INTRODUCTION

EDUCATION AND POWER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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Despite the fact that the Mediterranean region is marked by discontinuities and fractures, where the economic, cultural and educational genealogies or codings of different states and groups of states reflect and occupy different sociological times (Cowen 1998), it is nevertheless possible to perceive a number of common elements which are worth focusing on. Among these one can refer to the transitional dynamics that mark most Mediterranean states, with major changes taking place in the economic, political, and cultural spheres (Calleya 1997; Sultana 2001). Such transformations generate tensions in states, caught up as these are in the process of globalization, where power in defining futures has both intra-state as well as inter-regional and international dimensions.

These tensions are played out in different social institutions, among them educational ones. Educational institutions in fact constitute not only one of the contexts in which the power of a variety of organized social actors is exerted, but are themselves constitutive of the struggle for power (Sultana 1998, 1999). The nature and form of educational institutions in the Mediterranean region in fact determines, to a greater or lesser extent, the nature of the dynamics of inter-generational change. Educational institutions, for instance – whether we consider their form or their content – are the direct result of a history of colonialism. They reflect the cultural and knowledge traditions and priorities of metropolis countries, and as such attract the approbation of those who would have their society participate in the process of modernization, and the criticism of those who, for a variety of reasons, would prefer to avoid, indeed contest that process. Education systems in the Mediterranean also tend to be characterized by centralized and heavy bureaucratic management structures, and hence they also tend to have a close connection to power centers, whether these are secular or religious. Such characteristics provide an important context and channel for the elaboration of a theory of the relationship between education and the state in semi-peripheral countries, and of an account of the way schooling mediates the transition between tradition and modernity.

Education by its function, mission and philosophy, is intimately tied to symbolic, political and economic power structure in society. This linkage is either explicit and intentionally put forward, or takes place implicitly as a consequence of the educational process. Based on the Bourdieusian approach, education can be seen as a system of learning and ideology that reflects the dominant political, social and cultural paradigm (Bourdieu 1996, pp.263-299). Those in control of decision-making use

education as a device for indoctrinating, transmitting, and maintaining their dominant ideas, status and privileges. In this respect, as a system of learning education becomes an efficient instrument of legitimizing domination and imposing values and social reproduction. It goes without saying that the goals of education are more than knowledge acquisition, culture, and enlightenment but these also pragmatically driven by the aims of empowering and fostering economic interests and achieving social mobility (Sabour 2001). In other words, the aims of education are about acquiring professional skills and social promotion.

Subsequently, in a utilitarian oriented education, knowledge is no more an aim in itself but mainly a medium for building a career and a vehicle for improving, maintaining or defending a social position. Because of this instrumentality, formal education is becoming a field where forces and groups compete for prominence and legitimacy. This matter of fact denotes, therefore, the centrality of social class relationships, the structure of political power and its impact on the academic (educational) power, as well as on the position of learning among various individuals and groups in society.

For the old generation, education principally represents a vehicle for the transmission and reproduction of values, the passing on to the young of the accumulated wisdom encapsulated in tradition. In Mediterranean societies, particularly those where religious values are marshaled against the secularist tendencies of modernity, schooling is considered to be a crucial space where culture, identity, ideologies and world views are to be defended against the onslaught of what are considered to be overwhelming currents from the "North". Pressures are exerted on the central authorities directing the educational apparatus in order to ensure that curricula reflect these concerns.

Interventions are made into the definition of what constitutes legitimate knowledge and appropriate practice in schools. Calls are made by leaders of the three Abrahamic religions – Catholicism, Judaism and Islam – in order to safeguard the moral high ground against secularist tendencies, be this in the teaching of biology, for instance, or in the use of "the Book" in order to explain and make sense of the central events that mark our era.

On the other hand, the modern sector of society wants to engage another aspect of education, that which highlights its productive rather than reproductive function, in order to challenge tradition, to embrace modernity, and to adopt a new identity that is more consonant with global culture. This explains why teachers find themselves at the interstices of the relationship between state and society, and have historically been mobilized for different and conflicting ends. At the turn of the century, for instance, Egyptian teachers were considered to be the cream of the modernizing group, the avant-garde "troops" representing "progress" because of their adherence to, and communication of modern and secular ideas. Today, on the other hand, there is an increasingly high profile of Islamic teachers (Abu-l-As'ad 1994), with the benefits of tradition over modernity being promoted in different ways and in many schools (Herrera 1998), both at the compulsory and post-compulsory levels. As Sabour (1999) has noted,

increasing youth unemployment, disillusionment with the promises of the west which, like the ideology of credentialism, seem to be unable to deliver the goods, the rise of a fortress Europe – one an all have rendered Universities ideal recruiting grounds for fundamentalists.

There are, therefore, sets of important questions that need to be asked regarding the way power is wielded and managed in the Mediterranean south, via the institution of education. The tension between reproduction and transformation of societies is particularly acute in the Mediterranean region, and the struggle over who shall establish leadership over the new generation, and over how one is to define and assert national identity in the face of globalization, is particularly important in any consideration of Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Of course, for a number of cultural and historical reasons, Mediterranean societies along the northern and southern, as well as the eastern and western shores, have different educational systems. There are both regional and national particularities, which cannot, and should not be submerged in any consideration of the "Mediterranean" as a unit of analysis. In this special issue journal, however, the question of power and education constitutes the axial and common ground for all the contributions. This collection of articles takes this common concern as its starting point, arguing that a focus on the microcosm of education generates insights into understanding processes that have an impact and a relevance to the wider picture in the region. The articles put together here document the interplay of education and power in the region, generating substantive case studies based on empirical research that throw light on some of the issues that are of central concern to educational sociology. The papers were especially written by a group of education scholars for the 2nd *Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting* organized by the Mediterranean Program of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute in Florence (Italy), which took place between 21 and 25 March, 2001.

The nature of the public sphere as a site for struggle over educational agendas is the specific focus of the article by Zeliha Etöz. The author considers the ideological and political struggles to control the public domain in Turkey, and analyzes group interests as they have manifested themselves in recent educational debate and legislation. Focusing on the law stipulating eight years of uninterrupted basic education, and on the directives preventing female students who have opted to wear the "Islamic" headscarf from entering schools and universities, Etöz lays bare some of the tensions and dynamics that mark the relationship between organized Islamic groups, the state and the army in Turkey, and how education is a trigger for, a reflection of, and a site for the development of such tensions.

Devorah Kalekin-Fishman focuses on recent developments in the use of education by Shas, an ultra-orthodox religious party in Israel. Promising to improve living conditions among impoverished ethnic groups, Shas has cunningly exploited legislation that permits private schools to be set up as autonomies entities while still

enjoying state support in order to establish an "independent" educational network, "The Fount of Biblical Education". Kalekin-Fishman shows how the party adroitly wove political modernism with an educational service that is traditionalist in both curriculum and pedagogy. This raises important questions, not only as to whether students are being well served by those that purport to work in their favor, but also about the link between tradition and modernism. Indeed, the way Shas has used power resources to exploit the state apparatus in order to assert an educational agenda that defines knowledge in terms of tradition is a clear illustration of the fact that fundamentalism is not merely anti-modernist. Rather, it is a strategy that uses modernism to serve traditionalist goals.

A language symbolizes a key element in defining a sovereign culture and nation. The re-appropriation and use of a national language has been a top priority in the policy of nation building and the re-affirmation of cultural identity in Algeria. Because of endogenous factors and the influence of French colonialism, the task of using Arabic has met tremendous difficulties. In his contribution, Miliani thoroughly examines the process of arabization of higher education and the different controversies and conflicts related to French/Arabic language prestige and power in Algerian society. In addition, he sheds lights on how the importance and sensitiveness of Arabic language is reflected in discourses of modernization, democratization and tradition.

Xavier Bonal and Xavier Rambla consider the way the Spanish state has dealt with immigration in its educational policies, claiming that the term "multiculturalism" has assumed many contradictory connotations in political and academic debates. They focus on how schools have understood cultural diversity, arguing that educational policy in Spain has tended to "splinter" multiculturalism. This is because while multicultural objectives are rhetorically present in official discourse, there has been little elaboration of the implications this has for social rights, in terms, for instance, of the development of such strategies as affirmative action that help groups attain equal opportunities and outcomes. The authors go on to consider the power dynamics that determine inclusion and exclusion of immigrant minorities in contemporary Spain by analyzing three specific factors, namely policy contradictions, the restriction of poly-ethnic rights, and the individualization and normalization of educational diversity. They conclude that despite the rhetoric of modernization through multiculturalism, the actual implementation of poly-ethnic measures in Spain seems to have, as its goal, the transformation of ethnic minorities into cheap labor commodities.

Gulf countries have been largely dependent on a foreign labor force in order to manage numerous educational, social and economic sectors in their societies. Academia represents one of the fields where non-nationals experts, teachers and administrators have been employed. In his thorough empirical study, Mazawi investigates the features of the division of academic labor in three Gulf universities: Kuwait University, Sultan Qaboos University, and the University of Qatar. His main aims are the assessment of how faculty members, having diverse national backgrounds, are adjusting to the Gulf context. The other goal of his study is the exploration of the way in which place of education, nationality, gender and scientific discipline influence the appointment, promotion and academic distinction of these faculty members. This study provides

valuable information and knowledge on societies marked by secretive characteristics, and by reluctance in unveiling social and cultural tensions.

The paper by Belhachmi presents an exhaustive historical description of the system of leaning in the Arab countries. Inspired by the works of Tazi and Waardenburg she follows, as she argues, "a systemic cultural approach" in providing a periodized account of education. Belhachmi's contentions concentrate on the conflicting relations between the Arab-Islamic and Western pattern of educational systems, on the one hand and particularly on the negative and prejudicial impact the latter has had on the efficiency and creativity of the former, on the other. Though some of her arguments can find a measure of endorsement among advocators of the tenets of "dependency theory", many of her contentions can be questioned in the light of studies done by prominent mainstream scholars (i.e. Laroui 1976, 1977; Jabiri 1982; Amil 1985). All things considered, her paper nevertheless contributes, in its own way, to the "eternal" debate on the encounter of Western and Eastern cultures and the impact of colonialism on Arab societies.

Helen Phtiaka considers an important aspect of exclusionary power, i.e. that exercised by Cypriot society and its schools towards persons with disability. She shows how the struggle for rights on the part of the disabled community brings the latter into a direct confrontation with the state and its professional classes, who have traditionally managed "difference" by developing a policy "charity" discourse underpinned by a "medical model" of provision of services. Phtiaka identifies the contextual features that have contributed to the shaping of the struggle over inclusion in Cyprus, noting the influence of classical Greek culture in transmitting injurious notions of what constitutes healthy normality, and the way Greek Orthodox Christianity, as well as political, ideological and economic views have shaped prejudice on the island. Phtiaka also connects the struggle over the rights of the disabled with the struggle for democracy, arguing that an inclusive society is only possible wherever there is a vibrant public sphere.

In this time of economic recession and cultural globalization, universities in Southern Mediterranean countries are experiencing various tensions and turmoil that are linked to their social function and intellectual vocation. Sabour's paper explores some of the structural difficulties and problems facing Moroccan universities. He outlines how the crisis of education is the reflection of the crisis in society in general. Moreover, he shows the contradictions and discrepancies, which prevail between their ideals and reality.

All these papers, in their own unique manner, contribute to the analysis of the myriad ways in which education is linked to power in Mediterranean societies, revealing the mechanisms by which such power is attained, exercised, contested and struggled over. In most cases, it is the reproductive role of education as the handmaiden of those in power that is highlighted, though the tensions that underlie the attempts to establish specific agendas clearly signal the need to keep on looking at education in complex ways. Indeed, it is that very complexity that gives rise to the hope that education becomes a democratizing rather than a repressive force, a hope that is in dire

need of revitalizing in a region that is caught in the cross-fire of so many burning issues, the resolution of which is so fundamental to the attainment of peace, prosperity, and justice.

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