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Religious Education in Greek Public Schools in Western Thrace: Identifying Controversial Issues

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Abstract

This article concerns two recent political legislative moves by the Greek government and one in regard to Religious Education (RE) in schools. The latter concerns compulsory RE and the right to exemption for Orthodox students. The former concerns the new Curriculum of compulsory education (2011) which keeps RE as a distinctive compulsory subject for all, claiming that RE has been non-confessional since 2003 and an Amendment (2013) of Law 3536/2007 which was never implemented. The Amendment enacts a formal Muslim RE only for the schools of Western Thrace and for the students of the Muslim Minority who register at Greek public schools and have the right to withdraw from RE due to reasons relating to their religious consciousness. The native Muslims of Western Thrace (a region in the northern part of Greece bordering Turkey) are recognized as a minority according to the Lausanne Treaty (1923). They comprise 50% of the population, and according to the Treaty they have their own religion and educational system. The author takes into account the complexity of religion, education and politics in the region and addresses controversial issues on the topic of RE that have been raised not only in local society but also between academics, educationists and educators. The question arises as to whether the Greek State is really concerned with RE and the type of RE to be offered to children. Fieldwork by interviewing persons responsible for or related to the subject and articles of local and national newspapers provided the sources for the paper.

1. Introduction

The discussion about Religious Education (hereafter referred to as RE) is very important to the development of the subject. Current debates in RE can only be understood in relation to legislation and policy within and beyond the subject. This article attempts to contribute to the discussion regarding one of the basic issues of RE within public education: Is the State really concerned with RE?

The responsibility for Education and RE in Greece rests exclusively with the State. General public education is compulsory for nine years and it is provided for all children in primary school for a period of six years (from the age of six) and then for three years in secondary school (Gymnasium). After nine years of compulsory education it is possible to continue for three years of General Education (Lyceum) or in a vocational school (Technical Lyceum). During the twelve years of education RE is a compulsory subject and it is taught two hours per week every year except the third class of the Lyceum (one hour per week) and the three classes of the vocational school (one hour per week during the first and second classes).

2. Education in Thrace

Thrace is a region in the northeastern part of Greece bordering Turkey and Bulgaria. As it was ruled for five centuries by Ottomans the population was mixed with Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks, Pomaks, Jews, Armenians and Roma (Tsitselikis, 1996, p. 274-5). The region was given to Greece in 1920 after the end of the First World War. This was followed by the large-scale Greek-Turkish population exchanges of 1923, agreed in Treaty of Lausanne (Martin, 1924, p. 959-1022), which finalized the reversal of Western Thrace's demography. The Treaty granted minority status to the Muslims in Western Thrace, in exchange for a similar status for the ethnic Greek minority in Istanbul and the Aegean islands of Imbros and Tenedos. The two minorities were entitled to have their own bilingual educational system. So from the first decade of 1920 in Thrace, along with the Greek public schooling system, a Minority education system has existed. Of course at first continuing the Ottoman schooling system it provided only basic RE for Muslim students. The system, however, gradually changed becoming more 'secular' after 1923 while at the same time Muslim religious schools (medreses) have remained and Muslim RE was and still is an integral part of the curriculum of the Minority schools.

Minority education has retained autonomy until today based on the Lausanne Treaty (1923), the 1951 Cultural Protocol and the 1968 Cultural Agreement signed between Greece and Turkey. In 2002, 223 Primary schools with 7107 pupils, 2 Gymnasiums/Lyceums and 2 Religious Schools with 905 students functioned for the Minority in Thrace (Tsitselikis, 2007, p. 6). Furthermore, an increasing number of Muslim adolescents register at Greek public schools because the Minority secondary schools could not satisfy all the applications due to their limited capacities. According to the official data of the Greek Ministry, by the 2008-9 school year, the number of Muslims students in public Greek Secondary schools was 4650 (Report of Greece, 2008, p.1).

2.1 Religious Education in Greek Public schools and Minority schools in Thrace

The framework for RE in Greek public schools is provided by the basic Law for Education (1566/1985) which requires that all students on a mandatory basis have to have been taught the authentic tradition of the Orthodox Church (article 1, paragraph 1). In addition, article 13, paragraphs 1-2 of the Constitution guarantee the basic right to freedom of religion and associate it with the development of religious consciousness. As a consequence, several interpretations exist in the pedagogical and theological area for the context of RE though the official organisation (Pedagogical Institute) which has had the responsibility for contributing to the curriculum since 1997 states that RE is an ordinary subject in the state education system which tries to be faithful to the transmission of democratic values and critical openness. Thus RE was considered as an open-ended educational process that does fair justice to religious pluralism whilst providing religious literacy and supporting students in developing their cultural identity by teaching mainly Christian Orthodoxy, other Christian traditions, world religions and worldviews and in cultivating a spirit of solidarity, peace and justice, respect for religious diversity and coexistence with the 'other' (Ministry of Education & Pedagogical Institute, 2003, p. 174). Until this year the 2003 Curriculum for compulsory education (Primary school and Gymnasium) and the 1999 Curriculum for the Lyceum and Vocational schools still remain although the State constructed a new Curriculum in 2011 for compulsory education, which will be examined below, and a curriculum pilot scheme is still being carried out in a small number of schools (3 Primary schools and 2 Gymnasiums in Thrace). It is important to mention that everyone has a right to be exempted from RE through an application arguing that his religious consciousness is offended in the RE class.

RE in Minority Primary schools, taking into account the minority's identity and its religious diversity, has been based on exclusively teaching the Holy Qur'an. The particular RE aims 'to develop the religious feeling' attempting to teach that 'Islam relies on moral and good origins' and 'faith in God and to uphold his commandments' (article 17) (Ministry of Education, 1957). Minority RE has a catechetical perspective and in the Minority Lyceum it becomes more an Islamic theology (Hatzopoulos, 2008, p. 72). Suffice to say that RE books have the title 'Religious Culture and Ethics' (Din kültürü ve ahlak bilgisi). Finally, RE in Minority Primary and Secondary schools has the same timetable as the public schools except for religious schools (medrese) where RE has to be taught 3 hours per week in the three classes.

3. Three legislative moves challenge 'secular' education

In the context articulated above three different moves of the legislative and judicial branches of government posed arguments and raised critical voices about how the State uses RE generally in the post-modern era and especially amongst a multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic community such as the Thracian.

3.1 New Curriculum of Religious Education (2011)

Greek governments have been reforming the educational system since 2007. As a result in 2011 they presented the 'New School' (Ministry of Education & Pedagogical Institute 1 2011) which has been implemented as a pilot scheme until now. 'New School' maintains RE in all public schools as a subject within the national curriculum, conforming to its framework of targets, programmes of study, aims and attainments. This means that RE in Greek schools still has a centralised role, within the curriculum at least. The timetable has had no changes made to it providing seven years of RE for all students as have all the previous curricula since 1985.

The basic aim of the curriculum is religious literacy (Wright, 2000, p.179-180) but it is focused on educating citizens so as to develop religious consciousness, to be open to dialogue and tolerant of diversity. 'Learning about' and 'Learning from', terms, derived from the British pedagogical and epistemological experience (Grimmitt, 1987), are used decisively in the curriculum. In fact the orientation of the new curriculum differs from the previous one (2003) in terms of curriculum construction. Its provision has changed from a curriculum focused on aims to one oriented in process (Elliot,

1998) and as a product of emancipated teachers (Stenhouse, 1975) dominated by representation of learning actions and interactions that facilitate student enquiry, and to construct and evaluate knowledge by themselves. The basic criteria for the actions and interactions that the curriculum seeks to promote are:

1. to contextualise knowledge with everyday life,
2. to support the acquisition of knowledge together with its implementation,
3. to present current issues, related to students' lives

by active learning procedures in developing their own coherent patterns of experience and knowledge (Ministry of Education & Pedagogical Institute1, 2011, p. 12-13).

Moreover, the new curriculum of RE is neither confessional nor catechetical as the designers of the curriculum had at least stated. The fundamental philosophy of its construction is the context of the aims and the subjects which are one, for the first time, and coherent for compulsory education, both primary and secondary.

The curriculum frames the following statement aims:

1. to construct a strong cognitive and comprehensive basis for learning about Christianity and Orthodoxy as a factor of spiritual reality, a living source of inspiration, faith, ethos, a key to the concept of the world, man, life and history and as a Greek and European cultural tradition.
2. to provide students' with knowledge of the phenomenon of religion in general and world religions in a sense of being a source of faith, culture and ethos.
3. to support students in developing the skills, attainments, positions and attitudes of a religious literate person, cultivating at the same time moral and social awareness.
4. to develop knowledge, critical understanding, respect and dialogue between students of differing religious backgrounds and moral orientations.
5. to contribute to students' individual identity construction, holistic (religious, cognitive, spiritual, social, moral, aesthetic and creative) development through enquiry into the concept and complexity of life (Ministry of Education & Pedagogical Institute1, 2011, p. 18-19).

Naturally, there are already within the aims some hints about criteria for the selection of content for the function of the classroom. The aims imply that there will be some balance between the traditional beliefs, the individual's beliefs and an engagement with human experience. Although the topics of RE are based largely on Christianity RE teachers should decide on the topics while bearing in mind their students and their experience. That means that a multi-cultural and multi-faith class provides the criterion for selecting phenomena, events and topics which best exemplify or illustrate the issues and beliefs of their religion firstly and all the others secondly. The constructors of the new Curriculum seem to be promoting a RE for all students though it is still founded on Orthodox theology and tradition.

3.2 Decision of the Administrative Court of Chania concerning withdrawals from RE (11.12.2012)

The Administrative Court of Chania (a city on the island of Crete-the southern part of Greece) issued a twenty page decision (115/2012) concerning withdrawals from RE due to the fact that nine RE teachers appealed against the director of the Department of Secondary Education of Chania. The case started when the local department of the Greek Federation of Secondary Education State School Teachers (ELME) published a document (2010), referring to a recommendation of 'The Greek Ombudsman' (2008), which mentioned that the principals of the schools should know that all the students regardless of their religion (and the Orthodox students) have the right to withdraw from RE citing reasons of consciousness without requiring any justification. As the Greek Federation had no authority to give instructions to school principals and the director of the Department of Secondary Education of Chania hadn't responded to this move, the court decided the following:

The court accepts the 'omission of the obligatory legal action' on the part of the director of the Department of Secondary Education of Chania. Moreover, the court deems that no state authority or body is allowed to interfere in the inviolability of the individual's conscience and to inquire into their religious beliefs or to force the disclosure of any convictions in relation to God unless that individual voluntarily makes known his religious affiliation to the State authorities for the exercise of specific rights which the law recognizes for the protection of religious freedom. Since the Orthodox Christian Church is designated by the Greek Constitution as the predominant religion, the development of the religious consciousness is conceived as being in accordance with the teaching of the principles of Orthodox Christian Church. The method of teaching the RE lesson as is drawn up by the curriculum is not in opposition to the requirements of pluralism, diversity of opinions and multiculturalism. According to Greek Constitution and Laws...RE is compulsory. Exemption from RE for Orthodox Christian students is not conceivable because the development of religious

consciousness is a constitutional binding requirement not only for the State but also for the Orthodox Christian student.

As it is a court decision it is binding for the school principals in Thrace and all over Greece. Therefore they are obliged to examine, if someone applies to withdraw from RE, his religious affiliation. Furthermore, it should be noted that the decision explicitly states that the justification for withdrawal from RE while disclosing at the same time his religious beliefs, when someone has voluntarily applied to withdraw, is not against his right of religious freedom. In any case the court accepted that a) the recommendation of the Greek Ombudsman (2008) is in direct conflict to the Greek Constitution, the State laws, decisions of the Minister of Education, decisions of the Council of State and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (Administrative Court of Chania, 2012, p. 5) and b) the Greek State is not bound by the Greek Ombudsman's opinions (Administrative Court of Chania, 2012, p. 6-7).

3.3 Amendment of Law 3536/2077 (articles 36-40) for the appointment of 240 imams in Thrace

As Law 3536 of 2007 and its specific articles (36-40) which voted for the appointment of 240 imams in Thrace has never been implemented, the Greek Ministry of Education amended it in 2013 (Amendment of Law 3536/2007-16 January 2013) in order this time to push forward the appointment since the first time the appointment had never been signed by the muftis (religious heads of the Minority). This fact was a result of their opposition to the selection committee which consisted of non-Muslim civil servants albeit that the committee had completed the imams' selection procedure. The amendment has radically changed the consistency of the committee (its majority will be Muslims) and contains a new arrangement which is of great interest to this research. The imams will teach the Holy Qur'an in the mosques and, in the Greek public schools where Muslims students study by choice. The Islamic RE lessons will be given during the timetable, the students will not get grades for them and they will not be compulsory. The Amendment essentially enacts a formal Islamic RE for the schools of Thrace and only for the students of the Minority who attend Greek public schools and have the right to withdraw from RE due to reasons relating to their religious consciousness. Above all it starts the procedure for the appointment of RE teachers in mosques and schools while the State is not certain that Muslim students will be interested in applying for an Islamic RE, as Law 1566/1985 states for the religious communities who want to organize their confessional RE on condition that 5 students would apply for it. Nowadays the committee is instigating the procedure to publish an announcement in order to start the process for applications for the appointment of imams.

4. Discussion: Does the State really care about children's Religious Education today?

First of all some explanation must be given to answer the question why the State in 2013 enacted its decision for the Muslim Minority to have a right to their own RE in the public schools when the Minority had never actually made an application for this to happen.

The State has made sure that the Greek Orthodox Church has no responsibility for RE in public schools, even though it is confessional, and that non-Orthodox students have the right to withdraw from it. Only Catholics on the island of Syros applied to have their RE as the Law 1566 of 1985 stated. Moreover when the new curriculum of RE (2011) is neither confessional nor catechetical and open to other denominations and religions the State seems to have the aim of promoting a RE subject for all students. At least that is what can be identified from the first stage from the documents above. Therefore the State has no reason to appoint Muslim RE teachers in the event that Muslim students might apply to have an Islamic RE. There is no certainty that it will happen, bearing in mind that the Amendment provoked among the Minority a variety of reactions.

It is obvious that the State did not have RE in mind when they amended the law. The main problem is the appointment of the imams in the mosques by the Greek State whereas in Thrace the minority has two religious leaders (muftis), the one who has been appointed by the State and the other who has been elected by the members of the Minority. This controversial issue has been discussed in Thrace, Greece and during the inter-state negotiations between Greece and Turkey since 1985. Of course now it is directly related to the Amendment and that is the reason for newspapers quoting it as the 'Amendment for the pay of the imams' (Patronidou & Valiadou 2013, p.3-5) referring to the issue of the two muftis and the role of Turkey (Bakirtzakis, 2013; Meletis, 2013). The issue above is illustrated by the advocacy of the Minority Member of Parliament Hatziosman, A. and his opposition to the Amendment in Parliament: *Why hasn't the Law of 2007 been applied? Because the Minority, all the members of it, did not accept it...I am asking every person responsible for this Amendment: Has the issue of the mufti been solved? The Minority has sought for a solution since 1985 (Stamoulis, 2013, p.6).* On the other hand the General Secretary of Religious Affairs of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports, Kalatzis, G. claims that *suspicion is rife. We are talking*

about a law that was not applied in 2007. People then who trusted the Greek State and applied for the positions have never been paid. It is obvious that he speaks about those who applied in 2007, had been evaluated and selected by the committee but were never appointed. And he adds: *Others who have trusted other sources are now very well paid* (G. Kalatzis, personal communication, May 28, 2013). The issue is much more controversial than it first seems and that can be concluded from the reaction of the Turkish government to the Amendment. The Turkish Prime Minister, Erdoğan, R.T. raised the issue during an unofficial meeting between him and Greek Prime Minister, Samaras, A. Therefore the latter stressed that the: *Amendment addresses previous failings of the Law of 2007. If imams become civil servants that will be an improvement and not a downgrading of them* (Ravanos & Athanasopoulos, 2013).

However, what is not yet apparent is why the State decided to appoint the imams not only for religious and rituals duties in mosques but for RE for the Muslims in Greek public schools also. The Greek General Secretary of Religious Affairs explains that *making this move confirms on an international level, and to an international audience that our country has no issues with Islam. Whether the Minority itself exploits this enormous advantage or not is entirely their own matter and is their right to do so. Do Muslims want to integrate as equals into society? If the answer is yes, then they have to learn Greek* (G. Kalatzis, personal communication, May 28, 2013). He clarifies the point that Islamic RE only in Greek public schools in Thrace would be a motive for Minority parents to enrol their children in Greek schools. The problem is whether the children would learn Greek or not. The lessons of *The Qur'an* dispel two myths. Firstly that Greece is against Islam and secondly that it aims to Christianize the Muslims in Thrace... Although the Muslims should applaud the Greek initiative, a number of people of the Minority are prominent at an international and European level in condemning the new Islamic RE. What they are afraid of is not the lessons of *The Qur'an* but the possibility for the Minority to learn Greek. I do not know whether it has been clarified or not but large sectors of the population in Thrace do not speak Greek. And it is to our shame that they do not speak Greek. In this context RE could play a role. Not a basic one but at least a role (G. Kalatzis, personal communication, May 28, 2013). Moreover, while the Amendment of the Law 3536 of 2007 refers to Law 1566 of 1985, it is not safe to say that there will definitely be in every public school 5 Muslims in the same school year that would probably apply to have Islamic RE. It is obvious that a possible Muslim withdrawal from RE does not simultaneously mean the entrance of the imams into public schools. What is important to add for this research at this point is that the Greek State has openly expressed its aims to educate the minority children from 2006 when a Ministerial Decision 61539/G2/10-6-2006 introduced a pilot scheme in 4 schools in Thrace including the Turkish language as an elective course at public schools not only for the Minority but for the majority also. It was a clear attempt to invite Minority children to register at Greek public schools. The scheme had been running for 3 years while the number of the students at pilot Turkish classes was: a) in 2006-7, 31 students, b) in 2007-8, 37 students and c) in 2008, 45 students (Huseinoglou, 2012, p. 259). The scheme was stopped due to the Greek financial crisis (Secondary Education Office of Rodopi, personal communication, June 10, 2013) but the numbers indicate that participation was very low. Considering the success of this scheme one could assume that it is not apparent that registration at public schools by Muslims will increase in the case of an Islamic RE. So what is the purpose of the Amendment? Probably the answer is the word 'ability'. George Kalatzis repeated it 5 times when he talked about the Minority, the Amendment and 'the ability to have their RE' (G. Kalatzis, personal communication, May 28, 2013). What he pointed out is that that is the reason that the Greek State stepped forward, as has been mentioned above to prove internationally that Muslims in Thrace are treated equally by the Greek Law.

However, does the research on the legislation point to any particular interest by the Greek governments in RE? As far as the elements of the study provide more explanations, the answer could not easily be positive. In other words, a vital question is inevitably posed: is in 2013 a confessional RE suitable for a multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic community such as the Thracian? Current research evidences stress, firstly, that it is impossible nowadays to understand contemporary issues, problems and human culture without knowledge of the religious plurality which is a factor that makes the interpretation of the phenomena more difficult exactly because a variety of traditions, religious and philosophical, exist. Educational scope is maintained by exploring within and across faiths, enabling students to learn different religions, beliefs, traditions and values, and their influences on individuals, societies, communities and cultures. Some results of the REDCo -Project (covering 8 European countries) underline the importance of religious literacy which is one of the main aims of education in the post-modern era. Teenagers' perspectives on the role of religion in their lives, schools and societies illustrate that: 1) Religious pluralism is not only accepted, but welcomed by the students, 2) Students expressed criticism against truth claims that exclude people of other religions or world views and 3) In spite of the awareness of the conflicts caused by religions and the difficulties arising from religious plurality, the majority of students appeared to share a vision of peaceful coexistence in a religiously plural society (Valk, Bertram-Troost, Friederici, Béraud, 2009). Secondly, school is the main recourse and an actual safe environment for learning about

religions and religious perceptions of other students, especially for those who have no commitment to one religion or others who are atheists. Besides for those who are members of a religious community, the school provides the main opportunity to come into contact with other religions and beliefs. Thus school offers unique possibilities to promote students' understanding, communication, tolerance and respect between and towards each other encouraging students to reflect on, analyse and evaluate their beliefs, values and practices and communicate their responses. REDCo research revealed a trend among youngsters that may be considered as important. It says that most students in Europe would like school to be a place for learning about religion and worldviews, rather than for instruction in a particular religion. At the same time in the European area there has been a dialogue for inter-religious and intercultural education since 2001 and the products of it are a) the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (2008), that its principles provide the intercultural dialogue and its dimension of religious and non-religious convictions as significant factors for the development of tolerance and cultural coexistence, b) the Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools (a result of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe- OSCE based in Vienna) (2007) which is an essential tool for the study and knowledge about religions and beliefs in schools, based on the rationale of religious freedom and c) the recommendation 1720/2005 (2006) that encourages the governments of member states to ensure that religious studies are taught at the primary and secondary levels of state education by an objective and inter-religious method. Finally, it is important to note that when the State in a multi-cultural society (Thrace) chooses the policy of 'educational appeasement' (Gotovos, 2007) maintaining the differences while it claims to respect human rights, on the surface, it is undoubtedly that inter-cultural education and community cohesion are absolutely not the factors that affect the State's educational policy. If the Greek government really aims to confront the problem of social/ national cohesion it has to promote even more amongst the youngsters the democratic values of equality, justice and solidarity because it thus not only guarantees the rights of all citizens, but also the right of all cultural communities to preserve for them important cultural elements and to participate in common culture (Taylor, 1994). Some researchers have extended the post-modern concept of culture by referring to a 'new multiculturalism' which is particularly useful. Through his fieldwork in London on cultural discourse, another researcher Bauman (1996) suggested that it was a 'dominant discourse' that treats cultures as separate and homogeneous and this separation creates a superficial view of the issues. In particular the Minority is not a unified whole though the State treats them in this way. In contrast to the dominant discourse is a 'demotic discourse': the dynamic process of making new culture through interaction (Bauman, 1996).

Finally is the RE for public schools promoted by the Greek State a non-confessional RE in the end? The answer is not explicit because a discrepancy would be revealed if one compare the claims that have been exemplified in the curriculum (2011) of a non-confessional RE and the opinion of politicians and journalists that RE in Greek public schools is catechetical. What is really going on in the classrooms is more complicated. The fieldwork for this particular research illustrates that the publications in the local newspapers of the capital of Thrace, Komotini (9 publications in Xronos and 8 publications in Paratiritis tis Thrakis) describe RE as catechetical. *Our children are taught the Bible in the schools* said Martidou, M. director of Xronos (M. Martidou, personal communication, May 11, 2013) something that is not valid. Moreover, Kalatzis G. say about RE: *The Christian RE does not force anyone to believe in God. It only gives the opportunity to someone to learn about the majority's faith. That is a useful social skill above all else because the Orthodox Church has influenced our culture, our worldview and the way we see ourselves* (G. Kalatzis, personal communication, May 28, 2013). Dragona, Th., additionally, the Special Secretary for Single Administrative Affairs Department of Educational Planning, Education Greek children abroad, Intercultural Education and Decentralization during the period (2009-10) of the construction of the new Curriculum of RE (2011) wrote in her article about the appointment of imams in Thrace: *As long as the children of the majority have catechesis in the school, why not allow the minority children to have lessons in The Kur'an? Besides they can have more religious lessons (catechesis) in case they want to, outside school just as the Christian children do in the Sundays schools* (Dragona, 2013). The State's purported interest in children's catechesis, an issue that should only concern the various religions, seems strangely belated.

What is apparent from the legislation and the discussion above is that the State takes into account that RE in public schools is an important factor in the construction of national identity. That is clear in the Law of Education (1566) and in the decision of the Administrative Court of Chania. Besides, the new Curriculum sets out the framework to construct a tolerant attitude against diversity by adjusting to what the current situation is and above all to the demands of International Institutions and The European Union (Koukounaras-Liagkis, 2012) but the content of the curriculum is based mainly on the Orthodox Christian doctrines, texts, history, ideas and values. Finally, on the other hand the Amendment of the 3535 Law stresses most explicitly the differences between the religious communities in Thrace by fostering within the context of a 'secular' education a confessional RE and constructing therefore amongst children

different identities in a multi-culture and multi-faith society.

The complexity of the context is steadily revealed, because above all the situation is a matter of policy. Furthermore in Thrace the conditions are much more complicated and difficult to interpret. What the research undoubtedly pointed up is that Greece as a secularising society tries to adapt its legislation to the secularized policies of E.U. However, it is essential for one to take into account that the issue of the Minority of Thrace is related to a Muslim non-secularised country, Turkey. In this context RE might be used just as a medium for political aims or a medium for educational aims and social change. According to the three aforementioned moves the Greek government does not seem to have taken the latter seriously.

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