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MULTICULTURALISM, CITIZENSHIP, AND EDUCATION IN MOROCCO

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Abstract – *Morocco has a long history of multiculturalism and language contact; however, this characteristic has become more prominent as a consequence of the expansion of education after independence. This paper investigates how multiculturalism and citizenship in Moroccan society impact on the system of education. It provides a framework that enriches the discussion of multiculturalism and citizenship by highlighting the role that education plays in the development and management of multiculturalism and citizenship. The paper discusses the interlocked phenomena of multiculturalism, citizenship, and education from an interdisciplinary standpoint, analysing and explaining the synchronic relationships between them. The educational system must address the linguistic and cultural diversity inherent in multicultural Morocco, from the human rights and intercultural learning perspectives. Its purpose is not to teach the role of multiculturalism in official curricula, but to construct an approach to intercultural learning that promotes citizenship, dialogue, mutual understanding, and living together. Such an approach differs from the monocultural approach still existent in many North African and Middle Eastern curricula.*

Introduction

This paper discusses the close linkage between multiculturalism, citizenship, and education in Morocco. It deals with the changing role of education, the concept of citizenship inherent in it, and the relation of multiculturalism to wider society from the early years of French occupation in 20th century Morocco to the present. These complex concepts are discussed through an analysis of the policies of education without losing sight of their impact on the concepts of knowledge and power in Morocco.

The language-culture interface is commonly acknowledged as an important symbol of citizenship and group identity, often engendering solidarity among communities and feelings of belonging to larger populations. In the Moroccan context, highly interesting issues arise in the construction of an adequate system of education and of national identity in the interaction of different languages, namely Arabic, Berber, French, Spanish, and recently English.

The approach that I adopt is that of anthropological linguistics, based on the relationship between bilingualism, biculturalism, and education. This approach takes for granted the strong link between language, education, and culture as well as the idea of concurrence of multiple variables like class, gender, attitude, and the channel of communication. The paper is also inspired by studies on multiculturalism and society by Bourdieu (1982), Eickelman (1985), Fairclough (1989), and Kymlicka (1995), which are applied to investigate the relationship between multilingualism, multiculturalism, citizenship, and education in Morocco. In line with Kymlicka (1995), I argue that group-specific rights are consistent with citizenship and liberalism. Minority rights should be protected in order to promote equality. I propose that societies need to become more welcoming and inclusive than they are currently in respect of group rights. I am mostly supportive of the recognition and preservation of the distinctive patterns of 'minority' cultures. In this framework, a genuinely multicultural community would seek to promote the recognition of national ethnic difference through education and other means.

The construction of common cultures of difference at the national level remains one of the key objectives of multiculturalism. In cultures where citizenship is predominantly formulated through national institutions such as education and government, these perspectives remain important. Yet the debate thus far presupposes that multicultural concerns are questions exclusively for national contexts. Such formulations are inadequate in that modern societies have become marked by globalisation and migrations of people that defy the exclusive role of citizenship (Stevenson, 2002).

The paper also aims to demonstrate that multiculturalism in Morocco – and in the world at large – has reached a significant level in terms of scale and importance. While adopting Sklair's (1999, p. 154) idea that 'it is absolutely fundamental that we are clear about the extent to which the many different structures within which we live are the same in the most important respects as they have been or different', I would like to argue along the lines of Fishman (1998) and Maurais (2003), among others, that multiculturalism today is developing within the context of globalisation and is in fact 'qualitatively different' from what it was before, as it represents in effect a new cultural and social trend with increasingly deep effects on citizenship and education (Aronin & Singleton, 2008).

The paper asks the following questions: First, how far are ideas of the national community inclusive or exclusive? To what extent does the state generate and how does it sustain definitions of citizenship? How important are factors like social movements, politics, and education in constructing a sense of identity?

This paper is divided into five sections. Section one deals with multiculturalism and citizenship in the global and national contexts. The second

section focuses on the historical background of Morocco. Section three is concerned with the sociolinguistic context, more particularly aspects of multilingualism. Section four discusses the challenges of Arabisation and bilingual education. Finally, section five deals with the role of Berber education in the development and management of multiculturalism and citizenship.

Multiculturalism and citizenship

Before embarking on issues relevant to multiculturalism, citizenship, and education, it is useful to provide some definitions. I want to acknowledge immediately that terms such as ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘citizenship’ are ambiguous. In fact, there appears to be a clear relation between these concepts. For the purposes of the present paper, I define ‘multiculturalism’ in its inclusive sense, as the acquisition and use of a plurality of cultures. Multiculturalism acknowledges that cultures are characterised by a range of distinctive values and attitudes; it can disrupt processes of assimilation or globalisation by protecting the specificity of individual cultures from absorption into more dominant ones. The concept of multiculturalism can be descriptive and refer to an actual condition of a society, namely that a multiplicity of cultures is present and represents a significant proportion of the population. Or it can be normative and refer to a desired state of a society. As a normative concept, it can refer to an official government policy, as in the Canadian or Australian contexts, or it can refer to an idea that is instantiated to a greater or lesser extent in actual societies. The ideas can be stronger or weaker but in all cases would demand that cultural differences found in a society be accepted and respected by both societal institutions and members of the public alike.

As for the term ‘citizenship’, it refers to the rights and obligations that define an individual’s membership of the political community. The study of citizenship needs to engage with both multicultural and educational questions. Bringing these issues together is possible if citizenship opens questions of cultural identity, and multiculturalism decouples itself from specifically national concerns. My argumentative strategy is that such questions are both central to any contemporary consideration of citizenship, and vital for future debates of educational issues and social and political theory.

In whichever way one seeks to define concepts of citizenship and national identity, ‘imagined communities’ attain an extraordinary impact as real social phenomena in which people believe and on which they act. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim’s injunction to ‘treat social facts as things’ becomes brutally relevant when people are looked down upon because of (imagined) ‘racial inferiority’, or when diversity is disrespected¹.

Multiculturalism need not be considered exclusively as a device for integration. It could just as well be considered as an instrument for bringing about a form of preserving cultural, religious, racial, ethnic, linguistic, or other forms of diversity.

The discourses of human rights have created an alternative need and source for the legitimization of individual and collective rights other than membership of a nation. For example, the International Labour Organisation defines and monitors the observance of the rights of migrant workers, demanding and obtaining for them entitlements which at one time only citizens of a country might customarily have expected to receive. What we have is a trend toward a new model of membership anchored in de-territorialised notions of persons' rights. Classical conceptions of citizenship are no longer adequate in understanding the dynamics of membership and belonging to a country or a community.

Entitlement to citizenship carries with it a host of specific rights and responsibilities: rights to residence, education, and work, assorted benefits, political representation and participation and, often, associated obligations to the wider community.

Citizenship has wider, affective connotations too: the sense of belonging to a broader community, expressed in symbols and values, and the often quite vehement emotional identification which may be associated with that wider community of belonging. Conversely, exclusion from citizenship may be associated with lack of entitlement to vote or with marginalisation in undemocratic countries.

Trends such as globalisation, global migration, and the technological revolution along with uncertainty about the future all contribute to the view that schools must do more than prepare students for jobs, that citizenship education must be re-conceptualised and re-instituted as a centrepiece of public education.

The current multicultural situation in Morocco has a number of distinctive features. Since independence in 1956, global processes of the internationalisation of the economy, enhanced communication networks, and cultural currents have been changing the character and functions of the society, and a person's identity as a member of the nation has been uncoupled from their rights.

Since Morocco's independence until very recently, citizenship education has not been a central purpose of public education. This view is supported by the neglect of social studies education over the past three decades, which has begun to have the effect of leaving a large proportion of the student population without a sufficient knowledge base to make informed decisions regarding public affairs or civic responsibilities.

The national charter of education has recently raised concern about the appropriateness of curricula and the necessary development of resources. Today,

it appears that interest is spreading into the wider education community, especially with the potential introduction of citizenship courses like ‘*asha?n al maHalli*’ (local affairs). Public education, as a cornerstone of democracy and citizenship education, should be central to the provincial education programme.

The concept of citizenship should be broadly defined to encompass multiple dimensions applied locally, nationally, and globally and based on such values as respect, tolerance, acceptance, open-mindedness, non-violence, equality, commitment to social justice, and concern for the common good.

Responsibility for citizenship education rests with the school, the family and community, and with society at large through government support for public education. Citizenship education is relevant to students’ interests and involves active engagement and critical thinking and advanced levels of literacy. Citizenship education should include community service work that would help draw school and community closer together.

Historical background

Since the 8th century, an Islamic traditional system of education was prevalent in Morocco. Qur’anic and religious schools offered an Islamic traditional style of education. They taught mainly the Arabic language and the holy Qur’an for centuries; the University of Qarawiyyine at Fès, built in the 8th century, helped students to pursue and deepen their knowledge of Arabic and Islamic thought (see Grandguillaume, 1983, p. 70).

Moroccan sultans encouraged education and Islamic studies. Sultan Moulay Hassan (1873-1894) incited scholars (*ulamas*) to debate modern issues, and his interest in higher education was basically aimed to modernise the society and to introduce reforms. Men of learning played a great role in the community (Burke, 1972), and Morocco’s sultans used scholars’ support to bestow legitimacy on their power (Al-Fassi, 1954, pp. 276-277)². Educated people enjoyed a great deal of prestige in the *Makhzen* (government) and in Moroccan society at large (see Eikelman, 1985, p. 4). Religious knowledge remained highly viewed by the Islamic ‘*Umma*’ (nation) throughout the Islamic world; it was and still is indeed the most culturally valuable knowledge (Rosenthal, 1970), and is considered a valuable form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 80).

The universities Qarawiyyine and Yusufia continued to receive students from intellectual, religious, and political circles from different parts of the country. In the 1920s, reformists introduced subjects like Classical Arabic literature, theology, Islamic law (*shari’a*), and history. Although the main objective was to teach and learn the religious sciences, the studies also helped the graduate to attain positions

in the government as a judge (*qadi*), a secretary (*katib*), a teacher (*fqih*), an *imam* in the mosque. These skills were equally used to engage in political and social activities and establish social networks and economic advantages.

Morocco was colonised by two European powers in the 20th century: France and Spain. The French colonial power justified its existence by claiming that it had a mission to civilise and develop the region. But politically the real reason was that the French wanted to dominate Morocco and subjugate its population. Economically the intention was to exploit the raw materials and use cheap labour to the advantage of the European market. The main objective of colonialism was to perpetuate the political and economic dependence of the indigenous people. Concerning education and science, the kind of colonial education reserved for the local populations (whose objective was to train people for low-level jobs) and the economic policy adopted meant that Moroccan natives would remain dependent and under-developed in these fields.

The French colonial presence in Morocco provoked two different processes: first, the spread of French language and culture, and the acculturation or alienation of the masses, and second this caused anti-colonial feelings among nationalists. The latter reaction took violent forms in the struggle for independence, and was based on religious motives which are still strong among the population. After independence, almost the opposite tendency resulted, as many young people and intellectuals seemed to insist on learning French language and culture for pragmatic goals (for the reasons of social promotion and openness to the West). Today, there is a rush to the French schools and classes especially in urban centres (see Ennaji, 2005, p. 105).

During the colonial period, the French colonisers made great efforts to dissociate Moroccan society from its indigenous languages and cultures. The French endeavoured to divide the country into ethnic groups to facilitate the colonisation process. This act was not arbitrarily implemented; rather, it was carefully planned because the colonisers were aware of the strong feelings of ethnic group membership in the region.

On 16 May 1930, the French issued the Berber *Dahir*, which formally put Berber-speaking zones under the customary law courts instead of the Islamic jurisprudence. Both Berberophones and Arabophones stood against this decision. Demonstrations spread all over the country, from Sale, to Fès, to Rabat, in order to express Moroccans' utter condemnation of this decree which sought to divide and rule Moroccans³. The *Dahir* was presented as an attack on Islam and a threat to Muslim values and principles. From that period onward, the French efforts in education, scarce as they were, were viewed with scepticism, and people started to understand French rule as a menace against Islam. Many nationalist meetings were held in mosques. The nationalist movement gained momentum in the mid-1930s,

and the moment the French authorities arrested King Mohammed V and exiled him and his family to Corsica and then to Madagascar on 20 August 1953, the beginning of the end of the French occupation started (Eickelman, 1985, p. 102).

The French introduced modern education but only in favour of their own children and at best in favour of the children of the Moroccan elite and collaborators. Education continued to be elitist under the French rule, and standards were high. For lack of large numbers of university graduates, primary certificate holders were appointed in high positions. According to Waterbury (1970, p. 84), between 1912 and 1954, only 530 Moroccan students passed the end of high school certificate (French Baccalauréat). Mass education started after independence; only 25,000 students were registered in primary education in 1955, and 130,000 new students entered the primary cycle in 1956. Popular enthusiasm for modern education grew as the link between socioeconomic mobility and educational achievement was strong.

Despite the decline of Islamic higher education during the French occupation, cognitive studies remained the main style of learning, influencing the nationalist movement and the political action in the country. The pursuit of religious knowledge among Arabic and Berber speaking people was commendable although it did not necessarily lead to social promotion or economic advantages.

At the beginning of the 20th century, religious scholars were basically the only Moroccans with full literacy in Classical Arabic. Until recently, literacy has been possessed only by a minority in Morocco. Educated people had such a great social respect that, without their cooperation, the French colonisers would not have succeeded to pacify Morocco and expand their administrative power all over the country. However, when the French authorities used violence and direct intervention, many intellectuals and scholars joined the resistance and the nationalist movement for independence led by Allal El-Fassi and Mohamed Hassan Ouazzani and many others.

According to Laroui (1967, pp. 19-28), Arab intellectuals can be divided into three categories. First, there are the religious scholars and clerics who seek to improve the society while maintaining the dominance of Islamic thought and values. Second, there are the liberal politicians, who aim to modernise society by adopting Western norms and ideas and political reforms. The third category is that of Western-educated technocrats and apolitical intellectuals, who seek the betterment of society through the adoption of socialist or Western know-how and rational thinking. I agree with Laroui when he notes that the clerics are usually less interested in establishing dialogue with Westerners. However, Laroui's division is vague and not 100% correct since there is a large overlap between the three categories; furthermore, the elite's attitudes change over time, and the first category, which is the most complex, is vaguely defined.

Religious knowledge in Morocco is characterised by orality, especially in the Berberophone areas; religious scholars venerate the words in the Qur'an which they memorised by heart with the purpose of spreading and transmitting the Holy Book and the traditions of Prophet Mohammed, without alteration or falsification, from generation to generation. Until very recently, literacy in Morocco entailed religious schooling, with the first years of study emphasising memorisation and recitation of the Qur'an; the subsequent years consisted of learning reading and writing. The literacy estimates of the early 20th century are indicative of the scale of traditional education in Morocco. In the 1930s, the rural areas witnessed a literacy rate of 4% of the adult male population and 20% of the adult male urban population (Geertz, 1979, pp. 470-487). As to the overall rate of literacy among women, it was less than 1% (cf. Eickelman, 1985, p. 60; Ennaji, 2005, p. 219).

Qur'anic teachers (*fqihs*) played an important role in the memorisation of the Qur'an; up until the beginning of independence *fqihs* taught Arabic and Islamic thought in mosques, *medersas*, and elementary schools. The fact that they were not generally rich did not preclude their respect and high esteem of society as carriers of the Qur'an (Waterbury, 1970, p. 32).

For most students, this was the only form of education they could achieve. Only the fortunate few could access Qarawiyyine or Yusufia University. Both universities were also used by the community as spaces for worship and other pious meetings in such a way that the university was both a mosque and a learning centre. Lessons, which were held five times weekly, were organised around 'the daily cycle of prayers' in the form of circles of teachers and students, and were open to the public, which indicated popular support to these lessons. The teaching and learning activities were related to the needs and expectations of the community. For accommodation, hostels were reserved to students of these institutions (Geertz, 1979, p. 469).

From the 1930s onward, and well after independence, the shift went in favour of modern Western-type of education, and religious scholars were no longer reproduced in large numbers, although they continued to enjoy considerable respect in the community. Higher Islamic education lost its vitality because the French colonisers imposed reforms to the two major universities and appointed salaried teachers, whom they controlled. Gradually, religious education was left to students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds or of rural origins. For comparison, according to Marty (1924, p. 337) and Berque (1974, p. 173), in 1924 there were 300 students from the city of Fès and 419 from rural areas at Qarawiyyine University. In 1938, only 100 students from Fès and 800 from poor or rural backgrounds were registered. As to the Yusufia University in Marrakesh, estimates mention that in the early 1930s there were about 250 students from the city of Marrakesh, and 150 from neighbouring villages; these numbers dropped in 1935

to a few dozens of students. Islamic education after independence became less sought for because it lacked analysis and it did no longer meet the needs of the job market. The post-independence governments had to focus their efforts on modernising education and society. Moroccans regarded their children's futures as dependent on their training in French and their acquisition of certification that only French education could offer.

This shift in interest shows the close link between education and society in the Moroccan context and the way in which value is placed on various forms of learning, traditional or modern. For this reason, religious scholars and traditional 'ulamas' sent their own children to Francophone schools rather than to religious schools and universities. Even nationalist leaders from prominent urban families like Allal El-Fassi, Mohamed Hassan El-Ouazzani, and King Mohammed V, all sent their children to French-run schools (Waterbury, 1970, p. 44).

Until the 1960s, students attended religious classes in mosques and memorised the Qur'an by heart, but today very few educated Moroccans could recite but a few verses from the Qur'an. Religious education is referred to officially by the terms 'lettres originales', which is reminiscent of the strong influence of French-style education, as the word 'original' does not seem compatible with 'modern' education. However, the fact that Islam is the state religion coupled with the affinity between popular thinking and religious education allowed the latter to keep its important place in society until today. As a consequence, Islamic higher education never actually disappeared. Being conscious of the important role of Islamic education, and of the necessity to control it, the government decided to preserve religious education and to open Islamic schools and institutes, the most important of which is Dar Al Hadith Al-Hassania in Rabat.

Today, Yusufia University is called the 'Faculty of Arabic Language', and its staff is totally Moroccan. Qarawiyyine University in Fès continues to be an important centre of Islamic learning with the main language of instruction being Arabic, although French and English are also taught as foreign languages. One of the consequences of these Islamic schools was the transformation of religiosity in the late 20th century, with the expansion of Islamic associations like *Al-Adl wa Al-Ihsan* (extreme right NGO that challenges the establishment) and the Party of Justice and Development, which is a legal Islamist party, and who call themselves as Islamists (*Islamiyyun*) in sign of their self-description as the true carriers of Islamic values. The growth of these Islamist organisations is also the result of the success of the Iranian revolution, the fall of the Berlin wall, and the economic difficulties of post-independence, resulting in the strong social gap between the poor and the rich (see Eickelman, 1985, p. 175; Ennaji, 2005, p. 29). For the Islamists, independence did not bring development and progress, and Islam can lead to a profound transformation of society and to real progress and social justice.

After the proclamation of independence, the French were successful in influencing the Moroccan system of education, hence the reinforcement of French language and culture in the curricula. The country's leaders recognised the need to place education at the centre of Morocco's socioeconomic and political future (see Damis, 1970).

Classical Arabic was declared the official language and French the second language. Since then, French has been used alongside Classical Arabic. The former has been adopted for purposes of modernisation and development, and the latter for preserving the country's cultural identity and authenticity. In this respect, Al-jabri (1973, p. 45) notes that the Moroccan elite is in full favour of keeping the essence of the educational system of the French colonisation and developing it on the basis of the French model.

Post-independence officials endeavoured to spread French in fields like trade, administration, education, and the media. In the name of achieving modernity and preserving cultural identity, the ruling elite opted for Standard Arabic-French bilingualism in most active sectors (cf. Grandguillaume, 1983).

Free education is provided to all children in public schools; the technical track offers subjects like engineering, economics, and agricultural sciences. Vocational training courses are also offered. English is introduced into the state curriculum in Grade 10 (first year of secondary school). English, however, is becoming popular in the private schools in Morocco (Clark, 2006).

Two different educational systems in Morocco have always co-existed. As mentioned earlier, the first one is the Islamic model of instruction at Qur'anic schools, which concentrates on Islamic studies and Arabic literature. The second is the modern model, adapted from the French type, to serve the needs of Modern Morocco. Although only a small percentage of students follow the original track, the government stresses its importance as a means of maintaining a sense of national and regional identity (Wagner & Lotfi, 1980).

Sociolinguistic context

Morocco is characterised by multilingualism in the sense that many languages and varieties are used, including Classical Arabic, Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, Berber, French, Spanish, and recently English. This multilingual dimension has a direct impact on the sociocultural life and education and brings about sociolinguistic problems that must not be overlooked in language planning and in education.

The most salient sociolinguistic feature of Morocco is the emergence of three forms of Arabic: Classical, Standard, and Moroccan Arabic (cf. Ennaji, 1991).

Classical Arabic is the language of Islam, which is the vehicle of a great literary tradition and enjoys immense prestige among the population. Classical Arabic is culturally conceived as a sacred language because it is the language in which the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, was revealed, and because it is a written code unlike the Arabic dialects.

Like Classical Arabic, Standard Arabic is a written Arabic variety which has no native speakers. Classical and Standard Arabic are both learnt at school only, as they are not spoken languages. Standard Arabic, which is structurally less rigid than Classical Arabic, is both codified and standardised; the policy of Arabisation has led to its modernisation and to its use as a vehicle of modern culture. It is widely made use of in education, administration, and the media. The expansion of free education has led to the spread of Standard Arabic and to favourable attitudes toward it (see Ennaji, 2005, pp. 53-58).

Moroccan Arabic is the mother tongue of at least 60% of the population, which unlike Classical and Standard Arabic, is unwritten but spoken. It is generally acquired by Arabophones as a native language, and learnt as a second language by Berberophones. Moroccan Arabic can be divided into several regional varieties, which are often mutually intelligible unless they are geographically distant from each other. However, Moroccan Arabic is usually stigmatised and treated as a corrupt form of Arabic (cf. Ennaji, 1991).

Berber is the mother tongue of approximately half the population, but it is looked upon by many Arabophones as debased essentially because it is not fully standardised as yet (although the process has started), has no religious connotations, and no great written literary tradition. These issues are dealt with in greater detail in the section on Berber education below.

Moroccan Arabic is spoken as a *lingua franca* by many Berberophones. Through it, the latter sometimes express their beliefs and feelings. Moroccan Arabic is used by both Arabophones and Berberophones as a means of expression of affective and cognitive experiences.

French is widely used as a second language. Despite its being a colonial language, it is still prestigious. Its chief domains of use are education, administration, government, media, and the private sector. It is employed to achieve efficiency, wider communication, and socioeconomic development.

Spanish is made use of to a lesser extent in the north and south of Morocco. It is optionally taught as a foreign language. By contrast, English is widely taught in high schools and universities. It is perhaps the most popular foreign language in the country because it has no colonial overtones (cf. Sadiqi, 1991; Errihani, 2008).

Morocco is also characterised by Arabic-French code switching, which occurs when there is a juxtaposition of strings of words formed according to the patterns and grammatical systems of both languages. Educated bilinguals code switch

regularly between Moroccan Arabic and French (for example: '*aji shuf l'ordinateur est bloqué*'; meaning: 'come see the computer is stuck'). This code switching takes place mainly in informal situations during daily verbal interactions among schooled or highly educated people. In formal settings, however, Moroccan bilinguals use only one of these codes since formal contexts or specialised topics call for the use of one language exclusively.

Studies of Moroccan Arabic-French code switching have been developing since the 1970s. They have dealt with bilinguals' choice to switch between Moroccan Arabic and French from sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, and grammatical perspectives (Ennaji, 2005, pp. 139-156).

Sociocultural factors like geography, education, age, gender, and class determine the nature and extent of code switching. Code switching tends to be an urban phenomenon (see Caubet, 1998; Sadiqi, 2003, pp. 257-271) in the sense that most code switchers are usually educated city dwellers; however, people who code switch differ in their competence in the two languages concerned. There are different types of code switchers depending on the languages they switch, their linguistic ability and the topics dealt with. On the other hand, code switching entails informality, intimacy, or solidarity between code switchers. Myers-Scotton (1993) calls this phenomenon 'solidarity syndrome'. Code switching shows precisely the 'innovative accommodation' in engaging with both languages, both traditions, both mind-sets *at the same time* (Zughoul, 1978).

There are administrative factors which regulate the degree of code switching. Given that the Moroccan administration is bilingual, there is a tendency to shift from French to Standard Arabic in formal situations. In less formal contexts (administration meetings, social address, etc.) there is more shift from Moroccan Arabic to French or Standard Arabic. But most of the written work is done in Standard Arabic or French. In most of the above situations, code switching between Moroccan Arabic, Standard Arabic and French takes place.

Moroccan Arabic-French code switching is stigmatised (cf. Ennaji, 1988; Lahlou, 1991; Caubet, 1998). Despite being negatively viewed by most Moroccans, code switching is part and parcel of the multilinguistic panorama of the country, and the Maghreb in general.

Educated people are not all favourable to code switching. The Arabic-educated intellectuals (*Arabisants*) loathe this form of speech which they consider corrupt and a sign of loss of identity. However, the French-educated people tend to be in favour of code switching, which they regard as a symbol of high social status (see El-biad, 1991; Lahlou, 1991; Moatassim, 1992). In education, code switching is quite common, especially in science classes; many teachers mix Moroccan Arabic and French to explain scientific and technical phenomena.

For many intellectuals, code switching is one of the residues of cultural colonisation and a sign of lack of pride in Arabic language and culture. Moatassim (1974) qualifies code switching as a poor form of expression, and Guessous (1976) states that it is a 'bastard language' in the Moroccan multilingual and multicultural context. Code switching is in fact the most salient feature of the Arabisation policy applied since independence with the overall goal of generalising the use of Standard Arabic to all domains as a language of wider communication instead of French, which is considered by conservatives to be a threat to the linguistic and cultural identity of the country.

Arabisation and bilingual education

Given the connection between Standard Arabic, Islam, and nationalism, Arabisation may be considered a sign of the revival of the Arabic language and culture. Arabisation is strongly supported by religious groups and fundamentalists. Abdelaziz Benabdallah, ex-director of the permanent office of Arabisation, highlighted the invaluable role of Classical and Standard Arabic in an interview which appeared in the Moroccan daily *Le Matin* of Sunday 2 November 1997.

Furthermore, most scholars support bilingualism or mastery of foreign languages in addition to Arabic. The eminent Moroccan lexicographer, Lakhdar Ghazal, (ex-director of the Institute of Arabisation in Rabat, Morocco) argues that if Arabisation is a duty, Arabic-French bilingualism is a necessity as far as it serves the enrichment of Standard Arabic.

Arabisation is not only a language problem, but also a political and ideological matter. Right-wing political parties like the *Istiqlal* party and the Justice and Development party advocate total Arabisation at the expense of mother tongues (cf. Al-jabri, 1995). Progressive and modern scholars advocate bilingualism and the revival of mother tongues (cf. Boukous, 1995; Ennaji, 1997 and the references cited there). The Arabisation policy has in a way been turned against the public authorities, as it is often used by the opposition parties and by Islamists as a tool in their fight for power.

Despite four decades of Arabisation, French is still widely used in education, administration, and the private sector. The efforts of Arabising the educational system have not fully succeeded for three main reasons: (i) the place of French is still very strong in key socioeconomic factors; (ii) the ruling elite holds negative attitudes toward Arabisation and the way it has been politicised and implemented; and (iii) the official language policy has been inconsistent, and as a result there seems to be no plan to Arabise higher education.

The unfair dichotomy between written languages, that is, Classical Arabic, Standard Arabic, English, and French, on the one hand, and spoken languages like Moroccan Arabic and Berber, on the other hand, is sharpened by the policy of Arabisation whose aim is to introduce Standard Arabic in all fields of activity, as it is the symbol of cultural independence⁴.

Arabisation has had negative consequences on the Berber language because it has led to its marginalisation and to the assimilation of the Berber culture and people. However, in 2001 the government decided to revitalise Berber and introduce it in the educational system.

The fact that the post-independence government opted for Arabic-French bilingualism in education was certainly a pragmatic choice. However, this type of bilingualism is more imposed by historical, political and economic factors than chosen. The major reforms after independence have been the omission of French from the first two years of public primary schools and the increase of the teaching load of Arabic and the strengthening of the position of French in university, especially in science faculties⁵.

This kind of bilingualism and biculturalism is the source of difficulty for learners in schools because of the different and at times conflicting roles of Arabic and French. This difficulty is translated in reality by the high rate of failure and dropouts in primary, secondary, and higher education, hence the adoption of the Arabisation policy whose aim is to reduce the number of dropouts and the failure rate at school (Grandguillaume, 1983). In 1973, the government decided to Arabise mathematics and the sciences in the primary and secondary education, and philosophy and the social sciences at all levels of education; French thus became *de facto* a second language, and Arabic the language of instruction of all disciplines in primary and secondary education. However, up until now, the sciences are taught in French in higher education, whereas the faculties of science, medicine, engineering, and private institutes use French as the language of instruction.

The political leaders' stand on Arabisation and bilingualism has evolved since independence. While the enthusiasm for Arabisation was very strong immediately after independence, nowadays, it is waning as a result of unemployment among Arabised university graduates.

The ambiguity and hesitation that have characterised the educational system and the language policies adopted in a way reflect the painful acculturation and alienation that a whole generation of politicians, officials, and people have suffered in the post-colonial era.

The expansion of bilingual and bicultural education to masses of pupils and students from different sociological backgrounds after independence has led to their alienation and consolidated acculturation.

Bilingual education is a political option which has a serious impact on education and citizenship, and fosters communication with the West and the rest of the world (see Fitouri, 1983). However, after decades of the implementation of the Arabisation policy, the degree of mastery of French has regressed; yet, the prestige of French prevails and attitudes toward it remain for the most part favourable⁶.

The multicultural context in Morocco hides a class struggle, group competition, a clash of interests of the different sociocultural categories, as well as ideological tensions, which pose problems for citizenship. These tensions and conflicts reflect also the fight for power at various levels (cf. Grandguillaume, 1983; Ennaji, 1991; Boukous, 1995 among others). The multicultural context is instrumentalised by the progressive forces to consolidate democracy, citizenship, and minority rights, while the traditionalists (particularly the Islamists) use it as a political tool to give vent to their ideology and their political agenda with the aim of re-Islamising the country and ruling in the name of Islamic religion and culture.

Thus, the debate about Arabisation and bilingual education implies a larger debate on citizenship, government policy, ideology, politics, religion, culture, and identity. Arabisation policy is a hidden fight for social promotion used by opposition political parties and the lower social classes in the hope that Arabisation will re-establish collective rights, social justice, and equal opportunities for all.

As mentioned above, Berber, considered by many as a 'minority' language, has been marginalised by Arabisation and by French-Arabic bilingual education. However, since 2001 the authorities have called for the revival of Berber language and culture as a sign of reinforcing citizenship. In the following section, I discuss the impact of Berber on education.

Berber education

Historically, although at least half of the population speaks Berber, preference has always been given to Latin and later on to Arabic as the official language of the nation. Berber has never been recognised as the official language, nor introduced in the educational system, until 2003.

After independence, Berber was excluded from schools in the name of state-building and in search of a unified national identity. This forced a whole generation of children to enter school in a language they had never spoken before, contributing to a higher dropout rate among Berber children. Trouble for Berber-only speakers did not stop in the educational system. Many continued to face other difficulties communicating in hospitals and the court system, where Arabic and French dominated.

The frustration led to two major Berber revolts – one in 1973 and a second in 1994 – both of which the Moroccan government suppressed. But by mid-1990s the Berber movement was strong enough to catch the attention of King Hassan II, who on 20 August 1994 publicly vowed to integrate the indigenous tongue into the education system. However, there was little progress until King Mohammed VI, whose mother is Berber, took over. In 2001, he announced a programme to teach all schoolchildren Berber and declared the creation of a research institute, The Royal Institute of Berber Culture in Rabat, to develop a curriculum and promote the study of the Berber language. This initiative gave the teachers the chance to spend three hours a week teaching Berber to their students, in addition to Arabic and French.

The official recognition of Berber as part of the national heritage and cultural authenticity, and its introduction in Moroccan primary schools are good examples of the revival of this language. This revival is due mainly to the fact that both Arabic and Berber cultures play a strong symbolic role in strengthening the national identity, multiculturalism, and citizenship.

As a result of this move, the authorities have tentatively introduced Berber in a number of primary schools and plan to generalise its teaching and its use in the media. On television, the new move is the broadcasting of news bulletins, films, and advertising in Berber language. Attitudes to Berber have changed favourably since the royal speech of Ajdir on 17 October 2001 when the king announced the policy for the promotion of Berber language and culture. Attitudes toward Berber have in general become favourable (see Ennaji, 2003), and Berber academics and associations are working on how to standardise and unify their language. The number of Berber cultural associations has multiplied (more than 60 exist in Morocco). Their objective is to revitalise Berber language and culture, and sensitise people and government to the cultural value of Berber as part of and parcel of the national legacy and Moroccan citizenship.

In the field of education, one may state that the teaching of Berber is spreading steadily; Berber is taught in over 900 public schools and in many private schools, including the French Institute in Agadir and NGOs working for the dissemination and protection of this language both in Morocco and Europe, where there is a large Moroccan immigrant community (see Quadéry, 1998; Kratochwil, 1999). In 2007, nearly 300,000 students – native Arabic speakers as well as Berber speakers – were enrolled in Berber courses, according to the Ministry of Education (cf. Errihani, 2008).

Since the creation of the Royal Institute of the Berber Culture, the existing multilingual and multicultural dimension of Morocco has been recognised, and a new language planning, codification, and standardisation policy has been launched so as to integrate this language not only into the educational system, but into the different sectors as well.

In 2000, the National Charter for Education and Training was adopted with the aim to restructure the Moroccan educational system and language policy in order to upgrade the standards. The Charter outlined the role of Berber in society and the need to introduce it in education, as well as the need to have a good command of Arabic and foreign languages.

However, it would be interesting to find out whether the type of language policy set out by the Charter is compatible with the country's sociolinguistic and multicultural reality. Moreover, it would be of paramount importance to investigate the extent to which multilingualism and multiculturalism can be a source of conflict in language teaching and learning.

The official support for Berber has helped fuel a larger revival of Berber culture and life in the kingdom, where the country's native people have long been shunned, and sometimes imprisoned, for public expressions of their heritage. Nowadays, summer arts festivals are commonplace, Berber newspapers are thriving, and a long-blocked translation of the Qur'an into Tamazight finally made it into print.

Of course, the transformations have been far from uniform, and there are signs that the slow pace of change is beginning to exacerbate the tension between the government and Berber activists. Yet the story of the Berber project and the challenges it has faced from politicians, parents, and Berber natives is in many ways symbolic of the broader struggle Morocco faces as it tries to balance the competing interests of a multicultural country of over 30 million (Schwartz, 2008).

Though the government initiative calls for adding a new level of Berber each year, many schools have offered only the first level for the past three years. Many still have no Berber teachers, and the Ministry of Education will not allocate money to recruit new ones – a position that many Berber people see as a sign that the Arab-dominated government has not fully accepted the initiative. Textbooks are not always sent to rural areas, where Berber speakers are often the majority. Other promises, such as plans to launch an all-Berber television station and develop university-level programmes on Berber culture, have not materialised either. As a result, many Berber activists are beginning to criticise and distance themselves from the officials' efforts. In 2005, for instance, seven of the 30 board members of The Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) resigned because of the constant pushback from the state.

Despite all the obstacles, Berber is no more a forgotten national dialect, but a subject in its own right in Moroccan primary schools. Different positions arise concerning its introduction in education. The attitudes range from those of Berbers advocating the promotion of Berber to some Arabophones who are opposed to the idea of revitalising it. Many refute Berber as a mandatory subject in primary schools, claiming that it is useless in the job market.

Proponents of the teaching of Berber argue that it will motivate Berber-speaking students to continue their education and facilitate their socioeconomic integration and strengthen their sense of citizenship in a multicultural society (see Jackson, 2004, p. 21; Ennaji, 2005, p. 217).

Conclusion

Fifty-three years after independence, the multicultural situation and the educational system in Morocco have witnessed many changes. Although French remains important especially in higher education and in the private sector, Arabic has been consolidated through the Arabisation process. English has emerged as the most popular foreign language with no colonial connotations, and Berber has finally been introduced in elementary education. Moreover, the presence of Islam, which constitutes a fundamental cultural component side by side with Western culture, must also be taken into account, as a symbol of unity and a token of Morocco's cultural diversity.

One of the major hurdles faced by the Moroccan system of education since independence has to do with the ambivalence and the indecisiveness of decision-makers with regard to the management of multiculturalism and its impact on citizenship. The hesitation is flagrant specifically with regard to the officials' attitude toward Berber and its introduction in the educational system. Although Berber is taught in elementary schools, it is not yet recognised in the constitution as an official language, nor as a national language. The ambivalence equally concerns the Arabisation policy, which has been implemented in primary and secondary education, but not in tertiary education for ideological and political reasons. This reveals the complexity of the post-colonial Moroccan society.

Thus, the national community's ideas have not always been inclusive of all the cultural components of Moroccan society, and despite new efforts, the state does not strongly sustain modern definitions of citizenship. Factors like social movements, politics, and education, however, play a key role in constructing a sense of citizenship and identity.

A judicious reform of education is badly needed in order to achieve sustainable development, tolerance, social cohesion, and the preservation of Moroccan cultural identity. Integrating multiculturalism and citizenship issues may develop critical thinking, empower students to take action for problem-solving, and develop their awareness of citizen issues and global issues (cf. Ennaji, 2004).

Citizenship ought to be consistent with democratic values, namely respect for human rights, multiculturalism, and the rule of law. Educational authorities and decision-makers must adopt a multicultural approach as an efficient tool

for addressing pluralism and cultural diversity and for enhancing multicultural education and citizenship, which include students' right to be prepared appropriately for life as citizens playing a full part in democracy.

All in all, the nature of the political institutions, the political processes and governmental policies to a great extent structure the kinds of social and political relationships that ensue in a multicultural society. In such a society, individuals naturally prefer and promote the interests of their own group. By negligence and mismanagement, this attitude could degenerate into tension and conflict. Democratic culture and good governance have proven to be capable of changing the outcome of the social, political, and economic processes from being confrontational to national accommodation.

Notes

1. France in the modern era pioneered the definition of an active citizenship that was inclusive of all who accepted the principles of the Revolution and French culture. The availability of French citizenship to the children of immigrants on condition of their education in, and identification with, French culture expresses the idea of the French nation as a 'daily plebiscite'. Yet the very presence of immigrants who utilise the right to be different against the universalism of the rights of the citizen has caused French people to reassess the nexus between citizenship and ethnic nationality.
2. To encourage education, annual celebrations for religious students were held at Qarawiyyine University in Fès and Yusufia University in Marrakesh. Students chose a 'mock' sultan among them and other students constituted the crowd and the whole procession walked in a parade in the main streets of the city (this was called in Arabic '*Sultan Tolba*', i.e., the sultan of students). The Sultan sent gifts to the best students. However, in 1925, this tradition was discontinued by the French rulers who feared that this event had political implications.
3. People read the *latif* in the mosques, 'a collective invocation to God in times of disaster'.
4. Today, the *Tifinagh* alphabet is used to write Berber, and efforts are made to generalise its use to the whole Maghreb region. In Morocco, short stories and novels are nowadays written in Berber.
5. In addition, the government applied four principles in education: the generalisation of schooling to all the population which led to an extension of education; the unification of education (the same programmes have been adopted all through the country); free education to all (no tuition fees are paid); and Moroccanisation and Arabisation of education, which implied hiring Moroccan teachers to replace foreign ones, and progressively consolidating Modern Standard Arabic as the language of education, instead of French.
6. This is due to the fact that French is still the language of scientific, technical, and business studies, whereas Arabic and Berber remain the language(s) of cultural authenticity and ethnic identity expressing intimate, emotional, and spiritual values and beliefs (Gill, 1999).

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FINANCIAL AID AT PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST: ITS IMPACT ON PERSISTENCE AND STUDENT SATISFACTION, THE CASE OF LEBANON

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Abstract – *Many private universities around the world sustain their growth and retain students through a system of ‘cost-sharing’ where fees and tuition are channelled back to students in form of financial aid. Not all students are successful in obtaining financial aid solely based on need, but are also awarded aid based on their academic performance. This study questions whether a combination of financial aid types has a positive impact on graduating from a private university in Lebanon. Furthermore, this study assesses students’ satisfaction with the university at large by comparing those who received a combination of financial aid with those who applied and were not granted financial aid. Findings illustrate that the frequency and amount of financial aid received by students produced greater graduation percentages. In addition, no difference appeared between graduates and those who did not complete degree requirement regarding their satisfaction with university services and programmes.*

Introduction

The Arab World includes some of the richest and poorest countries in the world. The oil rich Gulf States have seemingly unlimited amounts of disposable income while other countries, such as Egypt and Yemen, house hundred of thousands of people living below the World Bank poverty line (Lancaster, Smith & Land, 2008). The wealthier Arab countries have embraced higher education by devoting billions of dollars to educational reform. The Gulf States alone have invested over 22 billion over the past five years to provide world-class higher education (Lancaster, Smith & Land, 2008).

What is the impact on public universities? Most Arab public universities are unable to meet the needs of the population in either the number of students or the quality of education (Mahmoud, 2008). These universities are heavily subsidised, usually operate at a loss, are overcrowded, and cannot absorb students desiring enrolment in popular programmes such as business administration and computer science. Furthermore, the university structure is difficult to develop and to adapt to the changing needs of the country.

Consequently, the development of private universities is a response to the inability of public education to meet the volume of demand for higher education and also the realisation that government monopolisation of higher education runs counter to national interests (Mahmoud, 2008). In Jordan alone, private universities serve 40% of the student enrolment (Mahmoud, 2008).

The same phenomena can be observed in Lebanon and Morocco, as well as in Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait. Currently there are roughly 150 private universities in the Arab World representing 41% of all Arab universities, when the corresponding figure for the United States is 20% of the total student enrolment (Mahmoud, 2008). Certainly, the boom of private universities reflects an important new trend in higher education in the Arab World.

Clearly a concern that surfaces is the cost of tuition and students' accessibility to financial aid of various sorts. The wealthier Gulf States provide citizens with resources. For example, Qatar has built Education City where the tuition and fees are the same as in American universities. However, Qatari citizens are reimbursed the cost from scholarships awarded by the country's Supreme Education Council (Lancaster, Smith & Land, 2008). However, this may be the exception since relying on the private sector is neither sufficient nor affordable for most people.

Our focus here is the affordability of private education but more importantly, the effect of various forms of financial aid such as loans, grants and scholarships on issues like student graduation, persistence, satisfaction and retention. In what follows, we examine student information from one private Lebanese university to determine the impact of financial aid on these elements.

Lebanese higher education

Similar to the growing worldwide trend, the growth in Lebanese higher education in this past decade has resulted in the development of over 42 private universities and one public university. Recent statistics illustrate the private sector's infrastructure growth with increasing enrolment in private than public universities. The Center of Educational Research and Development (CERD) of Lebanon reports that 45% of university students are currently enrolled at the only public university, the Lebanese University (LU), while the remaining students seek educational opportunities at private universities (CERD, 2007).

LU was developed after the establishment of private universities such as the American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University. The LU was built with the vision and goals for national and social unification, and economic improvement by opening the door to education for lower-income groups who had been deprived of educational opportunities for decades. However since the

establishment of LU, Lebanon has experienced a civil war, several political assassinations and other political upheavals. As many Arab countries have learnt from experience, the public university has been transformed into a liability, adding strain on the already growing national debt. In addition, LU remains archaic, highly influenced by the political forces, lacking in adequate infrastructure, and housed in apartment-like buildings. The university is underdeveloped and fails to maintain the global quality 'standards' that many universities worldwide are sharing through quality assurance measures and accreditation. With the greater costs in maintaining public higher education, the Lebanese government has encouraged the development and growth of the private sector. In fact, in the past decade, LU has lost more than 20% of its student population due to the rise of the private sector.

Currently, private universities are situated in an advantageous position compared to LU. Private institutions are responsible for their own funding, are responsible for their own internal governance, and have limited interference from government or public authorities. In fact, the perception of private universities is positive in the sense that tuition paid by students to the private universities is believed to be an investment contributing to the individual good (Altbach, 1999), with the investment amortised in future jobs, occupational attainment, and salaries. Many parents with low income are willing to invest in private universities by taking out loans or relying on well-off extended family members in the belief that there will be a 'payoff' upon graduation in the form of future income. They can also draw from financial aid or internal university loans available at private universities.

Private universities in Lebanon vary in the tuition and fees, based on both the education provided and how the university is perceived. For instance, Francophone universities are viewed as less enterprise-like than American-style universities, and therefore charge a lower tuition. It is clear that those universities that model themselves after American universities seem to draw more students and can secure high tuition fees. In fact, the Lebanese American University (LAU), which is a private American-style university, is now a candidate for US-based accreditation by the North East Association of Schools and Colleges. The American University of Beirut (AUB) follows close on its heels, and the two have the highest tuition fees in Lebanon.

Generally, students who are not accepted in a public university seek admission to private institutions, opting for programmes in medicine, dentistry, engineering or business administration which have lower admission standards than LU. However, this becomes problematic for many of these students because private universities do not offer state loans, government grants or financial aid for students. Only students whose parents are public servants receive government-

subsidised grants. In fact, students who rely on university financial aid, scholarship or loans must provide evidence for need and maintain a level of academic success.

With a greater number of students who now seek admission to private universities, there is a greater demand for financial aid that drives students to perform better and attempt to complete their degrees at faster rates. The increase of student tuition and fees at private universities forces universities to balance cost sharing with cost benefits in order to provide quality education for students. Few studies have been carried out in Lebanon and other countries in the region that examine the effects of such financial aid on output measures such as student continuation and satisfaction. With this in mind, we wanted to find out whether financial aid factors might influence student success in graduation.

Previous studies

Since the 1980s numerous international studies have examined factors that might impact on enrolment levels and choice of institution. In particular, these studies examine the availability of financial aid (Heller, 1997; Braunstein, McGrath & Pescatrice, 1999), student enrolment (Paulsen, 1990) in relation to retention, persistence, and matriculation decisions (St. John, 1990, 1993; St. John & Somers, 1993; Hilmer, 1998; DesJardins, Ahlburg & McCall, 2002a). Studying the impact of financial aid, in relation to attitudes and conditions as an economic investment, may prove to be far better and less expensive in both economic and social terms. With different social and economic levels, do such systems suffice to determine the level of student need for financial aid?

There are various studies that examine how financial aid factors influence student satisfaction, institutional commitment and persistence. Table I illustrates the studies and findings that are relevant for this study.

These findings illustrate the impact of various forms of financial aid on elements such as persistence, attainment rates and graduation. We can see that students receiving financial aid can be impacted both in a negative or positive manner by the various sources of aid whether loans, scholarships, work-study or grants. However, there is literally not a single research study that assesses the impact of financial aid on performance outcomes in Lebanon, or Arab countries in the Mediterranean or the Middle East.

With the large growth of private universities in Lebanon and the Arab World, many of these universities integrate supply and demand dynamics with financial aid policy. This information, if used with the institutional output data (i.e., those who graduate or do not) could provide strategic information about finances and student

TABLE 1: Relevant research findings regarding the impact of financial aid

Study	Relevant Findings
Strauss & Volwein (2004)	Multiple student-level variables influence student satisfaction and institutional commitment. The most important influences were located in academic factors, social integration and growth, followed by financial aid and academic satisfaction.
St. John, Hu & Weber (2001)	Receiving grants and loans improved college graduation rates in general, but receiving loans neither lowered nor raised college persistence.
DesJardns, Ahlburg & McCall (2002a)	Changing loans to scholarships had a large impact on retention while frontloading financial aid had a modest impact on retention.
St. John & Starkey (1995)	Grant aid and scholarships positively influenced persistence in college, while loans and work-studies had a negative effect on persistence in college.
Cofer & Somers (2000)	A significant positive relationship between grant and loan amounts and student persistence in both private and public colleges. Over a five-year period, loans did not contribute to higher persistence and attainment rates. Instead, loans were found to have a negative influence on persistence and no effect on attainment.
Singell & Stone (2002)	A positive effect of subsidised loans on persistence and an insignificant effect of unsubsidised loans; positive for merit scholarships and need-based grants on persistence and attainment rates.
DesJardins, Ahlburg & McCall (2002b)	A negative loan effect on persistence and positive effect for merit scholarships and need-based grants on persistence and attainment rates; work-study and other components of financial aid do not directly influence graduation chances.
Dowd & Coury (2006)	Students who take loans arrive at a more negative assessment of the net benefits of a college education than those who do not.
Paulsen & St. John (2002)	A negative impact for grant and loan dollars on college persistence, specifically for those students of low socioeconomic status.

output. To this end, this study set out to determine empirically the effectiveness of these financial support packages at a private university in Lebanon, and whether these had a direct impact on student persistence, academic completion, and satisfaction with their university experience – in comparison with those who apply for, but do not receive, aid. This study also set out to determine whether the policy in relation to the amount of financial aid at this private university was ‘equitably distributive’, that is, whether the faculties which charged a higher amount per credit hour were offering the highest amount of financial aid.

Two faculties, namely the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering, charged the highest dollar per credit hour and, hence, it was expected that students in both faculties would have a cumulatively larger financial aid amount than in other faculties. We also looked at differences between males and females to see whether there were more female than male graduates and whether one or the other received higher financial aid. Our results shed light on new attempts at relating financial aid to the quality of programmes and general student satisfaction, in a context where there is a dearth of data and analysis issued by the accrediting bodies that are charged with regulating universities and disseminating information based on institutional research data.

Financial support at a private university in Lebanon

Students in Lebanon initially qualify for financial support based on need as defined by criteria set by the various private universities. Unlike US, Canadian or Australian Universities, financial support in the American-style Lebanese universities is all ‘in-house’. Students who lack the required funding, whether from parents or through scholarships, have no alternative but to attend the public LU.

As with any private university, there are strict guidelines for the distribution of financial aid. Lebanese universities differ from American universities in that newly admitted students have no prior knowledge of the financial aid package they will get before they enrol at the university. American students receive a detailed financial aid package prior to enrolment, allowing parents and students to make decisions whether or not to enrol in a particular university, and how to supplement the grant with additional funds.

In order to continue receiving financial aid, students must have successfully completed 12 credits or more, with a cumulative grade average of 70% or higher. All students receiving financial support must secure full-time status (12 credits), and students taking remedial courses have no access to financial support. Many private universities also provide loans for students. These students are liable to begin the repayment of the loan once employment is secured. The various forms

of financial support are not only based on determined need, but also the educational performance of students. Unlike most American universities, financial support is awarded biannually rather than annually, toward the end of each semester.

Private Lebanese universities make available four types of financial support. First, there is a financial aid support package that is based on assessed need. Students who qualify for this form of aid must be full-time students coming from low-income families. The continuation of the award package is linked to the student's performance after the completion of one full semester. If the student is successful in achieving above a 70% score in completed coursework, the financial aid continues. Second, financial aid is available under what is termed a 'sibling grant'. A sibling grant is given when two or more brothers and/or sisters are registered at a particular university with proven financial need. If deemed eligible, siblings receive tuition discounts based upon their particular need. Third, the 'work-study grant' provides students with determined needs with opportunities to spend a maximum of 15 working hours per week at a unit within the university. Students are paid an hourly rate and are able to earn a particular percentage of their tuition. Work-study programmes have requirements, such as the completion of one full semester, a student average of above 70%, and full-time enrolment status. Finally, universities offer students who rank above the 95-percentile in their studies a semester based 'merit grant'. These students can lose the merit grant if they drop below the 95-percentile rank irrespective of need.

In this study, three types of financial aid were selected, namely: (i) financial aid based on need; (ii) work-study; and (iii) merit. These financial aid types were chosen based on a provision that students maintain an academic level that allows them to continue in their enrolment. Financial aid secured through loans was not considered in this study because of the anomalous data record.

Procedure

Two data sets were accrued from the University's Computer Information System. The first data set provided information as to whether the student received financial aid or not, whether the student was enrolled or not, whether s/he had continuing or graduated status, and the amount of money received. The second data set included responses to a satisfaction scale. Student identification numbers were used to tag and merge the two data sets. The first data set included a subgroup of 1578 undergraduate students. In the second data set, a subgroup of 473 students was included. This subgroup was used to compile both the satisfaction and the financial aid data.

To obtain a general measure of satisfaction, a scale was constructed, adapted mainly from Delaney (2005), Pascarella & Terenzini (1983), and Sanders & Chan (1996) – with some modifications made to the initial conceptualisation of the survey. Two basic dimensions were considered for the satisfaction scale, those that include explicit and those that include implicit services. Explicit satisfaction measures included students' satisfaction with specific university structures. Implicit satisfaction measures included student satisfaction with staff and faculty, and student relations with other students (such as friendliness, social activities and other cultural programmes that take place on campus). The satisfaction scale information was uploaded electronically on to the Student Information System – an automated registration and information system for students. Once students logged in, a reminder to fill the satisfaction scale appeared on the system. Students replied by filling the questionnaire and submitting it back to the computer system, which was then sent to the authors.

The first analysis compares those who had financial support with those who had applied but were not awarded aid. The method used a score called 'financial award measure' (FAM), defined as the number of times the students received the financial support subtracted from the number of times they applied but did not receive financial support. This calculated score was based on data from Fall 2002-2003 to Fall 2007-2008. If the student decided to leave the university and then return, the measure was calculated based on the number of times the student enrolled. If the student applied for financial support in a particular semester based on need, and was not awarded support, then the measure was subtracted from the number of times the student received financial aid. As an example, if the student was enrolled in the Fall semester of the academic year 2002-2003, and if s/he applied for and was awarded financial support for that semester based on need, then the value of FAM for that semester would be '1'. If the student applied the following semester for financial support and was not awarded support, then the value of FAM for the two consecutive semesters would be '1-1=0'. If the student applied for financial support for four semesters and was not awarded on all four occasions, the student would have a FAM score of '-4'. The datum for this measure was Spring 2006-2007. Thus, if a student was enrolled in Fall 2002-2003 and received financial support from the time of his enrolment to Spring 2006-2007, then FAM would have a value of 10. FAM as a measure of the number of times awarded financial support was reclassified into three approximate homogenous classifications, ranging from a low FAM level '1', a middle FAM level '2', and a high FAM level '3'. We crossed FAM with those who graduated or did not graduate.

A second measure used in this study was 'financial amount' (FA), defined as the total sum of financial aid received over the years spent at university. This aggregated amount was recoded into a three level classification based on the

distribution of the data. We crossed financial amount (FA) with those who graduated and those who did not graduate. Finally, an aggregate score of the 24-item satisfaction scale was summed and divided by 24. The resulting mean score for the satisfaction scale indicates the level of satisfaction among the students who received financial aid. The mean for the satisfaction scale could range from '1 = low' to '5 = high'. Both FAM and FA were run on the aggregate measure for satisfaction. We also used faculty and gender to determine whether the university maintained an equitable distribution of money for the different faculties

Results

We used socio-demographic variables to study the effects of gender and major, and to understand whether the level of financial aid was related to whether students graduated or not. FAM was crossed with those who graduated or did not graduate. FAM ranged from a value of -11 to 10 and was recoded into three homogeneously distributed FAM levels, namely, '1 = low', '2 = middle' and '3 = high'. A significant chi-square ($\chi^2(2, 1421) = 104.67, p < .001$) indicated that students with a high FAM (45.7%) are more likely to graduate in comparison to those with low (27.7%) or middle (26.6%) FAM. In comparison, those who did not graduate had a higher percentage at the middle FAM than the high FAM (see Table 2).

In the second analysis we used an aggregate financial amount of those who applied and received financial aid crossed with those who graduated or did not graduate. The aggregate financial amount was recoded into three homogenous classifications, namely, the lower one-third, the middle one-third and the upper one-third of the distribution. The results showed that a significant relation appeared between the financial amount and those who graduated/did not graduate ($\chi^2(2, 1421) = 132.2, p < .001$). For 40.9% of those who graduated had the highest amount compared to the corresponding 28.8% who received the lowest amount. And with regard to those who did not graduate, 15.3% received the highest amount compared to 60.3% who received the lowest amount (see Table 3).

In a third analysis, we examined gender crossed with the graduate classification. As more males than females enrol in majors traditionally associated with males (Abouchdid & Nasser, 2000), males graduate at higher rates. Since males are more likely to take 'masculine-type' programmes, they are apt to enrol in engineering and hard sciences that charge higher fees than other faculties do. Specifically, we wanted to find out whether there was financial award equity among males and females in these majors that have higher rates of males enrolled in them. Using a two-way 2x2 factorial design with sex (male, female) x graduate classification (graduate, did not graduate) showed that there was a main

TABLE 2: FAM crossed by those who graduated/did not graduate

		Recorded Financial Aid Measure			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
Graduated	Count	287	276	473	1036
	% within Row	27.7%	26.6%	45.7%	100.0%
	% within Column	67.5%	60.3%	87.9%	72.9%
Did Not Graduate	Count	138	182	65	385
	% within Row	35.8%	47.3%	16.9%	100.0%
	% within Column	32.5%	39.7%	12.1%	27.1%
Total	Count	425	458	538	1421
	% within Row	29.9%	32.2%	37.9%	100.0%

significant difference between males and females ($F(1, 189) = 15.77, p < .001$) with a greater average amount of aid given to females than males in ratio to their numbers. An interaction effect was also found ($F(1, 189) = 5.916, p < .05$) with a higher amount given to females who did not graduate compared to those who graduated and a lesser amount given to males who graduated compared to those who did not graduate. Thus, in this case study we note a slight advantage for females in terms of available money. Possibly, females have a higher performance in subjects such as mathematics and science, and this may have enticed these women to enrol in the engineering and sciences. In using cumulative grade point average as the covariate and by removing the variances associated with cumulative grade point average, we found a significant difference between those who graduated compared with those who did not graduate on the amount of financial aid received ($F(1, 185) = 7.132, p < .01$). In addition, by using the cumulative grade point average as a covariate, we found a main significant difference between females and males ($F(1, 185) = 8.692, p < .01$) and interaction effects ($F(1, 185) = 7.01, p < .01$). This indicates that gender differences were apparent irrespective of the performance of these students.

TABLE 3: FA crossed by those who graduated/did not graduate

		Recorded Financial Amount			Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	
Graduated	Count	298	314	424	1036
	% within Row	28.8%	30.3%	40.9%	100.0%
	% within Column	56.2%	77.0%	87.8%	72.9%
Did Not Graduate	Count	232	94	59	385
	% within Row	60.3%	24.4%	15.3%	100.0%
	% within Column	43.8%	23.0%	12.2%	27.1%
Total	Count	425	530	408	483
	% within Row	29.9%	37.3%%	28.7%	34.0%

Because the students who received the lowest amount may have stayed a shorter time at the university, the third analysis investigated whether the time students enrolled at the university was related to their graduation or non-graduation. If there was a higher percentage of non-graduates who stayed a shorter period of time and received a greater amount of financial aid, this would indicate that the amount received is related to the time students remain at the university. When students enrol for a longer period of time, receive higher amounts of money and still do not graduate, the financial aid would have been allocated somewhat unwisely. On the other hand, if the graduates enrolled for shorter periods and received lower amounts of financial aid, this would indicate that the university has a wise policy for financial support to strategically aid students. As many private universities in Lebanon survive from student tuition fees, the over-allocation of funds for financial aid eats into potential profit margins. Thus, private universities try to keep a balance in maintaining students through a cost-sharing system.

The time spent by students from the academic semesters of Fall 2002-2003 to Spring 2006-2007 is 10 semesters. This time variable was recoded into a three-level classification: the lower one-third, the middle one-third and upper one-third

of the distribution. The first part of Table 4 presents the recoded time spent at the university crossed with recoded financial amount by controlling for graduates. A significant finding was that those who enrol at the middle-time level receive the highest amounts of financial support ($\chi^2(4, 1036) = 66.51, p < .001$). The second part of Table 4 indicates that those who did not graduate received the lowest amount of financial help and spent a shorter time at the university ($\chi^2(4, 385) = 79.78, p < .001$).

We also investigated the availability of aid packages for students in faculties that charge the highest dollar for semester credit hour, focusing in particular on the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering. We wanted to see whether students enrolled in both these faculties had access to financial aid packages that were greater than those available to student in other faculties. If this was the case, this would indicate the prevalence of a fair policy. A one-way ANOVA showed a significant difference ($F(6, 870) = 4.97, p < .001$), while a post-hoc Scheffe' showed a larger difference between the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Business and Management (mean difference = 2218670.14, $p < .05$) with a higher mean value of financial aid amount for those in the Faculty of Health Sciences followed by the Faculty of Engineering compared to lower financial aid packages to the other faculties at this private university.

To understand the quality of the higher education experience related to financial aid, we ran a one-way ANOVA using the three-level classification on the aggregate measure of satisfaction as a mean score. A subgroup of 473 students continuing at the university responded to the satisfaction scale. Two analyses were performed using the number of times students received financial aid and the amount of financial aid students received as factors on the aggregated mean satisfaction. Both the number of times students received financial aid and the amount received were recoded based on the distribution of those who continued at the university. A non-significant difference between the financial amount levels was obtained on the aggregate satisfaction measure ($F(2, 397) = 0.45, p > .05$). The financial aid amount was recoded because the distribution in a two classification level did not impact student satisfaction ($F(1, 398) = 0.74, p > .05$).

Discussion

Financial support is related to student success in a private university in Lebanon. These findings reflect some level of significance in the relation between the receipt of financial aid and the monetary value of aid received on graduation,

TABLE 4: Time spent crossed by FAM and FA for those continuing at the university

Graduates Recoded Time						
			1.00	2.00	3.00	
Recoded Financial Amount	1.00	Count	102	104	92	298
		% within Row	34.2%	34.9%	30.9%	100.0%
		% within Column	39.7%	23.2%	27.9%	28.8%
	2.00	Count	102	140	72	314
		% within Row	32.5%	44.6%	22.9%	100.0%
		% within Column	39.7%	31.2%	21.8%	30.3%
	3.00	Count	53	205	166	424
		% within Row	12.5%	48.3%	39.2%	100.0%
		% within Column	20.6%	45.7%	50.3%	40.9%
Did Not Graduate Recoded Time						
Recoded Financial Amount	1.00	Count	136	69	27	232
		% within Row	58.6%	29.7%	11.6%	100.0%
		% within Column	78.2%	58.5%	29.0%	60.3%
	2.00	Count	33	31	30	94
		% within Row	35.1%	33.0%	31.9%	100.0%
		% within Column	19.0%	26.3%	32.3%	24.4%
	3.00	Count	5	18	36	59
		% within Row	8.5%	30.5%	61.0%	100.0%
		% within Column	2.9%	15.3%	38.7%	15.3%

discontinuation or dropout levels. Specifically, we wanted to see whether financial aid had substantial negative consequences on students graduating in a normal time frame, or whether financial aid prolonged students' stay at the university. Astin's (1975) classic study had found a small effect on student persistence or staying on at the university.

The findings in this study showed that for those students in the third and highest level of receipt of financial aid, the percentage of graduating students was higher compared to those who did not graduate. For those who did not graduate, the number of times they received financial aid was at the middle level. In terms of the amount of financial aid, those who graduated received most of the aid, while those who did not graduate received the least amount. These results are encouraging because it appears that the university is supporting graduates more substantially than those who drop out. This is particularly the case with those graduates who spent four to six semesters at the university and who received middle level amount of aid. Comparatively, a high percentage of those who did not graduate received the lowest amount of financial support, having spent one to three semesters at the university.

The private higher education revolution has mitigated a number of issues seemingly unregulated by governance, accountability or accreditation. Even though there are wide variations among the different types of private universities in Lebanon (whether they are for-profit or not, 'religious' or 'cultural', enterprise-like or bureaucratic, Francophone or American-style), all need student tuition fees to survive. This has increased university cost-sharing programmes, especially for those who cannot afford the fees charged. As has been argued, however, such financial support can pose problems for the private university.

In this study we looked at whether this university, like other private American-style universities in Lebanon and the Middle East, has an 'equitable' and balanced distribution of cost-sharing. One important finding showed that universities that charge higher tuition fees provide higher subsidies through financial aid when compared to other universities. Even more significantly, these universities encourage female engineering and science students to pursue their studies by providing a higher amount of aid for needy female students. These results tend to be similar to those obtained by Reuterburg & Svensson (1983) in their studies on higher education in Sweden. These authors found that financial aid was important not only for recruiting students, but was also related to persistence and degree attainment, particularly for students from lower socio-economic strata and for females.

The satisfaction scale assessed students' experiences in a variety of academic and supporting functions, including student affiliation and belonging to the university. The different experiences of these students were not impacted by

financial aid, a result that stands in contrast to the finding of Cabrera, Nora & Castaneda (1993) who noted that financial aid factors affect students' attitudes. The analysis of variance results did not show any significant difference between the number of times students received financial aid and satisfaction. In addition, the two-level classification of financial amount did not show a significant difference on the aggregate measure of satisfaction.

Other factors may possibly be at play where students could see other intangible aspects much more important to their satisfaction and to the quality of education at the university. Particularly notable is McNay's (1995) notion of culture within higher education, which has an impact on the way higher education is structured, organised and operationalised. According to McNay, the culture of a university influences a range of factors associated with academic and student life on campus, including satisfaction.

More important is the fact that institutions may forego large amount of money for financial aid to sustain and solicit academically successful students in the hope of improving student quality and, in turn, improve the university's reputation and public perception. Quality students leaving the university and entering the workforce can only be an asset for the university in terms of reputation and recruitment.

Therefore maintaining the difficult balance between financial aid and seeking high achieving students is a major strategic issue that universities must consider in devising admission policies. This study was exploratory but it provided a picture of financial aid with respect to student output. The data showed to some extent that when financial aid is used wisely, students are more likely to graduate in a timely manner, in comparison to those who receive the lowest amount of financial aid and leave the university.

Limitations and next steps

One limitation of this study is that financial aid is only one variable that might affect the student's decision to continue or to leave the university. It is also considered as a gross indicator of students' academic experiences. Students may have various reasons for leaving or for poor academic performance. Many of these reasons are unrelated to financial aid and future studies may consider a host of possible factors, including variables that influence student satisfaction such as academic abilities, programmes offered at the university attended, the quality of university professors and of teaching, and the overall university culture and climate. More importantly, achievement tends to be a far more persuasive factor for students in succeeding in getting financial aid, in staying or leaving the

university. Hence, future studies could use multivariate analysis to investigate the effect of abilities or achievement as a covariate measured through cumulative grade point average as it impacts on graduation or retention rates.

Conclusion

This study raises important questions about the Arab World's understanding of the funding of higher education and use of financial aid. First, the overall concept of funding higher education needs to be critically examined. A paradigm shift must take place where governments move away from the view of funding universities to the idea of funding students. No longer can public universities remain in privileged positions receiving funding without change or improvement. Rather competition should be added to the funding equation forcing universities to improve and change in order to better meet the needs of society and the individual student. Instead of unquestionably throwing money into public universities that fail to improve educational quality, government funding of private universities should be considered.

Second, these findings indicate that private universities embrace a perspective of financial aid that seriously considers the concept of equity. For example, our findings illustrate that more financial aid is given to females entering male dominated careers, thus facilitating equal access to these professions. Again this understanding of funding centres on the individual and not on the university.

Third, this study informs us that private universities and their financial packages result in a faster graduation rate. This provides additional room for other students who seek enrolment.

Fourth, there are several remaining and important questions to consider. What if the university's policy is to recruit top ranking students? Will this pose a problem to the institution? Will the university, through its financial aid resources and policies, be able to sustain these students? Improving the quality of students' overall university experience could possibly increase the number at the top of the graduating class and is likely to increase retention and graduation rates (DesJardins, 2001).

Finally, government officials need to stop embracing the dead hand of tradition of funding failing public universities and consider how their programmes and policies will promote a competitive system that will improve the country's overall education while meeting the political, social and economic demands of the country.

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BEING A LESBIAN IS NO SIN: RELIGION, SEXUALITY AND EDUCATION IN THE LIVES OF FEMALE STUDENTS

JOANNE CASSAR

Abstract – *The embodiment of religion in Maltese culture permeates its social organisations. Specifically, the institutionalisation of Catholic beliefs in Maltese society forms value systems and policy in education. This paper discusses the ways that Catholic morality discourses are intertwined with discourses revolving around gender identity, sexual pleasure and the erotic as they emerge from a number of hidden graffiti written on the toilet doors of a postsecondary school in Malta. These graffiti are considered subversive processes of learning, which reproduce, reinforce, question, resist and reject dominant Catholic morality discourses surrounding teenage sexual conduct and gender identity. These students' voices, acting within a graffiti community, offer means of negotiating and resolving tensions, which arise in described romantic and sexual encounters. The discursive spaces created by the graffiti writers question what constitutes 'normal' and demonstrate the contradictory ways that sexual issues could be perceived, understood and experienced. They demonstrate that sexual and erotic knowledge is acquired informally through the hidden curriculum by means of anonymous graffiti, which demonstrate a plethora of mixed feelings surrounding sexual ethics. These writings manifest students' experimentations with public/private boundaries and their attempts at breaking silences, secrecies and taboos revolving around sexualities. The study discusses how adolescent sexual identities are constructed within political, moral, religious and cultural agendas. It addresses the invisibility, voicelessness and non-representation of sexuality education issues in postsecondary curricula.*

Introduction

The development of romantic relationships is a hallmark of adolescence (Shulman & Collins, 1997; Furman, Brown & Feiring, 1999). Complexities surrounding teenagers' perspectives regarding sexualities and romantic attachments have been explored (e.g., Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Furman & Wehner, 1997; Furman, Brown & Feiring, 1999; Furman, 2002; Kehily, 2002; Measor, Tiffin & Miller, 2000; Epstein, O'Flynn & Telford, 2003). A number of studies have analysed teenagers' writings about romantic relationships and

sexualities, like in the form of letters to 'Agony Aunts' in teenage magazines (e.g., Currie, 1999; Kehily, 1999), through essays (e.g., Unterhalter et al., 2004) or letters discussed during sex education lessons (Kehily, 2002). The increasing body of research in adolescent sexualities and romantic relationships recognises that 'these relationships are not simply trivial flings' (Furman, 2002, pp. 177-178), but are relevant to adolescents' personal and social worlds.

The study presented in this paper deals with numerous teenage graffiti, which are scribbled on toilet doors of a postsecondary educational institution in Malta and whose subject matter concerns mainly romantic relationships and sexuality issues (Cassar, 2007a). It is assumed that the graffitists are mostly female students, since the writings are found in female lavatories, in which male students are forbidden entry. Although there are no specific indications that some graffiti have been written by males, I have been informed that a number of male students have however written graffiti on toilet doors of female lavatories at the institution where the research was carried out, in order to make fun of the graffiti, which are presumably written by females. Although I have assumed that the majority of graffiti have been composed by females, I acknowledge that I do not have any evidence related to this. The representation of the graffiti involves an incomplete process. The issue of representation in research and its relations with the search for the truth in complex social practices has not been settled or resolved (Peim, 2005, p. 67).

The writings are nearly all anonymous and they are written in Maltese and English. These countless writings are periodically removed by the cleaners, who scrub them off, although they start reappearing again soon after and replaced by other questions and comments about the same topics. The personal stories and narratives construct a sense of community and could be considered as a fragment of the 'world of sexual stories' (Plummer, 1995, p. 5), which has increasingly become recognised (Plummer, 1995).

Graffiti on toilet doors are also present in a number of Maltese female secondary schools. The phenomenon of graffiti, composed by women in confined, secretive spaces, has a long history. These writings are most likely to occur in controlled, patriarchal cultures, in which women's voices are restricted. For example in 2005, numerous graffiti were discovered in the ancient complex named Steri, which housed the Inquisition in Palermo, Sicily. The Inquisition was the Catholic Church's judiciary, which was tasked with stamping out heresy. These graffiti were found in the prison cells of women accused of witchcraft more than four centuries ago. Their writings testify to their anguish as they waited to be burned at the stake (Johnston, 2005). Graffiti are still being written in prison cells by political women prisoners; for example in Iran (Ebadi, 2006, pp. 172-174).

The graffiti presented in this study manifest their authors' ways of thinking and describe aspects of their social world. Concerns with the body, sexual expression, erotic desire, love, intimacy, trust, parents, birth control, pregnancy and disease are intertwined with dominant religious and education discourses. Psychic forces are intertwined with cultural texts (Kristeva, 1987). Since the ways through which cultural hegemony is maintained are complex (Guzmán, 2003, p. 31), religious, educational and youth sexuality discourses are understood as operating alongside each other and not as being rigidly separate from each other. Coffey (1999) holds that 'The physical act of sex is positioned alongside emotion, desire, gender, culture, time, space ...' (p. 95). Through poststructuralist perspectives, religion, sexuality and education discourses are regarded as accommodating complexity.

Public discourses and individual subjectivities are brought together in the graffiti forum to facilitate the girls' process of acquiring knowledge and norms about sexualities. Teenage students are not only part of the educational institution they learn in, but are also members of a broader social community, which to an extent influences how they adopt knowledges about sexualities to organise their behaviour. The informants' inner world of feelings and thoughts mingles with the external world of cultural norms. The understanding of the connections between the personal and the cultural is however complex, because these are constructed and re-constructed constantly:

'As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition.' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739)

Estrangement from sexuality education

Sexuality education as a specific subject is absent from postsecondary curricula in Malta. One of the reasons why knowledge is being requested inside the female lavatories, a marginalised school setting, might be due to the deprivation of schooled sexuality education. Sexuality education, as taught in numerous schools in different countries globally, does not include information about relationships, love and intimacy and tends to concentrate on strictly biological aspects (Measor, Tiffin & Miller, 2000; Mayock & Byrne, 2004). There is much controversy and disagreement about the nature, aims and practice of sexuality education (Measor, Tiffin & Miller, 2000; Atkinson, 2002). Debates about sexuality education are sensitive and controversial, because of political, ethical and moral connotations (Measor, Tiffin & Miller, 2000, p. 1)¹. Debates and implementation policies about the provision of sexuality education in a number of

Mediterranean countries like Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal, Spain and also in northern European countries, have led to considerable pressure by religious institutions, which opposed it through controlled discourses (Safe Project, 2006). The Church in these countries contributes to cultural conservatism, at times even through political parties, which support it. In the eastern Mediterranean region religious leaders are perceived as being reluctant to encourage the provision of sex education for young people, the promotion of condoms as disease prevention and the dissemination of information about HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (Tawilah et al., 2002). Perceived negative attitudes attributed to religious leaders also extend toward gay men. The influence of these leaders and of religious beliefs as well as their impact on the shaping of sexual attitudes in developing Mediterranean countries are considered society's 'foundation stones' (Tawilah et al., 2002).

Competing discourses are involved in sex education (Kehily, 2002). Sexuality has been regarded 'an unclear field of study' (Mac An Ghail, 1994, p. 2) and research about sexuality in schools 'a complicated business' (Kehily, 2002, p. 5). Schools have viewed students' sexuality as an impediment to the academic purpose of schooling and have either tried to regulate or deny its expression through sexuality education (Thorogood, 2000; Nash, 2002; Paechter, 2004). Adolescents are critical of current approaches to school-based sex education (Mayock & Byrne, 2004), which are unrelated to their sexual experiences (Sears, 1992). These perceived limitations produce a sense of estrangement and alienation in adolescents toward sexuality education received at school:

'Many young people prefer to rely on teen magazines, adult pornography magazines, television and their friends to provide them with more useful information and support about sexuality than they receive at school.'
(Epstein, O'Flynn & Telford, 2003, p. 51)

The study

Data was collected by means of a digital camera. Photographs of the graffiti were taken at random and then a selection of 191 was made for analysis. These graffiti were written and collected from 2004-2007. Since most of the writings are anonymous, it was difficult to meet the graffiti artists in person. I have however identified one graffiti author and talked to her (Cassar, 2007a). A number of informants have written their mobile telephone number or e-mail address to be contacted for further advice. Due to ethical reasons and because of the deviant nature of the graffiti, these informants have never been contacted in person. It

would have been particularly unethical to contact those girls who had written their contact number to request lesbian/bisexual sex.

I have treated the graffiti texts as '*discursive clusters*' (Kehily, 2002, p. 7; emphasis in original). I perceive the graffiti texts as being made up of a conglomeration of various discourses about the body, gender, love, sexualities, intimacy, romance and relationships. Since the girls' thinking is partially visible through their writings, the discursive spaces operating within their perspectives can be inspected, reviewed and discussed. This study of discourses examines whose voice is being heard, who is silenced, who is objectified and who is marginalised. Religion, education and sexual conduct discourses are shared and struggled over by the girls through their recognition of the need to work things out through writing about them.

Through discourse analysis I have tried to do more than analyse formal features of language present in the graffiti texts, but attempted to link discourse with power by showing how specific forms of language lead to particular political and ideological interests (Parker, 1997). The study examines 'the content and organization of discourse and what it is used to *do*' (Gill, 1995, p. 167, emphasis in original), according to the informants' fragmentary accounts. In adopting a Foucauldian framework (Foucault, 1972), I understand discourses as not only encompassing what is written but as implying power practices, which make and shape reality. I consider the formation, understanding and analysis of discourses as complex and fluid as no generalisations and certainties can be derived from them. I have adopted Threadgold's (2000) advice that 'we should not "burrow" into discourse looking for meanings', but rather 'look for the external conditions of its existence, its appearance and its regularity' and 'explore the conditions of its possibility' (p. 49). In my interpretation of the writings, I acknowledge that I might have fictionalised aspects of the girls' narratives, which might also have been invented by them in the first place. From a poststructuralist perspective, my analysis could therefore reflect moments when I could have misunderstood or misinterpreted these narratives.

In this study I consider most of the graffitiists as seekers and producers of knowledge. I regard their reflexivity as an important factor in understanding their concerns. My aim in bringing forward the girls' writings is to challenge silences surrounding desexualised curricula and demonstrate a deeper recognition of female adolescents' needs in their encounters with the sexual. Understanding young people's perspectives about sexualities is central to understanding any aspect of their sexuality. My positionality gives voice to the viewpoints and concerns, which female adolescents bring to the forum about sexualities. In general, this study positions these voices as 'positively and legitimately sexual' (Allen, 2005, p. 402). My positionality gives prominence to the discourse of 'openness' and the politics I advocate is one of inclusion.

Subversive dialogue

Although the girls' personal and private narratives occupy public spaces on the school's toilet doors, they are shrouded by confinement. The graffitiists could be described as 'subalterns' (Spivak, 1993), since they inscribe their subordinate position. Their secrecy is typical of secretcies surrounding girls' sexuality (Lamb, 2004) and might be related to cultural portrayals of women:

'Secrecy around girlhood sexual feelings may also derive from internalizing cultural anxieties about the media's 'oversexualizing' of girls and objectification of women.' (Lamb, 2004, p. 378)

The writings exhibit a strange way of attempting dialogue. Although they are familiar to many female students, they expose an unconventional, abnormal and even transgressive way of communicating one's intimacies. The normal everyday practice of this strangeness makes them familiar. This familiarity, however, does not soften the huge difficulties, which some informants presumably face. Numerous graffiti reveal the quiet desperation of some students, who beg anonymous and complete strangers for advice (Cassar, 2007b). Some of their questions and statements require serious attention like in the case when suicide, abortion, bulimia, child sexual abuse and depression are mentioned.

According to Spivak (1993), women living in colonial or postcolonial contexts are not equipped with the conceptual language to communicate within the discourse of colonialism, because there is no space for them to articulate themselves and therefore remain condemned to silence. Nations, which had formerly been colonised, experience a profound identity split and sense of irreparable dislocation and displacement (Bhabha, 1994; cited in Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p. 59). Stronach & MacLure (1997) understand Bhabha's conceptualisation of postcolonial discourse as a 'discourse of *otherness*' (p. 59; emphasis by Stronach & MacLure). According to Bhabha, colonial otherness is not constituted by the 'colonialist Self or the colonized Other but by the *disturbing distance in-between*' (Bhabha, 1994; cited in Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p. 59; emphasis added by Stronach & MacLure). Even the graffitiists reflect this distance and 'otherness'. Postcolonial authors tend to engage in ambivalent writing, which is partially visible through 'the secret arts of invisibleness' (Bhabha, 1994; cited in MacLure, 2003, p. 146). The graffitiists also partake in partial invisible acts of writing. The hidden graffiti also seem to reflect the colonial submissiveness of Maltese people, whose voice was not granted full legitimacy. Female voices in postcolonial settings are heard even less:

'Women in postcolonial societies carry the double burden of having being subordinated by colonialism and native men.' (Barker, 2000, pp. 257-258)

Gender identity

A number of graffiti themes, which expound how religion and sexuality discourses collate together in the educational institution where the research was carried out, will now be discussed. The first theme deals with gender identity.

The graffiti forum is sought to understand gender identity. School processes produce sites for the enactment of heterosexual identities that suggest the normative presence of heterosexuality (Epstein, 1994; Kehily, 2001). Heterosexual identity is actively produced through schools, which could be considered significant cultural sites that reflect sexual ideologies of the patriarchal-heterosexist state. Yet students negotiate their sexual identities and peer group sexual subcultures inside their school (Mac an Ghaill, 1996).

Some of the graffitists struggle over the implications of heterosexual identities. They explore who they are through anonymity and through writings addressed to 'Dear Anyone'. Although the graffitists share the same gender, they do not constitute a homogeneous group but demonstrate that there are different ways of being human and of being female. Despite their anonymity, their written contributions reflect diverse gendered identities and 'the multiplicity of female expressions and preoccupations' (Kristeva, 1986, p. 193). The data² demonstrates the dilemmas of some girls as they strive to understand how their gender identity brings up conflicting sexual desires and preferences:

*Does any1 know what one should do when your mind body & soul is divided into 2 1 part for ur bf and d other 4 a girl who makes ur mind body & soul turn upside down when you meet her!! ????? I'm fucked up.**

Anyway it's me again!! Still in d same shit after a week! It's not shit actually It's fuckin brilliant she is! More fucked up!!

*HI I HAVE A BIG PROBLEM I WISH I HAVE A GF I HAVE A BF X MISERABLE. **

Help! I am bisexual! I have a bf and I'm very confused in my Life. I'm feeling sick but I love my bf.

These informants describe how they agonise over how to confront the lovers involved, once the realisation of an erotic preference for males and females is made. The sense of shock and disbelief is evident:

HELP WANTED HEY! I have a bf but I'm having feelings for 1 of my girl best friends! What the hell am I gonna do? I never thought that I was bi-sexual and shy 2 tell my girl-friend. Should I tell them or carry on with my misreble life! GOD HELP ME!

The use of the dash in both words 'bi-sexual' and 'girl-friend' demarcate a split self. The prayer appealing to God's help indicates that God might be regarded as a source of support. Feelings of confusion are identified and sadness is communicated: '*God damn! We are all miserable. very confused*'. The term 'we' promotes a sense of community. Kristeva (1986) argues that individuals struggle over sexual identity. She emphasises the *singularity* of each person but also bring out the *multiplicity* of every person's possible identifications. She demystifies ideological uniformity of gender and retreats from sexism. In the graffiti forum discussions about gender identity also make way for a multiplicity of personalities.

I have regarded the girls' conceptions of the self as discursive constructs. The girls' understandings of who they are challenge the idea of a stable, coherent self. Like Butler (1990), who maintains that there are no answers to the question 'who am I?', they destabilise unitary accounts of the self. Butler (1999) is against the setting up of 'woman' as an eternal abstract universal category. She rejects this notion on the basis of the variations of fragmented identities and discontinuous or provisional understandings of gender identities.

The acceptance of gender identities, other than the heterosexual one, seems to cause anxiety to some heterosexual girls, who struggle to defend heterosexuality, and who associate being lesbian/bisexual with sickness: '*Fuck the Biy they make me sick*'*. The response repeated the same accusation: '*U make me sick*'. An answer to the question '*Any good looking bisexuals in the school???*' was '*sooo incredibly disgusting what are you? Do you want sex that much?*'*. The homophobic comments are outnumbered by remarks, which support homo/bi sexuality, but they are present nonetheless.

The girls point out that oppressive norms and practices like homophobia effect the conception of the self. Some girls challenge homophobic ideas presented through the graffiti by advocating the transformation of mentalities, which reject non-heterosexual students. Schools not only serve as central sites for the reproduction and circulation of culture, but also for its transformation (Giroux, 1994). Some graffitists strive to bring a transformation in the ways that other bisexual/lesbian graffitists are perceived by challenging taken-for-granted notions through their writings. Bisexual/lesbian/heterosexual writers deconstruct the normative power and the universality of heterosexual desire. They contest the Catholic Church's teaching: '*I've heard the Pope saying that*

homosexualism is a great sin. But, girls. Do you agree with this? They point out that heterosexuality is not compulsory for all girls and expose its weaknesses. The official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church (1992) still holds on to the tradition, which has declared that ‘homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered’ and sinful (paragraph 2357).

Some writings problematise homophobia by making its familiarity strange. They object to it as they identify and uphold values related to respect for diversity, autonomy and individuality. The graffitiists deconstruct the notion of heterosexuality understood in terms of being regarded as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ and resist the view that heterosexuality is the only stable, institutionalised model of stability. They communicate their contempt for the dominant discourses, which hurt the feelings and cause emotional hurt to gay and lesbian minorities. These writers reflect the principles of queer theory (Sedgwick, 1990, 1994; Dollimore, 1991; Butler, 1993, 1999) as they dissect homophobic graffiti and expose imbalances underlying the use of language in relation to sexual identities:

Girl 2 girl love is not an alternative for anyone! it is the way some people love. it is as good as girl 2 boy love, not an Alternative! its not for u! sucker.

Being a lesbian is no sin, I am straight but I respect gays & lesbians as long as they don't try with me. It's a free world.

Respect for diversity is perceived as being part of a ‘free world’. Numerous graffiti however demonstrate that it is not a free world at all, as the need to create and maintain boundaries of safety is demonstrated even within the toilet walls. Graffitiists who describe themselves as lesbian or bisexual create their own subculture within the graffiti subculture itself, in order to exclude the homophobic writers. The lesbian/bisexual informants generally address their questions to ‘fellow lesbians’ and not to the heterosexual girls. The data, however, suggests that a number of the *same* problems are described as occurring among hetero/bisexual and lesbian relationships, irrespective of gender identity (Cassar, 2007a).

The doing it debate

Some graffiti statements, written mostly in heterosexual contexts, demonstrate that the doing it/not doing it debate is one of concern, which elicits curiosity. For example, a graffiti chart was drawn and readers were asked to tick whether they are virgins or not. The chart showed 6 ticks in the ‘not virgin’ column and 3 ticks under the ‘virgin’ heading. Although one person could have ticked more than once, in both segregations there were affirmations that they

were 'proud' to be/not to be a virgin. Some readers showed reluctance to allow intrusions into their private selves and declared that their sexual status is 'not anybody's business'*. Debates surrounding this chart demonstrated that whereas some girls described that they gain confidence through sex, others associate sex with feeling used or with degrading oneself. Addressing the 'not virgin' ticks, one girl asked 'where is your dignity guys!?' The implication that having sex diminishes one's dignity may reflect Catholic morality discourses, which discourage sex before marriage. The Catholic theology of the body places emphasis on being sexually responsible and links sexuality to parenthood and to marital chastity. It affirms heteronormativity and assumes that sexual union should only occur in the heterosexual marriage. Some girls have indeed written this explicitly when confronted by writings, which take a sexual relationship for granted: 'Wait a min No Sex Before Marriage'. Such writings manifest an abstinence discourse, which Catholic teachings employ in relation to teenagers and single persons. The presence of the abstinence discourse might indicate that '... girls may have been taught that sex is shameful and dirty, their shame encouraging them to police their sexuality' (Lamb, 2004, p. 378).

Some girls on the other hand narrate that they are simply happy to wait until they feel ready. They argue in favour of being free to choose whether to have sexual experiences or be sexually inactive. Within this schema, some girls transmit the discourse, which dictates that legitimate and fulfilling coupling postpones sexual intercourse until marriage. They insist on safeguarding their personal choices:

Very much proud, its my body, and my pleasure and above all an expression of love towards my loving boyfriend who accepts me the way I am and so should all the rest of you look for in a man.

Maltese culture tends to put the burden of responsibility on women with regard to restraining sexual behaviour (Lafayette, 1997). Being a virgin is considered 'an expression of love'. This answer also draws on a Catholic sexual ethics discourse. In its official catechism, the Catholic Church portrays the sexually active, unmarried persons as deviant, indirectly implying that they are 'disordered' (Roman Catholic Church, 1992, paragraph 2351). The discourse of the church portrays the heteronormative marriage as the only channel through which sexual expression is morally permissible. It emphasises that 'Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes' (Roman Catholic Church, 1992, paragraph 2351). This approach considers casual sex outside marriage as problematic; involving risk of unplanned pregnancy and exposure to sexually transmitted infections.

The Catholic Church's view that an enduring, exclusive, committed relationship in marriage is the only framework for having sex is being challenged. For example, among 417 University of Malta male and female students, 65.8% disagree with the Church's teaching about the prohibition of premarital sex (University of Malta Chaplaincy, 2003, p. 69). While only 5.4% would choose not to get married either civilly or religiously (p. 62), 58.1% find nothing wrong with cohabiting before marriage (p. 64) and 85% disagree with the Church's teaching against the use of contraceptives in birth control (p. 68). Another study confirms that 'the sexual activity of young people (in Malta) has come under the influence of global and western European culture' (Abela, 1998, p. 11).

The comparisons of differences in the virgin/not virgin chart reflect different social attitudes and norms. Issues related to the transition between being a virgin and not remaining one are contemplated as some girls reveal their fears and/or their desire to have sex for the first time. The loss of virginity is considered a special occasion by some informants. Some consider it a right and others a loss or a rite of passage. Some describe that they feel scared, just by thinking about it. For some graffitiists, there is no doubt as to whether they should be sexually active. Their narratives contain positive ways of thinking about active sexual desire and expression. The enjoyment of sexual experiences is emphasised: '*Sex is Fun enjoy PPL*'.

Sexual pleasure

Within the toilet walls, sex is perceived as a function that should be hidden. The girls' articulation of the sexualisation of themselves deals with questions related to practical information surrounding sexual behaviour. As the girls bring forward their perceived complexities and their adherence to existing moral codes, they simultaneously question and deconstruct these same codes. They push an erotic discourse forward, even as they regulate themselves. The following question about the morality of masturbation was possibly framed within the Church's discourse of 'masturbation is a sin':

Is it right or wrong to masturbate? Do you masturbate often???

*Yes a lot HEHE!! **

*No, even I masturbate a lot it is normal but embarrassed to show that's why finger fuck is fantastic.**

its something natural, yes I do masturbate often! ☺ Don't worry.

I don't know how to can someI help!?!?

These messages can be regarded as constituting a pleasure-seeking mechanism. As the girls acquire, exchange and discuss their sexual knowledge, they experiment by engaging in the construction of pleasure through writing. In this way they repeatedly 'perform' (Butler, 1999) their sexual fantasies and desires. In line with Butler's (1999) perceptions of performativity, their repeated concerns could be regarded as a 'ritual'. Performativity is inextricably linked with institutional practices, which is reinforced through repeated performances:

'... performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.' (Butler, 1999, p. xv)

Some of the girls' statements imply that sexual pleasure is an important component of their liberation, self-determination and autonomy. The question of what constitutes 'normal' however surfaces constantly: '*is it normal that girls hate to masturbate???*' I have never read any graffiti, which stated that masturbation is wrong. The 'slut' concept (Cassar, 2007a) has not been employed to girls who stated that they masturbate. Irigaray (1985) confirms that woman:

'... finds pleasure almost anywhere. . . . the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined ...' (p. 28)

Contraception

Some graffiti advice encourages girls to manage sexual desire by sensibly protecting themselves against unwanted sexual experiences, sexually transmissible diseases and pregnancy. Very few graffiti however mention contraception and the ones which do generally revolve more on the use of condoms than on other types. In Malta there are no specific birth-control clinics and in postsecondary schools students do not learn about basic health issues related to sexuality. This might be one of the reasons why the graffiti writers consult the graffiti forum. The dilemmas surrounding the risks of getting pregnant are outlined:

I have a BF and we've been 2gether for a year and a half now. We really love each other and we wish to stay together forever. We never had real sex although we experiment other things. Now we both wish to have sex and

show how much we really love each other but we're both virgins and we're scared of me getting pregnant. We were going to plan to use condoms but I'm still scared because they're not 100% safe. What should we do??

In their attempts to take the relationship on a higher level and seek more sexual closeness, some girls demonstrate responsibility as they try to balance risk reduction with their desire to 'show their love'. Some advice directed at this situation is once again motivated by the idea that one should not commence a sexual relationship before marriage. As the girls share tips on how to avoid pregnancy, they empathise with each other. They share their fears of getting pregnant, which accompanies sexual experimentation and the exploration of desire amidst their wish to express 'love'. Some explicit advice advocates contraceptive use:

*Use a condom and when he is about to come stop so that he would not be able to ejaculate inside you so that you'll be safer. But DNT WRY TOO MUCH you don't have to. BTW if you worry you'll take longer to get it (menstruation). GOODLUCK.**

*Don't have sex during the most dangerous time or else start taking the pill. Everyone is a little bit afraid at first. But once you pop u can't stop!! (The most important thing is that you love each other right) xxx. Gdlu.**

The Church's discourse against the use of contraception is questioned and debated:

Do you agree that the Church should interfere with one's personal choice of whether to use contraceptives or not?

YES! Coz the church protects LIFE! I am a proud Christian! & i love JESUS

PURE BULLSHIT The Church brainwashes ppl like yourself. Condoms prevent spreading diseases like HIV and prevent unwanted pregnancies which would unfortunately lead to abortion. GROW UP WE ARE IN THE 21ST CENTURY NOT D STONEAGE! ALWAYS USE A CONDOM!

Who are u to decide who's in the stoneage or not?

I don't agree with the church on telling us we shouldn't use contraceptives. I mean c'mon why should a person kill their child if they don't want it. It's better to be safe from the beginning don't u think. It's not offending God in any way put a condom on a person.

Church forbids sex in the first place before marriage so you shouldn't use them idiots!!

Pope John Paul's II (1993) encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* specifically describes the practice of artificial contraception as an act, which is not permitted by Catholic teaching in any circumstances.

Abortion

Thoughts about the possibility of pregnancy trigger the need to contemplate abortion: *'I think I'm pregnant. I'm only 16!! What do I have to do to get rid of the baby?? help me please!!'* Some advice induces guilt and acts as a corrective to the girl's question:

Think hard about this its not fair on the child. Adoption is an option. You should have thought about this before you had sex. If you made a mistake then, don't make another one now.

Advice against abortion is entrenched within discourses, which portray emotionally resonant values produced in some families and secondary schools: *'Buy a small pregnancy test from a pharmacy to be certain first. Abortion is not the solution. Remorse will haunt you in case you kill a new life'*.* Some girls however, offer alternative advice: *'Drink a whole bottle of vodka at one go → it works!'** (some days after this was written someone wrote over this sentence in an attempt to try to cancel it, presumably so that this advice would not spread).

The aftermath of abortion brings up an overwhelming sense of guilt, according to some written confessions. A girl searches for God's forgiveness as a possible means of coming to terms with abortion and arrive at self-acceptance. She faces her sad feelings in what she hopes is a compassionate environment. As she describes her loss, she defends herself against accusations of being considered a bitch:

I got pregnant and I did an abortion, coz I was too young. Will God ever forgive me? I'm sorry for what I did P.S. Please don't call me a bitch cause I'm not.

One answer to this plea suggested that one does not have to conform to guilt stricken feelings and dictated what God should do: *'If it was 4 a good reson God SHOULD understand'*. The experience of abortion has led some girls to describe their search for freedom from constraints related to what other people say.

Finding meaning and support

The graffiti themes discussed demonstrate a lack of positive intergenerational dialogue between parents and their teenage daughters and between teachers and students. Graffiti suggestions to seek advice from adults are totally absent. This could either be interpreted as a sign of autonomy or else as distrust in grown ups. The graffitists might believe that their teachers, parents or other adults do not understand their situations and cannot answer their questions. The girls have never written: 'What should the curriculum or school do to help me or how can my parents help me?' The absence of adult mention might indicate that some girls may not feel the need for formal sexuality education at their educational institution.

Parental attachment is disrupted when daughters deviate from their parents' cultural norms and beliefs. One informant's narrative reveals how descriptions of her parents' subjectivities uncover a racist discourse and an othering attitude:

*My family is against black people and I'm going out with an Arab. We had sex many times .. in fact my period is overdue and I think I'm pregnant. What the fuck am I going to do? How can I tell my parents that I had an intimate relationship with a person they dislike? Help me please.**

Having sexual relations with racially diverse men, especially 'black', is described as a problem when parents deny their consent for such relationships to occur. Some informants are faced with their parents' limitations and learn the flaws of the adult world. Crises in the parents' own relationships or marriage and how these affect their children are described as causing serious ramifications:

MY MUM & Dad R splitting up. Dad is such a creep, I can't stand him. He has no respect whatsoever for women, and calls me all kinds of names, starting from 'whore' to 'go kill urself' . I think its because of him I have trouble dating guys. I don't trust them, and my longest relationship was 2 wks long. Seriously, what should I do?? It feels lonely not being able to be with some(one) else. Any advice?

This described sense of vulnerability was felt by a number of graffiti readers who responded. One answer stated: 'I think @ the moment you should find a best friend in yourself. Bad people pick on good people, so fight spiritually and HOPE. I know you can manage, and so do you, deep down ☺'. The girl might have confirmed that she wanted to heed this advice as '10Q!! I will' was written some days after. Warnings from other graffitists about the dangers of becoming involved with people, who might be 'bad' just like her dad, ensued. In giving advice to 'fight

spiritually', a religious discourse is employed, aimed at encouraging the distraught girl to overcome her described fears, anguish, insecurity and lack of self-esteem. The advice might imply that God could be regarded as a surrogate parent. From this perspective and in view of the breakdown of intergenerational dialogue, religion is regarded as a source of solace and strength and as an important moral guide.

Some graffiti advice revolves around a discourse, which advocates the reliance on religious icons: '*Jesus Christ is the only one who can make your life worth living*'. The question of whether a life without love is worth living has been put up for 'discussion'.

What are we living for? If one has no love, friends and a family who love, isn't better just to die and leave all problems behind?

No, it isn't better. You have to fight problems Life isn't made of beautiful things only. This is just an ugly period 4 u. It WILL PASS!!

Yeah! It hasn't passed for 17 years, & wont pass now! But I like your positivity.

The girls' search for love leads them to explore different conceptualisations of love and to construct understandings of their sexual selves. A life devoid of love is perceived as not worth living and as insignificant. The girls' search for purpose in life touches on existentialist questions, which all world religions and cultures grapple with. Although the study is situated in a particular context and culture, it reflects wider realities:

'How and toward whom love is expressed varies by culture. Yet there are certain fundamental human propensities for connection that find expression in some form universally.' (Josselson, 1996, p. 8)

Discussion

In the absence of a language for adolescents, with which to talk about sexual expression, behaviour and feelings through their curriculum (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 1994), young people make up their own discourses about the sexual. Available discourses are inadequate as they are either too clinical or regarded as obscene (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 1994). In Malta this situation is even more accentuated, since even basic words, such as those referring to the genital organs and to the act of making love, are considered rude.

In trying to defy silence, some girls explore possible ways out of their shyness, low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy and inferiority complex, which arise through their described sexual feelings for other teenagers they are attracted to or involved with. In seeking approval from their toilet mates, some girls empower themselves to speak out. The demonstration of their feelings and doubts on toilet doors could however further reinforce their shyness and inhibitions. The graffiti biographies could be perceived as an escape from reality, since they occur in a context that fosters a sense of isolation, individualism and disembodiment from face to face dialogue. The girls' attempts at writing however could offer them spaces to learn about how to reach self-acceptance and how to form successful attachments with persons they are sexually attracted to. In their search for knowledge about the sexual, some informants construct channels of dialogue through which they can creatively rework power. Inside the lavatories, the girls cannot be fully assessed or monitored. This sense of freedom grants them power and control to unite in order to write about their problems and expose their lover/s, parents, classmates and friends to judgment.

Education is one of the vehicles through which the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to romantic intimacies and sexuality issues could be made possible. The graffiti confront the silences that surround sexualities at their school. They act against the prevailing institutionalised silence by using the same language of silence in secretive, anonymous and subversive conditions. Yet the graffiti space functions as a medium of self-learning and teaching. The girls teach themselves and each other and in a way the lavatories are transformed into a 'classroom'. The pedagogical spaces they construct expose and challenge their self-knowledge and serve as means of acquiring new ideas and possibilities. As they write about their problems and embark on efforts of self-inquiry, some of them seem to increase their self-awareness. Some graffitiists seek to unlearn silence because their teachers/parents/caregivers might not provide reliable knowledge and emotional support or provide little. Yet, the graffiti education functions paradoxically as both a status quo as well as an emancipatory, even transgressive movement.

The girls' hidden writings in the lavatories and the hiding of their names could be considered manifestations of the hidden curriculum they are creating. Their hiding also replicates the hiding and invisibility of sexuality education. Their anonymity gives them a sense of freedom and safety but it also reflects their fear of publicly asserting who they are. Historically most women have felt afraid and inadequate in asserting themselves in patriarchal cultures.

The study questions whether the educational agenda, with particular reference to Maltese postsecondary schools, is meeting the needs of adolescent students regarding issues pertaining to sexualities and romantic relationships. The graffiti

main themes (Cassar, 2007a) constitute the kind of knowledge the girls are constantly requesting. The Maltese postsecondary National Minimum Curriculum aims at contributing toward the 'education of the "whole" person' by empowering students with both life and study skills. It invites them to adopt a holistic approach to knowledge, to become reflective, critical and 'self-directed learners' (Ministry of Education, 1991). It also seeks to direct students to 'handle emotional responses in a mature manner' and develop their communication skills (Ministry of Education, 1991). It does not however mention the sexual development of postsecondary students.

The corpus of graffiti could be regarded as a form of discourse in itself and part of the postmodern 'discursive explosion' about sexuality (Foucault, 1978). The girls' voices provide a discourse for them, through which they confront their existential questions and problems. The graffiti discourse refers to the ways the graffiti language works to organise fields of knowledge and practice. The discursive formations present in the graffiti texts indicate how sexualities are produced in school settings. This study suggests that the transmission of culture occurs inside educational institutions and that sexualities are shaped and lived through student cultures. Discourses of religion and education produce sexual identities and act within political, moral and cultural agendas. The graffiti suggest that sexual pleasure is mediated by cultural norms and that the discourses and practices around adolescent sexuality construct the adolescent sexual body in certain ways. Discourses of sexuality are positioned amidst constructs related to the curriculum, policy and politics operating in Maltese society. They reflect postcolonial influences in the construction of national and personal identity. The graffiti narratives could therefore be regarded as having political importance.

The graffiti demonstrate that young people's concepts about sexualities question a traditional, Catholic, restricted, insular and conservative paradigm. Studies reveal that Maltese society is embracing a more secular, democratic, liberal, egalitarian, pluralist, racially diverse and cosmopolitan outlook (Abela, 1991, 1998, 2000; Cassar, 2004) and integrating European principles (Abela, 2000) despite the hold of Roman Catholicism. Comparative studies of Maltese and European values give evidence of a gradual shift from widespread conformity toward greater individualised values, a multiplicity of lifestyles and pluralistic behaviour (Abela, 2000). There is greater acceptance of the diversity of lifestyles including those related to homosexual persons and more policies favouring gender equality: 'the strict traditional morality of the Church in Malta is gradually giving way to a more open discourse on sexuality and its ensuing secularisation' (Abela, 1998, p. 66).

The process of moving toward secularism and liberalism has on many occasions proven to be a divisive, controversial and disturbing experience in Maltese society. Debate on the morality of issues, such as divorce and abortion are

intense and highly polarised. The use of contraception as a means of avoiding sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy is still debated and there is no consensus between advocates of the abstinence debate and the more liberal faction. Discourses about sexuality and love compete with one another and send out conflicting messages to adolescents. They hear the abstinence discourse simultaneously with messages advocating the legitimacy and normality of being sexually active. Adolescent girls are often told to be virtuous and reserved sexually. Peer cultures and the media however often convey the idea that being sexy is beneficial to gain popularity. Some boys are also told to control their sexual desires by their parents, but they are expected to be sexually active by their peers. Maltese young people are expected to grow up and be responsible for their actions, yet they are also discouraged from behaving in grown up ways when they are not trusted in terms of the choices they make. The conflicting messages conveyed to adolescents could interfere with their identity formation and cause confusion in terms of what the transition into adolescence signifies. Alternatively through conflicting messages they can deepen their knowledge and understanding of the complexities related to sexualities and romantic intimacies.

While the Foucauldian notion of discourse has been accused of gender blindness and determinism (see Walby, 1990), poststructural workings of it through discourse analysis however open up awareness and challenges to oppressive discourses in recognition of the multiplicity of discursive practice and subjectivity, including gender identity (Mama, 1995). Graffiti writers show that the desire for human connection and sexual expression is compelling and year after year they continuously face the perplexities and implications surrounding it (Cassar, 2007a). Sexuality has overwhelming power and some people, including the informants, regard it as a way through which they acquire a sense of belonging and acceptance. For some people, religion is also regarded as having this purpose to unite people and to get them together in the sharing of everyday and even significant life events. Both religious and sexual experiences offer means of self-discovery and could be considered as paths toward the understanding of life's purpose. As the graffitiists grapple with the understanding and meaning of human relatedness, they leave a trail behind them, which throws significant light to educational policy makers and curriculum authors. Through education, dialogue about the significance of religion and sexualities can be brought together in ways, which encompass the same paradoxes, doubts and contradictions, which students are legitimately facing and uncovering. The present discourse of silence prevalent in postsecondary curricula could therefore be replaced by discourses of openness, mutual understanding and respect for diversity.

Notes

1. A general overview of sexuality education theories and programmes is outlined and discussed in Bruess & Greenberg (2004) and values related to the principles and practice of sexuality education in Halstead & Reiss (2003). A study about policies and practice of sexuality education in European countries has been carried out by the Safe Project (2006).
2. Quotes marked by an asterisk (*) have been either partially or completely translated from Maltese.

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NAVIGATING RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES AT SCHOOL: FROM LEGITIMATE TO SPECIOUS RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS

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Abstract – *The mere fact of talking about pluralism, be it religious or of some other type, as a way of characterising today's society may seem like a statement of the obvious. However, pluralism is not an exclusive characteristic of our times nor is religious pluralism evident in all contemporary societies. In this paper, we will concern ourselves with re-thinking a situation in which we move from an environment of religious monopoly to one of pseudo-pluralism; in which one religion is no longer capable of setting itself up as the one and only official one; while other religions appear alongside it. We will start from an investigatory study, not by looking deeply at the results but by questioning the need for tasks like the ones we will make reference to, and the one we have prepared. Our approach of this situation is within the framework of one specific institution, that of education.*

Le bricoleur est apte à exécuter un grand nombre de tâches diversifiées; mais, à la différence de l'ingénieur, il ne subordonne pas chacune d'elles à l'obtention de matières premières et d'outils conçus et procurés à la mesure de son projet: son univers instrumental est clos, et la règle de son jeu est de toujours s'arranger avec les « moyens du bord », c'est-à-dire un ensemble à chaque instant fini d'outils et de matériaux, hétéroclites au surplus, parce que la composition de l'ensemble n'est pas en rapport avec le projet du moment, ni d'ailleurs avec aucun projet particulier, mais est le résultat contingent de toutes les occasions qui se sont présentées de renouveler ou d'enrichir le stock, ou de l'entretenir avec les résidus de constructions et de destructions antérieures. L'ensemble des moyens du bricoleur n'est donc pas définissable par un projet (ce qui supposerait d'ailleurs, comme chez l'ingénieur, l'existence d'autant d'ensembles instrumentaux que de genres de projets, au moins en théorie); il se définit seulement par son instrumentalité, autrement dit, et pour employer le langage même du bricoleur, parce que les éléments sont recueillis ou conservés en vertu du principe que « ça peut toujours servir ».

Claude Lévi-Strauss; *La Pensée Sauvage*

Introduction: from engineering to *bricolage*

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962) in *La Pensée Sauvage* contrasts the tasks of *bricolage* to those of an engineer. In the case of *bricolage*, it is a question of re-using what is left (the ‘residues’ or ‘leftovers’) of previous constructions and demolitions; in the case of engineering, however, the elements and the tools are conceived and constructed according to the specifications of each problem. Continuing this same analogy, the ‘engineering’ work of which we shall take advantage of the ‘residues’ is a report sponsored by the Religious Affairs Department of the Generalitat of Catalonia. For this report we designed a number of instruments to ascertain and illustrate the main elements that were outlined as sources of conflict for the teaching staff in Catalan educational centres as well as for the various religious representatives. We gave special attention to those situations that are commonly seen as responses to certain religious practices or concepts. This investigative work was based on an exhaustive analysis of religious diversity in different educational fields. Equal emphasis was given to that which passed as collective evidence as to that which tended to go unnoticed. The information used came from a detailed analysis of 26 interviews with staff from different Catalan education centres. The interviewees were selected according to the following criteria: type of centre (infant, primary, secondary), the status of the centre (public, private, state assisted), territorial diversity, and a significant proportional presence of students from minority religious traditions.

Consequently, and keeping with the original analogy, our paper becomes a *bricolage* job due to the fact that we have sought to make use of pre-conditioned and specific ‘residual materials’ viewed from a sociological perspective. We set out by taking a step backward to see things from a different angle so that what is usually taken for granted or normal will be questioned. So, when we asked about the existence of religious plurality in educational centres, the staff, for example, often spoke of the collective immigrant group to refer to it, or to identify those who practised a religious confession *different* from what has been for decades taken as the norm, that is to say, the Catholic faith, although it is almost never actually named. It is a question of taking a step beyond the simple documentation of what is called ‘common sense’ and thus accepting that social reality is much more complex than we dared to imagine. We think, to a certain extent, that is what sociology is all about.

In order to understand the current situation, there is a need to briefly turn to: (i) the legislative framework that regulates the curricular situation of the subject of Religion; and (ii) the fact that Catalonia is today a geographical region in which more than 13 religious traditions are represented.

Legal context or what legislators imagined in 1979

The Spanish Constitution (1978) combines the non-denominational nature of the State with certain cooperation between religious confessions. Article 16.3 states, 'No religion shall have a state character. The public authorities shall take into account the religious beliefs of Spanish society and shall consequently maintain appropriate cooperation relations with the Catholic Church and other confessions'. This specific mention of the Catholic Church is interpreted in some sectors as being the remnant of undercover confessionality. Article 27.1 says, 'Everyone has the right to education. Freedom of teaching is recognized'. This announcement of the right to education, understood to therefore mean the creation of schools, the right for parents to choose their children's education and academic freedom, did not appear in the draft and was added to the document with an amendment agreed by various groups. This article is understood to mean the end of the classic struggle that from the early 19th century (cf. The Spanish Constitution of 1812 that was promulgated by the Cádiz Cortes) had been going on between those that defended the Church's monopoly on education and those that supported public and lay schools, like in France. The Constitution thereby guaranteed ideological pluralism both in the public and the private system. But this does not mean that as regulations have developed since, there have not been criticisms both of public aid awarded to private centres or the belief that it privileges in an unbalanced way the rights of the owner of a private centre, and the belief that it restrictively interprets parental rights. Article 27.3 says, 'The public authorities guarantee the right of parents to ensure that their children receive religious and moral instruction in accordance with their own convictions'.

In terms of the 1979 Agreements between Spain and the Holy See, the state recognises the fundamental right to religious education, and the Church admits that it should coordinate its educational mission with the principles of public freedom regarding religious affairs and the rights of families and all pupils and teachers, avoiding any discrimination or situation of privilege. In fact, the agreements made the right to freedom in education a provisional right, whose organisation was entrusted to the ecclesiastic hierarchy and whose cost was financed by the State. The ecclesiastic hierarchy proposes the teachers that will provide this teaching, as well as its academic content.

What legislators imagined in 1979 was that there would still be Catholic Religion classes in schools, but they would no longer be compulsory. Absolutely no legislation was issued that considered the possibility that the alternative might have been another religion that was different to Catholicism. Later equivalent agreements were established with the Federation of Evangelical Entities, the Islamic Commission and the Israelite Community.

From the moment when the State signed, in 1992, a series of agreements with the Jewish, Islamic and Evangelical communities, we enter into what is to a certain extent a contradictory situation. It is the situation we find ourselves in today: in application of the agreements that have been signed with these communities, on the one hand it seems that the State has made it possible for there to be confessional religious teaching of all these religions at schools; but at the same time such a situation is not viable, because there are relatively few schools that have a large enough number of pupils that require it, and if there were a lot of these schools, then there would not be enough teachers with the right training or the resources to pay for it.

To summarise, the situation the Catholic Church finds itself in is one of unashamed privilege, in that the confessional teaching of the Catholic religion can be provided whenever a group of parents request it. And if this model continues we will find ourselves faced either by an unfair situation of inequality, which will become increasingly more patent, as in the future there will be many more schools at which the parents of Muslim children request the teaching of the subject of the Islamic religion, or otherwise by a situation in which pupils are segregated when it comes to Religion classes. Something that would make the subject of Religion not a unifying factor, but one that could cause segregation.

Minority religions within a majority Catholic context

The first indications of diversity go back to the early 20th century, when we find clear signs of a large number of Protestants and the opening of the first synagogue in Catalonia, founded in 1918 (Estanyol, 2002). However, the Franco dictatorship made it an obligation for minorities to become clandestine and it was not until the beginnings of the transition to democracy (1975) that many of the minorities now living in the country (such as Orthodox, Mormons, Buddhists, Hindus, etc.) started creating their own places of worship in our country.

Not until 1967, the year of the first law on religious freedom, was it possible for the religious groups that had had to hide themselves during the Franco dictatorship to start coming out in public and not have to face any apparent obstacles to joining the religious 'market'. These groups were the posit for a diversity that would increase exponentially, partly as a result of the increase in international migration.

The migratory flows originating from outside of the State started increasing from the 1980s and have especially increased over the last 16 years (1992-2008). So, if we observe the data¹ we note how from 65,533 foreign residents in 1989, there was a rise to 183,736 in 1999, and more than 860,000 foreign residents in 2007. In other words, from amounting to 1% of the total population in the late 1980s, the foreign population resident in Catalonia is now almost 12% of the total.

This population comes from a very diverse variety of nationalities, the majority being Moroccans (currently making up 20% of the foreign population resident in Catalonia). Nevertheless, it has also been noted that in recent years this migratory group has diminished in Catalonia, while there have been increased arrivals of people proceeding from other countries. This change has been referred to as the ‘tendency for the Latin Americanisation’ of the foreign population (Domingo & Gil, 2006).

Catalonia today is a geographical region in which more than 13 religious traditions are inscribed (see Table 1). Of these, as indicated by Grier (2007), we can only show that two are the result of the arrival of newcomers: Islam and Sikhism; the other traditions already existed before, although they have been affected by the incorporation of new migratory flows. With the increase in immigration there has not only been an increase in religious diversity, but also diversity within the groups that make up the religious confessions.

TABLE 1: Number of places of worship per religious tradition

Religious Tradition	Places of Worship
Brahma Kumaris	5
Buddhism	41
Adventists Churches	16
Latter-Day Saints	13
Evangelic Churches	435
Orthodox Churches	21
Baha’i Faith	14
Hinduism	25
Islam	167
Judaism	4
Sikhism	6
Taoism	6
Jehovah’s Witnesses	146
Others	5
Other Christians	12
Total	915

Source: Database of Religious Centres in Catalonia, ISOR, 2007

Two (re)constructions of hypothesis about religious pluralism at school

To understand the ‘great theatre that is the world’ is a difficult task, but such an understanding might be achieved, according to Mills (1987), by those who possess ‘sociological imagination’ with reference to the private life as well as the public life of a great number of individuals. With the idea of exercising sociological imagination, starting from the information collected in the sixty-odd interviews carried out, plus the bibliographical sources used during the initial research phase (Carbonell, 2000; Franzé, 2002; Montón, 2003; Terrén, 2004), we would like to make a note of several significant questions related to the Catalan educational sector.

Before enumerating and presenting the areas we refer to, it is important to bear in mind that each centre is a unique case, and that the singularities of educational centres are based on three interrelated factors. Firstly, despite the fact that all the centres interviewed share the same general intercultural context and religious pluralism, each one has one or more particular approach depending on the length of time that the centre has been involved with immigration or religious diversity; the type of immigration and/or religious diversity that affects the centre, and the density in which ‘the others’ have arrived at the centre, etc. Secondly, with regard to the specific situation of each centre, discussions and justifications are generated that help to legitimise the specific procedures and attitudes that the centre adopts. Finally, each centre responds in a different way to similar situations – a fact observed in each one of the areas presented – because each centre uses or has different tools on hand to manage religious and cultural pluralism.

From ‘it’s always been done like that’ to ‘things can be done in a different way’

Hypothesis 1: It is common to translate literally and apply the term ‘religious pluralism’ to most present day societies to the point of making modern society synonymous with ‘plural society’. A plural society is one where diverse systems of legitimation exist in equality of conditions, and where none may succeed in imposing themselves absolutely, thereby establishing a monopoly. A plural society is one then in which there is no totalitarian ideology, no single party and no single official religion. *Given that the Roman Catholic Church has ceased to hold its position of protected religious monopoly that has always typically represented our country, we may describe Catalonia as pluralist. But if by ‘pluralism’ we mean a formal open market embracing competing religious systems, then we have to opt for the term ‘pseudo-pluralism’.*

(i) School calendar and Catholic celebrations

The development of school activities throughout the course includes diverse celebrations and festivities that take place in the centre. Apart from the celebrations that mark the end of a specific scholastic period (end of term, beginning of a holiday period, etc.), there are others that do not relate to the school calendar *per se*, but take place every year and all members of the school community are expected to take part in them. From a generalised set of norms, each centre chooses the content and the manner of doing things. Nonetheless, the majority of these festivities have a Catholic foundation, both historically and culturally. Most probably, therefore, those students who have been socially nourished in Catholicism will experience these celebrations with greater ease and comfort and would not question them taking place in their centre. Whereas those students who, by family or cultural tradition, have no Catholic roots will simply have to adapt to the situation. So, on the one hand, we can state that it is not normal to consider the possibility of non-attendance at class for religious reasons. On the other hand, we verify that there is discrimination provoked through ignorance or lack of attention to the customs of certain student groups. A case in point could be, as occurs in many other countries, that it is not considered justifiable for a Muslim child to be absent from school during the Celebration of Sacrifice or the End of Ramadan, but at the same time, for example, the centre tolerates the lack of active participation in the Shrovetide celebrations of a Jehovah's Witness child.

(ii) Sporting activities and related scenarios

With regard to sporting activities there are basically two areas of conflict. One concerns the fact that it is obligatory to shower sponge bath in shared spaces after taking part in physical activities, especially swimming classes, and the student simply does not wish to show his or her naked body in public. The other area of conflict is related to the norm that requires participants to dress in a certain way in order to take part in games and sports. This second conflict is particularly relevant to girls from Islamic traditions. What usually happens will be that some of these students either do not reconcile themselves to wearing a short-sleeved vest as recommended by the centre, or because the student wants to wear a veil during the physical education class and the centre considers this inappropriate. In short, we wish to underline two aspects: firstly, the physical activity in itself is not the cause of the conflict, but rather aspects related to it. Secondly, the point is that the conflicts resulting from the physical activity have more to do with cultural traditions than with religious precepts.

(iii) *Dinosaurs in Eden*

One common feature of almost all the interviews carried out with the staff of public educational centres was to consider normal an understanding of the origin of human life based on the Theory of Evolution and with the resultant feeling that it needed to be explained. At the same time, a common feature of most of the religious representatives interviewed was their interest in informing the children in their centres about the different theories regarding the origin of human life. They were thinking, of course, of an explanation in class of Creationism², Intelligent Design³, and the Theory of Evolution⁴. Therefore, it should be mentioned that it appears to be an aspect that does not generate conflict *per se*, but has indeed many religious implications. (It would not be irrelevant to point out that Charles Darwin concluded his *The Origin of Species* with this famous sentence: *I see no valid reason why the opinions expressed in this book should hurt anyone's religious feelings*. Obviously, if he saw 'no valid reason', the sentence was superfluous. But no doubt he wanted to be ready for the criticisms and counteract possible accusations, as far as he could. Darwin was right when he said that the opinions expressed in his book should not hurt the feelings of anyone, however, the problem was not what he said – and Darwin knew it – but rather at what he was hinting: the biological origins of man).

(iv) *That which cannot be eaten*

In most cases, the alimentary precepts contemplated by religious traditions are not obligatory for minors. In spite of that, however, it is quite normal to find students in educational centres who follow some type of alimentary prescription related to their beliefs, for example, vegetarianism for Hindus. These prescriptions appear in the centre in very diverse ways. For example, when the students need or want to stay in the school dining-room; when they take part in activities that require them to eat away from home (school trips, camps, celebrations, etc.); when some students are not present at the centre due to fasting periods, as in the case of Ramadan for Muslim students; and when birthdays are celebrated, as in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses. Although all this is true, it is also true that questions related to alimentation have a very important cultural element. To a certain point it may be said that the process of adaptation of newly arrived students also passes through a period of adaptation to different culinary tastes and family models which are not necessarily related to religious precepts.

(v) *From compulsory to optional out-of-school activities*

When we speak of out-of-school activities we refer to those activities that take place outside the centre's physical space or outside the normal school timetable.

School trips, cultural visits or certain types of games could be examples of this. The educational centres consider these out-of-school activities to be part of the formal or implied curriculum and that participation is ‘normal’ and expected. This ‘normality’ is considered the main justification for the efforts the staff makes to convince families that all students should take part in them. Although our field work showed that many students from different cultural or religious backgrounds – and not necessarily newly-arrived ones – do not take part in these activities, it proved to be impossible to identify any religious confession that had prescriptions or regulations relating to participation in these events. The non-participation of the newly arrived student in these activities, therefore, could be for other reasons, such as, economic inequality, differences in interpretations of what is considered ‘educational’, questions of social class, or lack of trust in the staff assigned to control activities outside the centre. If the activity lasts for more than a day it means the child will be spending the night out of parental control. Thus, we confirm that the fact of non-participation in the out-of-school activities is very often due to the family model, and *not* belonging to a certain religious confession.

(vi) *Pink veil versus blue turban*

One of the most visible distinguishing characteristics that mark the increasing diversity in Catalan classrooms is attire that responds to religious precepts and recommendations. This is as much owing to its nature as an external sign as to the fact that it becomes a characteristic feature that identifies and indicates the singularity of one community with respect to others. It is precisely because it makes the differences visible and at the same time holds ideologies together, plus as well as echos the subject causes in the media, that this behavioural area is distinct from the rest. It is important to underline, firstly, that wearing the traditional veil or headscarf (*hijab*) should not be seen as fundamental obedience of a religious precept. It is one interpretation:

‘Children of Adam, We have sent you down clothing with which to conceal your private parts and to dress up in. *Yet the clothing of heedfulness is best!* That is one of God’s signs, so that they may bear it in mind.’ (Surah 7, verse 26; emphasis added)⁵

In fact, it is worth mentioning that the veil was, and in certain parts still very much is, an unmistakable feature of the Mediterranean tradition, whereas in the majority of Islamic countries women are under no obligation to wear it. (Legislation in certain countries, however, such as Iran or Saudi Arabia do require women, Islamic or not, nationals and foreigners, to cover their heads.) Secondly,

this problem does not only involve girls wanting to wear the headscarf. As one teacher informed us, ‘Some students ask why they cannot wear caps, hats and hoods’. Thirdly, and quite curiously, we do not know of a single case where Sikh boys wearing turbans were involved in such difficulties. It would seem that problems arise exclusively with adolescent girls. And lastly, those who interpret the veil as a symbol of male repression would be well-advised to refrain from dissuading the girls from wearing it. For would not those well-meaning discourses prove to be another type of repression?

Some further views on the question of women and veils

Hypothesis 2: Two results of religious ‘pseudo-pluralism’ in the Catalan context are as follows: (i) *From the viewpoint of religious convictions, the emergence of pluralism in the Catalan/Spanish society has supposed a significant increase in religious indifference; and (ii) From the viewpoint of religious culture, the religious indifference brings Catalan/Spanish society closer to religious illiteracy (especially in the younger generation).*

Now we will dedicate a deeper look at the issue by referring, firstly, to the interpretations that the educational centre staff makes of dressing differently: whether the interpretations are uniform and critical ... whether they try to convince and justify why students dress in certain ways, and/or to determine whether they are doing so for religious reasons or not.

Before entering into sociological interpretations of these matters, we consider it appropriate to report the classification of positions taken by educational centres when referring to the ‘question of the veil’. The first case to attract public attention in Spain was in San Lorenzo del Escorial (Madrid) in 2002, when a state-assisted school refused to admit Fatima, a Moroccan student, because she wore a *hijab* (Moreras, 2007). Five years later, in Catalonia, the Generalitat compelled a centre to re-admit Shaima, an eight-year old student who had been expelled in Girona for failing to comply with an internal norm that prohibited the use of the *hijab*. Along the same lines, but arriving at different conclusions, Terrén (2004) showed that for Moroccan girls in Catalan schools, the *hijab* could be considered a religious symbol, or as a sign of maturity, responsibility, and indeed, coherence. Thus it may be said that the *hijab* should not necessarily be interpreted as an imposition – either directly (by father, elder brother or mother) or indirectly (by the imam or the community) – but may be understood as an environmental imposition or a differentiating symbol of identity. These questions clearly have been amplified and made problematical through echoes and reverberations of similar situations in other European countries like France or Great Britain. Although different from

each other (Molokotos, 2000), they have helped to create a climate of alarm due to the high likelihood of a repetition of such cases.

When it came to citing cases we found a range of views from those radically opposed to the use of the veil and also, though to a lesser degree, those opposed to the use of the Sikh turban, to those in favour. Far from considering this question to be problematical, the latter felt the veil to be a differentiating characteristic which might even foster the integration of the collective since it demonstrates the singularity of certain communities with respect to others. In the following text we shall refer exclusively to the interpretations that the centre staff gave to the use of clothing with religious connotations though, however, not only religious. A classification of attitudes emerged that: (i) directly forbid it; (ii) openly criticize it as discriminatory; (iii) try to establish a dialogue to convince; or (iv) justify it as part reinforcement of identity, be it Muslim, Sikh or other. (We shall take a number of excerpts from the interviews carried out to illustrate these attitudes, knowing that an understanding of these phenomena is elusive and irksome, but unavoidable. From the sociological perspective that runs through this document we maintain that a proper understanding of the situation calls for descriptions that are non-judgemental and not over-eager to qualify as exhaustive and final.

(i) *As an obstacle to integration the veil should be forbidden*

In a number of the cases collected there is justification of prohibition of the veil on the grounds that certain ways of dressing are an obstacle to the integration of students of that religion. The arguments in support of this view and the cases that illustrate it are quite diverse. However, we could point out that a young Sikh's turban, though often considered to be an 'ostentatious' element, is curiously respected and problems seem to be avoided. On the other hand, the adolescent Muslim's veil is interpreted as 'problematical', and consequently, it is in many cases explicitly forbidden. This dissimilar attitude is paradoxical since the Sikh youth wearing a turban and the Muslim girl with a veil are of course identical actions, that is, they are covering their heads with a piece of cloth. Here are a few excerpts from our interviews.

The first Sikh to arrive came as a shock: The students didn't know whether it was a boy or a girl, but now he has integrated well with his companions and nobody takes any notice of it [the turban]. (Director, public infant and primary education centre, Olot)

It's a difficult subject [i.e., Muslim girls and the veil], because ethically everyone is free to do as they want, but when you are in a centre with 600 adolescents, it's often difficult to stick to your principles. Actually, this

could finish up as a source of conflict for the girls themselves. It could end up as a too strongly differentiating feature that does not encourage integration at all, and might produce the opposite effect. Integration is not possible when there is such an obstacle. This is the big problem. (Director, public compulsory secondary education centre and centre of high school level, Terrassa)

In fact, more than a few centres, when referring to conflicts directly or not related with religious pluralism, place all the blame on the ‘the question of the veil’. They present it as a ‘complex and confounding’ matter to deal with. For sure, questions related to Muslim children and adolescents cause dilemmas and debate among the centre staff themselves revealing the contradictory nature of the issue. Obviously, this diversity of opinion among staff can make it more than difficult to establish a clear consensus of opinion on the matter. Some members of staff consider it to be a characteristic that ‘exaggerates’ the difference with regard to other students. A closer look at the following extracts from interviews should be helpful:

Personally the question of the headscarf is a subject that annoys me, and it annoys me because at sometime or other it will provoke conflicts, won't it? (Headmistress, public secondary and higher education centre, Terrassa)

... because that person faces an integration problem. When you look up at the group [she gesticulates as if looking panoramically at students in a class] it doesn't matter whether they are white or black, does it? But when you are faced with the headscarf, you stop, you analyse and you look. (Headmistress, public secondary and higher education centre, Terrassa)

In short, most of the school staff members interviewed considered the question of the young Muslim girl's veil to be perplexing in the extreme. Practically, half of them are against its use in the classroom. The inference is that the veil is seen as a symbol of restriction, and only in a few exceptional cases is it considered a possible symbol of belonging, a reinforcement of identity, and indeed a symbol of liberation.

(ii) *Permitting the use of the veil is discriminatory against those who are not Muslims*

One situation that occurs quite frequently in centres that allow the use of the veil is, strangely enough, the question of possible contradictions or complaints about the differential treatment that this tolerance creates within the classroom. We were able to verify that in several educational centres some students, alongside

classmates wearing veils, claim the right to wear caps or hoods. We also found cases where mothers and fathers of students justified their children's claims as a re-affirmation of equal treatment for all. The most frequent remark posed by the teaching staff and picked up by some students and their parents may be expressed as follows:

Why does one student have to take off his cap, whereas, a Muslim girl can wear the veil? (Headmistress, Infant and primary state school, Canovelles)

Behind this question then lies another: Is there any justification for prohibiting everyone the use all clothing that covers the head in order to avoid differential treatment? If we accept this solution in order to treat everyone equally, are we not being discriminatory toward the religious minority?

In other cases, the use of the veil is interpreted as a patriarchal imposition, as pointed out by De Botton, Puigvert & Taleb (2004)⁶, and not as a personal choice made by a Muslim girl. From this angle the veil is seen as a symbol of male chauvinism and oppression of women:

The question is really not whether they wear the veil or not, but whether they want to wear it or not. What they see as a sign of identity is seen by us as a sign of machismo. This is a question of mental attitude that we should all try to change. That is to say, not to change their beliefs but, in this case to respect the dignity of the women in question. (Headmaster, public compulsory secondary education centre, Reus)

This interpretation is clearly relative to the age of the girl. If she is quite young, the staff of some centres (mainly in primary education) tends to think that the use of the veil is not a personal choice, but a result of family imposition. In other centres, however, this same interpretation is applied to all cases where girls wear the veil, regardless of age, and even when the girls themselves express the wish to wear it freely of their own will.

(iii) Has open discussion on the use of veil favoured deification of the dialogue?

Equally significant, although not representative, are the cases where there is an attempt to convince female students to 'decide' not to wear the veil. Sometimes this is undertaken by the course tutor, at other times through the figure of a mediator or by a person in charge of student reception duties (it should be added that this person is not usually a Muslim).

Up to now we have not had any student wearing a veil. We have been able to convince them that it would not be appropriate. Nevertheless, it is a question that presents teachers with the dilemma of deciding whether they approve of the veil or not. (Headmistress, public centre of compulsory secondary education, Terrassa)

However, there are cases, of course, in which these attempts to convince female students ‘do not work’ or only work partially from the perspective of the teaching staff. For example, we might illustrate the situation with the case of a girl who refused to follow the centre’s recommendations and so wore the veil. As a result, all the other girls who had previously opted not to wear the veil, in accordance with the centre’s criteria, decided to wear it again. On other occasions, the use of the veil has become a question of negotiation where priority is given to finding intermediate ‘solutions’. It could be rules applying to different places within the centre itself (veils may not be worn in the classroom, but may be worn in other places such as the centre’s playground). Other centres made their regulations according to age, explaining that it could only be by personal choice after a certain age. This meant that it could not be worn by the young ones in primary, but would be allowed in secondary levels. As a result of these negotiations arose the notion of ‘peaceful veils’ that Massignon (2000)⁷ writes about. This is a reference to intermediate agreements made between the educational centres and the Muslim families or students (the girl wears it everywhere except in sports class; or the girl wears it to school, but takes it off when she arrives at class). Moreover, it should be pointed out that the justification for convincing a Muslim girl not to wear the veil is, in certain cases, due to reasons of safety or hygiene.

So, in some educational centres the veil is allowed in the centre and in the classrooms, but with restrictions such as in the case of sporting activities where it is explicitly forbidden. It is argued that because of the very characteristics of the physical activity the veil should not be allowed for reasons of hygiene and that, in some cases, it could be detrimental to their health. In this respect there are centres that have opted for the use of a wide ribbon for physical education classes instead of the veil. This solution has been widely accepted as opposed to leaving the head uncovered.

Finally, in our re-interpretation of the subject there is the underlying idea that dialogue demands reciprocity: There cannot be a dialogue if one party does not wish to take part. Dialogue also calls for respect – it should not be used to nullify or neutralise the other. At times, dialogues are used to exclude, to marginalise or shame the other party; that is to say, using all ways imaginable for what Bourdieu & Passeron (1969) so accurately call *symbolic violence*.

(iv) *The veil is the vindication of an identity (or it will end up so being)*

Although this situation does not occur too frequently, it should be pointed out that some educational centres evaluate the veil as the most visible sign of a vindication of identity. Of course, these pieces of clothing are divisive and restrictive, but, at the same time, they integrate members of a community whether the origins be cultural or religious or both. The following examples illustrate M'Chichi's (2004) interpretation that '... the use of the veil is not a sign of integration rejection. In fact, it could be just the opposite. It may represent the desire of the girls to integrate by living peacefully and at the same time participating in a movement that reaffirms their community's values' (p. 30). In a wider context, Arab-Muslim women are presented in society as being reduced to male submission and oppression. From this perspective, the Muslim woman is represented as being associated with obligatory maternity and exclusive dedication to the family while remaining fully dependent on the male. She is a person to whom fate has attributed this division of labour. Perhaps for this reason, the teachers usually give their personal support, either implicitly or explicitly, to the successes achieved by Muslim girls, and especially to those who have adopted the model of 'invisibility'.

Consequently, our proposal has been to demonstrate how multifaceted the problem of the veil is and suggest that it would be better to stop talking about religious pluralism at school as problematic. In this way we recognise implicitly that the question that most interests the sociologist does not necessarily coincide with what others usually consider to be a 'problem' and that, even supposing they do coincide, the sociologist does not usually create 'solutions', but rather tries to understand how the whole system works; to understand the foundations on which it is based, and what it is subject or tied to. Nevertheless, we coincide in the interpretation that places the Islamic veil or *hijab* as one of the most evident elements of religious pluralism in educational centres. This is due to its very nature as an external sign as well as the fact that it has been converted into an identity feature that differentiates and recognises the singularity of certain communities from others.

According to what has gone before, we cannot doubt that use of the *hijab* makes certain differences visible. This in spite of the fact that there are numerous types of veils and headscarves, and choices can be made. In addition, the evidence of the social construction of an Islamic threat, in relation to the division between 'conflictive cultures' and cultures that can be integrated, becomes visible through external symbols and give rise to a stereotyped Muslim woman.

In conclusion, from a sociological perspective we must not reproduce and repeat other people's interpretations, but rather force ourselves to construct

paradoxes and this is why we consider that *the issue of women using veils reaffirms the 'modernity' of western societies.*

Concluding comment

The results of the above mentioned hypotheses have led to a singular state of affairs in the case of Catalonia/Spain: *The indifference in respect to religious convictions and to religion in general has brought about a society that is less antagonistic, less unkind to all aspects regarding religion.*

Tools for a sociological investigation of *other* religions

A century ago anthropology was dedicated to finding the ordinary aspects of what was considered exotic. In fact, we could say that this discipline and sociology were created to look in an understanding way at what could be considered unusual and strange. But the distance between what is strange and what is normal is the same as that between an observer and what is observed. In short, it is a question of accepting that the exotic (meaning strange or incomprehensible) can be in one sense just the ordinary. For the purpose of our article we are going to adapt the question of what is 'normal' and what is not.

When a man's finger points at the moon, the idiot looks at the finger
(Chinese proverb)

For a start, it is clear that we cannot simply define as normal the 'common acts of the majority' if we do not first designate them to a certain group or society and to a particular time in history. This statement of the obvious leads us to the main characteristic of a norm, of any norm, namely its relativity. That is to say, just as social concepts of abnormality are relative, so too are 'normal' social concepts. Normality, just like deviation, is a question of social definition. Moreover, between behaviour that can be socially condemned and that which is socially approved, there is a very wide zone of permissiveness. Therefore, deviation can only be present when, with regard to a particular social situation, there is a high degree of consensus about how 'things should be' and what is 'correct'. It may be because 'God decrees it', reason dictates, it is the way of 'good people', it is fashionable (or not), and so on. In short, one characteristic of the concept of deviation is that it depends on what is considered the norm.

There is another and more significant characteristic of social deviation that, remote from the sociological perspective, could appear to be contradictory; if

social deviation provokes social alarm – being seen as an attack on the socially acceptable norm – it is at the same time upholding and reaffirming the norm. There is no doubt that certain forms of conduct, behaviours, ideas, etc., at a particular moment and in a defined society, provoke unrest as they question what is considered to be ‘normal’ behaviour and the right way of doing things. Nevertheless, at the same time and paradoxically, the action that is considered to be a deviation carries within itself the implicit function of protecting the feelings of reality of members of that society, and in that sense, holds together those who follow the norm. Another way of expressing it would be: Defining what is not normal reaffirms our sense of what is normal (Cardús & Estruch, 1981, p. 29).

Who defines an action as deviation? From what point of view is this definition made? And to what end? In order to answer these questions we turn to the Theory of Labelling (Goffman, 1989). We would like to briefly examine Goffman’s inversion, which proposes that in order to understand differences, we should not look at what is different but at what is current and routine, what is obvious and is ‘naturally so’. And even when stigmas have, for Goffman, an important general function (i.e., that of achieving help for society among those that are not helped by it), and at this level are extremely resistant to change, there are also additional functions, which vary depending on the type of stigma being dealt with, and that can also function as a means of formal social control.

From the perspective we adopt, the importance and significance of the rules appear much more evident when these are transgressed and interactions are consequently seen to be threatened, than when they are observed and when adherence to the same means everything goes ahead normally. For Goffman, deviation, violation or transgression of rules is something endemic; it is the normal condition of the habitual framework of interactions. In this respect, he warns us that rules always involve what is ‘normal’ and its ‘deviations’, and even when widely accessible norms are implied, their multiplicity has the effect of disqualifying many individuals.

So, the handling of the stigma is a general feature of society, a process that arises anywhere where there are norms regarding how one should be. From this approach, stigma does not imply a set of specific individuals separated into two groups, those that are ‘different’, ‘strange’ or ‘deviant’ on the one hand, and those that are ‘normal’ on the other, as a penetrating social process composed of two roles in which each and every individual represents one or other, at least in certain contexts and some phases of life. As the Goffman stresses, ‘normal’ or ‘different’, what presents in a certain context a difference on the basis of which it is considered ‘distinct’ or ‘strange’, are not people, but perspectives.

This theory does not interpret deviation as a set of particular characteristics of groups or people, but as a process of internalisation between those who wear

the label of deviators and those who do not. From this perspective it is more important to know who are the ones who stick on the labels, and on whom they stick them, and why. Or, what amounts to the same thing, the labels we use to designate or name the ‘marginal’ groups say more about those who have the power to stick on labels than it does about those who have been labelled.

In conclusion, social divergence is interpreted as the label hung on certain people and/or their actions. The acceptability of this label will depend on the power of those labellers to define a specific situation as *abnormal* and the impetus they have to define it. In these cases, those that are presented as divergent, that is to say those *stigmatised*, will strive for a level of acceptability, both socially and psychologically, to preserve their identity. It is in this respect that our study raises many more questions than it answers: If being an immigrant cannot be considered as a hereditary characteristic, why is the label of ‘immigrant’ used so often to refer to second generations? Does immigration necessarily contain *per se* diversity or pluralism? How can diversity be treated at school if the school system aims at a homogenous solution as a means of solving what is considered problematic? Should it be the school system to provide ‘solutions’ to society’s problems? And referring exclusively now to the ‘problem of the veil’: Does the pressure over the *hijab* at school transform it into a sign of identity for Muslims girls? How can it be interpreted that some girls who wear the veil here do not use it in their families’ native villages? And finally, should the religious pluralism of immigrants be considered a problem at school? Perhaps the core problem is the uncertainty created by that pluralism.

Religious pluralism in Catalonia: yes, but...

We live in a society where social classes, ethnic groups, nations or religions unite and at the same time separate. In fact, many solutions may be applied to our dilemma that might range from a desire to eradicate any sign that would suggest that one religion is alien to another⁸, to the opposite extreme of maximum permissiveness represented by what some have termed ‘management of diversity’.

Although it may seem obvious to characterise today’s society using the term pluralism – be it religious or of another sort – pluralism is not a characteristic exclusive to our times, neither is religious pluralism evident in all contemporary societies. In this respect it is essential to point out that in Catalonia there exists, on the one hand, an increase in expressions of religiosity distinct from Roman Catholicism, and, on the other, the generalised view that religion has been losing its influence among the general public. It is not our intention to reproduce the debate on theories of secularisation or, de-secularisation as Berger (1999) pointed out with reference to Europe. We want to point out what we consider the special

features of pluralism in our times: (i) *Some social institutions are greatly strengthened, but others, as Religion, are very much weakened*; and (ii) *Different religions compete with each other in a more or less open market context, but the hegemony over the rest is still held by the Roman Catholic Church*. This will help us to present the situation of religious pluralism in Catalonia today.

Regarding the first appraisal above, it is clear that there is a gradation between strong institutions and weak ones, and as one approaches either of the extremes, the differences become ever more visible. Examples of the first would be the great structures of a modern state and its economy or its school system; while in the section of the 'weak', or, more accurately, of 'those that are weakening', we would find religion. Moving further along this line may help to argue that a plural society can be properly represented as that in which there is no ideological totalitarianism, no single party, and no exclusive model of religion. Such a representation should be accompanied by a warning: liberation from any type of totalitarianism in society does not of course necessarily imply liberation, or anything like it, for the individual.

To clarify the second assessment, we will follow Berger's idea which maintains that pluralism may be understood as co-existence among different groups in civic peace, within a single society. It may be important to point out that the term co-existence 'does not only mean abstaining from reciprocal carnage; it denotes rather a degree of social interaction' (Berger, 1994, p. 54). It is true that throughout history there have been numerous periods in which different groups have succeeded in coexisting. However, in general, this desirable state of affairs was maintained by raising barriers on social relations between these same groups (it was not normally the result of tolerance and high ideals, but rather of restriction on power). But, the pluralism we are interested in studying in this section is of another sort; the one that appears when the barriers are broken: 'The neighbours look over the fence, speak to each other, and have a reciprocal relationship' (Berger, 1994, p. 54). After this, and in an inevitable way, what Berger has called 'cognitive contamination' starts to occur, which is to say, the different life styles, values and beliefs begin to intermingle.

It should be clarified following Berger's thesis that this sort of pluralism is not exclusive to the modern world. It has appeared periodically throughout history, but what characterises modern pluralism is the fact that people belonging to radically different cultures find themselves compelled to live shoulder to shoulder with each other over long periods of time. Moreover, urbanisation has been transformed into a mental phenomena and not just a physical one, and this peculiarity is certainly exclusive to our day. Furthermore, by virtue of enormous advances in mass literacy and through modern mass communication, people come into contact with different cultures and concepts of the cosmos without necessarily abandoning

their geographical place of birth. Obviously, it is clear that the consequences of 'pluralising' factors in modern times are intensified even more by market economies and democratic systems.

We adapt these reflections to our more immediate context when we affirm that the religious situation existing in Catalonia is plural, given that the Catholic Church no longer professes to be (at least in theory) the unrivalled protected religious monopoly that was formerly the case in our country. There is no religious pluralism, however, if by that we mean the existence of a formally open and competitive market of legitimate religious confessions.

Another special feature in the Catalan case is that the *appearance* of pluralism has given rise not only to a very significant increase in religious indifference, but this mentioned indifference is turning Catalan society into one approaching religious illiteracy. For example, the euphemism of speaking of 'African children' when those interviewed referred to black Muslim children, indicates, firstly, that being an immigrant is considered hereditary when it is not and, secondly, that 'Muslim' is a label which, generally speaking, is not used by the teaching staff, but when used, it is applied pejoratively. Moreover, the adjectives employed to replace it ('Moor', 'Magrebi' or 'Arab') either reflect ignorance or show little respect for origins which can only be understood when viewed from a western standpoint. (Thus, we would confirm the argument of the Labelling Theory presented previously, that is, that labelling tells us more about the labeller than about the one who has to wear it).

Hence, according with the above, we are facing a situation in Catalonia in which we move from an environment of religious monopoly to one of pseudo-pluralism, where one religion can no longer stand up firmly as the exclusive one, that is to say, the official one, because alongside it (although not in direct competition) *other* religions exist and are practised⁹. However, this exposition should not leave us with a binary interpretation (the 'others' versus 'us') in which the *others* with their diverse religious manifestations give meaning and reality to the 'us'; and even more so when it is advisable to escape from expressions like 'natives' as opposed to 'foreigners'. The important point, however, is that what has become twisted or has been lost in 'us' remains right or valid in the 'others'. Consequently, under the shadow of the self-invented other, not only ethnic-centralism and xenophobia, but also, and in an ambivalent way, there may be present self-criticism and even *xenophilia* (i.e., a kind disposition toward the foreigner).

Notes

1. Source: Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales. Permanent immigration observatory.
2. Opinion, philosophical or religious doctrine that upholds an explanation of the origin of the world based on one or more acts of creation by a personal God, as found, for example, in the case of the Great Book-based religions.
3. A belief that states that the origin or evolution of the universe, life and man, or of creation was the result of rational actions deliberately undertaken by one or more agents.
4. Biological evolution is the continuous process of transformation of the species through changes taking place in successive generations and is seen in the changes of genetic frequencies in a population. The theory of evolution is the scientific model that describes evolutionary transformation and explains its causes.
5. *The Noble Qur'an* (in Arabic; translated with commentary by Dr Thomas B. Irving in 1992). Amana Books.
6. The *hijab* worn by Muslim women is always viewed with suspicion. It is reduced to being considered as an imposition by man, whether this is the head of state, the father, the husband or the brother. It is an imposition on women to hide or silence their voices (De Botton, Puigvert & Taleb, 2004, p. 102).
7. 'Cependant, les affaires de voile permettent le mieux de mettre en évidence l'existence d'une prise en compte négociée des expressions religieuses à l'école publique. Notre enquête nous a permis de voir qu'il existe des "voiles tranquilles", qui n'entraînent aucune crise dans les établissements, très différents des exemples médiatisés. Des accords sont mis au point, portant sur la forme du voile (plus petit, coloré, coiffe alternative sans signification religieuse: bonnet, large bandeau, turban) et les lieux de son port (interdit dans les salles de classe, voire dans la salle de documentation et à la cantine, mais autorisé dans la cours de récréation)' (Massignon, 2000, p. 358).
8. We agree with the interpretation of Lurbe & Santamaría (2007) for whom immigrants can be seen as the incarnation of the alien. They state this with a double meaning: Firstly, they give them a distant, external character of inappropriateness or social inadequacy; and then secondly, they show how the effects of this alienation are incorporated subjectively so as to be perceived as out of place or living as if out of place.
9. This pluralistic dynamic applied to religion can also be traced in language; in the Catalan case a person is 'a believer' or not, and in this context one can be 'practising' or 'non-practising'. They are expressions that, in the end, serve to underline the peculiarities of this pluralism in which the Catholic Church no longer has a monopoly, but whose influence is still felt.

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STUDENT TRANSITION TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FROM MIDDLE SECONDARY SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA AND LEBANON: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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Abstract – *This paper arises from an exploratory comparative study of student transition to vocational education (voced) from middle secondary school in Australia and Lebanon. Following an elucidation of the educational contexts in which this transfer may occur, data arising from surveys of first-year voced students who made this transition are presented and discussed. Converging themes were the link between vocational education and the acquisition of employment-related skills, and the perceived inadequacy of mainstream secondary schooling to meet these students' needs. Issues which brought about a divergence between the two groups highlight major differences between the two education systems. The paper ends with a series of recommendations for the beleaguered Lebanese voced system.*

Introduction

Despite the virtual dismissal of vocational education (voced) as an alternative to regular schooling a quarter century ago (Benavot, 1983), there has since been a resurgent reappraisal of voced alternatives at high school level, particularly with regard to employment outcomes. Channelling secondary school students into vocational streams reduces the risk of later unemployment as it enables them to enter the labour market as skilled workers (Arum & Shavit, 1995). This is an especially pertinent observation in the context of 'at risk' youths who would otherwise likely drop out of school and be facing chronic unemployment (Bishop, 1995, p. 14). Even in the educationally sophisticated western developmental context, it has been suggested that pupils be introduced to vocational subjects as early as primary school with a view to allowing them to opt for vocational tracks at secondary school level (Danish Ministry of Education, 2004).

Voced as an alternative to regular schooling is an established aspect of the Australian and Lebanese education systems, both of which allow students to make the transition from middle secondary school. The backdrop education systems are, however, strikingly different. The two countries share no colonial or educational-

developmental common history, but do face similar issues with regard to such global issues as youth unemployment and the demise of the unskilled labour market, to which they have responded in their own ways.

This paper begins with an elucidation of the Australian and Lebanese voced systems, particularly as they operate at upper secondary-equivalent level. We then present data arising from a comparative study of first-year voced students who made the transition from middle secondary school with emphases on why they chose to transfer, their aspirations and goals, and their overall perceptions of the voced experience. The research will hopefully contribute toward a strengthening of the viable but somewhat embattled Lebanese voced system (World Bank, 2002, 2003; Karam, 2006; European Training Foundation [ETF], 2007; Vlaardingerbroek & El-Masri, 2008).

The Australian and Lebanese voced systems

Australian schooling is based on the British model and features a discernible juncture between lower and upper secondary tiers, although in most states these occur within composite high schools. There is generally a formal assessment event at the conclusion of Year 10, which usually coincides with the end of compulsory schooling in Australia, and which in some states may involve external examinations. Upper secondary schooling takes up the remaining two years of the cycle. Lower secondary curricula tend to be broad, involving both core academic subjects (English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies) as well as Physical Education, Technology and Arts. Within these last two broad groupings elective subjects such as Music, Drama or Dance, Home Economics or Workshop Technology may be undertaken with the latter two areas having a vocational orientation to them.

The upper secondary school experience in Australia may be entirely school-based or may include dual enrolment at school and at a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institute or other Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Under the 'VET [Vocational Education and Training] in Schools' programme, VET courses may be delivered in schools by TAFE staff. There is also the possibility of full-time enrolment at a TAFE at the age of 15 or 16 depending on the state. By a variety of pathways including structured work placements in industry, apprenticeships and traineeships (which enable students to combine training with paid work), students are able to complete their secondary education, acquire valuable job skills and gain a nationally recognised voced qualification. VET is particularly important for young people who do not proceed on the conventional academic path of 12 years of conventional schooling followed by university (Karmel, 2007).

VET qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) include Certificate levels I and II which provide students with basic vocational skills and knowledge, while Certificates levels III and IV have largely replaced the range of traditional trade certificates and prepare people for a diverse range of jobs from plumbers to animal attendants to graphic designers. Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Vocational Graduate Diplomas and Vocational Graduate Certificates also fall within the current accreditation framework of the Australian VET sector. The successful completion of a qualification at Certificate level III is generally regarded as the equivalent of completing Year 12 studies (Karmel, 2004).

Since VET provides skills and qualifications for various types of employment in Australia, except for those jobs which require a university degree, it is a popular choice for young people about half of whom undertake VET within a year or two of leaving school; the participation rate in TAFE for the 15-19 age group is currently 31% (National Centre for Vocational Education Research [NCVER], 2007). There is moreover a significant skills shortage in Australia, particularly in the light of the current mining boom, and people with required skills can command high salaries. The government is addressing this shortage by increasing its budgetary allocation to VET as well as through increasing the quota for skilled immigrants.

There is considerable student traffic between the Australian 'academic' and 'vocational' sectors: TAFE students can articulate into some university courses, while conversely some university graduates undertake VET to obtain specific skills to improve their employability (Keating, 2006; NCVER, 2007). In this sense, VET in Australia is gradually losing its 'second rate' status in the wider community.

Careers education and guidance are common and growing features of the Australian school system. Lower secondary students are encouraged to think about their careers, set personal and career-oriented goals and understand how subject and career choices are linked. There are 'Careers Expos' which students and their parents may attend. Common from Year 10 onward are 'work experience' schemes in the course of the normal school year. Most high school students have access to trained careers counsellors while increasingly parents and significant others are encouraged to visit the school with the student for regular meetings with key advisors (counsellors and teachers) to discuss career and subject choices.

In Australia, the principal reason for offering a vocational alternative at secondary level relates to the problem of early school leaving, which in the context of the declining job prospects for unskilled youth since the 1980s has been associated with high levels of long-term unemployment and social exclusion. As many students feel ill-suited for, and disinterested in, pursuing an academic route to Year 12, policy makers have decided that the best 'social insurance' policy for such students is to provide them with a learning pathway at the post-compulsory levels that will increase young people's retention and employability.

The French-derived Lebanese school system follows a 6:3:3 cycle with an external examination filter (the *Brevet* examinations) controlling progression to the final three years. This examination hurdle coincides with the minimum school-leaving age of 15, although this statutory requirement is seldom enforced. Lower secondary (referred to as ‘Intermediate’ in Lebanon) and upper secondary schooling are institutionally distinct in the public education system.

Lower secondary schooling (Years 7-9) in the Lebanese system is rigorously academic – there are no prevocational subjects in the curriculum, while Physical Education and Art/Music classes are conducted but not formally assessed. Students enter for the *Brevet* examinations at the conclusion of Year 9 in nine subjects – Arabic, Mathematics, English or French as a second language, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, History and Civics. Candidates who fail the *Brevet* (25-35%, varying from year to year) have the options of repeating Year 9, transferring to voked, or simply dropping out of the formal education system. Academically weak students who narrowly pass the *Brevet* are also likely to be advised to transfer out as they stand little chance of succeeding in the demanding Lebanese academic *Baccalauréat* examinations at the end of Year 12. Mainstream academic *Baccalauréat* programmes involve students enrolling in a package of related courses constituting a ‘track’ (Sciences, Life Science, Humanities, or Economics and Sociology) culminating in up to 11 examinations. While some subjects are common to all tracks (e.g., Arabic and English or French as a second language), the content of these courses varies according to the track.

The mainstream Lebanese voked system is situated in Technical Institutes, voked outgrowths of high schools, and accredited private training providers. The system is a centralised one with curricula and assessment being under the auspices of the voked section of the Ministry of Education. There are three branching-off points to voked in the course of the school cycle. Some special needs students are removed from the mainstream school system after Year 5 and enrolled in the 2-year *Certificat d’Aptitude Professionnelle* (CAP). This prevocational programme is almost extinct in urban areas but continues to operate in some rural areas and graduates several hundred students annually. The next is the *Brevet Professionnel* (BP), a 2-year programme which may be entered either after Year 7 or following completion of the CAP. The BP is a low-profile qualification (circa 3000 graduates in 2007). It is strongly occupationally-oriented and offers ‘majors’ in traditional trades (e.g., electrical and motor trades), commercial practice (e.g., bookkeeping, sales) and paraprofessional fields (e.g., beauty therapy, nurse-aiding). Students who have completed the BP or Year 9 of regular schooling may transfer to a 3-year *Baccalauréat Technique* (BT) programme. The overwhelming majority of BT students did so from Year 9 of regular schooling. BT ‘majors’ include mechanical and electrical engineering, aircraft maintenance, heating and air conditioning,

electronics, dental laboratory technician, surveying, interior design, accounting and informatics, tourism and hotel management, and education (preschool, special needs and primary teaching). CAP, BP and BT programmes, although largely taken up by specific vocational training, also include courses in academic subjects, although these are much shorter and less demanding than their regular school equivalents.

The ratio of academic *Baccalauréat* to BT graduates in 2006 was circa 10:3 (from figures supplied by the Ministry of Education). Compared with 'academic' Year 12 graduates, job prospects for BT graduates are reputedly comparatively good, especially in technical fields (Vlaardingerbroek et al., 2007; Vlaardingerbroek & El-Masri, 2008). However, Lebanon has been going through tough economic times over the past few years, and unemployment is high.

Post-secondary voced qualifications are the *Technicien Supérieure* (TS) and *Licence Technique* (LT), the latter being at the level of a first degree in the French university system. It is theoretically possible for a BT graduate to enter university providing the BT 'major' links up with a degree programme (e.g., accounting or engineering); this is, however, extremely rare in practice.

There is effectively no careers education or guidance in the Lebanese education system. School students tend to present a very limited awareness of career options beyond conventional professions (Vlaardingerbroek et al., 2007; Vlaardingerbroek & El-Masri, 2008). Repetition and attrition rates during the first year of voced are high, often because of an inappropriate selection of 'major'. Despite the links with employment, prevailing attitudes toward voced in Lebanon tend to be rather negative, as they are throughout the Arab world (Al-Heeti & Brock, 1997; World Bank, 2002, 2003, 2008; Karam, 2006).

Strategic educational planning is poorly developed in Lebanon, as in the MENA region as a whole (ETF, 2007; World Bank, 2008). A contributing factor in the case of Lebanon is the marked private/public education sector dichotomy with the large former sector strongly oriented toward academic prowess, and often forging links with foreign higher education options (e.g., North American). 'Public' in Lebanon is a disparaging term and the vocational sector is mostly 'public' (Vlaardingerbroek & El-Masri, 2008).

The student surveys

An earlier study (Vlaardingerbroek & El-Masri, 2008) had generated a data pool for 340 BT1 (i.e., first-year BT) students who had completed questionnaires soliciting information regarding their school backgrounds, reasons for transferring to voced, intentions upon completing the BT, career aspirations, and overall perceptions of voced in Lebanon. The following year (bearing in mind the

different northern and southern hemisphere academic years), a questionnaire targeting the same issues was administered to a sample of first-year students at the New England Institute of TAFE in New South Wales, the most populous of the eight states and territories in Australia (see Appendix A). Criteria for inclusion were that students were of upper secondary age (16-19), had transited to TAFE from middle secondary school (i.e., had not completed Year 12), and were enrolled in programmes leading to recognised qualifications (cf. ‘short coursers’). Regular high school students who were dually enrolled at TAFE for one or two subjects were not included. The survey instrument was identical to that administered in Lebanon with the exception of the language used (English instead of Arabic) and some minor modifications for the Australian context. In both Australia and Lebanon, the questionnaire was administered by the staff of the college and the completed questionnaires were returned to the researchers for analysis.

The stringent application of the aforementioned criteria yielded an ensuing Australian sample of 47 – the exclusion of dually enrolled students in particular had a marked effect on sample size. The resultant sample was somewhat biased in favour of trade programmes (plumbing, auto engineering/motor mechanics, carpentry, welding, construction, catering – 32 students); other areas represented were business and financial studies, veterinary nursing and media. Australian lower-level voked tends to be dominated by males in technical and trade areas (Collins, Kenway & MacLeod, 2000; Creswell, Rowe & Withers, 2002) and there were only nine female students in the sample. Sixteen students were of age 16, thirteen were of age 17, nine were aged 18 and nine were aged 19.

A comparative Lebanese sample was compiled by matching each Australian student with a Lebanese counterpart with respect to gender, age, and the programme enrolled in. Where there was no direct equivalent, a similar programme was used (e.g., nursery care for veterinary nursing; heating and air conditioning maintenance for welding).

The data were processed by tallying the responses to the closed items and by transcribing and thematically analysing the free response items. Numerous exemplars of the latter are presented in the findings section.

Findings and discussion

Table 1 summarises the comparative data for the two samples. Two-thirds (66%) of the Australian students had attained the Year 10 School Certificate in five or more subjects, while about the same proportion (72%) of the Lebanese students had attained the *Brevet*. Only six students in the combined sample had undertaken an extra year at school before transferring to voked.

TABLE 1: Summary data for matched student samples (n=47)

	Australia	Lebanon
Attained School Certificate/ <i>Brevet</i>	31 (66%)	34 (72%)
Completed Year 11/Year 10	4 (9%)	2 (4%)
Reason given for transferring to voced:		
(Apprenticeship/traineeship)	19 (40%)	n.a.
Career-oriented	16 (34%)	20 (43%)
Interest in the field of study	8 (17%)	16 (34%)
Other reasons	2 (4%)	4 (9%)
No comment	2 (4%)	1 (2%)
Failed at school	0	6 (13%)
Intention upon completing current studies:		
(Apprenticeships/traineeships)	19 (40%)	n.a.
Enrol for higher qualification	14 (30%)	40 (85%)
Get a job	13 (28%)	6 (13%)
Undecided	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
Ultimate career goal:		
Secure good employment	21 (45%)	24 (51%)
Own business/self-employment	13 (28%)	19 (40%)
Other or no comment	13 (28%)	4 (9%)
Perception of voced:		
Positive	33 (70%)	3 (6%)
Ambivalent	7 (15%)	1 (2%)
Critical	3 (6%)	23 (49%)
No comment	4 (9%)	20 (43%)

Forty percent of the Australian students were on apprenticeships or traineeships and were attending TAFE as part of those programmes¹. Of the remainder, the most common reasons given for transferring to voced (34% of respondents) were explicitly career/employment-oriented. A sample of Australian comments:

I wish to pursue a career in carpentry. Can't learn it at school. (male, 16, carpentry)

So I can get a good paying job. (female, 16, business)

To gain skills and knowledge for employment. (male, 17, business)

I feel that it would be better for me to attend TAFE and work toward achieving my goal of becoming a chef instead of staying at school for two years. (female, 18, hospitality)

I want to gain skills and experience so that I can get an apprenticeship with a builder. (male, 18, construction)

Likewise, the most common theme arising in Lebanese students' response to this item (43% of respondents) was the desire to develop employable career-related skills. A sample of Lebanese comments²:

Because the career I chose is found only in voced. (male, 17, engineering)

There are more job opportunities for voced graduates than for academic graduates. (male, 16, electronics)

To enter the job market quickly and be acquainted with its demands. (female, 18, business)

It is an easier and quicker way to choose the career I want. (female, 19, informatics)

Voced is better than the academic system because it enables us to start work sooner. (male, 16, engineering)

The next most common reason given for transferring to voced (17% and 34% of Australian and Lebanese students respectively) was an interest in the field of study being undertaken. Some sample comments:

To be able to weld. (Australia, male, 16)

School didn't have the [business administration] subjects I wanted. (Australia, female, 18)

Because I am interested in surveying. (Lebanon, male, 18)

I like bookkeeping. (Lebanon, female, 17)

The only other reason drawing 10% or more of responses in either subsample was that of having failed the *Brevet*, given by 13% of Lebanese students.

Thirty percent of Australian students indicated their intention to continue with a higher programme upon completing their current studies, one of them at university. The proportion of Lebanese students declaring higher studies to be their intention was an overwhelming 85%. Eight entered ‘university’ for this item, although it must be borne in mind that a number of Lebanese private ‘universities’ would better be referred to as further education institutions. A few students in both samples indicated that they expected to continue to study on a part-time basis while engaged in part-time work at the same time. Conversely, only 13% of Lebanese students (cf. 28% of Australian students – or 68% of all Australian students if it is assumed that all those on apprenticeships and traineeships enter the work force upon completion of their studies) signalled their desire to enter the labour force upon completion of their current studies. Wages are low in Lebanon (the minimum wage was increased by about 50% to US\$ 500/month in May 2008, but unemployment is high and many people work for less) and there is a strong pecuniary incentive for young Lebanese to attain a tertiary qualification.

About the same proportion of students (45% of Australian and 51% of Lebanese) noted as their ultimate career goal to have a satisfying employment. Most Australian students simply wrote the name of their vocation for this item, while Lebanese students tended to write comments such as ‘Work in my field’ or ‘Get a job with a good salary’. Twenty-eight percent of Australian students and 40% of Lebanese students noted as their ultimate career goal the desire to start a small business or become self-employed through comments such as ‘Open my own business’. It is pertinent to note that much self-employment of tradesmen and other workers with technical skills in Lebanon is in the informal sector.

Australian students appeared to be generally very satisfied with their vocation experience, 70% offering positive comments under the last item. A sample of their comments:

I love coming to TAFE. They have helped me achieve so much. (female, 19, prevocational)

Fun, enjoyable, freedom of speech, freedom overall. A step leading to independent [sic]. (female, 17, business)

Great, good learning environment. (male, 18, motor mechanics)

Treated like an adult! Taught professionally! (male, 17, hospitality)

Cool and good. (male, 16, plumbing)

Good. Gain handy skills and knowledge. The facilities here are great. (male, 16, welding)

Sentiments such as ‘Not too bad’ and ‘It’s all right’ accounted for another 15% of student perceptions. Where comments were critical, they alluded to specific problems students were experiencing with courses.

Almost half the Lebanese students did not respond to this item. Of those who did, the most common sentiment was one of a need to improve the lot of voced in Lebanon with respect to the quality of education, prevailing attitudes toward voced, and job opportunities. Some sample comments:

Take better care of voced and improve social attitudes toward it. (female, 16, nursery)

Voced should have the same status as academic education. (male, 17, engineering)

[There is a need to] support voced in order to improve production in Lebanon. (male, 17, electrical)

We need better technology, more labs, more teaching materials. (female, 18, bookkeeping)

There are too many graduates [in some fields]. Salaries are low. (male, 17, motor mechanics)

A theme which emerged in numerous comments made under the various questionnaire items was that of the inadequacy of conventional schooling to meet the needs and aspirations of the young people who took part in this study. In all, 41 students (mostly Lebanese) made explicit or implicit comparisons between the mainstream school and voced systems. In all but one case where an Australian carpentry student wrote that TAFE was ‘Just like school’, these comments were unfavourable to the ordinary school system. Some of these comments have already been cited in this paper. Other sample comments:

I couldn’t see the point in doing Yr 11 and 12 doing subjects I didn’t need when I could get what I want here doing one subject I like doing. (Australia, female, 16, hospitality)

School did not give me enough benefits, to [sic] much flex time was a waste of time! I’m not attending university. (Australia, male, 17, hospitality)

You learn a lot more at TAFE than school. (Australia, male, 17, carpentry)

I am finding it a lot easier to understand than school, and the teachers and students are nicer. (Australia, female, 17, prevocational)

I want to practise my specialisation and not just study academic disciplines. (Lebanon, female, 18, nursery care)

I tried to continue in secondary school but failed. I want to develop my talent in the drawing field. (Lebanon, male, 16, technical drawing)

I failed Grade 10 and hate memorisation. I like electricity and electronics and practical work. (Lebanon, male, 17, electrical)

My inclination is toward voced [as opposed to academic schooling]. Voked offers me the life/job to which I aspire. (Lebanon, male, 18, motor mechanics)

I failed at school and did not want to repeat [Grade 9]. Voked is easier. (Lebanon, male, 17, avionics)

Conclusion and recommendations

Despite the markedly different education systems at both school and vocational/technical levels forming the backdrops from which the two national samples were drawn, there are clear points of convergence between them. Although all Australian students and almost three-quarters of the Lebanese students could have continued on at school had they been intent on doing so, they chose to transfer to voced rather than attempting to complete conventional upper secondary schooling. In both instances, the overarching consideration was to acquire career-related training – assuming expressions of interest in specific voced fields to signal eventual employment destinations, career-related reasons accounted for 96% and 77% respectively of the reasons given by Australian and Lebanese students for having transferred to voced. This observation should come as no surprise, for the relationship between vocational education and direct employment is a strong one, especially for people from lower socioeconomic classes (Arum & Shavit, 1995; Bishop, 1995; Shaban, Abu-Ghaida, & Al-Naimat, 2001). The higher Australian figure is largely accounted for by the observation that 40% of students were already ‘in work’ in the form of apprenticeship and traineeship schemes. A related point of convergence is the strong association between voced enrolment at this level and the desire to eventually become self-employed or to start a small business. But perhaps the most notable similarity arising from a comparison of the two groups is the dissatisfaction with conventional schooling which transpired through numerous comments. These are clearly not ‘lazy’ or otherwise reticent students, judging by the high levels of interest in pursuing

qualifications and securing employment. Rather, they are industrious and, in many cases, ambitious young people who are simply not cut out for academic schooling, as many boys in particular appear not to be (Trent & Slade, 2001; Lingard et al., 2002).

The Australian system appears to cater for such young people much better than does the Lebanese. The presence of prevocational subjects at school, effective careers guidance, and a respected voked alternative to upper secondary schooling, including the possibility of dual school/TAFE enrolment, not to mention apprenticeship and traineeship schemes, combine to ensure a smooth and purposeful transition to voked and associated career pathways from middle secondary school for those students whose aptitudes and aspirations lie in that direction. It is little wonder, therefore, that Australian first-year TAFE students are generally very happy about the voked experience. These various factors are, however, glaringly absent from the Lebanese system, and this is amply reflected in the views that many BT1 students express.

Reform of the Lebanese voked system has long been mooted (World Bank, 2003, 2008; Karam, 2006; ETF, 2007) but public attitudes and political indifference continue to impede progress. A multifaceted approach to bringing voked in Lebanon into the educational mainstream at secondary school level would require the following:

- The introduction of assessable prevocational subjects at lower/middle secondary level. In the Lebanese curricular context this would include commercial studies as well as subjects such as workshop technology and cuisine. In order to make room for such inclusions in the timetable, some academic subjects could be merged, such as Biology, Chemistry and Physics (into Integrated Science) while History, Geography and Civics could likewise be combined.
- The introduction of a professional careers counselling service for school students and their parents.
- Probably most importantly, the raising of the profile of voked as a viable upper secondary pathway in the public eye. The amalgamation of the currently separate ministerial sub-entities overseeing academic and vocational education at school level would be a step in this direction. Greater coordination between upper secondary schools and the BT sections of Technical Institutes in the form of dual enrolment systems whereby the 'academic' subjects would be taught only by schools would help to bring down the barriers between the

subsectors as well as increasing the efficiency of the system. Conversely, the Technical Institutes could offer some voced courses to dually enrolled school students. Ideally, the rigid ‘track’ system operating at the mainstream upper secondary level could be replaced by, or supplemented with, a more flexible curricular structure whereby students can choose from a variety of stand-alone subjects of both the ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ type toward the attainment of the *Baccalauréat* much as Australian students can to attain the Higher School Certificate (HSC).

Clearly, there is a pressing need for much more research into Lebanese voced at the secondary-equivalent level. The principal limitation of the survey component of this study was the small sample size, and a more in-depth study involving larger numbers and possibly adopting a mixed methods approach would be most informative. Perhaps most importantly, tracer studies need to be carried out to ascertain how effective the education/employment interface operates for Lebanese voced graduates.

Notes

1. A German-modelled apprenticeship/voced system does operate in Lebanon under the auspices of a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)/Lebanese government joint development project. Students enrolled in this programme may be dually enrolled for Lebanese and German vocational qualifications. As this scheme has not been mainstreamed into the Lebanese voced system, it was not included in the study from which the Lebanese data pool was generated.
2. Excerpts from the Lebanese data appear translated from Arabic into English.

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APPENDIX A

The Questionnaire (Australian Version)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FIRST-YEAR TAFE STUDENTS

Question 1:

(a) What is your gender? M F

(b) What is your age? _____ years and _____ months

Question 2:

(a) Did you attain your Grade 10 School Certificate? YES NO

Subjects passed: _____

(b) Did you attend Grade 11 or 12 of regular schooling? What was the outcome? _____

Question 3:

(a) Why are you enrolled at TAFE rather than attending regular schooling?

(b) What qualification are you currently enrolled for? (Please give the full name of the qualification) _____

How long does this take to complete full-time? _____ years

(c) What do you intend to do after finishing this qualification?
(Tick one option and answer the question that follows it)

(i) Advance to a higher qualification. Why?

(ii) Get a job _____

(iii) Work and continue studying part-time _____

What would you enrol in? How long will it take you to finish?

(d) What are your ultimate career aspirations?

Question 4:

What is your overall opinion of TAFE education?



VALUES IN TEACHING AND TEACHING VALUES: A REVIEW OF THEORY AND RESEARCH, INCLUDING THE CASE OF GREECE

EVANGELIA FRYDAKI

Abstract – *This paper brings together an overview of ideas about values in teaching from an historical, theoretical, as well as from a research-based perspective. More specifically, it aims to review: (i) the ways in which education attributed meaning to values and their teaching in the second half of the 20th century; (ii) the relationship between values and education with respect to three educational movements of different underlying theoretical traditions; and (iii) recent research focusing on how teachers diffuse their own values during the teaching process, thus influencing the development of their students' own values. The study also intends to shed light on the terms of this pedagogical discussion of the relevant issues pertaining to Greek education, and to contribute to the diffusion and enrichment of relevant thinking. Suggestions for the education of prospective teachers are also included.*

Introduction

The discourse on educational values, and specifically in the teaching process, is not new. In each era there seems to be a renewed dialogue on this issue raising specific questions. Our late modern era expanded the relevant discussion on this matter, posing questions such as: What kind of meanings did education attribute to the concept of values in order to be treated in teaching? Have these meanings been modified? Should, nowadays, teachers infuse values in their instructional settings, or should they abstain from such a task? In addition, what kind of values should teachers infuse: the values of a shared value system or values of their own preference and belief system? Furthermore, is there a common ground on which a shared value system may rest? Is such a system desirable (Butroyd, 1997)? The different and sometimes confusing answers to these questions engender from time to time a new need for a review, particularly seeing that emerging situations create new needs, both social and educational; the current society of late modernity needs members which are able to identify and choose their values with increasing autonomy, in an increasingly complex social environment. To survive, society itself needs high degrees of tolerance, acceptance of difference (be it cultural, religious, or value-related) and, simultaneously, some sort of social commitment

from its members. As eloquently put by Bruner (1990), in a democratic culture, broadness of mind is the 'willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one's own values' (p. 30). Consequently, even though education's traditional socialisation role seems to be limited in an open pluralistic society, it is the position of this author that teachers ought to support the efforts of youth to develop their own values in a process which takes place in different socio-cultural contexts, and under different circumstances. In such a complex context, teachers as well as prospective teachers need updated information deriving from theoretical frameworks and research findings, which could facilitate them to broaden their concepts, expand their perspectives, strengthen their awareness, in order to gain a thoughtful sensitivity to the concrete situations of practice.

Under this perspective, the present paper aims to review: (i) the ways in which education attributed meaning to values and treated them during teaching in the second half of the 20th century, including the case of Greece; (ii) the relationship between values and education with respect to three educational movements of different underlying theoretical traditions; and (iii) recent research focusing on how teachers integrate their values in the teaching process, thus influencing the development of their students' own values. In this manner, this paper aims at shedding light on the terms of this pedagogical discourse, and to contribute to the review, diffusion, and enrichment of relevant thinking, both for education researchers and for active practitioners. Lastly, it seeks to suggest new perspectives for the education of future teachers.

Meanings attributed to values and instructional treatments

In the 1950s and 1960s, western societies considered as values the socially and culturally acceptable models and behavioural norms. Not only were society's goals and needs considered more important than the individuals', but they could also determine the latter's respective goals and needs (Parsons, 1951; Whiting, 1961). Consequently, the teaching of values was the process by which students came to identify, accept, and internalise social values in their own value system. Apart from this perspective of the individual as a servant of social needs, a contrary position viewed the individual as a free participant in society, contributing only to the degree society ensured the individual's own self-fulfilment. According to the latter view, deriving from Rousseau's tradition, school curriculum should teach values like freedom to learn, human dignity, creativity, justice, self-exploration and personal development. The work of Maslow (1970, 1979) and Rogers (1983), belonging to humanistic psychology,

provided a useful starting point in the above orientation. Maslow used the popular term *self-actualisation* to describe a desire that could lead a person to realising his/her capabilities, and to reach personal growth, which takes place once lower order needs have been met. People that have reached *self-actualisation* are spontaneous, open-minded, and they accept themselves and others. Rogers (1961), like Maslow, was interested in describing the healthy person. His term is *fully-functioning*, which includes qualities such as openness to experience, trusting, responsibility for one's choices, and creativity. In the comparative overview of a survey of 26 countries concerning values education in Europe, several values emanating from the work of Maslow and Rogers were often mentioned (see Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe [CIDREE], 1994, p. 41).

Another aspect of values education in the early 1980s concerned the specific ways in which the institution of education in general, and the process of teaching in particular, taught values. Values were perceived as absolute, universal, eternal entities that could be neither negotiated nor challenged. The only conceivable problem concerned the process and framework of their legitimisation; for some, values were considered theological (pre-modern discourse), for others, they were viewed as natural orders, and for others still, related to varied theories or ideologies. The above debate had little impact on the mission of teaching, which adhered to one task: to 'transmit' values via the appropriate subject matters, which in most cases included the humanities, without any discussion, critical reflection, or questioning (Huitt, 2004). During the same period, Massialas (1975) suggested a new approach to values in teaching in the framework of humanistic education. His perspective concerned 'human learning through social inquiry', which included a flexible pattern of questioning through which teachers could encourage students to clarify, support and justify with evidence their ideas, values, judgments and emotions that were relevant to the problem under examination.

During the following years, education was dominated by technical and instrumental thinking, for a period culminating in the 1980s. Emphasis in education was given to goal oriented curriculum, skill development, and on effective teaching; values were cast aside, perhaps because it was believed that they belong to a precarious non-scientific realm, marked by normative, moralistic, or ideological perspectives. By the 1990s, a renewed interest in the ways in which values could be re-integrated in the educational process appeared again in the academic and research world. This interest is presently revamped given the social innovations and changes, the weakening of cohesive traditional value systems, the expansion of the cultural continuum to which individuals are exposed today, and the plethora of choices available in the context of a globalised society (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003).

As far as the Greek educational system is concerned, it has not set clearly its priorities regarding values in teaching due to various and often conflicting factors. At first, the turbulent history of the Greek nation state, the need for creating, or recreating, its national identity, the spiritual and moral values of Christianity, as expressed by the Greek Orthodox Church, are some of the reasons contributing to an overemphasis on nation-centred values (Flouris, 1997). Besides the fact that up to 1976 the cultivation of nation-centred and religious values constituted a crucial educational target (CIDREE, 1994). Up until the previous decade, Greek curricula were still dominated by traditional and nation-centred values, and teachers were authorised to fill the students' minds with predetermined sets of values (Massialas & Flouris, 1994; Flouris, 1995). This was the period when the teaching of any literary or Ancient Greek text should emphatically promote the text's 'eternal meanings'; Greek history was a pantheon of heroes, martyrs, and glorious achievements; finally, in Philosophy and Ancient Greek Literature, the conflict between Socrates and the sophists was only taught in order to compare the former's morality to the latter's immorality. On the other hand, as some scholars support, Greece is in a transitional stage and at a technocratic period, with a 20-year lag (Kassotakis, 2004), which brings up more the issue of effectiveness of teaching rather than its value laden aspects. In parallel, many scholars call for the ideal of an informed, active, socially responsible and probably universal civil citizen, which is also promoted by the European educational policy. This citizen is to be equipped with skills, such as literacy, technological literacy and foreign languages as well as with attitudes and values, such as the respect of human dignity and human rights, the tolerance for those from a different cultural background, etc. (Massialas & Flouris, 1994; Flouris, 1997; Koutselini, 1997; Xochellis, 2001). Hence, the Greek educational system has not demonstrated a systematic discourse either on common acceptable values to be taught in schools, which would not necessarily be the desirable orientation, or on the moral groundwork of an open, pluralistic society.

The issue of teaching values in Greece has been expanded at present, as it is supported by the Pedagogical Institute (PI), the main investigatory and advisory institute concerning educational matters, which was established in 1964 and falls directly under the aegis of the Minister of Education. The PI claims that students ought to adhere to 'a strong sense of responsibility towards the nation and the universal and multicultural perspectives of present and future' (PI, 2000, p. 162). The value-related recommendations of the current curriculum for the teaching of Literature and History cover a wide range, including both the goals of traditional humanities and postmodern objectives (respect of difference, multiple perspectives) (Frydaki & Mamoura, 2007). Furthermore, in Social Studies, objectives refer to a growth of students' awareness of the equality of persons, of

the interdependence of people in society, of the rights of family and education (Papoulia-Tzelepi, 1997). As fortunate as these may seem, they do not enjoy sufficient support by schoolbooks, teaching materials and guidelines, nor do they illuminate what actually takes place under real school conditions (Flouris, 1995). Likewise, a considerable difference has been already pointed out between the values that a school proclaims and those which in fact underpin teachers' practice (Halstead, 1996). In this slightly confused context, as already mentioned, teachers seem to need extra help to realise their own value-commitments in order to support students to develop their own values. With regard to this need, a theoretical framework, including some different perspectives on the teaching of values, is discussed in the following section of this paper. This framework is not intended to uphold some perspective against the others. Instead, it is intended to initiate a dialogue which could generate fruitful and reflective thinking about the positions and contradictions of all perspectives so that teachers can be assisted in locating themselves within value contexts and gain awareness of the essential role that their own options play in the process of value communication.

Three perspectives on teaching values

Among the variety of trends on values in education, three distinct movements stand out: Value Education, Moral Development, and Critical Pedagogy (Veugeliers, 2000).

The concept of Value Education or Character Education refers to the teaching of social, political, religious, cultural, aesthetic, or other types of values, predetermined as necessary for shaping the students' character (Linkona, 1993, 1997; Noddings, 1995; Wynne, 1997). Many researchers concur on the great difficulties in reaching a consensus on universal, non-relative values that transcend the needs of specific societies and constitute a multicultural world society. Thomas (1992) points out that not everyone defines the moral domain in the same way, and he substantiates the complexity of such a definition using the following three patterns that highlight three controversial dimensions of values: (i) universal versus relative moral values; (ii) permanent versus changeable values; and (iii) absolute versus conditional values (pp. 69-74). This complexity is perhaps one of the reasons why Value Education is linked with basic values, considered as non-controversial by their advocates, which ground character formation and peaceful co-existence, that is, trust, participation, care, fairness, respect and collective responsibility (Cohen, 1995). Some describe these values to be as *meta-moral* (Berkowitz, 1997), since they represent an individual's attribute supporting his/her moral functioning. Value Education programmes aim to

reinforce the teaching of such values in the educational process, not only through the curriculum (that is via direct teaching of specific subject matters), but also through the school's communication conditions and moral environment. Relevant criticism focuses on the following points: Firstly, no research so far has demonstrated direct correlations between taught values and their impact on students' behaviour. Secondly, notions such as *fairness*, *participation* and *trust* can be very controversial issues, in the sense that all these concepts may have different connotations in different contexts, that is, in an abstract humanistic framework or in a socio-political context. However, the advocates of this Value Perspective avoid highlighting this point and they present these concepts in their most abstract and normative sense. Thus, given the normative character of this approach, there seems to be a risk of becoming oppressively moralising, instead of involving students actively in meaning making, decision-making, and reflecting on their lives (Lockwood, 1997; Wardekker, 2004).

The movement of Moral Development differs from the first one in two crucial determinants: the types of values and the way they are developed. Regarding value types, this movement revolves not around personal, social, or aesthetic values, but around 'basic moral concepts' (Kohlberg, 1969, 1984), which, in Kant's tradition, morally establish any individual or collective action. They include honour, justice, equality, human dignity, responsibility and any value that directly promotes others' rights and well-being (Prencipe & Helwing, 2002). In terms of value development, this is based on the development of cognitive processes, as defined by Piaget's cognitive development stages. Cognitive development can also support the development of moral reasoning, the skill of thinking and reflecting on issues related to moral values. The ideal strategy recommended (and implemented) for developing such skills may be via small group discussion. This encourages students to take a stand on value dilemmas, as presented in real or imaginary situations and/or stories. The stories should clearly represent a main character's 'real conflict', contain a certain number of moral issues, and facilitate differentiated student reactions. The teacher should firmly guide the discussion toward the development of moral reasoning. In practice, this means encouraging students to express their views freely, urging them not only to share their views with others, but also to discuss the reasoning behind their views and choices; student discourse should be structured and based on arguments, without necessarily leading to a 'correct' or acceptable answer (Gailbraith & Jones, 1975). Relevant criticism focuses on the movement's tendency to overestimate cognitive processes and underestimate the emotional and social factors involved in the development of values (Lovat & Schofield, 1998; Wardekker, 2004). Gilligan (1977, 1982), based on her studies of women, suggested that females' moral decisions relate more to relational and affective factors rather than to abstract

principles, as Kohlberg has proposed. Hence, Gilligan (1993) developed a 'care version' of moral reasoning arguing that moral dilemmas are to be placed in a relational and emotional context.

The movement of Critical Pedagogy has had an impact on Greek educational discourse during the recent years. According to the principles of Critical Pedagogy, every form of social reproduction or reform is the result of political and cultural struggle. In education, this struggle is reflected in the curriculum, the teachers' goals, and their teaching practices (Giroux & McLaren, 1989). That is, it is reflected not only in the transfer of knowledge, but also in the development of values. Willing or not, teachers cannot retain a neutral stance toward this political and cultural struggle, nor can they remain neutral in terms of value transfer. For instance, by teaching their students on their role as citizens in a democratic society, teachers influence shifts either toward social reproduction or toward social reform. Thus, Critical Pedagogy theorists argue that teachers' involvement with values ought to correspond to their socio-political or socio-cultural practice, and the way they do it contributes to social justice (McLaren, 1994). Critical Pedagogy theorists are more explicit regarding the values they deem important: critical reinforcement, the right to difference, self-determination in political terms, and social justice. Such an orientation by the teacher could help students listen to the voices of the oppressed; understand the degree to which they themselves may be the victims of inequality, and develop a sense of justice and empowerment, which is central to becoming moral persons. However, according to relevant criticism, the rhetoric of Critical Pedagogy is hardly helpful for thinking through and planning classroom practices to support the political agenda (Ellsworth, 1989). Moreover, there is a lack of skills required by teachers to critically reflect on their values, integrating them more consciously in their socio-political or socio-cultural practices, so that their students become co-players in the pedagogical game of signification (Veugelers, 2000). Therefore, teachers seem to be allowed to deal with the topics promoted by Critical Pedagogy in any way they themselves see fit.

According to Wardekker (2004, p. 189), the first two movements seem to ignore that the individuals' (i.e., teachers' and students') values are seldom developed as product of an individual rationality, but rather tend to conform to existing rules and moral qualities of the social contexts in which individuals live. One could infer that Critical Pedagogy seems also to emphasise the individual rationality, in case it remains restricted to its political rhetoric. Moreover, teachers who implement the principles of Critical Pedagogy by confining themselves to the transmission of its rhetoric, run the risk of being considered as inculcators. On the other hand, Critical Pedagogy could highlight the relatedness between the micro and the macro, the personal and the political. That is, it could help students

develop a sense of critical and emancipatory empowerment on the understanding that it tackles topics which emerge from students' own lives as well as that teachers foster a genuine reflective dialogue about the existing societal values, possibly internalised by the students. Such reflective dialogue should relate the abstract value concepts to real students' experiences and practices in order for the students to understand that they themselves have choices that would permit them to change their own lives and social life as well (Ball, 2000).

Although the dialogue between the three perspectives on the teaching of values can generate a fruitful and reflective relevant thinking, another thing remains to be considered for the topic to be better illuminated: How do teachers deal with values within actual classrooms nowadays? What kind of values do they infuse and in what way? Thus, the following section attempts to classify some currently available research findings on how teachers themselves infuse their own values in their classrooms, including the case of Greece.

Indirect diffusion of values in teaching

Despite long-standing consensus regarding the inevitable embedding of values in teaching (Dewey, 1964), there has been little research on how teachers incorporate their values in the design and practice of their teachings, their behaviour toward students, and their teaching discourse. However, significant evidence, mainly from small-scale qualitative research projects, indicates that teachers' underlying values are crucial regarding how they transform curriculum into practice in the classroom. According to Veugelers (2000), teachers cannot avoid influencing students, even if they strive to strictly confine themselves to the learning processes. For learning is a process of meaning making, of attributing a particular personal meaning to the subject matter taught and to the world in general. Inevitably, every such process involves elements of the teachers' and students' own identity, and therefore explicit or implicit value orientations.

In reviewing the literature on teaching values from 1990 to 2008, some studies were identified regarding the way teachers' values permeate the teaching process. Reference databases (ERIC and HEAL-LINK) were searched for potentially relevant studies published since 1990. Two groups of descriptors have been used (including synonymous and related terms). The first group of descriptors was: values, moral, ethical. These descriptors were combined with terms such as: teaching, teachers, teachers' beliefs, teachers' dispositions, subject matter, objectives, strategies, and pedagogy. The abstracts of the papers were analysed to support whether they actually highlight the dimension of hidden diffusion of teachers' personal values into instructional settings. The combination of the two

groups of descriptors guided the author of this paper to include in this review a total of 24 studies, from which the following patterns emerged: (i) values infused through teachers' beliefs on what should be taught; (ii) subject-linked values, that is, values derived from teachers' conceptions of the subject matter; (iii) values emerging from teachers' strategies, whenever they teach value-laden issues; and (iv) values resulting from teachers' character and dispositions.

The researches under examination could not be subjected to quantitative meta-analysis because of their theoretical and methodological differentiations, nor to detailed description as the latter could weaken the focus of the entire study. Hence, their results are presented in a narrative descriptive way, which is considered appropriate to highlight the emerging patterns.

Values infused through teachers' beliefs on what should be taught

This pattern of values is the most easily distinguishable and recognisable. Teachers in these studies are bound to make choices regarding the emphasis placed on each aspect of the subject matter taught, as it is impossible to cover the full syllabus, not only because of its quantity, but also due to time restrictions. Such choices are implemented through their teaching goals and objectives, which, despite official guidelines for teaching each unit, often differ, even between teachers within the same school (Gudmundsdottir, 1990). Following the guidelines of the above research study, another study conducted in Greece (Frydaki & Mamoura, 2008) identified that two High School teachers taught the same novel (Stratis Tsirkas' *Ariagne*, the second volume of the trilogy *Drifting Cities*), but driven by their own personal value orientations created two different texts and instructional settings. The first one, devoted her instructional time to a socio-political perspective, and taught the text as historical evidence on the conditions of the expulsion of Greeks from Egypt. The second teacher, addressed classroom issues to her own humanitarian worldview and placed a lot more emphasis on 'the inherent tenderness and sublimeness included in the female soul' (Frydaki & Mamoura, 2008, p. 1494).

Another way in which teachers infuse their values through their beliefs on what should be taught is as follows: Despite the supposed priority of cognitive goals, some teachers have been observed to dedicate up to 50% of their instructional time to the development of social skills (Wentzel, 1991), others on democratic attitudes (Blumenfeld et al., 1979), while others on the discussion of the students' personal problems and the class's collective problems (Prawat, 1980). More recent research (Ennis, Ross & Chen, 1992; Ennis, 1994; Husu & Tirri, 2007) shows an increasing trend of academic goals giving way to social and community goals, including social responsibility, cooperation, responding to

the needs of others, respect, and participation. In support of these orientations and rationales, teachers reported the following: (i) student population becomes increasingly heterogeneous; in order to deal with academic content, students first need to obtain a relative social cohesion as members of the school community; (ii) the content of all subject matters should be connected to students' personal, social, and professional life; and (iii) students should be motivated to involve themselves more actively in the class, seeing that interesting, pleasant and meaningful education yields greater opportunities for enhanced student performance (Ennis, 1994, pp. 116-118).

In short, teachers who participated in the above research studies infuse implicitly their social, political, religious, cultural, aesthetic, or other types of values, even if these values are not predetermined as necessary for shaping the students' character. That is, they put into practice various tacit Value Education 'programmes' consistent with their beliefs. In these 'programmes', the shift from the discipline to the responsibility, participation, respect of difference and cooperation is habitually discernible. The question is whether these personal 'programmes' consider values as something to be transmitted once more or as something to be communicated involving students actively in meaning making, that is, taking into account their personal experience, commitments, worldviews and understanding of themselves.

Subject-linked values

This pattern concerns values derived from teachers' conceptions of the subject matter taught. Shulman (1986) introduced the notion of pedagogical content knowledge speaking 'of the particular form of content knowledge that embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability [...], of the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others' (p. 9). According to Gudmundsdottir (1990), teachers transfer their values to their students neither consciously nor intentionally, but rather through their pedagogical content knowledge, that is, through the way they conceive their subject matter and plan their teaching. Indeed, academic disciplines, from which many school subjects are derived, differ in their histories, bodies of knowledge, epistemologies, sets of agreed procedures, and the degree of consensus existing within the field (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995). Hence, they create a number of subject subcultures, and possibly different subcultures within the field of the same subject.

Relevant research (Gudmundsdottir, 1990; Slater, 1995; Husbands, 1996; Bills & Husbands, 2004) reveals that teachers initially claim to aim beyond the scope of their subject matter, that is, promoting critical thinking, fostering responsible citizens, etc. However, these broader aims often derive from the teachers' own

beliefs on the nature and purpose of the subject matter taught. This occurs especially in the case of secondary school teachers who teach broad, less well-defined subjects (such as Literature, History or Social Studies), as these subjects provide them with a greater flexibility and curricular autonomy than more defined school subjects (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995, p. 6). For example, a Literature teacher who believes that Literature is important for students' self-discovery and growth may organise the class quite differently from another one who teaches a text's established interpretation, to promote the students' 'general education' or 'culture' (Muchmore, 2001; Shaw, Barry & Mahlios, 2008). The two above teachers transfer different values to their students in different ways, that is, through the types of questions asked, the way the class is managed, the points of focus, or the promotion of a single or multiple responses. In the first case, students learn the value of mental and emotional awareness toward literature, while in the second case, students learn the value of conformism, limiting themselves to verbal expressions and 'having something to say'. Other studies revealed that analogous situations seem to apply to other subject matters too. A teacher may think that history teaches us the best human achievements of the past; another one may hold that it teaches us to evaluate facts objectively, so as to reach informed conclusions; a third one may believe that history teaches us to understand the perspectives of others and develop tolerance (Akinoglu, 2004; Bills & Husbands, 2004; Frydaki & Mamoura, 2008).

It should be noted that not all possible teacher attitudes and values appear with the same frequency. Research findings have indicated that teacher beliefs on the nature and purpose of the subject matter are strongly influenced by the dominant values in the subject matter's tradition, which 'embody a notion of the perfection of the intellect' (Pring, 1996, p. 104; also Frydaki & Mamoura, 2007). Teachers' priority is to familiarise the students with the subject matter's inherent values, considered critical for their ability to think, reflect and evaluate 'the best that has been thought and said' (Pring, 1996, p. 106). This attitude is often shaped by and within a strong academic tradition of university education, usually reinforced by equally academic curricula and content- and examination-oriented bureaucratic educational systems.

In sum, teachers seem to transfer values to their students through their pedagogical content knowledge and, especially, through the way they conceive and perceive a specific subject matter. The question is: Do teachers hold to a sufficient extent conceptual frameworks and tools that enable them to broaden and critically reflect on their beliefs as a result of the nature and purpose of their subject? Or do they remain confined either to the subject matter tradition or to the prevailing subject's subculture, since these are mainly reinforced by curricula and the school culture as well?

The subjects that inherently contain value-laden issues are mainly the humanistic ones. The ways in which teachers handle these types of issues could reveal their probable orientations toward some of the three aforementioned educational movements. Recent research findings in Greece and elsewhere indicate that Literature and History teachers handle very cautiously, even tentatively, the value-laden issues, especially those that raise reactions from students, opting to maintain their neutrality. Although they reject the predetermined transfer of values and encourage students to exchange their views, teachers avoid expressing their own views, unless their relationship with the students enjoys stability and trust. Even when students express provocative views, teachers refrain from expressing their own, preferring to react more indirectly (e.g., expanding the scope of student discussion, or urging students to exchange arguments) (Frydaki & Mamoura, 2008). This situation seems to endorse other findings on the dilemma between having personal values or educational ideals and publicly expressing them in class (Boxall, 1995; Chater, 2005).

Moreover, teachers in Greece rarely bring into question, while teaching literature, the text's central values, preferring to focus on eternal humanistic values, as expressed in the great texts of literary tradition, including freedom, honour, justice, dignity, and self-sacrifice. For example, the K. Kavafis' poem *Antony's Ending* embodies the value of dignity before a defeat, a frustration, or a dead end. Given the Greek curriculum guidelines and established teaching practices, an observer would note that most Greek literature teachers avoid discussing the text's central value issue and refrain from offering alternative positions, that is, fighting all the way to the end. On the contrary, the same teachers seem to strongly defend similar values while teaching other literary texts, in which this value issue is dominant (i.e., *The Free Besieged* by D. Solomos). In brief, a great majority of Greek teachers seem to avoid either presenting different views or creating moral dilemmas through which students may be encouraged to take a stand and defend their positions.

On the other hand, research conducted by the University of Amsterdam (Veugelers, 2000) revealed that teachers handle value-laden issues by a greater variety of strategies, only the first of which coincides with the pre-mentioned Greek tendency: (i) they try to avoid expressing their personal views, remaining devoted to the 'official' interpretation; (ii) they explicitly clarify which values they find important, that is, they express and defend their position; (iii) they underline the possible views one may hold on the issue under study, avoiding to take sides; and (iv) they present different views, but also express the values they find

important. Several participants indicated that they themselves follow a linear sequence of teaching approaches i, iii, and iv; at first they are neutral, then they present a range of alternative views, while at the end they present their own view for discussion in class. On the other hand, students stated their preference for teachers who present different values and then present their own views, without emphasising them excessively. In other words, students want to know what their teachers believe, but they would not wish to be indoctrinated (Veugelers, 2000, pp. 43-44). These students seem to share Kelly's (1986) notion of 'committed impartiality' according to which the teacher attempts to provide all sides of a topic but does share his/her own views with the class.

In sum, the data at hand revealed that several Greek teachers tend to avoid indoctrinating students; but, contrary to their colleagues from the Netherlands, they tend equally to avoid involving themselves too obviously in the process of value communication either by expressing their own values or by bringing into question the text's central value. The question is whether this stance of value neutrality shows an emerging value orientation that is more critical and emancipatory, or an emerging political correctness with conservative overtones.

Values resulting from the teachers' dispositions

Richardson (1993) and Fenstermacher (1999) were among the scholars that distinguished between the three aspects of teachers' behaviour in class: method, style, and manner. Method consists of teachers' intentional actions, aiming at influencing students. Style refers to behaviour reflecting teachers' personality. Manner includes all the characteristics and dispositions that reveal teachers' moral and intellectual character. Under the same vein, Fallona (2000), for the purposes of her research, further analysed teaching manner in relation to how teachers express in class each of the 'Aristotelian moral virtues of bravery, friendliness, wit, mildness, magnificence, magnanimity, honor, generosity, temperance, truthfulness, and justice' (p. 684). Despite the difficulties inherent in observing the distinctions among the above manners, this researcher found it quite important for teachers to realise and study their own teaching manners, so as to enjoy a more fruitful interaction with their students (Fallona, 2000, p. 692).

More recently, Johnson & Reiman (2007) utilise the tradition established by Dewey and the movement of Moral Development, which holds that every action is based on an underlying moral judgment. They define dispositions 'as teacher professional judgment and professional action in the moral/ethical domain' (p. 677), that is, when confronted with situations that can be solved in more than one ways. Their qualitative research grouped teachers' values, moral judgments and actions in three distinct patterns, based on how rules are shaped in class. In

the first pattern, when confronted with a dilemma, teachers endorse the rules to maintain order, the one 'right' solution to every problem, and the need for students' obedience. In practice, they attribute themselves the role of controlling classroom relationships, and are easily disturbed by the lack of student discipline; they create and modify rules of their own, while their teaching strategies overlook students' perspectives or internal motives, paying no attention to the students' emotional needs. In the second pattern, teachers' judgments are based on rules, which guarantee protection and stability. Although teachers allow no exceptions when applying the rules, they do make an allowance for student perspectives and motives. In practice, they establish explicit and uniform rules, and follow them themselves. Teachers of the third pattern express their judgments and design their activities taking into consideration students' rights, the variety of learning styles, and the situational context; they view rules as relative and changeable, existing only to protect certain rights. In practice, they encourage students to participate in the shaping of rules and in decision-making, they choose individualised and interactive teaching strategies, they are tolerant of provocative student behaviour and committed to facilitating their students on all levels. With reference to the last two patterns, it can be claimed that the quality of teacher-student interaction would be greatly enhanced if teachers were to realise and critically analyse how they shape rules (Johnson & Reiman, 2007, p. 681).

Indeed, little is known about how teachers' dispositions influence how students learn to interact and develop their own values. Nevertheless, in both types of research, the need for the teachers to critically reflect on their manners and choices is crucial for a meaningful interaction with their students. Such meaningful interaction can represent a supportive environment of openness and trust for the students to develop their values with increasing autonomy in an increasingly complex social context.

Conclusions and discussion

The meanings that education attributes to the concept of values have undoubtedly changed. Academic discourse and curricular tendencies seem to have shifted from the value of integration into the environment to the value of the autonomy of the individual, from the adherence to the past to critical thinking, from the discipline to social rules to individual responsibility, respect and cooperation.

Even though educational policies reconsider their orientations regarding values in education, the relevant movements (Value Education, Moral Development and Critical Pedagogy) do not represent integrating approaches to

the field. They seem to lack either openness (Value Education) or trust (Moral Development and Critical Pedagogy), which are needed for the development of students' values. On the other hand, the research findings, as revealed in the present study, bring to light some common issues, and draw some major conclusions: First of all, teachers do infuse their values in classrooms through a variety of ways, even if they avoid involving themselves actively in the process of values communication by expressing their own values or bringing into question some values to be taught. Secondly, they seldom have an awareness of what they do in the processes of values communication, since they are deficient in realising and critically reflecting on how they shape their own commitments, beliefs, and values. Finally, although teachers avoid indoctrination, they seem not to adequately take into consideration the need for students to develop their own values and their personal identity with increasing autonomy based on a continuing dialogue with their own experiences as well as the existing societal values. However, some teachers do involve their students in the process of value communication, allowing them to express their own experiences, emotional needs and commitments through an open, supportive and reflective interaction. In this case, the process of value communication seems to become essential and meaningful, reflecting somewhat the Habermasian notion of 'communicative ethics'.

The above point is considered crucial by the author of the present paper. Values are to be developed through an active interaction of students and teachers in meaning making. The relational context promoted by the movement of Value Education, the argument-based moral reasoning promoted by the movement of Moral Development and the emancipatory demands of Critical Pedagogy are useful but not sufficient by themselves to the task of such a development. Although it is rarely articulated as such, a basic issue emerging from most types of research is the demand for an interweaving of openness and trust. Students' value development could be based on the open expression of their own value-commitments, but furthermore it should be ensured by the teachers' self-awareness, 'committed impartiality' (Kelly, 1986), responsibility and continuous reflection on their own practical decision, so that a mutual trust could be achieved. On the other hand, teachers seem to lack the education needed for such a demand.

Bearing in mind the educational needs as set by the current socio-cultural context, the various perspectives on values in education and the research findings, I concur that it is of utmost importance to include 'teaching values' in teacher education. Of course, this does not refer to the normative transfer of any set of values. So far, there is no consensus and a common ground for a shared value system, regardless of how desirable such a system would be. Including 'teaching

values' in teacher education simply means that teachers should realise that teaching extends beyond the transmission of academic knowledge, and certainly beyond knowing how students learn. To paraphrase Dewey (1964), relying entirely, or even partly, on knowledge and the use of 'methods' is a fatal mistake for the best interests of education.

Whether teachers realise it or not, teaching is a value-laden process; consequently, they ought to learn how to identify and critically reflect on their own values, relating them to the real social contexts in which they live. This is needed specifically in Greece, where, as it has already been noted, the teaching of values 'is fragmentary and it more or less depends on the sensitivity of the educator ...' (CIDREE, 1994, p. 118). They also need to become aware of their own behaviours and choices, incorporating values in the teaching process. Prospective teachers should therefore be encouraged to discuss their experiences and practices, and be urged to identify practical examples of inconsistencies between their stated values and their behaviour or choices (Husu & Tirri, 2007). Moreover, prospective teachers as well as teacher educators need theoretical frameworks and tools, so that they would be able to deal with the issue of values in teaching. These theoretical frameworks and tools can also support them to develop the necessary skills to ensure balance between two orientations, which although seemingly contradictory are actually complementary: defending their own values honestly, without disguising them as absolute truths, and stimulating students to develop and defend their own personal values within a supportive environment of openness, flexibility and trust. If education is a game of continuous meaning making, teachers have to be simultaneously co-players and referees. Both roles call for high degrees of self-awareness, responsibility and professionalism.

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POLICY PROCESS AND EDUCATION REFORM IN THE ARAB WORLD

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Abstract – *This paper explores and summarises the status, policies, challenges and reforms of the education systems in the Arab World. There is much that the systems have in common, especially in relation to cultural background, language and general strategies – this despite the striking differences that exist in the region in terms of the stage of development as reflected in such indicators as literacy rates, participation rates, gender issues, funding, and so on. The steady shift of the status of, and approach to education from being predominantly a social service reflecting mainly individual needs and human rights, and thus is mostly supply driven, to a balanced socioeconomic activity that incorporates the necessary aspects of a social service and economic investment has been a common phenomenon in Arab countries. One of the major developments in this respect is the growing privatisation and globalisation of educational services, especially in higher education. Modern technologies helped to support such developments and enhance a commodity approach with all its pros and cons which are clear mainly in distance and open education that utilises e-learning methodologies and which is spreading quickly, whether in open universities or as blended education in ordinary ones. The governance and structural aspects of the education systems in the Arab World have been characterised by some apparent weaknesses that are reflected in the ongoing efforts to improve their relevance to developmental needs and labour market requirements, enhance the decentralisation aspects and school empowerment, and develop the technical and vocational education systems. The relatively high population growth rate, coupled with the phenomenon of mass education and the lack of resources in the majority of Arab countries, have reflected negatively on the qualitative aspects of educational efforts and services, and have resulted, in many cases, in poor efficiency. This is clear for example in the modest achievements in the field of scientific research. In the educational field, the Arab World does not lack regional and sub-regional organisations and set-ups, although the effectiveness of such organisations has so far been subject to criticism despite many distinct efforts and achievements.*

Introduction

For the Arab region, many social, cultural and economic characteristics render a regional approach to many educational issues a feasible effort, despite the great differences among the individual countries in the degree of progress and stage of development, as well as the priorities and challenges. The feasibility of a regional

approach is further justified by a common language as well as similar educational frameworks and strategies that developed with time through different bilateral, sub-regional and regional interactions. Regional organisations, in particular, played an important role in this respect. Such organisations include the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO), the Arab Labour Organisation (ALO), the Union of Arab Universities (UAU), the Arab Union for Technician Education (AUTE), the Arab Education Office for the Gulf countries, and others.

The characteristics of the labour force and the labour market in the Arab World have much in common; and since such characteristics are expected to be taken into consideration and addressed by the national education systems, a regional approach to the relevant issues and frameworks is justified and needed. To start with, a relatively high labour mobility exists within the Arab region, reflecting the fact that some countries have surpluses while others have deficits in their human resources. The organisation and rationalisation of such mobility would justify common efforts in such human resources development issues as occupational classification systems, occupational standards, certification and national qualification frameworks. On the other hand, the mobility of Arab labour outside the Arab region requires that the above mentioned regional approach to educational issues should take into consideration the need for compatibility with the relevant international standards and criteria, such as the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) and the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO). Furthermore, the trend of globalisation with the accompanying Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) imposes additional pressures and incentives for a regional and international approach to many human resources development, including educational, issues.

The education system

In what follows, a brief description and general assessment of the various stages and components of the education system in the Arab World will be undertaken, taking into consideration the great variations among countries.

Literacy

Literacy rates for the adult population, 15 years-of-age and above, vary considerably among Arab countries. For the period 1995-2004, such rates varied between 51% and 93% (UNESCO, 2007, p. 252). It is worthwhile noting that, as will be shown later, the gender gap in the field of literacy exceeds considerably

that in the field of participation in primary education. This is an indicator that the efforts exerted are directed mainly toward the preventive measures to dry up the sources of illiteracy through the universalisation of compulsory basic education, more than toward the remedial or curative measures through the introduction of programmes for the eradication of illiteracy. On the other hand, the data on literacy rates conceal, as expected, the variations that might be considerable among geographical areas such as the urban and rural areas, or among the various population groups, such as the poor and the rich. In general, such and similar data conceal the poor distribution of the knowledge wealth which is as bad as the poor distribution of 'material wealth' in society. Thus, to help deal with the literacy issue in the Arab countries, the efforts that are exerted for the universalisation of compulsory education need to be strengthened, taking care of its quality and efficiency dimensions, and should be accompanied by the availability of effective eradication of illiteracy services, including easily accessible locations, qualified teachers, appropriate learning material, supporting legislative tools, and the necessary funding resources. The need exists also for enhancing the social demand for literacy services in general, and of females in particular, through the relevant social work and information and media efforts, to raise the awareness and convictions of the target population.

Pre-school education

The importance of pre-school education is attributed not only to its mission that aims at the development of the child's personality as is the case with other educational stages, but also to the nature of the concerned age group (i.e., 3-6 years), since most aspects of the individual's personality develop and their features define before joining school, which usually takes place at the age of six. This is reflected in the growing popular support for the concept of Early Childhood Development (ECD), as emphasised by educationists, psychologists and sociologists. In the Arab countries, pre-school education varies between two and three years before the age of six. Gross enrolment rates are very low in most Arab countries, indicating that such education has not been a priority in the relevant national educational plans. Such rates varied in 2005 between 1% and 74%, and were nearly the same for males and females (UNESCO, 2007, pp. 268-269). The gender gap in pre-school education is less than in basic education and in literacy. In many Arab countries, this gap is almost disappearing. This can be explained by the fact that the population groups that benefit from pre-school education tend to be of relatively high income, and thus can afford the cost involved, especially that such education is non-compulsory and is provided to a great extent by private for-profit institutions.

Basic compulsory education

Admission age to basic compulsory education in all Arab countries is six years. Nevertheless, the duration of such education varies considerably from one country to another: between five and ten years. Legislation regarding free basic compulsory education exists in all countries. Net enrolment rates in primary education vary in Arab countries between 33% and 97%, with small differences between males and females (UNESCO, 2007, pp. 276-277, 284-285, 292-293, 300-301). The transfer from basic to secondary education is open and accessible to all students without any educational filters in some countries, but with such filters in the form of national examinations in others.

It is worthwhile noting that the concept of compulsory education is in practice applied to mean 'compulsory to the government' to provide the relevant services, and not 'compulsory to the learner and parents' to benefit from such services. This is clear from the fact that education laws do not usually refer to any legal action against parents whose children drop out from school before completing basic education.

Academic secondary education

As in the case of primary and basic education, great differences exist among Arab countries regarding the rate of transfer from primary to secondary education which in 2004 varied between 45.9% and 99.9%, and regarding the net enrolment rates in secondary education which in 2005 varied between as low as 15% and as high as 95%, with small differences between females and males to the benefit of males (UNESCO, 2007, pp. 308-309).

To join higher education institutions, including universities and intermediate university institutions, graduates of academic secondary education, which is offered free in public schools, are required to pass national examinations. Such examinations are usually planned and implemented by the concerned national Ministry of Education (MOE), thus casting some doubts about their credibility and objectivity. There is need therefore to disengage such national examinations from the MOEs and to entrust them to autonomous agencies that are looked after by councils with representatives from universities, intermediate university institutions, MOEs, teachers and the private sector. Such examinations should basically have the objective of admission to higher education, and should thus assess the different components of the learners' abilities, rather than just the cognitive component.

Vocational education

In most Arab countries, vocational education is considered part of upper secondary education, lasting between two and three years, and offered within a

formal school system. The economics and funding of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems is a major issue that reflects on the quantitative and qualitative aspects of such systems. In most Arab countries, TVET institutions are state owned and funded, with little participation of private sector enterprises which are usually the main beneficiaries of the outputs of TVET programmes. Thus, there is urgent need for the diversification of funding sources, and securing a participatory approach to the financing of TVET whereby employers, civil society, the government, and sometimes learners are the concerned contributors. This should be supported by efforts to deal with the existing weaknesses in the efficiency and effectiveness of TVET programmes through such measures as the choice of cost-effective systems of TVET, raising the utilisation factor of facilities, reducing the drop-out rates, and enhancing relevance to developmental needs and labour market requirements. Other weaknesses that require special attention include the need for effective systems of monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance. Needless to say, the standards and criteria for such a system would benefit from a regional approach, taking into consideration the need for compatibility with international standards. It has to be admitted that public-private partnership in TVET is weak across the region, despite genuine efforts and some breakthroughs in a few Arab countries. Such partnership can be promoted through several measures, including the development of cooperative or formal apprenticeship systems, the enhancement of the role of the private sector and social partners in policy making, planning as well as testing and certification. Furthermore, skill standards, specialised curricula and performance tests need to be derived from actual job requirements and work competences.

Higher education

As is the case in the other stages of education, considerable variations exist among Arab countries regarding the rates of enrolment in higher education. This is clear from the gross enrolment rates that varied in 2005 between 2% and 56%, with females achieving slightly better rates than males. The proportion of females varied between 25% and 68%.

The weakness of scientific research in Arab countries, as judged by the relevant criteria and indicators, is admitted by the concerned stakeholders. One of the relevant limitations in this respect is the relatively low 'freedom ceiling' that is available for researchers when dealing with some social and cultural issues, such as gender issues. Such limitations are sometimes influenced, directly or indirectly, by the official authorities, or they could be the result of potential social pressures that generate a state of 'self censorship' or self imposed limitations by

the researchers themselves. On the other hand, many scientific theories, initiatives and breakthroughs in Arab research efforts have external, usually Western, sources. This is not restricted to the fields of natural and applied sciences, but is to be found in the humanities and social sciences as well. The relevance to Arab societies, socially and culturally, would thus be incomplete.

Assessment of educational progress

The performance of the education system in the Arab World can be assessed through the adoption of three kinds of criteria. These are:

- (i) *Quantitative criteria* that are concerned mostly with the quantitative indicators in education, such as the extent of universalisation of services and facilities for the various educational cycles at the regional and national levels. In other words, the quantitative criteria are those criteria that measure the extent of attaining equal opportunities for all to access the available educational services and facilities, and to progress in the educational ladder so that the social and economic status and background of the learner does not stand in the way of such accessibility or progress. It is worthwhile noting that the progress achieved in the Arab countries according to this type of criteria has been substantial, taking into consideration the great variations that exist among the individual countries. One of the indicators about such progress is the average number of years spent at school in formal education including primary, secondary and higher education. According to this indicator, the average years of schooling in 2005 exceeded 12 years in half of the Arab countries, and exceeded 10 years in the majority of countries (UNESCO, 2007, p. 277).
- (ii) *Qualitative criteria* that deal with such issues as the quality of teachers, curricula, teaching methodologies, facilities, evaluation tools, guidance and counselling services, special services for individuals of special needs, and the nature of out-of-class activities. They also include the extent to which life-long educational services and facilities are available, especially within non-formal education. The progress achieved in the Arab countries according to the qualitative criteria has been modest. Weaknesses can be identified in most of the above mentioned issues, such as in-service training of teachers, proactive learning, school environment, etc.
- (iii) *Governance criteria* that concern the different organisational frameworks and administrative structures. They include legislative provisions, financial and funding set-ups, stakeholders' roles, etc. As in the case of the qualitative

criteria, the progress achieved regarding the governance criteria has also been modest. The major weaknesses in most countries include a high degree of centralisation, lack of school empowerment, weak interaction with local communities, and the absence of teachers' professional associations and unions.

Education legislation and social practices

In general, equity and equal opportunities characterise Arab constitutions, laws and by-laws in the field of education. This applies in general to all fields and stages of education, including its formal and non-formal systems. Nevertheless, the availability of the appropriate educational legislation constitutes in practice one side of the coin. The other side is the extent to which such legislation is applied and translated into action and practices. Many challenges and obstacles are encountered in this respect. To start with, the lack of resources or will on the part of governments stand in the way of availing the facilities and services as well as human resources that are necessary to activate the relevant legislations, such as the full provision of basic compulsory education. Social practices and convictions, especially in some remote or rural areas, sometimes reflect negatively on the extent to which educational services are utilised, such as in the case of women's education. On the other hand, the commitment to the implementation of some aspects of legislative provisions is restricted in practice to the public and governmental sector, while such commitment is not fully practised by the private and non-governmental sector, especially if such legislative provisions are vague. Thus, in general, it can be stated that a clear schism exists in Arab societies between the cultural roots and the prevailing societal culture. The cultural roots, a great part of which emanates from Islamic teachings, encourage life-long education for all, 'from the cradle to the grave'. National legislative tools, whether old or new, reflect this concept to a great extent. This is also reflected by the positive response to the international treaties, conventions and declarations which rarely face any reservations from Arab countries, due to their concurrence with the relevant cultural roots. This is not usually the case with other international treaties and conventions that deal with fields other than education where, not infrequently, reservations are made concerning the provisions of some articles.

When exploring social and cultural characteristics in Arab societies and their influence on educational issues, one can easily conclude that it is societal culture, rather than the cultural roots, that influence the type of outputs and impact. Societal culture is a mixture of original cultural roots on the one hand, and those inherited cultural features that accumulated through centuries of backwardness on the other. In this sense, societal culture is of special relevance when exploring those limitations

in Arab societies that stand in the way of the full utilisation of educational progress in national socioeconomic developments. One of those limitations is the limited utilisation of women's education in their participation in such developments.

Education and society

Education systems affect and are affected by many social, cultural, political and economic considerations and factors. The nature of interaction between education and these factors is what actually differentiates one educational system from the other. The following is a brief description of the general issues that are of relevance, and the relevant status of such issues in the Arab World.

Democracy and education

Democracy of education is to some extent a reflection of democracy in society at large. The education system can be assessed as democratic if:

- (i) It provides equal opportunities to all social groups in society: males, females, the underprivileged, the talented, the slow learners, the handicapped, the refugees, etc.
- (ii) It is organised, governed and administered by the utilisation of democratic principles and processes that highlight the participatory approach to learning and that empowers the school as the basic unit and active cell in the system.
- (iii) It makes available the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to the learner related to democratic systems, models, principles and practices through the relevant educational material as well as in-class and out-of class activities.

The substantial progress in the Arab World vis-à-vis the first criterion (i) above is not matched by the status of the two other criteria, (ii) and (iii). This is clear from the fact that the organisation, governance, administration and content of the system lack the democratic approaches, principles and processes.

Unemployment and education

With rates exceeding 14%, unemployment has been for sometime a chronic problem in the Arab World. Although it is basically an economic issue resulting from the fact that the new job opportunities created by the economic growth are

less than the number of new entrants to the labour market, the education system can contribute to improve or worsen the situation. The fact that more than 20% of the labour force in the Arab countries consists of expatriate labour from outside the Arab Region who are employed mostly at the basic occupational levels as skilled and limited-skills (semi-skilled) workers, coupled with high unemployment among university graduates leads to the conclusion that the education system should emphasise more the preparation of human resources at the post-basic education level in vocational areas. Furthermore, the relatively high population growth that amounts to 2.4% on one hand, and the slow economic growth that has been accompanied by the availability of limited job opportunities on the other, led to high unemployment rates in most Arab countries that affected women more than men, due to various practical and social factors.

Poverty and education

It is estimated that about 15% of the Arab population live under the poverty line. Some studies show that poverty in the Arab countries is due to low income as well as to unemployment. Most of the efforts undertaken to alleviate poverty are of the curative type through such measures as direct financial help, provision of loans to establish productive projects, and the provision of training services in employable skills. Preventive type efforts for the alleviation of poverty such as tax structures, redistribution of wealth systems, legislative tools, and fighting corruption are not as effective as needed. The education system can play a role in the efforts to alleviate poverty by promoting its relevance to developmental needs and labour market requirements, and by expanding its non-formal and adult education services that enhance the employability of the poor and empower them locally and regionally.

Gender and education

The progress achieved by many Arab countries in the field of women's education has been accompanied by only a modest progress in their political, economic and social status. It seems that a time lag exists between the outputs of educational efforts and the expected impact on other socioeconomic fields, including gender issues. As one relevant example, the great progress achieved in the enrolment ratios in the various stages of education has so far not been matched by a similar progress in their participation in the labour market. Females constitute only 20% of the labour force in the Arab World, and unemployment among females is more than 50% higher than among males. This is despite the fact that,

as in the case of educational legislation, labour laws provide for equal job opportunities for males and females, the basic right to work for all, equal wages for similar jobs, etc. Nevertheless the situation in the case of employment is different from that of education, as the legal provisions for equality are applied to a lesser extent in the labour field, especially in the private sector. The issue should thus be explored regarding how the education system can contribute to the promotion of female employment by enhancing its relevance to developmental needs and labour market requirements, and emphasising the relevant attitudinal aspects.

Any future look on women's education and its impact on their role in public life and contribution in the labour market would lead to potentially positive indicators within two dimensions. The first concerns the dwindling effect of the 'time lag' referred to above and hence the gradual growth of the influence of developments in women's education on their role in public life and their contribution to the national economies, especially with the support of other forces of change that yield pressures in the same direction. The second dimension concerns the influence of new technologies and the accompanying ICTs that are gradually leading to new modes of work that are expected to open new horizons for employment in general, and for the employment of women in particular, especially if the education system supports such developments. The new modes of work include 'distance or virtual work' where the individual can work without physically joining a work site.

On the other hand, it can be stated that what has been achieved regarding the realisation of equal opportunities and similar rates of participation for males and females in education guaranteed the quantitative dimension only of gender equity in education. The need would still exist to realise the qualitative dimension that concerns curriculum content, the image of women in school textbooks, and in general the approach to gender issues in the education system. This qualitative dimension includes also the role played by women in the teaching profession, especially in the planning, policy making, governance and organisation of the education system at the central, local and institutional levels. Such role is known to be far from adequate in most Arab countries. This is not the case regarding female participation in the teaching staff where, with the exception of higher education, the proportion of females in the teaching staff exceeds that of males. The limitations that stand in the way of women's participation in education in general in Arab countries increase by one extra limitation when considering vocational education that aims at the preparation of skilled workers at the basic occupational levels. Such limitations, as already referred to, have quantitative and qualitative dimensions, and are of both social and economic nature. In this respect, the available information (UNESCO,

2007) shows that even in countries that have realised full gender equality regarding the enrolment rates in the various educational stages, such quantitative equality conceals noticeable differences in enrolment rates in vocational education to the benefit of males, due to various practical considerations and social prejudices. Such limitations can be explained by the fact that admission to vocational education takes place usually after completing basic compulsory education, in most cases at the age of 15 or before, and lasts for two or three years. Females at this age are usually considered by their families as too young to join the formal labour market.

On the other hand, most vocational education programmes in the Arab countries prepare learners for jobs and professions that fit the traditional labour market, and rarely deal with the needs of home industries or self employment or micro and small business that can be attractive to females. Furthermore, vocational education necessitates in many cases direct contact with enterprises for on-the-job training, especially in apprenticeship schemes. Typical Arab families in many parts of the Arab World are too conservative to have their daughters involved in such schemes at an early age. The status of females as compared to males in higher education is better than in secondary and primary education, despite the great variations among Arab countries. The enrolment ratio of females in such education exceeds the ratio for males in more than two-thirds of the Arab countries. On the other hand, female enrolment is particularly high in such fields as the humanities, arts, medical sciences, and health care, and is equivalent to that of males in the natural sciences, but considerably less in engineering, industry, construction and agriculture (UNESCO, 2007, pp. 324-325). To summarise, the following are some indicators about women's education in the Arab World (UNESCO, 2007):

- Average years of schooling for females are equal to or more than those for males in most Arab countries.
- Literacy rates vary between 35% and 91% for males, compared to 60% and 95% for females.
- Enrolment rates of females in pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education are comparable to such rates for males.
- Females in the majority of Arab countries constitute more than 90% of the teaching staff in pre-school education and more than 50% of the teaching staff in primary education, where co-education is common.
- The proportion of females in the teaching staff is nearly equal to that of males in secondary education where co-education is not common.
- The proportion of females in the teaching staff of higher education is less than 35% in most Arab countries.

Role of the non-government sector

When considering the involvement of the non-government sector in education, two groups of stakeholders can be identified. These are the private sector which is usually a for-profit sector, and the NGO sector including philanthropic and voluntary organisations and civil society at large. Both these groups are active partners in Arab education systems, and their role in such systems is characterised by a number of strengths and weaknesses. To start with, the relatively high level of participation of the non-government sector in education on the implementation level is not matched by a similar level of participation on the policy making and planning levels, despite the representation of this sector in the membership of the relevant boards and councils. Furthermore, the non-government sector has a weak role in the evaluation and assessment of the outputs of the Arab education systems. The need to strengthen such a role is particularly obvious in the case of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems, some of which are implemented jointly by both government and non-government partners. It is worthwhile noting here that the role of the non-government sector on the implementation side of TVET is almost exclusively limited to the cooperative (dual or apprenticeship) system which can be found on a limited scale in some Arab countries, and is minimal in the school system which prevails in most countries. On the other hand, voluntary NGOs are usually active in the provision of subsidised or free educational services for special groups such as the handicapped and the underprivileged, especially at the pre-school and pre-university levels, although a modest proportion of such groups are provided with the necessary educational and training services.

The size of private education in particular, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, varies considerably in Arab countries, although a great expansion in such education took place during the past two decades. On the other hand, private education addresses all educational stages, but it tends to expand more in the non-compulsory stages of education, such as pre-school and higher education. Learners and their families usually bear the full cost of services in educational institutions that are run by the private sector. This applies to private universities, intermediate university institutions and schools. The relatively high cost involved and the lack of effective systems of student funds render such institutions accessible mainly to the economically able to the detriment of those who cannot afford to pay for the services, thus reflecting negatively on the democracy of education. Student funding schemes that are available for this purpose are provided by some NGOs and through some trust funds that are established by individuals, but the size and impact of such efforts are limited.

In general, therefore, it can be stated that private education, especially where public education is not comprehensive enough in its coverage or where its quality is relatively low, enhances elitism in the education system and accentuates social strata. This is because the high costs involved stand in the way of low income groups benefitting from the relevant services. In this context, the summary of the *Arab Human Development Report* states that 'in the existing institutional context, it would be difficult for the profit driven incentives to provide a basis for fulfilling the educational needs of vulnerable groups ... Such vulnerability worsens if the government does not assume its role in securing education for these groups' (Gharaibah, 2002, p. 29).

Due to the high cost of the services of private education institutions, especially the for-profit ones, their social mission stops usually short of providing services in activities or programmes that are not economically feasible, such as serving remote areas or groups of special needs. Needless to say, all these restrictions apply in particular in the case of traditional educational institutions that require face-to-face presence of teacher and learner inside the education institution. It does not necessarily apply in the case of open learning institutions, especially those that utilise modern information and communication technologies or e-learning. Fortunately, such open modes of education are gaining momentum and are helping to reduce, at least partially, the elitist dimension of traditional systems.

The economics of education

It is well acknowledged now by education systems, including Arab ones, that education is as much an investment in human capital as it is a social service and a human right. Nevertheless, and despite this recognition, the economics of education as a concept that comprises such components and criteria as internal efficiency, rate of return, sources of funding, etc. is not fully recognised or comprehensively taken into consideration in the Arab World. On average, Arab countries spend about 6% of their Gross National Product (GNP) on education. Percentage wise this is a favourable figure according to world standards, but as an absolute figure it falls short in most countries of the funding requirements that would respond to the quantitative and qualitative needs of the education systems. Part of the gap is frequently bridged in some countries by external funding through loans and grants. A substantial increase in national spending on education can be a justified and feasible suggestion in some countries, but not so in others due to other pressing national needs. In both cases, any major moves in this respect should concentrate on promoting the economics of education by rationalising expenditures and enhancing the rates of return on educational services. Some of

the weaknesses that need to be tackled in many Arab countries in this respect include:

- Little efforts are undertaken to evaluate the socioeconomic rate of return and feasibility of many educational programmes at the secondary and post-secondary levels.
- Low utilisation factor of educational facilities in some locations due to population characteristics and the scattered nature of schools and lack of consolidation of facilities.
- Lack of funds to develop the qualitative aspects of the educational processes, resulting in a higher than usual proportion of the available financial resources spent on salaries and wages.
- Under-employment in some educational levels and sectors due to lack of adequate human resources, and over-employment in other levels and sectors due to social pressures that reflect conditions of unemployment.
- The limited diversification of funding sources, and thus the need to increase the role of the private sector (e.g., in scientific research), NGOs (e.g., in services for learners of special needs) and learners (e.g., in higher and non-formal education).
- The need to rationalise the system of government subsidies in general, and to higher education institutions in particular, so as to link such subsidies to the promotion of national policies and priorities, or to criteria that are related to quality and relevance of outputs.

Education, globalisation and modern technologies

Globalisation is a phenomenon whose effects and extensions show in one way or another in almost all societies. Disregarding globalisation might lead to marginalisation and isolation. There is no alternative therefore but to deal with the challenges it presents in a practical and rational manner to maximise its benefits and minimise its shortcomings. Needless to say, although this applies to all societies, the efforts needed in developing ones are deeper and of a more serious nature. It can be taken for granted that good quality education at all levels and in all fields, through formal and non-formal systems, is a major tool in dealing with the challenges of globalisation, utilising its potentials and avoiding its pitfalls. Technological developments and ICTs are known to be important features that accompany globalisation, and both act as driving forces as well as outputs at the same time. In this respect, the challenges that face the education systems in developing countries, including Arab countries, assume a further dimension due

to the continuously widening scientific and technological gap between such countries and the developed ones. One of the dimensions of such a gap, which is known as the 'digital divide', exists in the field of ICT. In addition, this gap can be found among the Arab countries themselves, and even among the different social groups within the same country.

The continuous expansion that is taking place in the utilisation of ICT in education systems and work places should be a helping factor in this respect. Open and distance education that utilises modern technologies, and which is called e-learning for this reason, is one of the fruits of the ICT developments that is establishing itself in Arab education systems, especially in higher education. Although it is facing some difficulties regarding its accreditation and full assimilation within the education mainstream, such difficulties seem to be part of a transition period. As one mode of distance learning, e-learning is characterised by the potential to avail educational services to a wider spectrum of societal groups than can be realised by traditional learning systems. These groups include housewives, residents of remote areas, the employed and many groups of special needs. The fact that these groups in particular are not well served by existing services renders the growth of e-learning facilities and services a welcome sign. On the other hand, e-learning upgrades the capacity of learners for self-learning and entrepreneurship. It also enhances their contacts with a wide spectrum of sources of knowledge. This is expected to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education which would be a welcome and needed development in Arab education systems. Furthermore, e-learning supports both formal and non-formal education, thus helping to open new horizons, which are not restricted by time or place, for continuous education and lifelong learning. The proviso being that such learning is well utilised and made accessible for the various societal groups, especially if it is blended as much as possible with the traditional face-to-face learning systems.

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CONFERENCE REPORT

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

*Reflections on the International Debate held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,
13-15 May 2009*

MELITA CRISTALDI

Reporters: Hailu Gutema and Nuru Mohammed.

Addis Ababa, which means 'New Flower' in Amharic, is the capital of Ethiopia and its largest city. It is also the political and cultural heart of the state. The country's ethnic and cultural diversity has given rise to many unique, dynamic visual traditions, considering that 80 different languages and dialects are spoken there. Addis Ababa hosted the *First International Conference on Educational Research for Development*, from 13 to 15 May 2009, organised by the College of Education, University of Addis Ababa (AAU).

The AAU is the oldest and most important university in Ethiopia. The AAU College of Education is indeed the oldest of all the education faculties in the country and is located on the Main Campus of the University. The overall aim of the College of Education is to foster teaching, research, testing, training and consultancy services in education and related fields. Almost all the departments offer undergraduate degree programmes and postgraduate MA/MSc/MEd programmes and some seven run PhD programmes. The College also publishes a biannual journal, the *Journal of Education for Development*.

The conference was held at the Akaki Campus. Akaki is an industrial suburb of Addis Ababa; the campus being about 20 km from the city centre, but the conference Organisation guaranteed efficient transport for all the participants during the three days of the meeting. The aim of the conference was to generate a global discussion forum on the roles of research in policy and improving practice, and to create new networks and research consortia. The language of the conference was English. The conference organising committee provided facilities for those presenting papers in terms of laptop computers for PowerPoint presentations, a LCD projector and so on.

This first international conference of the College of Education was organised thanks to the efforts of Professor Tirusew Teferra, dean of the College of Education, who succeeded in setting up a large international network.

There were 233 participants with different profiles: researchers from prestigious universities, members of international research associations, partners of the College of Education in Addis Ababa, scholars from the Ethiopian Diaspora, representatives of education-affiliated non-governmental organisations, presidents and delegates of Ethiopian Higher Education Institutes, academic staff from Addis Ababa University and doctoral students. The majority of the international delegates came from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, some came from other parts of United Kingdom; there were also people from Scotland, Finland, France, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, the United State of America, Canada, Tanzania, India, and Iran. The contributions covered a wide range of topics and issues necessary to an understanding of the nature and role of education and research including empirical studies carried out in a wide range of contexts involving diverse cultures and education systems (both from the developed and developing world). Diverse methodological approaches, perspectives and assumptions were represented. There were 68 paper presentations on interdisciplinary perspectives regarding: educational research paradigms, higher education, innovation and challenges, teacher education, early child and special needs education, gender, adult and environmental education. The conference was composed of keynote addresses, parallel workshops, and a mix of plenary and parallel sessions, paper presentations and poster presentation sessions.

The keynotes speeches (some sponsored by the British Educational Research Association and by the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain) addressed the following areas: 21st century methodological paradigms in educational research, postgraduate research, teaching and learning links, educational research for development in the 21st century. In particular, David Bridges (Professor Emeritus, University of East Anglia; Emeritus Fellow, St. Edmund's College, Cambridge) observed that the rapid growth of higher education in Ethiopia and other parts of the world needs to be accompanied by a parallel expansion in research and questioned whether all universities and staff should be engaged in research. He argued that requiring all staff to engage in research may not be desirable and realistic, and therefore proposed that the vitality of teaching in higher education be supported by staff who are engaged in other scholarly activities or professions or business and not just research work. Professor Bridges outlined the conditions required for a conducive research culture. He underlined the need for university faculties of education to engage in research at different levels (international, national and local) and argued that it is in the interest of society for researchers to produce different kinds of research (illuminative, policy directing, policy implementation, evaluative and critical). Teshome Wagaw (Professor Emeritus of Higher Education; Emeritus Professor of

African and Afro-American Studies, University of Michigan), drawing on his experience, explained the kinds of challenges and barriers faced by those wishing to conduct research in Ethiopia and argued that it takes great professional commitment and determination to successfully conduct research. Professor Morwenna Griffiths (Moray House School of Education, Edinburgh University) focused on using narratives in educational research. She argued that the usual emphasis on the need for generalisable and universal knowledge is wrong. She also argued against the claim that personal narratives do not lead to trustworthy knowledge and she made a case for context-specific knowledge. Professor Samuel L. Odom (Director, FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina) showed that in the United States research questions and standards for research in education have changed over the last decade. He explained that there has been a tendency for the focus of research questions to shift from efficacy to implementation. Professor John Furlong (University of Oxford; President of BERA 2003-2005) stressed that the quality of the teaching staff represents the single, most important factor in improving education and, therefore, teachers have to come top on the quality agenda. He argued that a key part of professional education must take place in the context of the classroom itself.

The topics covered in panel discussions were: innovative approaches to educational research, methods of monitoring school performance, models and processes of self-assessment, the impact of education MDGs in Africa, the role of new technologies in enhancing teacher education and lifelong learning, intercultural trans-disciplinary models of educational research, the contribution of qualitative research to policy making, planning and implementation, contextualising knowledge, knowledge acquisition vs. knowledge application, the role of evaluation in enhancing student's results, evidence-based educational planning, ethical issues in educational research, the importance of research by teachers for policy-making, the role of educational research in improving pedagogy, an indigenous philosophy of education, action research, ethnographic research and education policy, the influence of neo-liberal thinking on education and traditional vs. newer forms of ethnography.

A networking session was organised during the last day of the Conference. The discussants were the deans of Education Faculties of Dilla, Bahir Dar, Haramaya, Arba Minch and Mekele Universities. The convener, Professor Tirusew Teferra, invited the participants to create new networks and research consortia. Representatives from the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Kiel contributed different suggestions. Giovanni Pampanini from Italy, member of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, was asked to communicate the results of the conference to the World Council in order to guarantee the widest possible circulation. Thanks to the organising committee which pre-arranged a

cultural evening, including traditional Ethiopian music and food, and a visit to Ethiopian schools and historical sites, the international participants had the opportunity to meet educational researchers in Ethiopia and to participate in the rich cultural life of Addis Ababa. In this city, I noted that one says *hello* by shaking hands and touching shoulders. I found this an enriching experience for my own field of psycho-motion.

This conference facilitated Ethiopia's entrance into the field of international education research and, at the same time, encouraged the international teaching community to get to know this fascinating African country.

BOOK REVIEWS

Karin M. Ekström and Birgitte Tufte (eds.) (2007) *Children, Media and Consumption: On the Front Edge*, Nordicom, Göteborg University, 356 pp., ISBN: 978-91-89471-51-1.

‘When it comes to research regarding children, media and consumption,’ writes one of the editors of this volume, ‘it is important to look at this area through interdisciplinary glasses’ (p. 94). This position is well reflected in the range of essays that make up *Children, Media and Consumption: On the Front Edge*. The book offers a broad spectrum of insights and ideas about how contemporary children and youth use, interact with, interpret and make sense of their world in and through the commercially dominated landscapes of 21st century media. It grew out of an international multidisciplinary conference on child and teen consumption held in Copenhagen in 2006, and is part of the excellent series of research monographs published on a regular basis by the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media – an organisation based at Göteborg University and financed by the Swedish government and UNESCO.

Children, Media and Consumption sets out to shed new light on this subject by presenting research and recent studies conducted by scholars working in different countries and drawing on different disciplinary traditions – including education, childhood studies, media studies, consumer studies, and gender studies. One thing which is clearly shared by the writers of the 20 essays which make up the collection is the conviction that the insights gained through research into how children appropriate, use and perceive new media have the potential of equipping educators and parents with better ways of helping young people become more responsible and autonomous in their use of commercially-dominated media technologies and messages.

The book is divided into three broad sections focusing on *Media Culture*, *Brand and Advertising Cultures*, and *Family Culture* – though the editors insist that there is a fair deal of overlap between the different sections. The eight essays in the first section focus primarily on different aspects of children as consumers of computing and internet technology, as well as on their relationships with mobile phones and new media more generally. There is a good range of topics covered here, with interesting reports on recent research conducted with different age and gender groups and in different geographical locations. The topics covered include the marketing of educational software and computer games, patterns of internet and computer use among ‘twens’ and teens, and children’s motives for acquiring mobile phones and how they use them once they have them. Other essays in this

section look at questions of online privacy, differences in how young people use the internet at home and at school, and ways in which digital and other media are perceived and used by children and teenagers in a range of countries.

The eight essays in the second section deal with different aspects of market branding and advertising aimed at children, with particular emphasis on the nutritional implications of how food and drink are sold to children. A recurring concern here is children's potential vulnerability to sophisticated market strategies – particularly in view of the fact that today's young people are the most intensely analysed demographic group in the history of marketing and market research. Individual essays thus focus on how different children and age groups understand and respond to television advertising targeted at the young; on the issues raised by 'fun food' which links food with play (as in chocolate eggs containing miniature toys); and on the links between advertising and the growing health problems caused by excessive weight and poor nutrition among children worldwide.

The final section of the book focuses on 'family culture', with particular emphasis on how family life has been modified by the patterns and imperatives of consumer culture. One essay looks at how the possession of consumer toys has come to be seen as a precondition of a happy childhood and of an 'accomplished' family life. Another examines how consumerism influences the ways in which children's rooms are decorated with visual artefacts, and how choices in this regard are negotiated between children and their parents. The last two essays in the volume discuss young people's changing attitudes to environmental consumerism, and how parents and children have become active participants in the propagation of consumerism by habitually parading on the 'catwalk of consumption'.

The volume's opening essay, by David Buckingham, provides a useful illustration of the types of practical and pedagogical concerns which underlie the book as a whole. Buckingham here considers the motives, uses and commercial strategies which inform the current growth of the 'edutainment' industry in computing software, CD-ROMs, games and websites which are designed and sold as combining learning with entertainment. This software is primarily targeted at parents who are willing to pay for educational goods and services in the hope of engaging their children in 'informal learning' at home – as a way of supplementing schoolwork and also perhaps to salve their own consciences for not being able to devote more of their own increasingly limited time to helping more directly in their children's education. Buckingham's study suggests that while anxious parents may represent a 'soft touch' for marketers of this educational software, children themselves do not appear to be so easily persuaded, so that even when their parents buy it for them, children actually make very limited use of such software. This lack of interest is partly ascribed to children's unwillingness to

spend their free time in anything that closely resembles schoolwork, and also to the fact that the limited quality of much of the educational software currently available makes it much less appealing to children than all the other (commercially generated) things they can do with computers anyway. Among the issues raised here is the fact that commercially-oriented software aimed at children has become so heavily dominated by attention-grabbing entertainment that ‘edutainment’ faces a losing battle. As a result, Buckingham suggests, ‘the idea – promoted by some enthusiasts for educational computing – that new technology will automatically result in new, more liberating styles of “informal learning” in the home seems somewhat questionable’ (p. 44).

The main strength of the volume as a whole is in the variety of perspectives and insights which it brings to this important topic, together with the wealth of relevant research which is analysed and discussed here. One unfortunate limitation is the distracting presence of a number of typographical errors in the editorial introduction. Another is the fact that, perhaps inevitably, the different contributions are not of an even quality. But the scholarship displayed in most of the essays is impressive, making *Children, Media and Consumption* a valuable and timely addition to the growing research literature on children’s and young people’s changing relations with media and consumer culture. The issues raised by the book as a whole are also of urgent topicality for parents and educators concerned with helping their children navigate their way through the increasing complexities of a media-saturated and consumption-driven world.

Joe Grixti

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David Phillips and Michele Schweisfurth (2007) *Comparative and International Education: An Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice*, New York, Continuum, ix + 181 pp., ISBN: 847060595 (paperback), 0826478549 (hardback).

David Phillips and Michele Schweisfurth's volume has been designed as an introductory text in comparative and international education (p. 4).

The main feature of this volume is a systematic concern with fundamental conceptual clarifications. Thus, the meanings of comparative vs. international dimensions, both as fields of inquiry and specific mindsets, become the very organising principle of the whole volume. These two strands are addressed in their own specificity in clearly dedicated chapters: comparative education is dealt with in chapters 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8, while chapters 3, 4 and 6 are dedicated to the international education realm. In fact, comparative and international education fields of inquiry are effectively discussed throughout the book. The authors choose to focus on the how these different strands contribute to the knowledge production and to the improvement of school practices around the world. Their analysis highlights possible interrelations between the world of practitioners – as ONG based – and that of theoretical construction and academically oriented one. From this point of view and when compared with similar texts, the volume makes a considerable progress in investigating the internal and external borders of this field of study.

The main arguments are presented and discussed in the eight chapters, introduction and conclusion. Chapter 1 (*Making Comparisons*) and Chapter 2 (*How Comparative Education has Developed*) both set the scene for the inquiry into comparative education. The analysis spans from a historical overview of the leading figures in comparative studies, to a recollection of some crucial theoretical tools, such as 'the spectrum of educational transfer' (Ochs & Phillips, 2005) and the 'framework for comparative education analyses' (Bray & Thomas, 1995). In addition, the analysis is enriched by constant and illuminating references to the recent knowledge production of international bodies and scholarly journals in the field.

Chapter 3 (*Domains of Practice and Fields of Inquiry in International Education*) and Chapter 4 (*Education and National Development: An Introduction to Key Ideas and Questions*) present development policies related to international education. These focus on domain of practice, including the internationalisation of the norms of teaching and learning, international schools and global citizenship education, as well as aspects related to fields of inquiry such as the notions of insider and outsider research, research and participants relations in the field as

well as a thorough understanding of research within international frameworks, globalisation studies, education and development studies. This part of the volume is to be considered the most innovative in terms of the conceptual elaboration of what international education means and its relationship to comparative education. The authors' main argument, which I am in total agreement with, is the importance of overcoming an 'ethnocentric and single-solution outlook' and the idea that the international researcher may benefit from intercultural competences and a more robust comparative, critical and analytical perspective. At this point of their analysis, Philips and Schweisfurth highlight important interconnections between the comparative and the international strands. As Epstein maintains in the foreword to the book, 'the description and elaboration of international education activity found here is unequalled anywhere in the literature' (p. ix). The issue of development is thereafter addressed and read from economic, social and holistic perspectives. The part dedicated to the exploration of the links between education and development represents another helpful insight into the complexity of the field under investigation. The chapter ends with an illustration based on the 'education for all' policy. It offers a very efficient overview of some theories, such as the human capital theory, modernisation, liberation and conscientisation, correspondence, reproduction and perpetration theories. However, I believe that a more critical perspective on these issues is needed in order to avoid ethnocentric and dominant language practices (see Preece, 2008). In fact, a 'positivist' notion of development, as mainly related to 'developing countries', 'helps to normalise the new imperialism' (Bicum, 2005; cited in Preece, 2008).

Chapter 5 (*Comparative Education: Method*) and Chapter 6 (*Researching Education and Development: Perspectives, Practicalities, and Ethics*) discuss methodology issues and research design in comparative education. They refer to notions of classical theories and scholars such as, Edmund King, Brian Holmes, Harold Noah and Max Eckstein, and also to more recent literature such as the 'classification of comparative research' of Theisen and Adams. After addressing a number of fundamental phases and concepts, they propose an original structure for comparative inquiry. The stages of Philips and Schweisfurth's research project include: conceptualisation (neutralisation of questions to be addressed), contextualisation (description of issues against local backgrounds in two or more cases), isolation of differences, explanation (development of hypothesis), re-conceptualisation (contextualisation of findings), and application (generalisability of findings). The conceptual richness and the fruitful dialogue between classical readings and current developments in the field have to be remarked upon. In this sense, *The Conceptual Matrix of Education Reform Discourse* of Yoneyama (2004) and *Policy Borrowing in Education: Composite Process* (Phillips & Ochs, 2004) are two useful theoretical lenses the book offers to its readers.

From a methodological point of view, however, I would prefer to be presented with a more detailed analysis as to the meaning of comparisons from larger sociological perspectives. In fact, if comparisons are not to be viewed as simple mental operations, then readers should be introduced to deeper sociological perspective of what it entails (Fideli, 1998). In addition, it is worth remembering that comparison between national states is only one style (or level) of comparison between others (Bray & Thomas, 1995; Fideli, 1998). This text seems to engage foremost with a peculiar and highly diffused style of comparison – the macro-analytical style of comparison in Fideli (1998, p. 50) or the state/provinces level in the ‘cube model’ of Bray & Thomas (1995). But it neglects other styles and levels – for instance, those included in the ‘cube model’ of Bray & Thomas – that is, individuals, classroom, school, districts, world regions, countries, continents. This traditional line of reasoning endorsed by the authors also leads them to neglect the insights offered by ethnographic methodologies, except for Alexander’s (2000) scholarship and Tobin, Wu & Davidson’s (1989) research.

Chapter 6 (*Researching Education and Development: Perspectives, Practicalities and Ethics*) deals with problems of methodology in international education, presenting several perspectives while grasping the meanings of the concept of development: economic rationalism, Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives, anthropological perspectives, post-colonialism, gender, human rights. It also mentions the global security issue. Chapter 7 (*Comparative Education Research: Survey Outcomes and their Uses*) discusses issues related to large-scale comparative studies on educational achievement such as those conducted by IEA and PISA-OECD. The criticism of the authors is opportunely balanced with some positive sides of such large-scale inquiries and this is a reasonable choice if this text is expected to be used in different national contexts. I would however expect more evidence as regard the benefits of large-scale inquiries. From my teaching experience, students focus more on traditional negative accounts of the limitations of such statistical data collection. Therefore, the choice to highlight mainly the shortcomings, as proposed by many traditional readings, may result inopportune, especially in countries with weak statistical and sociological traditions.

In Chapter 8 (*Outcomes of Comparative Education: Selected Themes*), the last chapter, we are offered a series of key themes in comparative education, such as transition, post-conflict education, education in small states, pedagogy, and citizenship education. These are highly relevant issues and their choice is a good illustration of the contemporary research directions.

The volume is primarily designed as an introductory text in the field of international and comparative education. Its merits lie in its high conceptual density, clear internal organisation and elaboration of international education,

viewed both as a distinct and interrelated field as regard comparative education. I also appreciated the authors' defence of the interdisciplinary legitimacy of comparative education construction, as rooted in different disciplines from sociology to philosophy. Another possible line of reasoning as an organising principle of the volume could have been that of a more systematic presentation of the most influential current schools of thought in comparative education and of research approaches. This would have allowed the introduction, for example, of the neo-institutionalist school of Stanford, the socio-historical stream of Luhmannian resonance developed by Schriewer (2004; see also Schriewer & Martinez, 2004) at Berlin or the very influential critical-historical approach school initiated by Popkewitz (2000, 2003, 2008). For all these reasons, the volume is a refreshing and efficient introduction to the comparative and international education field, worth being adopted as a course textbook or translated for non-English contexts. It represents an important point of reference not only for students and newcomers in the field, but also for scholars and experienced practitioners.

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