

GRAMSCI, THE SOUTHERN QUESTION AND THE MEDITERRANEAN¹

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Abstract – *My paper focuses on Gramsci's discussions of the Southern Question to derive insights for an understanding of some current dynamics in politics and culture in the Mediterranean region and to explore appropriate educational strategies in this context. I start by providing some general considerations regarding different conceptions of the Mediterranean that is viewed in the context of a broader conception of the South. Drawing on Gramsci's own reflections, I attempt to avoid romanticising the Mediterranean and the South in general, and to capture some sense of the region's complexity. I give important consideration, in this context, to the issue of dominant belief systems, referring, in the process, to Gramsci's own views on religion. This leads to questions concerning ethnicity and religious beliefs in Southern Europe, the geographical area that constituted the focus of Gramsci's attention. The paper foregrounds one of the major challenges for social solidarity facing people of this region, namely the challenge posed by massive migration from the South to the North in the context of the intensification of globalisation. I take up the Gramscian theme of regional solidarity, for a revolutionary socialist politics based on knowledge and understanding, and the related themes of misplaced alliances and internal colonialism. The paper draws on Gramsci's discussion on North-South solidarity (proletariat and peasantry), in the context of a nation state, to explore possibilities for a broader and trans-national form of North-South solidarity, rooted in political economy and an understanding of colonialism, connected with the issues of migration and inter-ethnic solidarity. Educational strategies, for this purpose, are identified.*

Introduction

Gramsci's discussion of the Southern Question – which runs throughout his *Quaderni* and is therefore not confined to his interrupted essay 'Some Themes regarding the Southern Question' ('Alcuni Temi sulla Quistione Meridionale', henceforth 'The Southern Question')² – is that which, probably more than anything else, attracted me to the Sardinian's work in the first place. These writings and notes helped shed light on the geopolitical context in which I was born and raised³. It is for this reason that I seek to extrapolate from Gramsci's

writings, concerning the Southern Question, insights for a greater understanding of some current dynamics in politics and culture in the Mediterranean region at large, a region which I conceive of as an expression of that larger construct referred to as the South.

Structure of argument

The paper opens with some general considerations regarding different conceptions of the Mediterranean, linking the region with the broader South and highlighting issues of subalternity connected with the latter. The Mediterranean is viewed in a manner that takes account of both its Northern and Southern shores. Efforts are made, drawing on Gramsci's own reflections and anecdotal accounts, to avoid romanticising the Mediterranean and the South in general and to capture some sense of the region's complexity. Importance is given, in this context, to the issue of dominant belief systems, with reference to Gramsci's own views on religion. The issue of religion leads to questions concerning ethnicity and religious beliefs of people with different traditions co-existing in the area, especially Southern Europe – the focus of Gramsci's attention. The paper foregrounds one of the major challenges for social solidarity facing people of this region, namely the challenge posed by massive migration from the South to the North in the context of the intensification of globalisation. The Gramscian theme of regional solidarity, for a revolutionary socialist politics based on knowledge and understanding, and the related themes of misplaced alliances and internal colonialism are taken up. The paper moves from Gramsci's discussion focusing on North-South solidarity (proletariat and peasantry) in the context of a nation state to a broader and trans-national form of North-South solidarity, rooted in political economy and an understanding of colonialism, connected with the issues of migration and inter-ethnic solidarity. Educational strategies, for this purpose, are identified.

Different conceptions of the Mediterranean⁴

Like all regions of the world, the Mediterranean can at best be regarded as a construct. This region is conceived of in different ways by different people according to their location in the North-South axis. There are those in Northern Europe, and possibly other parts of the Western hemisphere, who conceive of the Mediterranean in a colonial, ethnocentric and euro-centric manner. They historically seem to have regarded the Southern part of the Mediterranean as the

target of a 'civilising mission'. They also see the division between North and South of the Mediterranean in immutable and therefore essentialist terms. They possibly even see this division as representing the battle line between Christianity and Islam. Pride of place is often given, within this conceptualisation, to those traditions that lie at the heart of 'Western civilisation', notably the Greco-Roman tradition, where explicitly or implicitly any indebtedness of this tradition to civilisations emerging from the Southern Mediterranean is denied. One often finds this conception also among colonised subjects. For as Frantz Fanon wrote:

'The colonialist bourgeoisie, in its narcissistic dialogue, expounded by the members of its universities, had in fact deeply implanted in the minds of the colonized intellectual that the essential qualities remain eternal in spite of all the blunders men (*sic*) may make: the essential qualities of the West, of course. The native intellectual accepted the cogency of these ideas, and deep down in his brain you could always find a vigilant sentinel ready to defend the Greek-Latin pedestal.' (Fanon, 1963, p. 46)

This process of cultural invasion leads one to think of the Mediterranean only in terms of those centres in the region which are directly associated with the Greek-Latin tradition. In this respect, the Rome-based Croat scholar, Predrag Matvejevic, writes 'We need to get rid of this European habit of speaking about the Mediterranean and think only of its northern shore: the Mediterranean has another shore, that of Africa and the Maghreb' (Matvejevic, 1997, p. 119)⁴.

Avoiding romanticising the South

Others construct the Mediterranean differently, projecting it as a region having all the characteristics of what can be broadly called the 'South'. Here is a vision of the Mediterranean that connects with a larger and more expansive notion of the South. Needless to say, the South has its contradictions and should therefore not be romanticised. After all, Gramsci, himself a southerner, who reacted strongly to any attempt to caricature the South, criticising even socialists such as Ferri, Nocifero, Sergi and Orano (Gramsci, 1975, p. 47; Gramsci, 1997, p. 183) for their positivist and pathological affirmation of what they perceived as the southerners' 'biological inferiority', never romanticised the region from which he hailed. He regarded most of the unsavoury aspects of life in the South as 'folklore' and did not shy away from underlining the most shocking aspects of his native Sardinia. These included the different forms of superstition from which he, 'Antonu [Ninu] su gobbu' (Nairn, 1982), suffered as a disabled person, holding his parents responsible for not seeking professional help for what would nowadays be

diagnosed as Potts disease and for giving in to the popular myth that anyone born with a disability has a terrible birthmark which has to be hidden from public sight, hence his mother's fabrication that he damaged his spine when falling from a helper's arms (Lepre, 1998, p. 4). His most shocking depiction of the horrors of Southern life is provided in that much cited letter to Tania of 30 January 1933 where he discloses that he once witnessed a disabled young man confined to a hovel fit for animals. The 10 year-old Antonio was taken there by the young man's mother, from whom he was to receive payment on his mother's behalf:

'She told me to accompany her to a certain place and that on returning she would take the crochet work and give me the money. She led me outside the village to a small clearing cluttered with debris and rubble; in one corner there was a hovel resembling a pigsty, four feet high, without windows or openings of any kind and with one heavy door as an entrance. She opened the door, and immediately one heard an animal-like moan; inside was her son, a youth eighteen years old, of very swarthy complexion, who was not able to stand and therefore remained seated and lunged in his seat toward the door as far as the chain around his waist permitted him to go ... He was covered with filth and red-eyed like an animal of the night. His mother emptied the contents of her bag, fodder mixed with leftovers from home, into a stone trough and refilled another container with water. Then she closed the door and we went away (Gramsci, in Germino, 1990 p. 3; original in Gramsci, 1996, p. 674) ... I did not say anything to my mother about what I had witnessed given the impression this had on me and that I was convinced nobody would have believed me.' (Gramsci, 1996, p. 674; my translation)

It can be argued that Gramsci, an atheist who was the son of a deeply religious woman whose strong spiritual beliefs he respected, even though he did not share them, as manifest in his letters to her, also regards the kind of Catholicism that prevailed in the Southern regions and islands of Italy as another unedifying aspect of life in the *Mezzogiorno* (the South of Italy). The Catholic religion, as Gramsci shows, is tied to strong material interests in the Southern region of Italy. It is connected to land (priests were land administrators, usurers), power structures and folklore; it traditionally served as a buffer against modernising forces and, as the Brazilian thinker Paulo Freire (1995, p. 132) would argue with respect to the 'traditional church' in 'closed societies', such a church would mould the people's 'common sense' along immutable and fatalistic lines. The arrogance of Southern ecclesiastical power was reflected, in Gramsci's time, in the 'morally lax' attitude of priests (in contrast to Northern priests who were perceived to be 'morally more correct') who served as subaltern intellectuals and who were viewed cynically by the peasants themselves ('A priest is a priest on the altar; outside he is a man

like all others' [Gramsci, 1995, p. 38; original in Gramsci, 1997, p. 196]). These peasants would nonetheless aspire to see their children join the clergy and therefore move upward within the power structure. This strong connection between religion, hegemony and power, in this part of the world, needs to be borne in mind in a context increasingly being characterised by the influx of immigrants, from outside the peninsula, including immigrants from North Africa who cling to a different belief system. The role of Southern intellectuals, including the dominant 'cosmopolitan' type of Southern intellectuals (who speak a language that cuts them off from the people) as well as the subaltern intellectuals, including the traditional 'pre-industrial society' intellectuals (notaries, doctors, lawyers, priests, teachers), is also analysed for these intellectuals' part in sustaining the agrarian bloc and hence the subaltern status of the southern regions, *vis-à-vis* the North, within the contemporary, post-*Risorgimento*⁶, hegemonic set up. In short, Gramsci does not romanticise the South. He highlights its major shortcomings which, unlike many socialists of his period, he does not attribute to some 'biological inferiority' established 'scientifically', the sort of perception of biological inferiority, presented as 'scientific truth' and 'taught in the universities for over twenty years', that Frantz Fanon (Fanon, 1963, p. 296) decries in *The Wretched of the Earth*. On the contrary, Gramsci attributed such shortcomings to the exploitative 'internal' coloniser-colonised dialectical relation that characterised post-*Risorgimento* Italy.

Religion, ethnicity and subjugated knowledge

The alternative conception of the Mediterranean, as an expression of the South conceived of in its broader context, leads to an appreciation of the region's richness and cultural diversity, as well as the many voices and identities it comprises. One can consider many of these voices and identities marginalised, typical of southern voices and identities. In the euro-centric centres of cultural and intellectual production, these voices and identities are constructed as forms of *alterity* and they are often rendered 'exotic', if not demonised⁷, being very much subaltern voices engendering, in Foucault's terms, a subjugated body of knowledge (Foucault, 1980, p. 86). And yet, as I shall attempt to show, also drawing from Gramsci's writings in the *Quaderni* (Prison Notebooks), this body has in the past contributed significantly to the development of what is referred to as the Western tradition.

The Mediterranean gave rise to the three great monotheistic religions, many of which have a hegemonic presence in several countries of the region and therefore feature prominently in Gramsci's analyses throughout his work, notably his prison

writings. His insights concerning Catholicism⁸, often enhanced by his reading of *Civiltà Cattolica* (Catholic Civilisation) and papal encyclicals, and Islam⁹ are of great relevance to the current situation concerning religion and ethnicity in this conflict ridden and heterogeneous region.

Intensified globalisation and migration

The link between religion and ethnicity becomes most pronounced in various parts of the region owing to one of the major features (migration by populations from the South to the North) of the intensification of globalisation as it has affected this part of the world, with globalisation, strictly speaking, having always been a feature of the capitalist mode of production characterised by periodical economic reorganisation and an ongoing quest for the exploration of new markets. In fact, it is most appropriate, in the present historical conjuncture, to repeat the term I have just used: the *intensification* of globalisation. This intensification is brought about through developments in the field of information technology. This process 'not only blurs national boundaries but also shifts solidarities within and outside the national state' (Torres, 1998, p. 71)¹⁰.

Mobility is a characteristic of globalisation's 'inner' and 'outer' circuits (Torres, 1998, p. 92). We can speak of mobility in terms of the threat of the 'flight of capital' in a scenario where the process of production is characterised by dispersal and cybernetic control (outer circuit), and mobility of workers within and beyond the region (inner circuit). Migration is an important feature of the Mediterranean. As underlined at the 1997 Civil Forum EuroMed:

'Immigration represents the emerging aspect, probably the most evident, of the wide process which characterizes more and more the whole planet – globalization. Migrations represent more than a phenomenon, a historical certainty that can be found today, though with different features, in all countries and, in particular, in the most developed [*sic. read: industrially developed*]. Migration phenomena are becoming more and more important within the Mediterranean basin.' (Fondazione Laboratorio Mediterraneo, 1997, p. 551)

According to Braudel (1992), there was a time when 'exchange' was a prominent feature of life in and around the Mediterranean basin. In this day and age, however, the exchange takes on a different form. In terms of mobility of people¹¹, it would be amiss to consider the exchange one that occurs on a level playing field. It can also be argued, with respect to the movement of people from the Southern Mediterranean to the Northern Mediterranean and beyond, that the

‘spectre’ of the violent colonial process the ‘old continent’ initiated has come back with a vengeance to ‘haunt’ it (Borg & Mayo, 2006, p. 151). This process is facilitated by the requirements of the economies in highly industrialised countries concerning certain types of labour and the consideration that these requirements cannot or should not (to minimise labour costs) be satisfied by the internal labour market, despite the high levels of unemployment experienced within these countries (Apitzsch, 1995, p. 68).

Colonialism, hegemony and misplaced alliances

The legacy of colonialism and its effect on the migratory movements from the South-Mediterranean to the North-Mediterranean and beyond reflects the similar colonial bind, albeit of an ‘internal’ nature (Italy’s North in a process of colonial domination of the country’s Southern regions and islands), that Gramsci emphasised in his writings on the Southern Question. His writings focus for the most part on the need for solidarity among subaltern groups across the North-South divide.

The concept of ‘national-popular’, so much emphasised by Gramsci, takes on a specific meaning in this context. What is ‘national’ is often tied to the culture of hegemonic ethnic groups and is related to the whole structure of hegemony. Concepts such as ‘national identity’, ‘national culture’ are thus challenged, as part of the process of negotiating relations of hegemony. This applied to relations between different groups within the boundaries of a single nation state, the object of much of Gramsci’s analysis. Subaltern groups, involving proletariat and peasants, had to engage in a *historical bloc* to challenge the concept of ‘national’ and transform the relations of hegemony which it represented. In this regard, one had to challenge misplaced alliances. These included the proposed alliance between exploited Sardinian peasants and their offspring on the island and mainland¹² and the offspring of the exploiting Sardinian gentry, the local (Sardinian) overseers of capitalist exploitation. This is the significance of the episode in ‘The Southern Question’ concerning the effort of the eight communists to thwart the forming of the *Giovane Sardegna*, a challenge which proved successful and which led to the postponement *sine die* of this proposed Sardinian organisation. The same applies to the episode concerning the role of the *Brigata Sassari* (the Sassari Brigade) with respect to industrial unrest in the North. Here the issue of cultural and ethnic hybridisation is raised by Gramsci who regarded the process of solidarity between proletariat and peasants as likely to be helped by the fact that the former consist, for the most part, of offspring of the latter, given that much of the industrialisation in Italy’s North was predicated on internal

migration from the industrially underdeveloped and impoverished South. Gramsci highlights the bonding that emerged from conversations between the soldiers and strikers that led to the realisation that both were victims of the same exploitative process. The themes of solidarity therefore and the struggle against misplaced alliances become two of the most important features of his writings on the South, especially the essay on which he was working at the time of his imprisonment in Rome ('The Southern Question'). They have great relevance for the Southern Question when viewed in a larger context, the context of North-South/South-North relations on a regional and transcontinental scale.

Renegotiating hegemony and the national-popular

One major difference however is that crossing national borders is more difficult and hazardous than crossing regional ones within the same country. As the Slovenian writer Slavoj Žižek rightly argues 'in the much-celebrated free circulation opened up by global capitalism, it is "things" (commodities) which circulate freely, while the circulation of "persons" [*themselves treated as commodities* – author's insertion] is more and more controlled' (Žižek, 2004, p. 34). And yet, often risking life and limb, being at the mercy of unscrupulous 'coyotes', thousands and thousands of migrants cross the 'New Rio Grande' divide between North Africa and Southern Europe, many drowning in the process. If I can play around with Gramsci's statement concerning the North of Italy in relation to the *Mezzogiorno*, Europe with its colonial centre was an 'octopus' (Gramsci, 1975, p. 47) which enriched itself at the expense of the South in its broader context. Long-term victims of the predatory colonial process that led to the ransacking of Africa (see Rodney, 1973), these migrants, often from sub-Saharan Africa who travel via North Africa, attempt to reach the centres of Europe (once again a case of the empire striking back) but often end up at the continent's periphery. The intermeshing of cultures that this brings about leads to further questioning of old hegemonic arrangements and the concepts that reflect them. The concept of 'national popular' takes on a new meaning in this context. Meanwhile, old but still prevalent concepts such as 'national identity' and 'national culture', resorted to by sections of the often self proclaimed 'autochthonous' population as part of a xenophobic retrenchment strategy, are called into question by those who derive their inspiration from Gramsci and others (more recently Said who draws on Gramsci's 'Southern Question' in his work)¹³ and who aspire to a society characterised by social justice. The greater the presence of multiethnic groups and the stronger their lobby, the greater would be the struggle to renegotiate relations of hegemony within the countries concerned.

In this respect, there is relevance, for the current situation, in Gramsci's insistence that the Turin communists in the North of Italy, which, I reiterate, largely included people of southern origin, brought the Southern Question to the attention of the workers' vanguard, identifying it as one of the key issues for the proletariat's national popular politics (Gramsci, 1997, pp. 181-182). Furthermore, the national popular alliance of Italian workers and peasants, advocated by Gramsci and also Piero Gobetti (Gramsci, 1997, p. 204), takes on a larger more global North-South meaning in this age of mass migration from South to North. Any genuinely socialist initiative today must bring to the forefront the issue of the Southern Question in its larger context extending beyond geographical boundaries and territories.

North-South solidarity

This must be done in the interest of generating North-South solidarity and confronting misplaced alliances. I would include, among these misplaced alliances, the false alliance between 'labour' and 'management' against 'the competition'. Globalisation has brought in its wake misplaced alliances based on racist, labour market segmentation strategies. Workers continue to be otherised and segregated on ethnic, national and religious lines, as well as on such lines as those of being refugees, asylum seekers or 'economic migrants'.

Such an anti-racist programme of education and social action can be successful only if rooted in political economy and an understanding of colonialism. These are the elements that Gramsci sought to bring to his analysis of the Southern Question in Italy, placing the emphasis on political economy and a historical understanding of Italy's 'internal colonialism'. Gramsci's use of political economy is most evident in 'The Southern Question' and the notes concerning Italy's post-*Risorgimento* state (see Notebook 1 of the *Prison Notebooks*) where he gives economic reasons for the subordination of the South, reasons that are also supported by the work of economic historians such as Luigi De Rosa (2004). Gramsci writes about the Northern economic protectionist, 'fortress' strategies ruining the southern economy. These strategies include the tariff wars with France that had a deleterious effect on southern agricultural life in Italy (Gramsci, 1975, p. 45). Likewise economic power blocs such as the EU and the US, today, adopt their 'fortress' economic and agrarian policies that impinge negatively on economic development in Africa and elsewhere. With a daily billion-dollar subsidy provided by the wealthy countries to their farmers, people from poor countries that depend on agriculture will find it hard to feed and educate their children, with migration, often at terrible costs, proving to be their only option¹⁴.

Educating for solidarity: a lengthy process

Using material from Gramsci with respect to the Southern Question and related themes, such as those concerning Arabs and Islam, one can identify some of the ingredients for the kind of work that genuinely socialist parties and other organisations can carry out to generate the consciousness necessary to foster greater solidarity among different subaltern groups in this situation characterised by massive immigration into Southern European countries. This is one of the greatest challenges facing those committed to a socialist politics in this region. The work involved is unmistakably of an educational nature, as was most of the work in which Gramsci was engaged when attempting to generate a truly revolutionary working class consciousness in the Italy of his time. After all, education is, for Gramsci, fundamental to the workings of hegemony itself (Borg, Buttigieg & Mayo, 2002, p. 8). And the kind of educational work in which one must engage, in the contemporary context, is a lengthy one. With local working class people, living in a state of precariousness, being the ones most likely to suffer from the devastating effects of Neoliberal globalisation policies, this work becomes ever so urgent. Unless such an educational strategy is developed, it is more likely that working class people become attracted to the kind of populist right wing and often neo-fascist discourse that plays on their fears and leads to further segmentation and antagonism among workers on ethnic lines. This can result in misplaced alliances and the mystification of the fact that both they and the immigrants share a common fate: that of subalternity and of both being victims of a ruthless process of capitalist exploitation. There have been cases when traditionally socialist parties have been accused of shunning the responsibility of working toward fostering inter-ethnic solidarity among workers. They are accused of doing so for fear of losing electoral votes, a situation which highlights the limits of bourgeois democracy for a genuinely socialist politics predicated on worker solidarity across ethnic and national lines.

Elements for an educational strategy

My proposal for an educational strategy for greater solidarity in this day and age includes developing a broad terrain of cultural studies which entails:

1. A deep understanding of the culture of 'alterity'. This would include, but of course not be limited to, knowledge of the different religions of the Mediterranean, including the religions which immigrants bring with them from other areas such as sub-Saharan Africa. Once again, as with Gramsci's portrayal

of the Southern regions and islands in Italy, one must also avoid romanticising these religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam and African religions). They should be subjected to critical scrutiny.

2. Avoiding caricatures and exoticisation of the type which Gramsci decried with regard to Northern conceptions of the Southerner's alleged 'biological inferiority' and Northern misrepresentations of legitimate struggles of southerners who were denied land by the Northern 'liberators' (e.g., the references to *brigantaggio* – brigand activity – and the widespread exaggerations surrounding its manifestations).
3. Challenging (mis)representations/conceptions of the other (in this case immigrants from the Southern shores of the Mediterranean and beyond) that reflect a 'positional superiority' on the part of those who provide the representation (Said, 1978).
4. Analysing seriously the relationship between Islam, traditional African religions (many migrants who cross the Mediterranean come from sub-Saharan Africa) and modernity: Gramsci writes about the existence, before World War 1, of a circle of young Christians in Turin, including Dominicans, who drew sustenance from modernising tendencies in Islam and Buddhism, conceiving of religion as a syncretisation of all the major world religions (Gramsci, 1975, p. 2090)¹⁵.
5. Challenging essentialist (*a la`* Huntington) notions of immigrants, Islam(s), Arabs, Africans, Blacks, etc. – all are much more variegated than Huntington and his like would have us believe, there being no fixed and static cultures but cultures which, on the contrary, have flourished as a result of hybridisation and cultural cross-currents. Gramsci¹⁶, for instance, writes about key Arab leaders and how they sought to confront a more universalistic Islam with a sense of national unity and adaptation. And he argues that, in many places, the Islam of his times was already different from what it was earlier – it will continue to evolve but not suddenly; he felt that it cannot be substituted by Christianity which took nine centuries to evolve while Islam is forced to run 'dizzily' (Gramsci, 1975, pp. 246-248) – a rather contentious assertion that reflects an 'evolutionary development' model¹⁷.

Cultural cross-currents and the 'clash of civilisations' myth

The last point warrants further commentary. Monolithic, essentialist conceptions of Islam are provided by right wing westerners as well as Muslim

fundamentalists. In his critique of Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations,' Edward Said wrote:

'... Huntington is an ideologist, someone who wants to make "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing. This far less visible history is ignored in the rush to highlight the ludicrously compressed and constricted warfare that "the clash of civilizations" argues is the reality.' (Said, 2001, para. 4)

Said made the point, time and time again, about there being no such thing as pure cultures. What we have are hybrid cultures, a point Gramsci demonstrates forcefully in the *Prison Notebooks* and in such works as 'The Southern Question' where he indicates the intermeshing between Southern immigrant workers and Northerners in Italy with the implication being that there is an intermeshing of cultures in these regions (e.g., Southern immigrants contributing to Northern culture and *vice versa*). On a broader scale this ought to lead to a consideration of non-European contributions to aspects of what is heralded as 'Western civilisation'.

In this respect, Gramsci echoes many others in highlighting the contributions of Arabs, Islamic culture, and other non-European cultures to the development of so-called 'Western civilisation'. In a note (§ 5) in Notebook 16, Gramsci makes reference to the work of Ezio Levi and Angel Gonzales Palencia, the latter outlining Arab influences in cuisine, medicine, chemicals etc. (see Boothman, 2007, p. 65). Gramsci furthermore reminds us about the Arab post-1000 influence on European culture via Spain. He states that philosophical and theological disputes in France, during that period, betray the influence of Averroes'¹⁸ doctrine (Gramsci, 1975, p. 642). He also underlines what should be commonplace knowledge and yet which, on the evidence of my own teaching experiences, seems to be ignored, namely the Arab and Jews' reintroduction of ancient philosophy into European civilisation (Gramsci, 1975, p. 644). Also, in Notebook 5, Gramsci mentions the scientific influence of Arabs on the formation of Germanic-roman states, specifically on medieval Spain (Gramsci, 1975, p. 574)¹⁹.

Others have also referred to the work of Miguel Asin Palacios in this context, notably the Italy based Egyptian scholar, Mahmoud Salem Elsheikh who in an article 'Le Omissioni della Cultural Italiana' writes about the 'debtor's syndrome':

‘the person to whom one is indebted is constantly a hated person; particularly if the creditor, as in this case, is a strange body, rejected by the collective consciousness, hated by the political, social, cultural and religious institutions. If anything, the rage against the creditor, in these circumstances, becomes an almost moral duty and a necessary condition for the survival of that society.’ (Elsheikh, 1999, p. 38; my translation)

Furthermore, the Turkish writer Ali Hasbi insists:

‘The knowledge and technologies which are the shared heritage of humanity were not created *ex nihilo*, but were built up in a lengthy process of accumulation to which every people has made its contribution. Efforts are now being made to give the West credit for a unique and absolute rationality and a creativity, which are seen as consubstantial with it [... *this demonstrates*] amnesia and ethnocentricity.’ (Hasbi, 2003, p. 378)

The importance of these contributions, including the direct and indirect contributions of black African cultures and other cultures (see, for example, Bernal, 1987), cannot be overstressed in an educational process intended not only to do justice to a culture or cultures (for instance, those of Islam and Arabs, which are not to be used interchangeably²⁰) that have often been denigrated in a process of historical and cultural amnesia predicated on ignorance and prejudice. This process should serve to highlight the hybrid nature of cultures, crisscrossed by ‘contrapuntal’ (to use the term Said borrows from music and literature²¹) currents, and set the record straight with respect to flawed conceptions of cultures that give one a sense of positional superiority and falsely lead to the construction of cultures and civilisations as being mutually exclusive and antagonistic. In this respect, one must recognise that Christian, Jewish and Muslim fundamentalists are also guilty of a similar historical and cultural amnesia when projecting a fixed notion of their religion and when being reluctant to acknowledge derivations in their religion from other civilisations and philosophical traditions that were in turn indebted to other civilisations and philosophical traditions.

Conclusion: challenging a contrived world cultural order

Over and above an understanding of colonialism and its political economic basis, one must also understand the long term effects of the imposition of a contrived world cultural order. This work would enable us to foster that sense of solidarity that Gramsci had called for. These are the elements that Gramsci sought to bring to his analysis of the Southern Question in Italy, with his emphasis on

political economy, astute cultural analysis and historical understanding of the *Risorgimento* (a passive revolution) and the process of ‘internal colonialism’ it brought about.

Much of the published literature, at least in English, concerning Gramsci’s ideas and education, have hitherto focused on such themes as the Unitarian School, the education of adults (including ideas connected with the Factory Councils and the issue of industrial democracy), hegemony in its broader context, the role of educators as organic intellectuals and the educational role of revolutionary parties. The writings concerning the Southern Question, however, deserve greater treatment in educational debates. I hope therefore that this initial effort to engage some of Gramsci’s writings on the issue will lead to further debates in the field since the ‘Southern Question’ is not a thing of the past but very much a contemporary reality. It is a question which, as I hope to have shown, continues to have implications for socially transformative educational and cultural work in this day and age. May the debate continue.

Notes

1. Earlier drafts of this piece were presented at: (i) the international conference, *Gramsci, le Culture e il Mondo* (Gramsci, Cultures and the World), Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Rome, 27-28 April 2007; (ii) seminar with PhD students, ‘Religion and Cultural Hegemony’, Faculty of Sociology and Political Science, Goethe Universität, Frankfurt Am Main (modified version incorporating the discussion about Catholicism and Islam), 26 June 2007; and (iii) public seminar ‘Gramsci, The Southern Question and the Mediterranean’ organised by the Global Education Network, Department of Education Policy Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, 23 July 2007. I am indebted to the various participants at these seminars for their insights on the paper and the issues raised. I am also indebted to Godfrey Baldacchino, Carmel Borg, Joseph Buttigieg, Joseph Gravina and Michael Grech for their comments on earlier drafts of the article. I have taken up and incorporated some of their suggestions. I also thank the reviewers and copy editor for suggestions regarding modifications. Joe Gravina and Michael Grech wrote numerous insightful comments in the margins which, I feel, helped me improve the text, clarify some of my statements and provide a more nuanced perspective on things. Any remaining shortcomings are my sole responsibility.
2. Gramsci uses ‘Quistione’ instead of ‘questione’, a word which would nowadays be considered archaic. According to Verdicchio (in Gramsci, 1995, p. 16), it was written in response to an article that appeared in *Quarto Stato* (an important neomarxian journal whose founding editors were Carlo Rosselli and Pietro Nenni) which refers to Guido Dorso’s assessment, in *La Rivoluzione Meridionale* (The Southern Revolution), of the Italian Communist Party’s position on the Southern Question.
3. I was born, raised and still live in the Mediterranean and typically *Meridionale* island of Malta which historically has shared strong cultural affinities with the Italian *Mezzogiorno* (South) to which it is geographically also very close – 96 kilometres off the Sicilian coast.
4. I have reproduced in this section material from Chapter 5 of my book *Liberating Praxis* (Mayo, 2004). Permission granted by Praeger Publishers.

5. Personal translation from Predrag Matvejevic's address, in Italian, at the II Civil Forum, Euromed, Naples, 1997.
6. Italian unification (called in Italian the *Risorgimento*, or 'Resurgence') was the political and social process that unified different states of the Italian peninsula into the single nation of Italy.
7. In the words of Egyptian writer, Nawal El Saadawi: 'Perhaps the problem of the world has always been the 'objectification', the nullification, of the 'other'. For the West or the North, the South is the other which exists only as an object to be exploited and oppressed. Christianity or Western culture sees Islam and Arab culture as the other. And in all religions, all that does not belong to God is seen as emanating from the devil. The problem of our world is to ignore, to dismiss, to destroy the other. To do this, the other must be satanised' (El Saadawi, 1992, p. 137).
8. It has a strong presence in the Italian Southern regions and other countries such as Spain, Croatia, Malta and Portugal (it strictly speaking lies on the Atlantic but shares a southern European/Mediterranean culture).
9. Islam is very strong throughout the South Mediterranean as well as in Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and other parts of Southern Europe given the strong migratory waves across the Mediterranean basin.
10. This process continues to have a strong influence on identity, especially with regard to communities that have traditionally not been organised along individualist lines as has been the case with most Mediterranean and non-Western communities. This, together with other previous modernising forces, seems to be at odds with the fundamentally religious way of life experienced in certain regions of the Mediterranean and also tends to destroy that sense of mystery so much cherished in several non-Western societies. I am indebted to Michael Grech for this point.
11. I have been inspired, in discussing the very important contemporary issue of migration across the Mediterranean, by Pasquale Verdicchio's concise and excellent introduction to his annotated translation of *The Southern Question* (Verdicchio, 1995).
12. 'Il continente' – 'the continent', as Sardinians refer to the Italian mainland.
13. See Said (1994, pp. 56-59).
14. I am indebted to the late Professor M. Kazim Bacchus, Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta, Canada, for this point.
15. When discussing the relationship between Islam and liberalism, Palestinian peace activist Nahla Abdo had this to say in an interview: 'If and when Islam is conceived of as a religion, I see no reason why one cannot speak of liberal Muslims, the same way they would speak of liberal Christians or liberal Jews. Muslim liberal discourses have firmly been entrenched in the legal system of some Arab/Muslim countries like Tunisia for example. Moreover, Sheikh al-Qaradawi, often featured on al-Jazira and the well-known Sheikh Al-Azhar from Egypt are well known for their liberal interpretations of social and gender phenomena' (Nahla Abdo in Borg & Mayo, 2007, pp. 29-30)
16. Points 4 and 5 draw from Boothman (2007, pp. 65-66).
17. In this respect, I would refer to an interview by Michael Grech with Antonio Dell'Olio, coordinator of the Italian branch of Pax Christi International. Dell'Olio refers to a conversation he held with a Muslim professor from a Cairo university. The latter is reported to have told Dell'Olio 'Give us time ... in the Islamic world we had neither a French revolution, which led to social reforms as a result of its separation between church and state, and its cry of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, nor a Vatican Council which led to religious reforms. These two important events led to a situation when, after so much resistance, denial of progress by the Church and giving up [on the possibility of reform], the Catholic Church and Catholicism began to renew themselves. When we have events such as these we will make a leap forward' (in Grech, 2006, pp. 64, 65; my translation from Maltese).
18. Abu l-Walid Muhammad ibn Rushd
19. I am indebted to Boothman (2007) for these points.

20. Derek Boothman states that Gramsci uses 'Arab' almost interchangeably with Muslim: 'In the paragraphs cited here it is always the case that when Gramsci writes 'Arab' the term is also understood to refer to the larger category of Muslim' (Boothman, 2007, p. 65; my translation) If Gramsci does that, then this is unfortunate. Not all Arabs are Muslim. Furthermore, Arabs constitute only one tenth in a milliard of Muslims while Islam is a world religion which therefore knows no ethnic boundaries.
21. See for instance Said in Viswanathan (2001, p. 211).

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UNDERSTANDING STUDENT TEACHERS' EFFECTIVENESS THROUGH JOURNALS AT AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING DEPARTMENT: A TURKISH UNIVERSITY CASE

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Abstract – *This paper focuses on a case study of twelve student teachers' experiences about 'Teaching Practice' through teaching journals in an English Language Teaching (ELT) department in a university in Turkey. Data were analysed qualitatively through eight thematic categories, namely, 'teaching topic', 'teaching techniques', 'problems in teaching', 'dealing with problems', 'successful parts in teaching', 'unsuccessful parts in teaching', 'changes in the plan' and 'possible future change in teaching'. 'Timing', 'classroom management', 'giving instructions' and 'planning' are identified as the problematic areas in teaching. The emergent data underline the importance of teacher knowledge, teaching skills and competencies focusing on a more effective school-faculty partnership and effective teacher education. The implications of the study's findings are discussed at the end of the paper.*

Introduction

It has become increasingly clear that the 'quality' of education has come to have an important place in any discussion about educational improvement and change. Within developing world contexts, early concerns were about 'quantity'. Now, the concern is not just about getting more students into schools, but also about the quality of the education that they might be expected to experience while they are there. Central to this learning experience is the teacher, and a good deal of discussion and research concerning the effectiveness of the teacher has dominated educational writings during recent decades.

Turkey is no exception to this development. For example, there have been rapid changes in initial teacher education in Turkey relating directly to issues concerning the improved effectiveness of new teachers. New national policies have stipulated the expansion of the period of compulsory education – known in Turkey as Basic Education – from five to eight years. A consequence of this was a re-organisation of education faculties to provide the necessary numbers of suitably qualified teachers of quality. In the early 1990s, primary teacher education courses were extended from two to four years, automatically qualifying

such courses for graduate status. Courses for teachers in Basic Education were re-thought and considerable work was done to improve the teaching practice of the initial teacher education course, to produce new curricula in the methodology of teaching in each subject area and to develop working relationships between faculties of education and the practice schools in which they place their students.

The Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK) was also concerned to improve subject teaching for students in secondary education and for those in the last years in Basic Education. The main work objective here was to focus on a sound academic understanding of the subject base through an undergraduate programme lasting three-and-a-half years, followed by postgraduate training in pedagogical and school-based practice lasting one-and-a-half years. This system shares some similarities with the UK model of a first degree followed by a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

The main reasons for the ‘restructuring programme’ undertaken in 1998 were the insufficient teaching practice and the gap between theory and practice (see YÖK, 1998). The situation could certainly be said to have improved somewhat as a result of this. However, in my view there are other fundamental issues, such as, definition and content of the roles and responsibilities of partnership between practice schools and education faculties and its actual practice. I think the roots of the ongoing problems are in the perceived communication gap between the Ministry of Education and the Higher Education Council (YÖK) (see Gürsimsek, Kaptan & Erkan, 1997; Altan, 1998; Küçükahmet, 1999). In Turkey, the perceived problem in the system, namely the gap between theory and practice in teacher education courses, is fundamental to the policy makers’ thinking about improving the effectiveness of teachers.

However, the meaning of theory and practice, their nature, relationship, construction and ownership are not addressed either implicitly or explicitly in the Language Teacher Education (LTE) programme. The theory-practice divide remains unarticulated. I subscribe to van Lier’s (1996) view that, in general, theory might be defined as received knowledge, data gathered from research and a collection of hypotheses. This interpretation of theory can be identified as ‘public theory’. Drawing on this definition, in the Turkish context, the gap between theory and practice derives from the transmission of the so-called ‘public theory’ without application to educational settings.

Bridging the gap between ‘public theories’ and practice may be achieved through adapting van Lier’s (1994, 1996) understanding of ‘theory of practice’ and ‘theorising’. The point made is that ‘theory of practice’ is located in classroom practice and experiences, where practitioners become more familiar with ‘public theories’ and make them personal by ‘theorising’ them through process-oriented pedagogical interaction. In this way, practitioners construct their own theories

through ‘theorising’, and these theories become ‘personal theories’ (see Kumaravadivelu, 1999). Consequently, it is crucial for practitioners to examine their own theories by making them explicit, and in doing so rationalise the meaning and reasons of pedagogical decisions. Therefore, there is a need to know what makes an effective teacher in an attempt to explore teachers’ public and personal theories through decision making process, their actions and some problematic issues regarding teacher education.

In this context, my main goal in this article is to focus on student teachers’ understandings and experiences through journals which they keep while they are teaching in their practice schools as a compulsory requirement of their degree. I believe that the data gathered from the post teaching journals enables me to understand my students’ theories (public and personal) and actions, and the relationship between them within the framework of teacher effectiveness. As a teacher educator and tutor I have to be well informed of the current needs of my students if I am to help them become effective teachers. Toward this end, I believe that journals are useful tools to explore how public and personal theories are transformed into actions through decision-making processes, teaching skills and competencies.

Thinking about effective teaching

There is no doubt that the immediate response to questions about what are the determinants of effective teaching would be that the teacher is the most essential of these. However, thinking for a few moments raises questions about what effective teaching is, how it can be defined and if it can be measured. Some educators

‘... claim that good teaching cannot be defined because the criteria differ for every instructional situation and every teacher. They conceive good teaching as being so complex and creative that it defies analysis.’
(Braskamp & Brandenburg, 1984, p. 1)

However, this view has not stopped educational researchers and writers from considering the issue. Looking at the literature, it would seem that much writing has focussed on discovering what teacher characteristics are associated with good teaching. The result of this line of inquiry is lists of teacher characteristics, which may be used to define the ideal model of the ‘effective teacher’. Perrot (1982) summarised effectiveness as ‘hardness of the head and softness of the heart’ (p. 15), but other educators have produced much longer lists of teacher effectiveness. For Harris, Jamieson & Russ (1996), the components of effective teaching are:

- Effective planning
- Meaningful learning
- A positive inter-personal climate
- Cognitive matching (Matching content or knowledge to students' stage of intellectual development)
- Translation (Breaking up subject content into comprehensible parts for the learners)
- Effective teaching time
- Quality of instruction
- High teacher and learner expectations
- Enhancing motivation
- Monitoring and assessment
- Reflection and evaluation' (p. 74)

Broadhead (1987), on the other hand, pulled together a blueprint for the effective teacher. This model contained 41 items under five headings (i.e., 'professional behaviour', 'personal characteristics', 'organized attributes', 'perceptive qualities' and 'information-gathering skills and evaluative skills'). An example of the detail can be seen in the 'organized attributes' which include: (i) engaging in long and short-term lesson planning; (ii) gaining access to teaching aids/resources for both self and students; (iii) being skilful in class management and the grouping of students; (iv) making use of a diversity of subject matter within the classroom; (v) selecting and presenting subject matter that will engage students' interest; (vi) developing students' main skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening; and (vii) being able to communicate the assessment of performance to individual students.

The list of headings compiled from the documents by Broadhead (1987) is detailed and very prescriptive, and although all the items might not be attainable by every teacher, it identified thinking about what teachers should aspire to. On their part, Hopkins & Stern (1996) provide a useful synthesis on 'effective teaching' that highlights the key characteristics of high quality teachers. Such teachers are endowed with 'commitment', 'love of children', 'mastery of subject content', 'multiple models of teaching', 'the ability to collaborate with other teachers' and 'capacity for reflection'. This constitutes, in my view, a more holistic view in comparison with Broadhead's blueprint.

One issue concerns differences about the actual role of the teacher in the educational process. Borger & Tilemma (1993), for example, consider that the teacher has not only to acquire relevant knowledge and skills, but also has to bring that knowledge and those skills into action in the classroom practice. Essentially, this means that, for Borger & Tilemma, effective teachers transfer the theoretical knowledge into application, taking into account the situation and changing

demands of the classroom. This is a decision-making process that relies on teachers' knowledge base, both public and personal theories, the particular conditions, an understanding of teaching and experience, and a conception of teaching models.

Conception of two models of teaching

Cooper & McIntyre (1996) mention two contrasting models of the curriculum and teaching to illustrate their point. One model is what they call the 'national curriculum model', which sees the teacher as a pedagogical expert. The other is the 'educator model', which sees the teacher as a scholar and critic. The national curriculum model regards the curriculum as a body of knowledge and a set of values that are prescribed by subject experts and delivered by teachers. However, the knowledge itself is generated and selected by expert scholars.

In the educator model, however, the task of teaching the curriculum is less prescriptive. In this model, guidance from expert scholars can be welcomed, but the actual curriculum decision-making in terms of what is to be taught cannot be separated from decisions about how it is to be taught and to whom it will be taught. This model implies that there is an interaction between teachers and students, which is a basis for generating the curriculum rather than a transmission of curriculum content decided elsewhere and without the necessary direct relevance to a particular audience. In the educator model, it is essential that teachers should have subject expertise and the capacity for critical curricular thinking which will enable them to decide what should be taught. Their effectiveness comes from doing this well. From just this example, we can see that the criteria for making judgements about what is an effective teacher can be very different and are dependent on views of what the teaching process is supposed to be about.

In the educator model, the teacher is more of a decision-maker. The skills of an effective teacher in this model depend upon the teacher's ability to make decisions based upon a different range of pedagogical skills, rather than those required to follow the prescriptions of others. We could say that these decisions are based not only on the knowledge that the teacher has about the subject base, but also on the skills that enable the teacher to establish an effective teaching context.

Teacher knowledge bases and essential teaching skills

A good example of such an approach is that discussed by Shulman (1986) who emphasises the basis of knowledge that teachers must have. According to Shulman, effective teachers are teachers who have an understanding of how to

promote learning among students. The seven areas identified by Shulman are:

- Content knowledge: referring to the amount and organization of knowledge in the mind of the teacher. This includes both substantive and syntactic structures of a subject, i.e. the variety of ways in which the basic concepts and principles of the discipline are organised and the ways in which truth or falsehood, validity or invalidity, are established.
- General pedagogical knowledge: with special reference to those broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter.
- Curriculum knowledge: with particular grasp of the materials and programmes that serve as 'tools of the trade' for teachers.
- Pedagogical-content knowledge: that form of content knowledge that embodies the most essential aspects of content regarding its teachability. It includes, for any given subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstrations. In other words, the way of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others.
- Knowledge of learners and their characteristics.
- Knowledge of educational contexts: ranging from the workings of the group or classroom, the governance and financing of schools, to the character of communities and cultures.
- Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and the philosophical and historical grounds.' (Bennett, 1993, p. 7)

No area stands alone; this is a more holistic view of effective teaching. All the individual knowledge bases are to be taken along with all the other knowledge bases, which the teacher has to understand and implement. This view is more compatible with the educator model and, I feel, provides a more integrated model of teaching, appreciating different teaching skills, competencies and knowledge bases. In this model, an effective teacher has a clear understanding of how these types of knowledge interact with one another depending on certain conditions.

Within current thinking in Turkey concerning the education of teachers, a knowledge base is seen as fundamental to teachers' effectiveness in the classroom and considerable effort has been spent on developing new curricula. However, as mentioned earlier, the main recognised problem in the old model of initial teacher education was the identified gap between what teachers knew about the subject area and how they were going to manage student learning in the classroom.

Consequently, elements were built into the new curricula that help to focus the teacher on how learning is to be achieved in a more positive way. The issue now is to focus on teaching skills in the classroom as much as on the content of what is to be taught.

Kyriacou (1991) observes that planning, presentation and monitoring, and reflection and evaluation are major skills for the teacher. However, planning covers all these things because all the other aspects mentioned by Kyriacou need to be thought about by the teacher at the planning stage. To be effective, the planning stage must take into account the potential level of student attention, motivation, their mental effort and the desired educational outcome. This links planning to the notions of 'preparedness' and 'purposefulness' for both the teacher and the students (Harris, Jamieson & Russ, 1996). Harris, Jamieson & Russ (1996) say that to be more effective, the expected outcomes of lessons should be set out clearly and shared with students. This is all part of the 'advanced mapping' that takes into account the context of the lesson, the type of student, the room layout, time of day as well as the content and learning activities in relation to students' previous knowledge and understanding.

Lesson presentation is part of the focus of developments in Turkey that relate to more effective classroom practice and as well as the planning, which has already been mentioned. There is the need to monitor how the lesson is going, how time is monitored, how relevant is the task, and how the presentation is (i.e., teacher's tone of voice and manner). Effective teachers should try to see the learning experience from the students' perspective as well as the teacher's, taking into consideration students' problems, difficulties and errors, and the effect of these on learning and self-confidence. Harris, Jamieson & Russ (1996) state that effective teaching is strongly linked to effective monitoring, which implies the routine assessment of the progress of the lesson and students' learning. It is a circular process really, because the context of the lesson, the learning content, the teaching approach adopted, the range of student abilities, and the tasks carried out will influence the type of monitoring that the teacher chooses. For example, teachers may use tools to assess progress (such as questions, quick tests, essays, and checking work) in addition to reading the facial expressions and general behaviour of students. Feedback concerning student progress, either individually or collectively, is another tool that teachers may use. This view is compatible with the classroom assessment cycle that spreads over four phases, namely 'plan the assessment', 'gather evidence', 'interpret the evidence' and 'use the results' (see Buhagiar, 2006). Such an assessment method is highly related to the educator model of teacher education, as all phases are interactive with each other, giving space to teachers to make critical pedagogical decisions.

As well as monitoring for effectiveness in the lesson, a review of the success of the lesson in the light of planning and the lesson experience is also necessary. Robertson (1981) suggests that reflection and evaluation after a lesson involves: (i) checking whether the lesson has been successful; and (ii) assessing and recording the educational progress of the students. It could be said that there is a difference between evaluation and reflection. Evaluation could be seen as the systematic collection of evidence and judgements, whereas reflection could be seen as less systematic but no less valuable. In the content of initial teacher education courses, teaching skills and competencies are understandably closely related to each other, since the teacher must constantly question, adapt and modify his or her skills and competencies.

Teaching competencies in effective teaching

Harris, Jamieson & Russ (1996) state that the main role of an effective teacher is to create powerful learners. This implies competencies for teachers that go beyond the relevant subject matter to include skills such as flexibility in thinking, continuous self-directed learning, creativity, good communication with students and with other teachers, and the ability to take initiative. In order to underline the relationship between effective teaching and competencies, teaching competencies can be defined as follows:

- The ability to react against a particular situation (Ashton & Webb, 1986).
- Dynamic reaction as a consequence of cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986, 1989).
- The ability to control situations, making decisions and putting these decisions into action (Bandura, 1986, 1990).
- Feeling confident concerning the processes of effective teaching and learning (Smith, 1989; Guskey & Passaro, 1994).

Kyriacou (1991) also identifies three important teacher knowledge and competencies that cover the above definitions holistically. These are:

- **Knowledge:** Teacher's content knowledge, knowledge about student, curriculum, teaching methods and the ability to teach appropriately regarding the factors influencing teaching and learning processes.
- **Decision-making:** Teacher's thinking and decision-making process before, while and after teaching (see also Schön, 1983, 1987).
- **Action:** Teacher's set of actions either as an outcome of teaching or the ones he or she uses while teaching. These can be explicit (desired and deliberate)

or implicit (routine and intuitive). It is rather important to make the implicit action explicit through analysis and questioning of the decision-making process (see also Argyris & Schön, 1974).

These definitions underline the strong relationship between effective teaching and competencies. These competencies are also located within teaching skills, teacher knowledge and theories (see also van Lier, 1994, 1996; Selçuk, 2000; Ayas et al., 2006).

It is recognised in Turkey that if the schooling system is to be transformed, we need something more than good curricula – we need teachers who are competent to take learning beyond what is printed in the curriculum guides. These new demands necessitate a shift from teaching as a transmission of knowledge to a more transactional and transformational teaching, which accepts that learners can be autonomous, actively thinking and learning for themselves. This conception of learning as part of the learner's inner activity and initiative can be viewed as essential to effective teaching within this view and might be linked to the 'constructivist view of learning'. It leads to a different view of the role of the teacher. He or she are now seen as a negotiator, an organiser of learning situations, and one who collaborates, participates and interacts in the context of schooling rather than one who just works in his or her classroom alone with the curriculum guide.

Competence-based model of teacher education: current situation in Turkey

As part of the late 1990s restructuring movement in Turkey, the 'competence-based model of teacher education' was established within the 'craft model' in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice (see YÖK, 1998; also Wallace, 1991). YÖK (1998) has identified four main categories of teaching competencies in a booklet called *Faculty-School Partnership*. These are 'Subject-Specific Knowledge and Teaching', 'Teaching and Learning Processes', 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Record Keeping' and 'Other Competencies' (e.g., being critical). These competencies are defined as observable and assessable teaching behaviour that can be marked by the assessor as 'needs more practice', 'acceptable' and 'well trained' in the evaluation sheet (see YÖK & World Bank, 1998). These competencies, which are derived from teacher knowledge and teaching skills, give teacher educators and school teachers the opportunity to observe and evaluate student teachers' performances in a more standardised and objective way.

Despite these advantages, educational outcomes in this model are seen as part of the production/consumption system (Wallace, 1991). Students are put into

schools, to delivery places, with master practitioners and are supposed to get related craft knowledge. After the required practice period, trainees are supposed to reach professional competence (see also Atay, 2003). This model is essentially imitative in process and is ‘competence-based’ in content (McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Roberts, 1998). Therefore, it potentially avoids the exploration of alternatives and ignores individual differences in trainees’ beliefs, values and experiences. Teaching is reduced to a set of mechanistic competency list.

Teaching journals

Teaching journals have the potential to give space to alternatives and different teaching and learning experiences. According to Day (1993), the first priority of new teachers is to survive, to learn coping teaching strategies and to increase teaching effectiveness in actual teaching. Day suggests that teacher effectiveness through the preparation of journals can help teachers to monitor their experience by giving them something concrete on which to reflect. The autobiographical efforts of the individual teacher are not something new. Kelchtermans (1993) offers analyses of career stories and has revealed the importance of several aspects in the professional development of teachers, which are linked to the personal assessment of their professional experience. The identified aspects include self-image, motivation and satisfaction, and self-questioning in relation to pedagogical knowledge and practice.

Journals might potentially work as a tool to bridge the gap between teachers’ implicit ‘public theory’, teacher knowledge, skills, competencies and practice in the Turkish context. Teachers can relate their ‘personal theories’ with ‘public theories’ through questioning the underlying reasons for their decisions and actions, and reconstruct or ‘reframe’ them if necessary drawing on the journal data (see Schön, 1983, 1987; van Lier, 1994). This has the potential to give more ownership, control, autonomy, choice and responsibility to teachers. Such a process might also lead to reconsideration of practice, change and improvement by encouraging them to act in an explicit, conscious manner as they become researchers-in-practice. Moreover, writing empowers teachers as they become critical decision-makers by using explicit, justifiable evidence, an articulated knowledge base, ‘theorised’ rationale and intrinsic professional sense of purpose.

At my university ELT department in Turkey, there is also a need to make implicit teaching practice explicit and justifiable. For we hold that the keeping of journals (either as a daily or weekly record) helps students undergoing teacher

education to better understand their own decisions, theories, theories-in-action and student behaviour. This forms a basis both for their own understanding of what happens in the classroom and for discussions with other student teachers. This is also a useful experience in the kind of collaboration that is seen as a basic activity for the effective teacher. In Turkey, at least, teachers do not necessarily have the experience of sharing this information and such sharing at the training stage might lead young teachers to see this as a natural part of their professional development in schools. Indeed, Atay (2003) maintains that teacher autobiographies, recollections of past school and teaching experiences, and all kinds of reflective and argumentative essays should all be part of teachers' professional lives. With teaching continuously requiring teachers to exercise judgement in deciding how to act, one can argue that professional development and learning can never really come to an end. It is a life-long process and teachers need to be always aware of the type of educational outcomes they are trying to foster, the appropriateness of the learning experiences they set up and how all that they do can provide good opportunities to achieve effective teaching and learning.

Within this context, in order to establish a more flexible, reflective and process oriented assessment module, three ELT teacher educators (including myself) developed a three-dimensional 'Teaching Practice Journal' to be completed by the student teachers as a part of their teaching practice portfolio that contains information about the faculty-school partnership programme, teaching plans, materials, observation and evaluation sheets, and other necessary documents. This structured journal has three parts – namely 'Planning', 'Actual Teaching' and 'Post Teaching' – and contains 18 questions (10 multiple choice questions and 8 open-ended questions) (see Appendix A). The purpose for developing this journal was to propose a less mechanistic and more holistic evaluation tool, which stresses the whole process of teaching. This would then provide the teacher educator with an opportunity to know about the difficulties, the decision-making process and the reasons behind the actions of student teachers concerning before, while and after teaching. This constitutes a marked improvement, we find, on the previous practice of simply ticking the observable competencies included in the evaluation sheet developed by YÖK as either 'well trained', or 'acceptable' or 'needs more practice' (see YÖK & World Bank, 1998).

Methodology

This study employed qualitative case study research methodology to hear the voices of student teachers' teaching experiences through their journals. The thematic categories that emerged from the data will be discussed below.

Research site

Final 4th year student teachers of an ELT Department at the Faculty of Education take a 5-credits ‘Teaching Practice’ course as a compulsory requirement of their degree programme. They spend 6 hours in practice schools per week (observing the school teacher during the first 2 of their 14 weeks of school placement). From the third week onward, students have turns in teaching. They teach from 3 to 6 hours per week. At times, when they are not teaching, they observe their peers teach. But this depends on the teacher’s programme, the number of trainee teachers at school and the teaching topic. Unfortunately, the faculty does not have much control here – much depending on external factors such as the head of school and the National Curriculum. Our students are also required to attend a 2-hours theoretical course at the faculty with their faculty tutors during the 14 weeks of the spring semester. In the theoretical course, they discuss school and teaching experiences, teaching plans and problems with their faculty tutors in small groups of six.

Participants

Twelve ELT students (2 groups of 6) participated in the study as a compulsory requirement of their degree programme during the spring semester of the 2006-2007 academic year. They kept a teaching portfolio (in which they insert information such as the teacher and peer observation forms, pertinent school documents, classroom details and their time-table) and the three-dimensional Teaching Practice Journal after their actual teaching (see Appendix A).

Teaching practice journal as a research tool

Twelve Students filled this form after each teaching session at school (3 to 6 hours of teaching in 12 weeks). This form is three-dimensional and contains questions about planning (before teaching), actual teaching and post teaching. The idea is to give students an opportunity to evaluate the relationship between planning and implementation in mainstream teaching, and if necessary to readjust or reframe teaching for future use. In the form there are 3 multiple choice planning questions, 7 multiple choice actual teaching questions and 8 open-ended post teaching questions. The answers are discussed with the faculty tutor during the theoretical hours.

The discussion sessions revealed that student teachers find journals useful and would keep them when they become teachers, as journals give them an

opportunity to explore the relationship between their theoretical knowledge and practice. As a teacher educator, I believe that journals contribute a lot to teaching practice since they supply context, content and agenda to the course so that we could focus on problematic areas such as planning, classroom management, giving instructions, choosing the most suitable teaching materials and improving practice for future use.

Data collection and analysis

The present study will focus on the qualitative analysis of the post teaching section of the journal (i.e., the 8 open-ended questions filled by the 12 participating students). Each of these students taught in a state school for approximately 4 hours per week during their 12 weeks of teaching (in the first two weeks they observed the teacher). The 8 questions below form the thematic categories of the data gathered (see Appendix A).

1. What exactly did the students learn? (*Teaching Topic*)
2. Which teaching techniques have I used? (*Teaching Techniques*)
3. Which problems have I faced? (please list) (*Problems in Teaching*)
4. How did I deal with the problems? (please list) (*Dealing with Problems*)
5. Which was the most successful part of the teaching? (*Successful Parts in Teaching*)
6. Which was the least successful part of the teaching? (*Unsuccessful Parts in Teaching*)
7. Did I depart from the initial plan? If yes, why? Did the changes work out and how? (*Changes in the Plan*)
8. If I had to do again the same teaching session, would I change anything? (*Possible Change in Teaching*)

Table 1 illustrates the categories of answers. The number of times these categories were mentioned by students are shown in the parentheses and the most frequent answers are given in bold. These categories are discussed briefly below:

- **Teaching Topic:** The topics taught by the student teachers are shown in Table 1. The student teachers taught from grade 4 to 8. The age of the children taught ranged from 10 to 14 years. ‘Tenses’ (simple present, simple continuous and present perfect), ‘adverbs’ and ‘passive voice’ are taught in the upper grades. ‘Vocabulary’ (colours, days, countries, etc.), ‘simple imperatives’ (come, go, open, etc.), ‘personal pronouns’, ‘indefinite article’ (a/an), ‘wh’ questions’ (where, who, which, etc.), ‘simple adjectives’ (big, small, tall, etc.) and ‘likes/dislikes’ are taught in the lower grades.

TABLE 1: Summary of the student teachers' teaching portfolio (each student: 12 weeks × circa 4 hours teaching per week ≈ 48 hours)

| POST TEACHING THEMES | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Teaching Topic | Teaching Techniques | Problems in Teaching | Dealing with Problems | Successful Parts in Teaching | Unsuccessful Parts in Teaching | Changes in the Plan | Possible Change in Teaching |
| Hours (7) | Question and answer (56) | Material use (2) | Material Use (3) | Presentation (22) | Material use | Change in the material (2) | Group work |
| Like/dislike (6) | Demonstration (7) | Management (25) | Giving tasks (6) | Material use (16) | Exercise in the course book | Change in the student level (2) | Would use song, puzzle or game (2) |
| Vocabulary teaching (10) | Repetition (22) | Grammar point (7) | Use of tables (5) | A particular activity (27) | Instructions (6) | Deleted an activity (20) | Reconsider student level (5) |
| Tense teaching (25) | Wrap-up (8) | Memorisation | Rewriting the sentences | Warm-up (15) | Timing (18) | Revision (3) | Stressing revision |
| Personal pronouns | Feedback (14) | Pronunciation (9) | Reforming the questions | Question and answer | Management (18) | Timing (30) | Timing (14) |
| 'Wh' questions (3) | Pictures (7) | Timing (13) | Timing (8) | Student motivation | Pace of activities (16) | More examples (3) | Less activity (7) |
| Asking age | Warm-up (21) | A particular activity (3) | Student level (2) | Use of native language for clarification | Maintaining motivation (2) | Use of Turkish (2) | Careful planning (2) |
| Adverbs (4) | Audio-visual aids (9) | Maintaining motivation (2) | Error correction (2) | Summary (2) | | No change (10) | Use of voice |
| a/an and plural - s | Presentation (8) | Instructions in English (10) | Repetition (12) | | | | Management (9) |
| Reported speech in present tense | Games (3) | Use of technology | Use of vocabulary in sentences | | | | Less use of course book (2) |
| Adjectives (2) | Guessing intelligently (3) | | Use of drills (4) | | | | Clear instructions (7) |
| Passive voice (2) | Reading aloud (3) | | Writing unknown vocabulary on board | | | | Checking out materials (9) |
| Requests (2) | Grammar teaching (3) | | Raising voice to warn students (9) | | | | No change (12) |
| Weather conditions | Guided discovery | | Omitting an activity (4) | | | | |
| Imperatives (3) | Brain storming (3) | | Monitoring students (5) | | | | |
| | Activities | | Explaining activity in detail (4) | | | | |
| | Pair work (5) | | Summary | | | | |
| | Graphic organiser | | Use of native language (7) | | | | |
| | Group work | | Use of body language | | | | |

- **Teaching Techniques:** The student teachers stated that they used ‘question and answer’, ‘warm-up’ and ‘repetition’ techniques most of the time for introducing the topic, asking and giving feedback, clarification, checking out understanding and communication. The other techniques used were ‘demonstration’ for explanation, ‘giving feedback’, ‘using pictures’ and other ‘audio-visual aids’ (such as music, tapes and TV), ‘games’ for motivation and interaction, ‘reading aloud’ for clarification, ‘group work’ and ‘pair work’ for interaction and sharing. They also used semi-guided activities with upper grades such as ‘guessing intelligently’, ‘guided discovery’ and ‘brain storming’ for creativity and inductive teaching of grammar or vocabulary.
- **Problems in Teaching:** ‘Management’, ‘timing’ and ‘giving instructions in English’ were identified as the most problematic areas in teaching. Other problematic areas were ‘material use’, ‘teaching of a particular grammar point’ (such as plurals and negatives), ‘memorisation difficulties’ and ‘pronunciation difficulties’ of students, ‘teaching of a particular activity’ (such as listening or writing), ‘motivating students’ and ‘use of technology’ (such as the use of computers and tapes in the classrooms).
- **Dealing with Problems:** ‘Repeating problematic parts’, ‘adjusting timing for activities’ and ‘raising voice to warn students’ were the most frequently repeated strategies by student teachers to cope with the problems. ‘Material use’, ‘table drawing’, ‘rewriting the sentences’, ‘reforming the questions’, ‘use of vocabulary in sentences’, ‘use of drills’, ‘writing unknown vocabulary on board’, ‘explaining activity in detail’, ‘summarising’, ‘use of native language’, ‘use of body language’, ‘error correction’, ‘adjusting student level’ were also used for better understanding and clarification of the teaching point. While ‘omitting an activity’ was generally used for timing, ‘monitoring students’ (walking around and changing seating arrangements) and ‘giving extra tasks’ to problematic students were used for classroom management and to cope with misbehaviour.
- **Successful Parts in Teaching:** The student teachers stated that ‘presentation’, ‘material use’ and ‘activity use’ (listening, speaking, etc.) were the most successful parts of their teaching. Other successful parts were given as ‘warm-up’ (introduction to the topic), ‘question and answer’, ‘maintaining motivation’, ‘making use of native language for clarification’ (i.e., Turkish) and ‘summarising’ the lesson.
- **Unsuccessful Parts in Teaching:** ‘Pace of activities’ (sequence of the activities), ‘giving instructions’, ‘timing’ and ‘classroom management’ were

indicated as the least successful parts of teaching. The student teachers had also difficulties in selecting and/or designing the suitable material, exercises in the course book and keeping the students motivated.

- **Changes in the Plan:** ‘Adjusting timing for activities and drills’, ‘deleting an activity’ for more effective use of time and ‘giving more examples’ for clarification were the changes in the initial plan made by the student teachers. They also changed their decisions in using ‘materials’ (using another material or not using the material), simplified the teaching topic according to the ‘student level of understanding’, made ‘revision’ and used ‘native language’ (i.e., Turkish) for more effective teaching. Ten student teachers made no changes.
- **Possible Change in Teaching:** ‘Timing’, ‘management’, ‘checking out materials’ and ‘clear instructions’ were the possible changes for future teaching. The student teachers also considered ‘group work’, ‘use of song, puzzle or game’, ‘reconsidering student level’, ‘stressing revision’, ‘reducing the number of activities to use time more effectively’, ‘more careful planning’, ‘effective use of teacher voice’ and ‘less use of course book’ as possible changes. Ten student teachers stated that they would not change their teaching plan.

Discussion and implications concerning teacher education in Turkey

Drawing on the data, ‘timing’, ‘classroom management’, ‘giving clear instructions’ and ‘pace of activities’ were identified as the most problematic areas in teaching. These areas are considered as essential components of teaching skills – such as ‘lesson planning and preparation’, ‘lesson presentation’ and ‘classroom management and organisation’ – in order to meet the intended educational aims and learning outcomes (Kyriacou, 1986, 1991; Erden, 2005). The data shows that student teachers develop strategies to cope with difficulties such as student misbehaviour, lack of interest and motivation, difficulties in understanding a new topic or instructions, and following the initial plan. Some of these strategies are listed as ‘omitting a certain activity or use of material’, ‘repetition’, ‘simplifying instructions or level of teaching’, ‘using Turkish to teach English’ or using ‘verbal warning’, which are closely related to teachers’ use of ‘knowledge’, ‘decision-making process’ and ‘putting these decisions in action’ (see Schön, 1983, 1987; Shulman, 1986)

These findings are of interest to education faculties preparing students to become teachers. Firstly, the faculty staff has to think about what they do in a more constructive manner, particularly with reference to practical teaching tasks such as planning, classroom management and the decision-making process.

Traditionally, the tasks given to students in training have often had little relevance to what they will meet when they go into classrooms. We need to exclude such tasks from the curriculum and focus our attention on more structured support that is directly related to what our students will be required to do in schools. For example, student teachers need to know about the range of abilities that they will meet in the classroom and how to cope with them. They also need to experience and appreciate how complex it is to work with children and unexpected behaviour or situation. The responsibility for tackling these issues rests with the university staff – they need to reflect on their current practices, with an eye on improvement or change, in view of what is happening in schools. University staff needs to be well acquainted with what happens in schools so that they can prepare students to be effective learners through more practical courses and training. In view of the present findings, we are planning as a department to restructure the content of the teaching portfolio. Our idea is to give more practical knowledge about the problematic issues that emerged from the data, to have micro-teaching sessions and to have closer contacts with school teachers who can possibly identify the sections in the lesson plans that would not work out in their context.

The present move, as part of the current restructuring period in Turkey, to broaden and systematise the teaching experience of trainee teachers on teaching practice will also bring teachers in schools in contact with university teaching departments. This closer contact offers two groups of people, who have had so far very little to do with one another, the opportunity to discuss the school and learning experience. It has already been mentioned that part of the new reform is to have closer links with schools. Part of this initiative is for student teachers to have more time on teaching practice and for tutors and teachers to work more closely together in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice. McClelland (1996) points out that successful teacher education occurs when there is a closer partnership between schools and higher education institutions, with each reinforcing the work of the other. In a genuine partnership, in which teachers also have a valued role to play in the training process, tutors visit schools regularly throughout the placement as opposed to just visiting for the student evaluation. This can give teachers and university tutors a chance to observe and discuss each other's work and be more knowledgeable about what is going on.

A longer placement in schools is useful also because it puts student teachers in direct contact with qualified teachers and gives them experience of a group of teachers whose practice, hopefully, is good. In this way they have a model of the profession to make comparisons with when they move on to teach themselves. Student teachers can gain in confidence by discussing with serving teachers what experienced teachers do, to then decide how that measures up to what they are doing in their training course. However, teachers in schools are not always eager

to take part in teacher training by becoming mentors to student teachers. Student teachers in my ELT department, unfortunately, have pointed out that some serving teachers were not ready to help in matters related to planning, selecting suitable teaching materials, activities and instruction. This brings about the issue of mentor selection and training, as mentors are important parts of teacher training because they are the real practitioners and models in schools with regard to putting teaching skills and knowledge into action.

The systematic observation of lessons, on the other hand, could be an effective research method that we could build into our university courses. We could plan, for example, to undertake such observations at three different levels involving colleagues, students and the classroom teacher. Teachers' and/or student teachers' autobiographies, case stories, portfolios and journals could also be used as part of examining what happens in the classroom. Day (1993) and Grenfell (1998) have argued that such autobiographies have a useful place in helping us to understand what happens in classrooms.

Observations, autobiographies and teaching journals are all part of training young teachers to think about what they do and to realise that teachers are different individuals. Teachers may have different backgrounds, personalities, career experiences and come from different cultures. Within our ideas about what 'effective' means, there must be room for differences between people even if we are constantly trying to establish effective teaching.

Drawing on the literature, being open-minded, interpreting the descriptive data from teaching outcomes, making judgements and evaluating them in the light of aims, values and collaboration are essential teaching aspects (see Erden, 2005). No teacher should be alone – collaboration with colleagues and others involved in education should help the individual teacher to share, clarify, compare, support, advise, analyse and refine together with others. Collaboration is still a neglected area within schools and is presently rare in Turkish schools. It could be encouraged through seminars, tutor-groups and workshops. For Turkey, at least, when it comes to issues of collaboration with other nations in today's globalised world (e.g., the EU projects and programmes such as Socrates and Leonardo), attention must also be paid to moral, ethical and political issues. This will guarantee that the professional and personal judgements can take in the whole of the changes envisaged in our schooling system.

It must be stressed at this point that reforms in Turkey have focused on initial teacher education rather than on improving the effectiveness of teachers already in the classroom. Dunne & Wragg (1994) point out the importance of in-service training to serving teachers, as it includes the opportunity to reflect on what they actually do through the analysis of their classroom practice. To have serving teachers acting otherwise might pose problems for the new teachers trained in a

different way. The climate of the school in which the new teachers start to teach is important to their development in the first years after initial education (this also applies to pre-graduation when they are in their teaching practice phase). If the teachers in those schools do not understand and are not sympathetic to what is changing, that is then likely to have a detrimental effect on new teachers. It takes a very confident new teacher to stand out against the established practice in the school where he or she has the first job as a teacher.

Finally, it does seem useful that we should encourage students to share ideas and look forward to working collaboratively when they are qualified. Cooper & McIntyre (1996) point out that it is necessary to learn about teachers' teaching of different kinds of lessons to different classes and in different circumstances. In this way, they say, student teachers as well as teachers can get more reliable and valid information about their teaching performance, about their strengths and potential weaknesses. If we can encourage student teachers to be reflective about their own practice and about the practice of others during their training, it might be that they also develop the good practice of doing this when they are qualified teachers.

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APPENDIX A

Teaching Practice Journal

PLANNING:

You may circle more than one option.

1. I made my plan concerning these items:
 - a. Educational aims and objectives
 - b. Course content
 - c. Course book and/or teachers' book
 - d. School curriculum
 - e. Student needs
 - f. All
 - g. Other

2. I have divided my plan into sections:
 - a. Warm-up
 - b. Phase of activities
 - c. Organising groups (pair work, group work, etc.)
 - d. Course book and materials
 - e. Timing
 - f. All
 - g. Other

3. I have faced some difficulties when making my plan:
Yes () No ()

If yes:
 - a. Defining aims and objectives
 - b. Defining student level
 - c. Timing
 - d. Defining activities
 - e. Preparing materials
 - f. Course book and/or resource book selection
 - g. All
 - h. Other

ACTUAL TEACHING:

Fill in the blank line below.

4. Today's teaching topic is:

.....

You can circle more than one item in questions 5-10.

5. I have accomplished the teaching objectives:

- a. All
- b. Partly
- c. At some points
- d. Not accomplished
- e. Other

6. Timing for each activity:

- a. Whole class hour (40 minutes)
- b. Nearly whole class hour
- c. Less than minutes
- d. Other

7. I have taught the topic through:

- a. Explaining definitions and rules
- b. Using audio-visual aids
- c. Using instructional technology
- d. Correcting student errors
- e. Organising discussion groups
- f. Using examples
- g. Using simulations
- h. Other

8. I have monitored learning through:

- a. Making students do the drills orally
- b. Asking questions

- c. Recognising student errors
- d. Pair/group work
- e. Discussion groups
- f. Written/oral feedback
- g. Examination/quiz
- h. Evaluating homework
- i. Other

9. Students participated in the activities actively:

- a. All
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely
- e. Never
- f. Other

10. Plan:

- a. Followed wholly
- b. Followed to a great extent
- c. Followed to some extent
- d. Could not follow the plan
- e. Other

POST TEACHING:

Answer the questions below.

- 11. What exactly did the students learn?
- 12. Which teaching techniques have I used?
- 13. Which problems have I faced? (please list)
- 14. How did I deal with the problems? (please list)
- 15. Which was the most successful part of the teaching?
- 16. Which was the least successful part of the teaching?

17. Did I depart from the initial plan? If yes, why? Did the changes work out and how?
18. If I had to do again the same teaching session, would I change anything?



PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION POLITICS: THE CASE OF DISABLED CHILDREN

SIMONI SYMEONIDOU

Abstract – *This paper explores Greek-Cypriot parents' role in influencing developments regarding the education of disabled children in Cyprus. It mainly comments upon parents' conceptualisations of disabled children's rights which guided their responses to educational, social and political issues related to disability. The historical and interpretative nature of this paper is achieved by building arguments through interpreting qualitative data covering the period 1970-2007. Four periods associated with important developments were identified to facilitate understanding of parental involvement in politics: (i) early forms of parental mobilisation; (ii) parent groups acting as 'non-pressure' groups; (iii) parental power through networking; and (iv) resolving issues of identity and power between parent pressure groups. The paper ends with a critical discussion of parental involvement in education politics in relation to the nature of parent associations which constitute this evolving pressure group.*

Introduction

In the light of an increasing appreciation of parental involvement regarding disability related educational issues (Riddell, Brown & Duffield, 1994; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997), parents' role in the developing legislative context of inclusive education is now of interest (Tisdall & Riddell, 2006). In the context of inclusion, the medical and normalising assumptions embedded in segregation and integration are marginalised, theoretically leaving the 'experts' with less power to determine disabled children's future. Many definitions of inclusive education have been advanced, but what actually differentiates integration from inclusion is that inclusion is about the right of all children to full, and not partial, participation in education (Florian, 1998). Parallel to inclusive education theories, theories in disability studies emphasised the social aspects of disability (Oliver, 1990), while the psycho-emotional dimension of impairment (Thomas, 1999) and the impact of history, culture and language to the experience of disability (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002) were also recognised. Within this rich theoretical context, parents' role in shaping their disabled children's every-day lives and influencing developments at political level can be conceptualised through different angles. As far as the education of disabled children is concerned, parents are now expected

to be among the protagonists of the road to inclusion. Their role is not merely restricted to supporting the education of their children. They are now expected to be alert to on-going developments regarding education in order to safeguard fundamental rights and place prospective political changes in the appropriate philosophical and theoretical contexts.

Parents' involvement in educational developments is actually one type of parental advocacy. Prior to reaching this level of involvement, parents exert influence through the level of economic and practical support they are able to offer, as well as through the socialisation in which families are engaged (Dee, 2006). Parental involvement in educational provision is another important type of parental advocacy. Lewis (1993) informs us that in the UK, parents have the right to influence decisions in four aspects of educational provision: (i) formal educational assessment; (ii) appeals; (iii) non-statemented special provision; and (iv) participation or otherwise in the curriculum. Parental involvement can be quite powerful when it comes to decision-making about young people's choices in further education and employment. In many cases, particularly in cases of young people with learning difficulties, parental choices may supersede their children's views (Dee, 2006) or be influenced by professionals' choices (Broomhead, 1998). However, research evidence suggests that parents' role in influencing young people's decisions is significant not only in cases of young disabled people, but also in cases of young non-disabled people (Ball, Maguire & Macrae, 2000; cited in Dee, 2006). Often, parental involvement goes beyond family and school level, and reaches the political sphere. Organised parents, who are accorded the role of advocates, aim to influence political developments to improve the quality of life of their children.

In this context, the extent to which parents should be able to define their children's personal and social lives in the future is an issue. In an imaginary decision-making continuum, where do parents' and children's views meet? Lewis (1993) provides relevant examples to suggest that parents and children may disagree about the nature of children's 'best interests' because they hold different priorities. Parents are expected to safeguard their children's rights while, at the same time, they should appreciate their children's views and their role in decision-making. A fundamental question would be: Are parents adequately equipped to acknowledge their delicate role as advocates and to participate in a continuous struggle for change as equal partners to other stakeholders, such as politicians, ministry officers, teachers and experts? A brief account of parental involvement in educational developments so far can help shape a preliminary answer to the question posed here.

In Cyprus, parents (of disabled and non-disabled children) have a relatively short history of substantial involvement in educational developments. The social,

political and historical context of Cyprus explains their belated engagement in lobbying the state for educational improvement. The Cypriot family has undergone a structural shift which followed the country's shift in politics and economy, and has had an impact on the perceived role of education (Symeonidou, 2005). Cyprus' unsteady political past (Turkish occupation from 1571 to 1878 and British colonialism from 1878 to 1960) justifies the Greek-Cypriots' strong bonds with the Orthodox Christian Church (Phtiaka, 2003) that was seen as the medium toward national, cultural and linguistic survival. Before Cyprus became an independent republic in 1960, a standard family would have many members. People would earn their living through cultivation and farming. As children helped their parents in the fields, schooling was a secondary activity. Most children left primary school before they reached the last grade, as a result of their parents' instigations. Those who managed to graduate from high school were a minority. Young adults, usually males, who managed to get university education, mostly in Greece, were even fewer (Argyrou, 1996). After Cyprus gained independence, and especially after the 1974 invasion, Cyprus' economy changed. The loss of agricultural land favoured light industry and services. Families became smaller: a standard family would have two children. Medium and high socio-economic class parents increasingly value education, as they see it as a means toward well-paid, respectful employment. Nowadays, almost all children graduate from high school and more and more youngsters pursue academic studies either in the University of Cyprus or in other universities, preferably in Greece, the UK and the USA.

Considering the particularities of the Cypriot context, parental involvement in educational issues emerged in co-operation with teachers, a highly respected group of professionals at the time. Polydorou (1995; cited in Phtiaka, 1999) informs us that between the late 1940s and 1950s, Parent-Teacher Associations flourished in Cyprus, having as a main goal the provision of free milk, food and clothes to poor children. Later, parents functioned without teachers' assistance through Parental Associations (PAs), aiming to secure better provision at school level. Today, PAs function collectively at political level through federations and confederations. Arguably, their goals have extended from catering for poor children, to supporting the school financially (securing secretarial services or equipment for school) and, more importantly, to representing parents in consultation with the state.

Parental involvement in educational issues cannot be examined without highlighting another important dimension: parental education. Arguably, this area has traditionally been far from the state's priorities, sentencing parents to become players of an unfair game. Phtiaka's (1999) analysis informs us that parental education approaches in Cyprus have traditionally followed a passive teacher-

centred didactic model. Thus, parents' experiences, perceptions, knowledge and skills were not adequately valued, giving the experts the power to decide what was to be learnt from parents, who were in turn seen as passive students. Over the years, parental participation in such programmes declined, an indication of parents' dissatisfaction of being lectured. Phtiaka (1999) emphasised the need to turn toward a new parental education model that would include parents and experts-teachers in a more dynamic participatory partnership.

Although local research records promising examples of constructive teacher-parent partnerships as far as parents of non-disabled children are concerned (Symeou, 2006), the case differs significantly when it comes to partnerships between disabled children parents' and the stakeholders involved in the education of their children (Phtiaka, 2001). Unequal power relationships among parents and disability experts act as a barrier for encouraging partnerships on equal terms. However, this is not an exclusive feature of Cyprus. Tomlinson (1982) and Barton (1988) were among the first sociologists to theorise on the issue of unequal power relationships between parents and professionals. Riddell, Brown & Duffield (1994) report that relevant studies conducted in the UK provide evidence to suggest that the ideal of parental partnership is a feature more of rhetoric than reality. Often, the idea of partnership is increasingly used by professionals to justify mechanisms which seek to control the behaviour of parents and their children (Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997).

In Cyprus, parents of disabled children have been players in the political game of education ever since it started, although their status has changed over the years. At first, they gratefully accepted anything the state and charitable initiatives would offer – that is, special schools for the education of disabled children (1929 – 1979), the segregating *Special Education Act* (1979) and experts' superiority. After a long period of separatist education, parents came across the idea of integration developed in western countries, and they reluctantly began to advocate for changes in the education system. Alongside all the stakeholders in this process of change, parents witnessed important developments: (i) an influential report suggesting the urgent need to turn toward integration (Constandinides, 1992); (ii) the *Integration of Deaf Children in the Education System Act* (1993) which secured the integration of children with hearing impairments; and (iii) a long consultation process (1995-1998) on subsequent drafts of legislation about integration (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2002) leading to the long-desired *Integration of Children with Special Needs Act* (1999). Parents' views about the implementation of the new law were recently recorded in an evaluation report prepared for the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture (see Phtiaka et al., 2005). According to this report, although parents strongly express their dissatisfaction with the way integration is being implemented, at the same time

they are convinced that integration, not segregation, should be the only option for the education of their children. Despite their frustration, parents are still engaged in the process of securing better education for their children and it is expected that they will be present in forthcoming developments.

This paper reports on research findings regarding parental involvement in policy developments in the education of disabled children in Cyprus. The conceptualisation of this study was guided by the assumptions underpinning hermeneutics, a paradigm falling under the umbrella of interpretive approaches. Given the hermeneutical assumption that there are multiple realities and multiple truths, the researcher is engaged in a process of understanding the meaning of what is being researched in order to provide the best possible interpretation (Schwandt, 1997). As the analysis entails interpretation of parental involvement in key-stages of the process, parents' role is contextualised and significant actions and decisions that acted as turning points in parental struggles are pointed out. Qualitative data covering the period 1970-2007 was used for the purposes of this paper. Part of the data was collected for a larger research project about disability and the disability movement in Cyprus (Symeonidou, 2005). Other primary sources were sought to cover the period after the aforementioned research project was completed. The primary sources used in this paper are only a small part of the large archive of newspaper articles about disability issues, which emerged for the research project. The archive comprised thousands of articles from all Cypriot newspapers published in the periodical *Anapirikon Vima* (1970-1974), the newspaper *Phileleftheros* (1974-1989), the newspaper *Simerini* (1990-1998) and all Cypriot newspapers (1999-2007). A justification of the period covered by each source can be found in Symeonidou (2005). Written responses of PAs to consultation documents discussed in Parliament were kindly disclosed by the Cyprus Parliament Archives Department. The Pancyprian Federation of Parents' Associations of Children with Special Needs and the Cyprus Confederation of Disabled People's Organisations kindly provided access to important documents and minutes respectively.

It is particularly important to comment on the terminology used in this paper, given the linguistic variations which shape the way societies regard disability (Corker & French, 1999). Although Cyprus has imported the British term 'children with special needs' which is still unquestionably used, in this paper the term 'disabled children' is used. This decision was taken in the light of critiques regarding the oppressive assumptions hidden in 'special needs' (Corbett, 1996), and the expressed preference of the international disability movement in favour of the term 'disabled people' (Oliver, 1990). In some parts of the paper, language that is now considered outdated or oppressive is used (i.e., mentally retarded children). This is, however, the result of direct translation of texts that originally appear in Greek, indicating local linguistic specificities.

In the sections that follow, four periods associated with parental involvement and important developments are analysed: (i) early forms of parental mobilisation; (ii) parent groups acting as ‘non-pressure’ groups; (iii) parental power through networking; and (iv) resolving issues of identity and power between parent pressure groups.

Early forms of parental mobilisation

In Cyprus, the recorded history of special education dates back to 1929, when the School for the Blind was founded by the wife of the British governor of Cyprus at the time. The period 1929-1979 marked the gradual establishment of special schools (Phtiaka, 2006a). During this period, special schools were run by a Board of Governors, following their own set of rules and regulations, and working in competition with other special schools and institutions (Phtiaka, 2006a). Far from taking on the nature of a movement, parents’ first associations were scattered across Cyprus. They were also special school based, representing parents whose children attended the same special school, but had different types of impairments. PAs were initially interested in fund-raising activities that would help them build special schools or support the existing ones.

Documentary evidence suggests that Nicosia Special School Parents’ Association, formed in 1972, was one of the first PAs in Cyprus (Nicosia Special School Parents’ Association, 1979). At the time, this particular special school did not function in a special school setting. It was spread in different mainstream schools which sheltered its special classes. The appointed headmaster was travelling on a daily basis to supervise the functioning of the ‘school’. Although this could be characterised as an early form of integration, the parents were strongly opposed to this settlement (Nicosia Special School Parents’ Association, 1979) and focussed instead on collecting all the necessary funds for building the long desired special school:

‘The General Board of Nicosia Special School Parents’ Association announces its effort to establish a Special Fund in order to assist the Ministry of Education in its efforts to build an appropriate building for the School, and calls people to make donations.’ (Nicosia Special School Parents’ Association, 1976, p. 3)

In 1977, the Pancyprian Association for Mentally Retarded People was formed in Limassol. It was a voluntary association aiming to inform society about people with learning difficulties and to lobby the state for improvements in educational provision. Primary data indicates that this association was a mixture of parents representing special school associations, non-disabled people representing special

schools' Board of Governors, and special school staff ('Pancyprian association for ...', 1977). The membership of the first General Board of the association denotes that parents were not expected to lead this association. The chair was Lia Tseriotou, a high profile lady, and the vice president was Amerikos Argiriou, a doctor.

The presence of popular personalities and doctors in associations that were supposed to represent parents was a factor against the empowerment of parents. Parents were forced to believe that having a 'mentally retarded' child in the family was a source of stress for parents and catastrophic for non-disabled siblings. Families saw special schools as a convenient setting for disabled children: a setting that would enable parents to feel that their children are somewhere safe and minimise disabled children's interaction with their non-disabled siblings. In his speech, the vice-president of the Pancyprian Association for Mentally Retarded People, Dr Argiriou, emphasised the need for a special institution for 'mentally retarded' children and adults. Bearing the status of a doctor, he presented a series of arguments to suggest that it is impossible for a number of families to live with 'severely retarded' children and he concluded by stating:

'You will see that the least we will achieve with the institutionalised shelter is a place for these children to live. More importantly, we will have achieved to protect their healthy siblings, to have tranquillity in their family and to save our fellow citizens.' (Argiriou, 1978, p. 8)

At this stage, parents accepted this type of statements and when given the opportunity, they expressed themselves in a similar tone (e.g., Theofilou, 1979, 1980).

Only a few months after this association was formed, a letter of protest was published in the newspaper. The author was Nora Afami (1977, p. 8), a mother of a child with learning difficulties:

'Dear Editor,

I address this letter to the archbishop, the bishops, the ministers Mr Mikellides and Mr Sofianos, and the mayor of Limassol Mr Kolakides. A miserable mother of a mentally retarded child appeals to all those people with philanthropic sentiments who can help. It is about the Institution of Mentally Retarded Children of Limassol. Although the piece of land and the money are available, the construction plans are approved and there is a promise that it will be built as soon as possible, there is no progress. I, personally, and all the mothers of those unhappy children beg you to help us build this institution so that our children are saved from the streets where they become a toy of unscrupulous mean people.

Yours sincerely,
Nora K. Afami'

It is important to note that this mother chose to write this letter as an individual, even though there was a newly formed local association that was expected to represent parents. An important feature of this mother's letter is that she addresses her appeal primarily to representatives of the Church (the archbishop and bishops), then to representatives of the state (the ministers) and lastly, to the representative of the local society (the mayor). Elsewhere, I have argued that in the absence of a human rights discourse, the triad 'State-Church-Society' was expected to cater for disabled children and adults (Symeonidou, 2005). This letter indicates that this mother operated within this context, possibly like many other disabled and non-disabled people at the time, including parents of disabled children.

Parent groups acting as 'non-pressure' groups

By late 1978, parents were convinced that segregation was the most appropriate response for disabled children and their families. PAs were constantly struggling to secure the necessary funds to build special schools and hoped for additional financial contributions on behalf of the Ministry of Education. Although there was no relevant policy, a total of eight special schools functioned at the time (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1979). However, as special schools were founded as a result of private initiative and had their own governing bodies and rules, the Ministry of Education and Culture eventually considered that its authority was restricted.

Thus, in October 1978, the Ministers' Council authorised the Ministry of Education to prepare a White Paper on Special Education, submit it to Parliament and 'promote its passing as soon as possible' (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1978). According to the archives kept in Parliament, there were three consultation meetings (in December 1978, March 1979 and April 1979) prior to the passing of the *Special Education Act* in June 1979. In brief, the law passed with minor amendments six months after it was submitted in Parliament. Twist of fate, or twist of politics, the first *Special Education Act* passed during the International Year for the Child. This served as a political tool for the state which advertised the new law in four special education conferences organised throughout 1979 by the National Committee for the International Year for the Child ('Four conferences ...', 1979).

According to the invitation letter sent prior to the first consultation meeting (Cyprus Parliament, 1978), the bodies invited to discuss the White Paper were the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, the teachers' union and four PAs:

- Pancyprian Association for Mentally Retarded People
- Nicosia Special School Parents' Association
- St Loukas Special School Parents' Association
- Vocational School Archbishop Makarios III Parents' Association

Importantly, the Pancyprian Association for Mentally Retarded People and St Loukas Special School Parents' Association informed Parliament about their interest in being invited to consultation meetings prior to the invitation letter (Pancyprian Association for Mentally Retarded People, 1978; St Loukas Special School Parents' Association, 1978). The Vocational School Archbishop Makarios III Parents' Association also made a similar query, although its wish to participate in consultation was simply to make sure that the functioning of vocational schools would not be part of the forthcoming law (Vocational School Archbishop Makarios III Parents' Association, 1978). There is no recorded evidence in the Parliamentary Archive about queries from other PAs to participate in the consultation process.

The official report that refers to the consultation meeting held on 21 December 1979 (Cyprus Parliament, 1979b) suggests that PAs were generally satisfied with the White Paper:

'Parents' representatives who participated in the Committee for the discussion of the White Paper expressed their satisfaction for the proposed special legislation that will propose arrangements about issues regarding special educational provision for mentally retarded children. They appeared optimistic about the possibility that the government will soon have under its control all the private special schools. They requested that parents should have the opportunity to participate and be heard in issues regarding the implementation of the proposed legislation.' (p. 3)

Parental satisfaction is also recorded in the minutes kept during this meeting (Cyprus Parliament, 1979a). Parents' suggestions at the time fitted the general philosophy of the White Paper. In summary, parents pointed out the need for:

1. collecting information about children who need special education;
2. special educational provision according to each child's needs;
3. parental representation in the general boards and other committees functioning in special schools;
4. differentiated status between special schools catering for children aged 5-18 and special vocational schools catering for children beyond the age of 18;
5. formation of a training school for special teachers;
6. free medical treatment;

7. formation of a special education department at the Ministry of Education;
8. formation of boarding schools for children with special needs.

In summary, points 1-3 appeared in the White Paper prior to the consultation process. Point 4 also appeared in the White Paper, but it was improved following parents' recommendations, and points 5-8 did not appear in the White Paper and were never added.

Overall, parents appeared easy-going and grateful during the consultation process. No consultation documents were submitted in Parliament indicating detailed suggestions or protests. No relevant articles were recorded in daily newspapers either. Parents were satisfied with the proposed legislation because it would legitimate separatist education that was already taking place and secure their children in separate establishments. As separatist education was what they considered best for their children, they were in complete agreement with the government.

Importantly, in this period, a group of parents co-operated with the Pancyprian Organisation for the Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PORDP), a collective organisation established in 1966 to promote disabled people's interests. It was believed to be an umbrella organisation comprising groups of disabled people with different types of impairments, albeit run by non-disabled distinguished figures of the Greek-Cypriot society. Due to the close relationship between PORDP's non-disabled leader and Petros Stylianou, a government politician, disabled people were benefiting a lot from the activities of the organisation in terms of securing social policy developments (Symeonidou, 2005). Parents joined PORDP in 1978-1979 possibly because they saw it as a means of promoting their goals more easily (PORDP's action, 1978, 1979a). A careful triangulation of primary sources reveals that parents who were the leading figures of PAs in special schools also joined the board of PORDP's parental sub-group (PORDP's action, 1979b).

Not surprisingly, PORDP's philosophy was restricted to the medical and charity models. Thus, it contributed in the construction of stereotypes for disabled people by using oppressive rhetoric and by encouraging fund-raising for building different types of segregating settings, such as institutions and medical centres (Symeonidou, 2005). Consequently, parents continued to promote fundraising for building special schools, but this time through PORDP (PORDP's action, 1979b).

Parents' enrolment in PORDP strengthened their beliefs about separatist education and withheld overcoming their internalised distress:

'The situation is extremely difficult and suffocating for families with a mentally retarded child. Even if the parents are well educated, this unhealthy family structure has a negative influence on the development of the healthy child. The lack of harmony and intellectual balance between the

healthy child and the mentally retarded sibling, prevents the healthy child from feeling happy and without any worries, these being important preconditions for shaping his/her character in the first years of life. The child's relations with his/her peers are influenced and we are aware of many cases where the healthy child becomes miserable and unhappy for the rest of his/her life just because of his/her bad luck to be raised in a family alongside a mentally retarded child. We sadly reach the conclusion that in such families, the rights of the healthy child are violated.' (Theofilou, 1979, p. 3; Theofilou, 1980, p. 116)

Theofilou's way of thinking is representative not only of parents' feelings at the time, but also of society's responses to families with disabled members. Importantly, the same extract was published in a daily newspaper in 1979 and in PORDP's periodical in 1980, indicating the persistence in her way of thinking. Her position becomes even more valuable for this analysis if we consider that Theofilou was the president of the PA of an institution for children with learning difficulties and a founding member of PORDP's parental sub-group. If the activist mother of a disabled child was trapped in this oppressive discourse, it goes without saying that parents who were not yet members of such associations would be even more confused about their role as parents and their children's rights.

Parental power through networking

In 1981, Anthoula Theofilou strongly encouraged all parents of children with learning difficulties to join forces in order to form a powerful pancyprian association. Her vision is recorded in a powerful letter published in a daily newspaper (Theofilou, 1981). Her letter had a repercussion in another association operating in Larnaka and Famagusta, whose chair also sent a letter to the newspaper to express his agreement with Theofilou's arguments (Hatzimichael, 1981). The outcome of Theofilou's efforts was the formation of the Pancyprian Parents' Association of Mentally Retarded People in 1982.

The association established co-operation with the non-disabled leader of PORDP, Petros Stylianou, who became the Honorary President of the former ('Respect to the ...', 1982). Between 1983-1985, Petros Stylianou was a consultant for the President of Cyprus and between 1985-1991 he was an elected Member of Parliament for the second time. His political activity was useful for parents who consistently invited him to their meetings. Their decision to lobby for legislative changes to benefit children with learning difficulties and their families was the outcome of joined meetings held in April 1983 ('Actions and events ...', 1983; 'New actions ...', 1983). By the end of April 1983, the Ministers' Council

examined the parents' demand for legislation for mentally retarded people and agreed to promote it ('Legislation for ...', 1983). In this case, parents succeeded in finding a way to lobby the state through a politician who knew the political language very well.

Furthermore, the Pancyprrian Parents' Association of Mentally Retarded People also joined a new collective organisation – the Cyprus Confederation of Organisations of Disabled People (CCODP) formed in 1984, which aimed to substitute the first collective organisation, the PORDP, by accepting only disabled people's organisations as members. Thus, this particular PA became a member after a special arrangement in the CCODP's statutes ('Disabled people ...', 1984). A careful analysis of CCODP's archive (minutes and letters) indicates that CCODP's primary goal was the improvement of the legislative framework for disabled people (Symeonidou, 2005). Primary sources suggest that Anthoula Theofilou, who represented the PA in CCODP, stated that 'the future of mentally retarded people lies in CCODP's actions' (CCODP, 1987, p. 4). CCODP's leader, the lawyer Mikis Florentzos, a leading disabled activist himself, agreed to help her with legislative issues (CCODP, 1987).

The outcome of these fermentations was the passing of the *Mentally Retarded Persons Act* (1989) in 1989. According to the law, a committee should be appointed to safeguard the rights of people with learning difficulties and promote legislative improvements in all areas affecting their lives. The new law also established a fund to assist the committee promote its goals. Increased involvement of the PA in the passing of this law resulted in the legislative arrangement that half of the committee's members should come from their association and the other half should be state officials. This law is a landmark in the association's history. A few years after the passing of the law, a newspaper announcement from the association reminds us that:

'Five years ago, the PANCYPRIAN PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF MENTALLY RETARDED PEOPLE was actively involved in the passing of a law to legitimise the rights of mentally retarded people. The outcome of that powerful initiative was the 1989 LAW FOR METALLY RETARDED PEOPLE (117/89). As a natural consequence of our struggles, our association was recognized as the only propitious body to decide about half of the members comprising the Committee that evaluates the implementation of the Law.' ('For mentally ...', 1993; capitalisation in the original)

In this case, organised parents found their way in politics and they were successful in securing legislation for a particular group of children. They pursued building networks with influential people and groups, until they achieved what they considered best for their children: a special law for people with learning difficulties.

Parental pressure groups: resolving issues of identity and power

In the 1980s, while parents of children with learning difficulties were involved in powerful politics to improve social provision for their own interest group, the idea of integration reached Cyprus. After a critique of the separatist education system expressed in a UNESCO report (Benevento, 1980), the Ministry of Education and Culture adopted the rhetoric of integration recorded in official documents (Phtiaka, 2006a). Soon, integrative practice began to take place in the absence of relevant legislation. The formation of the Pancyprrian Parents' Association of Deaf Children in 1987 determined the massive turn toward integration. Parents of children with hearing impairments expressed their dissatisfaction with the education provided by the School for the Deaf and powerfully lobbied the state to legitimate their children's rights for integration (Kouppanou & Phtiaka, 2006). In 1993, Parliament enacted the *Integration of Deaf Children in the Education System Act* (1993) which legitimised the integration of children with hearing impairments in the mainstream. I shall return to this legislation later in this paper.

In 1991, the Pancyprrian Federation of Parents' Associations of Children with Special Needs was formed. This is a collective organisation aiming to represent parents of children with different types of impairments. Eleven associations joined the federation upon its formation. Importantly, the federation's first president was Pavlos Toumazos, who was also the president of the Pancyprrian Parents' Association of Deaf Children. Today, there are 25 member-associations of different types (Pancyprrian Federation of Parents' Associations of Children with Special Needs, 2007 – see Table 1).

The particularity of the federation's composition lies in the fact that only 6 out of 25 five associations are single-impairment PAs. Twelve associations are special school PAs and four associations are county based PAs. Put simply, the parents' unifying feature was not their child's impairment, but their child's special school or county respectively. Last but not least, three organisations are not PAs, but disability organisations. As I now turn to explain, the federation's position on educational developments that followed is closely related to its synthesis.

Parents' pressure for integration prior to the formation of the federation resulted in the appointment of a committee to investigate the provision of special education and make suggestions for improvements. PAs and the parents' federation expressed their views to the committee which finally produced a report, known as the Constandinides Report (Constandinides, 1992), which suggested the legitimisation of integration. Based on this report, three subsequent draft legislation documents about integration were prepared (1995, 1997 and 1998) and parents were involved in a consultation process held in the Education

TABLE 1: Synthesis of the Pancyprrian Federation of Parents' Associations of Children with Special Needs in 2007

| Association Type | Members | Number |
|--|---|---------------|
| Parents' Association of Special Schools, Institutions and Services Centres | Parents whose children attend the same special school, institution or services centre, but they do not necessarily have the same type of impairment | 12 |
| Single-Impairment Parents' Associations | Parents whose children have the same type of impairment | 6 |
| County Based Parents' Association | Parents whose children attend schools in the same county, but they do not have the same type of impairment | 4 |
| Disability Organisations | Disabled and/or non-disabled people | 3 |
| Total Number of Associations | | 25 |

Parliamentary Committee. This time, parental involvement was more powerful than their involvement in the consultation process of 1978-1979 described earlier. PAs submitted documents with detailed suggestions about the proposed legislation and they participated in numerous parliamentary meetings. The interplay between parents' suggestions and state's reservations regarding the cost of the legislation resulted in amendments and compromise, discussed in more detail elsewhere (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2002). In what follows, I will focus on the collective parents' views about the last draft legislation of 1998.

The parents' federation expressed its views on the draft legislation of 1998 by submitting an amended copy of the draft legislation with their suggestions in blue and red print. The points in blue were parents' suggestions for additions and the points in red were the points parents wished to be crossed out. This interesting way

of expressing their views was taken into serious consideration during the discussions in Parliament, and the federation expressed its satisfaction for the deputies' commitment (Pancyprian Federation of Parents' Associations of Children with Special Needs, 1998). With this multi-colour copy, which revised specific points of the draft legislation, parents demonstrated their overall agreement with the philosophy of integration proposed in the forthcoming legislation.

A focus on the parents' federation response to the 1998 White Paper, and their additions and deletions in blue and red print, could be summarised as follows:

1. The new law should be part of the general education law.
2. The state should cater for disabled children from birth.
3. Children with learning difficulties, sensory or bodily impairments should attend the mainstream school, except in cases of children with multiple impairments.
4. The state should provide educational services for children who cannot attend the mainstream school due to health problems.
5. The state should develop regulations about the functioning of special schools.
6. The state should issue a 'Code of Practice' to guide services to target children who may have special needs and to support parents.
7. Parents' role in the assessment procedure should be strengthened.
8. Special schools should not be 'neighbouring' mainstream schools: rather, they should be built in the same place with mainstream schools.

Generally speaking, parents' suggestions signify that they were committed to securing the future of special schooling, while at the same time being in favour of integration. Their position is strongly related to the synthesis of the federation analysed earlier. It is evident that special school PAs felt that their children should continue to attend special schools, and that they thus should secure better educational conditions in these settings. In fact, they even specified the categories of children that should attend the mainstream and the special schools (point 3).

The federation's position about one particular issue demonstrates that parents had a long way to go until member-associations resolved issues of identity and power. According to the 1998 White Paper, all existing legislation relevant to the education of disabled children would be abolished after the passing of the new law. Even though the parents' federation agreed with the abolition of the first segregating law of 1979, it was against the abolition of the 1993 legislation about the integration of children with hearing impairments (*Integration of Deaf Children in the Education System Act*, 1993). Why did parents oppose the abolition of the

1993 law when the proposed legislation would still cater for children with hearing impairments? Why should children with hearing impairments continue to have their own law?

The answers in these questions are partly found in the philosophy underpinning the views of the Pancyprrian Parents' Association of Deaf Children, and partly in the cultural assumption that whatever is gained at political level should never be abolished. Parents of children with hearing impairments had been long struggling for the passing of the 1993 law, which was considered as the most successful outcome of their organisation. They were confident that the education provided in the School for the Deaf, the only special school for children with hearing impairments, was inappropriate. This was also emphasised in an influential evaluation report about the quality of education of children with hearing impairments (Markides, 1990), which suggested that all types of education for children with hearing impairments were problematic (i.e., School for the Deaf, special unit, mainstream class). According to Kouppanou & Phtiaka (2006), parents were so determined to secure integration for their children that they marginalised deaf education experts because they considered them responsible for the poor education provided by the School for the Deaf. They also marginalised the views of the organisation of adults with hearing impairments (Kouppanou & Phtiaka, 2006). Thus, it was extremely difficult for parents to let go of this law, even though its implementation was problematic, as it was never followed by regulations. Their commitment in safeguarding the 1993 law is expressed in the following letter which they sent at that time to Parliament:

'The Pancyprrian Association of Parents of Deaf Children works with all member-associations of the Pancyprrian Federation of Parents' Associations of Children with Special Needs for shaping shared positions about the White Paper that will be presented to you as soon as possible [...] We want to strongly emphasise that the Pancyprrian Association of Parents of Deaf Children will **never** accept the abolition of 61(I)1993 Law which safeguards the unconditional integration of deaf children in the main body of education without bureaucratic processes [...] **Parents of deaf children will never accept their children attending special schools without their will.**' (Pancyprrian Association of Parents of Deaf Children, 1998; emphasis in the original)

Evidently, parents of children with hearing impairments were worried that the new legislation would leave their children exposed to a bureaucratic system that could lead to placement in a special school without taking parents' opinion into account. Despite their initial insistence on this, parents finally agreed to the abolition of this law.

The amended copy of the draft legislation submitted by the parents' federation was prepared only seven years after the federation was formed, justifying the nature of its suggestions. From 1991, when the federation was formed, to 1998, when the federation submitted the final document with parents' suggestions on the draft legislation, the federation's member-associations gradually increased from 11 to 21. In this period, the consultation on the white papers proposing integration was the first and most significant mission of the federation. Member-associations, although having only a short experience as part of a federation, hardly struggled to find a balance between what is best for the group of children they primarily represented and what is best for children with different types of impairments that they were expected to represent as members of the federation. The fact that the vast majority of its member-associations were not single-impairment PAs was crucial, as parents did not have to struggle over the different needs of each impairment group to the extent the disability movement had to do (Symeonidou, 2005). Most PAs were representing children with different types of impairments who shared the same special school.

The passing of the 1999 law marked the political transition to integration, giving a sense of satisfaction to organised parents. Its official implementation in 2001 began with gradual accommodations to improve integrative practice. As it is often the case, a gap between policy and practice was unavoidable. A recent evaluation report funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Phtiaka et al., 2005) informs us about the difficulties encountered to implement integration by the different stakeholders (i.e., ministry officials, teachers and parents). As far as parents are concerned, Phtiaka et al. (2005) report that integration is implemented in a way that exhausts them physically and mentally without achieving the promised goals. Mainstream schools were not restructured in a way to encourage integration and, more importantly, teachers did not receive adequate training regarding their new role. Phtiaka (2006b) reports that parents feel alone, intimidated and powerless, and they have limited means of expressing themselves or affecting change. Despite the difficulties they face, parents insist on integration and they demand improvement of integrative practice.

Discussion

In summary, parents' role in influencing educational developments has followed a trajectory that denotes their unchanged desire to improve educational provision and a changing philosophy about what is best for their children's education. This trajectory was influenced primarily by their effort to conceptualise the particularities of their role as parents of a disabled child in the given society

and an on-going struggle to find their way in politics as organised parents. Their involvement in consultation with the state was long guided by the medical and the charity models characterising the local culture. Initially, they sought support from high profile people, doctors, the Church and state officials. They also co-operated with charity organisations run mainly by non-disabled people campaigning for disabled people's interests. Parents were carried away by a language of disability oppression which hindered political changes and led to the reproduction of social and cultural stereotypes toward disabled people. Over the years, parents began to make a turn toward the social model of disability without putting the medical model aside, as they maintained that segregated educational provision can be more beneficial for their children.

I would argue that together with the historical, political and social particularities of Cyprus (see also Symeonidou, 2002), there are concurrent factors that withheld parents' powerful lobbying of the state. To begin with, the absence of a representative number of single-impairment PAs led to limited opportunities for distinct parental group members to interact, share experiences, exchange views and co-operate for their children's best interests. This prevented them from shaping a group identity, a necessary prerequisite for powerful political engagement of a group (Hofstede, 2001). The plethora of special school PAs and county based PAs sentenced parents to reproduce the medical and the charity models characterising both the local culture and the nature of education provided by special schools. Although further research needs to be undertaken with regard to the synthesis of the three types of PAs (i.e., single-impairment, special school based and county based), it is important to keep in mind that parents' class differences are related with different types of impairment associations. Arguably, middle class parents of children with some kind of physical impairment or specific learning difficulties are more powerful (Riddell, Brown & Duffield, 1994). Indeed, in the case of Cyprus, the membership of single-impairment PAs comprises middle class and articulate parents who have occasionally managed to influence legislative developments for their own interest group.

Given the limited number of single-impairment PAs, interaction with equivalent single-impairment organisations of disabled people was restricted. Since most parents were not operating through single-impairment PAs, why would they even consider initiating co-operation with disabled people's single-impairment organisations? Such an interaction perhaps would enable parents to become better informed about the particularities of the education of their children, and the transition to adulthood and the labour market. For example, if constructive dialogue was initiated between parents of children with hearing impairments and the equivalent adults' organisation, parents' lobbying for change perhaps would have been different and more beneficial for their children. Although

disabled people's organisations in Cyprus have still a long way to go until they also engage in powerful disability politics, they have made important progress in criticising oppressive policy from a human rights perspective (Symeonidou, 2005). Possible co-operation with PAs would benefit both groups, particularly in thinking about the transition to a discourse that respects linguistic and cultural specificities, and is not oppressive to disabled people –namely, a 'new disability discourse' (Corker, 1999). Last but not least, I need to address the absence of self-advocacy groups of adults with learning difficulties. People with learning difficulties are considered passive persons with limited ability to participate in decision-making about their lives. This belief gives parents an increased sense of responsibility and authority over their children's lives and leaves the issue of empowering people with learning difficulties untouched.

The absence of single-impairment PAs in Cyprus prevented parents from shaping a group identity that would strengthen their involvement in their collective federation and facilitate the shaping of a collective identity. To be more specific, parents did not undergo all the necessary steps to form a collective identity that would enable them to function as a collective movement (Crossley, 2002). Unlike the disability movement (see Symeonidou, 2005), parents did not struggle to resolve basic issues such as collective ways of protest, ways of lobbying the state, and ways of safeguarding the rights of all disabled children without undermining the particularities of different impairment groups. The fact that the parents' federation did not support the abolition of the law for the integration of children with hearing impairments, at a time when a new law was emerging to legitimate the integration of all disabled children, is quite informative of the nature of the federation. Last but not least, parents seem to be trapped in a perceived hierarchy of impairments that rests in the local culture, similar to the one characterising the disability movement (Symeonidou, 2005). Parents' sense of impairment hierarchy needs to be researched further, and the connections with parents' social class and their children's type of impairment need to be drawn.

Although everyday life is a continuous struggle for parents of disabled children, they are empowered to influence decision-making and improve their children's quality of life. Even though parents are often seen as a disempowered group that does not speak the language of the politicians or is guided by experts, parents can still find ways to be empowered. Tisdall & Riddell (2006) argue that in the light of existing legislation, parents are now a powerful lobby group of which politicians and civil servants are very aware. In Cyprus too, parents have demonstrated that they can create the prerequisites of becoming politically powerful, and they have also begun to prosecute the state for not securing educational provision as expected according to the law. As parents gradually gain political power and build networks, the question is to which direction they will use it.

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AWARENESS OF SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES AMONG SCIENCE EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AT THE HASHEMITE UNIVERSITY IN JORDAN: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract – *The primary purpose of this study was to assess the level of students' awareness about sustainability issues at the Hashemite University in Jordan. A 30-item instrument, adapted from Dunkerly-Kolb (1998), was used to collect data from a sample of 230 preservice science and vocational teachers during the academic year 2005-2006. Results indicated that preservice science and vocational teachers showed medium level of awareness about sustainability issues. Additionally, results indicated that participants appeared to be independent from their natural surroundings. The study suggested few practical solutions for faculty members and for the university administration to incorporate sustainability principles into university curricula.*

Introduction and theoretical framework

The concerns about the quality of the environment have attracted the attention of the global community. These concerns are considered to be the precursors to develop positive attitudes in people toward the environment. As a result, developing such favourable environmental attitudes has occupied main sections in many international environmental documents (e.g., World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987). The underlying notion in these documents is that developing caring attitudes about the environment can lead to build good citizens who, in turn, can promote good environmental practices and actions in others.

Many educators argue that preparing scientifically literate citizens should be the ultimate goal of instruction at schools, colleges and universities. They believe that scientific literacy enables people to take right decisions to solve their future socio-economic problems (Colucci-Gray, Giuseppe Barbiero & Gray, 2006), such as shortage in quality food, water, and air. However, many researchers argue that most social and economic issues have a major environmental dimension (Fien, 1993; Cortese, 1999; Hares et al., 2005). They argue that good citizenship requires

a familiarity with the social and economic processes that accompany most environmental issues and some understanding of how the scientific method works (Schneider, 1997; Brickhouse & Kittleson, 2006). Environmental literacy should therefore be a major task for schools and universities in the future (David, 1974; Orr, 1992; Brennan, 1994; Bowers, 1996; Hsu & Roth, 1998; Colucci-Gray, Giuseppe Barbiero & Gray, 2006).

According to Brönmark & Hansson (1998), environmental literacy should include the skills necessary to make educated decisions about environmental problems by being able to integrate information from different disciplines (e.g., solving the population problem requires knowledge from geography, biology, agriculture and other fields). However, although an environmentally literate person is not required to be an expert in technical details, he or she is expected to have a knowledge base of how science and its products (e.g., technology) work in order to evaluate the assessments that surround most environmental policy debates (Schneider, 1997).

Environmental education is recognised as the most promising approach to increase environmental literacy and awareness, and to produce a logical knowledge base on which people can make intelligent decisions to protect the environment (Desinger, 1982). In recent years, much of the discussion of environmental education employs sustainable development as a key guiding notion (Bonnett, 1999), where sustainable development means ‘the development that meets the generation’s needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs’ (WCED, 1987, p. 43). Indeed the growing consensus about the usefulness of the notion of sustainable development is reflected in a number of influential reports, including *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987) and *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [UNCED], 1992).

Education intended to prepare sustainably aware citizens is known as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (Orr, 1992; UNCED, 1992; Fien, 1993), which differs in turn from environmental education by including issues of international development, cultural diversity, and social and environmental equity.

ESD attempts to prepare future environmental citizens (Fien, 1993; Cortese, 1999, 2001; Sterling, 2001) by focusing on providing students with broad and diverse sources of knowledge. More importantly, the goals of ESD are for students to develop a deep concern about the welfare of the planet, its ecosystems, its cultures and its people. As such, it is therefore important that people understand that they are part of nature and the need to view environmental problems holistically (Colucci-Gray, Giuseppe Barbiero & Gray, 2006).

While the education of the future generation rests in the hands of educators from different disciplines, colleges of education are seen to play a vital role in modelling and practising ESD in their teaching. However, incorporating ESD at schools, both in Jordan and globally, faces many obstacles (Cortese, 1999; McKeown, 2002). Some of these obstacles relate to the educators themselves, while others relate to the need of equipment and preparation.

Addressing these obstacles may greatly contribute to limit the current environmental degradation in the globe. However, limiting that degradation cannot be accomplished without limiting the local and national degradation of the natural resources of every country. With mankind being the major contributing factor to the degradation of earth's natural resources, raising people's awareness of sustainability principles could significantly contribute in overcoming this problem. It was therefore decided that this study sets out to measure the level of awareness that Jordanian students have about sustainability principles. Our choice of Jordan is particularly interesting as it currently faces serious problems in view of its limited and degraded natural resources.

Jordan and its environmental challenges

The geography of Jordan

Jordan is a relatively small country situated at the junction of the Levantine and Arabian areas of the Middle East. Jordan occupies an area of approximately 96,188 square kilometres, including the Dead Sea, making it similar in size to Austria or Portugal. However, Jordan's diverse terrain and landscape belie its actual size, demonstrating a variety usually found only in large countries.

Western Jordan has essentially a Mediterranean climate: a hot, dry summer, a cool, wet winter and two short transitional seasons. However, about 75% of the country can be described as having a desert climate with less than 200 mm of rain annually. Jordan can be divided into three main geographic and climatic areas: the Jordan Valley, the Mountain Heights Plateau, and the eastern desert (or Badia region).

Wildlife and vegetation in Jordan

Throughout history, the land of Jordan has been renowned for its luxurious vegetation and wildlife (Al-Eisawi, 1996). Known in the Bible as the 'land of milk and honey', the area was described by more recent historians and travellers as green and rich in wildlife (Alnewashi, 2003). During the 20th century, however, the health of Jordan's natural habitat declined significantly. Problems – such as

desertification, drought and over-hunting – have damaged the natural landscape and will take many years to rectify (Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature [RSCN], 1994).

Current environmental threats and the Jordanian response

The Jordanian habitat and its wildlife communities have undergone significant changes over the centuries and continue to be threatened by a number of factors (Alnewashi, 2003; Ministry of Environment, 2003). A rapidly expanding population, industrial pollution, wildlife hunting and habitat loss due to development have taken a toll on Jordan's wildlife population. Jordan's absorption of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, since 1948, has resulted in the over-exploitation of many of its natural resources, and the country's severe shortage of water has led to the draining of underwater aquifers and damage to the Azraq Oasis (Ministry of Environment, 2003).

In recent decades, Jordan has been addressing these and other threats to the environment, beginning the process of reversing environmental decline. A true foundation of environmental protection requires awareness upon the part of the population, and a number of governmental and non-governmental organisations are actively involved in educating the population about environmental issues (Alnewashi, 2003). Jordan's Ministry of Education is also introducing new literature into schools' curriculum to promote awareness of environmental issues among young students (Alnewashi, 2003).

The national strategy presents specific recommendations for Jordan on a sector-by-sector basis, addressing the areas of agriculture, air pollution, coastal and marine life, antiquities and cultural resources, mineral resources, wildlife and habitat preservation, population and settlement patterns, and water resources (Al-Eisawi, 1996; Alnewashi, 2003). The plan places considerable emphasis throughout on the conservation of water and agriculturally productive land, the contamination or loss of which would bring swift and significant consequences to Jordan.

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) has been at the forefront of Jordanian efforts for wildlife conservation. Founded in 1966, the RSCN was the first non-governmental organisation of its kind in the Arab world. The society addresses a wide range of environmental concerns, but its primary *raison d'être* is the preservation of wildlife, both in the Jordanian mainland and in Aqaba's coral reefs and coastline.

The national environmental strategy

For Jordan, environmentalism is neither a luxury nor a trend destined to go out of style in time. The country's scarce resources and fragile ecosystems necessitate

a viable and ongoing programme of action covering all aspects of environmental protection. In order to maintain a viable resource base for economic growth, as well as to preserve the region's natural heritage, Jordan became the first country in the Middle East to adopt a national environmental strategy (Ministry of Municipal, Rural, and Environmental Affairs, 1991). With help from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, in May 1991 a team of over 180 Jordanian specialists completed a practical and comprehensive working document entitled *National Environment Strategy for Jordan*.

The document is a long-term environmental blueprint for government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sector businesses, communities and individuals. It also contains a wealth of information about Jordan's natural and socio-economic environment. The strategy is predicated on the fundamental principle of sustainable development, which the report defines as

'development which increasingly meets human needs, without depleting the matter and energy of the ecosystem upon which development is founded. An economy which develops sustainably would be designed to perform at a level which would allow the underlying ecosystem to function and renew itself ceaselessly.' (Ministry of Municipal, Rural, and Environmental Affairs, 1991, p. x)

The study

Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the level of awareness about sustainability issues among undergraduate students of the School of Educational Sciences at the Hashemite University in Jordan. The following research objectives were pursued in this study.

- **Objective 1:** To assess the level of awareness about sustainability issues among students at the Hashemite University.
- **Objective 2:** To determine the differences in students' awareness related to sustainability issues based on gender, academic level and academic achievement (GPA), and the class taken (Science vs. Vocational).

Significance of the problem

The preparation of future citizens rests in the hands of educators. The ongoing degradation of national and global environments requires new strategies to impede

that degradation. Educators believe that preparing sustainably aware citizens through sustainability education will contribute significantly to resolving the current environmental degradation (Orr, 1992; Fien, 1993; Cortese, 1999; McKeown, 2002). However, the notion of sustainability education is being underestimated at both national and global levels (Calder & Clugston, 2003). This study addressed the lack of research on sustainability education in the Jordanian context. It intended to assess students' awareness about sustainability issues at the School of Educational Sciences, Hashemite University.

The results of the study are expected to help the Hashemite University administrators, as well as other administrators in other universities in Jordan, to reformulate their educational policies toward addressing sustainability issues in their curricula. Furthermore, it may help them improve their pedagogical strategies to promote sustainability education in their teaching.

Methodology

Population and sample

The population of the study included all the Hashemite University undergraduate students who were enrolled in the 'science education' and 'vocational education' courses offered by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction during the second semester of the academic year 2005-2006. The selection of this purposeful sample of prospective teachers stems from the belief that researchers have about the vital role that teachers play in teaching for sustainability. However, we decided to choose our sample from students from the School of Educational Sciences, and not from other university schools, as their prospective career will be only teaching.

In this study, there were two sections of the science education course with a total number of 120 students and two sections of the vocational education course with a total number of 110 students, resulting in 230 participants. Twenty students were excluded from the actual sample as they had participated in the pilot study. As a result, the actual sample of the study included 110 science education students and 100 vocational education students.

Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect data in this study was a two-part questionnaire named Awareness of Sustainability Issues (ASI) adapted from Dunkerly-Kolb (1998). The first part of the questionnaire collected demographic information

related to students' gender, academic level and academic achievement (GPA), and class type (Science vs. Vocational). The second part of the questionnaire included 30 items related to students' awareness of sustainability issues (see Appendix A). These items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale as follow: 1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Neutral; 4 – Agree; and 5 – Strongly Agree.

Validity and reliability of the instrument

The original English version of the ASI was developed after: (i) an extensive review of the literature; (ii) consultation with field centres for environmental education and natural resources; and (iii) participation by a panel of experts including administrators, university faculty members and public officials (Dunkerly-Kolb, 1998). The ASI was shown to have both content and face validity. For indication of reliability, the ASI was studied with 405 students, resulting in an acceptable reliability coefficient of .71 (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994).

Instrument translation process

To ensure equivalence of meaning of the items and constructs between the Arabic and English versions of the ASI, a rigorous translation process was used that included forward and backward translation, subjective evaluations of the translated items and pilot testing. The goal of the translation process was to produce an Arabic version of the ASI with items that were equivalent in meaning to the original English version (Lomi, 1992; Sperber, Devellis & Boehlecke, 1994). Two translators (faculty members), both bilingual in English and Arabic, translated the English version of the ASI into Arabic (forward translation). These translators were asked to retain both the form (language) and the meaning of the items as close as possible to the original, but to give priority to equivalence of meaning. When the Arabic translation was finalised, the ASI was then back-translated (from Arabic to English) by two other faculty members, again both bilingual in English and Arabic.

The back-translated items were then evaluated by five faculty members to ensure that the item meanings were equivalent in both the original English version and the back-translated version. If differences in meaning were found between items, those items were put again through the forward and backward translation process until the faculties were satisfied that there was substantial equivalence of meaning. The finalised Arabic version of the ASI was then pilot tested with a group of 20 students and 10 faculties to collect feedback about instrument content and usage. The feedback from the students did not lead to any substantive changes.

The feedback from the faculties emphasised that the instrument has both face and content validity in the Jordanian context.

It is known that there are several concerns that surround the adoption of a ready-made questionnaire to be used in a different context. While some of these concerns revolve around the content of the items themselves, others revolve around the cultural connotations that items might have. However, the researchers of this study were aware of these major concerns and employed careful strategies to overcome these difficulties. For the issue concerning the content of the original items of the questionnaire, the researchers consulted a panel of experts in environmental sciences to make sure that the content is relevant to Jordanian environment and deals with national environmental issues. With regard to the concern of the cultural meaning that the original items of the questionnaire might have, the panel of experts consulted by the researchers confirmed that the items were culture-free and would not be misunderstood by the respondents.

Instrument standardisation

The instrument was pilot tested with a group of 20 students who were enrolled in the science education and vocational education courses. These students were then excluded from the actual sample of the study. The changes recommended by the validation panel and those identified as needed during the pilot test were incorporated into the instrument. These changes occurred only in the wording of items. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using the same group of students used in the pilot study. Based on the pilot test, the 30-item instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of .79. With regard to instrument dimensions, the reliability coefficients were as follow: (i) independence from nature (.83); (ii) adherence to nature (.76); (iii) interdependence with other members in nature (.80); and (iv) interest in nature (.79). These figures suggest that the instrument is suitable to measure students' awareness of sustainability issues.

Data analysis

To answer the first objective, descriptive statistics were used to compute the means and standard deviations for the items of the ASI instrument. The SPSS statistical package (version 11.5) was employed to carry out these analyses. The second objective was achieved initially by conducting factor analysis to determine the number of dimensions that exist within the 30 items. Then, the objective was answered using the *t*-test statistic and multivariate analysis of variance

(MANOVA). The *t*-test statistic was used to determine differences in students' awareness related to sustainability issues based on gender, academic level and academic achievement (GPA). In the case where the independent variables in the study had three or more levels (e.g., educational level), the MANOVA statistic was utilised.

Data collection

During the last two weeks of the second semester of the academic year 2005-2006, the researchers handed the instrument to students in the two sections of the science education course and the two sections of the vocational education course. Data were collected in class from 200 students, with a response rate of 95% (200 out of 210). Twenty percent of the respondents were males and 80% were females. Forty-two were freshmen (21%), 52 sophomores (26%), 48 juniors (24%) and 58 seniors (29%). Finally, while 55.5% of the students had an overall grade-point average higher than 3.0, 40% (80) of the students had a GPA lower than 3.0.

The results

- **Objective 1:** To assess the level of awareness about sustainability issues among students at the Hashemite University.

Analysis of the first question data involved the tabulation of 'awareness of sustainability issues' means. The calculation of the total mean score was based on student responses to each item in the selected scale, using the 5-point Likert scale detailed above (see 'instrumentation' section). Given that the 30 items of the ASI questionnaire could each be scored from 1 to 5, the range of scores on the questionnaire items was therefore between 30 and 150. Consequently, the levels of awareness about sustainability issues were interpreted using the following categories: (i) 30-69 = low awareness level; (ii) 70-109 = medium awareness level; and (iii) 110-150 = high awareness level. These categories indicated the level of awareness about sustainability issues among students at the Hashemite University. Students at the Hashemite University were found to have a medium awareness level ($M = 98.45$, $SD = 8.14$) with regard to sustainability issues.

- **Objective 2:** To determine the differences in students' awareness related to sustainability issues based on gender, academic level and academic achievement (GPA), and the class taken (Science vs. Vocational).

To answer this question, a factor analysis statistic was utilised to determine the dimensions of the used instrument. The following paragraphs describe this procedure in detail.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis was used to determine how many reliable and interpretable dimensions there are among the 30 items of the ASI questionnaire. Factor analysis was conducted to determine what, if any, underlying structure exists for the measures on the 30 items. Principal dimensions analysis was conducted utilising a varimax rotation.

The initial analysis retained only four dimensions. After rotation, the first dimension accounted for 17%, the second for 10%, the third for 9%, and the fourth for 6% (see Table 1). Table 2 presents the loadings for each dimension. Dimension number 1 – which was labelled ‘independence from nature’ – included items with both negative and positive loadings. Positive loadings included the variables of 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 20, 22 and 23. Negative loadings included items 1, 9 and 24. Items with the highest loadings were 8 and 5. Dimension number 2 – which was labelled ‘adherence to nature’ – included items 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 30. The item with the highest loading was 16, while 15 was the only item with a negative loading. Dimension number 3 – which was labelled ‘interdependence with other members in nature’ – included items 2, 4, 7, 11, 18, 19, 21 and 28. Item 2 carried the highest loading, while items 4, 11 and 19 had negative loadings. Dimension number 4 – which was labelled ‘interest in nature’ – included items 25, 26, 27 and 29. Two of the four items (i.e., 25 and 27) had negative loadings and the item with the highest loading was 26.

TABLE 1: Total variance explained

| Dimension | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | total | % of variance | cumulative % | total | % of variance | cumulative % |
| 1 | 4.984 | 16.615 | 16.615 | 4.984 | 16.615 | 16.615 |
| 2 | 2.862 | 9.539 | 26.154 | 2.862 | 9.539 | 26.154 |
| 3 | 2.610 | 8.699 | 34.853 | 2.610 | 8.699 | 34.853 |
| 4 | 1.783 | 5.944 | 40.796 | 1.783 | 5.944 | 40.796 |

TABLE 2: Dimension loadings

| Item | Dimension | Loading |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Dimension 1: Independence from Nature | | |
| 8 | | .683 |
| 5 | | .650 |
| 9 | | -.623 |
| 22 | | .613 |
| 23 | | .514 |
| 24 | | -.509 |
| 10 | | .484 |
| 3 | | .483 |
| 1 | | -.482 |
| 6 | | .388 |
| 20 | | .364 |
| Dimension 2: Adherence to Nature | | |
| 16 | | .785 |
| 14 | | .669 |
| 17 | | .631 |
| 12 | | .578 |
| 13 | | .560 |
| 15 | | -.493 |
| 30 | | .340 |
| Dimension 3: Interdependence with Other Members in Nature | | |
| 11 | | -.581 |
| 2 | | .502 |
| 18 | | .493 |
| 21 | | .457 |
| 19 | | -.449 |
| 4 | | -.372 |
| 7 | | .323 |
| 28 | | .311 |
| Dimension 4: Interest in Nature | | |
| 25 | | -.821 |
| 27 | | -.818 |
| 26 | | .812 |
| 29 | | .432 |

In order to answer the second objective of this study, four-way MANOVA were conducted for the four dimensions of the sustainability awareness mean scores by gender (male & female), academic level (first, second, third & fourth year), average (below 3 & above 3) and the class taken (science & vocational).

TABLE 3: Four-way MANOVA sustainability awareness by gender, academic level, average and class taken

| Effect | Wilks' Lambda Value | F | Hypothesis df | Error df | p |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|---------------|----------|-------|
| Gender | .985 | .585 | 4 | 159 | .674 |
| Academic | .958 | .575 | 4 | 159 | .863 |
| GPA | .972 | 1.154 | 4 | 159 | .333 |
| Class Taken | .920 | 3.437 | 4 | 159 | .010* |
| Gender X Academic Level | .934 | .920 | 12 | 420 | .526 |
| Gender X GPA | .986 | .568 | 4 | 159 | .686 |
| Gender X Class Taken | .991 | .344 | 4 | 159 | .848 |
| Academic Level X GPA | .925 | 1.043 | 12.000 | 420.966 | .408 |
| Academic Level X Class Taken | .954 | .634 | 12.000 | 420.966 | .813 |
| GPA X Class Taken | .992 | .308 | 4.000 | 159.000 | .872 |
| Gender X Academic Level X GPA | .897 | 1.468 | 12.000 | 420.966 | .133 |
| Gender X Academic Level X Class Taken | .975 | 1.039 | 4.000 | 159.000 | .389 |
| Gender X GPA X Class Taken | .993 | .299 | 4.000 | 159.000 | .878 |
| Academic Level X GPA X Class Taken | .974 | .536 | 8.000 | 318.000 | .829 |

* indicates significant result

Table 3 presents the four-way MANOVA results. MANOVA results revealed significant differences between the class taken (Wilks' Lambda = .920, $F(4, 159) = 3.437, p = .010$) on the four dimensions of the dependent variable of sustainability awareness. Univariate analysis was conducted as a follow-up test.

MANOVA results indicated that gender (Wilks' Lambda = .985, $F(4, 159) = .585, p = .674$), academic level (Wilks' Lambda = .958, $F(4, 159) = .575, p = .863$) and GPA (Wilks' Lambda = .972, $F(4, 159) = 1.154, p = .333$) and the interaction between gender, class taken, academic level and GPA had no significant effect on the students' sustainability awareness.

Table 4 shows the respective mean values and standard deviations of the four dimensions of the ASI questionnaire, and Table 5 presents a summary of the ANOVA results regarding students' class type.

TABLE 4: Means and standard deviations for the four dimensions

| Dimension | Class Taken | N | M | SD |
|--|-------------|-----|-------|------|
| Independence from Nature | Science | 108 | 35.23 | 4.76 |
| | Vocational | 80 | 31.90 | 4.32 |
| | Total | 188 | 33.81 | 4.85 |
| Adherence to Nature | Science | 108 | 23.11 | 4.20 |
| | Vocational | 80 | 26.10 | 3.00 |
| | Total | 188 | 24.38 | 4.01 |
| Interdependence with Other Members in Nature | Science | 108 | 27.47 | 3.49 |
| | Vocational | 80 | 28.41 | 2.98 |
| | Total | 188 | 27.87 | 3.31 |
| Interest in Nature | Science | 108 | 12.23 | 2.32 |
| | Vocational | 80 | 12.59 | 1.69 |
| | Total | 188 | 12.38 | 2.08 |
| Total | | 188 | 98.45 | 8.14 |

Discussion and implications

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the level of students' awareness about sustainability issues among preservice science and vocational teachers in the School of Educational Sciences at the Hashemite University in

TABLE 5: ANOVA summary for students' sustainability awareness regarding their class type

| Source | Dependent Variable | Type III Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p |
|------------|--|-------------------------|-----|-------------|----------|------|
| Intercept | Independence from Nature | 48978.889 | 1 | 48978.889 | 2289.892 | .000 |
| | Adherence to Nature | 25488.205 | 1 | 25488.205 | 1847.603 | .000 |
| | Interdependence with Other Members in Nature | 32376.660 | 1 | 32376.660 | 2942.772 | .000 |
| | Interest in Nature | 6661.584 | 1 | 6662.584 | 1468.213 | .000 |
| Class Type | Independence from Nature | 161.433 | 1 | 161.433 | 7.547 | .086 |
| | Adherence to Nature | 30.679 | 1 | 30.679 | 2.224 | .138 |
| | Interdependence with Other Members in Nature | 24.565 | 1 | 24.565 | 2.233 | .137 |
| | Interest in Nature | .406 | 1 | .406 | .090 | .765 |
| Error | Independence from Nature | 3465.046 | 162 | 21.389 | | |
| | Adherence to Nature | 2234.836 | 162 | 13.795 | | |
| | Interdependence with Other Members in Nature | 1782.340 | 162 | 11.002 | | |
| | Interest in Nature | 735.027 | 162 | 4.537 | | |
| Total | Independence from Nature | 219341.813 | 188 | | | |
| | Adherence to Nature | 114780.000 | 188 | | | |
| | Interdependence with Other Members in Nature | 148055.563 | 188 | | | |
| | Interest in Nature | 29636.000 | 188 | | | |

Jordan. Two groups of preservice teachers (science and vocational) participated by responding to a 30-item awareness of sustainability issues questionnaire (ASI).

As indicated in the results section, the mean value of the students' response on the ASI questionnaire was 98.45, signifying a medium level of students' awareness about sustainability issues. However, when performing the factor

analysis statistic on the items of the instrument, four major dimensions emerged. These were: (i) Independence from Nature (mean value 33.81); Adherence to Nature (mean value 24.38); (iii) Interdependence with Other Members in Nature (mean value 27.87); and (iv) Interest in Nature (mean value 12.38). These figures indicate that both science and vocational preservice teachers appeared to be independent from their natural surroundings. This means that their first priority was not considering the environmental consequences of their actions, but their benefits and satisfaction. This non-environmental attitude of students, coupled with their low interest in nature, could be attributed to, and perhaps limited by, the type of education that these teachers received during their preparation. This is in line with the findings of the Calder & Clugston (2003) report on evaluating the progress toward sustainability in higher education. Calder & Clugston (2003) indicate that education for sustainable development has been under funded and under supported, both within and outside of the academic community. They argue that one source of that underestimation is the tensions that have arisen between environmental educators and sustainability educators, which has led in turn to no consensus being found on who or which institutions should guide the higher education on sustainable development movement.

The present finding suggests that, if we are to transform our current education into sustainability education, more attention should be paid to incorporate sustainability concepts into Jordanian higher education. Methods that can be employed by faculty members to incorporate the concepts of sustainability into their teaching include assigned readings, class discussions and class projects. Key benefits of incorporating the concepts of sustainability into teaching include increasing student awareness, collaboration, vision development and social implications. These strategies are also supported by Filho's (1999) earlier research findings that increasing awareness often leads to increased acceptance of sustainability.

However, leaving the mission of incorporating sustainability concepts in higher education only to the faculties' own interests would not help in accomplishing that mission. As university faculty have expanding work responsibilities, special support for faculty and staff is needed in order to successfully integrate the concepts of sustainability in university teaching (Clugston & Calder, 1999). The university, for instance, could involve its faculty and staff members in campus-wide sustainability initiatives (Filho, 1999). These initiatives could help faculty members increase their students' awareness and understanding of concepts of sustainability (University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, 1998). Establishing special sustainability centres (University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, 1998; Filho, 1999) could also facilitate the systematic reinforcement of the value of achieving success in integrating the concepts of sustainability in university teaching.

Another suggestion for Jordanian universities to promote sustainability education within their borders would be to offer faculty development opportunities for sustainability, including workshops and conferences, and to change tenure and promotion requirements in order to reward innovative scholarly focus on sustainable development and contributions to public debate and policy development (University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, 1998).

Furthermore, universities can also promote the articulation of the notion of sustainability by conducting annual campus environmental assessments and by greening their physical operations to make campuses model sustainable communities (Shriberg, 2002). They can also buy green products and use campus purchasing to leverage the development of sustainable local and regional economies (Rothblatt, 1995).

Moreover, universities can foster student engagement by creating a student environmental-sustainability centre on campus and by supporting student activism beyond the campus (Lele, 1991; Kidd, 1992). Again, they can encourage interdisciplinary and integrated thinking through internships and service learning (Clugston & Calder, 1999).

After incorporating sustainability principles in its curricula, the university should seek to increase the level of awareness of the surrounding society about sustainability issues. The literature indicates that it is of paramount importance to increase the level of sustainability awareness throughout society as a whole (Michelsen, 2000). According to Abraham (2005), a sustainable society provides a high quality of life for all of its inhabitants without harming the integrity and productivity of the natural systems and resources upon which all life depends. As such, sustainability should be a goal toward which we could all strive.

Universities are not the only educational institutions in Jordan that have the responsibility to disseminate sustainability principles among students. Jordan's Ministry of Education should play a vital role in incorporating the concepts of sustainability into the schools' curricula. The Ministry of Education can use a number of strategies to accomplish this mission. One such strategy is to use research-based assessment to help teachers analyse their course content for environmental concepts.

Another strategy is to equip the school laboratories with multiple environmental teaching resources (e.g., environmental kits, posters and laboratory sheets) and to encourage teachers to make use of these resources by designing their scientific experiments around special environmental topics that help raise their students' awareness and attitudes toward the environment.

It is important to note that incorporating sustainability concepts into Jordan's curricula requires reliable coordination between the Ministry of Education and

local NGOs (e.g., Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, Jordan Environment Society and school clubs for the conservation of nature). This would help them to focus their efforts of disseminating sustainability concepts in Jordanian society without waste of time and efforts.

At the end, it is the universities that hold the tools that will allow societies to become sustainable. We thus owe it to the rest of the world to provide them with the mechanisms to achieve this goal. But still, the education of all people is the key to success. For educated people can understand the global impact of their actions and make informed decisions *vis-à-vis* how the world should be for the future generations.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire: Students' Awareness about Sustainability Issues

| No | Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. | Sciences and technology can solve any future food shortage problems. | | | | | |
| 2. | To get along in the world, you need to think about yourself first. | | | | | |
| 3. | I would like to always live in the town or city where my family lives. | | | | | |
| 4. | The government takes care of poor people in my town or city so I don't need to worry about them myself. | | | | | |
| 5. | People can get more done when they work together. | | | | | |
| 6. | Sometimes we need to damage our town's natural areas to have the things we want (e.g., bigger houses and nicer neighbourhoods). | | | | | |
| 7. | Living things can be taken apart and understood just like machines. | | | | | |
| 8. | In order to feed ourselves now, we can't afford to think about our effect on the future generations in my town or city. | | | | | |
| 9. | I feel a peacefulness outdoors that I don't feel in any other place. | | | | | |
| 10. | As soon as I finish school, I would like to leave this town or city for good. | | | | | |
| 11. | Being a part of my community is important to me. | | | | | |
| 12. | I would like the natural areas in my town or city to stay the same as they are now. | | | | | |
| 13. | The farmland in our area has its limits on how many people it can feed without being destroyed. | | | | | |
| 14. | It bothers me when I see buildings in my town or city vandalised. | | | | | |

| No | Item | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-----|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 15. | I am afraid of encountering dangerous animals when I walk in the woods. | | | | | |
| 16. | Part of the person I feel I am comes from living in this town. | | | | | |
| 17. | I could get along without many of the things I own. | | | | | |
| 18. | People who stay in the same town all their lives must not have much ambition. | | | | | |
| 19. | I see nature as a community of creatures of which I am a part. | | | | | |
| 20. | It's easy to get along without ever asking for your neighbours' help. | | | | | |
| 21. | Scientists have the ability to understand someday everything about the natural world. | | | | | |
| 22. | I feel a special connection to nature that is difficult to explain. | | | | | |
| 23. | I would move away from this town or city to advance my career. | | | | | |
| 24. | I think most of the concern about environmental problems has been exaggerated. | | | | | |
| 25. | Knowing about environmental problems and issues is important to me. | | | | | |
| 26. | A community's pollution regulations should not interfere with industrial growth and development. | | | | | |
| 27. | I am concerned about the issue of deforestation. | | | | | |
| 28. | More controls should be placed on industry and agriculture to protect the quality of the environment, even if it means that the things I purchase will cost more. | | | | | |
| 29. | I believe that plants and animals exist to be used by humans. | | | | | |
| 30. | I am not concerned about the rate of species extinction in the world. | | | | | |



THE IMPLICATIONS OF LEBANESE CULTURAL COMPLEXITIES FOR EDUCATION

LINDA AKL

Abstract – *The numerous cultures that exist in Lebanon are in constant conflict. This paper tries to identify the extent to which multiculturalism influences the Lebanese educational system. The paper tries to develop possible solutions to the educational problems created by a multicultural Lebanese society by comparing and contrasting western liberal-secular educational ideologies. The solutions arise from an examination of: (i) the influence of Lebanon's politico-religious history on the national cultural identity; (ii) the infrastructure of Lebanese schools and universities; (iii) some politico-religious events in Lebanese educational institutions; and (iv) the multilingual society of Lebanon which manifests itself in patterns of social and academic behaviour.*

Introduction

Lebanon has managed to survive numerous wars and internal conflicts. Its geostrategic position as a small country lying between Syria and Israel makes incursions by these opposing foreign powers inevitable. Lebanon still exists on the map but the fundamental quandaries remain. The consequences of the multiple Lebanese cultures and the ways in which they relate to one another and impact on the Lebanese educational system are unique and complex.

This paper provides a brief overview of the various entangled elements that underlie the Lebanese culture and explores their influence on the educational system. The purpose is to set a framework for future empirical research on the issues of equality within the Lebanese educational system. Since there is a limited amount of published research within the Lebanese context on this topic, this paper draws on constructs created by western cultural theorists. The author of this paper draws upon her own and others' personal experiences to exemplify some of these theories.

Culture symbolises the specialised lifestyle of a group of people (Devito, 2004) and 'can be thought of as a blueprint that guides the ways in which individuals within a group' (Biehler & Snowman 2003, p. 145) perceive, believe, evaluate, value, share and work (Arends, Tannenbaum & Winitzky, 2001; Eggen & Kauchak, 2003; Femiano et al., 2005). In addition, when religion plays a prominent role in culture, it is difficult to separate the impact of religion from other

cultural influences. Berger's (2003) comment that 'as soon as one looks at culture one is looking at religion' (p. 4) applies particularly to the Lebanese situation. Furthermore, language and culture are deeply intertwined and 'one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture' (Iskold, 2002, p. 103). Thus, culture is a dynamic phenomenon that encompasses numerous, usually covert, variables. These underlying components appear to be the reason why cultural problems are not easily identified and solved. The importance of religion and language, and their effect on the formation of a culture, vary from one community to another. Lebanon is a good example of a country in which religion and language profoundly affect the evolution of the culture which, in turn, influences the educational system.

The Lebanese Republic is one of the most unusual states in the world, encompassing a melange of cultures. It is a conglomeration of paradoxes and contradictions. Lebanon as a polity is archaic, inefficient and divided; it is also democratic, traditional and modern (Hudson, 1985). As described by Harris (2006):

'Lebanon's story is a particularly rich and varied tapestry, encompassing sectarianism and class conflict, secularism and religious radicalism, Islam and Christendom, the Orient and the West, Sunni and Shi'a, Israel and the Arabs much else besides.' (p. 9)

Lebanon is a country with a mosaic of cultures, a linguistic kaleidoscope and a vivacious population. Lebanon is difficult to classify according to the usual typologies, it is a democracy, but it is also an oligarchy (Hudson, 1985).

The infrastructure of Lebanon and the coordination of its highly articulated subcultures create fundamental problems on various levels and in many organisations, including the educational system. Most of the research that deals with multicultural education has been designed by western writers who are guided by a liberal-secular ideology which fits into the cultural formation of their respective societies. In order to look at multiculturalism from an insider's point of view it is important to look at the various components of the Lebanese educational system. These include:

1. The foundation of the school system and its cultural implications.
2. The formal and the hidden curriculum.
3. The infrastructure of the Lebanese universities and their affiliations within a cultural context.
4. The politico-religious events that are taking place within educational settings.

Furthermore, this paper will look at Lebanon's politico-religious history and Lebanese multilingualism in order to explore how they influence the development of a Lebanese national cultural identity.

The influences of culture on educational systems

It is difficult to challenge the view that culture impacts on learning (Evans, Schweingruber & Stevenson, 2002; Eggen & Kauchak, 2003; Armstrong, Henson & Savage, 2005). However, each culture influences pedagogy in a different way. Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) generated a framework for defining some of the ways in which educational relationships are constructed in different cultural situations. At opposite ends of the continuum are the collectivist cultures and the individualist cultures. Collectivism pertains to societies where the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual, whereas individualism pertains to societies where the interest of the individual prevails over the interest of the group (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Western cultures tend to be individualistic, whereas most non-western cultures tend to be collectivist (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002; Anjum et al., 2005).

In individualistic societies, multicultural education is dealt with by constructively using students' diverse backgrounds as enhancements instead of impediments (Eggen & Kauchak, 2003; Armstrong, Henson & Savage, 2005). In addition, the teacher's role is viewed as a mediator of cultural diversity (Arends, Tannenbaum & Winitzky, 2001; Biehler & Snowman, 2003). This western perspective on multicultural education can be labelled a 'liberal-secular ideology'. Many multicultural educational programmes for students are built upon this ideology (Kluth & Straut, 2001; Barth, 2002; Gay, 2003; Schaps, 2003; Wolk, 2003; Shields, 2004; Albright & Kugler, 2005; Bazron, Fleischman & Osher, 2005; Bismilla et al., 2005; Napoliello & Powell, 2005).

Furthermore, the liberal-secular ideology is a significant feature of national identities. For example, there is arguably a hegemonic culture evident in the UK and the USA. The dominant populations are white Anglo-Saxon, and English is the basic language. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a power-dominant view of what it means to be a citizen of the UK or the USA. Even though many subcultures exist within these two countries, there appears to be a dominant, albeit sometimes contested, national identity and language. Accordingly, the subcultures are at a disadvantage. This puts pressure on minority groups to integrate to the cultural hegemony. It is possible that this hegemonic culture drives liberal-secularists to deal with multicultural education in a way that is compatible with their cultural perspective. Therefore, these liberal-secular approaches to the educational field are easily applied in western cultures.

In contrast to western individualistic cultures, Lebanon is characterised by collectivist cultural values (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Lebanese multiculturalism is fragmented to the extent that the notion of a national identity is highly contested. This is because there is no single dominant faction which promotes the development of a central Lebanese identity. When national identities are weak, national unities are threatened. In the absence of a hegemonic culture, conflict is difficult to resolve. The equivocal dominance of the Lebanese cultures lack constructive interaction except on functional levels. There are difficulties in communicating thoughts about the various cultural differences, which are at the core of the Lebanese quandaries. In exploring these issues, the author will refer to Barth's (2002) concepts of 'nondiscussables'. Some western concepts on multicultural education are of questionable value to Lebanese educational concepts. The reason being the liberal-secular argument that the diversity of students is something to be highlighted, acknowledged and explored rather than ignored.

The following are central to Hofstede & Hofstede's (2005) account of the construction of educational relationships in collectivist societies:

- Students tend to speak up in class only when sanctioned by the group.
- Students from different ethnic backgrounds often form subgroups in class.
- Students from the same ethnic background as the teacher or other school officials tend to expect preferential treatment.

Whereas, these authors argue that in individualistic societies students expect to be treated as individuals and preferential treatment of students is considered nepotism. In addition, Hofstede & Hofstede (2005) point out that collectivist cultures usually tend to have 'large power-distance' cultural dimensions. Power-distance is defined as 'the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed equally' (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 46). Thus, in terms of relating the power dimension with educational relationships, these authors highlight the following features of educational settings in collectivist cultures:

- Authority resides with the teacher.
- The parent-child inequality is perpetuated by a teacher-student inequality.
- The educational process is teacher centred.
- In the classroom, there is strict order with the teacher initiating all communication.
- Teachers are never publicly contradicted or criticised and are treated with deference, even outside the school.

There is a difference between the way multiculturalism is defined in western cultures and the way it is defined in eastern cultures. The use of the term multiculturalism in the West often refers to ethnic minorities, religious and racial differences, foreign students, and challenged or gifted students (O'Brien et al., 2003; Schaps, 2003; Albright & Kugler, 2005; Bazron, Fleischman & Osher, 2005; Bismilla et al., 2005; Napoliello & Powell, 2005). In Lebanon, multiculturalism refers to similar types of diversity with the additional category of related political affiliations. Paradoxically, the Lebanese culture is characterised by the absence of a single dominant culture. In this paper it is argued that the Lebanese culture is in fact characterised by the presence of diverse and un-integrated subcultures. However, within these subcultures, the ethnic, religious and political components are deeply interwoven in such a way that ethnic identification is associated with linguistic identity and political and religious affiliations. Appendix A shows how the key elements of the Lebanese culture overlap. Furthermore, education systems are main functions of cultural reproduction. Their role is not to change the culture but rather to reproduce it harmoniously (Bernstein, 1970). Central to this paper is the argument that there is an absence of a national Lebanese identity to promote within schools. So each faction in the Lebanese society tends to reproduce its own culture in the schools that it organises in the diverse Lebanese educational system.

Key historical cultural influences in Lebanon and the Lebanese national identity confusion

There are deeply entrenched historical reasons that underlie the confusion about Lebanese national identity. After the First World War, the Middle East was divided according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, by which France and Great Britain each took responsibility for the governance of a country (Ismail, 1972). Great Britain was allocated control of several areas including some Arab countries. France was allocated control of several countries, Lebanon included. When French forces landed in Beirut, Christians cheered their arrival whereas the Muslims watched the arrival of the French with grave apprehension (Salibi, 1988). This welcome presaged the acceptance of the French mandate which was enthusiastically accepted by the Christians and adamantly rejected by the Muslims (Salibi, 1988). This conflict was the result of the earlier occupation of Lebanon by the Muslim Turks (the Ottoman Empire) who had fought against the victorious western powers during the First World War (Ismail, 1972). Lebanese Muslims had been privileged under the Ottoman occupation, whereas under the western occupation the Christians were favoured by the then dominant power (Hudson, 1985).

The Lebanese government and the French authorities decreed the creation of the State of Greater Lebanon (Picard, 2002). Leaders from the Christian majority, in consultation with the French mandate authorities, wrote the Constitution in 1926 (Hudson, 1985). This led in turn to the creation of the Lebanese Republic (Grafton, 2003). It is sometimes referred to as the Franco-Maronite¹ creation of Greater Lebanon; a Maronite concept for Maronite purposes (Harris, 2006). It left the Muslims feeling alienated because they aspired to Arab unity (Hudson, 1985; Dagher, 2000).

Consequently, from the 1920s onward the Lebanese have developed contrasting ideas regarding the role and identity of the Lebanese polity (Dagher, 2000). At the two ends of the spectrum are what have been termed 'Lebanonism' (proponents being exclusively Maronite Christians) which views Lebanon as something detached from its Arab neighbourhood and 'Arabism' (proponents being Muslims) which views Lebanon as an integral component of the Arab world (Salibi, 1988; Harris, 2006). Lebanonism implied asserting the mythology of Phoenician origins and of attachment to the West, which could be labelled 'Maronite Nationalism' (Harris, 2006). Consequently, the two forces collided on every fundamental issue, impeding the normal development of the state (Salibi, 1988). In 1991, the word 'Lebanonisation' emerged, meaning the 'process of fragmentation of a state as a result of confrontation between diverse communities' (Harris, 2006, p. 1). This one word basically describes the disjointed infrastructure of Lebanon.

Christians and Muslims disagree on major concepts, such as Arabity, pluralism and cultural differences (Dagher, 2000). Even though Christians and Muslims remain in strong disagreement on how the Lebanese Republic ought to be generally interpreted and run, both sides have become equally convinced that there can be no viable alternative to Lebanon as territorially constituted (Salibi, 1988). 'Geography has constrained their coexistence while history has taught them that living together – for better or worse – was an irrevocable fate' (Dagher, 2000, p. 6).

The legacy of the confused national Lebanese identity is that 'both doctrinaire Christians and Muslims feel superior to and threatened by each other' (Hudson 1985, p. 91). The Muslims and the Christians of Lebanon did not exhibit a common identity in 1920, or in 1943 when the Lebanese Republic gained its independence on the basis of a 'polite fiction' (Salibi, 1988) of national unity among its people, or in 1958 when the Muslim and Christian Lebanese were in conflict with each other for six months over the issue of pan-Arab unity (Salibi, 1988). Clearly then, culture is not synonymous with nationality because even if individuals of a certain country are taught similar beliefs, attitudes and values, enormous differences will emerge (Devito, 2004). As Salibi (1988) described the

Lebanese situation: ‘to create a country is one thing, to create a nationality is another’ (p. 19).

The influence of Lebanon’s multilingualism on its culture and educational systems

Multicultural societies often ‘contain a single dominant high-status group whose language is the lingua franca of the nation and a number of other ethnic groups whose languages are subordinate’ (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002, p. 427). This is what the current author refers to as cultural hegemony. Lebanon’s multicultural society has equivocal levels of multilingualism, yet there is a distance between the various factions as a result of the aforementioned historical reasons. Although language is the most obvious sign of cultural difference within Lebanon, it is merely the symptom of a deeper symbolic rift. The root of the rift is religion, which is based on the historical clashes, which in turn resulted in the Lebanese national identity confusion.

Christian groups adopted the French language, traditions and customs. Muslim groups preferred to speak and to teach their children the Arabic language. Nevertheless, they adopted English as their second language since many came from Arab countries at a time during which Britain had power of authority. Given that language is one of the most distinct and clear markers of ethnic identity (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002) and speech styles cue ethnic identity, each factionalised Lebanese culture conveys its individuality and its distinctiveness by the language it has adopted. For example, at a shop in the western side of Lebanon the salesperson would say the price in English or Arabic, whereas in the eastern side the price is mostly spoken in French or in Arabic. Interestingly, national greetings are almost always spoken in French: ‘*bonjour*’, ‘*bonsoir*’, or on the phone ‘*allo*’. A good example of the complexity of the Lebanese culture is a common phrase used by the Lebanese, which combines all three languages: English, Arabic and French: ‘*Hi, kifak, ça va?*’ Translation: ‘Hi, how are you, fine?’

The Lebanese language

English began surreptitiously to seep into Lebanese-Arabic, leading to a fusion of languages into what is now referred to as ‘Arabinglizi’ (Al-Yousef, 1999). The grammatical structure of these words is derived from English roots and ‘Arabified’ (for examples see Appendix B). Hence, in addition to the already existing words with French roots, English words mutated into ‘Arabic’ words. These changes led

to the following significant question: 'What is the language of Lebanon and what implications does it have for education?' Thonhauser (2001) researched this issue and reported that this simple question turned out to have not as simple an answer as might have been thought. The following example further elucidates the complexity of the linguistic divisions. A student coming to Lebanon from the University of Cambridge, UK, with the intention of strengthening her Arabic language, ended up leaving Lebanon without any improvement in her Arabic language, while polishing her English and French languages. She expressed her dismay by asking: 'Why don't the Lebanese like to speak their own language?' (cited in Al-Yousef, 1999). The question should not be generalised, as this is not the case with *all* Lebanese.

For historical reasons, the Lebanese Christians preferred to speak French and English instead of Arabic, as they tried to ignore the Arabic culture in order to strengthen their lifelong quest for independence from the Arab world (Dagher, 2000). The link between Arab and Islam is clear, however the link between Christians and Arabs is vague. The overwhelming majority of Arabs happen to be Muslims, hence Islam naturally underlines the sense of common ethnicity among most Arabs (Salibi, 1988). In addition, the foundation of the Arab world's identity and the expression of its specificity is the Arabic language. This coincides with the language of Islam, which can only be fully learned and embraced in Arabic (Dagher, 2000). This association between the Arabic language and Islam presents the real dilemma for eastern Christians (Dagher, 2000).

When a population perceives its ethnic identity to be a source of self-respect and pride, it accentuates it (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). It is common for some Christian Lebanese to de-emphasise their Arabic native language because of its connotations. Some Lebanese Christians refer to their language as Lebanese and not Arabic to emphasise the distinction. According to Salibi (1988), the Lebanese Christians have no doubt about the matter, they remain 'Lebanese regardless to which extent the outside world might choose to classify them as Arabs, because their language happened to be Arabic' (p. 27). Conversely, Muslims value their Arabic language. They are in a position where it is pragmatic to learn alternative languages to succeed in this modern era. Further, historic friction between Muslims and the French language seemed to have declined by the late 20th century (Dagher, 2000). However, it is possible that this symbolic convergence has been interrupted by the most recent war that took place in July 2006.

Another example of Lebanon's multilingualism is provided on the streets where most placards combine languages (Al-Yousef, 1999; Thonhauser, 2001). This includes the colloquial Arabic, which follows no rules or grammar and is

usually written in English script. Appendix C provides an example of a placard in Lebanon. A further uniqueness of the Lebanese multilingualism is in informal writings. For instance, '*ana mnie7*' translates to 'I am fine'. Obviously, numerical numbers replace letters (e.g., the number '7' is used to replace the stressed 'H' sound). The numbers chosen resemble the letters in the Arabic language (e.g., '7' is _ and '3' is _ in Arabic). However, official documents are usually written in Arabic, the official language, before being formally presented².

The implication of language for the educational system

Most private schools in Lebanon require students to learn two main languages (Arabic and either French or English) and a third minor language (English or French). Some even implement a curriculum containing all three languages with equal importance. In addition, schools implement formal Arabic which is different from spoken Arabic. Hence students are introduced to yet another new language, which ignores all prior experiences that have shaped the student's identity and cognitive functioning. Within a constructivist approach, educators would argue that teachers with students from linguistically diverse backgrounds should explicitly activate their students' prior knowledge. This knowledge embraces not only the information or skills previously acquired in formal instruction, but also the totality of the experiences that have shaped the learners' identity and cognitive functioning (Bismilla et al., 2005).

'The study of language in society illustrates how the members of a culture use verbal expression to define themselves and others in relation to one another' (Block & Lemish, 2005, p. 154). Furthermore, the manner in which a person speaks (accent or language) affects the way s/he is evaluated by others. The reason does not envelop the probability that 'certain speech styles are intrinsically more pleasing than others, but rather because speech styles are associated with particular social groups that are consensually evaluated more or less positively in society' (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002, p. 427). Similarly, in educational settings, students coming from diverse backgrounds are distinguished by their primary language (Au & Blake, 2003). This is particularly true in a Lebanese classroom where students' ethnic backgrounds will be recognised by the manner in which they speak. Consequently, teachers will identify the social group to which students belong and, if the teachers hold preconceived biases and prejudices, discrimination for or against those students might occur. Not only could students be subjected to unfairness because of their language and ethnicity, but a teacher's perception of students' academic abilities could also be influenced by the students' language use (Galguera, 1998).

Religious cultural factors underpinning educational institutions

Lebanon is dominated by its religions. Religion is not only part of the Lebanese culture, it is the catalyst that binds the individual subcultures internally. Casual or professional encounters between Lebanese people often entail indirect questions, with the intention of finding out the religion of the other person. The Lebanese population comprises different religious communities: the Christian (mainly Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics) and the Islamic (Sunnite Muslims, Shiite Muslims and Druze) (Salibi, 1988).

A research article by Jamali, Sidani & Safieddine (2005) reported that ‘the Muslims are estimated to comprise 70 per cent of the total resident population, with the remaining 30 per cent Christians’ (p. 584). However, this is not entirely accurate because although Jamali, Sidani & Safieddine (2005) claim that these figures are based on 2002 data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) website (see <http://www.undp.org/>), the present author found that the UNDP website does not break down the Lebanese population by religion and only reports that the total Lebanese population was 3.5 million in 2003. In addition, several authors (Hudson, 1985; Dagher, 2000; Harris, 2006) assert that the demographic figures of the Lebanese population are considered a taboo, the belief being that if the actual numbers of people within different religions were known, those with the highest number might use this information as a basis for seeking greater political power. Thus, recently quoted demographic figures for Lebanon are usually spurious and often biased, because the latest available official figures date back to the 1932 census. Jamali, Sidani & Safieddine’s (2005) report tries to promote the idea that the Lebanese culture is characterised by the Muslim religion, however this might not actually be the case.

Religious symbols are part of everyday classroom life. Students identify themselves by using verbal or non-verbal expressions that typify their cultural background. This presents a problem if individuals hold negative bigotry views about others. Some Christian students often make the sign of the cross before taking an examination and some Muslim students often say ‘Allah Akbar’ meaning ‘God is Great’ when hearing the prayer from the Mosque. Therefore, teachers can easily identify the religious backgrounds of their students. Thus, if the teacher is able to recognise the students’ ethnicity, it is possible that preconceived biases or prejudices could emerge. The solution is not easily found. The educational paradox is that there is an absence of the opportunity to acknowledge or discuss these differentials. Then again, discussing these locally controversial issues could have major consequences.

The Lebanese school system: the formal and the hidden curriculum

In Lebanon, the public (i.e., the government) school system is poorly established. Across Lebanon, public schools suffer due to political interference, a spiralling number of students and dwindling government funds (Hajj, 2000). Hajj (2000) reports that the president of the public secondary school teachers' league addressed the following aspects during a seminar that took place in 2000:

- The issue of sectarianism being the most difficult obstacle standing in the way of public education.
- The concern for national unity is being jeopardised since rampant spread of sectarian politics is prevailing in schools all over Lebanon.
- The confessional troubles which are not being solved by the government.
- The suffering of students due to political interference in the administration of public education.

There are more Lebanese private sectarian schools than non-sectarian schools. In most cases, the geographical location of a school indicates the religion to which it subscribes. Parents choose a school for their children based on the types of values, ethos and traditions they want their children to follow.

Schools across Lebanon teach different versions of its history. Each community has its own collective memory, its own history, its own heroes, its anthem and its flags (Salibi, 1988; Dagher, 2000). Hence, Lebanon is permitting the young to be educated using highly selective and contradictory versions of its history (Picard, 2002). The Druze schools teach a new version of the history of Lebanon, which is radically different from the official version, as well as changing the curriculum to parallel the political ethos of the Druze community (Salibi, 1988). In contrast, the Sunnite schools follow the official government curriculum, upholding all the established symbols and traditions of their version of Lebanon (Salibi, 1988). As a result, students across Lebanon are acquiring their national citizenship in diversified ways, which causes intercultural conflict when they interact together academically and socially.

Most schools in Lebanon follow either the French baccalaureate model of the curriculum or align themselves with the American High School system. However, some schools adopt a mixture of the two. Each private school implements its own curriculum alongside the formal national Lebanese curriculum, which public schools are compelled to follow. The hidden curriculum encompasses a wider range of learning experiences than the formal curriculum. It will thus be discussed in more detail.

A new curriculum was legally established in Lebanon in 1997³. Because religion and culture are interwoven and culture influences education, a religious-cultural educational conflict emerged. In 1999 Muslim intellectuals criticised the new school curriculum (Kayali, 1999). One general argument was that the curriculum copied the texts from western countries, neglecting to include Arabic traditions and customs. A specific debated issue was that the civic education textbooks emphasised the woman's role as an income earner and marginalised her role as mother and wife. Another complaint was that the science textbooks promoted improper sex education. Finally, the omission of the Islamic school of thought in the economic learning materials was considered a personal insult to the Islamic religion and totally disgraceful (Kayali, 1999).

One of the common factors in the many different curricula in Lebanon is that they rarely overtly address social issues. The liberal-secular ideology argues that if a school curriculum does not systematically include important information about the diversity of the society, it then causes major gaps in students' academic achievements (Gay, 2003; Brooks & Thompson, 2005). Douglas (2002) claims that one profound source of unrest in this world is the failure of educational systems to bypass narrow ethnic and national interests and to provide teaching about differing belief systems and shared common values. In Lebanon, the curriculum lacks cohesive and general guidelines which would direct students on how to deal with the political and religious quandaries that are inherent in the ways in which cultural factors are negotiated in Lebanon.

Central to this paper is the argument that in Lebanese educational settings, individuals rarely converse about 'nondiscussable' issues. According to Barth (2002),

'nondiscussables are subjects sufficiently important that they are talked about frequently but are so laden with anxiety and fearfulness that these conversations take place only in the parking lot, the rest rooms, the playground, the car pool, or the dinner table at home.' (p. 8)

Major Lebanese 'nondiscussables' entail political and religious subjects. There is great fear that open discussions of these controversial issues will produce severe consequences. Some kind of harmony is maintained by not discussing the very issues that are at the heart of the Lebanese predicament. However, it seems that this type of harmony is only maintained inside the classroom. Substantial student arguments take place elsewhere. However, within school grounds, the confrontations are not severe, possibly because of the formation of the school system which is based on a hierarchical authority structure. Another explanation could be that it would depend on the school system into which the parents enrol their children. If the school parallels communal regional cultural values, then the

students would maintain homogenous beliefs and customs. Whereas on university campuses all over Lebanon, students' constantly clash with each other over political and religious events (Tuttle, 1998; Zaatari, 1998; Ibrahim, 1999a; Abdul-Hussain, 2003; Abou Nasr, 2004; Hatoum, 2005, 2006; Ghazal, 2006a, 2006b). Appendix D provides a chronological list of some of the conflicts that occurred between university students in Lebanon.

A possible interpretation of these discords is that although students are sheltered from divergent cultures during school years, the exposure to diverse cultures is inevitable when they go to university because the choice of high-quality university education is limited. The educational dilemma is that it is unclear whether the discussion of these taboo topics in school would have led to positive consequences or not. When some views are exclusive and entrenched in a culture, productive dialogue is not only difficult to produce, but is also delicate in its nature because the unwrapping of some topics might lead to open hostilities and major ruptures.

From the liberal-secular perspective, it is argued that teachers' deficiency in openly discussing taboo topics leads to a lack of collective classroom coherence (Tatum, 2000; Barth, 2002; Shields, 2004). Thus, the liberal-secular ideology encourages teachers to develop classroom cultures that create shared student values (Kerfoot, 2004) by taking students' cultural differences into account (Shields, 2004). Shields (2004) points out that 'a successful education leader must attend to both social justice and academic excellence because one implies the other' (p. 38).

Tatum (2000) offers some reasons behind teachers' avoidance of provocative topics in the classroom. These include a lack of skill at discussing them, or a limited opportunity to explore these issues in their own education or a reluctance to lead such discussions for fear that they will generate classroom conflict. Barth (2002) asserts that giving these 'nondiscussables' such incredible power as to govern the school culture indicates that the same underlying problems will continue. The proposition to interrupt the cycle of biased behaviours, according to Tatum (2000), is that students need to understand how they operate in their society.

One would assume that the liberal-secular ideology would resolve social and academic problems in Lebanon, since hiding behind the taboo issues apparently did not resolve the quandaries. Then again, scrutinising the complexity of the Lebanese situation, coupled with the consideration of the consequences of the war that broke out in July 2006, leads to the inference that the liberal-secular ideology challenges what would be the obvious interpretation of the situation. The divergent factions differ sharply over the national interests and hold totally opposing views of what Lebanon is or should be. Thus, the quandary remains on how the educational system could unite the Lebanese multicultural students.

Politico-religious events in the educational field

There is a rigid link between politico-religious events and the educational field in Lebanon. The Lebanese academic landscape reflects the confessional mosaic of the country in the way in which prominent universities were established by religious foundations. For example, as pointed out by Dagher (2000):

- The Shiites Supreme Council founded its Islamic University.
- The Sunni community established the al-Makassed.
- The Greek Orthodox administered the Balamand University.
- The Greek Catholic and Maronites founded Notre Dame University, Kaslik University, Law School of La Sagesse, and the Haigazian and Homenetmen Armenian institutions.

Lebanon 'currently accommodates 18 officially recognized private universities that are mostly patterned after the American credit system of higher education' (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2002, p. 198).

The first example comes from the Lebanese University (LU), a public institution. 'During the war, its various branches were geographically, confessionally and ideologically divided between 'East' and West' and were the hotbed of political militancy' (Dagher, 2000, p. 129). In 1999, a plan was initiated to merge east and west campuses (Ibrahim, 1999b). In 2001, the proposal came into effect (Darrous, 2001). The proposal received mixed reactions from both LU academics and LU students. Members at Beirut branches (Muslims) generally supported the cabinet's decision, whereas Mount Lebanon-based staff and students (Christians) opposed the merger. The latter believed that merging the campuses would have dangerous political aspects and that the merger was aimed at suppressing students' and academics' political freedoms. Although students from the Progressive Socialist Party, which is a mostly Druze party, did not politically approve of the Christian opposition bloc, they supported them in their plan to fight the cabinet proposal. They justified their support on the basis that the decision entailed a political dimension and not an academic one. However, their long internal strife with the Shiites of Beirut, who happened to support the merger, is recognised (Darrous, 2001).

Another example from the school system consists of anecdotal information. Recently, in the eastern side of Lebanon, a Christian inter-sectarian conflict between the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) has been escalating. The FPM has adopted orange as its colour, resulting in the whole country linking the orange colour with that movement. Accordingly, this gives rise to easy differentiation between people on political lines. Now, to avoid being

politically differentiated, it appears that some people are avoiding wearing any orange garment. It is argued that this behaviour has contaminated school grounds. The affiliation of teachers or students who wear the orange colour could be recognised, and thus biased behaviours could emerge toward and from the opposing group. This is in line with Hofstede & Hofstede's (2005) theory that in collectivist cultures, students tend to expect preferential treatment when they share common ideologies with the teacher. Taking into account that 'prejudices and stereotypes influence teachers' perceptions of and behaviour toward students but also that similar attitudes influence students' perceptions of and behaviour toward teachers' (Galguera, 1998, p. 412).

If these kinds of events are generalisable throughout Lebanese classrooms, then it is possible that there is an absence of healthy teacher-student relationships where teachers promote learning (Wolk, 2003), establish rapport (Mendes, 2003) and enhance student achievements (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). As a consequence, the concept of educating the 'whole' child (Wolk, 2003) fails since it depends on school bonding, a healthy school climate, teacher support, and student engagement (Blum, 2005).

Some liberal-secular ideologists would argue that students require unconditional acceptance to flourish (Kohn, 2005), and claim that education that is just and caring provides opportunities for students to make sense of complex topics such as religion and ethnicity (Shields, 2004). Brooks & Thompson (2005) emphasise that teachers have a 'professional responsibility to see the diverse cultural value systems of their students with an open mind, as free as possible from their own value systems' (p. 50). Accordingly, it is suggested that toxic school cultures that are monopolised by politics and religion are not only preserving hostile discriminatory feelings in the new generation, but are also affecting students' learning and personal growth.

A logical conclusion to be drawn from the preceding arguments is that, on the one hand, there are the 'nondiscussables' and, on the other hand, there are individuals who are parading their political affiliations. This is a threatening combination and a potential source of conflict. The problems are there for everyone to see, yet they cannot be discussed within the formal educational context. This suggests an unhealthy state of affairs in the classroom. The very things that divide people are the exact things that are not allowed to be discussed. Although multiple sources of variations exist within cultures, one's early experiences tend to become organised into definite systems of thought (Jackson & Wasson, 2002). Even more, in a multicultural country such as Lebanon, one would assume that education is multicultural, which means 'education that promotes educational equity for all learners' (Armstrong, Henson & Savage, 2005, p. 115). Evidently, this is not the case.

Conclusion

This paper recognised the fragmentation of Lebanon. Lebanonism became a byword that describes the disjointed infrastructure of Lebanon. During the writing of this paper, another war broke out in Lebanon which changed its whole panoramic view. Political alliances shifted and were reconstructed on the bases of political and personal gains rather than religious grouping. The war's implications for the educational system are countless. Other than reintegrating bias and prejudice feelings in the older generation, the younger generation is now living the harsh reality of intolerance which were previously just anecdotes passed on to them. Multiple Lebanese cultures continue to exist, but in a volatile state. This has produced serious consequences which will lead to future political and social conflicts. These, in turn, will undoubtedly have significant implications on the educational system. The Lebanese quandary is, among other things, an educational challenge.

The aim of education in general is bound by a universal purpose – to educate the students, but each particular society has specific aspirations and methods which make it unique (Noddings, 2005). A liberal-secular argument is that for successful teaching and learning in multi-linguistic and multicultural societies, students must gain an understanding of the differences and similarities of the various cultures. As Brooks & Thompson (2005) stated, 'it is crucial to help students consider diversity, understanding, and the places where the two intersect and clash' (p. 48). In order to promote a unified national culture, students who are prospective teachers need to encounter more cross-cultural experiences so that they can develop favourable personal and professional beliefs about diverse learners (Garmon, 2004). However, the application of liberal-secular educational theories in Lebanon is contestable.

The history of Lebanon is marked by conflict and filled with turmoil, dismay and suffering. It is difficult to read one book or one paper that captures the whole Lebanese picture. Many books have been written about Lebanon and yet none capture the reality. Lebanese writers portray the view of the aspect with which they are or choose to be aligned, thus failing in their efforts to be unbiased. No Lebanese person who has lived in Lebanon can be truly unbiased. Each group, having observed the death and suffering of its own members caused by an opposing party, cannot be totally objective when claiming facts and events. Foreign writers, unfamiliar with the Lebanese culture, also fail to convey a view of Lebanon that is free from bias. They might investigate many issues, interview different political parties, but there is something about Lebanon that a person cannot fully comprehend unless s/he has lived there.

This paper has illustrated the difficulties in attempting to describe Lebanese culture. The Lebanese people are, on the one hand, united by a common fate, yet, on the other hand, are separated by religious doctrines and political ideologies. Although the profound and negative influences of the culture on the educational system are recognised, solutions have yet to be determined.

Notes

1. Maronite is a dominant Christian sect in the Middle East.
2. Source: personal communication with a senior civil servant in the Lebanese government.
3. Public Law number 10227.

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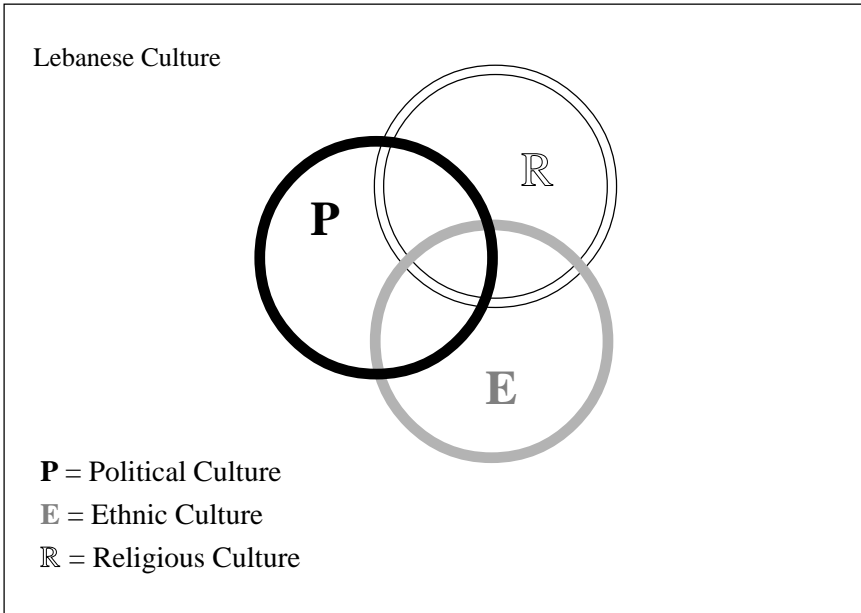
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APPENDIX A

Schematic illustrating the Key Elements of the Lebanese Culture



APPENDIX B

Glossary of Arabinglizi

| Word | Meaning |
|-----------|---|
| angarit | to become angry |
| golargi | goalkeeper |
| hawvaret | to 'hoover' (to clean – from the vacuum cleaner brand 'Hoover') |
| sayyiva | to save something on a computer |
| dapris | to get depressed |
| reglij | to regulate |
| cancel | to cancel |
| jalal | gigolo |
| cdeeyet | plural of CD |
| emaiyilla | to e-mail |
| fawella | to fill it up |

APPENDIX C

An Example of Lebanon's Multilingualism taken from Thonhauser (2001)

‘Yeprad Amseyan & Sons. Repair – Frigidaires & Woching Machines’

The sign addresses customers with essentially the same message in two different languages and two different scripts. There is even a French word (Frigidaires), which is simply a brand name in a somewhat plural feature of Lebanese communication. The spelling of ‘Woching Machines’ reflects the dominance of spoken discourse in everyday language use. Orthography seems to rank second. The visual representation of a familiar combination sound is enough.

APPENDIX D

Conflicts between University Students in Lebanon as reported by The Daily Star, a Leading English Language Lebanese Newspaper

| | |
|------|---|
| 1998 | A fistfight broke out between the two competing blocs; one holds supporters of the Communist Party and Hizbollah and the second bloc groups supporters of the Amal Movement, the Baath Party, and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party during the election of a new student council at LU (Zaatari, 1998). |
| 1998 | Students clashed over the election of the student council at LAU Beirut (Tuttle, 1998). |
| 1999 | Students from the Amal Movement clashed with students from PSP at the LU Beirut campus (Ibrahim, 1999a). |
| 2003 | Students from the LF and the FPM clashed at NDU over election seats (Abdul-Hussain, 2003). |
| 2004 | Students clashed between proponents of Amal and Hizbollah at LU Sanayeh (Abou Nasr, 2004). |
| 2005 | Students from the opposition and pro-Syrian factions clashed at the Arab University in Beirut (Hatoum, 2005). |
| 2006 | Students from the FPM overcame the security checkpoint at NDU to direct a political meeting, which the administration had banned (Ghazal, 2006a). |
| 2006 | Students from the Amal Movement brawled with students from the PSP movement at LAU Beirut campus (Ghazal, 2006b). |
| 2006 | Students from the LF clashed with students representing the FPM at LU over election seats for the student council (Hatoum, 2006). |

Abbreviations:

- Lebanese University (LU)
- Lebanese American University (LAU)
- Notre Dame University (NDU)
- Lebanese Forces (LF)
- Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)
- Progressive Socialist Party (PSP)



AN ANALYSIS OF EQUALITY, LEGISLATION, ATTITUDES AND VALUES IN EDUCATION: THE CASE OF GREECE

CONSTANTINOS A. VOUYOUKAS

Abstract – *This paper analyses teachers' attitudes, socio-educational values and educational legislation in Greece, using as starting-point the notion of equality. It seeks to investigate how teachers' attitudes toward equality relate to the Greek educational legislation and to socio-educational values. The basic hypothesis to be tested is that there are various conflicts between teachers' attitudes, socio-educational values and educational legislation regarding equality. Teachers try to resolve tensions created within the educational legislation when meeting different pupils' needs in class. This affects in turn the accommodation of socio-educational values into school practice. It is argued that investigating teachers' attitudes within the context of socio-educational values and educational policy can: (i) help the state clarify the aims of education in its legislation; and (ii) help teachers in applying a critical-reflective approach on their work.*

Introduction

What occurs within the classroom is mainly dependent upon academic-based types of learning abilities. Pupils' learning ability is shaped by a variety of factors – hereditary, socio-economic, cultural, developmental, as well as combinations of them. Each pupil also brings into the classroom a personal set of attitudes and expectations regarding the teacher's role and the role of his/her schoolmates. When dealing with pupils from unequal backgrounds, a teacher must decide how best to distribute his/her care. What model of educational equality guides his/her decision? Three models suggest themselves:

1. Equally, irrespective of pupils' abilities and disabilities (a strict egalitarian model);
2. Proportionally, according to the abilities of their pupils, that is, the higher the abilities, the higher the educational provisions (a liberal egalitarian model);
3. Inversely proportional to the abilities of their pupils, for example, the lower their abilities, the higher the educational provisions (a fair inequalitarian model) (Rawls, 1993).

While taking these models into consideration, there are further adverse factors that influence teachers' conception of equality models. The following are among the most significant:

- Mainstream versus special schoolteachers (Martlew & Hodson, 1991).
- Background factors such as: (i) teachers' age and experience (Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998); (ii) teachers' gender (Anderson & Anderson, 1995); (iii) school region (Cox & Jones, 1983); (iv) national context (Archontakis & Kyriakou, 1994); and (v) teachers' ethnicity (Chazan, 1994).
- Complexities of classroom life (Smith & Laslett, 1993).
- Use of integration, inclusion and grouping (Ireson & Hallam, 1999).
- Use of pupils' motivation methods (Covington & Omelich, 1985).

In this paper I argue that the factors influencing teachers' equality model are formed by the educational policy of the state and the values of the society to which teachers belong. Teachers facilitate the process of transforming social values into educational policy. Policy and values are related in such a way that a country's educational system will reflect the broader values of the nation. Ifanti (2007) refers to Lawton (1989) and argues that:

'Curriculum, in turn, is defined as a selection from the culture of a society, whereas the process of curriculum planning is not an automatic exercise; it always involves values.' (p. 72)

How then do teachers engage in the transformation procedure of social values into educational policy and which, in turn, affect the accommodation of educational equality in a society such as Greece? In order to answer this question, I argue that there is a need to: (i) examine what teachers believe about their pupils in an international and Greek context; (ii) analyse the conflict of socio-educational values in teachers' attitudes toward educational equality; (iii) describe the Greek compulsory educational legislation and examine the extent to which it manages to accommodate different educational equality models; and (iv) examine the accommodation of socio-educational values within the contemporary Greek society. What follows these analyses is that contemporary western societies – including the Greek society – are facing ideological impurity, a situation which affects the provision of education and raises concerns over educational equality. In the final section of the paper, I argue that teachers should develop a critical-reflective approach in their work in order to deal with ideological impurity. This critical-reflective approach may enable them to analyse the values, examine the degree of accuracy and appreciation, and consider alternatives when responding to issues around educational equality.

Teachers' attitudes toward their pupils

The school, as a congregation of pupils, reflects the section of society from which the pupils come. In an ordinary compulsory school pupils tend to be distributed according to their social origin, physical condition, abilities and school attainments. Being in the same school, all pupils are supposed to receive equal access and opportunity to the educational benefits offered by that school. Educational equality is set in practice on the condition that all pupils are treated according to their own needs. What then do teachers believe? Do teachers have positive attitudes toward pupils with difficulties or not?

In this paper the term 'attitude' is defined as teachers' tendency to evaluate something by agreeing or disagreeing to a statement or stating their preference to a given option. It acknowledges the evaluative dimension of attitudes and focuses on attitudes' cognitive element (Baker, 1992; Oppenheim, 1992; Richardson, 1996). On the other hand, the term 'pupils with difficulties' is based in this paper on teachers' interpretations of pupils with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties in classrooms. This definition is individual class and teacher based and excludes pupils with severe learning difficulties. In the UK, pupils with severe learning difficulties are referred to as SLD (i.e., Severe Learning Difficulties) or PMLD (i.e., Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties) (Croll & Moses, 1985; Norwich, 1990).

Various research on teachers' attitudes toward pupils indicates that: (i) when teachers begin to believe that some of their pupils have 'difficulties' it becomes difficult for them to change their attitudes resulting in the creation of 'self fulfilling prophecies' (Babad, 1993); (ii) teachers may have good intentions concerning the education of pupils with difficulties, but they are rather pessimistic about the progress of such pupils depending on the nature and severity of the pupil's difficulty and they also feel that they are not adequately trained to work with them (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002); and (iii) teachers' training at both pre-service and post-service levels is a significant factor in the development of teachers' support for inclusion (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000).

Greek research revealed that the majority of teachers were concerned with this issue because they experienced it daily in the classrooms (Pirgiotakis, 1992). Though they were generally positive toward teaching both pupils with and without difficulties in the same class, they were sceptical about the practicality of such teaching mainly because of lack of appropriate training (Riga, 1997; Hopf & Hatzichristou, 1999; Poulou & Norwich, 2000). In that sense teacher training becomes crucial as a process of adopting patterns of thought and strategies for responding to pupils with difficulties (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007).

Conflict of socio-educational values in teachers' attitudes toward their pupils

Bearing in mind the conflicting nature of attitudes, especially teachers' attitudes, I want to explore the way differences between pupils are treated (Lunt & Norwich, 1999). Norwich (1996) argues that in a mainstream school classroom there are different pupils' needs that require accommodation by the teachers. These needs arise from individual needs (characteristics different from all other pupils), exceptional needs (characteristics shared by some pupils) and common needs (characteristics shared by all pupils). The main question is how to deal with these needs.

This question raises further questions concerning educators' attitudes (Lunt, 1997). First, there are pedagogic questions that deal with: (i) the type of curriculum offered to pupils (i.e., 'common curriculum question' – whether different pupils would have the same learning content or not); (ii) the identification of pupils (i.e., 'identification question' – whether and how to identify individual pupils as different or not and treat them accordingly); and (iii) the integration and inclusion of pupils (i.e., 'integration and inclusion question' – whether and to what extent different pupils would learn in regular classes or not) (Norwich, 1993). Educators not only have different opinions about each question, but their answers often conflict with one another. This becomes more explicit when the questions are transferred into a specific situation referring to different pupils. For the 'common curriculum question', the situation would be whether offering the same to all pupils leads to the promotion of equal opportunities. For the 'identification question', whether identifying pupils with difficulties and treating them accordingly will help them or not. For the 'integration and inclusion question', whether teaching pupils with difficulties in special or ordinary schools will be better for them.

Each question refers to educational and social values. These values are equality, individuality and a sense of belonging (Norwich, 1994). Equality presupposes that all pupils should be treated with no discrimination of any kind. Individuality presupposes that every pupil is a unique individual with special interests that need attention. A sense of belonging presupposes that each pupil should be a participating member of a valued social good, relating with other pupils in schools and classes (Osborne, 1997).

There appears to be a tension between these values, which raises another point (Lindsay & Thompson, 1997). Equality can be combined with a sense of belonging only when there is the sense that all belong equally in the same group. Is it possible to combine these values with individuality? Behind the notion of equality there is a notion of democratic ethos and principle, which seems difficult

to combine with the notion of individuality (Kim et al., 1994). According to Labaree (1986), this is the paradox of the modern educational system, exemplified by the US educational system: although schools were founded with the aim of promoting equality and democratic ideals, they also functioned in an environment 'dominated by markets and the ideology of possessive individualism' (p. 40).

Individualism is a characteristic that dominates the structure of modern western societies. It involves liberty, excellence and quality. Liberty is an individual's right to choose among different courses of action. Excellence and quality involve producing a high quality product, not necessarily at the lowest cost (Labaree, 1986).

It seems that the simultaneous fulfilment of these values is difficult. Husen (1975) has identified another kind of incompatibility between the identified values, especially between individualism and equality. On the one hand the notion of individualism includes liberty, which implies an individual choice concerning education and leads to different and unequal educational outcomes, while on the other hand the notion of equality involves reducing differences in educational outcomes.

Riley (1994) argues that excellence, quality and equality are interconnected and inseparable features of any good educational provision. Acknowledging a tension between them due to competing values and pressures from different social groups, Riley believes an adequate educational system must resolve the issues. According to Riley:

'... through the exercise of their discretion – based on values and judgements – key actors in the system can influence quality and equality outcomes in favour of different groups in the system.' (p. 13)

Moreover it seems that, at a general level, the exclusive pursuit of one value violates or eliminates the other. Attention to balance is difficult due to multiple variables generating dilemmas (Bierlein, 1993). As Labaree (1986) argues, the balance required of US schools is one that balances conflicting but highly valued ideals promoting the good of society. Accommodating the demands of an egalitarian ideology (which, for example, values equality and a common good) with the demands of a capitalistic ideology (which values individualistic choice) is often unattainable. Cohen & Neufeld (1981) noted paradoxes concerning the provision of educational equality in a competitive society like that of the US:

'In the schools America seeks to foster equality – and individual Americans seek to realise it. But in the market, Americans seek to maintain or improve their economic and social position, thereby contributing to inequality even if they individually wish the reverse.' (p. 70)

We see that, once again, values pull against each other giving rise to genuine dilemmas.

Greek educational legislation concerning compulsory education

Greek education has followed a course parallel to that of other advanced and modern European countries with certain particularities and differences (Mouzelis, 1996). In the post-war period, with the exception of the junta interval (1967-1974), Greece enjoyed its most stable parliamentary democracy. It voted for a new constitution in 1975, signed the accession to the Common European Market in 1979 and saw some significant statutory reform measures, particularly the updating of the educational system. It is important to note that there has been a widespread demand by Greek society for education. This demand that has been adopted by all political parties, yet the states' response has not always been effective (Dimaras, 1978).

The basic statutes of the post-war period on education are the Legislative Decree 4379/1964 (Greek Ministry of Education, 1964), the Law 309/1976 (Greek Ministry of Education, 1976), the Law 1566/1985 (Greek Ministry of Education, 1985), as well as some other relative provisions, plus the separate statutes for special, technical-vocational, and higher education. Three statutes for general education followed and expanded the basic principles and directions of the educational reforms of 1917 and 1929. Both the 1917 and 1929 educational reforms were guided by *Ekpedeftikos Demotikismos*, a renovating linguo-educational movement that sought to end a chronic intellectual and educational debate about the language problem of Greece (Charis, 1976); and have, consequently, a distinctly progressive orientation, which is increasingly progressive from statute to statute, at a minimum level. These statutes, which have both common characteristics and divergences, were propounded and passed by three successive and politically different governments – Central Union (EK), New Democracy (ND) and Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) – one of which, ND, held a politically conservative ideology (Persianis, 1998).

The predominant features of the Greek compulsory educational policy regarding the treatment of pupils are the following:

- The Greek school education system has been centralised at the level of both planning and implementation. Curriculum contents and timetables, textbooks, and teaching methods, are totally controlled by the Ministry of Education in state schools and to a high degree in private schools (Eurydice, 2005).

- The development of pupils' creative and critical abilities and their appreciation of collective effort and co-operation, so that they can undertake initiatives and contribute through responsible participation to the social welfare and the development of their own country. Among the conditions toward this end are respect of each pupil's personality, and the fostering of the necessary pedagogic climate that favours the development of friendly interpersonal relationships among pupils (Greek Ministry of Education, 1985).
- Education for all pupils without discrimination. The Law 4379/1964 legislated the extension of compulsory education from six to nine years, a provision that was included in the Greek Constitution of 1975 and was implemented from 1976 onwards. Pre-primary education was also gradually extended, having become compulsory quite recently but only in theory, since no relevant measures have been implemented yet (Greek Ministry of Education, 2006).
- Education became more accessible for all pupils irrespective of their socio-economic status and geographic region. To achieve this end a series of provisions were enacted, such as: (i) free state education; (ii) gradual reduction of the number of pupils per class; (iii) establishment of new secondary schools all over the country; (iv) gradual incorporation of one-teacher elementary schools into larger units; (v) transportation to school, at state expense, of pupils residing a long distance; and (vi) abolition of the examinations from grade to grade within compulsory education (Greek Ministry of Education, 1985). Law 2525/1997 founded *oloimera* primary and secondary schools, that is, schools whose timetable was extended till afternoon and their curricula and teaching methods varied (Greek Ministry of Education, 1997). Despite these schools proving helpful to pupils and their parents, lack of funding has tended to be problematic.
- Reorganisation and advancement of special education for pupils who are physically, mentally or psychologically challenged in either separate schools or on a part-time basis in classes or groups within ordinary schools (Greek Ministry of Education, 1985, 1996). For pupils with mild learning difficulties in compulsory education, a form of teaching called 'reinforcing' was instituted in 1991 (Greek Ministry of Education, 1991). Pupils were expected to attend additional tutorials in some of the basic subjects, language, mathematics and science in primary and secondary schools. The responsibility for the 'reinforcing' and the tutorial groups was handed over to the teaching staff of the school. Remedial programmes were further developed and implemented in Greek education by the Law 2817/2000

(Greek Ministry of Education, 2000) which founded 'KDAY' (Child Services/Support Teams) to support and help pupils with special needs. It is worth noting that Law 3194/2003 first introduced a category of pupils with special needs as the ones 'with exceptional mental abilities and talents who need proper educational care and attention' (article 2, paragraph 7). This category was added to the rest of the categories of pupils with special needs described in the Law 2817/2000 (article 1, paragraph 2) regarding special education.

- The evaluation of pupils' progress in learning is estimated in school marks. It is here that the oscillations in educational policy have been more pronounced. In 1980, under a conservative government, the numerical marking was replaced in primary schools by the letters A, B, C, all of which ensure promotion (Greek Ministry of Education, 1981a). In the 1980s, under a socialist government, the marking with A, B, C was maintained, but was removed from the certificates that were then issued with only a 'he or she is promoted to next class' (Greek Ministry of Education, 1985). In 1991, under another conservative government, the numerical scale 0-10 was reinstated in the four higher classes; while in the first two classes the letters were raised to four: A, B, C, D (Ministry of Education, 1991). Finally, in 1995, under a socialist government, the marking was fixed as follows: (i) in the first two classes descriptive evaluation replaced all marking; (ii) in the middle classes marking was replaced by the letters A, B, C, D; and (iii) in the last two classes marking was replaced by the numbers 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, and 'Scarcely good' for those pupils receiving under 5, pupils who present various difficulties (Greek Ministry of Education, 1995). Marks on the certificates were only maintained in the last two classes. In lower secondary schools the marking scale remained unchanged – from 1 to 20 – over a long period. In primary schools evaluation does not refer only to the pupil's performance, but also to characteristics such as effort, interest, initiatives, creativity, co-operation, and respect for the rules of the school. Above all, the evaluation of primary school pupils should not lead to antagonism or be used for selective purposes. Pupils with difficulties within ordinary classes are not evaluated, nor given marks in those subjects where they have severe learning difficulties. In separate special education classes, ordinary schoolteachers in co-operation with special education teachers will evaluate pupils with difficulties.
- Evaluation also includes pupils' behaviour and exceptional achievements. In lower secondary education pupils should comply with the rules set by the school and with the principles of the social environment in which they

live. Accordingly, their 'conduct' is characterised as 'excellent', 'good' or 'reprehensible' and is marked on their certificates. If their behaviour deviates from the accepted one, the school may inflict a punishment upon them. The punishments assigned are: admonition, reproof, removal from class for one hour, expulsion from school for three to five days and change of school environment. On the other hand, pupils who have done particularly well in their school duties are awarded certain distinctions: progress distinction, progress prize and public praise. In primary education the labels for the 'conduct' of the pupils were removed from their certificates in 1981 (Greek Ministry of Education, 1981b). With regard to the pupils who come first in scholastic achievements, they are bestowed to be the flag-bearers and the flag-attendants (Greek Ministry of Education, 1986).

We may conclude that the Greek education system reflects in theory the principles of modern democracy and educational equality by providing a democratic setting for treating all pupils according to their own needs. Educational provisions include a mixture of strict egalitarian, liberal egalitarian and fair inegalitarian principles. Strict egalitarianism is expressed by providing all pupils access to education and by providing the same curriculum contents and textbooks; liberal egalitarianism is expressed by the use of awards and distinctions for talented pupils and the repetition of classes for pupils who do not perform well; and fair inegalitarianism is expressed by emphasising on pupils with difficulties and compensating for their difficulties.

Furthermore, we have seen that educational statutes or parts of the educational equality model were legislated by a series of governments of different political ideology. For example, the measure of the automatic promotion from class to class for all pupils in the compulsory educational stage was enacted by a conservative government. We have seen that this measure has had an interesting 'history' in the hands of the various Greek governments: the conservatives first introduced it (Greek Ministry of Education, 1981a); the socialists preserved and advanced it (Greek Ministry of Education, 1985); the conservatives then abolished it (Greek Ministry of Education, 1991); and the socialists never bothered to resurrect it (Greek Ministry of Education, 1995). It seems that those responsible for the Greek educational policy regarding pupils' evaluation have not always had clear views about the model of educational equality they wish to set in practice. The most plausible reason for this is that there is no continuity in the changes set by the educational reforms. The Greek governments introduced new legislation, yet some items contradicted each other or did not follow the previous governments' measures. There was no clear guide to determine where the focus should be placed.

Tensions between teachers' socio-educational attitudes and educational legislation

Teachers' attitudes toward educational equality – whether fair inegalitarian, strict egalitarian or liberal egalitarian – often face obstacles set by the Greek educational legislation. Teachers who espouse one of these models may have problems with the statutory provisions for marking, repetition of the same class and public acknowledgement for those who come first in scholastic achievement. These teachers may also have problems providing sufficient attention to pupils with exceptional mental abilities and talents (Greek Ministry of Education, 2003). On the other hand, teachers who espouse liberal egalitarianism tend to have problems with the statutory provisions for compensatory teaching of pupils with difficulties (Greek Ministry of Education, 1991, 2000). There are also more ambiguous provisions built into the statutes, such as fostering the 'necessary' pedagogic climate inside the classes (Greek Ministry of Education, 1985). It is not clear, for example, whether the use of competition and marking are among the constituents of the pedagogic climate. In such cases the teachers interpret the provisions as they wish if they think these contradict their attitudes.

Tensions between teachers' attitudes concerning socio-educational values

Teachers try to avoid tensions between attitudes in favour of values of equality and belonging, individualism, liberty, excellence and quality. Practically, teachers may do this in two ways:

1. By including all pupils in the same school and differentiating according to their needs (especially pupils with difficulties). Here, the value of liberty is most restricted, since it does not involve stakeholders' options, like parental school choice.
2. By separating pupils according to their abilities, thereby providing the same opportunities and expecting that the more able pupils will advance further. Here the value of belonging is most restricted, as it does not involve the inclusion and integration of pupils with difficulties.

Teachers' attitudes toward educational equality may combine the fair inegalitarian, strict egalitarian and liberal educational equality models in the following ways (Vouyoukas, 2002):

- By focusing on the needs of pupils with difficulties and eventually reducing pupils' differences. This is an expected combination of models of educational equality. Conceptually, we would expect to find associations between the fair inegalitarian and strict egalitarian educational equality models. However, the tension created when treating all pupils the same and focusing on pupils with difficulties remains.
- By stressing the liberal egalitarian principles with strict egalitarian principles. This combination of educational equality models favours the more able pupils, since it presupposes that all pupils should be treated the same, but at the same time the structure of the school should be hierarchical so the more able pupils can be motivated to achieve their potential.

Reconsidering educational equality within the Greek context

There has been a great deal of debate over the appropriateness of educational equality models in western states like the UK (Lunt & Norwich, 1999). This debate is reflected in the UK's educational legislation, which tries to combine and meet conflicting values (Lindsay & Thompson, 1997). The Greek educational legislation presented so far gives an example of a western state that includes conflicting strict egalitarian, liberal egalitarian and fair inegalitarian educational principles in its legislation. However, the Greek educational equality model has the peculiarity of being based not only on conflicting educational legislation, but also on an inconsistency between the compulsory educational legislation and the current views of Greek society. We have seen that the Greek compulsory educational system gives emphasis to egalitarian educational principles (nine-year compulsory education and use of the same curricula, textbooks and teaching approaches in all schools), whereas evidence suggests that contemporary Greek society tends to favour liberal egalitarianism with all its particulars (priority to individualistic values, emphasis on academic achievement and result, and increasing use of private schools) (Georgas, 1989; Katsikas & Kavadias, 1994; Gari & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1998; Hopf & Hatzichristou, 1999; Schwartz, 1999). There is greater diversification in UK schools and the US than in Greece; however, public opinion and parental pressure in Greece is progressively conducting an assessment of education primarily from pupils' academic results and there is pressure on teachers by parents for results starting from the compulsory educational stage (Pigiaki, 1999). Under these conditions, pupils' working hours exceed those of adults, and their right to leisure time is restricted.

Greek middle class parents place much emphasis on their children's education, since education is traditionally believed to be something that is 'socially beneficial' and the best means of developing self and family (Gari & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1998). Many aspiring parents consider the option of sending their children to private rather than state schools (Katsikas & Kavadias, 1994). The perceived connection between scholastic achievement and social elevation places pressure on both parents and pupils, with many Greek parents paying for private tuition or coaching in extra curricular subjects, such as foreign languages, piano, ballet and gymnastics (Hopf & Hatzichristou, 1999). In accordance with these trends, the majority of Greek teachers in the compulsory state schools may apply liberal egalitarian principles in their classroom practice, despite the fact that they may have opposing theoretical views.

What kind of values should be adopted in Greek compulsory educational legislation?

We have seen there exists an ongoing debate over the appropriateness and utilisation of social values within a society's educational system. Every society, according to its particularities and characteristics, adopts and practises certain values. As societies develop and change, the importance given to certain values changes as well. Greek society follows a similar trend. It was shown that contemporary Greek society tends to give more emphasis to liberal values such as individualism, liberty and excellence at the expense of egalitarian-collective values such as equality and belongingness (Georgas, 1989; Schwartz, 1999).

It is true that the growth of the middle class in many European countries (including Greece), and increased awareness of the importance of education for socio-economic success has raised the issue of perceiving parents as stakeholders and not simply as the recipients of education (Sliwka & Istance, 2006). Does this mean that educational legislation should adopt more liberal values because of parents' demands? This would imply, for example, that emphasis should be given to competition among pupils and schools, to academic achievement and to results. Interestingly, in Greece only a minority of parents are stakeholders of education, despite the emphasis they place on it.

Who then will decide on the utility of values in the educational legislation if the parents and various stakeholders do not participate? In Greece, according to Ifanti (1994):

'... potential debate about government policies can come either through constitutional mechanisms of the parliamentary system or through specialised educational interest groups.' (p. 220)

It seems then that the Greek state through its Ministry of Education controls and generates the content and the organisation of the curriculum and decides on the values adopted. The specialised educational groups that interfere in this procedure are mainly teachers' unions, education officers or the Church, which do not always aim at the right direction.

Even if there was a wider participation of various interest groups and stakeholders regarding the formation of whatever social values were included in educational legislation, our question still remains: Is there a coherent set of values acceptable to all social classes, which can clarify attitudes and policy in education? Some might suggest that, at least in the compulsory educational stage, emphasis should be given to pupils with difficulties in order to help them compete with their more able classmates in the later stages of education. This would mean that society should reach a consensus on applying the values of fair inegalitarianism in the compulsory educational stage. Others might say that applying the values of fair inegalitarianism distorts equality values, since it neglects the more able and gifted pupils. The argument for increasing resources to talented pupils is based on the liberal educational assumption that these pupils will be able to make better use of what they get and, therefore, could be providing a strong argument for giving talented pupils all the educational resources they can use. A 'liberal-egalitarian' modern society gives opportunities to all of its members to promote them socially through meritocracy. Ideally, the notion of meritocracy is supposed to create an 'unequal but fair' society, in the sense that inequalities exist among people, but that all people are supposed to have a 'fair' chance to progress financially and socially. In practice, the application of meritocracy in society is problematic. On the one hand, meritocracy is a fair social mobility process because it promotes the highly able and motivated people regardless of class background and parental support. On the other hand, while meritocracy, defined in terms of ability and motivation, plays a part in determining individuals' social mobility and class destinations, the influence of class origin and parental support remains strong (Goldthorpe, 1996). In that sense, the educational systems of many western countries, like Greece, may lead to social inequality (Giamouridis & Bagley, 2006).

Both arguments have strong points and defend their values from their own point of view. According to Norwich (1996):

'... there is no ideological purity in education. No single and exclusive value or principle, whether it be equality or individuality or social inclusion, can encompass what is commonly considered to be worthwhile. My stance is therefore for appreciating the benefits of ideological impurity and living hopefully with it.' (p. 100)

The need for critical-reflective teachers before the question of social values in education

Despite the ideological impurity in education, the state has an obligation to declare what kind of equality is adopted in its educational legislation. In the case of a synthesis of educational equality models, it is important to make sure that its components are as compatible as possible and inform teachers how they can apply the revised version into classroom practice.

One potential avenue is through reflection on teaching (Schön, 1987). Schön viewed teaching as an activity characterised by uncertainty, instability and value conflict. In this way, reflection helps teachers to analyse their attitudes, their prior knowledge and their experiences, and integrate them into teaching practice (Pigiaki, 1999). Research shows that reflective teachers tend to be more creative, something which becomes indispensable when implementing new educational measures into schools (Starida, 1995). Papoulia-Tzelepi (1996) argues that reflection on teaching can establish a conception of the teacher as a thinking, complex agent, rather than as an automation who simply puts the findings of research into classroom practice. Furthermore, as Everton, Galton & Pell (2000) argue, if research is to influence classroom practice, then it is vital that teachers are given extended opportunities for further professional study alongside those teachers who are already conducting research.

Looking at the international bibliography regarding reflection, we can identify three levels of reflection, with each one higher than the last (Yaxley, 1993; Harrison, Lawson & Wortley, 2005; Matsaggouras, 2005).

The first level is reflection on the technical aspects of teaching (application of technical skills, such as, practical management of classes and the production of tasks and resources). At this stage, reflection on teaching implies that teachers can reflect upon the effectiveness of their teaching strategies.

At the second level, reflection concerns the underlying assumptions and possible consequences of teachers' actions. Here, reflection focuses on how and why certain teachers' choices and actions are made and how these are influenced by institutional and social factors.

The third level is critical reflection with moral and ethical issues related to teaching, including issues concerning equality and justice. Reflection at this level argues for a teacher being a 'transformative intellectual' (Giroux, 1988) who critically reflects on how teaching contributes to a just and humane society.

Wellington & Austin (1996; cited in Day, 1999) propose five 'orientations' of teachers' reflective practice:

1. Immediate orientation focuses on the basic demands of teaching and aims at teacher's 'survival' in class.

2. Technical orientation focuses on applying teaching methodology and aims at efficient delivery of prescribed educational results.
3. Deliberative orientation focuses on discovering and assessing personal meaning in teaching and aims at autonomous teaching.
4. Dialectic orientation focuses on political and social issues regarding education and aims at critical questioning and revision.
5. Transpersonal orientation focuses on inner self development and aims at clarifying the multi-dimensional role of the teacher.

According to Liston & Zeichner (1990),

‘When we reflect on our teaching, it is appropriate for questions about the students, the curriculum, the institutional setting, and the larger social role of schools to surface.’ (p. 240)

These questions are concerned with teachers’ attitudes. Critical reflection looks at the justification of these attitudes. As mentioned earlier, we do not argue for a coherent set of values absolutely free of ambiguity and contradiction. This may prove too difficult to accomplish. Instead, the goal is to analyse the values, to examine the degree of accuracy and consider alternatives.

Let us examine an example. Suppose that a state decides to give emphasis to the more able pupils in the compulsory education without neglecting the pupils with difficulties. The decision would become part of educational legislation and might be interpreted as a shift to a liberal model of educational equality. How will teachers respond? They might consider practising different teaching approaches. For example, ability grouping might be an option. This option may be analysed first on the grounds of teaching effectiveness *via*, for example, reflective questioning between teachers (Barnett & O’Mahony, 2006). Secondly, teachers may reflect on why and how they practise ability grouping in their classes. Is it because of pressures from certain stakeholders, like parents? Which category of parents prefers ability grouping and why? Could it be that ability grouping does not always help the more able pupils, creating at the same time various constraints to pupils with difficulties? (Ireson & Hallam, 1999).

These questions lead to the third level of critical-reflective thinking. By reflecting on the previous issues, teachers can become aware that any teaching approach they choose, including ability grouping, has certain consequences regarding social justice and equality. So they need to be capable of examining their own situations, compare them with others, justify their options and be prepared to search for alternative and more justifiable methods should there be a need (Liston & Zeichner, 1990).

We can see that different levels of reflection introduce different perspectives on teachers' attitudes and values on certain issues. It should be noted, however, that for various reasons, not all teachers might be prepared to engage in all different levels of reflection. We have seen that the educational legislation and the values of the society where teachers live and work can prove to be serious obstacles for enabling critical reflection among teachers. According to Day (1999):

‘... no single form of reflection is necessarily ‘better’ than another ... teachers must be involved in all during the course of a career. The different kinds of reflection may, therefore, be conceived as being parts of a continuum of reflective practice, rather than different levels in a hierarchy.’
(p. 225)

The dilemma facing teachers is which level of reflection to choose and when. The example regarding the teaching methods illustrates the need for teachers to engage in critical reflection in order to reconsider their role in schools and their communities, and how to deal with the tensions created between attitudes, socio-educational values and educational legislation.

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BOOK REVIEW

Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo (2007) *Public Intellectuals, Radical Democracy and Social Movements: A Book of Interviews*, New York, Peter Lang Publishing, 214 pp., ISBN: 9780820470764.

Seventeen public intellectuals and social activists ranging from different parts of the world – including Portugal, England, Malta, Brazil, the Caribbean and the United States – promote social justice in this enthralling collection of interviews. The book involves people from a wide spectrum of civil-society organisations, actively engaged in revolutionary activities. It is made up of a set of dialogues with individuals set on transforming oppression in concrete and meaningful ways. Their message is not a simple denunciation of injustices; it implies a narrative of hope, even though such narrative is commonly derided in various quarters (from postmodern philosophers who jab at any liberating narrative, to neo-liberal prophets of doom who condemn any revolutionary proposal).

Different geographical locations, where actual struggles are taking place, enrich the backdrop of these interviews. The reader can appreciate the multiple ways in which oppression is manifested across diverse contexts and how political and cultural variables influence the mechanisms used for social integration. Participating in critical education – a pedagogy based on dialogue, critical thinking and problem solving rather than on transmission or instruction – has given the speakers, and the communities afflicted by the struggles, the power to advance human freedom and knowledge. Through popular education processes, people can organise themselves, name and resist oppression. More social justice and more participatory democracy ensue when people from all walks of life are considered as social actors capable of making sense of their lives in purposeful ways.

The main thrust of this book pertains to how power structured relationships in systems of social and political oppression are identified and questioned. The social activists convey authentic life experiences – their own and of the communities they belong to – that bear witness to a reality where the status quo is actively disturbed. What seems static and inevitable can change dimension.

The dignified (read ‘not compassionate’) and heightened form of sensibility toward social suffering expressed in the interviews is a striking presence running throughout the book. The nature of the suffering revealed by the speakers is manifold and evidenced in the states of poverty, violence, war, gender and racial discrimination. The interview with Nita Freire in Brazil, for instance, verbalises the experience of people excluded from the system, people who are homeless, unemployed and illiterate, pertaining to a social class exploited by a more

powerful and dominant one – an oppression that is denied and thrives because of this advantage. In another testimony, one reads of how discriminatory provisions present in national laws (which, for instance, do not stipulate that domestic violence is a crime) are also deeply embedded in a public culture that resists the attainment of complete equality. Magda Adly from Egypt sheds light on this phenomenon and recounts her involvement in the strengthening of democracy and the implementation of human rights conventions. The *Movimento dos Sem Terra* (MST) and ecological movements that promote justice in trade, in their turn, help the reader understand that groups are continually being disadvantaged because of inequitable social and economic realities, the degradation of the environment and the violation of their human rights. The reader is also made aware that these accounts need not necessarily be detached from one's immediate experience. The purchasing and consumption of certain commodities, like a pair of jeans or a bar of chocolate, may contribute to such degradation.

Certain forms of exclusion are made more public, like the case raised by Paul Cooper of individuals who fail to engage effectively in the educational process with the consequence that they are unable to derive benefits from educational experiences. The factors influencing the exclusion process are multiple and complex. However, common patterns can be identified. Children from relatively wealthy families or born to parents of significant cultural capital have access to high status educational opportunities because they are socialised in ways that enable them to outperform their less well prepared peers in state funded institutions. Moreover, a proportion of students become disengaged from the learning process because of factors like ethnicity or stereotyping. This exclusion can lead to disruptive behaviour and the development of deviant subcultures; those excluded are subject to impaired life chances, such as occupational opportunities which in turn can contribute to limited economic advancement. The interview makes urgent the need to identify those forces that hinder efforts to make education equitable and fair – a current challenge inflicting educational systems worldwide. Education has an important role, that of advancing people's rights to live in a just world, yet educational opportunities often exclude some while advantaging others.

This issue has more resonance when one considers how education can actually contribute to individuals becoming more involved in their community. Maria Hamlyn Zuniga affirms how politically invisible and powerless people in Nicaragua were able to change their lives and their conditions by partaking in popular education programmes. The experience of John Fisher, committed to the labour movement, is equally absorbing. Workers were equipped not merely with skills, but also with an education that helped them identify the causes of economic changes, understand the options and challenge the apathy by seeking real alternatives and implementing them.

Beyond doubt, the amazing and varied life experiences brimming with intimate and passionate accounts will fascinate the reader and intrigue her/him to inquire on how these activists deal with the oppression surrounding them and how they contribute to alternative ways of knowing. What makes this book more inspiring, however, is the reassuring way the reader learns of experiences of human dignity; how individuals have managed to refuse their sub-ordination, making tangible the power of transformation even to the most sceptic among us.

The intertwining of theory and practice, deftly exercised both in how the questions are structured and the way the interviewees choose to answer them, adapts perfectly with the stance taken by all the speakers. This book is about reflections, but also about activism and responsiveness. The people interviewed are committed to radical and progressive social change and the passion toward their cause, their sustained interactions and above all their knowledge and skills have set a new ball in motion. The vibrant accounts compel the reader to engage in critical thought. A movement of social change is felt building its way through the pages with each intervention, with every interview. The need to cultivate a critical mindedness is felt like never before. This has perhaps been one of the objectives of the authors – that of triggering a positive vigour and retrieving a collective effort of critical discourse. For this reason, this book is thoroughly recommended to all those aspiring to live in a just world.

Michelle Attard Tonna
University of Malta

Notes for Contributors

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