New Perspectives towards Gender Equality

The case of Muslim minority in Greece

Eleftheria Koniari

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Abstract

Significant progress has been made the last decades in Thrace, northern Greece, in the Muslim minority education setting, with respect to gender parity in school enrollment, retention, and progression from primary to secondary education. The change of orientation of the Greek politics towards the Muslim minority which allowed for reforms and initiatives, the Project’s for the Education of Muslim Children (PEM) actions alongside with the overall changes of modernization are perceived to be the determinants for the substantial changes in the landscape of Muslim minority education. But why there are still gender disparities within secondary education? This research study focuses on the ways the concept of gender equality is addressed, promoted or undermined and thus identifies ways that facilitate and promote gender equality through education. The investigation took place in the prefecture of Xanthi, in rural and urban areas, with the participation of teachers and female students. In total, forty teachers and fifty three students responded to questionnaires while thirty of the students participated in focus group interviews.

The present study points to some interesting findings which provide an insight on gender equality teaching, the project’s contribution, and obstacles for the completion of compulsory\textsuperscript{1} education from the students’ and teachers’ perspective. Drawing on the evidence of the study, despite the significant progress in female students’ access in education, there are still significant social and cultural constraints in shaping one’s own educational path.

Keywords: gender equality, girls, minority, secondary education, Greece

\textsuperscript{1} Education in Greece is compulsory for all children aged six to fifteen years and consists of three stages; preschool, primary and lower secondary education
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The Muslim minority is the only officially recognized minority in Greece and lies in the area of Northern Greece, Thrace (Figure 1). In Europe’s southernmost corner, the region of Thrace borders with Turkey to the east and Bulgaria to the north. The Muslim minority was created under the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 which officially ended the war between Greece and Turkey (1919-1922). According to the Treaty of Lausanne, a convention concerning the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations was signed between the two countries. However, the populations of the Orthodox Greeks of Istanbul, Imvros and Tenedos and the Muslims of the geographical area of Thrace had been excluded from the exchange and were entitled to remain as a minority under a special legislation that provided for the protection of the Greek Orthodox Christian minority in Turkey and the Muslim minority in Greece (Boussiakou, 2007).

Figure 1: Northern Greece, Thrace

Greece is a linguistically and culturally homogenous country and the Muslim minority is a heterogeneous minority, comprised of populations of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The Muslim minority consists of three ethnic groups: Turks, who make up 50% of the minority population, 35% are Pomaks (of Slavic origin) and 15% are Roma. Overall, the Muslim minority population is estimated approximately from 98.000 to 120.000 in a total population of 338.000 (Borou, 2009). The recognition of the minority as “Muslim” is
inaccurate since ignores the cultural and linguistic diversities within the minority and repress the right to self-determination (Gewrgiadis, Koutsouri & Zisimos, 2011). The educational situation is rather complicated by the fact that although the language of the groups\(^2\) (Pomaks and Roma) within the Muslim minority is not Turkish, their education is viewed by the Turkish minority and the Turkish government as being regulated by the Treaty of Lausanne as a result of the Muslim religion (Cummins, 2000). For many years, the core of the controversy had been the definition of the minority either as ethnic or religious group. During the 1960s, the Greek State recognized the minority with the criterion of ethnicity but eventually, the religious dimension prevailed.

The framework for the minority education was first articulated in the Treaty of Lausanne and lately was supplemented by the Cultural Agreement of 1951 and the Cultural Protocol of 1968 signed between Greece and Turkey. The Muslim minority enjoys a special educational status and thus receives instruction in its mother tongue and uses its own language at school (Boussiakou, 2007). However, the Muslim minority education has always been dependent on political decisions and contingent on the political stability of Greece’s relations with the neighboring country, Turkey. All these years, the Muslim minority education has suffered from practices that failed to address the needs of minority students and to encourage the usage of principles consistent with the multicultural setting of minority education (Gewrgiadis et al, 2011). According to Cummins “it seems that the Muslim minority children in Thrace have been pawns to be sacrificed in a struggle for historical righteousness….were caught in the crossfire of historical antagonisms” (Cummins, 2000, p. 9). The most significant challenges are the dramatically low levels of education attained by the minority student population, the dropout rates from the compulsory to secondary level of almost four times higher than the national mean. The above are the severe consequences of the burdensome, the inappropriate educational practices, the poor quality of schooling at primary level and the limited knowledge of the Greek language (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2008).

The situation started to change in 1997 when a large scale educational project started implementing. The Project for reforming the education of Muslim children (PEM) has been co-financed by the European Union and state resources\(^3\). The main objective of the Ministry of education as it has been clearly articulated is “the reduction of educational and social

\[^2\] As a result, these two groups attend the minority schools and learn two languages which none of those is their mother-tongue

\[^3\] The project has been under the aegis of Greek ministry of education while the supervision of the program has been assigned to university professors
inequalities which have a direct result leaving these children without professional education and training with obvious implications for the regional and economic development of the country”(ibid). The basic aim of the program was the improvement of Muslim minority education and the enhancement of language acquisition with the prevailing principles of intercultural education (Magos, 2007). With the motto “Addition, not Subtraction, Multiplication, not Division” the Project has been trying to equalize the educational opportunities for the minority students and help them integrate culturally as well as socially.

Research results have showed that the overall educational situation regarding the Muslim minority started changing at a very fast pace. The education of minority children at all levels of education expands and tends to generalize while the schooling of minority children at every educational level is expanding and tends to become universal (PEM, 2013). There has been an impressive rising trend towards the completion of primary and the enrollment in secondary education. The picture is outstanding in the case of girls. More specifically in 1998-1999, the number of female students registered in secondary education was 611 while in 2002-03 the number increased remarkably to 1.081 (Askouni, 2006). However, despite the positive and full of hope indicators, there is still a significant number of incomplete schooling and early drop-out percentage mostly evident in the case of girls.

Taking into consideration the above portrayed situation, our research questions can be summarized as follows:

1. What is the percentage of girls’ enrollment within secondary education?
2. How do girls experience gender equality in education?
3. Which are parents’ aspirations towards education?
4. To what extend and how gender equality teaching is promoted in the classroom?
5. How do teachers perceive gender equality in education?
6. To what extent and how students and school books express stereotypes?
7. What is the general contribution of PEM and the main challenges that need to be dealt?
8. What suggestions for improvement and promotion of gender equality through education are supported?

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4 Secondary education comprises two stages: Gymnasium, a three-year lower secondary education, after which students can attend Lykeion, a three-year upper secondary education or Vocational training
5 The research question 4.7 and 8 will be examined, analyzed and compared from the girls’ and teachers’ perspective
1.2 Aims and objectives

The main aim of the research is to develop a framework in order to understand how the concept of gender equality is addressed, promoted or undermined in the context of Muslim minority in Thrace and thus identify ways that facilitate and promote gender equality through education. The specific objectives are the following:

- To reveal girls’ attitudes and perceptions towards gender equality, the contribution of the Project for Reform in the Education of Muslim Children (PEM) and the challenges that still remain to be dealt with
- To address teachers’ perceptions and attitudes upon the teaching of gender equality
- To determine which actions are required in order to promote gender equality through education

1.3 Limitations and delimitations

The findings of the study depend on governmental and official sources and data supplied by female students and teachers. Issues of validity and reliability arise when using external information and people responses as a basis for the findings. In order to mitigate the errors, different sources of information and various research methods have been employed.

Moreover, the nationality of the researcher is Greek. Her profession is teacher and during her teaching experience has worked for the year 2009-2010 in a school in the prefecture of Xanthi in Thrace. This could be considered as a great advantage since the language will not be an issue and the researcher is familiar with the education system along with the special educational setting that exists in this area but this simultaneously could constitute a limitation since the familiarity with the minority setting can have an impact on the interpretation of the findings.

Additionally, the impact of values, beliefs and feelings harms the validity of outcomes. Therefore it is truly important to recognize and acknowledge that the research cannot be value free and simultaneously it is crucial to exhibit reflexivity towards the methods, biases, values etc. (Bryman, 2012). “The educational research is a very human process and therefore is prone to error and biases” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2007, p. 1). In addition to that, as the sole researcher of this study, having the interpretative prerogative, the conclusions are constructed only by the researcher’s understandings. In the current study, in order to minimize the
influence of errors and biases, triangulation\(^6\) of data will be employed so that findings can be cross-checked.

Furthermore, it is of significant importance to highlight that the scale is limited\(^7\) and thus the generalization of the findings in not encompassed among the intentions of this study. Despite the fact that the initial estimation of the number of participants who reside in the city of Xanthi and belong to Turkish or Pomak population, was large, eventually was not confirmed and only two girls, who belong in this group, participated. The reason underlying the abstention, according to the principals of the schools, was presumed to be the objection to the new legislation concerning the teaching of Koran in Greek in the public schools. The participation of a substantial number of Roma girls who live in urban areas would allow us to identify differences and similarities between urban and rural areas but due to the fact that we were not able to hear the voices of girls who reside in urban areas and do not belong to Roma population, we cannot draw any further conclusion on certain processes and attitudes attributed to Turkish and Pomak students who reside in urban areas. Finally, the nature of the current study is exploratory and seeks to provide insight and reflection. In order to acquire a more accurate and comprehensive idea, there is need for a larger and more representative sample.

Finally, it is important to be stressed out that during the research, it was observed that a noticeable percentage of female students possess moderate language command in terms of spoken and written skills and reading comprehension as well. Especially in the case of Roma students, in order to overcome communication issues, some of the researcher’s questions had to be translated into the Romani language by other students.

1.4 Significance of the study

Various studies have been undertaken concerning the educational changes that have occurred since the 1990s in the education of Muslim Minority in Thrace. These studies mainly focused on the new practices that have been utilized by the project, statistical data about the enrollment rates in public primary and secondary schools, the training of teachers and diagnostic tests about the level of language acquisition obtained by the students.

This current research has the ambition to become more specific and seeks to further expand the knowledge concerning the gender inequalities in terms of access to education and more

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\(^6\)“The use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon” (Bryman, 2012 p. 717)

\(^7\)Only a certain number of schools in the prefecture of Xanthi will be employed in the study
importantly how these inequalities exist and which actions and practices can facilitate and promote the concept of gender equality within education. The importance of these inequalities has not only one dimension but reflects broader patterns of marginalization. Therefore, it is of crucial importance to investigate the relationship of gender with schooling in the context of minority education.

Above all, the findings and conclusions from the collected data will be employed in order to enhance further the educational efficiency towards girls’ education by taking into consideration aspects and dimensions that might have been ignored before. Moreover, the findings of this research could also be utilized in other cases where students from disadvantaged backgrounds face similar challenges.

Ultimately, it is important to be stressed out that the phenomenon of gender inequality in the minority setting is a multidimensional phenomenon. Despite the fact that the concepts of gender, ethnicity and social class can be identified as separate social constructions, it is impossible to be separated in understanding the patterns of inequality. The above fundamental dimensions of the social structure are interrelated, interact and produce stratification systems (Rothman, 1999). In the current study the phenomenon is being examined and analyzed from a gender, social, cultural, economic and geographical perspective. Therefore the present study is primarily concerned with the interrelation among social class, minority status and gender while other variables shall be taken into consideration. In other words the interaction and intersection of the above dimensions will be examined in order to get an in depth understanding of the importance of the group to an individual within a particular context (Figure 2). The concept of intersectionality is a central concept of the study and will be further explored in chapter two.
Figure 2: Multiple group membership, adapted by Banks & Banks, 1989, p. 14
Chapter Two
Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Post-structuralist Theories

2.1.1 Discourse of Language, Culture, Power and Education

The new sociology of education emerged in 1970s and offered a critical view of education. Traditional ideology ignored the prevailing role of education in socio-economic reproduction and schools were merely considered instructional institutions. However, proponents of the contemporary social theory argued that school knowledge was a particular representation of the dominant culture which was constructed through a selective process and exclusions.

Collins’s theory of educational stratification leads him to the concept that educational systems have as a main activity to teach particular status cultures, both in and outside the school and in order to examine the particular function of the school, it is important to identify the nature of these cultures and the processes by which they are transmitted (as cited in Karabel & Halsey, 1977).

The neo Marxist theory differs from the functionalist theory which holds a consensus view of the society and argues that cognitive skills are responsible for the higher earnings and therefore for educational and social stratification. The Marxist oriented theories point out that cognitive differences provide a partial explanation and the main role of education is the maintenance of a system of structured social inequality (Karabel & Halsey, 1977).

Is stratification universal and necessary? David and Moore take the view that the universality of inequality serves some vital social action and social institutions must play a crucial role in the continuity of the society in which the most competent people occupy the most important positions (Davis & Moore, 1945). However, this position fails to take into consideration the constraints on individuals’ opportunities.

Bowles and Gintis, raise the question If individual I.Q tests do not explain social inequality, what does in fact explain the reproduction of hierarchical division of labor? And concludes that schools adjust their attitude towards students according to the social origins of the children and ultimately that is the primary reason why students of the privileged tend to occupy the higher positions in the social structure (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). “The educational systems serve…through the correspondence of its social relations with those of economic life…to produce inequality” (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 48).
Bernstein highlighted the relation between language, education, social class and power relations. According to him, linguistic differences occur in the social environment and status groups may be distinguished by the forms of speech. Bernstein distinguished between the restricted code of working class and the elaborated code of the middle class. The social structure generates distinct linguistic forms or codes and these codes essentially transmit the culture and thus constrain behavior. Additionally emphasis is placed upon the concept that one code is not better than the other. Each possesses its own aesthetic, its own possibilities. Nevertheless society may place the different values on the orders of experience elicited, maintained and progressively strengthened through the different coding systems (Bernstein, 1974). Moreover, Bernstein recognizes the existence of other unequal relations among social groups such as ethnicity, gender, religion, and region. Yet, he is more focused on the cultural reproduction of these class-regulated modes since according to him, class is regarded at the basis of classification (as cited in Apple, 1999). Ultimately, Bernstein is opposed to the idea of compensatory education which intends to transfer the attention from the educational context upon the family and children since is something that is being offered to the children who at the first place did not receive an adequate educational environment (Bernstein, 1974).

Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction has been greatly influential. According to Bourdieu, the educational systems in industrialized countries function in a way that legitimate class inequalities. The possession of cultural capital and of higher class habitus facilitates the educational success. However, success and failure in the education system are seen as being due to individual gifts. The cultural capital “consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 114). Nevertheless, the economic capital seems to be at the root of all the other types of capital including the cultural, social and symbolic. Therefore, according to Bourdieu, the more official transmission of the official capital is prevented, the more the effects of cultural capital become determinant for the reproduction of the social structure (as cited in Lauder, Brown, Dillabough, & Halsey, 2006).

Lareau and Lamont, who are based on Bourdieu and Passeron, distinguish the concept of exclusion as the central dimension of the theory of cultural capital and suggest four major forms of exclusion: self-elimination, over selection, relegation and direct selection. Concerning self-elimination, individuals formulate a conscious and unconscious view of the world and develop inspirations and attitudes according to the perceived chances of success. Additionally, these individuals exclude themselves from environments and settings which are
not familiar with. The exclusion of over selection takes part when individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds participate in the same process of selection with those who are culturally privileged and they need to overcome their cultural “handicap” and outperform the others. Relegation takes place when individuals with less valued cultural resources occupy less desirable positions and benefit less from their educational experience because they have landed in a less desirable position. The last form of exclusion is the direct (Lareau & Lamont, 1988).

The question that arises here is how we can use education differently in order to effectively challenge the roots of inequality?

For Freire, education includes and moves beyond the notion of schooling. Education represents a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. For Freire, there is a need for education for liberation that “is concerned, as a social praxis, with helping to free human beings from the oppression that strangles them from the objective reality. It is therefore political education just as political is the education that serves the power elite” (Freire, 1985, p. 125). Freire sees education as a practice of freedom and denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. This humanizing and liberating pedagogy involves a genuine critical perspective and commitment for the recreation of the world (Freire, 1972). Thereafter, there is a need for a transformative pedagogy that enhances students’ critical thinking in order to help them relate the curriculum to their individual and collective experiences and also to address and analyze broader social issues relevant to their lives. Additionally, educators become agents who are involved in a process of negotiating identities and work individually or collectively towards the creation of contexts of empowerment. If formal education fails to address these issues then it contributes to the continuation of inequality and disempowerment. (Cummins, 1996). On the contrary Bourdieu and Passeron despite the fact that begin also from the same problem how education reproduces domination-they argue that only rational pedagogy, the attempt to counteract social inequalities by inculcating dominant culture into disadvantaged groups, would help reduce social inequalities in education and society. The idea of “giving everyone the equal educational opportunities cannot overcome the real inequalities even when it deploys every institutional and economic means” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, p.76). However, they conclude that rational pedagogy is a utopian project and that there cannot be any alternative education as long as the class structure remains the way it is. However, the attempt would benefit the unmasking of inequity of cultural preconditioning (ibid).
2.1.2 Minority status and academic experience

The phrase of minority group was introduced by the sociologists in order to highlight the power differentials and the subordination by the majority (Rothman, 1999). According to the sociologist Louis Wirth minority groups “are sub-groups within a society that can be distinguished from members of the dominant group by visible identifying characteristics, including physical and cultural attributes. These sub-groups are systematically excluded, whether consciously or unconsciously, from full participation in society and denied equal access to positions of power, privilege and wealth” (Wirth, 1941, p. 347).

Cummins tried to analyze the patterns of school success and failure in school among culturally diverse students in an international context and identified that power and status relations between dominant and subordinated groups exert a major influence and that subordinated groups have been discriminated over many generations (Cummins, 2000).

Ogbu, concludes that the minority school performance is influenced by i) the societal and school treatment of minorities by the larger society and the school and ii) the dynamics of minority communities, the minority group members’ interpretations of and responses to their treatment (as cited in Gibson, 2005). More precisely, there are two key premises; the voluntary or immigrant minorities and involuntary minorities. As a result, the voluntary minority has a positive orientation to the host society and tends to succeed academically while the involuntary who was brought into the society against its will and was often denied the opportunity for true participation in or true assimilation into the mainstream society, tends to experience academic difficulties (Ogbu, 2008).

However, it is interesting to look into theories that view literacy as a form of colonization. In this context, according to Freire, literacy is dehumanizing, dysfunctional and domesticating (Freire, 1972). Lankshear and McLaren state that "teaching literacy sides with the structured investment of superior power in minority and majority elites; enabling the elites to retain their power advantage over oppressed minorities by helping to secure the consent of the oppressed to their own domination" (Lankshear & McLaren 1993, p.99). This occurs when the problem of illiteracy is demonstrated as an individual rather than a collective societal issue.

An insightful analysis of the factors that create the phenomenon of analphabétism de minorité is provided by Wagner. He argues that despite the fact that illiteracy among subordinated groups is similar to the illiteracy of general population, there is a crucial qualitative difference that is only identified in minority groups. He distinguishes two types of
illiteracy, the *illiteracy of oppression* and *illiteracy of resistance*. Illiteracy of oppression is the result of assimilation in schools and society in general. It results in the slow destruction of the identity. Illiteracy of resistance applies to those who reject the education provided by the majority on the grounds of their fear to assimilate and to safeguard their own culture and identity (as cited in Masny, 1996; Cummins, 2000).

### 2.1.3 Theoretical perspectives on gender stratification

Since 1970s, sociologists have made a distinction between sex, the biological differences between males and women, and gender, socially produced differences between being feminine and being masculine (Holmes, 2007). For sociologists the emphasis has been given to the social construction of the gender. As changes in the social relations between genders became more visible, the nature of sociological discourse started changing. Sociological perspectives on gender stratification vary in respect to the roles and power relations within the society.

**The functionalist perspective** of gender roles suggests that gender roles exist to maximize social efficiency. The society seen as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. Men and women are conceived to have distinct roles that are important for the survival of the family and society (Kendall, 2002). Neoclassical economic perspectives share similar concepts and according to them, individuals vary widely in the amount of human capital they bring to the labor market. Despite the fact that functionalists do not support the gendered division of labor, their analysis support that it is inevitable and natural (ibid). More precisely, Durkheim argued that gender roles made the division of labor more efficient and the society stronger (as cited in Holmes, 2007).

**The conflict perspective** suggests that men, as the dominant gender, subordinate women in order to maintain power and privilege in society. Contemporary conflict theorists support the view that when women become wage earners, they gain power in the family structure and create more democratic arrangements in the home, although they may still carry the majority of the domestic burden. Conflict theorists argue that gender stratification results from private ownership of the means of production (Smelser, 1988). Engels, argues that in the family “the man was the bourgeois and the woman the proletariat” (as cited in Bradley, 2007).

**Interactionism theory** argues that gender is produced and reinforced through daily interactions and the use of symbols. According to interactionists, gender stratification exists because people act toward each other on the basis of the perceptions they have for each other, and these perceptions are derived from social interaction. Cooley developed the concept of
looking-glass self in order to describe that individuals’ self-idea grows out of society's interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of other (Cooley, 1902).

The feminist perspective uses the conflict approach to examine the reinforcement of gender roles and inequalities. Conflict theory posits that stratification is dysfunctional and harmful in society, because it benefits the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor and thus the inequality is perpetuated. Radical feminism, in particular focuses on the immutable physical differences between genders as the principal source of women’s oppression (Smelser, 1988). In patriarchal societies, the male’s perspective and contributions are considered more valuable, resulting in the silencing and marginalization of the woman.

2.2 Concepts

2.2.1 Habitus

The theoretical and conceptual framework of the study draws and builds heavily on the work of Bourdieu. The concept of habitus is central to his theory and is defined as “the system of dispositions towards the schools, understood as a propensity to consent to the investment in time, effort and money necessary to conserve and increase the cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 495) and “the habitus, as a system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behavior, and thus for the regularity of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 77). Bourdieu takes the view that habitus is expressed through multiple ways such as standing, speaking, walking, and thereby feeling and thinking (Bourdieu, 1990). Nevertheless despite Bourdieu’s primary focus on relating habitus with social class, habitus can also be used in order to interpret and analyze the ways habitus is embedded in the daily interactions of socially advantaged and disadvantaged. Consequently as McClelland asserts “it can easily be applied to the analysis of gender (or racial or ethnic) disadvantage as well” (as cited in Reay, 2004) and this it could easily be utilized to uncover how gender is embodied in individuals’ actions, attitudes and perceptions expected of “people like us”.

Moreover, Reay claims that habitus should be refined and considered to be a methodological tool for analyzing and interpret the way individuals are engaged in creating their world whose structure is predetermined by broader gender, racial and class relations (ibid).
2.2.2 Modernity

Attempting to identify the new perspectives on gender equality, the current study could not underestimate or ignore the role of modernity towards the transformation of new identities and realities. The concept of modernity emerged during the age of Enlightenment and constitutes the parameter of various factors; political (the uprising of secular world), economic (capitalism), social (formulation of social classes, division of labor according to gender and social status) and cultural (transition from the religious to secular world) (Hall, Held, & McGrew, 1992). The concept of modernity was an idealization of society focused on universal values and its concepts and categories symbolized the ideals of modernity (Dodd, 1999). According to Giddens, “modernity involves the separation of time and space, the disembedding of social systems and the reflexive ordering and reordering of social relations” (Giddens, 1990, p. 143). Giddens argues that modernity is inherently transformational and the world is in a constant process of renewal (O’Brien, Penna, & Hay, 1999).

Consequently, the reflexive modernization is encompassed by a process of detraditionalization. According to this notion, traditional beliefs, norms and practices might reappear but within the post-traditional society they have been attributed with a different role. Traditional practices are retained only as long as they can be articulated and justified (Dodd, 1999). Today, modern societies are distinguished with an increased complexity and the impact of tradition has decreased in the interest of individual choice which enables individuals to structure new identities (Hall et al, 1992).

2.2.3 Gender

What is gender? Despite the fact that is expected to be a simple answer, the biological and social differences between males and females are not discrete realms. The word “sex” refers to the biological differences and is determined by physical characteristics while gender is a social construction which is created by the society in which individuals function and “consists of the socially and psychologically appropriate behavior for males and females sanctioned by and expected within a society” (Banks & Banks, 1989, p. 17).

However, in the above definition of gender, the cultural factor should be added as an important determinant for the characteristics taken on by males and females. As Wharton (2005), adopting this view of gender, argues that gender involves the creation of both differences and inequalities and constitutes three main features of gender i) is being produced and reproduced ii) is evident at all levels of the social structure iii) organizes relations of
inequality within the society. Males and females are being socialized and represent certain stereotypes and images because societies order the world into male and female oppositions. Sexuality becomes meaningless; it is gender that allows us to think of distinctively different bodies (Colebrook, 2004).

2.2.4 Intersectionality

The term “intersectionality”, was first articulated in 1989 by Crenshaw, and basically describes the multidimensionality of marginalized subjects’ lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). The concept of intersectionality originally was utilized in order to shed more light on the oppression of women of colour since the struggles of women fell between the notions of the feminist and anti-racist theory. Since then, the intersectionality’s importance heralded as ‘the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far’ (McCall, 2005, p. 1771).

Taking into consideration the above, it is assumed that the concept of intersectionality is not only a feministic theory but also a methodology for research and finally a springboard for a gender equality action agenda. Intersectionality helps us analyze the way cultural and social categories are interrelated and how the relationships between the gender, nationality, language, sexuality etc. explain the inequalities that exist in our society and create a system of oppression. In other words, intersectionality contributes to the understanding of intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination.

Collins (2002) considers intersectionality of social inequality as the Matrix of domination. The matrix of domination refers to the general organization and structure of power in a society. There are two features to any matrix. First, any specific matrix has a particular arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression. Just what and how these systems come together is historically and socially specific. Second, intersecting systems of oppression are specifically organized through four interrelated domains of power: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. Finally she highlights that groups are constructed in connection to the others and argues the only way “white” exists in a social index is because “black” exists. Overall as Crenshaw concludes “through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1299).
2.2.5 Women’s empowerment

It is a common belief that education is an entry point to other opportunities and also that the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. According to United Nations Population Fund the investment on girls’ education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty and investing in girls’ secondary school education yields especially high dividends. Girls who have been educated are likely to marry later and to have smaller⁸ and healthier families. Additionally, the education level of parents is related to their children's educational attainment, and the mother's education⁹ is usually more influential than the father's (UNFPA, 2013).

Who are the most disadvantaged girls? The Population Council¹⁰ (2012) describes the disadvantaged girls as being vulnerable because they are illiterate, deprived of educational opportunities, married and have young children, belong to minority and ethnic groups, and live away in marginalized rural or urban slums.

So what is empowerment? It has become one of the most widely used terms among politicians, non-governmental organizations, agencies, academicians etc. However, it is one of the least understood in terms of how it is measured or observed. According to the United Nations (UN), “women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth, their right to have and to determine choices, their right to have access to opportunities and resources, their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally”. Yet, it is important to be noted that empowerment it should not be seen in a context where women gain power and men loose. Empowering women is a process referring to power with and from within (UN, 2013a).

In order to enhance and promote women’s empowerment through education, there is a need to reconsider the formal and non-formal education. It is of high importance to examine the way the concept of gender exists or not exists in the educational system. The reexamination could involve curriculum changes and reorientation on teachers’ training towards gender sensitization, ensuring equal access to education, revising teaching materials and incorporating issues such as ethnicity, gender, urban and rural context in the programs.

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⁸ In Mali, women with secondary education or higher have an average of 3 children, while those with no education have an average of 7 children (Unesco, 2011)
⁹ In Latin America, children whose mothers have some secondary schooling remain in school for two to three more years than children of mothers with less schooling ((Inter-American Development Bank in Unesco, 2011)
¹⁰ Organization founded in 1950 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd, with focus on biomedical, social science, and public health research.
Additionally research, campaigns, networking and media should be encompassed in the process (Medel-Anonuevo, 1995).

2.2.6 The concept of gender equality in the global agenda

“Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potentials, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefiting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is, therefore, the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in their home, community and society. Gender equity is one means of achieving gender equality” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 23).

In 1948, approximately 65 years ago, the nations of the world adopted the Universal Declaration of Human rights and it was asserted that “everyone has a right to education” (UN, 2013b). In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The Convention affirms the principle of equality by requiring states parties to take "all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men" (ibid). In 2000, at the World Education Forum, Dakar, 164 governments, together with partner organizations from around the world, were committed to provide quality basic education for all (EFA) to children, youth and adults. As a result, six goals were identified to be met by 2015. The third Millennium Development Goal was to promote gender equality and empower women by 2005 and at all levels by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). In more details, the target indicators identified in the MDGs were: i) ratio of girls and boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education ii) ratio of illiterate females to males of 15-24 years old iii) ratio of women to men in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and iv) proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (Holsinger & Jacob, 2008). There have been major developments since 2000 such as the increase in primary school enrollment.

Nevertheless, the gender parity goal has been missed. Only one third of countries reported parity in both primary and secondary education (ibid). Almost two-thirds of the world’s 792 million illiterate adults are women. Additionally, women are paid less for their work and have limited access to positions of decision-making and power (UNESCO, 2011). Gender parity is closest to being achieved at the primary level; however, only 2 out of 130
countries have achieved that target at all levels of education (UN, 2013a). Overall young women in general receive less education, have fewer opportunities and enjoy less freedom than young men. Girls who live in remote rural areas or speak a minority language are often excluded from education (UNESCO, 2011).

The above data raises questions about the challenges that need to be dealt with and the actions that are required in order to narrow the divergence between the goals and the reality. According to USAID, common criticisms are related to the view that gender is not a priority and many policies are based on the assumption that if more boys attend primary school then naturally the female rates will increase as well (as cited in Holsinger & Jacob, 2008). In addition to that, there is a prevailing conception of gender that view women as a homogenous category and fail to address differences such as ethnicity, socioeconomic background, residence, language, religion, etc. In the same way, Stromquist states that the education system is not gender neutral and that the emphasis on equality promotes a narrow definition of the women’s empowerment. A broader view of empowerment is required, an equitable approach that supports the participation of women in decision making and contributes to education policy formation (as cited in Holsinger & Jacob, 2008).
Chapter Three  
Methodological Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research methodology that has been adopted for the research in this study. The chapter will first begin describing the research approach and design and the methods used for data collection.

3.1 Research approach and strategy

The link between the social theory and the research provides a rationale for the research being conducted. Basically the fundamental question is whether the research has as an objective the testing or building theories. The current study adopts an inductive approach and the theory is the outcome based on the findings of the research. However, according to Bryman, the inductive and deductive approaches should be seen as tendencies rather than clear-cut approaches (Bryman, 2012).

3.1.1 A mixed-methods approach

While the epistemological and ontological commitments may be associated with certain research methods and be related with different research strategies and roles of theories, similarly to research approaches, are best thought as tendencies as the epistemological and ontological connections to research strategies are not deterministic and distinctive (ibid). The present study integrates a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Particular note has been given to the fact that only quantitative research is incompatible with feminism while qualitative data allows women’s voices to be heard (ibid).

3.1.2 Sequence and priority

The reason for conducting a mixed methods study is combining the “best” of quantitative and qualitative research. The notion of mixed methods research assumes that employing both approaches enhances the integrity of findings (ibid). The quantitative research provides us with the opportunity to gather data from a large number of people whereas the qualitative permits an in-depth exploration and detailed understanding of the phenomenon, providing us with useful information and gives voice to silenced people (Creswell, 2002). The priority decision is concerned with the idea that more emphasis is placed either on one type of data than other types employed in the research or equal weight is attributed to all types of data (Bryman, 2012). In the present study, more emphasis is placed on qualitative data.
Moreover the *triangulation design analysis* will be adopted in order to converge or compare in some way different sources of data and both quantitave and qualitative findings. Therefore, the concept of triangulation embodies the element of enhancement. Furthermore, within the triangulation design, the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time. The process engages two data collections that are related to each other and proceed simultaneously (Creswell, 2002). According to Yin (2003), a case study is appropriate when rely on multiple and not singular sources of evidence.

### 3.2 Methods and sampling

In quantitative research the type of sampling revolves around the notion of probability sampling whereas the qualitative research entails purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012). In the present study, *purposive sampling* has been undertaken for the selection of schools, students and teachers. In purposive sampling the participants are selected in a strategic way with direct reference to the research subject (ibid). Three schools are selected to participate. More precisely, there has been given additional attention to residential areas, *sampling of context*, and to participants, *sampling of participants*.

The criteria for the selection have been the student population, the age of students and the location of schools. It is important to bear in mind that the research concerns exclusively the minority female students registered to public schools and also teachers who are members of either the minority or the majority and work with the minority student population. All three schools belong to the prefecture of Xanthi. The first school is located in the rural area of Xanthi and the students are Pomaks while the second school is located in the suburbs of the city and consists of Roma students. Finally, the third school lies around the city of Xanthi and the student population is composed of Pomaks and Turks. The findings of the above schools hopefully will give us in depth understanding but also further conclusion will be drawn from the comparisons between rural-urban areas. The sampling strategy employed here allows us to examine similarities and differences among participants within each area and between areas. Additionally, official statistics will be provided by the Ministry offices of secondary education and the PEM in order to determine the number of female students registered to secondary education.

#### 3.2.1 Focus group interviews

The focus group technique is a method of interviewing that involves more than one interviewee. The focus group method focuses on a specific subject and the researcher is
interested on how the group members make sense of the social phenomenon collectively. In other words, the group is focused in a way that it affiliates to a collective activity such as debating a certain set of questions (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). Significantly, the main criterion for distinguishing focus groups from group interviews is the usage of the group interaction as a source of data (ibid). In addition to that, what is extremely important and in accordance with the intentions and objectives of the study, is the fact that focus group participants are able to take over much of the direction of the session.

As feminist researchers note, “participants’ points of view are much more likely to be revealed than in a traditional interview and…focus groups may have a further role in allowing the voices of highly marginalized groups of women to surface”(Bryman, 2012, p. 504). Moreover, in the current study, students hopefully will feel more comfortable to share their views on a common topic as members of a group rather than participating in an individual interview.

### 3.2.2 Questionnaires

The participants of the study will complete the questionnaire themselves. The questionnaires will be neither sent out nor returned through postal system; will be delivered personally to participants. In the case of teachers the questionnaires will be collected after the course of four days whereas in the case of students the questionnaires will be collected the same day.

The questionnaire contains open and close questions. In spite of the fact that with close questions is easy to process and analyze answers and is easy for respondents to complete, there is always a possibility that respondents might come with interesting replies that are not covered by the fixed answers that are provided. Hopefully the combination of both closed and open questions will provide us with the necessary input as well as with different perspectives and personal experiences unique to each student and teacher.

### 3.2.3 Official statistics

The statistical data are forms of quantitative data and here concern the percentages of female students registered in secondary education and are retrieved by the Ministry offices of secondary education. Moreover additional statistical data are provided by the PEM. The statistical data will enable us to get a more holistic and concrete view of girls’ enrollment in secondary education and, despite the fact that the quantitative and qualitative data are totally different strategies, the collection of the official statistics will function supportively and allow us to accumulate a better understanding of the research context.
3.3 Analysis of data

3.3.1 Qualitative data

In the current study, the content analysis for the qualitative data analysis has been adopted and more specifically the thematic analysis (Figure 3). The central idea in the thematic analysis is the construction of themes and subthemes that are repeated patterns, ideas and topics.

![Diagram: Basic steps of thematic analysis](adapted by Bryman 2012, p. 578-581)

The fundamental issue is to identify themes imbedded in the many words of the text. Thematic analysis advocates that a framework is required in order to synthesize data (Bryman, 2012). Franzoni supports that this framework is evolved in a coding scheme which is based “on categories designed to capture the dominant themes present in a text” (as cited in Hardy & Bryman, 2004). In case the list of categories is considered to be extensive the categories will be condensed into broader categories or themes (Figure 4). The below coded themes were predefined by the researcher and were mainly based on the research questions of the study. The additional concepts and issues expressed by the participants through questionnaires and focus group interviews created the below sub-categories. Moreover, a constant comparison of data will be conducted during the analysis. Therefore the framework analysis constitutes an excellent tool in order to evaluate policies and procedures from the very people that they affect (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).
Moreover, being aware of the unique characteristic of focus group interviews which is the interaction among the participants, the dynamics and interaction of focus group shall be mentioned when is needed. The data will be analyzed initially 1. At the group level which includes the interactional analysis with potential consideration of censoring, conformity 2. At the individual level: responses are analyzed without regard to group context. 3. As comparison: of individual responses against group data (Carey & Smith, 1994). In the present study the researcher instead of using a computer software such as NVivo, has decided upon a traditional mode of analysis which will be conducted manually.

### 3.3.2 Quantitative data

The analysis of quantitative data has been conducted with the computer software Sigmaplot 11.0 and Microsoft Office Excel 2010. The particular choice was based on the knowledge and familiarity of the researcher with the specific statistical software. The quantitative data within the questionnaires encompasses dichotomous and ordinal variables.
which because are not inherently numerical should be transformed into quantities for the data processing through coding (Hardy & Bryman, 2004). The quantitative data is relatively easy to analyze, interpret and understand and through displaying will be given a more visual view of the participants’ responses.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues arise at all stages of social research (Bryman, 2012). Before conducting a research, it is crucial to consider which practices should be adopted in order to protect the participants and similarly which actions that could harm them should be avoided. In this research, all steps will be followed in order to make the interviewees feel comfortable and not experience any feelings of stress and anxiety. All participants will be fully informed about the researcher’s identity, nature, process and aim of the study and will freely decide whether they would like to participate or not. During the interview, in case the interviewees do not wish to answer to certain questions, their wish will be totally respected. School names as well as participants’ names will remain anonymous. The actual names of schools and participants will not be mentioned as to prevent any correlations between the findings of the participants and schools.

A further area of ethical consideration is related to official and legal approval for conducting a research. For the present study, an official approval by the Greek ministry of education has been obtained and parental informed consent documents will be distributed to the parents of students.

3.5 Presentation of participants

3.5.1 Questionnaires-respondents

Questionnaires were distributed to five secondary schools in urban and rural areas of the prefecture of Xanthi. Forty teachers participated in the research (Table 1). All of them are members of the majority and have been working in public schools with minority student population. Overall, eighty questionnaires had been distributed but only forty were filled in by the teachers. Due to the fact that the teachers’ participation in the three schools, where the focus group interviews were conducted, was limited, two more secondary schools were approached by the researcher and the sample was increased from twenty-five to forty questionnaires. It is important to mention that all teachers filled in the closed ended questions yet five teachers chose not to answer all the open ended questions. As we can see from the
Table below, the majority of them are women, hold a 4-year bachelor degree and have working experience of more than 20 years.

Table 1: Questionnaire participants according to length of education, sex and working experience in education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Up to five years</th>
<th>5-10 years</th>
<th>10-15 years</th>
<th>15-20 years</th>
<th>More than twenty years</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-year-Bachelor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phd</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.2 Questionnaires respondents-students

Questionnaires were distributed to three secondary schools in rural and urban areas. Fifty-three girls participated in total (Table 2). As it is shown below, the majority of them are thirteen years old and all of them are students in the lower secondary education. Out of fifty-three questionnaires, thirty-one have been distributed in the rural area while twenty-two in the urban area. The table below demonstrates a very interesting trend. Most of the girls in rural areas had completed primary education in minority schools whereas girls in urban areas had graduated from public schools.

Table 2: Questionnaire participants according to area and age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>13 years old</th>
<th>14 years old</th>
<th>15 years old</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Minority primary school</th>
<th>Public primary school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urban</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.3 Focus group interview participants

Focus group interviews have been carried out in three schools. In total, four focus groups have been conducted and the size of participants varied in each case. At the first focus group two girls participated, at the second eight girls and at the third and fourth, ten girls took part. Overall, thirty girls participated in focus group interviews (Table 3). Below there is a
description of the participants. The names used below are pseudonyms for anonymity purposes.

Table 3: Focus group interviews participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evrim</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gul</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Turk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esma</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eidan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safiye</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melek</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serin</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afet</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funda</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>Pomak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meliha</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emine</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birsu</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceyda</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasemin</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeliha</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elif</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zehra</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feride</td>
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<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahsen</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leyla</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceylin</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylin</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahar</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nermin</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Four
The Muslim minority in Greece

4.1 The structure of Muslim minority education

As it has already been mentioned, the official legal status of the Muslim minority education is defined in the Treaty of Lausanne and in a series of agreements between Greece and Turkey. The term minority education is referred to a number of schools that function under a special framework which apply exclusively to minority students. The minority education is considered to be a unique part of the Greek educational reality regarding the structure, the content of the curriculum and the teachers. In any case, the minority schools are considered to be equivalent to public schools according to the ministry of education. The school principal belongs to the minority group and the vice-principal to the majority. The overall supervision of schools has been assigned to the Ministry of Education (Tsitselikis, 2007).

4.1.1 Pre-primary, primary and secondary education

The minority education, as an organized network of schools, satisfies the needs of the minority student population in the level of primary and secondary education. The establishment of minority pre-schools has not been regulated legally although primary education is provided in pre-schools and primary schools as well (ibid). However the number of minority students in pre-schools has been towards a significant rise, in 1994-95 the overall number of students enrolled in pre-schools was 144 while in 2002-03 the number increased to 784 (Askouni, 2006). Despite the significant increase in pre-schools attendance by minority students, it cannot be considered universal.

In minority primary schools, the curriculum is bilingual with half of the subjects taught in Greek and the rest in Turkish. Until the years 1999-2000, the minority schools had been using books and instructional material that were utilized in the majority schools and were aimed to Greek native speakers and subsequently were totally inappropriate for minority students. Similarly, the Turkish books were out of date since there were first published in

11 The international context which regulates the minority education does not include pre-school education which “compels” the minority students to attend public or municipal pre-schools
12 Since 2000, the old books have been replaced by new ones. These new books were prepared by the PEM (Askouni, 2006)
13 In 2000, after the bilateral agreement on minority education between Greece and Turkey, new books started being used, especially prepared by the Turkish Ministry of Education for the minority students in Thrace (Askouni, 2006)
The teachers of minority schools are divided into the Greek-language teachers and the Turkish-language teachers. The first, are public employees while the latter are private and the majority of them have only studied for six or seven years after the completion of primary education (ibid). Despite the fact, that typically the Greek public schools have been accessible by the minority students, until recently the minority schools had been absorbing the total of minority students since the minority primary schools were considered to be their common bond to language and religion. However, the last years there has been an increase in the percentage of minority students enrolled in Greek public schools within the last 15 years (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Number of enrollment of minority students in Greek public schools in the prefectures of Xanthi, Rodoph, Evros

Source: Education Ministry Offices of Primary and Secondary Education (PEM, 2013)

For the minority students the transition to secondary education is not an automatic process after the completion of primary school. There are three types of secondary institutions for minority students: the minority lower-upper secondary school, the Greek public school and the religious- Islamic school (Medrese). For many years, the number of minority students registered to Greek public schools has been limited. It is also important to note that in the whole area of Thrace there are only two minority high schools and two religious-Islamic schools, and thus for a long period of time these schools had been the only path to secondary education. Nevertheless, the rising trend in the percentage of minority students enrolled in public schools is not only obvious in primary education but also in lower secondary as it is shown below (Table 4). Since the last decade the situation has been changing at a very fast pace and is the most profound evident of the educational expansion of minority students at each educational level.
Table 4: Minority students at lower secondary schools per school year in the prefectures of Xanthi, Rodoph, Evros

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Public schools</th>
<th>Minority schools</th>
<th>Religious-Islamic schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>2,089</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>2,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>2,410</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>3,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>2,640</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>3,581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Education Ministry Offices for Primary and Secondary Education (PEM, 2013)

During the 1980s, only a slight number of minority students completed the lower secondary education and progressed to upper secondary education. Additionally, the majority followed a technical-vocational path. Despite the rising trend towards enrollment in upper secondary education (Table 5), the percentage still remains limited in comparison with the percentage of students in lower secondary education (Askouni, 2006).

Table 5: Students' enrollment in upper secondary schools in Xanthi, Rodoph, Evros

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Public secondary Schools</th>
<th>Minority secondary Schools</th>
<th>Vocational schools</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989-90</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>1,098</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>1,061</td>
<td>2,602</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Askouni, 2006 & Education Ministry Offices for Primary and Secondary Education in PEM 2013

4.1.2 Tertiary Education

Until 1995, the only access to tertiary education had been through the Special Pedagogical Academy\(^{14}\) of Thessaloniki, which was established in 1968 and had as a main purpose the preparation and educational training of potential minority teachers (Tsitselikis, 2007). However in 1990s, the Greek state policy towards minority education undertook radical changes. More specifically, in 1996, an affirmative action was taken by the government,

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\(^{14}\) The duration of the studies is two years and is considered to be insufficient with low quality of education since the overall aim is for students to acquire knowledge on didactics and pedagogics for minority children and the curriculum is strictly taught in Greek (Tsitselikis, 2007).
which allowed a 0.5% minority quota to enter in Greek universities by special examination. In 2005, this affirmative action was extended to the students of technical secondary schools (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2008).

### 4.2 Project for reform in the education of Muslim children

The large scale project which was launched in 1997, has had as a basic goal to reform the education of the Muslim minority in Greece. The project represents a long term endeavor for the improvement of education which is provided to the minority children and underlies the intention of the Greek state to undertake new strategies towards minority citizens. The last decades many policies had been implemented but ultimately lead to marginalization and discrimination and simultaneously hindered the integration of minority citizens into the society. The key principles that permeate the educational intervention are the principles of *isopoliteia*\(^\text{15}\) and *isonomia* (PEM, 2013). “Respect for human rights, educational policies against social exclusion and the protection of minority cultural differences are part of the new agenda”(Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2008). Nevertheless, it is important to note that there are still skeptical circles that cast doubts on the actions and objectives of the program. Their opposition revolves around the additional classes of Turkish which it doesn’t compound the mother tongue of Pomaks and Roma and secondly the discriminative nature of school books and instructional material which appeal exclusively to Muslim students and not to all students who have Greek as a second language. However, it is of great significance to acknowledge the contribution and achievement of PEM in the quality of schooling and enhancement of trust and communication between “Us” and the “Others”. As Dragonas and Fragoudaki (2008) stated, part of the achievements that have taken place are attributed to certain regional political measures and the overall process of modernization.

### 4.2.1 Project activities

The PEM consists of three phases while the fourth phase is called “The Program for the Education of Minority Children in Thrace 2010-2013” (PEM, 2013). Different educational actions have been carried out in each phase. The main areas of intervention by the PEM have been:

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\(^{15}\) In ancient Greece, the ideas of *isonomia* (equality of political rights) and *isopoliteia* (equal citizenship rights) had been an integral part of democracy.
**Development of new books and teaching materials**

New textbooks and educational materials replaced the school books employed in minority primary schools. Forty new textbooks have been designed for the primary level covering Greek as a second language, history, geography, the environment and civic education (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2008). A basic priority for the PEM has been the production of educational material for secondary schools for the teaching of Greek as a second language as well as the production of a teacher’s guide and training materials for the teachers of Minority primary schools. Additionally, supplementary material has been provided as an electronic method for teaching Greek as a second language (PEM, 2013).

**Teacher’s training**

An important prerequisite for the effective implementation of the program’s actions was the training of the teachers. Approximately, 120 hours per year have been offered for training teachers on bilingualism, didactic and pedagogic skills, use of the new materials, social and gender inequalities, classroom dynamics, identity issues, discrimination and the negotiation of differences. Trainers also systematically visited teachers at school premises (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2008). Furthermore, during the fourth phase, emphasis was placed upon the training for preschool teachers and conducting an “action research” on developing methods suitable to teaching Greek to preschool children whose mother tongue is not Greek (PEM, 2013).

**Additional classes**

During the third phase, 2005-2008, additional classes after the regular school hours were provided at secondary schools attended by Minority students (PEM, 2013). Trained teachers offered afternoon classes to more than 1.000 students per year (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2008). Compensatory classes at primary schools that aim at improving children’s command in Greek, conducted at hours additional to the regular school schedule or in synergy with the full-day school (PEM, 2013).

**Support Centers (KESPEMS)**

According to the website of the PEM, the Support centers (KESPEMS) aim to enhance access and communication between the minority citizens and the local population. KESPEMS are staffed equally with members from the minority and the majority who organize and develop educational and creative activities parallel to the school (PEM 2013). The KESPEMS were first established in 2003 and currently there are ten KESPEMS; three of them operate in the urban centers of Thrace and seven of them in small towns or villages. The KESPEMs
organize various classes and educational activities that aim at improving minority children's command of the Greek language and their school performance. Additionally, computer-assisted classes of Greek language are offered to primary school students, Pedagogical activities for pre-school children lending library, summer courses, Greek classes for parents and unemployed young women, and counseling for parents (mostly mothers) and teachers, information and counseling to parents, Turkish-language classes to primary and secondary education teachers. The Centers have proved to be the best way of offering a learning context alternative to that of the minority schools (Dragonas & Frangoudaki, 2008).

Mobile KESPEMS

In 2006, the program launched the mobile KESPEMS, which are vans especially equipped with laptops and various educational materials and visit on a daily basis remote villages. Basically, the mobile KESPEMS, enable students to participate in the program’s activities.

Creative Youth Workshops (DENs)

Within KESPEMS, creative activities take place and help children work collectively on social problems. The philosophy behind the creative youth workshops is to bring together different children and encourage them to work as members of a team and make them realize the wealth generated from the meeting and the interaction of different cultures (PEM 2013).

4.3 Socio-economic and educational features of minority student population

The majority of Muslim minority resides in the prefectures of Xanthi and Rhodopi and a small percentage lives in the area of Evros. Pomaks constitute the largest part of the minority population in Xanthi, Turks represent the largest percentage in Rhodopi, while the majority of Roma live in Evros. The basic geographical division lies between the rural and urban areas. There is inadequate statistical data on the professional and economic situation of the minority population however previous studies reveal that the primary sector of employment continues to be the agricultural sector and more specifically the cultivation of tobacco is the dominant activity especially in rural areas (Askouni, 2006).

Moreover, there has been a distinct tendency towards urbanization during the 1980s. The types of occupation vary in the prefectures of Thrace. In the prefecture of Rhodopi, the agricultural occupation of the minority population is more evident than in the other prefectures and in the urban areas the majority owns small traditional businesses while in the prefecture of Xanthi the population who lives in the city is a result of internal emigration and
are occupied as workers. Most of the people who work as employees have studied in Turkey or they work as teachers.

The educational deprivation of the minority is evident in the percentages of people who have finished compulsory education. According to a study in which parents of students participated, it was evident that in 2000 only 3.2% of the minority population has completed the compulsory education while the majority has only finished primary school (ibid). Among students’ parents agriculture was the main employment within minority population and the second most common group were the craftsmen and factory workers. Among women, 82% were housewives and 15%\(^{16}\) of them were working in the fields. Overall, in 2000, the majority of Muslim minority mothers were unemployed or were involved in professional activities that did not require any educational background. The professional profile of the parents can allow us for deeper insights into the social marginalization of minority population.

4.4 The pattern of educational attainment

It is of great significance the examination of the relationship between the gender and education in the context of Muslim minority. At this chapter, the objective is to descriptively examine the educational inequalities in terms of the disparities in educational attainment. According to the National Statistical service in 1990s, the percentages of girls that completed primary education converge with the national average and thus there is no diversification in the completion rates of primary education towards gender (PEM, 2013). However, the situation in secondary education indicates an unequal access against girls.

Table 6: Number of male and female students enrolled in lower secondary education the school years 1998-99 and 2002-03 in the prefectures of Xanthi, Rodoph, Evros

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male students</th>
<th>Female students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>1.551 (71.7%)</td>
<td>611 (28.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>1.855 (63.2%)</td>
<td>1.081 (36.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Askouni 2006

\(^{16}\) The percentage is rather small, as working in the fields is not reported since it is not considered to be an employment
It is clearly demonstrated (Table 6), that the number of female students enrolled in lower secondary education during the late 1990s is dramatically lower than the number of male students. Despite the significant rise in the enrollment rates within the following years, girls were still lacking behind in both prefectures in 2002-03.

Table 7: Number of male and female students enrolled in upper secondary education during 2002-03

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male students</th>
<th>Female students</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary public schools</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority upper secondary schools</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic schools</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational schools</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>1226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Askouni 2006

The overall picture in upper secondary education is similar to the lower secondary education (Table 7). Female students maintained their percentage through lower and upper secondary education. In the light of the above data, is important to be stressed out that the transition from primary to lower secondary school is of crucial importance for the girls’ educational future. As soon as the girls complete primary school and continue their studies to lower secondary school, are more likely to move beyond the level of compulsory education.
Chapter Five
Presentation of research findings

In this chapter, the research findings, analysis and discussion will be elaborated attempting to provide answers to the research questions of the study while additional insights will emerge seeking further research investigation. The findings will be presented in a descriptive manner and participants’ expressions will be presented in quotation marks.

5.1 Girls’ access to secondary education

Research question 1: *What is the percentage of girls’ enrollment within secondary, higher education?*

A part of the data will be analyzed in order to determine the percentage of girls enrolled in secondary and higher education. The data has been provided by the PEM. Additional data has been provided by the Ministry office of secondary education of Xanthi, which sheds light on the phenomenon of girls’ dropout from secondary education. Moreover, in order to get a more accurate view of the phenomenon, the percentages are being specified for each school year from 2007-08 to 2012-13. An ongoing comparison of the quantitative data between girls and boys will be carried out during the analysis.

![Figure 6: Students' total enrollment numbers in secondary and higher education in the prefectures of Xanthi, Rodoph, Evros](image)

Source: PEM
According to the above figure\textsuperscript{17}, in 2010, girls’ and boys’ access to secondary and higher education had been increased since 1997 and more precisely girls’ number rose remarkably in lower secondary education and higher education where there is an eightfold increase in girls’ enrollment percentage (Figure 6).

![Figure 7: Students' enrollment numbers in secondary education in the prefecture of Xanthi](image)

Source: Ministry office of secondary education of Xanthi

The above figure illustrates the girls’ and boys’ enrollment numbers within the levels of secondary education in the prefecture of Xanthi from the school year 2007-08 to 2012-13 (Figure 7). It is clearly evident that the gender disparity in terms of access is identified in the first year of lower secondary education and more precisely it takes place during the transition from primary to secondary education. This gender gap indicates that more than a hundred girls in the prefecture of Xanthi had been dropping out of school during these years. Nevertheless, the gap in survival rates between girls and boys tends to decline within the following years; the dropout number of girls fell sharply. Conversely, the number of boys enrolled in the first year of lower secondary education and the third year of upper secondary education reveals a dramatic decrease\textsuperscript{18}. The number of male students fell from three hundred fifty male students in the first year of high school to ninety-nine boys in the last year of secondary education who were outnumbered by girls in 2012-13. In the same way, girls’

\textsuperscript{17} It is important to be stressed out that the specific percentages refer to the overall Muslim student population in the prefectures of Xanthi, Komotini and Evros

\textsuperscript{18} However as it is being illustrated below, a significant number of boys registered to vocational education.
number shows a gradual decline; the number of girls enrolled in the first year of secondary was a hundred ninety-nine whereas a hundred girls reached the final level of secondary education. Overall, it is of great interest that despite the gap in the first year of high-school, the gap between female and male students tends to minimize during the school year 2012-13.

![Graph showing students' enrollment rates in vocational education in the prefecture of Xanthi](image)

**Figure 8: Students' enrollment rates in vocational education in the prefecture of Xanthi**

Source: Ministry office of secondary education of Xanthi

A noticeable number of students are registered in vocational education which takes place after the completion of lower secondary education (Figure 8). The number of boys enrolled in the first year is significantly larger than girls. Within the following years, there has been a slight downward trend towards boys’ number while the number of girls experienced a severe fall in 2012-13.

At this point, it should be highlighted that the above data which reveal the number of students within the levels of secondary education should not be seen as absolute numbers since a percentage of students continued their studies in the Minority secondary school, a number of students who had been rejected, reregistered at the same class of secondary or vocational education and ultimately there was a slight number of students who continued their studies in Turkey. However the above quantitative data should be considered as important indicators that reveal the general flow of girls and boys into the levels of public secondary education. Overall, the above findings imply that the most crucial period for girls’ education future is the stage between the completion of primary school and the registration to the first
year of lower secondary education. So, the question that arises at this point is *which are the paths and mechanisms that lead to a girl dropping out from school right after the completion of primary school?*

5.2 Teachers’ perceptions

5.2.1 Gender equality

Research question 5: *How do teachers perceive gender equality in education?*

Overall, teachers’ perceptions on the concept of gender equality orientated to similar views which were aligned with each other. For the majority of teachers, gender equality is intimately related to the provision of equal opportunities in terms of access to education. Another important aspect is the equal treatment of students and the non-differentiated teaching according to gender. As teacher11 mentions:

“Gender equality is definitely a difficult definable concept but I would define it mostly as the ability for girls to reach any level of education they wish for themselves.”

Teacher14 feels the same and adds that:

“Girls and boys should be treated equally; the learning of female and male students should be supported equally and also equal opportunities should be provided in secondary education and most importantly in higher education.”

More teachers emphasize the need for promoting the idea of gender equality through education. Teacher22 states:

“The idea of gender equality should be promoted through teaching and this promotion should be considered as an ongoing process in which girls are informed about their rights in the field of education and life in general.”

Teacher19 identifies three ways of defining gender equality:

“First, all the barriers that hinder girls’ access towards education should be removed; second women should be promoted to different positions of responsibility in order to function as examples for the female students and third, there is a need for a systematic reference to the history of feminism.”

It is evident that gender equality is seen as a very significant and essential concept and education as the principle tool to create awareness among girls. Teachers’ perceptions imply a right perspective which is related to the ability of a person to exercise his rights. All teachers
perceive gender equality more as a process than a purpose. The majority of teachers chose to provide the researcher with rather general definitions of the concept.

5.2.2 Gender equality teaching

Research question 4: To what extend and how gender equality teaching is promoted in the classroom?

Frequency

Despite the fact that teachers acknowledge the value of gender equality, it does not seem to be a priority for a noticeable percentage of teachers (Figure 9). More precisely, 24% of the teachers have almost never raised the subject of gender equality during their teaching. However, it is important to highlight that some of them, due to the nature of their work are specialized in certain school subjects such as Physics, Mathematics etc. and thus they have less opportunities to bring up issues or concerns relating to gender equality during their lesson. Nevertheless, there is a significant percentage of teachers who touch upon gender equality issues often.

![Figure 9: Frequency of gender equality topics (n=40)](image)

Additionally, an interrelation was identified between the frequency of discussions on gender equality topics and the number of working experience (Figure 10). It seems, that there is a correlation between those two variables and more specifically it was identified that teachers who practice the teaching profession for more than 20 years, touch upon equality topics more often than teachers with less working experience. The reasons could be explained by the fact that the more working experience a teacher has, the more confident and flexible could be during his/her teaching.

\[19 \text{ N represents the absolute number of participants}\]
Content-examples

The trigger for bringing upon issues related to gender equality exists to a larger extent into more theoretical school subjects according to teachers’ responses. Moreover, the gender equality teaching usually unfolds around the distribution of roles and responsibilities within the family and society in general. More precisely, Teacher8 states:

“During lesson time, we have discussed about women status and the rights and responsibilities of both genders inside and outside the house. Also we referred to whether there are equal opportunities between men and women in the working sector. Additionally, we touched upon the differences between the traditional and modern family provided that in my students’ families dominates the traditional type of family.”

Teacher23 argues that during lesson, there are many ways to address the topic of gender equality. As she states:

“An activity based on healthy nutrition and a picture of a man cooking led to a discussion about gender roles since all students, boys and girls, were surprised seeing a man cooking. So, it is up to the teacher if he/she wants to touch upon gender equality topics.”

Similarly, teacher10 adds that:

“Many texts such as Perl Buck’s novel “the mother” within the Modern Greek literature subject prompted discussions about the traditional values and beliefs that exist in our society and the need to balance between the tradition and the new ideas. Also, in the Modern Greek language subject, the unit dedicated to friendship gave...
rise to discussions about friendship among people in the course of time and between boys and girls.”

A recurring statement in teachers’ responses is the analysis and comparison of the woman’s status during ancient times and today. As teacher35 adds:

“During our lesson on Odyssey and more precisely about the unfaithfulness of Odysseus and the naivety and fidelity of Penelope, I took the opportunity and started a conversation about the traditional and appropriate roles of women during the ancient times and how this is reflected in our text.”

Also, many of the teachers address topics stressing out the participation of women in historical facts. Teacher22 talks about it:

“During the lesson of history, we learn and discuss about the participation of women in the French and Greek revolution despite their exclusion from basic human rights. We also reflect on bright examples of women in the research and fine arts faculty. Additional sources for more critical thinking on gender equality were found in traditional songs and films.”

Teacher31 is teaching English and tries to utilize gender neutral material in her teaching:

“I try to use equal quantity of male and female names in the school materials and I am also focused on presenting equally women and men in various professions. The characters in the material, women and men, do the same jobs and are dressed in similar ways.”

As it is evident from the above responses, the school subject plays a central role in upbringing of the topic of gender equality. However, teacher37 argues that:

“Despite the fact that I do not have many opportunities as my colleagues since I am a mathematics teacher, I imply it when I say for example that the world of science belongs to men and women.”

Overall, only few of the teachers referred to gender equality teaching in terms of the mode the school materials that are being used. Moreover, equality teaching is used mainly regarding to the subject/topic which provides teachers with the opportunities to discuss further and reflect on gender roles, stereotypes, traditional and modern societies. However, despite the fact that there is a limited space for some school subjects to encourage gender equality topics from a didactics point of view, still teachers can design their teaching in a gender sensitive way which aims at supporting equally female and male students.

Another important indicator is whether the discussion raised upon the concept of gender equality comes from the teachers themselves, students or both. The chart below (Figure 11)
reveals that the majority of teachers initiate equality topics, while a percentage of 36% underpin that the discussion on gender equality comes from both themselves and students. In addition to that, only a slight percentage of teachers state that students raise gender equality topics. It is obvious that teachers are willing to include equality topics in their teaching in order to sensitize students. However, students do not seem to be the first who take the initiative to raise questions or discussions on equality. The reasons for this attitude could vary from the sensitivity of the subject, students’ disregard of the subject, the uncritical acceptance of the situation or the structure of the lesson that does not encourage or promote students’ active participation.

Furthermore, a very interesting finding is revealed and concerns the extent to which school materials promote discussions relating to the concept of gender equality (Figure 12). More than half of the teachers advocate that school books and instructional materials encompass gender equality topics and concepts only to a limited extent.
A significant percentage, 23%, assert that almost none of the books promote equality discussions, whereas only 8% argue that gender equality topics are considerably brought up within the school books. Analyzing and combining the findings above, we came across with an interesting antithesis. On the one hand, the idea that school books do not promote gender equality topics adequately was supported by the majority of teachers and on the other hand, more teachers replied that they often discuss on equality topics. Then the question that arises is how equality topics are brought up when school books do not promote it?

The above figure (Figure 13) was selected by the researcher in order to highlight the co-occurrence between the frequency of gender equality discussions and teachers’ perception on whether school books promote gender equality topics. If we do take a look into the figure, we can identify that the majority of teachers who argued that they discuss equality topics very often, state that school books promote discussions to a limited extent only. The same patterns are identified also in the case of teachers who opted for the choices of very often, quite often and often. Overall, we could assume that either the discussions on gender equality topics derive less from the school books and depend more on teachers’ personal interests and willingness to consider gender aspects in their teaching or the teachers just by exploiting every opportunity for gender equality discussions encompassed in school books, have the sense that they touch upon equality topics very frequently.
Further down, girls’ responses will be explored and compared with the above findings in order to get valuable insights on the concept of gender equality teaching within the minority context.

5.2.3 Evaluation of Project of Reform in the education of Muslim Children

Research question 7: What is the general contribution of PEM and the main challenges?

Contribution

The PEM, as it has already been mentioned in the beginning, is a multiyear project with an undoubtedly tremendous contribution and impact on students’ school access and performance. However, in order to identify teachers’ perceptions on how PEM has helped out female students, the researcher has been provided with teachers’ responses on the question “What is the most important contribution of PEM to girls’ empowerment?”

The majority of teachers’ responses are concentrated on the learning and social benefits that girls acquire from PEM. Teacher26 states the following:

“In my opinion, PEM’s contribution to girls’ empowerment concerns mostly the social and educational enhancement. PEM boosts girls towards education and helps them integrate into the society and shape their social life.”

In a similar way, teacher13 argues that:

“First and foremost, girls are given the chance to socialize more which will help them integrate smoothly into the education system and the society. Second, enables them to achieve a good command of the Greek language which has an immense impact on their educational future and third, through PEM girls have the facility and comfort to express their personal beliefs and thoughts.”

Other teachers also put emphasis on the educational and social advantages enriched with the dimension of self enhancement. Additionally, teachers are aware of the gender disparities in terms of access and stress out the need for girls to remain at schools. Teacher30 responds the following:

“Just the fact that girls participate to the activities of PEM after school classes, is a great achievement. This creates a positive attitude towards education. Girls’ self-reinforcement allows them to remain at school and proceed with their studies.”

Fewer teachers are primarily concerned with the activities that take place and the materials that are being used by PEM. More precisely, teacher34 asserts that:
“What is important is that the activities, practices and instructional material enhance critical thinking and are underpinned with a balance towards both sexes. This lies in contrast with what they experience in their social surroundings and hopefully will help them free themselves from norms and practices that lead them to social marginalization. Yet, of course, education results to stronger girls.”

To sum up, according to teachers’ perceptions, PEM’s most significant contribution has been the improvement of girls’ education and the enhancement of social integration. Additionally, education is seen as the tool to remove social barriers that prevent girls from honing their skills and realizing their full potentials.

**Challenges**

At this point, teachers provide the researcher with answers regarding the difficult tasks and obstacles that PEM has to deal with. The responses to this question varied and were concerned with five different aspects.

More precisely, the majority of teachers take the view that the greatest challenge that PEM is facing are the traditional and social norms that result in the exclusion of girls from educational opportunities. More specifically, teacher 39 states:

> “The most difficult task for PEM is to struggle against the social prejudices that have existed for many years and thus it is very difficult to disappear”.

In a similar way, teacher 20 asserts the following:

> “In my opinion, the greater challenge is to persuade the students and parents and the general opinion about its utility and significance and at the same time to fend the argumentative circles off, which they desire to abort it.”

There is a significant number of teachers who argued that there was an initial skepticism about PEM in the beginning and in some cases it remained, questioning PEM’s objectives and actions. Therefore PEM’s work becomes even more difficult when it has to deal with the dispute and the social preconceptions as well. Additionally, teacher 12 feels the same way:

> “PEM has to fight with the stereotypical and established mindset, give a different meaning to it without necessarily to refute it”

The above response turns out to be really interesting. It adds a new perspective and gives emphasis to the difficult task of PEM to identify and address the stereotypical attitude and mentality and through its actions eventually to reinvent new concepts, ideas and identities without necessarily to condemn the previous ones.
Furthermore, a significant number of teachers argue that the biggest challenge that PEM encounters is the additional classes to the analytical school program.

Teacher11 argues:

“The additional classes right after the school make it really difficult for students to attend and follow PEM’s classes. The everyday school program is already too demanding and burdens students with a lot of studying. Considering the lack of fluency in Greek language makes it even more difficult.”

Teacher1 shares the same view:

“It is really hard for students to cater for the multiple responsibilities and duties they have at school and also at the PEM’s compensatory classes. On many occasions students did not do their homework claiming to be tired from the long hours of classes.”

Fewer teachers indicate gender as the largest challenge of PEM. Girls’ dropout is marked out as the starting point for PEM to begin with. More specifically, teacher6 stated that:

“The most challenging task for PEM is to keep girls at school and to deal with the dramatic dropout rates. This is where the problem begins with. In order to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills, you need to keep them at school. When this doesn’t happen, PEM’s actions become aimless and meaningless.”

Additionally there is a small number of teachers that asserts that students do not perceive the importance of PEM. Teacher9 argues the following:

“Students do not understand the significance of the program for their future and there are times that ignore it or do not make any efforts to attend the classes. The reasoning behind this could be the heavy daily school schedule or the lack of support and encouragement on behalf of their parents.”

Furthermore, a slight number of responses are concentrated around the idea of the insufficient command of the language. Teacher5 argues that:

“The greatest difficulty for PEM is that a significant number of students do not comprehend the language and thus this limits teachers work so they cannot utilize and make the most of the instructional materials they have at their disposal.”

Overall, we could assume that according to teachers’ perceptions, PEM’s greatest challenge is to struggle and fight with the social and traditional norms and beliefs that keep girls away from school. Further, girls perceptions will be examined and analyzed and hopefully will give us adequate information to cross check the findings from different perspectives.
5.2.4 Stereotypes
Research question 6: To what extent and how students and school books express stereotypes?

According to Oxford Dictionary, stereotype refers to “a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing”\(^\text{20}\). At this point, teachers will provide the researcher with answers on the frequency and the content of possible stereotypical behavior among students. Additional data will be concerned with whether there content of school books is biased and reflect stereotypes and prejudices.

**Frequency**

Teachers opted equally for the choices of very often and often (Figure 14). Moreover, the remaining percentage was concentrated to the choice often. As it is clear indicated, all teachers take the view that female students express stereotypical behavior to different extents. The reasons for the above findings could be justified by the fact that minority girls’ environment orients them to certain behaviors; structures the dynamics of the group relations, generates expectations and through cultural processes perpetuates disparities between genders.

![Figure 14: Frequency of stereotypical behavior expressed by students (n=40)](image)

**Examples**

The majority of teachers assert that students express stereotypes regarding to gender roles in the family. In accordance with the findings below, the distribution of responsibilities within the family is not considered to be by no means an equal sharing of chores and duties. In particular, teacher2 argues that:

“**When we are having a discussion about the role of women in the family, boys and girls express stereotypes. Girls have to keep the house clean and do the cooking whereas boys are free to choose their wives and even physical abuse is justified.**

\(^\text{20}\) Downloaded from [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/stereotype?q=stereotype](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/stereotype?q=stereotype)
Recently, female and male students were annoyed because as they claimed, some Bulgarian girls were wondering in the area and were half naked. They argued that girls are not allowed to show their body and that they should hide as it is considered to be shame and seduction whereas boys are allowed to go wherever they want without being a shame.

Consistent to this view, is teacher’s statement:

“The other day, during my lesson, boys expressed that girls belong to the house and are responsible for children’s upbringing while girls admitted that the father/brother manages the life of the daughter/sister. Additionally they believe that boys need to have their own house and be the ones who are responsible for the finances.”

Teacher argues:

“The students express themselves in a stereotypical way mostly when it comes to the idea of marriage. Girls need to get married very early during their adolescence and they have to prove their virginity.”

Fewer teachers have stated that girls seem to be confused about the restrictions imposed on their life. Teacher states the following:

“Girls seem that they have not made up their minds about whether it is justified and fair not to be able to go outside from home. For example, they sometimes complain that they have to stay home all day but at the same time do not approve the fact that other girls stay outside until late.”

The above statement indicates that girls feel underestimated by their family environment but at the same time the traditional beliefs have deep roots on girls’ perceptions and actions.

Additionally, teachers are asked to what extent school books reflect gender stereotypes (Figure 15). The largest percentage of answers elaborate around the view that school books reflect gender stereotypes considerably while there is an equal distribution of answers between the options quite a lot and almost not at all. It is evident that the majority of teachers do not find school books gender neutral.
5.2.5 Future Recommendations

Research question 8: *What suggestions for improvement and promotion of gender equality through education are supported?*

The last part of teachers’ questionnaires concerns recommendations about which is the best way that promotes and enhances gender equality in education. In the largest percentage of answers, the school practices and discussions dominated while only a few differentiated and orientated towards other directions. In particular, teacher33 states that:

“School practices promote gender equality with a constant focus on the enhancement of girls’ roles and personality inside the classroom. Girls also should be informed of their rights and parents should be encouraged to get involved into discussions relevant to gender equality topics.”

Similarly, teacher9 feels that:

“The best way to promote gender equality is through the everyday practice and the equal treatment of both genders. Additionally, examples of students, teachers, parents who function with the criterion of equality should be given prominence and be seen as role models for all of us. Moreover, the most important thing teachers can do is to include all students in the discussions. Including all students can help destroy the stereotypes. Teachers must create an environment which gives girls the complete freedom to speak. Teachers can begin to do so by including all students, promoting respect, encouraging different learning styles, and broadening the curriculum.”

Other teachers point the cooperation between girls and boys to be a determinant for the enhancement of equality. More precisely, teacher25 argues that:

“The concept of gender equality should be stressed out through school books and educational material in general. Teachers should be ready to make the most of every
opportunity given during their lesson to discuss about equality issues. Moreover, there is a need for teachers to develop the ability to be aware of gender biases inherent in their behavior and educational practices. Furthermore, the cooperation between boys and girls should be the basis for the activities. All the school practices should rely on synergy and not competition.”

Teacher8 relates the provision of incentives with the completion of compulsory education: “The most important way to foster gender equality is to provide motivation to girls in order to complete compulsory education. The incentives could be for example the establishment of local enterprises that will utilize girls’ graduates.”

Overall, we could argue that gender equality is considered to be a paramount concept that should penetrate the whole education process. According to teachers’ perspective, the teachers are the ones who have to include strategies that foster gender equality in the classroom and these strategies vary from encouraging all students to participate in discussions, boys and girls should receive equal treatment, review of the school books and providing girls with incentives to continue school. Overall, what is important to be highlighted is that most teachers believe that they are the ones who hold a great responsibility for the enhancement of gender equality in general and conversely for the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. Moreover, teachers were asked if they had ever attended seminars with a main theme the concept of gender equality teaching. The majority of them, 40% have never participated, 29% respond that they have almost never participated while the options quite often and often concentrated 10% each. However the majority of teachers would like to take part in gender equality seminars and events (Figure 16). The figure below reveals teachers’ responses:

![Figure 16: Teachers' willingness to participate in seminars on gender sensitive teaching (n=40)](image-url)
5.3 Girls’ perceptions

As it has been highlighted in previous phases, the ultimate objective of the study is to uncover girl students’ perceptions on the concept of gender equality. However before analyzing the findings, additional information shall be provided in order to get a profound knowledge of girls’ educational background. Having a look into the figure below, we are able to implicit the significance and the underlying meaning of the below findings (Figure 17). First, the girls’ parents undoubtedly hold a very poor level of education in both areas, urban and rural. Second, the overall parents’ low educational background is surprisingly more evident in urban areas than in rural areas; thus in both cases, fathers’ education level is better than mothers’.

However, at this point is important to reflect on mothers’ and fathers’ education comparatively. The figure reveals that in the case of urban areas and more specifically in the case of Roma parents there is an overall deprived educational background. In rural areas, where Pomaks reside, father’s educational level is considerably better than mother’s. Generally, we could assume that in the case of urban area, concerning the Roma parents, is indicated that education was not appreciated and not considered to be a necessity for boys and girls. Conversely, in the case of rural areas, where the gender gaps are larger, boys were urged towards education while girls were prompted to drop out. Subsequently, the gender inequality is more evident in rural areas. Nevertheless, it is important to note that both parents of the two girls, who are Pomaks and Turks and reside in the city, hold a higher level degree. To sum up, we could assume that there are differences between urban and rural areas but also special ideologies can be attributed to Roma and Pomaks. However, due to the limited number of participants from other ethnic group than Roma who reside in urban areas, we cannot draw any further conclusions.
5.3.1 Parents’ aspirations

Research question 3: *What are parents’ aspirations towards education?*

It is a common belief that parents’ attitudes and behavior play an essential role in students’ academic future. The girls were asked to respond to the question *to what extent school’s education is important for your family.* Looking into the figure 18, we could decisively argue that almost all parents believe that education is very important. In both areas, rural and urban, the findings were identical and no difference was found to be related to a certain place of residence.

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Figure 18: Parents' perceptions on the importance of education (n=53)

The prevailing picture that arises from students’ responses is the picture of parents who are inclined positively towards girls’ education. Taking into consideration the low educational level of parents we could assume that support takes the form of the parents who did not succeed in educating themselves but transmitted their desires and dreams to their children. More precisely, Baldan who is Roma, states the following:

“My dad tells me to go to school so I can learn how to write and read. This is the only way I can find a job in the future and have a better life not like them (my parents) who live in the slums. My dad tells me I did not go to school but you should.”

Funda argues that:
“School is very important for my family. My parents want my brother and me to have a better future. They tell us that we should go to school, learn things and find a good job and not be like them who did not finish school and now they do not have any job.”

In a similar way, Melek asserts:

“My dad sends me to school and tells me not to get married early. I should study a lot at home so I learn Greek, finish high school, find a job and become independent with my own money. Besides I learn more at school than I do at home or the neighborhood.”

The word “sends” is revealing of the situation in which girls have no power or authority to make choices regarding their future.

The majority of girls responded that education is essential because it constitutes a prerequisite in order to learn Greek and find a job. In general, we could support the view that the idea of education that delivers prosperity, happiness and a better future is broad to girls’ responses. The access and expansion of education raises the hopes and expectations of parents. At this point we could also comment on the following; the majority of girls portray their father as the main person who decides upon crucial issues such as the educational future of his daughter.

5.3.2 Gender equality teaching

Research question 4: To what extend and how gender equality teaching is promoted in the classroom?

Frequency

If we have a look into the figure 19, the vast majority of girls take the view that gender equality topics are not brought up very often. Especially, in the case of rural areas where the girls are considered to be more disadvantaged, responses illustrate a rather dissuasive and disappointing situation in which gender equality topics are touched upon almost not at all. The situation in urban areas seems to be better in terms of gender equality teaching but still the options of very often and almost not at all concentrate equal percentages. Moreover there is a noticeable percentage that opted for the choice not at all.
Furthermore, contrasting the teachers’ responses with girls’ responses regarding the frequency of gender equality discussions in the classroom we can effortlessly identify the discrepancy between statements (Figure 20). On one hand, the majority of teachers argue that there are often discussions on gender equality topics and on the other hand, girls support the reversal. The reasons underlie the specific disagreement could be 1) both sides, teachers and students grasp differently the frequency by which equality topics take place 2) teachers, through their answers, chose to exhibit social desirability even though in the case of questionnaires the possibilities are less 3) students disregard gender equality topics 4) teachers integrate gender issues in their teaching often but fail to address these topics in a way that students conceptualize the idea of gender equality, become aware, criticize it and relate it to their personal experiences. Overall, in any case, the gender equality discourse should be related by the students to their individual and collective experiences.

Figure 19: Frequency of gender equality discussions (urban n=22; rural n=31)

Figure 20: Teachers' and students' perceptions on the frequency of gender equality teaching

(teachers n=40; students n=53)
Examples

Girls’ responses coincide in many cases regarding the examples of gender equality topics. Usually, the discussions are initiated from teachers while gender equality topics derived from random incidents or school books. More specifically, student 4 states that:

“One day, occasioned by the story in our school book of a woman poet who as a child had to get dressed as a boy in order to get to school, we discussed about ourselves and that many girls have to drop out and abandon their studies in order to get married early. Unlike girls, boys are encouraged to go to school and finish their studies. The boys in our classroom said that this was fair and this is the way things should be. For example, my brother can come home at any time but I have to be back before it gets dark.”

It is obvious that the student above understands the unequal treatment towards boys and girls. This treatment is relevant to the behavior and regulations which girls have to comply with in their everyday life. At the same time, disapproves boys’ attitude in supporting traditional notions.

Student13 asserts the following:

“Several weeks ago, we told our new teacher that we, the Muslims, mostly in the villages cannot go outside at night or hang out with boys. Sometimes we are not even allowed to talk to them. Our teacher asked us why this is happening. We told her that our parents want us to be good girls.”

The girl above stresses out the fact that is a member of the Muslim minority who has to follow certain norms that determine the way people live and form their relationships. Moreover, she seems uncertain to justify the restrictions imposed on the girls of her age but when the restrictions come from her parents become an uncontested command.

Student48 argues that:

“One day, our teacher divided us into groups where we had to cooperate in order to do an activity. Some boys and girls reacted and did not want to work with each other. Our teacher then, told us that it is important to learn to cooperate at school and also that boys and girls have equal abilities and potentials.”

It is not specified whether boys, girls or both were unwilling to cooperate. However, an interesting conclusion is that this girl has related the cooperation between girls and boys with the overall concept of gender equality.

Student51 argues:
“One day, my teacher asked me to show her my homework but I hadn’t done it because I had to help my mum with cleaning and cooking and that my brothers do not help me. Then our teacher told us that doing our homework is very important and we have to tell that to our parents.”

In the above statement can identify the roles that girls are bound to perform. Girls have to fulfill certain duties and responsibilities associated to their gender. Girls need to help with the house chores, neglecting their homework and studies.

Student39 states:

“In the school book there was a text about racism and then we had to do and activity about the different types of racism. Then we had a discussion about the boys and girls that they do not have the same opportunities in education and the workplace.”

The above girl comprehends the idea of unequal practices in education and workplace based on a person’s sex and relates it to racism.

Student52 argues

“Boys in my classroom believe that only girls should be responsible about the house chores while they should be free to do and go wherever they want. Then, one day, we had a conversation with our teachers about how girls have different roles in different countries.”

Gender related roles are repeated as a topic. However, in this case is compared and analyzed from a broader multicultural perspective. By this way, students get the opportunity to become aware, more critical by identifying differences and similarities.

5.3.3 Evaluation of Project for Reform in the Education of Muslim Children

Research question 7: What is the general contribution of PEM and the main challenges?

Contribution

Having already examined teachers’ responses concerning the contribution of PEM and the challenges that remain to be dealt with, it is considered to be of great importance the analysis of students’ responses upon the same question in order to acquire a holistic view which is comprised of teachers’ and students’ perspectives. More specifically, girls perceive the challenges and the contribution of PEM more pragmatically and practically. Finally, it is important to note that out of fifty-three girls, ten girls in rural areas did not answer to the
following questions since they had never taken part in PEM’s activities, while seven girls that live in rural areas think that PEM did not help them at all. In more details, student53 that lives in the urban area argues that:

“I participate in compensatory classes because I used to be a weak student at school. The additional classes helped me understand more, my weakness and gaps that I used to have in some subjects have decreased and my grades have been improved.”

In the same way, student8 states the following:

“Overall, PEM’s classes helped me with my school performance in all school subjects. The most important contribution is that I learnt to speak and write Greek better. Now I feel more confident and I know I can improve myself a lot more at school now”.

Student18 states that:

For example, I completed primary education in a minority primary school…so, when I started high school, I found it very difficult to adjust and keep up with the rest of the students...for example, we were taught the subject of mathematics in the Turkish language and I had to put a lot of effort to understand it here. Then I decided to attend KESPSEMS’ classes and they helped me understand it better... I am still going there because I see a continuous improvement in my school performance and grades.

Student29 lives in rural areas and mentions that:

“In the beginning, I had many difficulties in school because I found the subjects and the tests very difficult...I couldn’t understand anything and I didn’t want to go to school (...) now is still difficult for me but I feel I understand more. I speak easier and better Greek now.”

The statements above reveal that students appreciate the contribution of PEM in terms of their school performance. Additionally, the improvement of language skills is undoubtedly considered to be a determinant in the enhancement of school experience and overcoming performance difficulties.

There are also girls who reveal that PEM has helped them value education more. Student30 argues that:

“PEM has helped me understand the world better and how important education is for my future.”

In the same way, student from the rural areas states the following:
“PEM has helped me with my school performance. In the beginning I didn’t like school, because I was a bad student. Now I understand better Greek, I do better at school and I want to continue my studies up to the university”.

In the above statements we can recognize that, as it has been already mentioned by teachers, PEM has contributed to the creation of positive attitudes towards education and the self-reinforcement of girls through the improvement of academic performance.

Challenges

Girls’ responses upon the challenges that PEM faces are mainly concerned with the conduct and functioning aspects of the classes. More precisely, student2 argues that:

“I would prefer it if PEM’s additional classes could take place during weekends. We would be more restful and it would not be so difficult for us to understand. Moreover, more students could come if there were weekend classes.”

Additionally, student13 asserts that:

“PEM’s compensatory classes are conducted at hours additional to the school schedule. As a result we go home very late and we are very tired to study or do anything else. I think that we should have fewer hours of classes during school days.”

Student9 argues that:

“The classrooms where the additional classes take place are very small and the number of students is large. There are many times that students are very loud and we cannot listen or understand what the teacher says. Also, many students are not interested in the lesson and there is chaos in the classroom”

The above girls live in rural areas and their main concerns are related to the timetable of the additional classes, sizes of classrooms and number of students. The extra burdensome of PEM’s classes has been identified by several teachers as well. However, girls’ responses from rural areas coincide with the ones from urban areas. Student32 argues the following:

“If I could change something in PEM it would be the size of classrooms. There are many students that want to take part in the additional classes but there is not enough space for them.”

It is obvious that the situation in rural and urban areas is similar in terms of the size and the number of students that participate in PEM’s classes. Another element that has already been mentioned in teachers responses but also in girls from rural areas is the indifference of some students. Student44 feels that:
“Classes are important but there are students who get fussy and loud and disturb us from paying attention and concentrate on the teacher.”

Another aspect that has not been mentioned was the content of the classes. Student52 mentions that:

“If I could change something in PEM it is the kind of lessons we have in the additional classes. They are exactly the same with the lessons at school. It is a good revision to remember what we did at school but it becomes very boring to do the same things every day.”

In general, we could support the idea that despite the area of residence, girls seem to share the same view on the contributions and challenges of PEM. On one hand, one clue that was mentioned only by the girls in rural areas is the fact that they preferred to have the classes during weekends because they return late at home and on the other hand, some girls in urban areas would like the compensatory classes to include a variety of exercises and practices and not to be merely focused on the revision of school activities.

5.3.4 Obstacles to the completion of compulsory education

Research question 2: How do girls experience gender equality in education?

One of the focal points of this study is to identify the way girls experience gender equality in education. The above research question brought us to the other question “which are the obstacles that girls face and have to cope with in order to complete compulsory education”.

Social and cultural barriers

Evrim is Pomak and lives in the city of Xanthi. When she is asked to identify the reason why there are gender disparities within secondary education, she replies the following:

“I believe that girls do not continue their studies to secondary education, do not complete compulsory education because they retain a conservative lifestyle, for example they want to get married very early and thus they find studying pointless and useless. On the contrary, boys continue to high school but they perform very badly, they have to repeat the same classes or they fail to pass to the next grade because of absenteeism.”

Researcher: “Do you believe that language is an important factor that contributes to the girls’ low educational attainment?”

Evrim: “No. At least here, in the city, almost all students speak Greek well. It is the desire for marriage that makes girls drop out”.
Researcher: “Are there any girls from your environment who have dropped out from school?”

Evrim: “My cousins were registered to lower secondary education but they dropped out because they got married and now they considered themselves lucky and that I should be the one who has to feel envy because they can stay home without studying”.

Elif also has experienced her friends to drop out from school and states the following:

“I can think of at least five friends that they only completed primary education and now are making fun of me because I have to wake up early every day to go to school, while they wake up whenever they want and they claim that I should feel bad for spending half of my day at school….also my best friend, dropped out from school to get married and she still believes that did the right thing because she could not finish high school anyway.”

The portrayed situation according to the girls’ responses reveals that these girls chose consciously to drop out in order to get married. Additionally, some girls consider school a drudgery which has nothing to offer them. Opposite to girls’ statements above, Meliha a Roma student, experiences the phenomenon of early dropout from another perspective:

“There are many parents who keep their daughters home. I knew a girl who wanted to continue to upper secondary education and her dad told her that either you stay home and get married or you forget about us….however, with boys is not the same. I know many boys who had stopped coming to school and now they are back again. When I asked them, they told me that their parents had threatened them that they were going to cut the allowance to them if they did not continue their studies.”

Researcher: “What is it that they are mostly afraid of?”

Meliha: “If girls go to universities and have to move to other places then the parents believe that they will lose their daughters.”

Researcher: “Do you believe that boys and girls have equal opportunities in education?”

Meliha: “In reality, definitely no.....there should be equal opportunities for both though”

Pinar who is also Roma identifies the unequal treatment between boys and girls within education:

“On the contrary to girls, boys are urged to study and finish high school in order to find a job. For girls the situation is totally different….the Muslim girls usually get
married in the age of 13 years old traditionally. But also our parents marry us in order to avoid the risk that we might get pregnant and bring shame to the family (…)
I know it sounds weird to you (researcher) but this is the way they (our parents) think.”

It is obvious that Meliha and Pinar believe that there is gender inequality in terms of the opportunities provided to boys and girls. There is clearly a differentiated behavior towards boys and girls. In particular, boys are prompted to study and graduate whereas girls are discouraged and even forbidden to progress academically. Pinar condemns the parents’ traditional norms that promote the practice of early marriage in order to safeguard the honor and reputation of the family. Ahsen is Roma, lives in urban area and reflects on her own personal experience:

“In the beginning, my parents did not allow me to continue to lower secondary education because secondary schools have many boys (...). Then, because they saw that I got really upset with their decision, they decided to give me the chance to complete lower secondary education.”

However, Zehra who is also Roma, has a different opinion:

“My parents really push me to complete secondary education and continue to the university. They would never allow me to drop out. Their behavior towards me and my brother concerning our schooling is completely the same.”

Zehra who possess an excellent command of the Greek language, supports that education is very important for her family and she does not experience any discrimination. Further, having already highlighted the crucial period that takes place from primary to lower secondary education, girls were asked to reflect upon the reason why this transition turns out to be predominant for girls’ educational future. More precisely, Leyla states the following:

“High school is a totally different environment. Additionally, the activities and everything are more difficult. Especially for me the fact that I studied in minority primary school made it even more difficult to follow my classmates.”

Ceylin is Roma and resides in the city. Similarly to Leyla, argues that one reason for the challenging transition to high school and the main cause for the high percentages of dropouts is the fact that the level of the provided education is more advanced and they will not be able to conform to the requirements of secondary education. The above theory applies to the case of Ceylin:
“I think one reason for not continuing to high school is that they are afraid because they do not understand, speak or write Greek so well... girls are certain that they are going to fail so they drop out right after the completion of primary education.”

However Esma, Fidan and Nisan who live in the rural areas, hold a different opinion:

Esma: “I would really like to continue my studies and complete compulsory education but my parents do not want me to. My parents and all parents believe that primary education is enough. That is the reason why girls do not continue to lower secondary education. They (parents) say to us that primary school offers all the skills we are going to need in our life.”

Researcher: “But in case you wish to move forward academically, can your parents stop you?”

Esma: “Of course they can. The decision is not mine, it’s their decision”

Fidan: “Our parents are uneducated and backwards. The way they think is very narrow-minded.”

Researcher: “But why parents believe that just completing primary education is sufficient?”

Nisan: “Well... our mothers are completely illiterate and uneducated and they think that just learning to write and read is enough.”

The above arguments reveal the parents’ dominance over girls’ future. The above example reveals how parents can directly and perhaps more importantly, indirectly through their inspirations influence their children future prospects. Primary education is considered to be adequate for girls. The above statement demonstrates the reciprocal attitude which is expressed by both sides, parents and girls. Parents underestimate their daughters’ academic future and girls underestimate their parents for the specific behavior and way of thinking. Nevertheless, it is of great importance the fact that girls attribute their parents the conservative and traditional attitudes to their lack of education. The absence of education becomes a defining factor in maintaining social and traditional norms, practices and choices which narrow girls’ perceptions, opportunities and choices over their lives.

When Safiye, who lives in the rural areas, was asked if she will continue going to upper secondary education, her classmates answered on behalf of her:

“She will not continue, she will drop out this year”

Safiye explained her reason underlying this decision:

“I do not find education important....what is the point of going to school if I do not want to study for a professional qualification.”
Researcher: “And what do you want to do then if not going to school?”
Safiye: “…..get married”

Researcher: “Do your parents encourage you to continue your studies?”
Safiye: “No they do not…they do not consider completing high school important.”

Researcher: “Why?”
Safiye: “Because they are uneducated”

Researcher: “If your parents encouraged you to complete compulsory education, what would you do?”
Safiye: “In that case, I would try to finish high school”.

First of all, we can assume that in this case, girls seem to be fully informed on their classmates’ school future which implies that progressing within the levels of secondary education gives rise to concerns and discussions among girls. Safiye’s view upon her life expectations seems to be perplexed since on the one hand underestimates schooling and on the other hand she considers the absence of education the reason why her parents ignore the value and benefits of education. The conclusion drawn from the above statement is that Safiye is influenced by her parents’ aspirations about her future and her decisions, perceptions and actions reflect values inherent in the particular environment. However, simultaneously is a young person who is distinguished by a conflict between the conservative norms and the new trends which consider education a facilitator of modernity.

Overall, most analysis of girls’ responses suggests that the inadequate command of the Greek language which results undoubtedly in poor academic performance is not considered to be the major obstacle for the non-completion of compulsory education. The parents’ attitudes and practices are indicated to be the prevailing reason for the gender disparities within the levels of secondary education.

Area of residence

As it has been many times addressed in this study, the area of residence is a decisive factor for girls’ educational opportunities. The gaps between male and female students are greater in rural areas where girls are often marginalized from formal education. Gul lives in the city but she is aware of the disadvantages of being a girl living in a village.

“I believe the reason for the low educational attainment is the tradition. I mean, it is the tradition that supports that girls should stay home and get married very early.”
Otherwise if girls go to school then the name and the honor of the family is in danger...but in general here in the city you don’t see many girls drop out from school to get married. These things happen mostly in villages.”

Baldan knows that there are fewer girls attaining secondary schools, argues that boys are indifferent towards school and do not manage to complete it on time. At the same time is expressing gender stereotypes:

Baldan: “Boys from rural areas are more than girls but they repeat the same classes for many years. They are very naughty and loud during lesson time. But usually boys are more disobedient than girls... I do not believe that teachers really like those boys.”

Furthermore girls were asked whether they would have more opportunities in education if they lived in urban areas. All girls replied in one word “Yes”. More precisely:

Feride: The fact that we live in the villages plays an essential role in dropping out from school. Our parents definitely would have other attitudes towards our schooling and life in general.”

Melek describes distinctly the way coexistence of girls and boys at school is considered to be a taboo which in turn begets prejudices and biases.

“In villages, people talk too much.....for example, even if my parents decide to let me go to upper secondary school, then people from the neighborhood will start talking and will tell my mother and father that they should not send me to high school because there are many boys there.”

Similarly, Serin discuss further:

“If we lived in big cities, all the other girls would go to school and it would be only us who would not...and eventually they would allow us to continue our studies like everyone else.”

Taking into consideration the above arguments, we can assume that the traditional norms and practices have deeper roots and have a greater deal of influence on girls’ participation in secondary education not because schools are not there but because girls are the ones who experience the harmful traditional attitudes and practices that prevent them from exercising their right to education. Moreover, girls seem to be completely aware of the situation, the limits and the restrictions imposed on them due to the fact that they live in rural and remote areas.
Recommendations

Girls were asked to provide the researcher with recommendations on what should be done or changed so that all girls finish compulsory education. All girls in rural and urban areas responded simultaneously to the above question in the following way: “Our parents”. In particular:

Afet: “The way our parents think has to change. Things are not the way they used to be when they were in our age….the problem is that no matter how many times we explain it to them, they do not seem to understand.”

Funda: “The state has the responsibility to talk to our parents and make them change their minds. The politicians and all the people are aware of the situation here.”

Funda resorts to the state as the main agent who can resolve the inequality issues which arise from the discrepancies in access, attainment and completion of compulsory education. Moreover, some girls came up with the idea of threatening their parents in order to attain upper secondary education.

Yasemin: “Well….I think if the state threatened our parents with arrest then they would all send us to school. Who is not afraid of the police? I think this is the most effective way. In that case, the opposite would happen. We would like to stay home while our parents would force us to go to school.”

Apart from the amusing side of the above statement, this certain opinion indicates the status of terror and threats those girls live in and the absence of free will which diffuses girls’ choices and actions. Similarly, Ceyda argues the following:

“Our parents get allowances for the government. If our parents kept receiving this money on the condition that they send us to school, then they would not have other choice but to send us to school.”

5.4 Summary of the main findings

According to the statistical data presented in the study, it is clearly indicated that the gender disparity in terms of access is identified in the first year of lower secondary education and more precisely it takes place during the transition from primary to secondary education. Summarizing the main findings of the study, we ended up with the following conclusions:

Almost all teachers that participated in our study acknowledge gender equality as a very crucial and substantial concept and consider education the tool to create awareness among students. However there is a noticeable percentage of teachers who has almost never touched
upon gender equality topics. Moreover, the gender equality topics are usually related to the subject-topics entailed in school books which provide teachers with the opportunities to discuss further and reflect on gender roles, stereotypes, traditional and modern societies. Overall, the majority of initiatives for gender equality topics derive from teachers. Our findings have indicated that for the participants of the study, the working experience seems to be a determining factor for the frequency of gender equality topics in the classroom. The more working experience one has, the more often brings up gender equality discussions. Another interesting finding is the fact that the majority of teachers believe that school books promote gender equality topics to a limited extent and most importantly the teachers who argue that they often promote discussions on gender equality, additionally believe that school books do not promote adequately equality topics.

Regarding the evaluation of PEM, all teachers approve of PEM’s actions and efforts and more teachers consider the improvement of girls’ education and the enhancement of social integration the most significant contribution of the program. On the contrary the biggest challenge for PEM is to fight and eventually remove the social barriers that are compelling girls to drop out from compulsory education. Another important finding is the high frequency of stereotypes expressed by students in general. Additionally, school books reflect gender stereotypes to a considerable extent. In regards to the teachers’ recommendations on ways that promote and enhance gender equality, the teachers are the ones who hold the responsibility to incorporate strategies that foster gender equality in the classroom. The teachers should be accountable for the enhancement of gender equality or the perpetuation of gender stereotypes respectively.

The female students who have participated in the current study reside in urban and rural areas and come from an overall poor educational background. The gender disparities are more evident in rural areas but in general Roma parents who reside in urban areas hold a lower level of education than parents in rural areas.

According to students’ perceptions, all parents acknowledge the importance of education. In many cases parents transmit their aspirations and dreams upon their own life to their children’s lives. For them, the access and expansion of education raises the hopes and expectations for their children’s better future. Conversely to teachers’ responses on the frequency of gender equality topics, the vast majority of girls take the view that gender equality topics are not brought up very often. Especially, in the case of rural areas, responses illustrate that gender equality topics are touched upon almost not at all. The situation in urban areas seems to be better in terms of gender equality. Furthermore, the discussions were
initiated from teachers while gender equality topics derived from random incidents or school books. Students perceive the contribution and challenges of PEM practically from their everyday experience. The participation in PEM’s actions has contributed in improving girls’ language skills and school performance. Additionally, has created positive attitudes towards learning and education in general. The girls’ basic concerns from both rural and urban areas coincide and are related mainly to the timetable of the additional classes, sizes of classrooms and number of students.

The main obstacle towards the completion of compulsory education are the traditional and cultural attitudes and practices that force girls drop out from school and urge them to get married early. Girls attribute their parents conservative and traditionalist attitudes to their lack of education. The above portrayed situation is more intense in rural areas but overall girls identify a differentiated parental behavior towards boys and girls. Another obstacle is that girls believe that the level of the provided education is more advanced and they will not be able to conform to the requirements of secondary education and consequently, exclude themselves from education and adjust their personal aspirations to the family and parental aspirations. However, there are girls who choose to drop out from school since they hold no interest in learning. In this case also we can identify the influence of the poor educational background and social attitudes upon girls’ attitudes towards schooling which create a vicious circle and reproduce gender inequalities. Moreover, according to girls, the area of residence plays a crucial role since the traditional norms and practices have deeper roots and have a greater deal of influence on girls’ participation in secondary education. Ultimately, it is the parents’ way of thinking the great challenge to the completion of compulsory education that needs to be taken into consideration.
Chapter Six
Discussion, Challenges and Recommendations

6.1 Discussion
Before reflecting on the findings, it is important to stress out once more that the current study is a small scale research, the findings cannot be generalized and the conclusions drawn from the analysis apply only to the participants who took part in our research.

Addressing the research questions that were posed in the introduction, we can assert that despite the fact that the importance of promoting gender equality through education is a prioritized area for all teachers and in spite of considering themselves the ones, who are held accountable for the enhancement of gender equality, gender equality teaching does not constitute a general effort and priority for all teachers. Even in the case that it does constitute a priority, does not reach the ones who should get sensitized, on the contrary, girls do not realize it and finally fail to interpret and relate it to their lives and personal and collective experiences.

According to students’ perceptions, all parents consider education very important for their daughters’ lives and in most cases education constitutes a prerequisite for acquiring language proficiency and better occupational prospects. Nevertheless, it is important to clarify that parents who are favorably disposed towards education can either just approve their children’s schooling or encourage them to continue their studies and graduate. Some responses allow us to advocate that parents back and support their daughters’ educational attainment. However in other cases it would be arbitrary to draw any further conclusions. Also, it is worth mentioning that despite the fact that the participants of our study belong to the group of girls who finished primary education and are progressing through the levels of lower secondary education, still some of them express the pressure and difficulties they confront towards schooling.

PEM’s actions are acknowledged by teachers and students in terms of its contribution towards the enhancement of girls’ social integration and academic performance. However there are still challenges related to robust constraints such as the social and cultural traditions or the general function of the classes that cannot be dealt successfully by the program alone.

We should also stress out once more that the intersectionality concept is substantial and we should bear in mind the way gender intersects with other identities, experiencing discrimination and disadvantage. Assuming just that minority people might experience segregation is insufficient for describing their experiences. The present research makes
evident how social relations and structures shape and are shaped by the dimensions of gender, ethnicity, language, class and region and constitute interrelated forms of oppression that are manifested in multiple forms of discrimination.

Coming back to Ogbu’s theory regarding the academic failure of minority student population, the classification of the participants of our study as voluntary or involuntary minority, despite the fact that examines how the social relations are structured, would offer an oversimplified view of the educational conditions provided that ignores the impact of other variables such as the girls’ socioeconomic status, gender, language, traditional constraints etc. However, the theory of Cross and McCartan (1984), based on people’s attitudes and perceptions of themselves as learners, seems to be more consistent to the findings of the study. Moreover, according to the same theory, generally students with poor educational backgrounds frequently lack interest in learning. Furthermore, building upon the concept of the illiteracy of resistance, we could assume that parents in order to safeguard the cultural and traditional norms and protect their daughters’ identity, compel them to terminate their studies.

Among the obstacles for completing secondary education are the lack of fluency in Greek language and the lack of interest towards education. Nevertheless, the most defining factor for girls’ unequal educational access and attainment and also the major challenge for PEM, are the prevailing cultural norms, values, attitudes and parental practices that jointly shape and influence girls’ school future. Considering also that in some cases the poor academic performance can be partly attributed to the additional burden of house chores then we can easily identify the vicious circle; consequently, the poor performance constitutes an additional reason for parents to prevent their daughters from continuing their studies. There are cases in which girls consider themselves incapable of progressing to the upper secondary education. This could suggest that girls with less valued cultural resources adjust their aspirations to perceived chances of success and simultaneously exclude themselves from social settings due to lack of familiarity. The findings of this investigation point that we can trace the origin of the aforesaid obstacles and impediments in parental attitudes and aspirations and the way they perceive and formulate expectations about their daughters’ educational future. These hidden mechanisms originate from the family, produce gender disparities and sustain gender inequality in the Greek Muslim minority. More precisely, the findings suggest that there is still a strong causal relationship between the girls’ educational attainment and parental and family attitudes and practices which reflect the economic, social and cultural capital resources that most of the times hinder girls’ capacity of making choices about their educational future. As a result, the horizons of actions, which take place in the interactions between individuals
and the fields they inhabit, are predetermined, preventing girls from reaching their full potentials and from seeing what lies beyond these horizons (Hodkinson, 2008). Consistent to this view, is Max Weber’s concept of life chances “the chances an individual has for sharing in the socially created economic or cultural "goods" that typically exist in any given society” (Giddens, 1973, p.131-1).

The influence of the habitus, which was further elaborated in the theoretical part, is of essential significance for the reproduction of perceptions, thoughts and actions (habitus) which are inherent in the particular setting of the Muslim minority. According to teachers’ and students’ responses there are cases in which girls disregard education or exclude themselves from progressing since the available options they have, get narrow by the forces that have value and form girls’ perceptions upon their future. This particular attitude is consistent with the concept of self-elimination in which individuals formulate a conscious and unconscious view of the world and develop inspirations and attitudes according to the perceived chances of success. Moreover, among the findings of the study is the fact that all students express stereotypes in a regular basis and the stereotypes reproduce inequalities by being fulfilling “a false definition evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true” (Merton, 1948, p. 195).

However, it is of crucial importance to stress out that despite the significant role of socioeconomic background, minority status and gender on girls’ educational attainment, there are cases in which the effect of the above dimensions can be mediated by the encouragement of parents, girls’ own educational and occupational aspirations. Besides, we should not forget that the female students that took part in the present study represent the most progressive part of the Muslim minority female student population that chose and was allowed and supported to progress to the next levels of secondary education. It is important also to point out that the students who argued that their parents are very supportive and encouraging and do not feel that being girls influences their academic future, speak fluently Greek compared to their classmates who experience discrimination. Therefore despite the impact of different dimensions, parents’ attitude and aspirations are determinant for their children academic performance and future. According to Bourdieu and Passeron, there are students-exceptions that, despite the significant impact of social forces, ignore their social “handicap” and succeed in overcoming the difficulties and manage to change their lives’ course (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). In our research, there were girls that indicated not only the approval but the encouragement of parents and most specifically the presence of a supportive father. Moreover, the profile of the supportive father within the Muslim minority context has been
addressed in previous research concerning the cases of women, who managed to overcome the social and traditional barriers and completed their studies in higher education (Zografaki, 2011).

Nevertheless, one of the most interesting and important findings of the study is the fact that the girls find themselves among contradictory meanings. In other words, they have to synthesize different and distinct trends and develop a new more flexible framework. On one hand, they are aware of the cultural and social elements of their identities, they are influenced by the norms of the local community, express gender stereotypes but on the other hand they are influenced by the process of modernization which opts for the personal choice and various lifestyles and condemns traditional prejudices. One basic characteristic of the students’ responses is that they never hesitated to pass judgment on sensitive issues and to place themselves against their parents’ practices and attitudes. As it has already been mentioned, modernity allows the reappearance and maintenance of traditional norms and beliefs only in the case they are justified. Consistent to this idea is Bhopal’s research on south Asian women in east London which reveals that women with high levels of education reject aspects of their tradition. However, women with lower levels of education maintain the cultural and traditional practices (Bhopal, 2000).

Overall, it is indicated that education is seen as the engine that conveys modernity and leads to the reassessment and redefinition of meanings and identities. Education enables girls to question existing gender inequalities, as well as act for change; in other words, education facilitates girls’ empowerment.

6.2 Challenges
Having completed the analysis of the findings we have reached into a plethora of challenges embodied in the way gender equality is addressed – promoted in the context of Muslim minority education. The challenges will be further analyzed:

6.2.1 Gender disparities in secondary education
As it has already been mentioned despite the progress in girls’ enrollment rates, a lot of effort is still required in order to eliminate the gender disparities within secondary education. According to the statistical data, the transition from primary education is considered to be of major importance for the girls’ academic promotion. Despite the significant advances in bridging the gender gap, the disparities in secondary education against girls are still persistent.
The high dropout rates between primary and secondary education yield determined preventive measures starting from preschool education.

6.2.2 Lack of gender sensitive teaching
Gender equality teaching involves around various dimensions such as frequency of teaching, interactions among boys and girls etc. In the present study, it was addressed that despite the fact that there is a significant number of teachers that include gender equality topics in their teaching, there is a substantial number of teachers who choose not to engage in equality topics. Simultaneously, girls argue that there are rarely gender equality topics. The inadequate promotion of gender equality discourse has also been addressed in the school books and materials. Moreover, there is a substantial number of teachers that believe that school books and instructional materials reflect gender stereotypes.

6.2.3 Cultural and traditional constraints
Traditional and cultural norms clearly reinforce gender biases and stereotypes that give preference to boys over girls in access to education. This prevents girls from attending, and remaining at school, primarily between primary and lower secondary education. The practice of early marriage is the main reason girls are forced to drop out from school. The fear of early pregnancy, which is a disgrace prior to marriage, perpetuates the practice of early marriage.

6.3 Recommendations
Enhancing gender equality in not an easy task and gender inequality cannot be tackled by education alone. However in order to enhance gender equality in education there is a need for significant shifts in national education policies and priorities. That is why a multifaceted intervention is required in order to work at multiple levels of the education system. The ultimate challenge is for all the stakeholders to remain engaged to a systematic effort that combines interventions in overlapping strategic areas and promotes gender equality and tackles with the reproduction of gender inequality, the influence of family socioeconomic background on school experience, attainment and achievement. Further, recommendations are being suggested (Table 8):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Recommended Interventions</th>
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Table 8: Challenges and recommended interventions
### N° 1: Lack of gender equality teaching
which leads to:

- lack of discourse on gender equality topics
- lack of gender sensitive school materials

**a)** revision of school materials in which the male and female characters appear to the same extend with the same frequency, at the same hierarchical positions and in non-stereotypical roles

**b)** capacity building for teachers, focusing on practical pedagogical practices and materials for gender responsive pedagogy and responses to students’ challenges

**c)** integrate themes on gender and gender equality into preschool, primary and secondary curricula

**d)** ensure sanctions for teachers and principals responsible for gender biased behavior

### N° 2: Gender disparities in secondary education
which lead to:

- the reproduction of gender inequalities
- segregation of girls
- poverty

**a)** imposition of sanctions on parents for the non-registration of their daughters to compulsory education

**b)** integrate clear and concrete students’ support policies into school support measures and regulations

**c)** enhance and implement support for teachers in rural and remote areas

**d)** continue collecting reliable, detailed sex-disaggregated student-teacher data

**e)** ensure regular, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of national education policy implementation

**f)** reinforcement of PEM’s actions

**g)** remedial education for the improvement of academic performance

**h)** provision of incentives to girls graduates related to professional opportunities

### N° 3: Social and cultural constraints
which lead to:

- high dropout rates
- poor academic achievement

**a)** sensitize students, parents and community leaders about gender equality in education and the value of education

**b)** working to analyze and address socio-cultural barriers by working with Parent Associations to identify and find locally appropriate ways to dismantle obstacles that prevent girls from going to and remaining in school
c) building the capacity of Parent Teachers Associations to support school communities more effectively

d) consider regional realities and challenges in the development of policy strategies and indicators

e) enhance communication between teachers, parents and students

Yet, the recommended interventions above constitute a rather general framework. The obstacles, constraints and challenges could only be confronted with specific and concrete actions especially designed to this particular setting.

Underlying causes of gender inequality are diverse and interconnected. These causes can be broadly grouped into education system challenges and community level challenges. The lack of gender responsive pedagogy and gender sensitive teaching and learning material not only fails to raise awareness among students upon gender inequalities but contributes to the perpetuation of misconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices. Areas of fruitful action can include: institutional changes, specific interventions, partnerships, government commitment and responsibility and finally adequate and sustainable financing.

More precisely, there is a need for institutional changes such as reform of teacher-training courses to increase gender awareness on teaching, learning methods, gender responsive school environment and finally how to become themselves gender sensitive teachers.

Moreover specific interventions are needed in order to remove the barriers to girls’ access to education. Such interventions might include the imposition of sanctions for the non-registration of girls into compulsory education, clear and concrete regulations and policies that protect and support girls’ academic enrollment and participation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure policy implementation.

Partnerships constitute a prerequisite in order to transform cultural norms, attitudes and practices. The openness of formal and informal education to the local community and the close partnership between parents and schools will result into a variety of positive outcomes, such as raising awareness among parents, better attitudes towards school, low absenteeism and dropping out. Increased parental engagement in their daughters’ education will create a supportive learning environment for their children at home. There should be also partnerships between schools, students, community organizations and parents and teachers associations.
**Government commitment and responsibility** are of crucial importance for shaping, integrating and reinforcing policies into the public education system.

**Adequate and sustainable financing** is substantial for achieving gender parity in compulsory education. Spending on education includes financing the educational institutions such as universities, schools, ministries and other agencies and services. The funding of education can originate from the public, the private sector or can be private funds publicly subsided. Latest data reveal that the expenditure in 2000 was covered by 93.8% by the public sector while only 6.2% originated by the private sector (OECD, 2011). As a result of the financial and economic crisis, public finances are under great pressure. In 2011-12, more than 5% cuts in the educational sector were observed in Greece (EACEA, European Commission, & Eurydice 2013). Given the gloomy outlook of the economic situation and the acute need for additional resources in order to ensure that educational opportunities and outcomes are equitable, the private sector can be seen as a potential alternative source of finance. Ensuring that resources are spent effectively is just as vital. Therefore there is need to monitor how the resources are developed, planned and used.

### 6.4 Conclusions

Ultimately, taking the findings of the study into consideration, we hold the view that the realization of equality in and through education is still illusive and that the interrelation of economic, social and cultural capital in shaping girls future is still a paramount determinant almost half a century after Bourdieu first articulated the notion of social and cultural capital in 1986. However, it is clearly evident that new perceptions and identities are negotiated. The change of orientation of the Greek politics towards the Muslim minority which allowed for reforms and initiatives, the PEM’s actions alongside with the overall changes of modernization, signify education as an indispensable prerequisite, and no longer intangible, for the improvement of girls’ lives.

Also, it is important to keep in mind Sharp’s view “it is through budgets that policies and programs are taken beyond paper promises and put into practice” (as cited in UNESCO, 2010 p. 2). Today, Greece is hit by a severe financial crisis with an immense impact on the educational sector and the state pursues policies that constitute a backlash to gender equality. Nevertheless, in a broader sense, education is an individual, family responsibility but state has the overall responsibility to ensure an equitable education to all children.

The limitations identified in the study arise out suggestions that on the one hand encourage the replication of the research and also expand the investigation to include girls
who managed to complete compulsory and progress to higher education. Moreover, a research that includes Pomak, Romani and Turkish students at all three prefectures of Thrace would be very interesting since it could unveil interesting processes and specific attributes related to geographical and other social dimensions which underlie the phenomenon of gender inequality and which will eventually lead to entirely new avenues in the future. Finally, it is important to highlight that in the case of Muslim minority in Greece, the offer of equal educational opportunities and the integration into the society will not only benefit the minority girls but also Thrace and the Greek society since it constitutes a human right and a development multiplier as well.
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Appendix A: Teacher’s Questionnaire

Dear participant,

This study serves the purpose of studying the perceptions of teachers of minority students about the topic of gender equality. The information gathered, will be analyzed and compared by the research for the purpose of writing a Master’s thesis at the Institute of international Education(IIE) at Stockholm University.

All permissions to conduct this study have been attained. All questionnaires will be anonymous and all rules of privacy and anonymity will be kept. A participant may withdraw his/her answer at any given time.

Please make sure you answer the questions as accurately as possible and that you leave no blanks. This will only take you 10 minutes.

Thank you for your participation

Eleftheria Koniari

1. What is your age:

☐ 21-30 years old ☐ 31-40 years old ☐ 41-50 years old
☐ 51-60 years old ☐ over 61 years old

2. What is your gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Are you a member of:

☐ Muslim Minority ☐ Majority

4. What is the level of your education:

☐ 4-year Bachelor Degree ☐ Master’s Degree ☐ Ph. D
☐ 2-year degree from the Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki
☐ Other ........................................................................

5. How long have you been working as a teacher:
6. How do you define the term “gender equality” in education?

7. What is the most significant contribution of the Project for Reform in the Education of Muslim Children (PEM) for the empowerment of girls?

8. In your view, what are the challenges that PEM is facing?

9. How often do you discuss about gender equality topics during the lesson?

   1. Very often  
   2. Quite often  
   3. Often  
   4. Almost never  
   5. Never

10. Could you provide an example?

11. If yes, the discussions usually begin from:

   - Me  
   - Students  
   - Both me and students

12. Who dominates more in the everyday interactions?

   - The girls  
   - The boys  
   - Both boys-girls

13. Do you believe that school books and instructional materials reflect gender stereotypes?

   1. A lot  
   2. Quite a lot  
   3. Considerably  
   4. Almost not at all  
   5. Not at all

14. To what extent do you believe the school books and instructional material
15. Do students express stereotypical views?


16. If yes, could you give an example?

................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................

17. Which, according to your opinion, is the best way to promote and enhance gender equality in education?

................................................................................................................................
................................................................................................................................

18. Have you ever taken part in conferences, seminars with gender equality as the main subject?


19. If no, are you interested to take part in courses that could help you implement a more gender sensitive teaching:

Appendix B: Students’ Questionnaire

Dear student,

This study serves the purpose of studying the perceptions of minority students in the topic of gender equality. The information gathered, will be analyzed and compared by the research for the purpose of writing a Master’s thesis at the Institute of international Education(IIE) at Stockholm University.

All permissions to conduct this study have been attained. All questionnaires will be anonymous and all rules of privacy and anonymity will be kept. A participant may withdraw his/her answer at any given time.

Please make sure you answer the questions as accurately as possible and that you leave no blanks. This will only take you 10 minutes.

Thank you for your participation

Eleftheria Koniari

1. What is your father’s profession?

............................................................................................................................................

2. What is your mother’s profession?

............................................................................................................................................

3. What is the level of your father’s education?

☐ Has not completed primary education
☐ Primary education ☐ secondary education ☐ vocational education ☐ university education

4. What is the level of your mother’s education?

☐ Has not finished primary education
☐ Primary education ☐ Secondary education ☐ Vocational education ☐ University education

5. You have completed primary education at:

| 86 |
6. You have attended:
- Remedial courses of Greek language in Primary school
- Remedial courses of Greek language and others courses in secondary education
- Centers Program Support (KESPEM)

7. The Project for Reform in the Education of Muslim Children (PEM), mostly helped you in:

8. If you could change something in the PEM, what would that be?

9. School’s education is important for your family:
1. A lot  
2. Quite a lot  
3. Considerably  
4. Almost not at all  
5. Not at all

Please justify why:

10. Your school progress is mostly affected by:

A) Your family
1. A lot  
2. Quite a lot  
3. Considerably  
4. Almost not at all  
5. Not at all

B) Your teachers
1. A lot  
2. Quite a lot  
3. Considerably  
4. Almost not at all  
5. Not at all

C) Your friends
1. A lot  
2. Quite a lot  
3. Considerably  
4. Almost not at all  
5. Not at all

D) Your grades
1. A lot  
2. Quite a lot  
3. Considerably  
4. Almost not at all  
5. Not at all

E) Yourself


Other: ........................................................................................................................................

11. What is the biggest challenge/problem you have experienced or you are experiencing at school?

.....................................................................................................................................................
.....................................................................................................................................................

12. During school lessons, you discuss about gender equality topics:


13. If yes, could you give an example?

.....................................................................................................................................................
.....................................................................................................................................................

Thank you
Appendix C: Focus Group Interview Guide

KEY POINTS:

- Reasons for high school dropout
- Recommendations to reduce the phenomenon
- Expectations for the future

1. Which one in your opinion is the main reason why girls are dropping out from school? Why the high dropout percentages do not apply in the case of boys?

2. Research has shown that the transition from elementary to high school is critical for the girls. Why do you think this is happening?

3. What should be done or change so that all girls finish the nine-year compulsory education?

4. Do you believe that the place of residence affects the education of students? If so, justify your opinion

5. Do you believe that the economic crisis has an impact on the school career of students and if so, in what way does it happen?

6. Which are the expectations and dreams for the future?
Dear parent,

With this letter I would like to inform you about the research which is taking place in your daughter's school. The title of the research study is "New perspectives on gender equality. The case of Muslim minority in Thrace". The information gathered will be compiled, analyzed and compared by the researcher for the purpose of writing a Master’s thesis at the Institute of International Education (IIE) at Stockholm University, Sweden. The study aims to examine the relationship between education and gender and includes questions such as how important is education for your family, if discussions on gender equality are promoted in the classroom, etc. The participants after they decide freely whether they would like to participate, they will provide the researcher with responses through questionnaires and focus group interviews. The interviews will be conducted in the form of group discussion in an informal style with predefined questions. The size of the team will be the girls students of the class.

The questionnaires are anonymous and all rules for privacy will be respected. Participants have the right to withdraw their answers at any time. Additionally, after the transcription of recordings, the audio findings will be destroyed and will not be used for any other purpose.

If you have any question please feel free to contact me through the school principal.

Thank you very much in advance for your support

Sincerely,

Eleftheria Koniari

I agree to my daughter taking part in the above mentioned research with the title: "New perspectives on gender equality. The case of Muslim minority in Thrace."

Child's Name: ........................................

Signature of parent / guardian:..........................

Date:........................................