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“Migration teaching in school history courses. The case of the recent Albanian-Greek migration movement”.

Enquiry questions

1. Why should the history of human migration be taught in school?
2. Why teach the history of recent Albanian-Greek migration in the Greek school?
3. How to teach the history of recent Albanian-Greek migration?

1) Why should the history of human migration be taught in school?

Why should the history of human migration be taught in school?

- Mobility is key to understanding human history (Borghini & Smurra, [2022](#)), as people have always been on the move, and migration is a fundamental condition of today's globalised world (Oikonomou, [2018](#)).

Human migrations as a key topic of history teaching

Quality Education:

- “develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development and global citizenship education” (UNESCO, [2016](#): 8).

Human migrations as a key topic of history teaching

High Quality History Teaching:

- “offers insights into the complexities and diversity of human behaviour”;
- “fosters the ability to interrogate differing, even conflicting, narratives”;
- “requires that arguments are supported by an understanding of wide-ranging evidence” (CoE, 2018: 5).

Human migrations as a key topic of history teaching

Arie Wilschut (2018: 8) argues that an evidence-based strategy to achieve high-quality history and citizenship education seems to be to organise content around “cultural human universals”, i.e., “domains of human experience that have existed in all cultures, past and present” (Alleman et al, 2007: 168)

Human migrations as a key topic of history teaching

The study of social dynamics – like **migration**, as well as globalisation, interculturality, and plurality of identities (Facal & Schugurensky, 2022: 20) – offers excellent starting points:

- *To relate past and present realities.*
- *To link migration to personal choices, family strategies, and hybrid identities, thus transcending the nation-state perspective.*
- *To develop inclusive, multi-perspective, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary educational approaches.*
- *To overcome both the political narrative that sees migrants -by default- as a threat or danger to contemporary societies, and the narrative that sees them ~~a-priori~~ as a factor of enrichment.*
- *To reflect on the concept of borders.*

2) Why teach the history of recent Albanian-Greek migration in the Greek school?

Why teach the history of recent Albanian-Greek migration in the Greek school?

- *Because:* From the 1990s to 2013 Albania experienced one of the largest and most dramatic migration flows in its history, while Greece was a destination-country for more than 50% of Albanian migrants (Gemi, [2013](#): 4, 6).
- *Because:* The continuous numerical predominance of Albanian community among immigrants in Greece has been reaffirmed by recent reports (Gemi & Feta, [2023](#): 12; Dimitriadi, [2022](#); Kokkali, [2015](#): 123, 138).
- *Because:* The causes and effects of this massive migration constitute a very important chapter of social history for both countries (Albania and Greece), profoundly transforming critical aspects of their economic, political, educational, and cultural public life.

Why teach the history of recent Albanian-Greek migration in the Greek school?

- *Because:* Albanians constitute the great majority of pupils of foreign origin in the Greek schools (Lakasas, [2022](#)).
- *Because:* The mere presence of foreign pupils in Greek schools raises serious inclusion issues, which need to be addressed taking into account their specific ethnic, social, and educational profile, combined with their own aspirations.
- *Because:* The topic lends itself to the exploration of multiple, divergent, and opposing perspectives, human rights, inclusion and exclusion policies, historical contexts, social needs, international relations, attitudes and mentalities, cultural and artistic expressions.

*The place of recent Albanian-Greek migration in
the latest (2023) Greek history curricula*

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- The history of recent Albanian-Greek migration seems to be “**terra incognita**” – **no surprise!** – in the latest Greek history curricula for primary and secondary education (FEK B 507/2-2-2023; FEK B 217/19-1-2023; FEK B 198/19-1-2023).
- in the context of the Greek history curriculum for the 2nd grade of high secondary education (Lyceum), the chapter “Population movements in the Antiquity, the Byzantium, and the Modern Era” (FEK B 198/19-1-2023), takes up about a third of the annual syllabus, and it is combined with two other chapters, which focus on parallel socioeconomic developments. **But human migration is not presented as a common key feature of human history, while the curriculum’s narrative is overwhelmingly ethnocentric and, partly, euro-centric. National history still determines what will be taught and what will be left out.**
- For example, in the sub-chapter with the ambitious title “Population movements in the modern era”, the developments stop at the consequences of the Lausanne treaty (1923): No reference to the migratory and refugee flows of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries (including Albanian-Greek migration), except for a vague reference to the “opportunities and challenges of the modern world” (ibid).

3) How to teach the history of recent Albanian-Greek migration?

How to teach the history of recent Albanian-Greek migration?

- A parallel example of a proposed didactic approach is the comparative approach to the relatively recent migratory flows to West and East Germany in the post-World War II period, in the context of [the Berlin-Brandenburg History curriculum](#) (Ultze, [2018](#): 35).
- This approach is based on biographical oral testimonies of immigrants from various countries who worked in different positions in the German economy after World War II. Therefore, the migrants' voices, as well as their hybrid identities, emerge (Besch, [2021a](#); [2021b](#)).
- The historical approach of the topic is combined with the perspective of political education in the context of the social sciences: [The main goals are both historical understanding and acceptance of social diversity today](#). In addition, the available multimodal educational material is processed in a [history-lab environment](#) (Lesh, [2011](#); Lewis, [2022](#); UMBC, [n.d.](#); HistoryLab for Civic Engagement, [n.d.](#)).

How to teach the history of recent Albanian-Greek migration?

- Another noteworthy example of a didactic approach to the immigration issue comes from the Australian curriculum (Version 9.0, 2023).
- The topic of migrants and migration is linked with general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities, such as:
 - **ethical understanding** (i.e. explore and reflect on ethical issues, concepts, and decisions);
 - and **intercultural understanding** (i.e. develop multiple perspectives, world views, and empathy; reflect on cultural diversity, and the relation between cultures and identities).

In conclusion

- There were **always people on the move**, seeking better conditions or avoiding the worst. Thus mobility is a key to understanding human (Borghi and Smurra, 2022: 193-194), while migration is a fundamental condition of today's world, a representative and constitutive force in the context of modernity (Oikonomou, 2018). In other words, the immigrants constitute an “internal”, “intrinsic” or “integral” object of the history of humanity.
- For centuries in the Balkans ‘invasions’ and wars have caused population movements “in a **continuous** and still ongoing transformation of the distribution and the **overlapping** of religions, languages, ethnic groups and cultures” (Bonifaci & Mamolo, 2004: 519).
- After the dissolution of the "Eastern bloc" (1989-1991), the high unemployment rate and the great economic imbalance between the majority of the Balkan countries and the countries of the European Union have intensified migratory movements in the area.
- The history of recent (since the 1990s) Albanian-Greek migration eloquently highlights the **overlapping histories** of neighbouring and mixed populations under the multidimensional pressure of a fluid global context.

In conclusion

- In view of these developments, the teaching of history today could particularly benefit from organising the content around universal human issues, such as migration, that can easily be compared to today's standards.
- It is reasonable to expect that, in the context of such **comparative** approaches, the teaching of history can contribute substantially to the preparation of well-informed and responsible future citizens, “fit for life in a democratic society” (Wilschut, 2018: 3), who “will engage in non-violent actions to create more democratic, sustainable and happier societies” (Facal & Schugurensky, 2022: 23).

In conclusion

The history of recent (since the 1990s) Albanian-Greek migration eloquently highlights the **overlapping histories of neighbouring and mixed populations** under the multidimensional pressure of a fluid global context. The important didactic advantages of the subject are as follows:

- An opportunity to reconsider migration as an **intrinsic** part of human history and everyday life. Cf. Besnier, 2019; McIntosh et al, 2019: 5; United Nations, 2021.
- An opportunity for **interdisciplinary** approaches, aiming at **both historical understanding and acceptance of the social diversity** of the past and present.
- An opportunity to reflect on continuity and change, the structural and the conjunctural, the general (phenomenon of migration) and the specific (recent Albanian-Greek migration), the past and the present.
- The possibility of re-framing the available evidence using supportive multimodal educational materials and teaching suggestions in a history-lab environment, which in turn requires **flexible and inclusive** history curricula.