

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

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The 'Mediterranean Quest'

At the beginning of the new millennium the extended area of the Mediterranean appears to be searching for a new life and to be seeking out a new existence. If we believe writers such as Todeschini (1996), Matvejevic (1996) Sultana (1996, 1998) and Mayo (1999) the old sea, and the 20¹ countries it presently unites, are looking for a new rejuvenated identity, a *Mediterranean Identity*, which will take them back to the communication and the unity of the millennium before Christ, when the Greeks considered it the centre of the world (*Mesogeios*, i.e. middle of the earth) and the Romans could justifiably call it *Mare Nostrum*. It is then time for individual Mediterranean countries to begin to assert their distinct presence and to attempt to link with each other in a multitude of ways.

During the two intervening millennia the political emphasis – and not only that – has shifted to northern parts of Europe. Northern empires, such as the British one, came to replace the dominance of the South, and a novel concept of science has long abandoned its Greek roots and moved in western ways. Technology has equally moved on, retaining just the markings of the original Arabic numbers, departing from its geography. New empires are now being formulated on the basis of this new science and technology, empires who have exceeded in size and strength even the greatest of all the old ones, the British Empire, as their geography is no longer limited by maps: linguistic empires, commercial empires, technological empires which have no one single national identity but rather share – and impose – common 'values' or the lack of them. The old basin has long been demoted to an – often inappropriate (Miliani, 1996) – consumer of all this might: education, science, technology, goods, philosophies and religions.

Can we redress this balance? Need we do it? Why? How?

Why?

God, who appeared to be in the centre of the Egyptian cosmos, was replaced by man (*sic*) in the Greek tradition. What has replaced him as the new centre of

the world? How can we fail to see that it is the dollar? Everything seems to lead there and from there to nowhere. Old values which had acquired Gods' names and human faces in the Mediterranean religions of the past, such as love (as Aphrodite or Venus) and wisdom (as Athena) or family love and devotion (represented by Hera and Hestia) have long perished from the Pantheon of Gods, leaving little of value to fill a (wo)man's heart and to serve as a life purpose. It is precisely for this reason, for the reason that the new solitary deity has left our hearts and souls empty, that we need to resurrect the old Gods and Goddesses, realising, as we do, that their peril will soon signal ours. For no humans can, unpunished, retain for long a Godless existence.

In the same line, albeit in a very different mode, Sultana (1998) speaks of Mediterranean unity and collaboration as a matter of survival, and of the need to withstand – and obviously resist – the new circuits of imperialism in the interests of a culture of peace and, I would like to add, a meaningful existence.

How?

Miliani (1996, p.11) also seems perplexed by this issue when he rhetorically asks: 'Does not the mimicry of educational thoughts, whatever their origin, harm social behaviours and cultural habits specific to countries of the periphery?' We cannot but agree! However, it seems rather difficult – not to mention pointless – to start from scratch. As Miliani himself indicates (1996, p.5) 'development does not mean reinventing the wheel'. After all, what we now face as great western inventions are to a large extent an offspring of prime Mediterranean seeds. Building up on such notions, or, even better, watering them down with Mediterranean sea water, bringing out the forgotten principles and the old values, this is the way to proceed. We need not abandon precious germs of truth and knowledge where they can be found. We may simply enrich them with the human touch whenever possible.

I shall exhaust the rest of the space allocated to me in this introduction in an effort to draw a picture of such an example, making a synthesis of the papers that follow, although I am fully aware that my professional points of reference are not half as Mediterranean as I would wish them to be.

Special, integrational or inclusive education?

In 1971, in her groundbreaking book *The Empty Hours*, Maureen Oswin asked in passing: 'Junior-age children are open minded and eager to learn. Should they share their schools with handicapped children, so they all become familiar with each-other at an early age?' (Oswin, 1971, p.5). Thirty years later we can very

safely answer her: 'Yes, of course! This is exactly what they should do!' There have been in between a million answers. What was then a very advanced question for its time is now quite obvious: that the 'life' conditions Oswin (1971) describes in her book should never ever be allowed to exist for any child ever again, anywhere! More than that, it is now obvious that we have no choice *but* to encourage children with and without disabilities to co-exist if we are ever to expect that adults with and without disabilities are to do the same (Vlachou, 1997).

To come to this point of wisdom, the western world – in whose heart this question was generated thirty years ago (Oswin was writing in London of the early seventies) – went through a period of constant deliberation and change. Oswin (1971) offers a frightening testimony of umpteen wasted hours, umpteen wasted lives. Reading it today the book still reeks with pain in every page, even more so now perhaps, as we discover what we allowed to happen not so long ago. This testimony was quite possibly one of the reasons why the Warnock committee was set up in England in the mid-seventies to study the policy and practice of special education and make recommendations for improvement. This is at least Mortimore's view (Mortimore, 2000), which I took as a personal invitation to visit Oswin's book. It does not escape me that legislation for integration of children with special needs was already established in the United States in the middle of the seventies (*All Handicapped Children Act* of 1975), nor that the black and feminist movements before that had fought for the human and educational rights of the blacks and of all women (Zynn 1995; Robinson, 1998; Robinson, 2000). It is still a wonder to me how such pressure points meet at a given historical time to push for changes. But the important thing is that they do.

And so, in 1978 the Warnock Report (1978) was met with unparalleled glorious welcome (never bereft of criticism) not only by professionals and other interested parties in the place where it originated, but also in Europe and in a number of countries which had a relationship with the U.K. worldwide. It introduced for many people the issue of the integration of children with special needs in the ordinary schools. Its most original idea, that of the continuum of needs, broke – theoretically at least – a long tradition of separatism in special education. For once it became questionable whether those different children were indeed all that different from the rest of the children, from the rest of us. It was a severe blow at the 'them and us' attitude and all the 'them and us' policies. In 1981 a good number of the suggestions made in the Warnock Report became legislation in Britain, the 1981 Education Act (DES 1981). Is it a coincidence that the same year was chosen by the U.N. to celebrate Disability? Financial, political and other interests should not be overlooked in this process if we wish to be realistic about what happened and why (Tomlinson, 1982). Nevertheless, the 80's, the lean, mean eighties which seemed in political terms to reclaim all the achievements of the sixties and the seventies, the

eighties of the Reagan and Bush administration, the eighties of the Thatcher kingdom, the eighties which reached their climax with the fall of the Berlin wall, saw special education moving ahead with vast steps such as it had never done before, in a number of countries, justifying people like Tomlinson. Tomlinson had argued (1982, p.173) that professional worries about the future of special education following the Warnock Report and the 1981 Education Act, were unduly pessimistic as 'the social, political, economic and professional vested interests which have dictated the growth and development of special education have not disappeared, and the control of decisions and money by individuals and groups remains'. Her prediction (Tomlinson, 1982, p.172) was that 'special education, in changed forms and rationalised by changing ideologies, will continue to expand and become a *more* (emphasis original) important part of the whole educational system. This is exactly what happened.

By the end of the decade, and even before that in countries which had had an early start such as the USA, research evaluating the implementation of the integration of children with special needs in the ordinary classroom started bringing home disappointing news: integration did not seem to work, it was facing enormous difficulties, it was met with suspicion and prejudice from teachers, parents, pupils (Gresham, 1982; Lewis & Lewis, 1987; Lewis & Lewis, 1988; Lambropoulou & Padelidiu, 1995; Padelidiu, 1995) etc. But of course! How else could it have developed when it was not accompanied by the budget (and the other preparation) necessary to implement it? How else could it be perceived when it was used (by the British government at least) as a money saving exercise?

It was the perceived failure of the integration movement that brought about the inclusion movement in the nineties (Ware, 1995; Vlachou, 1997). We were much wiser by then. We knew that:

1. integration requires strong financial support (Padeliadou, 1995)
2. it cannot be implemented without adequate preparation (Vlachou, 1997)
3. it is not – or should not be – merely concerned with technicalities (Barton & Landman, 1993)
4. but most importantly, it has no chance of succeeding if it is not seen and handled as a broader educational reform that matters to the education system as a whole (Barton, 1997).

It is (apart from not receiving proper support) *because* integration had initially such a limited scope that it failed. It is because it was seen almost as an act of generosity to a small group of children, that it caused so many problems; to them mainly, but also to others and to the system. It is because it was a grand-child of the benevolent humanitarian model (Tomlinson, 1982) and a child of the medical

model (Solity, 1992) that it collapsed. The discourse supporting it was 'the wrong type of discourse' as it were. And so the birth of inclusion was necessitated.

The inclusion movement comes from a very different tradition (Phtiaka, 2001). It is a natural descendent of the human rights discourse. It claims that it is a human rights issue whether all children have the right to be educated in the same premises, therefore gaining access to the same curriculum, the same educational and the same employment opportunities (Barton, 1997).

Not that this right was a given! It had to be won over for working class children (comprehensive movement in the 70's in England) (Phtiaka, 1988); it had to be won over for girls (co-educational movement at about the same time) (Phtiaka, 1997); it had to be won over for black children even very recently in South Africa (Naicker, 2000). It had to be fought for and won over the world over, and it still has to, as children in many parts of the world, the Mediterranean included (Sultana, 1999), have no access to education what-so-ever. It also has to be fought for and won over for disabled children around the world, known from the late seventies as children with 'special educational needs' (Warnock Report, 1978).

This extension of rights appears to be much less convincing to a number of people. The abundantly racist and sexist 'scientific' claims of the 50's about the inferiority of black intelligence or the lightness of the female brain could not be uttered today without risking a law-suit. However, the long, strong hold of medicine and psychology over disability, and the undisputed reign of the medical model for over two hundred years in some countries (in the UK since 1760), ensures that public and professional opinion have enormous difficulty in perceiving disability the same way they perceive race and gender. While it would be unthinkable to perpetuate racist and sexist laws and attitudes in the education of blacks and women by maintaining such ridiculous claims as the above, the opinion of professionals is still very much the most important single source of information on which decisions are based regarding the education of children with disabilities. Not their own views, not their parents' nor their advocates'; the professionals' who might have met them once in a lifetime for half an hour or so (Ware, 1994). This been the international scene at large, let us now see what is happening in the Mediterranean region.

Special and inclusive education in the Mediterranean

What has traditionally been called 'Special Education' has for decades in the past been an experimental ground for mainstream education, opening and closing like a safety valve to let steam out of the mainstream system and to allow changes in policy and practice to take place there (Tomlinson, 1982; Whitty, 1984). In the

last quarter of the 20th century special education has acquired a very strong special momentum of its own, partly because of growing professional interests in the field, partly because of the maturation of the disability movement and partly because of the growth of parental pressure in the area. In an era of changes, this is the educational area that has been the object of the most changes of all (Barton, 1997). It has changed its name, its terminology, its structure, its basic philosophy, its legislation, its policy, its practice (Riddel & Brown, 1994). It has been visited and revisited *ad nauseam* by professionals, administrators, legislators, politicians, parents. It has been shaped and reshaped and reshaped again responding to changing ideologies and external pressures (Barnes & Oliver, 1995). We are now at a time when all the previous formations of special education coexist in a peculiar embrace, and old terminology is found next to new terminology confusing the issues (Corbett, 1994).

All this is still taking place in countries that have had a long tradition in special education, old, fully industrialized societies mainly in the North-West Europe. Not surprisingly then, this is exacerbated in countries where many different notions were introduced simultaneously and in a hurry, Greece (Vlachou, 1995) and Cyprus (Phtiaka, 2001) being two obvious examples. What is happening in the Mediterranean overall? Has the new terminology permeated the old basin? Is it accompanied by a new philosophy, a differentiated practice, a newly introduced legislation?

It is apparent in the seven papers which follow that philosophy, legislation, terminology and practice in special education are battling it out just as much in the Mediterranean as they are in North Europe and elsewhere. Similar – and even greater – confusion and misunderstanding is observed here, as foreign ideologies and practices are imported and applied before the society is ready to accept them. What is the result? Usually a big gap between rhetoric and reality. Unfolding aspects of the history, legislation, policy and practice of special education in Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Malta, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey² gives us a very good idea of the more general educational changes which are shaping the Mediterranean in the dawn of the new millennium and will provide us with a useful insight of how each country is dealing with concepts and practices that have originated elsewhere and been transported here. It will also give us a glimpse into the future and allow us to speculate what is coming for all children in the new millennium.

Taking it one at a time...

The papers contained in this issue extend from one to the other end of the special and inclusive education spectrum, covering a wide range of disciplines, perspectives and philosophies. This is reflected among others:

1. in the disciplines represented
2. in the methodology followed
3. in the terminology used
4. in the philosophies outlined

We shall examine these parameters one at a time...

Disciplines

Psychology has for a very long time been the undisputed queen of special education, reigning with supreme confidence in the area, and virtually determining philosophy, terminology, research methodology and, most importantly, priorities and values. Given its very nature, psychology has naturally concentrated on the individual and what has been considered an individual problem. When and where abused, this emphasis has led to pathological interpretations of disability and special education, which have in turn led to a fatalistic attitude about what can be achieved 'given a child's I.Q. test' or later 'his/her pathological environment'. Greece and Turkey are represented here by psychologists, although the authors of these papers seem to be more concerned with family support than they are with diagnosis. Israel's paper is also written by psychologists and seems to pay a lot of emphasis on diagnosis and categorisation, indicating the strong hold of the discipline in the area. Finally the Maltese paper comes from a psychologist, who is however – unusually – much more interested in education policy rather than traditional 'psychological pursuits' in special education. It could therefore be argued that Psychology is still in the Mediterranean the dominant discipline interested in the subject of special needs, but within it the emphasis has shifted considerably to include approaches other than those of the traditional medical model.

Sociology, represented here by Cyprus, Spain and Slovenia, is a discipline that has a history of involvement in special education of only about three decades. Its influence in the area has been considerable. It has helped make a shift from a pathological individualistic approach, concentrating on the 'problem' or the 'handicap', to an approach emphasising social response to, and social construction of, disability. Its discourse has been facilitated by disabled academics operating in the area of sociology of education or disability studies. They have offered strong evidence from within that difficulties caused by the disability itself are negligible compared to difficulties created by social, educational, employment or other discrimination. Judging from the papers included in this issue, the sociological

approach to special education is growing strong in the Mediterranean, as it is in Northern Europe.

Education is also – evidently – represented here, as a number of scholars writing in this issue, Cyprus, Israel, Slovenia and Turkey, regardless of discipline served, are based in Departments of Education. This is important. Education, being an applied discipline, needs to operationalise philosophies and findings from other disciplines in order to formulate teaching instruments that will facilitate learning for pupils with special educational needs without discriminating against them. It also needs to utilise in initial teacher training and in-service activities, not only the practice, but also the principles of special education as it evolves to become inclusive and embrace the whole school population.

The involvement of so many disciplines in the area of Mediterranean special and inclusive education also reflects international trends, and needs to be seen as a strength because it facilitates dialogue and exchange in policy and practice.

Methodology

The research methodology used in this issue ranges from traditional quantitative approaches such as statistical analysis of questionnaire data (Greece, Israel), to purely qualitative approaches such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews (Cyprus). There is also policy document analysis (Malta, Slovenia, Spain) and finally some employment of historical approaches to education (Slovenia, Spain, Turkey). This wide range of approaches, unavailable in many other areas of study, indicates the complexity of the issue at hand. This complexity can only be served by engaging a multidisciplinary approach. It also gives the opportunity to weave a very rich and colourful fabric of the Mediterranean Education, such as is often difficult to do in other fields of study. In a subject that is as applied and sensitive as this, this is another important strength that needs to be utilized and built upon. Here too, it seems, the Mediterranean basin fully reflects the richness of special and inclusive education research around the globe.

Terminology

It appears that the use of terminology in the Mediterranean is as confusing and contradictory as anywhere else, perhaps even more so. Mainstreaming, integration and inclusion are used almost interchangeably, although they have

different meanings, and they certainly have different traditions. Mainstreaming and integration are – as far as one can judge in this ocean of diverse meanings – synonymous. Their only difference is that the first comes from the North-American tradition and the second reflects more the Anglo-Saxon/European tradition. The first is a product of the early seventies – because this is the time when the issue was first discussed and finally secured by legislation in the USA. The second is a product of the late seventies and early eighties because this is the time when such issues were raised in the UK with an immediate influence on other European and non-European countries. They both mean ‘the placement of a child with special needs in an ordinary school’. This can be (and has been) done in a multitude of ways: full time, part time, for social purposes, for academic purposes, for all purposes, in some subjects, in all subjects, with or without support, with or without withdrawal, in special units, in the regular classroom, etc., but it always has the distinct feeling of uprooting a child from one place (usually the special school) and planting it into another (usually somewhere in the ordinary school). They are both the last descendants of the medical model, and part of their problem – which led to the need for new changes in terminology, practice and philosophy – is that they are seen as ‘add-ons’ and not as part of a broader educational change involving the whole education system, (save the technical arrangements for support of the ‘special students’ in the ‘ordinary school’).

Inclusion on the other hand is a product of a very different tradition. As it has already been pointed out, inclusion requires a complete restructuring of the education system that makes integration unnecessary for the simple reason that there are no un-integrated pupils. An inclusive education system, a natural product and a natural prerequisite of an inclusive society, does not discriminate on any grounds: certainly not on disability, but also not on race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or whatever else is currently used to make school life unnecessarily difficult for some pupils. Inclusion is the ultimate test in democracy and as such it does not exist yet, except on paper, in any country known to me, in any country described here, and certainly not in the Mediterranean at large where Democracy was certainly born but has since been constantly put to the test, not least by external interests (Sultana, 1999). This is reflected in almost all the papers of this issue where inclusion is often used inter-changingly with integration and mainstreaming. Having said that, it is perhaps true that the Mediterranean countries, all being well, are the ideal context for inclusive educational paradigms, as they are still comprised of very inclusive communities, for example small rural villages, almost unknown to most developed countries of the North. Another reason for my optimism is the fact that professionals do not, as yet, have such a strong hold over Mediterranean communities as they have in industrialised

countries. It is still to an extent a matter of negotiation between the community and the new abrasive professional organisations, on what and on whose terms this relationship will develop.

Philosophy

The philosophy held by each writer contributing to this issue, is of course underlying his/her discipline, methodology and terminology. There is overall a consistency between all four parameters. Positivist philosophy, for instance, adheres to a particular research methodology and a particular terminology and relates to specific disciplines. With these criteria in mind, we can discern here three types of philosophy: an inclusive philosophy, a separatist philosophy, and a transitional philosophy from the latter to the former. This, again, is not surprising as it reflects the international situation which informs regional thinking on the one hand, and relates to the disciplines involved on the other. An inclusive philosophy however seems to be the ultimate goal for all the papers (and all the countries involved?) even if authors and countries are at different stages of development along the continuum from segregation to inclusion, and even if inclusion is still an almost utopian goal for most of us. It cannot be overlooked that the meeting of such a diversity of philosophies, disciplines and methods has in the past caused fierce fights and antagonism in the area of special and inclusive education. To this day, conflicts in methodology and philosophy inhibit publication, and thus dissemination of knowledge and views in the area. This is a real problem and needs to be pointed out. It is also a problem that has been avoided in this issue, as described above. To solve it we need not all shift paradigms or, worse, for the sake of compromise arrive at a hybrid that has the disadvantages of all approaches and the advantages of none. What would be useful for the Mediterranean countries to do regarding special and inclusive education is to learn from each other and to utilise each other's paradigms that are likely to fit our 'climate' much more than northern paradigms have done in the past. In this sense we shall soon come to appreciate that inclusion also becomes these lands far more naturally than colder areas where it has been talked about much more and been practiced much less.

Epilogue

I have attempted in this introduction to:

1. set up the broad international context for special and inclusive education
2. clarify the concepts involved and the terminology used

3. identify notions which unite and divide special and inclusive education around the globe
4. examine how these notions are mirrored in the papers that follow and consequently in the Mediterranean countries

I am conscious that I have perhaps over-emphasised the broader international against the Mediterranean context. If this is the case, this is proof that more issues such as this are needed. North America, Northern Europe and less so Australia, is where the discourse of special and inclusive education was born and bred. The only guarantee that we shall not be forced to rely on foreign discourses for our own analysis in the future, is to create our own.

Notes

1. The 20 countries implied here are in alphabetical order: Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia & Turkey.
2. A call for papers was sent around a wide network of scholars in the Mediterranean when this special issue was first planned. These are the countries that responded to the call for papers, or joined in soon afterwards, and retained their interest through drafting and re-drafting. It is very unfortunate that Arab countries are not represented here. It is hoped that other Mediterranean countries will feature in future issues. Of course a rich variety of special education papers relating to Mediterranean countries are also hosted regularly in other issues of the *MJES*.

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