EDITORIAL FOREWORD

THE MEDITERRANEAN. EDUCATION AND THE MILLENNIUM

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e are pleased to bring to our readers the inaugural issue of the Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies.

The *MJES* is a unique initiative in the Mediterranean, and constitutes part of a wider project of the *Mediterranean Education Programme* that has, as an overall and guiding purpose, the following aim:

"To develop South-South and South-North dialogue in the field of education, and through this, to enhance the possibility of mutual understanding and co-operation among Mediterranean and other people in the various spheres of life".

The other elements of the Mediterranean Education Programme that contribute to the achievement of the goal just outlined are the Mediterranean Education Network/ Réseau Méditerranéen de l'Education (La MER), the Mediterranean Education Documentation Centre, and the annual Selmun Seminar. Details regarding these and other Mediterranean education activities are provided in the concluding sections of this inaugural issue. The present editorial introduction constitutes a statement of purpose for the MJES, placing the journal within the context of the larger events that currently structure and mark the Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean: the 20th century and beyond

The timeliness of this set of inter-related initiatives, and of the MJES in particular, becomes immediately evident when we consider the increasing importance of the Mediterranean region in the current global climate. The configuration of the world order in the aftermath of 1989 has seen an increasing emphasis placed on a North-South axis as the integration of the Eastern bloc into the West becomes not only an ideological, but also a material reality. The Mediterranean has become one of the regional contexts where the North meets the South, and where increasingly the need is felt to develop an understanding of different perspectives, cultures and interests. Because of the intensification of the processes of political, economic and cultural interaction, as well as due to the movement for European integration which tends to restructure - and at times strengthen - the boundaries between those that are members of the Union and those that are not, countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea are looking for a sense of identity and for unity. They had, of course, known a unity in earlier times, when, to use the words of one of the most renowned scholars of the region, "in the Mediterranean to live was to exchange" - whether this exchange involved persons, ideas, ways of life, beliefs...or habits of courtship (Braudel 1992: 548, 550). But much of this unity had, by the seventeenth century, given way to

discord as the region lost its role as the economic and cultural power-house of Europe, and became instead the site where imperialistic ambitions of the industrialising North were played out.

Axis of difference

Since then, the Mediterranean has been associated rather more with rifts than with cohesion. The geographical Mediterranean is clearly divided into distinguishable subregions, so that we can speak of the 'north' and 'south' Mediterranean as we can speak of the 'east' and the 'west'. Globally, the region is made up of twenty states if one had to include Portugal, and covers 3 million square kilometers. It is the home of 500 million inhabitants, representing 8% of the world's population. 200 million of these Mediterraneans are Arabs, and in all, over 200 languages are spoken around the basin (see Grenon & Batisse 1989; Luciani 1984; and ICM 1995a). The 'north Mediterranean' countries - what are referred to as the 'Latin arc' countries or, significantly, 'southern Europe' - are, for instance, distinguishable from the countries in the south of the basin by several of the commonly used indicators of development. They generally have a faster rate of industrial development (though still 'less developed' when compared to northern Europe) and have high literacy rates. Despite progress in the south Mediterranean countries, there were still between 5 to 34% of students who were still not receiving a primary education in 1991, with high illiteracy rates for several Maghreb and Machrek countries such as Morocco (50.5%) and Tunisia (34.7%) in 1990 (Gizard 1992; UNESCO 1995).

The Latin arc is moreover characterised by a low birth rate regime, the lowest being those of Italy and France with 1.3 and 1.8 children per woman respectively. In contrast, the south is a demographic time bomb of another sort, with high birth rates that are topped by Libya, with 6.7 children per woman (Regnault 1992). Algeria and Morocco have doubled their populations since the French retreat, and Egypt will double its population in twenty five years. The annual per capita income is less than \$1000 in the 'south', while that of the 'north' is at least ten times as much. One could also speak of a 'south' that 'exports' migrant workers, and of a 'north' (and 'west') Mediterranean that receives them; of a 'south' that is a home for Islam, and of a 'north' (and 'west') that is steeped in Catholicism, even if this is a secularised version; and of a 'north' that is increasingly integrating in the 'new' economic and political bloc, the European Union, and of a 'south' that is excluded.

Similarly, the 'east' Mediterranean countries - the Levant - face challenges that are different to those which trouble the 'western' sector of the basin, and that are decisively lodged in the geo-political context that can be more meaningfully and appropriately called Middle Eastern, or, if we took a north-easterly direction, Balkan. Whether we look to the north, south, east or west, we note the rise of fundamentalist movements within the three monotheistic religions of the region, movements which emphasise separatism rather than solidarity in the Mediterranean.

Axis of cohesion

متحث

Given these differences and division, it is not surprising that organisations such as the World Bank prefer to disaggregate countries of the basin and to organise them around more immediately significant economic or geographical units. As Fernand Braudel's path-breaking *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (first published in 1949) points out: "It would be difficult to recognise any unity in this dense, composite and ill-defined world (i.e. the Mediterranean)...other than that of being the meeting place of many peoples, and the melting-pot of many histories" (Braudel 1992: 171). But it was the same Braudel who most forcefully pointed out the climactic arch that gives the Mediterranean region its permanence and continuity. According to Braudel, the Mediterranean climate, stretching as it does from the northern limit of the olive tree to the northern limit of the palm tree, exercises a unifying influence that has a social, besides geographical referent. Braudel (1992:172, 178) in fact argues that

it is significant that at the heart of this human unit, occupying an area smaller than the whole, there should be a source of physical unity, a climate, which has imposed its uniformity on both landscape and ways of life...It is a matter of some importance to the historian to find almost everywhere within his (sic) field of study the same climate, the same seasonal rhythm, the same vegetation, the same colors and, when the geological architecture recurs, the same landscapes, identical to the point of obsession; in short, the same ways of life...a native of the Mediterranean, wherever he might come from would never feel out of place in any part of the sea.

That inner soul is the result not only of ecological continuities, but also of mutual influence among the peoples of the region. And referring to a more contemporary world, Davis (1977: 255) has argued that the intensity of contact has carried over from the past, so that "Over the millennia it has proved impossible for Mediterranean people to ignore each other. They have conquered, colonised, converted...the contacts are perpetual and inescapable". It is this constant factor of interaction, borrowing, diffusion and acculturation that are - at least partly - responsible for the homogeneity of the Mediterranean.

It fell to anthropologists and social scientists to explore the extent to which one could speak of the present Mediterranean reality as a social system, an attempt which less than a decade and a half ago was considered to be 'new and controversial' (Gilmore 1982: 175). Under the influence of authors such as Pitt-Rivers (1963), Peristiany (1965, 1968, 1976a, 1977b), Wolf (1969), Gellner (1977), the Schneiders (1976), Davis (1977) and Boissevain (1976, 1979), a pan-Mediterranean focus was developed in order to explore Mediterranean distinctiveness around unifying themes. Their studies suggest controversially - that a relatively uniform Mediterranean ecology led to an aggregate of sociocultural traits which Gilmore (1982), drawing on a variety of sources, lists (and here I both paraphrase and quote) as follows:

A strong urban orientation; a corresponding disdain for the peasant way of life and for manual labor; sharp social, geographic, and economic stratification; political instability and a history of weak states; 'atomistic' community life; rigid sexual segregation; a tendency toward reliance on the smallest possible kinship units (nuclear families and shallow lineages); strong emphasis on shifting, ego-centered, noncorporate coalitions; an honor-and-shame syndrome which defines both sexuality and personal reputation; ...intense parochialism and intervillage rivalries; communities are marked off by local cults of patron saints who are identified with the territorial unit; general gregariousness and interdependence of daily life characteristic of small, densely populated neighbourhoods, where patterns of institutionalised hostile nicknaming abounds, where the evil eye belief is widespread, and where religion plays an important institutionalised political role, as do priests, saints, and holy men. Marriage patterns, while superficially varied, signal the unity of the Mediterranean through the practice of the dowry. And there are important similarities in politics also, with weak bureaucracies at the national level leading to unstable democratic regimes, often alternating with dictatorships of both Right and Left. At the micropolitical level, this emphasis on informal personal power rather than formal institutions is reflected in the reliance on patronage, with clientage being the preferred form of adaptation to social inequality in the region.

Over and above these Mediterranean 'traits' - which seem to have evolved due to internal contacts which are both historical and contemporary, and which tend to germinate around the basin due to a similar eco-environment - others have emphasised the identity of the Mediterranean region in terms of a shared subjugation to external economic pressures. Authors such as Yachir (1989) and Amin and Yachir (1988) take a political economic approach to the Mediterranean, and draw on Wallerstein's world-systems analysis with its emphasis on centre-periphery relations, or on Santos' theorisation of semi-peripheral societies, in order to argue that what is quintessentially Mediterranean is not the result of local or regional conditions, but rather more a direct response to 'de-development' by the core powers.

Regional identity-formation in the Mare Nostrum

How, therefore, can we make sense of the centrifugal and centripetal tendencies that mark the Mediterranean region? One way of tackling this question is to consider 'regions' as constructs rather than as 'facts'. This should not be difficult to understand in a decade which has seen the overt intensification of the creation of a region called 'Europe' which, while historically and even culturally disparate, became a 'region' - or a system containing unities - under the influence of conquering armies, Christian mysticism, merchant traders, and captains of industry. At different moments in history, it has been politically and economically expedient to focus on the similarities or the differences that mark the old continent, and to use specific constructs of 'Europe' to include or exclude groups of people and whole nations. Indeed, 'Europe' is constructed

differently by diverse organisations such as the European Union, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, and behind these varied constructions lie important ideological, political and economic considerations. In other words, a 'region' should not be considered in a reified manner: it can become one, or fail to become one, as a result of vested interests by those doing the naming.

Several initiatives in diverse fields are indicating the extent to which the Mediterranean region is surfacing again as an important actor in the international arena, and that it is in the process of identity-formation. 1994, for instance, saw the European Council of Heads of State and Government meet in Corfu in order to give political impetus towards a new partnership with the Mediterranean. That Euro-Mediterranean partnership, confirmed more recently at meetings in Essen and Cannes, gave rise to a series of Association Agreements aiming at invigorating multilateral process of political, economic and social dialogue between the European Union and its twelve Mediterranean partners. In 1995, the Amman Summit tried to revive the idea of setting up a Middle East and North African Regional Bank, and the Crans-Montana Forum met in Malta, bringing together heads of states, ministers, governors of central banks, diplomats and academics to discuss issues related to security challenges in the Mediterranean, co-operation between North and South, and the democratic process and human rights in the countries around the Mediterranean. Much the same themes have been discussed at the two meetings of the Interparliamentary Conference on Security and Co-Operation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) which took place in 1992 and 1995 in Malaga and Malta respectively. Even more recently, the first Euromed Civil Forum, convened immediately after the EU Conference in Barcelona, formulated a framework for co-operation over and above political agreements, through social, economic and cultural agencies in the Mediterranean Basin (ICM 1995b).

Most of these initiatives have seen Brussels directing the pace and scope of European and Mediterranean interaction. Such a reflection is true of Med-Campus activities, for instance, which while providing opportunities for joint projects between European and Mediterranean partners in such areas as tourism studies, adult education and training, and the development of alternative sources of energy, tend to be generally marked by a concern with the transfer of technology from the North to the South. Indeed, the often hierarchical nature of the interaction suggests that the central aim of the EU in the Mediterranean is to consolidate a European sphere of influence. Not only is this influence important in terms of preserving markets for European products and services, but also to maintain stability in what is increasingly seen to be a volatile region, as well as to control the flow of migrants from the South to the North.

Other initiatives, while perhaps less momentous on the political scale, nevertheless do indicate that there are, indeed, processes of identity formation around the Mediterranean region. Since 1982, for instance the Paris-based Fondation René Seydoux has regularly published updated versions of its Répertoire Méditerranéen (1993), providing details about the activities of the different institutions working on Mediterranean concerns in the fields of human, social and applied sciences. The sixth

edition of the Répertoire lists 511 such agencies. 1982 also marks the year of the World Conference on Cultural Policies, when UNESCO took a small but significant step by declaring its interest in Mediterranean affairs, and recommended to its member states to proclaim the Mediterranean the "sea of human civilisation" and to "use the resources of culture and communication to intensify their activity on behalf of peace and international understanding around the Mediterranean". UNESCO justified these recommendations on the basis of its understanding that "the Mediterranean has (...) constituted a link between peoples and cultures, as a sea which is a source of creativity and of fruitful exchanges spanning millennia, and a means of communication between European and Islamic cultures".

In 1995, and as a culmination point of various bi- and multi-lateral initiatives undertaken by individuals and organisations under the auspices of - or in collaboration with - UNESCO, the latter decided to group together under the name 'Mediterranean Programme' a set of schemes, networks and activities with the aim of contributing "to the advancement of the countries and people of the Mediterranean in the sectors that correspond to UNESCO's mandate", to "develop co-operation between public and private sectors (civil societies) in all parts of the Mediterranean area"; and to "promote the Mediterranean as an ecocultural region" (UNESCO Mediterranean Programme, 1995:5). The UNESCO Mediterranean Programme, guided by documents such as the 1995 Carthage Charter on Tolerance in the Mediterranean, functions as a network for over 600 organisations, centers, universities, institutions and municipalities, relayed in each country by National Commissions, UNESCO clubs, Associated Schools, and UNESCO accredited NGOs.

Among the more important of these NGOs that have culture and education as a main or subsidiary focus are the Community of Mediterranean Universities (CUM) based in Bari (Italy) and active, through its decentralised Schools, since 1983; the University of the Mediterranean (UNIMED), with a central base in Rome, and with outreach bureaux in Amman, Cairo, Valletta, Montpellier and Rabat; the Laboratorio Mediterraneo, set up as a cultural foundation in 1995 and based in Naples; the Network of Mediterranean Study Centres, established in 1995 and co-ordinated by the Institut Català d'Estudis de la Mediterranea I Cooperacío (ICM); the 'Children of the Mediterranean' programme, launched by Federico Mayor in 1993, and involving children under the age of eleven with the aim of affirming the twin messages of ecology and peace; the South-East Mediterranean Project (SEMEP), which is primarily involved with environmental, technical and vocational education in Albania, Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Cyprus, Israel, Jordan and Egypt.

While currently privileging Eastern Europe and channeling much of its attention and resources in that direction, the Council of Europe has followed in the tracks of UNESCO, and has, through its North-South Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity, set up a Mediterranean Information Centre (Transmed-Info Centre) in Lisbon, with the purpose of identifying and organising into a trans-Mediterranean network the main sources of information about the Mediterranean. The European

Cultural Foundation has its own Mediterranean Programme focusing on translations from Arabic and Hebrew to European languages and vice-versa, as well as on a Network of Mediterranean Bookshops. Relevant to what has earlier been referred to as the shift in focus of the social sciences towards the North-South axis, the Vienna Centre for the study of East-West relations has relocated itself in Malta in order to coordinate EUMENESS, the Euro-Mediterranean Network of the Social Sciences.

The Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies

123

The MJES must be seen within the context of all these disparate activities, and indeed has, as its primary purpose, the provision of a forum for debate and reflections on Mediterranean education, understood in its broadest sense. There are now several journals that deal specifically with the region, including, among others, the Washington-based Mediterranean Quarterly, the Japanese Mediterranean World, the French Cahiers de la Méditerranée, the University of Malta's Journal of Mediterranean Studies, the Library of Mediterranean History, and Mediterranean Politics, the inaugural issue of which is to be published by the University of Portsmouth, England. Indeed, the Répertoire Méditerranéenne lists close to 600 journals and reviews that focus on countries from around the basin. None of these journals is concerned with education across the Mediterranean, which is perhaps not surprising given the diversity of education systems that mark the region.

And yet, there is ample opportunity and scope for systematic comparative analyses, for collaboration in education, and for the development of networks of scholars and joint research projects across the Mediterranean. There are over 250 universities and research centres in the region, with the youngest University being that of Cyprus, set up in 1992. There are more close to 130,000 University teachers and researchers (Boissevain 1982; Busuttil 1992), and most Universities have a Faculty, School or Institute focusing on educational sciences (see the World Book of Learning 1996). There is also plenty of scope for comparison between education systems. Higher education systems in the Mediterranean, for instance, tend to be more focused on teaching rather than research, an obvious repercussion of lack of sufficient funding and of the transfer of knowledge southwards. Most Mediterranean universities tend to be dominated by Faculties providing traditional professions such as doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, architects and religious specialists. There tends to be an over-reliance on the metropole and the 'north' for research and training partnership, often leading to post-colonial dependencies. Teaching styles and pedagogies tend to be uncritical and unquestioning, given the authoritarian relationships that dominate at many levels of the different institutions (Boissevain 1982), and the proximity of education systems to sources of power, whether these are secular or religious. Indeed, secular universities are a rarity in Muslim countries, for instance (Busuttil 1992). The 'brain drain' problem is particularly acute in the Maghreb countries, with 250,000 graduates emigrating northwards in the last twenty five years, representing an average of 10,000 graduates

per year, an enormous blow to human resource investment in the region. The brain drain phenomenon is also pertinent to Greece, all the *Mezzogiorno*, and Corsica (Gizard 1992).

There is a similarly wide scope for comparative studies of Mediterranean compulsory education systems. Just to mention a few examples, one could focus on the influence of the Napoleonic tradition on the development of centralised administrative systems. Economic underdevelopment has also led to an attraction for vocationalist forms of schooling on the part of system managers, while colonial experiences, and traditional Mediterranean views (see Braudel 1992: 520, 524) have, paradoxically, kept most of the population away from such vocational schools given that manual labor was constantly associated with low status. The importance of religion in the Mediterranean region, and the ability of the clerical class to generate funds via devotional practices of the faithful, has led to a situation where parallel educational services can be offered through denominational schools, an issue of no small consequence given the rise of fundamentalism in the Mediterranean region's three main and monotheist religions. At all levels, the medium of instruction presents a veritable challenge, as policy-makers have to decide whether they adopt an international language to teach scientific knowledge (mainly English and French), or translate and adapt books in the mother tongue. At all levels as well, the issue of women's education remains a crucial one, as cultures struggle to manage social movements for women's liberation without destroying traditional family life and the roles it entails. In a similar vein, comparative education studies have a rich research program should they focus on the contradictions between the socialisation provided in conventional Mediterranean families and schools, and the tidal wave of modernisation catapulted into the home via television programs and cinematic productions from the North (Perrein 1992).

The MJES sets out to respond to this lacuna by privileging and promoting both comparative education studies of the Mediterranean as well as case-studies of individual countries belonging to the region. Given the diaspora of Mediterranean people world-wide, the journal will also feature studies of the educational fortunes of the region's migrants in such contexts as North America, Europe and Australia. Comparative Mediterranean education studies, and Mediterranean education studies per se, can contribute to the new, hesitant sense of regional identity outlined earlier. The MJES and the Mediterranean Education Programme it forms part of provide, therefore, another possibility for genuine dialogue between South and South, as well as between South and North, with the view of promoting mutual understanding, equitable partnerships, and collaborative ventures. The emphasis is on facilitating an increased awareness - and valorisation - of the expertise that already exists in the region, and on the building of bridges and partnerships between scholars, researchers and practitioners in the such fields as comparative education, foundation disciplines in education, education policy analysis, Mediterranean studies, cultural and postcolonial studies, Southern European studies, intercultural education, peace education, and migrant studies. Such identity-formation is not exclusive of others: being for the

Mediterranean does *not* mean being against others. But it does mean that the South develops its own sense of identity, worth and unity so that it relates with the North from a position of strength.

Themes that will feature in the MJES

In order to achieve the goal of facilitating dialogue and understanding, both within and outside of the Mediterranean, the MJES will feature articles which dwell on a variety of themes, including: the identification of key categories organising education institutions in the South; comparative educational history of Mediterranean countries; ethnic and religious conflict and the role of education; comparative case studies relating to Mediterranean countries and substantive educational issues (such as adult education, higher education, equity, gender and scholastic attainment, privatisation and education, policy-making, centralisation and decentralisation, values education, and so on); the influence of European education systems, especially in the context of a uniting Europe; the influence of religious systems on education systems; education and development (including such themes as human resource development, vocational education and training systems, linkage between education and the economy, and so on); the role of the intellectual; Mediterranean Studies curricula; student flows in, out of and around the Mediterranean; education and dependency in the current world order; Mediterranean background students in the world diaspora. Some of these themes as well as other foci will be the subject of special issues of the journal, in order to permit more systematic and comparative studies. In addition, the journal will live up to its goal and facilitate dialogue by encouraging readers to respond to articles that appear in the MJES, and to comment about views expressed. Publications, conferences and research projects related to education in Mediterranean countries will be reviewed and announced in the Book Review and Networking sections of each issue of the MJES.

Language policy of the MJES

Articles will appear mainly in English, though occasionally papers submitted in French will also be published. We are not insensitive to the irony of a situation where the *lingua franca* of the region reminds us of past colonial régimes. On the other hand, one must be pragmatic: communicate we must, and while there are obvious dangers that, in drawing on colonising languages we integrate and reproduce colonising concepts and structures (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1981), there is also the possibility that we creatively use that same language to colonise it with our own meanings and experiences (Achebe 1975; Eco 1994). In an attempt to facilitate dialogue, we have opted to reproduce the abstracts of each article in French and Arabic, other commonly used languages of the Mediterranean. Furthermore, we will celebrate the diversity of the region by publishing each article abstract in the mother-tongue of the contributor.

The use of English as the key medium of the journal should not discourage potential contributors who are not fluent in the language. One of the tasks of the editorial team is to offer assistance in this regard, ensuring that papers that deserve to reach a wider audience actually do so. In exceptional circumstances, and dependent on the resources that the editorial team has at its disposal, articles which make a particularly strong contribution to the goals of the journal will be translated to English.

An invitation

Given the context outlined above, and the aspirations of the *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies*, the editorial board is pleased to invite potential authors to submit their work, following the guidelines set out at the end of this journal issue. Our aim is to be readable, current, reflective, provocative if necessary, and substantive. To this end we have established the *MJES*. We will periodically revisit the goals and assumptions underlying this initiative in keeping with our readers' responses and the temper of the times.

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