

# Early educational quests and pedagogical questionings of Ioannis Kapodistrias (1814-1828)

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**Résumé :** *Ioannis Kapodistrias a montré un grand intérêt en organisant l'éducation grecque durant toute sa vie entière et s'est consacré lui-même ainsi que sa propriété pour imposer la langue démotique et pour implanter des valeurs morales aux jeunes étudiants grecs. Ses idées résultent de sa personnalité et des relations qu'il a formées avec Pestalozzi et Fellenberg, deux grands philosophes du 18ème-19ème siècle qui ont inspiré Ioannis Kapodistrias avec leurs vues pédagogiques innovatrices et les méthodes qu'ils ont appliquées aux écoles qu'ils ont fondées.*

**Mots-clés :** *Ioannis Kapodistrias, Éducation grecque, Fellenberg, Pestalozzi*

**Abstract:** *Ioannis Kapodistrias showed great interest in organizing the Greek education throughout his whole life and dedicated himself and his property to impose the demotic language and to implant moral values to the Greek young students. His ideas result from his personality and the relations he formed with both Pestalozzi and Fellenberg, two great philosophers of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century who inspired Ioannis Kapodistrias with their innovative pedagogical views and the methods they applied to the schools they founded.*

**Key words:** *Ioannis Kapodistrias, Greek Education, Fellenberg, Pestalozzi*

Both education and the Greek language have very early become an important issue for Ioannis Kapodistrias, an “object for hard-fought struggle and wonderful dreams”, as he, himself, used to say. He first showed interest in education in 1802 as a state secretary in the Ionian Islands, when he worked with Georgios Motsenigos and Spyridon Theotokis on the organization of the education while he continued the drafting of the constitution of the state of Ionian Islands in 1803 he had been entrusted with by the Senate of the first Greek quasi-independent state. Ioannis Kapodistrias then instituted the obligatory operation of schools of primary education as well as the obligatory operation of a secondary school of high educational standards on all the Ionian Islands with a well prepared and well coordinated curriculum aiming at the restriction/reduction of illiteracy.

In the last article of the constitution Ioannis Kapodistrias stipulated expressly that the demotic Greek language would be the official language of the state not only in the primary and secondary levels of education but also in all its administrative sectors. The result of Kapodistrias' effort was the foundation of 40 primary schools on the Ionian Islands (Koukou, 1997: 432-434).

Even though the occupation of the Ionian Islands by France in 1809 turned him away from his previous occupation leading him first to the ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tsar Alexander A' and then to the Russian Embassy in Vienna, it did not, however, diminish his passion for the Greek education. In fact, his newly acquired position offered him the opportunity to care for the education of the Greek people living in Russia as well as for the foundation of communal schools while he shared his educational worries/quests with the Greek Metropolitane of Hungary-Wallachia Ignatios in their correspondence even when his diplomatic competence brought him to Switzerland in 1813-1814 for the settlement of the European issue regarding the detaching of Switzerland from the circle of French influence, the unification of the Swiss state as well as the grant of constitution to it (Koukou, 1997: 434-435).

Ioannis Kapodistrias did not plan to go to Switzerland, as it is clearly shown in the letter he sent to his father on January 1/13 1814 from Zurich, in which among other things he wrote: "I could never have foreseen that the year 1814 would have found me in Switzerland busy with affairs similar to a great extent to those I had occupied myself with at the dawn of my public career...". Nonetheless, while being in Switzerland, Kapodistrias contacted the counselor of the canton of Geneva Pictet de Rochemont and showed a great interest in the pedagogical methods of Pestalozzi, Vehrli and especially of the humanitarian educationalist and politician Fellenberg, one of Pestalozzi's students in Hofwyl (Evangelidis, 1936: 131, Koukou, 1962: 13-14, Vakalopoulos, 1975: 29).

In specific, Ioannis Kapodistrias formed close relations with both Pestalozzi and Fellenberg, and he had correspondence with both of them, with Pestalozzi from 1813 for a year and with Fellenberg from 1814 until 1819. Moreover, after the Greek revolution Kapodistrias visited the educational institutions both in Hofwyl repeatedly and in Yverdon once, excited with the innovative pedagogical views and the methods they applied, which, however, did not enjoy overall acceptance. The differences of the two educational models focused on the fact that Fellenberg was interested in a form of education that would put emphasis on the agricultural production through experimentation, while Pestalozzi cared for a form of education that would pay attention to the student through the agricultural production. Fellenberg considered that agriculture consisted the basis of education since it is a widespread productive activity, a systematic object of interest and perfection, a view that should not only be directly related to Pestalozzi's views, "...my sons, despite the fact that their spirit should receive the best cared nurture, should know how to cultivate the land, because I do not wish to create lazy citizens, but also broaden them" (Meletiadis, 1992: 48-60, Koukou-Valma-Pavlof, 1996: 37 and Pestalozzi, 1767).

Fellenberg's letter dated July 13, 1814 to Ioannis Kapodistrias makes it apparent that particular educational establishment was meant exclusively for wealthy young people. Fellenberg assured Kapodistrias that, despite the radical character of his educational system, the conservative leadership of Bern did not react to it, a fact that favored the increase in number of his teaching staff. He mentioned specifically the return of Johan Fr. Chr. Kortüm, a teacher of history of German descent, well-known for his progressive views, thus, dangerous according to the Swiss authorities, who, while in Paris had studied Greek and Latin manuscripts at the museums there. He also mentioned the employment of a new teacher for the school subjects of Drawing and Painting along with the impending employment of two new more teachers, one for the subject of Music (as a result the teachers of Music became three) and one for the subject of Language. After the employment of those three teachers, the teaching staff increased to fourteen teachers and such a number did not allow either for financial reduction or financial exemption to students (Koukou-Valma-Pavlof, 1996: 109-110).

In a letter that followed, dated April 1<sup>st</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> 1816, Kapodistrias suggested sending Fellenberg 10-12 wealthy young people of noble descent from Russia, where the demand for education was great, as well as an equal number of poor young people. He also asked Fellenberg to define the amount of money he needed for the extension of the foundation facilities. Moreover, he not only suggested that a studious young man, Dimitrios, study there, but he also mentioned his nephew for the same reason. Obviously the Swiss educators' establishment made a great impression throughout Europe and for this reason it attracted such distinguished personalities as those of Prince Wide's Children. For the same reason also Ioannis Kapodistrias, in almost every letter of his addressed to Fellenberg, expressed his deep desire Greek young people, eager to learn, to be offered the opportunity to study at this school, to be participants in the European pioneer methods applied at that establishment. Those methods were a combination of theoretical knowledge and (professional) vocational training with special emphasis on the agricultural sector, and educational aims that Ioannis Kapodistrias intended to carry to and apply in a future independent Greek state adjusting them to the needs of the state. He had already decided, as it has already been mentioned, to send a significant number of Greek students, eager to learn in order to be educated at Fellenberg's school in agriculture, commerce and martial arts after they had been taught the French and German language. Ioannis Kapodistrias emphasized the Greek students' need to be instructed there maintaining their religious and linguistic identity. In order to demonstrate how important such a necessity was he saw that a Greek orthodox church was built with money granted by the tsar despite the Catholics' reactions. Among the Greek students that were sent to that educational establishment were the Polilas brothers whose studies lasted two years and cost 500 florins for both of them. In order to be able to meet the students' financial needs Ioannis Kapodistrias founded an institute in Switzerland, the Society of friends of music, so that competent Greek people were offered the opportunity to study at the foreign universities in order then to become active, competent members of the government of the independent Greek state, when their services were required (Enepekidis, 1972: 23, Evangelidis, 1894: 32, Vakalopoulos, 1975: 29, Koukou, 1958: 26-28/ Koukou, 1997: 435).

In his letter of April 24<sup>th</sup> 1816 Ioannis Kapodistrias strongly recommended Prince Gregoire Gagarin to Fellenberg. The prince would visit Hofwyl in order to let his two sons study there. Finally in this letter of June 2<sup>nd</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> 1816 Kapodistrias requested his nephew, his sister's son, to be accepted at that school in order to be educated there. His nephew's financial support was undertaken both by G. Stavrou, a merchant in Vienna and by Ioannis Kapodistrias himself. He had high expectations regarding his nephew, greater, as it was proved, than the young man's abilities since his course of progress was not satisfactory. Ioannis Kapodistrias blamed his nephew's parents for his poor upbringing that resulted in his unsatisfactory course of progress and was seeking for ways and places where he could be properly educated. His continuous zeal regarding his nephew's education proves Ioannis Kapodistrias' interest in education and educational methods (Koukou, 1958: 29, Protopsaltis, 1961: 65-66).

Ioannis Kapodistrias adopted Fellenberg's educational programs enriched with elements of the method introduced by the British Lancaster and Bell. This method has become known in France due to the fact that the book by Alexander La Borde had been translated. Ioannis Kapodistrias was so excited with the views this book included that he asked his friend Alexandros Vasiliou to translate it in Greek. In the letter of December 14<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> 1815 sent to the Metropolitane of Hungary-Wallachia, Ignatios, among other things Kapodistrias expressed his dislike for the older pedagogical methods in use while he appreciated the methods of Fellenberg and Lancaster. He pointed out that his letter aimed at urging the Greek elders to send their children either to Fellenberg's educational establishment or to London to be taught the method of Lancaster in a practical manner (Vakalopoulos, 1975: 30 Dimaras, 1970: 55 Protopsaltis, 1961: 65-66).

From Fellenberg's letter of January 16<sup>th</sup> 1817 addressed to Ioannis Kapodistrias we are informed of the writing- dated in 1814- and the re-issuing of a memorandum referring to Fellenberg's school that had a great impact on the Europeans. The memorandum, presented the theoretical background of Fellenberg's conception. It also referred to the description of the foundation, to the subjects taught there and the children's education which was based on moral principles. The educational issues were directly related to the young people's moral uplifting, to the contact with religion and the subsiding of passions without offending the established social structures. The specific memorandum has been said to have been written by Fellenberg and countersigned by Ioannis Kapodistrias, a fact that shows certain diplomatic expediency on the part of Ioannis Kapodistrias, a certain educational differentiation from Pestalozzi as well as, most probably a desire to reach a compromising solution between the two educators (Kapodistrias, 1815: 68-69 Labraki-Panagou, 1989: 56-57).

In addition, Fellenberg's above mentioned letter shows that the methods used at his educational establishment were disputed by the circles of conservatives of Bern and Pestalozzi, himself who supported the view that the method Fellenberg followed, led to his students' downgrading. At this point it should be noted that the relationship between Pestalozzi and Fellenberg has fluctuations due to their different pedagogical views on one hand and political reasons on the other.

Fellenberg's political views were similar to those of the nobility of the canton of Bern while Pestalozzi was influenced by the French revolution. During that period of time, Fellenberg was faced with the same negative criticism that he, in other words, leads his students to slavery, expressed by Baron Christian de Stackelberg, a visionary of the reformation of Russia, who started undermining Fellenberg and the educational methods that he applied at his school in Hofwyl. The letter in reply Ioannis Kapodistrias sent to Fellenberg on January 31<sup>st</sup>/ February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1817 was reassuring regarding the success and the good reputation of the schools of Hofwyl. In specific Kapodistrias mentioned the names of the sons of Prince Souvaroff and Prince Volkonsky who aspired to study at Fellenberg's school (Koukou-Valma-Pavlof, 1996: 111-113).

It's made apparent that Fellenberg had considered working with foreign governments towards the formation of a uniform educational program based on the educational methods applied at Hofwyl, a detrimental practice according to Ioannis Kapodistrias, in which lurked the risk of departing from the fundamental principles of the school operation. Besides, there was always the risk of conflicting with the other governments.

In his letter of June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1817 Ioannis Kapodistrias urged him to favor the enrollment of Russian students of wealthy families who the imperial court would support financially and whose future the emperor of Russia would decide upon according to their education and abilities. Moreover, he emphasized the importance of the knowledge and use of the mother tongue. In his letter of September 16<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup>, 1819 Kapodistrias himself expressed his intention to subsidize two poor Greek young people to study at Hofwyl. It is apparent that Ioannis Kapodistrias not only was willing to spend in order to educate Greek young people but he also paid great attention to the kind and the methods of the education that was provided and for this reason he chooses Fellenberg's school (Koukou-Valma-Pavlof, 1996: 114-118).

A year after the movement of philhellenism was developed in Switzerland in 1821 Ioannis Kapodistrias submitted his resignation to the tsar and settled in Geneva in Switzerland because he was attracted by the advances of sciences and the liberal ideas that characterized the city. Moving to Geneva Ioannis Kapodistrias made it his sole goal to expand the movement of philhellenism and to ensure aid to the Greek nation. Thanks to Heynard, a philhellene and representative of the philhellenic committees in France, Paris, Lausanne and Geneva we are informed of Fellenberg's comments regarding the need for moral education of the Greek people. Fellenberg was a student of Pestalozzi, a well known/reputable educator of that time. Fellenberg in his letters to Heynard stated that he considered the damage the Greek education suffered irreparable. Moreover, he supported the view that it was necessary for the young Greek people to receive the proper education, if the national regeneration were to become a reality. For the materialization of the specific vision, what he considered a plausible solution was the transferring of elements of the ancient Greek culture to the neo-Hellenic educational programs, the foundation of educational establishments similar to his own in Hofwyl, the moral cultivation and national strengthening of the Greek people. Fellenberg, sharing the same

views with Ioannis Kapodistrias, believed that the development of education did not simply mean accumulation of knowledge; actually it was a significant factor of both moral uplifting and ennoblement contributing to the social upgrading of the Greeks. For this reason he asked the Swiss philhellene Louis-Andre Gosse, who had stayed for a long time in Greece and had acquired experience to select six talented Greek students to attend classes at Hofwyl.

At the school in Hofwyl their studies would be free of charge and a Greek teacher from Leipzig would be responsible to teach them the demotic Greek language which they themselves were expected later on to teach in their country covering the multiple educational needs the country had. In addition, regarding the maintenance of the Greek students' religious identity, Fellenberg engaged to offer them the opportunity to hear Mass at the Greek monastery the building expenses of which were met by the tsar of Russia. It is worth mentioning that Fellenberg assisted with great zeal Ioannis Kapodistrias in the realization of his work both morally and financially while, at the same time, he urged the philhellenes to show strong interest especially in educational issues (Vakalopoulos, 1976: 190-192, Vakalopoulos, 1978: 79-86).

Louis-Andre Gosse, having seen for himself, criticized severely the inadequate education Greek students received and was seeking those ways that would reverse the state of stagnation the Greek nation had fallen into due to the long lasting period of subjection to a ruling nation that was spiritually inferior. Yet Louis-Andre Gosse believed that an essential condition for the above mentioned reversal of the existing situation could be first the moral uplifting and education of the young people followed by the proper use of the financial donations sent (Vakalopoulos, 1975: 32-63, Vakalopoulos, 1976: 12-13).

Ioannis Kapodistrias, whenever he communicated with Heynard, insisted on mentioning his wish to base the "restoration of the Greek state on two fundamental principles, labor and elementary education." Among other things, on one hand he aimed at forming the elementary education of which he was the founder from the beginning of his governing, combined with the teaching of certain trades to students, especially to those who were not very competent in their academic studies while, on the other hand, he aimed at the moral nurturing of the young people because he considered it an essential element for the education of the young citizens of the Greek state (Velelis, 1928: 74, Epistolai, 1841: 75 and Koukou, 1972: 9-76).

In conclusion it may be stated that the aims of Ioannis Kapodistrias concerning the education were not only generally inspired by two great educators of the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pestalozzi and Fellenberg- mainly by Fellenberg who was high in the tsar's favor and shared certain aristocratic views with Ioannis Kapodistrias but also systematically applied to the Greek reality of the time.

The educational model of the agricultural schools of Yverdon first and then of Hofwyl as well as their founders' views regarding the necessity to promote the concept of "national culture and education" (Meletiadis, 1992: 40) were identified

with Ioannis Kapodistrias' views because he believed that the education of moral and national character was the necessary basis for the revival of the Greek society, turning the pedagogical dimension of education into a matter of primary importance for the Greek students, and the socio-economical recovery of the country. Moreover, Kapodistrias thought that the professional specialization, as it was offered at Fellenberg's school should be applied to the reality of the post-revolution Greek state which was faced with the problems of illiteracy, lack of primary production and lack of skilled workmen. Through the application of that model Kapodistrias attempted to nurture morally and educate the young people of Greece urging them to work for the revival of the country.

Ioannis Kapodistrias was a diplomat-politician with progressive educational views that he attempted to realize in a period of time characterized by adverse politico-economical conditions. His educational program that was based on the development of the primary and vocational education as means to support the development of secondary education soon was surpassed by new political-pedagogical conditions that prevailed in Greece after his assassination.

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