

## CP AND TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF A POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM (P.S.P.) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CRETE, GREECE

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### Abstract

The Postgraduate Studies Program (P.S.P.) *Educational Sciences, Critical Pedagogy and Teacher Education* was established in 2017–18 in the Department of Primary Education of University of Crete. It is affiliated with the Centre for the Study and Research of the History of Education and the Teaching Profession (C.S.R.H.E.T.P.) and remains active to this day (*contact: kemeiede@edc.uoc.gr*). No comparable postgraduate program currently exists in Greece that addresses the same subject matter – critical pedagogy, activism, open-minded educators within the field of Educational Sciences.

**Keywords:** *CP, teacher education, Crete.*

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### 1. Subject of the P.S.P.

The focus of the P.S.P. is the production and dissemination of scholarly knowledge in the fields of Educational Sciences, CP (CP) and Teacher Education (TE). Through a combination of academic knowledge, hands-on experience, and practical expertise, the program prepares postgraduate students with both theoretical foundations and metacognitive skills. It serves as both a conceptual framework and a practical tool for contemporary education, addressing the pressing need to redefine educational goals in response to the socio-political, economic, demographic, and cultural challenges of the 21st century.

The program demonstrates its impact on both formal and non-formal education through lectures, workshops, seminars, and field visits. Grounded in the theories of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, Antonia Darder, and other scholars, CP fosters a more humane and just society. It emphasizes educational and social inequalities, supports marginalized groups, and links theory with praxis, especially in the context of teacher education.

Key themes include innovation, empathy, democracy, social justice, inclusivity, the pedagogy of love, deliberation, gender issues, human-technology interaction, and the "missing voices" of contemporary societies. These elements highlight the essential role of teacher education and their transformative role of educators in our digital era, as critical thinkers. Activists, and open-minded human educators.

#### 1.1. Objectives of the P.S.P.

- To equip students with the necessary knowledge, experience, and skills in Educational Sciences, CP, and Teacher Education to enable them to pursue professional careers in both formal and non-formal education grounded in CP principles.
- To enable students to critically connect theory, research, and practice within educational and social contexts in pursuit of professional and/or academic excellence.
- To promote international collaboration, the exchange of best practices, critical thinking, and the cultivation of humanistic values through a broad-based curriculum.

#### 1.2. The philosophy of the P.S.P.

The philosophy, objectives and intended learning outcomes of the curriculum – as well as the teaching methods, assessment strategies, and course content – are designed to support student-centered learning. The program adheres to the principles of critical lifelong learning and open/distance education.

### **1.3. Educational methods, techniques and tools**

The P.S.P. employs a variety of educational methods, including experiential and critical-practical workshops, Art-Based Educational Research (ABER), fieldwork, and educational visits to institutions engaged with cutting-edge technologies and to sites serving vulnerable populations (e.g., prisons, Roma camps, and refugee centres). Workshops are conducted both on-site and remotely.

### **1.4. Learning outcomes**

- Familiarity with contemporary challenges in schooling and teacher education within the framework of CP.
- Development of critical psycho-pedagogical, research, and instructional competencies aligned with transformative educational paradigms.
- Capacity to analyse and interpret current ideological, political, demographic, social, cultural, economic, and educational issues in global contexts.

### **1.5. Program structure**

The curriculum is structured into three semesters (two semesters of coursework and one for thesis writing). Classes are held on Saturdays and include seminars, workshops, and lectures. The third semester is dedicated to the completion of a compulsory thesis. Instruction is supported by a blended learning approach. To graduate, students must earn 90 ECTS credits.

### **1.6. Examinations**

Students may choose among the following assessment options for each course: a) written examination, b) oral examination, or) optional assignment.

### **1.7. Thesis**

The thesis must align with the goals of the program, focusing on Educational Sciences and CP in relation to Teacher Education. Interdisciplinary research methodologies grounded in critical and postmodern epistemologies are used, including ABER.

## **2. Academic year 2024-2025**

### **- Winter semester**

*Teacher Education in Historical, Philosophical, and Metacognitive Pedagogical Contexts*

*Learning Theories, Adult Education, and Social Intervention*

*The Teaching Profession and CP: Gendered Achievement and Postmodern Trends*

### **- Spring semester**

*Principles of Psycho-pedagogical Research and Didactic Communication in the 21st Century, Exercise I*

*Professional Development of Teachers through Creative and Humanistic Pedagogy*

*Non-Formal and Informal Educational Structures and Lifelong Learning*

*Art, Teacher Education, and the De-Schooling of Knowledge*

### **2.1. Employment opportunities**

Graduates of the P.S.P. are often experienced professionals in public education but may also pursue careers in private education (e.g., Second Chance Schools, Vocational Training Institutes), adult education, training programs, or curriculum development. They may work in museums, NGOs, public and private sector organizations, or civil society bodies involved in education.

### **2.2. Teaching staff**

Courses are delivered by professors, researchers, external collaborators, and Ph.D. holders. Internationally recognized scholars are frequently invited as guest lecturers. Courses are conducted in Greek, except for guest lectures by international scholars (e.g., Michael Apple from the USA, Antonia Darder from the USA, Tien Hui Chiang from Taiwan, Hermendidle Rwantabagu from Burundi, Wang Disngua from China).

## **3. Conclusion**

According to the internal evaluation conducted by the University of Crete's Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP), the P.S.P. emphasizes:

- Student-centered, interactive, and critical-practical education

- Knowledge co-construction through experiential learning
  - Diverse educational environments and field-based learning (e.g., Museums, Schools, Prisons, Refugee Centers, Roma Camps, University Labs, and Public Spaces)
  - Multidisciplinary teaching approaches—each course is co-taught by multiple instructors
  - Flexible assessment methods, with students selecting their preferred form of evaluation
  - Artistic and educational projects with impact on the academic and broader community
  - International dimension through guest lectures and events
  - Global academic engagement through symposia, workshops, and reflective online forums
  - Development of alternative teaching materials and audiovisual content promoting CP
  - Integration with current research methodologies including ABER and other innovative approaches
- The program recently evaluated by an external international review board as “fully compliant”.

In conclusion, our experience with this P.S.P. in CP and Teacher Education demonstrates its potential to contribute meaningfully to innovation, transformation, and critical learning methodologies in both education and society in the 21st century and promote the role of teachers as critical pedagogues, activists and open-minded educators. This ongoing work on creating an environment that embodies the theoretical, ethical, political, and educational commitments of critically democratic practices provides a model of what needs to be done now and in the future. It does indeed give us "hope."

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