraduate students falling ideologically in the extreme right, and 78.6% of students who are placed ideologically in the right disagree with the view that the institution of parades is obsolete ($F = 4.478$, $df = 5$, $P < 0.05$), while 62.5% of students who belong to the extreme left is neutral. Also, 92.9% of students who are placed ideologically in the right are of the view that national celebrations preserve the cultural heritage of our race ($F = 4.657$, $df = 5$, $P < 0.05$) while the same view expresses only 25% of those who fall ideologically in the extreme left.

Also, 100% of students falling in the extreme right believe that only the ancestors made history ($F = 4.187$, $df = 5$, $P < 0.05$) as opposed to 100% of students belonging to the extreme left who disagrees with this view. Also, 85.8% of undergraduate students belonging ideologically in the right believes that national celebrations help pupils realize the debt to their homeland ($F = 2.436$, $df = 5$, $P < 0.05$) and 66.7% that national celebrations remind of the nation's course ($F = 4.320$, $df = 5$, $P < 0.05$).

Discussion

The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of future primary school teachers on the celebration of national holidays in the multicultural school. More specifically, it examines the views of prospective teachers on issues related to the formation of a national identity in the context of the class. The research aims to study the values expressed by prospective teachers in order to investigate the problem of integrating children belonging to minority groups. In order to capture the attitudes of prospective teachers towards the celebration of national holidays in the multicultural school, a questionnaire was used as a research tool, which contained eight questions of demographic data and 60 closed type, tiered scale questions, in which students had to indicate the degree of agreement with each question. The questionnaire was divided into five

thematic groups: "The role and content of school celebrations", "The anniversary speeches", "The reproduction of national identity", "The national and political education" and "The institution of parades".

According to the research results in the first thematic group, which referred to the role and content of school celebrations, it was revealed that the perceptions of students display a positive attitude towards the celebration of national holidays at school. From studying their answers on the role and content of school celebrations, it is found that national holidays should continue to be celebrated at school (48.3%), as they are of symbolic character (40%) and contribute to the awareness of the importance of ancestors' struggles (60%). According to the views of the students the didactic content of national celebrations is depicted, which teach pupils the achievements of the past (51.7%), reminding them of the glorious past (48.3%), while according to 46.7% student national celebrations also promote specific values. Also, they teach the important events of Greek history (48.3%), helping pupils learn about the history of their homeland (55%) and hence constitute an integral part of school life (51.7%). However, some changes could be made with regard to the festive atmosphere of national celebrations as they are repeated every year without changes (56.7%) and to pupils' participation in school celebrations, which should not be mandatory (33.3 %). The question of how the historical events worthy of a celebration on national holidays are selected and which historical knowledge they promote emerges strongly. Research revealed that in these anniversary events, the historical continuity and uninterrupted course of the nation from ancient to modern times is stressed emphatically, while pupils, through national celebrations, understand history as a sequence of past events leading to the present (Golia, 2006). At the same time, school national celebrations principally constitute an endless list of feats of heroes and great personalities (Mariolis, 2005).

In the second thematic group of anniversary speeches, it turned out that a large percentage of students (50%) has a neutral view on whether anniversary speeches on national celebrations should be abolished. 40.8% does express any degree of agreement on whether anniversary speeches are outdated, 45% does not express any degree of agreement on whether it is the teacher's duty to deliver the festive speech of the day, and on whether anniversary speeches are based on stereotyped national perceptions, while according to the same percentage of students (45%), anniversary speeches reproduce ideology. Bonidis (2004) however, points out that anniversary speeches texts in national celebrations "naturalize" national ideology converting it to common sense.

The third thematic group relates to the reproduction of national identity. According to the results obtained from the replies of future teachers, the contribution of national celebrations to the reproduction of national identity is noted. Some students express a neutral opinion on statements that national celebrations "build" national identities (40%), which shows that they do not have a clear understanding on this issue or that they do not believe they have such a decisive role in building national identity. A 46.7% agree with the statement that heroes honored on national celebrations are a model of imitation for children and a 38.3% agrees that on national celebrations pupils learn to respect heroes. In fact, it appears from the answers that national celebrations cultivate historical

awareness (51.7%), help pupils become aware of the debt to their homeland (39.2%), reinforce national morale (43.3%), contribute to the preservation of historical memory (53.3%) and in the shaping of identity (36.7%). Researchers who have dealt with the shaping the national identity of young pupils in preschool age, despite their minor disagreements, point out that racial and national identity begins to develop at preschool age (Katz, 1987, Ramsey, 1987) and stress that in this age there is no issue of national identity formation. They introduce and adopt the term "ethnic attitudes" and stress that young children follow a development course that leads to the formation of ethnic identity in an older age. Ethnic attitudes refer to the organized predisposition of children to develop a positive or negative attitude to people belonging to different ethnic groups (Aboud, 1988).

Also with respect to the fourth thematic group, the national and political education of pupils through the national celebrations at school, the students seem to have a neutral and negative, to some degree, stance towards political education provided by the celebration of national holidays, while they appear more positive on national education. Students neither disagree nor agree with the views that national celebrations promote cooperativeness of pupils (35%) and that national celebrations raise pupils' morale (41.7%), contribute to their socialization (37.5%), contribute in personality formation (36.7%) and in their political education (41.7%). They, however, disagree with the view that national celebrations help students become responsible citizens (55.8%). Contrary to Fragoudaki & Dragona (1997) and Golia (2006), which claim that apart from the sense of unity, the participants are trained to become suitable citizens through the celebrations. After all, the ordinary citizens are considered by the state apparatus, as persons needing education, shaping and training. Hence, national celebrations are part of the civil training policy of a state and aim to the national and political education of citizens and pupils (45.8%) and are an opportunity for social activities (40.8%).

Finally, regarding the results obtained from the last thematic group, which referred to the institution of parades, the students' stance towards the performance of parades seems to be quite positive and a significant percentage disagrees with the view that parades should be abolished (47.5%) and does not consider them as simple demonstrations of student skills (36.7%) and agrees that they cause sentiments of patriotism (49.2%). On the other hand however, a significant percentage of respondents agrees that parades could not be considered the culmination of national celebrations (30%) and believes that the participation of pupils the parade could be optional (45.8%). Therefore, it is clear, that through parades on national holidays, a reminder of historical facts is attempted and the main aim is to strengthen the national morale and national pride. This is reinforced via the use of symbols, which are carriers of values and ideas. On national celebrations, the effort for regeneration of the particular historical period combined with the use of national symbols such as the flag and other materials used during the celebration, attempts to strengthen the national identity and unity (Golia, 2006).

The results of this research depict that students are influenced to a significant extent by the current management of national holidays and national ideology, with certain however, obvious deviation tendencies from this, an

element which is partly justified by the influence of their university studies, but also by their limited connection with the reality of the Greek school.

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