



## PEDAGOGICAL REALISM TO THE ERGOGRAPHY OF KOSTAS CHRISTAKIS

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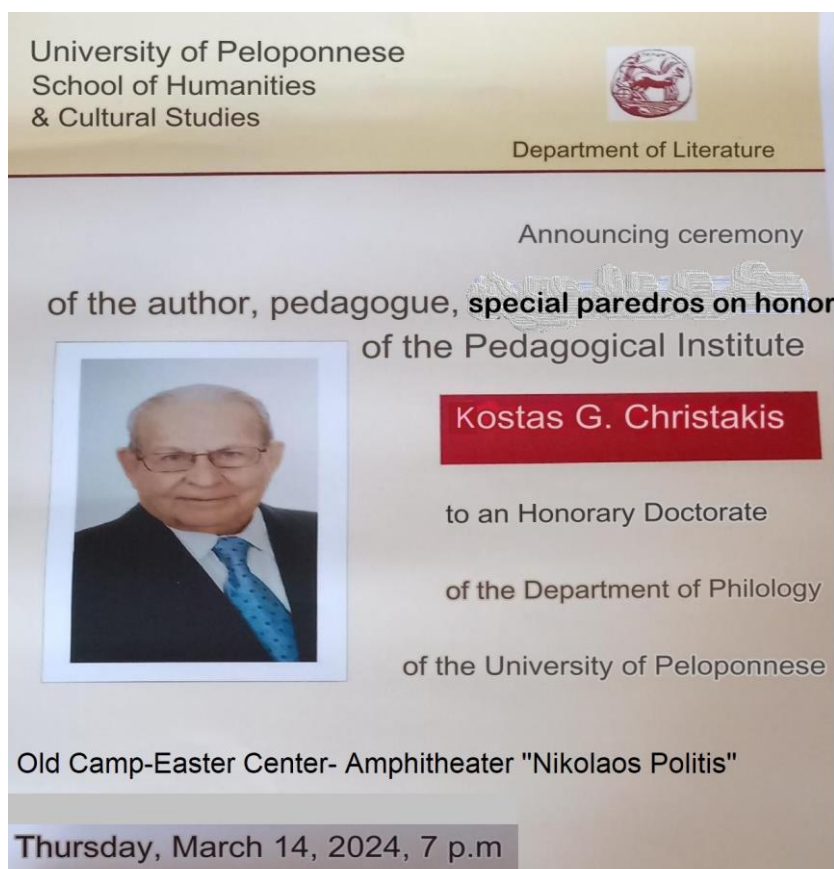
### **Abstract:**

The pedagogical realism to the ergography of Kostas Christakis is highlighted by his timeless views on inclusive special education and training, which he has held for more than fifty years [1970-2024]. Pedagogical realism emerges from reading his ergography regarding practices of intervention for primary and secondary school. Kostas G. Christakis was born and raised in Crete (Myrtos Ierapetras, 1937) and lives in Chalandri, Attica. He is one of the most eminent pedagogues and scholars in the Greek in the field of special education. After his basic studies at the Pedagogical Academy of Heraklion, Crete, continued his studies with post-educational and educational programs in Greece and abroad. From an early age, he turned his interest and attention to the education of children with special difficulties and needs (special education). His work during his many years of work as a professor at all levels of education is rich not only in volume, but also in quality. On the occasion of the increasing school violence (Law 5029 2023) and the difficulties of teachers in supporting students with special needs, we approached the pedagogical texts of Kostas Christakis in our present study. The purpose of this paper is to present the positive and optimistic pedagogical applications that have been implemented with successful results for all. This is how the author proposed the award of an honorary doctorate. So, on Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at 12:30 in the Conference Room of the Department of Philology (Old Camp Building - Eastern Centre, Kalamata), at the 12th meeting of the Academic Year 2022-2023 of the Assembly of the Department of Philology, one of the topics discussed was: Request for the recognition of Teacher and writer Kostas G. Christakis as an Honorary Doctor of the Department of Philology [see figures 1, 2]. More specifically and very briefly it is presented the pedagogical realism of Kostas Christakis has been mapped by his contribution to teaching programs and strategies in the neurodevelopmental areas of learning readiness (Ministry of Education-Pedagogical Institute 2009) and perspectives through neuropedagogy in the twenty-first century. Another important point that pedagogical realism runs through its work in all the context of the special education curriculum is the meaning of the decategorization of disabilities in life and perspective with new technologies. Finally, a point of reference for

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the promotion of pedagogical realism is the treatment and management of the complex cognitive, emotional and social difficulties of male and female students in the modern school. In closing, the contribution to the ergography of Kostas Christakis is underlined by the important consideration, according to which the interdisciplinary treatment of behaviour problems, in the modern school, gives precedence to the pedagogue. Christakis' legacy is that the teacher can design and implement realistic programs of teaching interventions that include behavioural goals with an emphasis on the linguistic understanding of rules and limits and the experiential expression of social skills.

**Keywords:** pedagogical realism, Kostas Christakis inclusive special education



**Figure 1:** The University of Peloponnese recognized Kostas Christakis for his contribution to education

## 1. Introduction

The reference to Kostas Christakis, the work at the Ministry of Education (1971 – 1981) (Law 1143 1981) as well as the teaching work and post-graduate study programs as well as the Post-Teaching of Special Education at the Maraslio Didaskalio has occupied me since the eighties (Law 1566 1985). However, it took me some time to internalize the importance of his tenure at the Pedagogical Institute [1990-2000] and his contribution to the Framework of Analytical Program Special Education (FAPSE) (Ministry of Education-Pedagogical Institute 2009). The books for the students, teachers and parents that I teach

to the students of the Faculty of Humanities and Cultural Studies at the University of Peloponnese and their impact on the academic subjects were the motivation for the writing of this tribute. The pedagogical realism of Kostas Christakis in inclusive education is highlighted by his contribution to the codification and decoding of the educational culture for people with disabilities and special educational needs [SENs], but also in his decisive contribution to the understanding of terms and definitions. He participated as a teaching professor in the Academic and Professional Upgrading of Primary Education Staff program at the Pedagogical Department of the University of Athens.

He highlighted with pedagogical realism the educational model of special education and training [SET] (Christakis 1978) by "translating" the medical descriptions and social perceptions of that time for the people who are today called disabled people, people with special educational needs [SENs] (Law 2817 2000) and people with specific learning difficulties [SLDs]. In the seventies, they were described as:

*"persons who, due to organic, mental or social causes, show delays, disabilities or disturbances in the general psycho-somatic structure or in the individual functions and to the degree that does not allow, hinders or seriously hinders the monitoring of the provided in the normal persons with general or professional education, as well as the professional rehabilitation and self-sufficient social integration of them."* (Law 1143 1981)

Pedagogical realism in inclusive education (Christakis, 2000) was highlighted also by his teaching work - now thirty years old - in the retraining of teachers for special education at Maraslio Didaskalio Primary Education of the Pedagogical Department of the University of Athens, where teachers attended, after exams from all educational regions of the country (Christakis, 2006). The perspective of anthropocentric meaning-making changed the educational conceptions for the deviant people (Drossinou-Korea 2017, a), people who suffered from diseases that required long-term treatments in nursing institutions, clinics or preventories. But also about people who showed partial learning difficulties or were *"school maladjusted or school immature"*, and any person of infancy, childhood or adolescence who presented a personality disorder as described in the normative texts of that period.

He worked with pedagogical realism at the Ministry of Education for ten years (1971 – 1981) with the aim of studying and promoting SEN, and is considered a pioneer of special education in Greece (Christakis, 2013, c, 175-184). With his presence, he contributed to the formation of a series of theoretical issues related to Special Education, Special Vocational Training, Employment and Social Care of people with disabilities and special educational needs (Christakis, 2013, b, 127-172). All this was reflected in Law 1143/1981. This is the first post-war special education law. Christakis' contribution to the realistically understanding of terms and definitions from teachers was decisive for the meaning of disabilities and SENs (Christakis, 1996). Particularly, the influences of pedagogical realism thought in this normative text of the law, for the first time, include educational legislation for people such as the blind, the deaf, the hard of hearing, the

physically disabled, the epileptic, the leprosy, the "mentally retarded". During this period, Christakis has taught the educational care for people with speech and language disorders, people who suffer from mental illnesses, who are inmates of special institutions such as asylums child care centres, but also minors who have been referred to therapeutic or "*another appropriate penitentiary*" (Law 1143 1981), (Law 2817 2000).

## 2. Pedagogical Realism in the Teaching Projects

During his many years of career, he has maintained a cooperative relationship with the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and has taught in many educational programs and seminars, which he organized himself, the Ministry of Education, University and other bodies. He participated as a teaching professor in the Program of Academic and Professional Upgrading of Primary Education Staff of the Pedagogical Department of the University of Athens. He taught in the Master's program of School Psychology of the Department of Psychology, School of Philosophy of the University of Athens.

Important was the help he offered to the Transnational Program of Postgraduate Studies "Development of teachers' skills in special education and training for the management of problems for students with complex cognitive, emotional and social difficulties and their families" (Drossinou Korea, 2020, b) of the Faculty of Humanities and Cultural Studies of the University of Peloponnese and the Department of Psychology of the University of Turin (Ministerial Decision No. 54929/Z1/8-4-2019 2019).

What marked his pedagogical realism to the ergography of Kostas Christakis is his teaching work - over thirty years - in the retraining of teachers for special education, at the Maraslio Didaskalio Primary Education of the Pedagogical Department of the University of Athens. In these courses, he highlighted the philosophy of the special educational programs that echoed the all-round, harmonious and balanced development of the intellectual and psycho-physical powers of the students, so that, regardless of gender and origin, they have the opportunity to develop educationally and socially and to live creatively in the degree that their capabilities allow.

The realistic pedagogical consideration of individuality was a central core of his lectures, beyond "*the type and degree of deviation and the consequent special needs of each individual*". As a special education teacher, he passed on to teachers his vision for the human-centered model of education. He inspired his students and instilled in them high values such as: teaching their students to be free, responsible, democratic citizens, to defend the country and democracy, to show love for man, life and nature and to be possessed by ecological consciousness (Christakis, 2011).

He contributed to the improvement of the curriculum by adding new teaching subjects from time to time and connecting the theoretical knowledge with the teaching practice, by establishing the practical training of the retrained in special education schools.

In 2001, he pioneered the educational treatment of children and adolescents with behavioral problems by recognizing individual and social identity, publishing the book

*"Behavioral problems at school age"* (Christakis, 2006). He shared the educational, pedagogical ways by proposing the psycho-pedagogical management that harmoniously cultivates the spirit and the body, the inclinations, interests and skills of students with special needs. At the University of Peloponnese, at the event of its valorization, in his speech, he referred to the topic *"General education and special education: two sides of the same coin - trends and perspective"*, (Christakis, 2024). Excerpts from his speech are quoted, which modestly refer to events that are remembered as milestones in the course of special education in Greece.

*"In Greece, the development of special education, affected by the pathogenicity and social upheavals that characterize the political and intellectual life of the country throughout the 20th century, simply confirms what one of the most important Greek educators to date said, Dimitris Glinos, that "without basic changes in society there are no changes in education"*.

*Some efforts that had been made from 1905 until the 1930s had a personal nature and did not have satisfactory continuity, due to the political instability that existed during this period. A first substantial effort made in 1937 by Roza Imbrioti, with the establishment of the first "Abnormal Children" school in Kaisariani, was stopped by the war of 1940. After the war, the school functioned, but did not have the expected continuity, due to political conflicts and civil strife. Also, an important effort made in the 1950s at the Center for Mental Hygiene with Kalantzis and Potamianou, which although a woman of the palace utilized the leftist Kalantzis, for the same reasons, remained within the narrow limits of the Center and was not utilized in public education. Until then, everything that was done was done by the Ministry of Health Welfare and had a welfare content and a medical-centric character. The Ministry of Education was defiantly absent.*

*This is how we got to 1969, when the first "Office of Special Education" was established in the Ministry of Education. Since then, the modern history of special education essentially begins. At the beginning of 1971, after a second retraining and a television interview on the then Armed Forces Television (YENED), I was called to the Ministry of Education for special education issues of the sub-phenomenon, to study and systematically organize special education."*

The excerpts show the difficulties in matters of special education and special vocational training in the historical path (Christakis, 1978, 2000). These subjects are counted among the basic educational services which are attached to the modern identity of inclusive special education and training (Christakis, 2006, pp. 16-72). When in fact these services are provided by the State free of charge to public schools but also to private schools under conditions (Christakis, 2023, pp. 221-260). The realistic educational path of Christakis for more than fifty years, recognized the organizational and operational difficulties of special education. Tried with a series of articles in scientific journals to define the field of special education in relation to society and the other specialties such as speech therapists. With his tireless efforts, he gave meaning to the realistic pedagogical view of the inclusive education of "deviant individuals". In which special educational

programs are applied based on the type and degree of handicap, emphasizing their hidden potential. He clarified the concepts of "educable" and "professional and social inclusion", with emphasis the social, economic needs, the cultural conditions and environmental requirements. With law 2817, the year of 2000 special classes were established in regular schools, and they were renamed from special classes to integration classes, because, after his research, he found that the term "special" class was repulsive for parents (Law 2817 2000).

### **3. His presence in the Pedagogical Institute**

In 1985, with the law 1566 "*Structure and operation of Primary and Secondary Education*" and with article 23, the Pedagogical Institute was re-established 4379/1964 (Government Gazette 182), and the Center for Educational Studies and Training was abolished. In the same law, among other things, the position of special education advisor is provided for (Law 1566 1985).

In 1990, Kostas Christakis joined the staff of the Pedagogical Institute [P.I.] with the rank of Special Assistant, equivalent to the rank of the Assistant Professor of Higher Education, where he was responsible for the further study and promotion of special education and training, according to chapter I', article 32 of the law 1566, the year of 1985. Into these describes for the first time the purpose and form of "special education" in the context of the purposes of primary and secondary education. Evaluating the scope and seriousness of the field of special education, he proposed and founded the Department of Special Education at the Pedagogical Institute (Law 2817/2000), whose organization and staff composition he determined himself.

The expertise of Kostas Christakis at all levels of the educational hierarchy, who served as a teacher, Inspector, School Counselor and Special Principal of P.I., was valuable for special education and special vocational training between the years 1970 to 2000.

At the Pedagogical Institute, Kostas Christakis, with realism, anthropocentric understanding and fairness, contributed to the design and implementation of special educational programs, in combination with other scientific and social measures. They aimed at the all-round and effective development and utilization of students' potential and abilities with SENs, their inclusion in the production process and their mutual acceptance in society as a whole section. The pedagogical consideration in these contains a detailed description of all the pedagogical methods, educational materials, collaborators, and participants who facilitate the individuals. Christakis taught the teachers with pedagogical realism the protocols used in SET, beginning from the data acquisition, techniques and procedures, and investigated teaching parameters such as the action in teaching research (Drossinou-Korea, 2017, c).

#### **4. Discussion of his Contribution to Certain Areas of special education**

Despite the fact that it is difficult to choose among Christakis' oeuvre some works that are distinguished for greater or lesser realism, we will try to refer to some pedagogical considerations by concluding with the particular points. The first concluding point of pedagogical realism in his ergography refers to the formulation of the Framework of Analytical Program of Special Education (FAPSE). During his tenure at the P.I., he was involved in two important projects. The first concerned the FAPSE and its publication by Presidential Decree 301 the year of 1996. The pedagogical considerations, according to the human-centered philosophy of FAPSE, emerge, which refer to the de-categorization and de-aging of individuals with particularities. The second consideration in the continuum of philosophy, law 2817/2000, is concerned with the modernization of education for people with SENs and its inclusion.

The second conclude point of his ergography refers to the description of the definition of SENs and the diagnosis with pedagogical realism. The contribution of Kostas Christakis to the pedagogical description of the definition of people with SENs is decisive for their educational course. His pedagogical considerations about the learning difficulties and adaptation are significant emphasizing due to physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional and social characteristics, such as mental deficiency or immaturity, particularly serious vision problems (blind, amblyopic) or hearing (deaf, hard of hearing). His educational contribution for the serious neurological or orthopedic defects or health problems, speech and language problems characterized from pedagogical realism. Finally, he has supported the teaching ways for the students, who are ascertained with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, but also complex cognitive, emotional and social difficulties, autism and other developmental disorders and special mental abilities and talents. He promoted the multidisciplinary diagnosis by the Centers for Diagnosis, Evaluation and Support, which today these operate as interdisciplinary assessment and advisory support centers.

The third concluding point of his ergography refers to the use of structured special programs with pedagogical realism. Kostas Christakis, for the first time raised questions about the preparation and implementation of structured special programs and teaching methods. The pedagogical considerations of teaching materials, as well as all kinds of facilities and ergonomic arrangements, complete by the pedagogical and psychological support, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, (Christakis, 2011, 2013, pp . 63-76, 2023) and their social and counseling work.

In law 2817 of 2000, it is defined that a necessary qualification for the placement of educational and special educational staff for deaf and hard of hearing is the knowledge of Greek sign language.

The fourth point of his ergography refers to the organization of special professional education and training with pedagogical realism. His pedagogical consideration for the Vocational schools is defined with the Special Vocational Education and Training Workshops in the secondary (Drossinou Korea, 2022).

The fifth concluding point of his ergography refers to the teacher's and students' books for students, teachers and parents who have written with pedagogical realism. His contribution to the theoretical reflection of special education and his bibliographic documentation have opened the way for fruitful discussions on the issues of inclusive education, in syllabi. This is declared by the provision of special education at home, family support, specially protected apprenticeship and production workshops, special vocational training "*at any place and time*" (Law 2817, 2000, Law 3699, 2008; (Christakis, 2023, 2000).

The sixth endpoint of his ergography refers to general education. Christakis's interest was not limited to special education. Equally important is his contribution to general education. In recent years, with pedagogical realism, has been persistently trying to make people realize that technological, scientific, economic and social developments which these have created new data. His pedagogical consideration emphasizes the evolution of the educational system and notes the transfer of the meaning of school' knowledge-centered to the human-centered model is required.

## 5. Conclusion

Closing the realistic points from his ergography, we could no less note pedagogical realism in issues such as "The child and the adolescent in the family and at school". He has argued that the family and the school are two interdependent institutions which significantly influence the development and adaptation of the child. In addition, the points from the books "Teaching approach to children and youth with moderate and severe learning difficulties", "Teaching programs and strategies for people with special needs and severe learning difficulties" and the book "Behavioral problems of children and adolescents" which have just been released, occupies an important place in his writing with pedagogical realism texts.

With his ergography and counseling work, he continuously supports educational intervention in dealing with behavior problems at school. Based on his constant perception that special education belongs to the core of general education, although from a point on, his main work was special education, he did not stop dealing with general education as well for the meaning of inclusion. He always believed that for the successful promotion of school integration, a necessary condition is the information, awareness and training of all general education teachers. Kostas Christakis has never stopped intervening to this day with useful comments and suggestions included in his suggestions at conferences and in his articles in newspapers and magazines. He is strongly concerned about the phenomena of violence, crime that are observed in society today. A large part of his texts'ergography refers to the identification and interpretation of these phenomena and persistently proposes the revision and modernization of the educational system.





Figure 2: Kostas Christakis in the lecture at the Nikolaos Politis amphitheater

## 6. Acknowledgements

Thanks to Professor Costas Christakis himself for the many hours he spent in our private discussions on certain issues of his ergography work and his issues of lectures. Also, I am very grateful to the collaborators who studied the ergography texts from the books of the author Kostas Christakis and raised questions about contemporary pedagogical problems, writing the texts that follow in this tribute. Finally, noted, that the tribute to the pedagogue Kostas Christakis has not received funding from anybody.

## 7. Acronyms

- Framework of Analytical Program of Special Education (FAPSE).
- Special Educational Needs {SENs}
- Special Education and Training (SET)
- Pedagogical Institute [P.I.]

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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