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EDUCATORS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN – II
Ronald G. Sultana (editor)

RONALD G. SULTANA

University of Malta

ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt

BIO-ACADEMIC NARRATIVES
AND EDUCATORS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

An Editorial Introduction

Critical accounts of education in the Mediterranean region abound, with education systems often taken to task for being too centralised, too unresponsive to needs, too elitist and too exclusive, often to the detriment of specific groups including women, and those living away from urban and coastal areas. Several accounts exist describing the way higher education has suffered from rampant massification, leading to situations which give access in name only, and to institutions which fail miserably in providing quality instruction that opens up suitable occupational pathways for graduates. Pedagogies across all educational levels have invariably been described as being too 'magisterial' in style and tone, smothering the student voice, and leaving little if any place for community involvement in determining curricula and social practices within the school that are meaningful and context-sensitive. To this toxic cocktail one can add the neo-liberal onslaught that has led to increasing privatisation that not only reproduces but reinforces privilege for some, and dead-ends for the rest. It is not a coincidence that the waves of popular unrest that we have seen in the region, leading to the toppling of regimes that seemed to be ever self-perpetuating, were triggered by unemployed graduates who, had patiently—and at great cost—gone through all the hoops and hurdles, only to see the promises of meritocracy fizzle into thin air.

This thematic issue takes readers of the *MJES* on a special tour of educational provision in the Mediterranean region. A score of prominent educators—one each from several countries from around the *al-Bahr al-Abyad al-Mutawassit*—'the White Middle Sea'—or *Akdeniz*, as the Turks refer to the great lake that gave birth to the three monotheistic religions and to what is now referred to as 'European civilisation'—were asked to respond to a series of seven questions and to engage with subsequent iterations in ways that drew on both their personal and professional experiences. They are 'prominent' educators in that they 'stand out' for their critical intellectual engagement in pushing the boundaries of knowledge of educational dynamics, in working in and through education to establish more democratic and more equitable structures and practices, and in critically speaking truth to power. In this issue of the *MJES* we present a selection of nine educators, with the total set of

interviews featuring in an expanded version of this journal number, being produced in book format by Sense Publishers of Rotterdam.

These educators' responses are therefore more than merely valuable in 'academic' terms: they are the responses of a group of individuals who, formed and shaped as they have been by their experiences in their country of birth and in the region, not only acknowledge the weaknesses and limitations of schooling and education more generally, but also struggle to devise personal and professional responses to those challenges, moving beyond critique to praxis. Some occupy, or have occupied, positions of responsibility, such as presidents of a university, or deans of faculties, directors of research centres or education programme coordinators of major regional and international organisations. Others have been actively engaged in community-based education initiatives, promoting access to learning to groups that have hitherto been excluded and even forgotten by the powers that be. All have, in one way or another, striven hard to draw on theoretical perspectives from a range of disciplines—and especially from the social sciences—in order to articulate deeper understandings of the interaction between education and society, in ways that challenge power and try to open up spaces for more democratic and equitable forms of life.

Many of our interviewees lived through keen struggles for freedom from colonial rule, and from home-grown despots that critiqued foreign oppression only to reproduce indigenous versions thereof in the wake of independence. Some remained 'at home' living the discomfort that is common among critical intellectuals who never really feel 'at home', never really 'belong'. Others took flight, but still look back at their native countries with distressed but still hopeful eyes, hankering as they do for social relations that are more humane, less exploitative, and less marked by inequity and injustice. Indeed, such desires appear particularly salient and arresting given the developments that we have witnessed in Tunisia and Egypt as this special issue went to press—developments that reminded us, once again, that people's aspirations for freedom and self-determination cannot be extinguished, and that authoritarianism, in all its forms, ultimately sows the seeds of its own destruction...though history also reminds us that, as the Polish saying wryly remarks, when people pull down the statue of 'the great', they tend to leave the pedestal—intimating, of course, that the task of emancipation is never complete, and that the educator's job is never done.

The bio-academic narratives of these educators—the milestones in their lives as they grew up in a world that was as exciting as it was threatening, in which they often felt they could not 'fit', and from which they sometimes felt obliged to flee, and yet to which they retained a loyalty and commitment, and to which they ultimately and painfully return, again and again—these stories are important narratives that deserve to be told. For here, other educators will read about personal journeys, unfinished and incomplete though they are, where individuals tried to make sense of the world around them—to 'read the world', as Freire—the most often cited educator in these interviews—would say. We see, above all, the efforts of individuals to lead a life that lives up to ideals that can be expressed and achieved through education.

Interviewees were specifically invited to be frank, to write without false modesty, but also to imagine that some of their sharpest critics were looking over their shoulders as they responded to the questions asked. Readers in all probability do not need to be reminded that, as with most autobiographical writing, they will find in these interviews the usual 'tropes' that tend to manifest themselves in the way educators present themselves to others—stories that are necessarily influenced by identity considerations which 'construct a self-image as a consistently moral individual' (Convery, 1999, p.131), with the interview convention providing an opportunity to fulfil personal identity projects. The 'performance' of one's self-narration, what is recalled, and how what is recited is selected, connected, organized and presented, gives the reader a sense of an individual who has a coherent and enduring moral self (Bourdieu, 1986), often marked by 'transformative epiphanies'—or critical events that had a major impact on one's personal and professional trajectory—the principled overcoming of 'hostile and oppositional forces', and the establishment of a 'preferred identity' shaped by an inexorable development as a morally refined individual.

In this sense, therefore, it is important to keep in mind that 'the activity of self-disclosure creates, rather than relates, 'the self'' (Convery, 1999, p.137), and that the purpose of this collection of interviews is not to present 'supermen' or 'superwomen' in a narrative which positions educators as 'heroes' (who are self-sacrificing, principled, committed to equity, undaunted by setbacks) or 'whores' (who have sold their soul to the 'system', abandoned students to their lot, and are only interested in self-advancement and personal careers). Anybody who has been an educator knows full well that life is far more complex than that...and indeed it is this constant, critical awareness of such complexity in the incredibly challenging task of education that keeps the bio-narrative interviews in this collection from sliding into a mode of self-celebratory complaisance which can perversely serve to make us 'regular readers' feel inadequate and ultimately excluded. This would be especially regrettable, given the wide audience of teachers—whether novice, experienced or expert—which this collection of interviews primarily tries to interpellate. While the different authors are reflexive in different ways and to different extents about the stories they weave, providing readers with hooks by means of which the narratives can be critically engaged with and deconstructed, all make it clear that, as educators, we all have our battles to fight, and demons to chase, and that their narratives are not an end in itself, but a means of improving our understanding of the educational experience.

These educators tell us much about the schools in which they grew up, and about the achievements and failings of the education systems that developed in their countries over the past decades. Readers of this volume will learn a great deal about the key challenges confronting education in different Mediterranean countries, and the region more generally. They will witness seasoned thinkers and doers drawing dexterously and skilfully on a range of theoretical frameworks in order to peel layer after layer of social realities that assume a common sense

quality about them, to show how power operates in ways that distort the real meaning of education, and which subverts education's mission of ensuring that every single person is accorded the conceptual and other tools to live a life that is marked by freedom and dignity.

Readers will also learn much about some of the most promising initiatives, as well as some of the remaining, intractable problematics that bedevil the different education systems that, geographically, politically and/or culturally border on the Mediterranean. But perhaps most importantly, readers will not only be informed but also inspired, feeling they have come up close and personal with scholars from their region, who are engaged not only in a search for knowledge, but also for 'being'. For these interviews bear witness to genuine efforts on the part of individuals who have striven to live up to the ideal of active citizenry, where the identities of scholar, educator and citizen merge together in ways that recall the classical Greek term 'phronesis', which reminds us that 'understanding' carries with it a responsibility to be and the challenge to act in accordance with what we now see to be the best—in terms of the most virtuous—course of action. For education has, since its ancient beginnings, been associated with the search for the 'good life', a life worth living in accordance with principles that connect with and promote the common good.

In their search for 'answers', the educators we have interviewed raise several questions, reminiscent of the problem-posing education that is the hallmark of the Freirian dialogic approach. Which education structures and which education systems are most appropriate for the region, and what kinds of responses should one make to the challenge of globalisation? How can we develop education practices that are responsive to economic realities, without being narrowly defined by a vocationalist ideology that panders to corporate interests at the cost of fairness and equity. How can one transform age-old pedagogies that 'normalise' authoritarianism, and reproduce in miniature undemocratic forms of life rampant in wider society? How can education be at one at the same time embedded in and 'speak to' local specificities, yet connect individuals to wider national, regional and global communities? Which language to use as a medium of instruction, given the dynamics of both centrifugal and centripetal forces in today's complex world? In which ways can we integrate the new technologies in our pedagogies, without falling into the trap that would confuse means with ends, and gadgetry with knowledge, wisdom, and uprightness? How can we provide an educational experience that is meaningful, relevant, and useful to groups that are differentially located in socio-geographical spaces, yet ensure that differential provision does not sell any group short? To what extent can the deeply-felt religious sentiments of a group be permitted to define what counts as education in a free society, and how can one arbitrate justly and wisely among competing groups and claims in order to develop an educational system that is inclusive of difference? How can one resist, contest, and offer alternatives to the fundamentalist, predatory orthodoxy of neo-liberalist and managerialist forms of education, when these have become so globally entrenched, and so terrifyingly hegemonic? What does one do, and how can one act nobly and with honour, in the

face of unjust practices, without engaging with violence that risks stripping us of that very humanity that we wish to defend? In which ways can education help citizens move beyond a blind identification with clan, canton or country, in order to recognise and practice solidarity with a species—and a world—in danger, while still remaining rooted in an identity which is, at one and the same time, specific and universal?

These and a myriad other thorny questions run through these interviews, where respondents struggle to illuminate the issues by drawing on their personal and political struggles as scholars and citizens. In different iterations, where in some cases further questions allow the respondents to amplify their thoughts, and extend the debates beyond initial answers, we have here what is hopefully a good example of an educational if not Socratic dialogue, where we go beyond the quest for information and the search for knowledge to the deeper pursuit of wisdom that is the true end/beginning of an authentic education. May readers be as inspired and as stimulated to action by these responses as I have been, and may such feelings of emulation as may have been stirred prove to be a spur to virtue.

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GABI BARAMKI

Emeritus Professor, Birzeit University—Palestine

gbaramki@hotmail.com

EDUCATION AGAINST ALL ODDS

The Palestinian Struggle for Survival and Excellence

Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.

I was born in Jerusalem on November 3, 1929 into a Christian family whose roots in Jerusalem-Palestine go back for at least five hundred years as far as the records of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem could tell. My father studied architecture at the Fine Arts Academy in Athens and was amongst the first architects in Palestine during the British Mandate. His style in architecture combined the Arabic arch with the Greek Corinthian column heads and his unique style spread not only in Jerusalem (one can see many of the houses he built still standing in the new City of Jerusalem, now known as West Jerusalem) but also in Ramallah and in some neighbouring villages.

I was sent at the tender age of five to the boarding school of Birzeit which was one of the very few national, non-governmental secondary schools established in a rural area. At the time national or private schools were few anyway and mostly in Jerusalem. The only government school—The Arab College—was in Jerusalem and top students from the primary government schools from the rest of Palestine were sent to it.

I enjoyed my life at Birzeit School but still missed my parents, family and Jerusalem. Coming home to Jerusalem for vacations was something I always looked forward to. I enjoyed accompanying my father to the old city to buy fruits and vegetables and where I learned from him how to buy the right kind of lamb meat from the meat market. Our centre of life in Jerusalem had always been the YMCA where boys and young men (prior to 1948), be they Christians, Moslems or Jews, interacted freely and played together without ever feeling any barriers. On Saturdays, the Palestine Symphony Orchestra (Arabs and Jews) would perform in the open air and on Sundays, the clock bell tower would chime lovely music. However, during the 40s (WWII) the Palestinian Arabs and Jews started growing apart as Zionist activities were increasing: illegal Jewish immigration, terrorist attacks against the British and Arabs, and establishing Jewish-only settlements with the idea of founding a Jewish National home in Palestine and thus displacing, rather than living

with, the Palestinian Arabs. Nevertheless, in Jerusalem social relations among some Jews and Arabs continued. I remember how much compassion we felt for Jews who escaped the persecution in Europe when we got to know them socially (often because of work connections with my father with some of them who worked for him as foremen or draughtsmen). This feeling of compassion was mixed with the feeling of anger and fear that these people are after all, Zionists who want our land without us in it.

Q. What have been some of the most formative moments in your own education? Here you can also tell readers about the individuals, movements, organisations, etc that were most influential in shaping your development as an educator/scholar/ citizen.

The period when I was a boarding student at Birzeit High School (renamed Birzeit College in 1942) was one of the most formative periods in my education. Here I learned discipline and how to adjust and to live in a community. This meant being considerate of others and being sensitive to their needs, thinking of the public good and putting it above one's personal needs. I got to love nature and to appreciate team work as a tool for success. My talents in singing and theatre were also developed in this atmosphere. I also learned how one can enjoy the simplest of things including enduring living under harsh conditions. We had a laugh when the roof of our dormitory leaked in winter, telling our parents that Birzeit now had running water in every room. We still make fun of the occupation, and that allows us to endure it. It was in this school that I received my first lessons in Arab nationalism in its broad sense. Our history teachers taught us Arab history and how we should take pride in our heritage. Our school song called for Arab unity and it was in so many subtle ways that one got the spirit and sense of identity and love of country.

When I was still in high school trying to hold my fort in the study of chemistry at the university—while my parents wanted me to study medicine, which is the usual expectation with parents of children who are good at sciences—I got the advice of a young friend of the family who had just graduated from the American University of Beirut (AUB) with a BA in Chemistry: 'One should study the subject that one likes and not the subject that suits others even if one can do well in this other field.' I developed this further myself and continued to give this advice to my students and anxious parents: the major you take up will stay with you all your life and if you like it you are bound to excel in it and that will give you happiness rather than leading you to boredom and mediocrity. So when I graduated from Birzeit College in 1946 and obtained the Palestine Matriculation Certificate, I was ready to go to AUB to study chemistry without any problem. At that time, students with the Palestine Matriculation certificate entered the sophomore class, which meant that at the end of the year I received the Associate degree in Science and went on to the junior and senior classes to obtain my B.A. degree in Chemistry in 1949.

During my second year at the AUB, we heard the devastating news about the UN partition plan of Palestine (UN Resolution 181). All the University students went on demonstration in Beirut once or twice, but classes soon resumed normally. During

that year I was getting news from my family about their moving from our house to another, supposedly safer place, in the German Colony close to where my uncle's family was living. After a few months however, the news of the Deir Yasseen Massacre spread—about 200 people, men, women and children from this village close to Jerusalem were slaughtered by the Irgun Jewish terrorist group. My parents decided that it would be safer to go and stay in Birzeit at the College, in an area where my aunt and her family, the Nasirs, lived. When the school opened, they went to Gaza where they shared renting a house with another refugee family from Jerusalem as houses for rent in Gaza were scarce at the time. Eventually when they could not go back to their house in Jerusalem, my father took a job with UNRWA in Gaza as an engineer and the family found a suitable house to rent. We joined thousands of others as Palestinian Refugees.

In my senior year, I received a tuition scholarship from AUB as most Palestinians were cut off from their families and sources of income. I graduated from AUB and got a job as assistant instructor at that University and that was how I found myself in the teaching profession without ever having thought about it. I learnt a lot from my students, who were not much younger than myself, and started enjoying teaching and also thought about how to make learning enjoyable for my students. In 1951 I started work on my MA at the University while teaching. I received my MA degree in 1953.

During my AUB years there were opportunities that I took advantage of to satisfy my interests. I joined AUB trips during Christmas vacations to the Cedar Mountains and learned skiing. It is true we occasionally had snow in Jerusalem and Birzeit, both of which are about 800 meters above sea level, but it was the first time that I saw so much snow and in such a beautiful setting with thousand year-old cedar trees. That helped me when I went to Montreal, Canada in 1957, where snow is the normal setting for at least five months of the year. I also joined a choral group and a music club where I got my first taste of listening to opera. The head of the chemistry department at AUB, professor W.A.West, was an avid hiker and I joined the hiking group which regularly went on hiking trips in the beautiful Lebanese mountains. Hiking was again a hobby that stayed with me. I passed on this interest to my students and colleagues when I joined Birzeit as a teacher and administrator and we went exploring the Palestinian mountains in our area which is just as beautiful as Lebanon, though with less water. From my experience at AUB and later at McGill University I always give the message to my students who go to study abroad: take the full advantage of your stay overseas, not only by gaining as much knowledge and expertise as you can from the university and its professors, but also by taking part in the other extra-curricular activities that are available, as these will be valuable to you and will enrich your personality. It was at AUB that I first experienced democracy through student elections and the process that led to them.

After four years of teaching and administration at Birzeit, I received a fellowship to study for my Ph.D. I chose McGill University where a friend of mine was studying Neurosurgery there and he advised me to go there myself. McGill to me was a new experience. 'Shopping' for a supervisor for my Ph.D. was fascinating. Meeting

graduate students from all over the globe coming from different backgrounds was a new rich interesting experience to me. I met Hungarians who were worried about the invasion of Hungary by USSR, I met Pakistanis and Indians who came from a war zone, I met Chinese from Hong Kong who had family in China that they could not see, and of course I met Canadians. I learned about their national and political problems as they learned about mine. I found that most of them knew very little about my case (Palestine) and I found myself often having to start from below zero. I needed to correct wrong information that was fed to people by the media which, in my experience, is generally pro-Zionist. It helped that I did not fit into the picture they formed from the media about 'terrorist Palestinians' who wanted to throw the Jews into the sea: I was 6ft 4 tall, light-skinned and Christian. Nobody knew the fact that two-thirds of the Palestinians were thrown out of their country by Zionists forces in 1948. What I got from my stay at McGill and in Canada in general is the value set on research and scientific work but how little is known about foreign countries, and in our case how much distortion we are subjected to so that we appear as 'terrorists' and criminals and the Israeli Jews as the victims: this is not simple ignorance, but prejudice against us. I realized how much work Palestinians have to do to educate the masses and to reach those who lead in the West. I learned that people can communicate easily and freely, in spite of differences in backgrounds, cultures, political and national problems, because people as humans are equal.

When I came back to Palestine in 1953 to work at Birzeit College, the West Bank had become part of the Kingdom of Jordan. The Jordanian Government set the goal to put all children of school age into schools. That meant the need for a large number of teachers to carry the load. The government established two-year teacher training colleges as an urgent measure and sent the top school graduates to AUB for higher education, as the first university in Jordan was not established until 1963. When Birzeit started its freshman class as part of the Junior College in 1953, it was not a common event. There was only one Junior College in the whole area and that was Aleppo College in Aleppo, Syria—an American College, recognized by AUB. Its students could therefore easily transfer to AUB and other American universities. At Birzeit, that was also our plan, but it took us nine years before our students could transfer directly with full credit to AUB. Prior to that, students had to sit for full entrance exams to get into second or third year at the university. Co-education was also a first at Birzeit. We had mixed classes at the high school level but male and female students had their separate campuses after school. As we started the Junior College we had to start carefully into getting a full co-educational system with mixed theatrical and musical plays—not a common happening at the time. The dormitories were separate, of course.

My mentor when I started my work at Birzeit was Musa Nasir, the principal and co-founder of Birzeit School and College. From him I learned the elements of public administration and the leadership and planning of an educational institution that always needed public support, especially if one insisted on high quality and excellence. I learned a lot from my students and colleagues and appreciated the need

to keep one's ears open to listen to criticism and see how elements of this criticism could be used in a positive manner to the benefit of the institution. I took after my father in being compassionate with my students and colleagues, as he was with his employees as a successful contractor.

After the occupation of the rest of Palestine in 1967, the College continued its work and later decided to develop into a full four-year College and later to a University with programmes in Arts, Sciences, Business and Engineering and a graduate programme in Education. In November 1974, the Israeli military authorities deported Dr. Hanna Nasir, who was the president of the University at that time, and I took over the running of the University and continued to do so until his return in 1993. During this period, the university grew and developed into the leading Palestinian university. Our graduates stood out as leaders in their communities and were able to do well in the best universities abroad. I played a major role in both keeping the spirit of the university and in leading the University in the right direction: training the students in the practice of democracy, non-violent resistance, putting public good ahead of personal interest and respect for community work. There was a rich extra-curricular programme which helped in building the well rounded personality of our graduates.

I am an independent Palestinian Arab nationalist, strongly attached to the land of our forefathers. I am an educator who helped build and develop the higher education system in Palestine, and a founding member of the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel Campaign which started in 2004. Perhaps one of the most important organizations that influenced me as a person and a citizen is the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs and particularly its long-serving presidents, Dorothy Hodgkin, a Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, and Joseph Rotblatt, a Nobel laureate in Peace. It is through the Pugwash Conference that I became more aware of the responsibility of scientists in resolving conflicts by peaceful means and the role scientists play in the development of weapons of mass destruction and hence their ethical responsibility for using their knowledge for the elimination of such weapons, eventually leading to a war-free world.

I, as part of the majority of Palestinians, felt that to end occupation and obtain our freedom we must fight for it. The issue then becomes what kind of fight. I chose resistance and fight by non-violent means as Gandhi did in India and Mandela in South Africa. In each of these countries you had a power with a formidable and well-trained army controlling and oppressing the indigenous population, just as in our case. However the similarity stops there as in none of these cases was the power interested or intent on displacing the population and 'importing' people from all over the globe to settle them in the land that is cleansed from its original inhabitants. I know that Israel depends a lot on world support and thus, we need to address first the international civil society and academics, and we can only do that by convincing these groups of the seriousness of the problem and the violations Israel committed and continues to commit against us. But we cannot do that while we are also violating human rights by attacking civilians even though Israel is committing crimes against

our civilian population. The world is waking up and I think it is just a matter of time before Israel will have to be held accountable for its crimes against humanity and justice will be done and peace will follow by ending the Israeli occupation of our land leading to the establishment of a state in Palestine where all people have equal rights including the right of return for the Palestinians who were expelled or left their land and property during periods of war. I am amongst the leadership that works with the civil society towards this end.

Q. What are some of the key educational 'problematics' that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

The problems in education that have been mounting during the last fifteen years are enormous and one does not know where to start. Let us say that, if any good came out of the Oslo agreement of 1993, it is the fact that the Palestinians took charge of the education portfolio and that, for the first time ever, they had the chance to prepare their own school curricula and to run their education system. However, Israel, still as the controlling power and with the upper hand, realized the importance of education for self-determination and independence and put all kinds of obstacles to hamper this operation:

[a] Funding: Israel started to hit on sources of funding for the curricula and textbooks on the (unfounded) grounds that in Geography and History textbooks there is incitement against Israel. As an example, in the Geography of Palestine, we use the Palestine under the mandate map, and Israel would say that we did not recognize Israel's existence. We responded by asking what borders we should use, as Israel has not yet set its official borders. Luckily, the EU as the major donor investigated the matter and realized that the allegations of Israel and Israeli settler organization that started the allegations, were unfounded.

[b] Closure of some schools during the second Intifada and occupying the schools for the use of the occupation army during certain operations.

[c] Erecting check points between cities and villages, often leading to complete siege of certain villages—leading to the inability of students of all ages to reach their schools or universities. These check points reached a total of over 600, dispersed all over the West Bank. How these check points help Israel's security is something that I cannot fathom. On the contrary, these checkpoints provide less security for Israel as they create frustrations and anger leading some people to take violent actions.

[d] The 'Apartheid Wall' which Israel calls the 'separation fence', is a wall of concrete slabs as high as 8 meters that is built mostly on Palestinian land occupied in 1967 and often comes between students and their schools in a neighbouring town or village and between farmers and their fields. The Wall winds in such ways as to annex to Israel most Israeli settlements (which are illegal according to international law), as well as most of the areas in the West Bank which have the underground water tables. It is 900 kilometres long, compared to the borders between Israel and the

Palestinian territory on June 4th 1967—the so-called Green Line—which are only 300 kilometres long.

All these issues come at a time when the Ministry of Education is trying to cope with ever-increasing demands on education: the building of schools, and the recruitment of more teachers to meet this demand. This puts pressure on the budget that is mostly dependent on external donors—a source that is not always reliable, making it difficult to plan far ahead.

Of course, under these circumstances, compromises have to be made: quality of education suffers as a result of the increasing students/teacher ratio and crowding of facilities.

I have not mentioned in all this the siege on the Gaza Strip which has been going on for four years now. The siege is a collective punishment that is considered by the international community as a war crime. This siege, where Israel controls what material enters into Gaza, has affected education in several ways: simple things as pencils and writing papers were not allowed in. Travel restrictions affect students wishing to go abroad for further studies, or teachers who wish to go for self-improvement or for carrying research with colleagues abroad; it also affects the ability of universities to develop and update their laboratories. Of course, the 2008 attack on an already besieged Gaza made things much worse, given the destruction of its infrastructure and a number of schools and university buildings.

These are problems directly related to the Israeli harsh occupation and will end only when occupation ends.

In addition to all the above, I must add my concerns about two major issues not related to occupation: the quality of higher education and the high percentage of high school graduates opting for academic rather than vocational and technical education (VTE). The trend in Palestinian society has been to concentrate on academic higher education, resulting in a great deal of pressure on universities to admit ever-increasing numbers of students without providing the required physical facilities or the number of qualified faculty and staff to maintain a reasonable quality of education. This led to the overloading of the faculty with teaching hours, thus reducing their ability to carry out research of reasonable quality, if at all. Thus the quality of programmes, by and large, has suffered significantly in the last decade. A major cause is the lack of finances available to enable the universities to attract the qualified teachers needed to improve the student/teacher ratio and to make progress in the research output. For a developing country like Palestine, poor quality of education is highly detrimental and affects negatively the development of the country.

The other issue which is related to the first is the low proportion of high school graduates enrolled in technical and vocational schools. Not enough tertiary TVET institutions are available, but the major reason is the lack of proper guidance at school and at home to direct students to the TVET sector. There is a social/psychological factor as well, that may be common in developing countries where the prevalent idea is about the superior social position of university graduates over

TVET graduates, which makes the university education the first choice of high school graduates, with only a few enrolling in TVET colleges as a first choice. This has also led to some of the two-year colleges to strive to upgrade to four-year programmes not out of necessity as much as out of prestige and the ability hence to attract more students to these schools. The cost-benefit of such an upgrade is questionable in most cases.

These two issues need a policy decision which should be accompanied by a financial commitment to support tertiary education and to link this support with quality. Support from donor countries should include a well planned manpower development programme whereby top graduates are sent abroad to select universities to receive the training and education and come back to serve in the country.

There have been several studies about TVET which the Ministry of Education should start implementing seriously, committing an appropriate budget both for manpower development (including training) and for building and equipment.

Q. What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in your country/region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in your country/region?

In my country—Palestine—education, whether primary, secondary or tertiary, is a top priority for every family to the extent that it is almost an obsession. This came as a result of the dispossession of the large majority of the population by the Zionists in 1948 who managed, through a major ethnic cleansing operation, to expel two thirds of the population. These people, bereft of their land and earthly possessions, became refugees in the neighbouring countries living in a state of statelessness. This is when the value of education became apparent since those who had nothing but their education were able to manage and succeed in starting a new life. Palestinians learned the hard way that education is a valuable commodity that, once possessed, cannot be taken away from them.

At the same time all countries in the region were experiencing for the first time freedom from colonialism, and governments were aware of the importance of education for development and for preparing the cadres for self-government. As the Palestinians had no country of their own with the exception of what was left of Palestine (which, in 1950, became part of the kingdom of Jordan), they helped in this process of development. As skilled and educated workers they played a major role in developing these countries and these workers became the major source of income for the families left in the refugee camps. Throughout this period the Palestinians depended on the neighbouring Arab countries—Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan—for providing university education, and therefore felt no pressing need for starting universities of their own. However, after the war of 1967, when the rest of Palestine was occupied by Israel, and the travel of young people from the occupied territory became a harrowing and humiliating experience, the need arose for establishing universities in the occupied Palestinian territories in spite of the

difficulties put in front of them by the Israeli occupation authorities. By 1993 eight universities were established and operated on a non-profit basis, with major funding for the running expenses coming from the PLO and a small part from fees paid by students.

During the 70s and 80s the liberal democratic atmosphere was dominant at the universities. With the formation of the Palestinian National Authority, the university campuses gradually underwent unwelcome changes: factionalism increased and students tended to increasingly resort to violence as frustration mounted. The high hopes of liberation and state formation were shattered as the West Bank and Gaza were littered with check points that made simple communication and movement of people and goods a traumatic experience. Israeli violence mounted with increasing violations of human rights, expropriation of land, the building of more settlements, and Jewish-only roads to secure these settlements, settlers' violence against the Palestinian population and against olives and other fruit trees (cutting, burning), the Apartheid wall—all this happening while our Palestinian Authority stands helpless. All this raised the level of anger to a degree that violence replaced reason amongst some students. I must hasten to say that this is not the general state of affairs but the gradual change might be indicative of a trend that might reach alarming consequences if the political situation continues to deteriorate. There is now though, a movement to adopt non-violent resistance among the civil society and student population in particular. This may not be related to student violence, but it could affect it especially with signs of success of non-violent protests abroad that could affect the situation at home.

*Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why***?**

The establishment of Centres of Excellence in the Palestinian universities is a development that should be commended. The Quality Improvement Fund (QIF) established with the help of the World Bank, not only helped in the creation of these centres, but also helped to bring about better and stronger cooperation amongst the local universities. This cooperation is an important and healthy development which was missing at the early stages of the development of the universities. Another interesting development is the introduction of e-learning in several universities. This is a relatively new development in Palestine and not only does this help overcome the issue of road blocks and difficulties students meet in getting to their schools or universities, but it also allows the introduction of new methods of learning and is especially helpful for teachers to improve the quality of learning not only at the high school level but also at the university level where it hardly existed before in this area. This matter meets some resistance on the part of some administrators, but has proved its effectiveness when applied in government schools and training institutes.

I am not happy about the trend of expanding graduate programmes where quality is not up to the level expected, as qualified faculty members are not available in

sufficient numbers. Qualified faculty are overworked and hence cannot give the time needed to produce outputs of good quality. I am worried that the economic factor of admitting a large number of students (who pay tuition fees in excess of the cost in these programmes), plays a major part in the decision to open such courses. The need for the programmes could be there, but without adequate number of qualified faculty there is no justification for such a development. Another matter of great concern to me is the poor linguistic skills amongst graduates. Students are admitted in increasing numbers from government schools where the level of communications skills—particularly in English—is rather poor. The universities are hardly doing anything to improve this, and universities which in the past paid more attention to English, for more than one reason, have dropped the matter of remedial courses in English that ensured the adequate standard of graduates in that language. I believe that the mastery of a second language, in our case English, is essential for enabling the graduates to have access to the up-to-date information and developments in their fields and in the world. In this age of globalisation, English is an important tool that would give the person an edge when competing for jobs or for being a leader in his or her community, able not only to communicate with fellow countrymen but with the world at large.

Q. What comments would you care to make about the impact of globalisation and/or regionalisation (e.g. Europeanisation) on educational development in your country/region?

For a small country like Palestine, networking amongst universities with the outside world was vital for their development and survival. It was therefore imperative for the universities to follow programmes that allow their graduates (or even undergraduates) to transfer to higher levels of undergraduate studies, or graduate studies abroad without losing credit for the work they did. We therefore followed the credit hour system which suited us and was more flexible. Fortunately, with globalisation, European universities with the advent of the European common market and later the European Union, pressed for better mobility amongst their students and that helped us also. Palestinian universities later established a network with the European universities (the Palestinian European Academic Cooperation in Education—with the appropriate acronym PEACE Programme) in 1991. This enabled our students to pursue higher degrees, and our faculty to carry out joint research programmes, at the universities that were members in the network which reached over 40 European universities.

With student mobility becoming easier amongst the region and the wider world—especially with Europe and the US—it was imperative that standardization and assurance of quality at the universities be properly attended to. The Ministry of Higher Education established the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission as an independent Unit to support this endeavour. This commission became a member of the International Quality Assurance Agencies network. Thus, because of globalisation, the monitoring of quality of programmes at the universities made

mobility amongst students even more meaningful and will serve to promote understanding and better communication among universities worldwide. In my opinion this is an important and very positive development that came about through globalisation. It will take time to make sure that all the programmes in all the universities meet the requirement of quality, but this is already happening and will gradually become a part of the development process.

No doubt, students and graduates of Palestinian universities will benefit from this development as it will improve their competitive ability in the bigger job market and will help in their mobility among universities abroad. Faculty members of Palestinian universities equally benefit from this trend as it improves their ability to carry out research with colleagues from other universities abroad who are part of the network. It also allows faculty members from European universities in the network to join their colleagues in Palestine to give courses or to carry out joint research in Palestine, thus allowing them to get to know our situation first hand. This is a matter of great importance as it contributes to international understanding, and to a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict in our region.

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MURAD JURDAK

American University of Beirut—Lebanon

jurdak@aub.edu.lb

SEARCHING FOR PRAXIS AND EMANCIPATION IN AN OLD CULTURE

Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life and your most noteworthy achievements as an educator/scholar/citizen. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.

I was born in 1943 in Marj'youn, a town in South Lebanon about 100 kilometres south-east of Beirut and about ten kilometres from the Palestinian borders then. The town residents may be described according to the standards in the 1950s, as mainly middle class, including merchants, landowners, and professionals with a minority working class of soldiers, artisans, and workers. My father was an artisan/small contractor, and as such my family was a working class family. My mother, who had a high school diploma from an American missionary school and had a working knowledge of English, was considered to be an educated individual according to the standards of the time. My family, especially my mother, had high educational expectations for the children, particularly for me, being the only male child in the family.

Two bundles of events stand out in my memory. First, as a child of six years, I suddenly became aware of the existence of the Palestinian issue when an elderly Palestinian couple, Imm Mousa and Abu Hussein, came unexpectedly to live in a room in the basement of our shabby house. They were referred to as refugees from Palestine. The couple looked happy as if they were coming to visit for a short time waiting for the 'events' in Palestine to clear up. Imm Mousa treated and pampered me like her son. After few months, the couple suddenly faded away as suddenly as they first appeared, most probably to join one of the hastily primitive shelters that were set up by the UN to house the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees for what was thought to be few months before returning to their homes in Palestine. Until now, I do not know what made my family share their poverty and the little they had with this Palestinian couple!

The second bundle of events which I vividly remember pertains to the critical role that the transistor radio played in connecting me to the world of news and culture. With this little magic transistor box in my hand and from my poor home in this remote town I could follow what was happening in the world. I took special

interest in the broadcast from radio Cairo which had at that time a cultural radio channel that specialized in broadcasting and critiquing classical plays and music. The transistor was an artefact that helped shape my educational and cultural formation.

My education at school and university was a continuing struggle to work in order to support myself and my family and at the same time maintain a very high academic achievement standard, which I regarded as the only thing that could give me a head start to obtain a scholarship to enable me to continue my education and to move up the social ladder.

My career as a mathematics educator started when, upon graduation from the American University of Beirut (AUB), I had my second encounter with the Palestinian issue when I took the job of an assistant teacher training specialist in mathematics at the Institute of Education run jointly by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) and UNESCO. The Institute of Education provided long- and short-term in-service teacher education programs to teachers in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza as well as in the refugee host countries (Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria). My job was to cooperate with the UNESCO mathematics education specialist to design and supervise the implementation of the mathematics education courses for mathematics teachers in all UNRWA schools. In the course of my job, I had to visit the UNRWA schools in the Palestinian camps regularly and conduct training sessions for teachers there.

My experiences in the UNRWA schools made me aware of the extent to which education is intricately linked to social context and justice. Here I came face to face with a human tragedy, where the Palestinian people in their totality were uprooted by force and intimidation from their homes in their country Palestine, to be accommodated in refugees camps with minimum provisions for survival. On the one hand, I had a chance to experience the glaring injustice which was evident in the daily life of the people in the camps as well as in the schools. On the other hand, I also experienced the human compassion reflected in the tremendous efforts of UNRWA to provide subsistence and education via UNRWA schools, which were comparable to, and even better than public schools in the Arab countries which hosted the Palestinian refugees. Now that I reflect on that experience, I realize that education in the Palestinian camps was more meaningful to the people than any of the many countries I had the chance to know.

I finished my Ph.D. in 1973 and joined the Department of Education and the Science and Mathematics Education Centre (SMEC) at AUB. As it often happens, I started my career there by developing the courses for the Master degree in mathematics education. As a young assistant professor, I was inspired, in this foundational phase, by my professors and their courses at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. My teaching at AUB and my supervision of MA theses had little impact on my belief system regarding the social aspects of education. Attempting to publish a paper on my first research project in a scholarly journal was a remarkably daring feat. For some reason, the journal of *Educational Studies in*

Mathematics (ESM) attracted my attention because it dealt with topics similar to my project. The editor of ESM was Freudenthal himself, one of the early fathers of mathematics education, who was the founder, editor, and the single irrefutable referee of ESM. Frankly, I was not intimidated to send the manuscript to ESM because I was simply not then aware of the weight and temper of Freudenthal. To my great surprise, I received a letter from Freudenthal responding to my submission in strong and unquestionable authority to tell me that, unlike some of the 'rubbish' he received, there may be something good in my manuscript but I needed to work on it. I did revise the manuscript and it was eventually published. My first successful experience with publishing in international mathematics education journals encouraged me first to continue my career as a mathematics education researcher and second, it initiated me to the 'trade' of publishing in international journals.

An experience which had a lasting impact on my conception of social aspects of education was my involvement in several mathematics curriculum development projects in Saudi Arabia and Sudan. This brought me face to face with the actual world of policy makers, schools, teachers, and students. Through institutional arrangement between the American University of Beirut and some Arab ministries of education, the Science and Mathematics Education Centre was charged with implementing science and mathematics curriculum development in some Arab countries. I assumed the leadership role in the mathematics education of these projects. Saudi Arabia was an oil-rich kingdom with vast financial resources and very ambitious plans for social development but within the strict interpretation of Islam. The Sudan, on the other hand, was a poor, vast, agrarian republic with limited financial resources to meet its development needs. Culturally, Saudi Arabia is an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously homogeneous Moslem society, whereas Sudan is (was) an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse society. The education system in Saudi Arabia grew out of religious community schools to become a vast public education system whose schools were equipped with modern facilities and mostly expatriate teachers from other Arab countries, mainly from Egypt; whereas, the education system in Sudan was modelled in its educational approach after that of Britain, which had ruled the country before the fifties.

The Sudanese schools lacked in facilities and equipment but were in good supply of well-prepared Sudanese teachers. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Sudan had a unique tradition in teacher education. In the 1930s, Griffiths, one of HMI inspectors of education, decided to establish an institution to prepare teachers for rural areas and set up an institute of education, calling it Bakht-Al-Rida after the name of the nearest little village. There he built a campus with minimal facilities similar to what one would expect in the rural areas of Sudan. The recruited student teachers were required to live on campus and lead a combined life of work and education in this minimalist environment. The student teachers as a group were expected to develop, test, and debate the school curriculum, lesson by lesson. Griffiths documented the establishment of Bakht-Al-Rida and his experiences there in a book, now out of print, under the title *An Experiment in Education* (Griffiths, 1953). For about five

years in the mid-seventies, our team had the chance to work with teams of local mathematics educators and to visit schools and meet with teachers in both Saudi Arabia and Sudan. The socioeconomic and cultural contrast between Saudi Arabia and Sudan sharpened my awareness of the complexity of how and to what extent the socioeconomic and cultural contexts mediate student mathematics learning. I emerged from these experiences with a double identity, a mathematics education researcher and a mathematics educator. The researcher identity made me conform to the standards set by the scholarly community without much regard to implications of my research to practice. On the other hand, the educator identity pushed me to use my expertise in the field to give judgments and recommendation to policy makers and practitioners without regard to research findings. By the end of eighties I was able to achieve a professional transformation by integrating the researcher and educator identities through integrating theory and praxis!

Q. What have been some of the most formative moments in your own education? Here you can also tell readers about the individuals, movements, organisations, etc that were most influential in shaping your development as an educator/scholar/ citizen.

In the early primary grades, I became more conscious of my socioeconomic status. Somehow this awareness gave me a sense of empowerment. Now that I can analyze it from my present perspective, I can trace that sense of empowerment to my home environment which developed in me a resilient motivation to achieve, as the only way up the socioeconomic ladder for me and for my family and to an obsessive drive to achieve distinction in school work to the point that I became determined to achieve the highest average in class in every subject. Given this head start, I started to realize that the personal capital I owned (my ability for distinguished academic achievement) and my home capital (attitudes and values) were valuable to the point that the principal of the school, a compassionate and visionary educator, allowed me to continue in school even after I informed him that my family would not be able to pay tuition anymore. Throughout my school years, not only had I not felt disadvantaged because of my socioeconomic status, but on the contrary, I did feel empowered and proud of being a disadvantaged student.

Coming from a low socioeconomic status would have been a barrier to join a private university, let alone the most expensive one. The 'home capital' I carried and my school success story helped me land a full scholarship at the American University of Beirut, the elitist and prestigious university in the Middle East. The requirement of my scholarship was that the field of study be a developmental one, such as agriculture, education, or public administration. My school grades made me eligible to be accepted in any field of study. However, I chose math as a major, and to satisfy the requirements of my scholarship I had to study for a teaching diploma, along with my bachelor degree in math. Though I would have preferred literature, I eventually chose mathematics as my subject because of my belief that it was regarded by society as the more prestigious of all other school subjects both intellectually and economically.

At AUB I had my first true experience with a multi-cultural society. In the nineteen sixties, the AUB student body, which had a representation of over 60 nationalities, was a truly multi-cultural community with students coming from many countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, Sudan, Cyprus, most Arab countries, and many European and American countries. The professors also represented a multi-cultural mix. This experience taught me the positive side of living in a multi-cultural community with people of different colours, languages, and cultures.

One of the significant things that I learned at AUB was how to make choices and take responsibility for their consequences. AUB has a long history of adopting and practicing a liberal education model since its establishment in 1966. Its motto '*that you may have life and have it abundantly*' was engraved on AUB main gate then and continues there to be a beacon for its education. As a teenager coming from a remote town where most of the important choices were made for me, I found myself challenged by the expectations at AUB to make my own choices and carry the responsibility for their consequences. For the first time I was on my own to decide what, how, when, or if I want to learn. At AUB, I made one of the most significant choices of my life when, after graduation from AUB, I got married to my wife Muna who studied mathematics with me at AUB.

After completing the Bachelor degree in mathematics and the Teaching Diploma in the teaching of mathematics, I decided to follow a Master degree in mathematics at AUB, and luckily was granted a teaching assistantship. However, during that period, I was initiated into the real world of teaching mathematics from two entry points: First, during my study for the Master degree, I had to teach freshman mathematics courses as part of my assistantship, and second, I concurrently started to be a part-time secondary school mathematics teacher. Both teaching experiences reinforced my conception of the teaching of mathematics that I had formed, based on experiences with my former mathematics teachers and my experience during my undergraduate study at AUB. At the time I viewed math teaching as a delivery act which involved the presentation and explanation of mathematical concepts in a clear, correct, and systematic way. The teaching act normally ended with assessment, which constituted the basis for judging students: Those who did not meet the 'standard' for success were judged to be deficient in their abilities or in their background knowledge. I rarely thought that the emotional, social, economic, or family background could influence how students learned, what they learned, or how much they learned.

My work with UNRWA/UNESCO Institute of Education ended in 1971 when I accepted a fellowship to study for a PhD in mathematics education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The fellowship was a part of a programme aimed at building a capacity in science and mathematics education at the American University of Beirut in order to form a centre for science and mathematics education there. At the time I accepted the offer, the Science and Mathematics Centre had already been established and had four science educators who completed the fellowship programme at the University of Wisconsin-Madison but had no mathematics educator.

My education at University of Wisconsin-Madison helped expand my technical and professional knowledge but fell short of making a transformation in my basic conceptions of education and its role. At UW-Madison I was initiated, for the first time, into research issues in mathematics education and research methods in social sciences. I had also my first opportunity to engage in ongoing research projects there. However, my experience did not add to my understanding of the social aspects of education. For example, my dissertation which was based on a teaching experiment of mathematical structure was conducted in Lebanon in two school systems which accommodated students with diametrically opposite socioeconomic and even cultural backgrounds: One was the UNRWA school system which served the children of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the second was the most exclusive school in the country. However, the dissertation did not try, in any way, to explain the learning of students in terms of their socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds but focused on the effect of teaching mathematical structure on mathematics learning. The study as conducted did not take note of the social context and assumed it could have been conducted anywhere with the same methods and probably with the same conclusions.

Q. What are some of the key educational 'problematics' that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

Almost all the critical educational issues that have preoccupied me in the last decade emanate from my conviction that it is through reflection and action upon the world (praxis) that individuals and communities achieve transformation and emancipation. For me, education ought to be driven by praxis in order to be meaningful and empowering. The educational 'problematics' that has preoccupied me most are: The role of the Arabic language, problem solving in school and life, equity and quality of education in the Arab countries.

Achieving literacy in the Arabic language is problematic. First, the large gap between spoken Arabic and formal Arabic as taught in schools results in extremely limited use and practice of the academic Arabic learned. Second, Arabic is the language of the Qur'an which for Muslims is not simply a revelation but the very words of God communicated to the world through an immutable text in Arabic. The widely held conception of Arabic as a sacred language dismissed or resisted, mostly on ideological grounds, the many attempts to bridge the gap between classical Arabic and Arabic as used in the real world. This led to an odd situation where the Arabic taught in schools is perceived as an academic language and as a cultural carrier whereas spoken Arabic (or a foreign language, mainly English) is the one used for expression, communication, and thinking in real life.

Another live issue in Lebanon is the use of a foreign language, instead of the native Arabic, as a language of instruction in mathematics and sciences. Foreign languages took such a stronghold that mathematics and sciences continued to be

taught in a foreign language even after independence in 1943 and despite laws and regulations to limit such practices. The social implications of the use of foreign language are obvious. Mathematics and sciences are often described as critical filters to university education in general and to scientific occupations in particular. The foreign language adds one more filter since the socially and economically disadvantaged have less opportunities to learn a foreign language and practice it in their home milieu. Consequently, mathematics and sciences taught in a foreign language tend to discriminate educationally and economically against students coming from low socioeconomic classes. There is also a divergence among Lebanese on the implications of teaching in a foreign language to individual and collective identity. There are those who believe that Arabic is a carrier of the Arab-Islamic culture and hence should be maintained as the language of teaching on one hand, and others who believe that the foreign language is a carrier of the western culture through which they want to maintain cultural ties with the west. Obviously, the social and national divisiveness becomes more complicated if the lines of social divisions due to the use of a foreign language coincide with cultural issues. I expressed my thoughts regarding these issues in a lecture (Jurdak, 1989) given at the International Conference of Mathematics Education (ICME).

The second educational issue which has pre-occupied me for some time is the apparent discrepancy between problem solving, particularly in mathematics, in the school and real life contexts. My research of this issue led me to discover Leont'ev activity theory and Engestr_m activity system as powerful constructs for looking at school and real life as two different sociocultural activity systems which in turn helped in understanding the discrepancy in problem solving between school and real life. My research in this area resulted in a series of three articles all published in the journal *Educational Studies in Mathematics of Education* (Jurdak & Shahin, 1999, 2001, and Jurdak, 2006).

One issue that has pre-occupied me for a while is the question of educational equity in quality education. In my book *Toward Equity in Quality in Mathematics Education* (Jurdak, 2009), I argue that educational equity and quality are inseparable constructs and that the challenge is to move towards equity-in-quality. In Part 1 of the book, I provided an analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of the construct of equity-in-quality and made the case that education is a purposeful collective activity enacted in a specific social-cultural context and constitutes a global nested hierarchical multi-factor system and that inequities in quality education result from multiple interactions of the multifactor system thus rendering inequities amenable to change. In Part 2 of the book, I used the theoretical framework to analyze TIMSS 2003 contextual data across a sample of 18 countries in order to identify, compare, and interpret student, teacher, school, and country related factors which account for variation in mathematics achievement within and across the 18 countries. Based on the analysis, I suggest a multifactor strategy for moving towards equity-in-quality in mathematics which I believe may be relevant to education as a whole.

Q .What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in your country/region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in your country/region?

One of the forces that has shaped educational policy and practice in Lebanon is the accumulation of its modern history. Lebanon has been and still is a cross-road of different cultures. In its recent history, Lebanon has become a bridge between the western culture and the Arab-Islamic culture. In the 19th century, Christian missionaries started to establish schools which reflected western values through several means, the most important of which was using French or English, not only as a foreign language, but also as a medium of instruction. In the last three decades there was an unprecedented growth in Islamic schools that were founded by charitable organizations and even political parties. Because the religiously-sponsored schools promote different value systems they tend to deal with educational issues from different perspectives. This situation makes the approval and implementation of urgently-needed forward-looking educational policies a tedious job which normally ends in consensual policies that continue the *status quo* in one way or another.

The nature of the political system is a major obstacle in the development of the educational system in Lebanon. The socio-political history of Lebanon has produced a confessional political system based on what is called consensual democracy based on the consensus of the different Lebanese confessional groups. Confessional groups exercise their political power through constitutional provisions, key laws, and unwritten political conventions. The constitution which is based on the Taif accord of 1990, stipulates among other things that the parliamentary seats and the key administrative posts should be divided equally between Christians and Muslims. Furthermore, the election laws since 1990 stipulated quota representation for different dominations of Christians and Muslims. With regard to education, the Taif Accord called for unified textbooks in history and civic education and re-emphasized the principle of 'freedom of teaching' which is generally intended to safeguard the right of the Lebanese groups to open schools and other educational institutions.

The political system is frequently paralyzed when faced with critical sensitive issues and education is not immune in that regard. For example, in 1997, the Ministry of Education undertook a national curriculum project from grades K-12. The formation of the curriculum committees was a delicate exercise to balance the representation of different political and confessional groups. In certain sensitive subjects, like history, different groups lobbied strongly to include their discrepant conceptions of the history of Lebanon to the extent that the history curriculum has yet to be issued. Another example is what happened to the higher education sector in the last three decade. The number of universities and colleges mushroomed from a handful of long and well-established universities, including the Lebanese university, to more than forty private universities and colleges many of which belong to confessional groups and are hardly subjected to any standard of quality control or

assurance. The weak political will renders the government's role in education more as a referee than a decision maker.

The historical accumulation produced a two-tier educational system of public and private school which acts as a potent force that has dampened the equitable development of the education in Lebanon. The public school system in Lebanon is inferior to the private system in terms of size, quality, and efficiency. One unusual feature of the educational system in Lebanon is that the private school system accommodates the majority of students (60% compared to 40% for public school system). The general perception, supported by evidence from international comparative studies, continues to be that the quality of education is much better in private schools than public schools because of the relatively superior quality of human and material resources in private schools on one hand, and the inefficient and bureaucratic public education system on the other hand. Because the private schools are tuition-based they can afford to attract higher quality human resources and to obtain better facilities and equipment. The public schools operate within a centralized system controlled by the ministry of education and consequently have little autonomy in their instructional decisions to enable them to adequately respond to student needs. One latent danger in the two-tier system is that the public schools accommodate low socioeconomic students, whereas the majority of students in private schools come from middle and high socioeconomic classes. This situation is a threat to social and national harmony particularly when the line of division between public and private schools coincides with social or confessional divisions.

Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why?

Lebanon adopted a number of macro, grand policies and measures in an attempt to further the educational reform agenda such as the educational revival plan in 1994 and the development and implementation of national curricula for all school subjects (except history) in 1997. However, these developments have yet to produce tangible improvements in the quality of education in the country, especially in public schools. This is because of the rigid top-down and bureaucratic educational system which allows only a little to 'trickle down' from the policy making at the top to the reality of public schools.

One development that I find promising is a small little publicized project called *School net Lebanon* whose ultimate goal is to interconnect all primary and secondary public schools and private schools and available libraries with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education using a state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure with a gateway to the global internet, supported by the latest information and communications technologies. The reasons I find this project promising are many. First, the project's goal, scope, and modern technology make it an unprecedented innovative educational project in Lebanon. Second, it is the first time in the educational history of Lebanon that there is a shared developmental

project between private and public schools under the umbrella of the ministry of education. Admittedly, the system has yet to be interactive and dynamic and to connect students and not schools. The third reason is that public schools and hopefully their students will have access to the internet which, if implemented properly, may present a challenge to public schools and their students as well as the educational system itself. Connecting to the internet is likely to develop student critical thinking through engaging students in searching for answers to their questions thus providing them with the opportunity to challenge the prevailing students' conception that the teacher and the textbooks determine the source and validity of knowledge. This is particularly important for public schools which accommodate students coming mainly from lower socioeconomic classes who normally do not have access to internet. On the negative side, the internet may be used by teachers to maintain their power to control students' knowledge by using it simply as a source of factual information to fulfil purely academic assignments.

There are many threats to the success of this project. First, the unstable political system in Lebanon does not provide any guarantee that the school net project will go beyond its pilot phase of about 130 public and private schools. Second, if the high-risk national external examination system is not aligned with the kind of learning that ICT may provide, the chances of empowering student learning through ICT will be dampened.

Q. What comments would you care to make about the impact of globalisation and/or regionalisation (e.g. Europeanisation) on educational development in your country/region?

I was one of the few mathematics educators who wrote quite early on globalisation in a lecture entitled 'Mathematics Education in the Global Village: The Wedge and the Filter' (Jurdak, 1994), given at the International Conference of Mathematics Education (ICME). I still believe that globalisation has a negative impact in terms of divisiveness (wedge) and exclusion (filter). I would like to add, however, that globalisation can have a positive impact on education as an incubator for emancipation. Globalisation is reinforcing the historically accumulated divide between developed and developing countries, which is reflected in a two-tiered global education system of different modes of educational development which I referred to as the optimal mode of development (moderate or high equity-in-quality education and integration with the global educational community) and the separate mode of development which I refer to as apartheid (low equity-in-quality education and marginalisation at the global level) (Jurdak, 2009). Globalisation has positioned developed countries at a highly favourable competitive edge in the global economy and this is likely to reinforce the educational advantage in terms of quality of their education as reflected in the results of international comparative studies (Jurdak, 2009). On the other hand, because the developing countries control two potent forces that shape global education, mainly the internet and English, globalization has helped marginalize developing countries from active participation and contribution

to global educational community. These two forces put developing countries at a disadvantage in terms of the quality of their education particularly in comparison to international standards and also in terms of preserving their valued local cultural values and practices. The positive effect of globalisation is in the empowerment it provides individuals and communities to challenge the establishment through the unrestricted instant access to information that the global communication system provides. Experience has shown that this empowerment has to start at the larger social context before it filters into the educational system.

Globalisation is likely to impact rich and poor Arab countries differently. Most oil-producing countries have invested vastly in globalising their educational systems through importing the latest educational technology and highly trained experts and introducing grand plans to modernise their curricula and instruction and at the same time were determined to preserve the ecology of their culture. However, these efforts have not so far grown roots and have yielded little in terms of the promised quality improvement in educational outcomes. One possible reason may be that these countries face the dilemma of appropriating the western technological aspects of education while closely protecting some valued aspects of their culture. Another reason may be the inherent weakness in the base of human resources in these countries. On the other hand, education in most poor Arab countries is likely to remain isolated from the effects of globalisation. Both rich and poor Arab countries will be waiting for 'Godot' or for praxis and emancipation!

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ABDULKAFI ALBIRINI

Utah State University—USA

abdulkafi.albirini@usu.edu

A SYRIAN EDUCATIONALIST IN THE USA

*Reflections on Human Relations, Practical Skills,
and Intellectual Empowerment*

Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life, and your most noteworthy achievements as an educator/scholar/citizen. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.

I was born in a small village on the outskirt of Homs (Syria) to a family of modest means but great confidence in its members. The community in which I grew up had little resources beyond farming, manual labour, and vending business. This unpropitious economic condition did not disturb the simple and happy life of the community, but it did stratify people based on their possessions, income, and position. Though my parents had no formal education, they believed in schooling as a means for socioeconomic mobility and financial security. My parents instilled in me the importance of hard work, high grades, and a sense of responsibility for my family and community. My family's orientation has allowed me to excel in my primary, middle, and high school education. I completed a bachelor's degree in English Literature from Al-Baath University, Syria in 1999. I received an award from the Syrian Ministry of Education as the top graduate in my department and a letter of distinction from the College of Arts and Humanities for having the highest average throughout the history of the College. In the same year, I was listed as the top Humanities graduate in the country by the yearly *The Top Graduate Record* (Published by the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education). I moved to the United States in 2001, where I completed my graduate studies and obtained two doctoral degrees, one in Education and another in Linguistics. I currently teach at Utah State University in the United States.

A major milestone in my personal life is the death of my father in 1994, which has allowed me to re-examine my thoughts about life and afterlife, reconsider the purpose of my human existence, and rearrange my priorities in life. On the professional level, my graduation as the top student in my college and the subsequent awards I received from the Ministry of Higher Education are major milestones in my career. I came to believe in myself and in my ability to improve my life and the lives of those around me. For the first time in my life, I came to 'experience' the value of

education and its role in defining who we are and what we are. This experience provided me with the momentum to pursue my first doctoral degree in the United States and later overcome the minor difficulties I faced as a 'stranger' in the new culture. My concentration on my graduate studies in the U.S. left me little time to explore the American social life yet allowed me to finish my first doctoral degree in Education in three years (2001-2004, the Ohio State University). At this point, I started to ponder on how much we humans can and cannot achieve, the relevance of what we achieve to the lives of others, and the utility of our 'knowledge' for dealing with real-life problems.

My biggest achievement as an educator has been my ability to relate to students from different backgrounds, share and discuss with them thoughts and ideas, and allow them to see the world from multiple perspectives and explore critically and systematically different modes of thinking, practice, and beliefs. I have received several teaching distinctions in the past ten years, which reflect my positive contribution to the education and lives of my students. In terms of scholarly work, I have published a number of papers and a book on education, educational change, and cultural relevance that I hope will benefit researchers and scholars interested in the connection between education, community, and culture. I have also published a number of articles that focus on the intersection between education, language, culture, and technology. In these works, I tried to bring to scholarly attention the importance of re-examining the assumptions upon which the new technologies are based (McLuhan, 1964), how they can limit or expand our cultural views, and their relevance to wider societal issues and concerns. The comments and inquiries that I received from colleagues in several developing countries, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, point to the relevance of these works to a wide audience.

Q. What have been some of the most formative moments in your own education? Here you can also tell readers about the individuals, movements, organisations, etc that were most influential in shaping your development as an educator/scholar/citizen.

The most formative moments in my education were in my primary school. I was very lucky to have a group of committed, caring, and enthusiastic teachers. From these teachers, I learned that a teacher-student relationship can extend beyond the classroom and that teaching is not merely about subject matter but also about compassion, empathy, and care. I remember one day when I was sick, unable to go to school. On this same day, my first-grade teacher, Sahar Hamduun, dropped by my house after school, without prior arrangement, and mentioned how the class, my colleagues and herself were sad that I had not been able to attend classes. This was not about absence, class, or teaching; it was about human relationships. I think that, if anything, my educational experience in Syria was the most crucial in the development of the moral and ethical side of me, the educator and citizen.

My study in the United States was a transformative experience for me in different ways. I arrived in the U.S. a few months before the September 11th attacks, full of enthusiasm, hope, and confidence. My move to study in the United States did not

initially carry any surprises in terms of educational expectations and social changes. I was mentally prepared for the new experience and was mostly excited about the opportunities it could provide. My initial longing to my home and family was assuaged, first, by my determination to succeed and, second, by my ability to create my own little world of study and study alone. However, the world that I constructed for myself was soon shaken by a sequence of events that the September 11th attacks brought with them. The attacks, the images of the victims, and the world reaction to the tragedy were used by American media outlets to manipulate the American public opinion with regard to what exactly happened and reinforce some of the already existent misconceptions about Arabs and Muslims. The consistent and deliberate vilification of Arabs and Muslims shook my inner self and mind. My dilemma was how to reconcile the media-made reality with my idyllic image of my people and community. In the first year of my graduate studies, I spent much time studying Arab history and civilizations. I also studied the history of Islam, particularly the life of Prophet Mohammad. I read not only about his life story, but also about his teachings and his manners. These readings helped me reaffirm my identity and restore my confidence in my beliefs, my people, and myself. At the same, the framework within which the media presented these events and the people who were involved started to nurture in me various forms of scepticism about man-made knowledge and reality, which became central to my development as a scholar. More importantly, this experience has taught me a great deal about the power of words not only to influence thinking and control behaviour, but also to change history. Thinking from an educator's perspective, I started to reconsider the role of words in defining who I am as an educator, my role in the classroom, and my ability to push students to grow and succeed.

My study experience in the U.S. was illuminating in another respect, as it helped me to compare and contrast different educational systems. Unlike its counterparts in most Arab countries, including Syria, the American educational system is more flexible and decentralized. For example, courses that seem to be overlapping in terms of topics and goals could be presented using completely different methods and from divergent perspectives. Likewise, polemics initiated by the student are often favoured to normative arguments provided in assigned course materials. My exposure to different educational systems in a number of Arab countries and the United States has been a primary landmark in my career as an educator and researcher. These experiences have exposed me not only to new ideas about the meanings of education, learning, teaching, schools, community, culture, and so on, but also to the influence of the socio-political atmosphere in defining different educational phenomena and criteria.

Q. What are some of the key educational 'problematics' that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

The problematics of education vary from one country to another and are often shaped by the socio-political and economic situation in each society. Based on my previous experience in Syria, as both a student and a teacher, I think that the main problematic of the Syrian educational system lies in its heavily centralized, top-down nature. Centralized education here refers to the existence of a central official body, such as the ministry of education, which seeks to control the means and ends of the educational process. This paradigm of education is enacted by national educational policies that dictate standards, goals, textbooks, curricula, methods, and assessment techniques. The realization of this paradigm is facilitated by the fact that decisions regarding the distribution of resources, training of teachers, and determining the content of curricula are centred in the hands of a few decision-makers.

Centralized, top-down education often manifests itself in the classroom and in the practices of the classroom authority, namely, the teacher. The teacher's role is to implement this national policy by making use of the available textbooks, standards, goals, and evaluation techniques. In terms of pedagogy, teachers often adopt what Freire (1970) called 'paternalistic' pedagogy, where the teacher assumes the role of the expert and learners assume the role of 'passive receivers' of knowledge. Teachers adopt this approach not only because it reflects the way they were taught but also because their training does not provide them with alternatives. Moreover, teachers are in some way obliged to follow this method because they have to prepare their students for standardized tests. In Syria, for example, the transition from middle school to the literary, scientific, vocational, and technical branches of high school is determined by a national test. A national test is also used to distribute 'successful' high school students among the different colleges and disciplines.

Students are required to absorb the material, memorize it, and re-produce it on the exam sheets. Students' success or failure is measured by their ability to memorize the material imparted by the teachers and contained in the textbooks. In fact, students are stratified in terms of their eligibility to different colleges (medicine, engineering, arts, etc.) based on their memorization capabilities. More importantly, because education is a major factor in socioeconomic mobility, the students' careers and socioeconomic statuses become bound by their ability to memorize. For students, the outcome of this educational process is therefore the internalization of a lot of information without having the incentive to think about it, reflect about it, appraise its validity, or consider its relevance to their own lives. This form of education is detrimental to the growth of the intellectual, humane, and critical faculties of students as productive social agents.

Another major problem concerns the incongruity between the level of educational planning and national needs. The identification of national needs is often not based on research or careful assessment but on the improvised decisions of a few educational administrators or on the experiences of senior educators. Little research is done about the needs and capacity of the job market, the exact resources required for implementing national plans, and the best methods to attain the desired goals. Further, the particular needs of the teachers and students do not factor in the plans-

needs equation. For example, in the past sixty years or so the educational system has produced much more doctors, engineers, teachers, technicians and other specialists than the Syrian local market can absorb. This explains the high rate of unemployment in the country in general and among college graduates in particular. Ironically, many private companies still rely on foreign expertise, particularly engineers and scientists, because most of the local graduates have little hands-on or research experience. A recent informal survey by a group of researchers from Damascus University and the United Nations Development Programme shows that the three major concerns of Syrian graduates are 'the gap between their theoretical knowledge and reality,' 'their little practical experience,' and 'the few work opportunities' (*Watan* Newspaper, 5 Aug., 2010). Under the title 'Syrian graduates' jobs are to search for jobs and employment offices succeeded only in counting them,' the pan-Arab daily newspaper *Al-Hayat* (6 Sept., 2010) reports the same patterns, with graduates attributing their dilemma to lack of experience and outdated educational curricula. Thus, many of the university graduates work in wage labour jobs and other low-paying jobs. Many graduates remain unemployed and therefore become a burden on the economy. Unofficial estimates put the proportion of graduates who are unemployed at thirty percent.

Many of the talented students choose to continue their education in more educationally and technologically advanced countries, particularly in the United States and Europe, and most of them stay there after the completion of their studies. This brain drain has a major effect on the educational, social, and economic well-being of the whole country. For example, the fact that most of the skilled and talented individuals stay outside the country leaves many of the key administrative positions in the ministries of education, economy, and social work in the hands of less qualified administrators, most of whom are mainly exposed to the Syrian model and therefore may not be able to offer new insights and developments into these ministries. Overall, the top-down model of education with its reliance on rote memorization, outdated curricula, *ad hoc* educational plans, and unclear vision of how to link education to development programs are main sources of problems in Syrian education.

Q. What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in your country/region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in your country/region?

Since its independence from France in 1946, Syria has witnessed a great deal of socio-political turmoil in terms of internal power conflict, military coups, and social unrest. The number of military coups between 1948 and 1970 is a world-breaking number of fifty. The political and social institutions were fragile, short-lived, and liable to dramatic changes between the successive Syrian governments. The disputing factions often restricted their arenas of struggle to the military and political domains. Education, as a social institution, played a marginal role in this socio-political conflict.

With the ascendance of the Al-Baath Party to power in 1963, a major shift happened; education came to occupy a central role in the Party's socialist and nationalist agenda. The Party's socialist and nationalist vision is reflected in its constitution, which states that 'Education is one of the State's duties by itself. Therefore, all foreign and private educational establishments shall be cancelled' (Article 45—the Syrian Ministries of Education and Higher Education have only recently licensed several private schools and universities). Furthermore, the Syrian Constitution states that 'The educational system aims at creating a socialist nationalist Arab generation…' (Article 21). This vision is materialized in the policy of centralizing the educational system as well as in the curricula. For example, a 'national education' course was added as a mandatory subject throughout the stages of primary, middle, high school and college. As the Party's constitution itself indicates, education under the Party's leadership is to serve different social purposes, the most important of which is to produce new generations that adopt the ideals of socialism and Arab nationalism.

Another front on which educational planners worked was the provision of equitable education for all, which again reflects the Party's goal to eliminate 'class discrimination' between different members of the society (Article 42). Equitable education meant providing similar learning opportunities to students through the centralization of education, standardization of curricula, goals, and assessment, and uniformity of training provided to teachers. This policy is a reaction to the pre-independence discriminatory policies which provided urban populations greater access to education, better educational facilities and resources, and more job privileges. The new policy have played a role in narrowing the social and economic gaps between different social groups (e.g. urban versus rural populations) which were the hallmark of the pre-independence socioeconomically stratified society.

However, the current configuration of the educational system may not be simply considered as a straightforward outcome of the political orientation of the ruling party. In fact, it is reasonable to say that the educational system was mainly influenced by the ethnically, religiously, and ideologically diverse nature of Syrian society. Educational planners were careful not to include in the curricula any politically sensitive, socially divisive, and religiously discriminating material. The rationale was to maintain the existing social order without arousing any sectarian tensions. Rather than opening the doors for discussion and dialogue, which may or may not always be productive, the strategy was to ignore these differences as though they did not exist. The curricula therefore emphasized conformity and allegiance to the central government rather than to ethnic, political, ideological, religious, or social affiliations. Stirring these 'socially and politically destructive issues', let alone critiquing them, became a political taboo. With the absence of well-defined criteria on what social 'destruction' is, neither teachers nor students had interest in taking the risk of discussing social and political issues that are part of their everyday lives yet may endanger their careers. The rule for the teachers was to stick to the curricula and for the students to focus on the material provided to them.

Overall, the fundamentals of the educational system in Syria are shaped largely by the very nature of Syrian society and its recent political history. The use of education for ideological purposes has become more visible since 1963, with the promotion of socialist and Arab nationalist principles.

Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country/region? How do you use these authors/texts in your own work? Feel free to cite an extended passage, and to comment on it in ways that add further insights into your own thinking.

There are three main authors whose insights on education and its relationships to larger societal issues are relevant to understanding the educational dynamics in Syria. The first is Paulo Freire, especially his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). This work is particularly important for understanding the relationship between teachers and students in the 'banking' system of education. According to Freire, the banking educational system is characterized by the existence of two poles in the educational process: the teacher and the student. The teacher's main role is to deposit information in the minds of the students, who themselves become the depositories. The student's role in restricted to 'receiving, filing, and storing the deposits' (p.72). But eventually, Freire argues, '[k]nowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other' (p.72). In other words, the mere transmission of information does not necessarily ensure learning.

Another author who deals particularly with education in the Arab World and whose work is relevant to understanding the situation of the educational apparatus in Syria is the Palestinian scholar Munir Fasheh. In an important paper published in 1990, and titled 'Community education: to reclaim and transform what has been made invisible', Fasheh criticizes the formal models of education that are 'abstract', 'symbolic' and 'theoretic' and that have no connection to real world problems—in his case, problems associated with occupation. According to him, these forms of education are as destructive as the machinery used to kill Palestinians. Moreover, education becomes hegemonic when it assimilates 'concepts, values, language, relations, and interests' that are external to the community life. In fact, he calls these forms of education hegemonic not only because of the alien ideas they include, but also because of their exclusion of forms of knowledge that are germane to the local people, resources, and environment. He calls for a community education that builds on the available strengths and resources of the community as well as the practical needs of the people. Fasheh also urges local intellectuals who are trained in Western institutions to re-pay their societies, cultures, and peoples by participating in the community education.

The work of the Syrian educational psychologist, Fakher Aqel, is also pertinent for comprehending some of the basic needs of the Syrian educational system. Aqel suggests that an educational system may fall short of its desired national goals when

it is cut off from its social surroundings and from the history of the nation. He therefore suggests that educational practices require 'originality' in terms of defining the needs of the society, addressing these needs, and availing the successful experiences in the history of the nation. Taking insights from the history and current situation of the country allows for the evolution of educational models that can further the development efforts of the country.

I find the works of these three authors insightful because they touch on the main ailments of the Syrian educational system. Freire's work envisions a new form of education, where knowledge is not received but created by the students and where teaching becomes a form of cultivating creative and critical thinking as well as a form of social empowerment. Fasheh's notion of community education underscores one of the major problems of the Syrian educational system, which often has little connection with the local people and the daily challenges facing the Syrian society. Thus, it invites a form of education that is more practical, purposeful, and inductive to the development of the learners and the local community. Aqel's emphasis on the originality of education and its relation to the sources of power in the community is also critical for addressing some of the gaps in the existing educational plans. I believe that combining the humanistic, pragmatic, and innovative aspects of education, which are supported respectively by Freire, Fasheh, and Aqel, is necessary for the success of the educational process in Syria.

Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why?

The terms 'democracy' and 'equity' are both abstract and elusive not only because they are relative (rather than absolute), but also because their meanings are malleable to socio-historical context, reality, and circumstances. Democracy and equity become more problematic when we consider the potential benchmarks against which democratic or equitable education is measured. Nonetheless, we humans often intuitively identify whether a certain action, practice, or plan carries some 'marks' of democracy or equity. Intuition is the term that may best capture my attempt to relate 'democracy' and 'equity' to the Syrian educational context. My intuitive reading of the developments outlined below is not based on first-hand experience but on observation of different reports, analyses, and information from the Ministry of Education, media, and educators.

In the past few years, the Syrian Ministry of Education has adopted a national plan to develop the outdated educational system. The plan, which is still underway and whish is supposed to be in place in 2021, was formulated in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The national plan consists of twelve related projects that aim, among many other objectives, to engage parents and community members in the education of their children, focus the dynamics of the learning process on the student, limit the role of the teacher to facilitation and guidance, offer additional opportunities for

distinguished students, and provide training opportunities for teachers and other educators.

I will focus on three projects that promise to blossom into some form of a democratic and equitable educational system (not necessarily society). The first project regards the creation of new curricula. The new curricula seek to place students at the centre of the learning process, enhance their abilities to solve real-life problems, and build their practical skills. In a recent press release, the Deputy Minister of Education Farah Sulieman Al-Mutlaq confirmed that the new curricula come with a whole package of changes that includes teacher training, new goals and standards, and new evaluation methods. The promise of these changes lies in their potential to develop critical thinking skills and hands-on experiences that are needed for the growth of the intellectual, humane and professional faculties of the students. Naturally, these skills are the mark of productive and responsible citizenry.

A second major project concerns the integration of technology in learning, including the creation of a local net that connects schools to each other and to the server of the Ministry. According to the Ministry, the aim is not only to equip students with basic technological skills to survive in the age of technology, but also to use different technological media in their own learning. The integration of technology (particularly the Internet) goes hand in hand with the implementation of the new curricula. For example, in 'the experimental stage' of the new curricula, students are sometimes asked to find information about certain real-life problems on the internet and to evaluate this information. This project offers a lot of potential because it supports students' autonomy in exploring, evaluating, and selecting the relevant information that may not necessarily be provided by the teacher or the textbook. The problem here is that many Syrian schools and homes do not have access to the Internet, which has induced much criticism for the new national plan.

The third project focuses on involving parents and community members in decision-making with respect to the schooling of their children. For example, community members may provide suggestions about student learning styles, teaching methods, classroom settings, and so on. Individual members of the community can also contribute to the equipment of the schools from their private income. The participation of parents and community members in the education of their children may prove productive not only for bettering the learning experiences of the children themselves but also for empowering the parents and the community.

The new curricula are implemented experimentally this year. Surprisingly, the curricula have been met by a storm of criticism from parents, teachers, students, and university faculty. The leading newspapers in the country have reported major concerns about the curricula and the accompanying changes. Among these concerns are the lack of infrastructure, the poor training of the teachers, and even the blurred vision about the details of the change process. I think that these criticisms may only be a reaction to change. As Marshall & Ruohonen (1998, p.1) observe, change, whether related to humans or organizations, is a 'fitful process' that is often characterized by many obstacles and regressions. Despite their potential and well-

intentioned goals, these projects may not necessarily contribute to the creation of a democratic or equitable educational system. Many societal issues can influence this process, especially when the socio-political ambience is not supportive of it.

Q. What comments would you care to make about the impact of globalisation and/or regionalisation (e.g. Europeanisation) on educational development in your country/region?

Syrian education, like its counterparts in several other developing countries, is torn between the impact of globalization and the need for regionalization. In fact, the new national educational plan and the ongoing changes in the Syrian educational system are mostly instigated by the encroaching requirements of the new global economy, cultural forms, media, and technologies of communication. As expressed by several Syrian educational planners, the changes aim to prepare students for the information age, integrate technology in the learning experiences of the students, and enhance the critical processing of information. The partnership between the Ministry of Education and UNESCO is not only an indicator of the Ministry's acquiescence to the demands of globalization, but also its desire to learn from the experiences of technologically more advanced countries.

Regardless of whether they relate to globalization or whether they will help enhance the socio-economic potential of the country, the new initiatives are important and necessary for equipping students with skills indispensible for the job market, for the intellectual and social well-being of the students, and for opening new opportunities for the community to participate in decisions that touch the foundations of their own lives. It should be remembered that the main advancements that countries such as China, India, and Malaysia are witnessing can be traced to major developments in their educational systems. For example, Malaysia, one of the most technologically advanced countries in Asia, owes much of its rapid economic growth to its huge investment in the educational system, which, according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, has ranged between 16% and 20% of the overall government expenditure in the past twenty years.

Despite their search for change that cope with the challenges posed by the global developments around them, the top educational administrators of the country still place these changes within a 'national framework.' For example, the Ministry of Education has developed national benchmarks designed to gauge the outcomes of these changes in terms of the societal needs. Much emphasis is also placed on the importance of national identity, belonging, history, and so on. It seems to me that the Ministry's vision of maintaining a balance between the demands of globalization and national needs is important for both attaining global economic competitiveness and attending to community priorities. Moreover, it helps create identity-balanced individuals who can compete in the global economy and simultaneously serve their own communities in meaningful ways. But again, it is too early to judge the future direction of the new initiatives, particularly in the light of the current discontent with their implementation

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DEVORAH KALEKIN-FISHMAN

University of Haifa—Israel

dkalekin@construct.haifa.ac.il

CROSSING BORDERS

Ambiguities and Convictions

Q. What have been some of the most formative moments in your own education? Here you can also tell readers about the individuals, movements, organisations, etc that were most influential in shaping your development as an educator/scholar/ citizen.

Most formative in my life were the moments that were strung together as my childhood and adolescence—in a milieu that was thoroughly multicultural. I had the great good luck to be born, grow up and go to school in New York. My parents had migrated to the US from a small town in the part of Poland that was occupied by Russia until the end of World War I, now part of the Ukraine. As young adults, they studied some English and immediately went to work to make enough money to live on. I, on the other hand, had the advantage of excellent free public schools, and a university stipend that got me through to a BA at the age of nineteen. Beyond this, living in New York was an education in democracy and multiculturalism. Regular visits to the 42nd Street public library, with the two welcoming lions on the front steps filled me with awe and joy. Toscanini led the New York Philharmonic every Sunday and I could hear them on the radio. My first experience of the ballet was in the balcony looking down at creations of George Balanchine and Anthony Tudor, among the most respected classics of modern dance. Joining a seemingly endless queue and getting to see a new film together with a stage show at Radio City Music Hall around Christmas time was exquisite.

And the people! I knew about WASPs from my school textbooks (nobody bothered about culturally appropriate materials then), but as the daughter of Jewish immigrants I knew exactly what it meant never quite to match the ideal. Now, I think the very definition of WASPs is an ideal type in Weber's sense—a configuration of traits that is never found among real people, but provides a basis for telling how any given group deviates from the 'ideal'. When I was growing up, I was not sure that I could even aspire to approach it. But in New York, I was after all a native; I rode the subways daily to and from school, rode the buses for going shopping and spending time with my friends. This meant endless opportunities to hear all the languages spoken in the city, to see faces of all colours of the rainbow, and to internalize the lifelong understanding that diversity is normal.

The centre of my world during the week was of course school and the neighbourhood. But other influences were intertwined with these. Because my family was religious, I joined a Jewish youth group at the age of eleven. This was an introduction to being totally foreign. We called each other by our Hebrew names, the names given to us at birth by our families but understood to be inappropriate in a non-Jewish milieu. Our activities in the 'nest' of the movement were all oriented to the renascence of the Jewish people in Biblical Palestine, the site of our dreams. We danced and sang Hebrew songs, whose words I then learned by rote because I did not know the language. The girls and boys I met in the movement were my weekend life, a different place altogether. I loved living in a melange of different frames and this enhanced my taste for multiplicity and miscellany.

There were also individuals who turned me in directions that have determined the tenor of my entire life. Studying piano from the age of seven added a different kind of language dimension. I spent years learning how to make the little black circles turn into varieties of sounds, and trying to think through what those designs meant. And in school, teachers indeed made a difference. Miss Garrahy, my home room teacher in the sixth grade was a model of the teacher who calmly accepted all her students and patently believed in their ability to make progress; her manner was an inspiration at the time and, indeed, has been ever since. Hunter College High School, now co-ed and then an all-girls school, was where I discovered the magic of serious study. And at Queens College, where I was a freshman at the age of 15, there were at least four professors who made a lasting impression on me: one who never prepared a lecture but always brought the liveliest criticism of political injustice into every class. In a class on the philosophy of science, Carl Hempel (one of the original Vienna group) demonstrated that logical positivism was the reigning truth for reasonable people. But in that class, I learned even more from a mature student, who untiringly raised objections to the positivists' cold evasion of emotion. There was the professor of English who opened my eyes to the fact that only people with self-confidence are capable of learning from criticism. And there was Mr. Emory, from whose lectures on Ancient Rome, I shored the immortal sarcastic comment: 'After all, no one really objects to war except mothers.' Those four years leading up to a BA taught me that even in school one didn't have to say 'yes' to everything someone in authority was saying or doing.

That lesson served me well many years later when I was working on a thesis for my MA, and had to find answers even though all the professors were annoyed with my constant questioning. And even better when I did my doctorate with Thomas Luckmann who showed me in a most economical way that an adviser can be completely permissive and democratic but at the same time ready to pounce on any weakness, no matter how cunningly camouflaged.

In looking back on what I have written in answer to this question, I found that a word that comes into almost every sentence is 'but' (I've deleted some). And if I went on and mentioned some more people, and one or two more organizations with which I was associated, I think that apart from the magic of multiplicity, I learned from all

of them an ineluctable lesson—there is indeed always a 'but'—the key to complexity.

Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life, and your most noteworthy achievements as an educator/scholar/citizen. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.

Milestones? Let me begin with the most recent. In 2009 I was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Joensuu, now part of the University of East Finland. As part of the celebration, we planted trees in a little wood not far from the university. The combination of academic recognition for past work and a live sapling taking root for a hopeful future was particularly moving.

During four years (2006-2010), I served as Vice-President for Publications of the International Sociological Association (ISA). This was after I had been a member of the Executive Committee for four years and President of the Research Committee for the Study of Alienation for eight years. All ISA terms of office are subject to constitutional limitations. The experience in the ISA was a further broadening of horizons, coming together with and after my participation in two European consortia that worked on multicultural teacher education and later on dual citizenship as problems of the European Union. (These research projects were summarized and published in five books.) Back to the ISA: Founded sixty years ago by a handful of sociologists from North America and Europe; now the ISA is an organization of close to 5000 members from across Australasia and Africa as well as Latin America, Europe and North America. Working in the ISA enabled me to gain at least an initial understanding of some of the professional similarities of sociologists everywhere, and of the wide differences among localities, because unhappiness and inequity and oppression are both universal problems and unique to each locale.

In 2005, I was asked to edit a new publication, two issues of a key journal of the ISA, *International Sociology,* and I became the founding editor of the *International Sociology Review of Books,* a publication with the central mission of publicizing the work of sociologists in the global south and east to the extent that that is possible. Thus, I was able to learn something about the publishing industry, and professionally speaking, about gatekeeping—its importance and the hazards.

It would be misleading to see career milestones as detached from milestones in my personal life. My migration to Israel was the point of departure for all the rest. The plan was to visit for a year, and then go back to New York to live in an apartment of my own in Manhattan while going on to graduate studies. When I arrived in Israel, I found it enchanting to be in a small country (then with a total population of under a million— even today the population of Israel is less than that of New York City), then a place where it seemed that everything was yet to do. Having had the experience of a Zionist scout movement, I wanted to 'get a taste' of collective living before I left and visited a kibbutz where I knew there were some Americans. There I met the man who became

the father of my children. Living on a kibbutz, a tiny village with all the advantages and disadvantages of everybody knowing everybody else well, was for the first time an experience of realizing equality and justice in an intimate setting. When I gave birth to my first child, though, and had to share his first year with the people responsible for the 'Infants' House', I found the atmosphere stifling and the separation from my son unbearable. That was when we left. My five children have been milestones in the best sense of the word. With each of them, I went through intensive courses in what it means to be a parent—a mother, and I'm still making discoveries.

Professional life was always there, however. Looking back as you have asked me to do, I see that no matter what else I have done, I've always taught. In the kibbutz, I taught music—both in classes and privately. After that, living in a development town, I set up the town's first music school, taught piano, guitar, mandolin, and recorder, and also conducted a children's choir. Students were almost all the children of new immigrants from Europe and from countries in the Near East and North Africa. Later, when the municipality could no longer support the school, I began teaching English to secondary school students; then I became a supervisor of English teachers in a town about an hour away from ours. When we moved to Haifa, I became head of the TEFL department of a large secondary school and was invited to join the staff of the School of Education. I then felt that the varieties of teaching I had done were all in preparation for and pertinent to instruction on an academic level and I was excited at the prospect of finally being obliged to do research.

In the Faculty of Education, I was in charge of teacher education for TEFL and once I had an MA in sociology I was asked to add courses in the sociology of education. I soon began doing research for my dissertation thanks to a stipend from the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Commission). When I presented my project at a Faculty colloquium ('Aspects of Socialization in the Kindergarten: Time, Sound and Control'), I evoked something of a scandal. No questionnaires! No laboratory experiments! I was doing ethnographic observations of entire kindergarten days in Germany and in Israel; and conducting open interviews with kindergarten teachers and supervisors in both countries. The scandal abated a few years after I had earned the doctorate when some other professors in the faculty discovered that 'even in the USA', there were people doing qualitative research. As the first on the staff to have had experience with such methods, however, I had the pleasure and the honour of being the first to teach qualitative research methods to undergraduate and graduate students in the Faculty, a particularly satisfying milestone. For several years, I coordinated the practice teaching of students in the Department of Teaching and Teacher Education—which meant constant contact with all the post-primary schools in Haifa and its environs. And I also coordinated the staff involved in teaching didactics of all the school subjects. Apart from simply having to be on top of it all, 'coordination' meant consultation, organizing in-service study days, and being available for support and help when necessary. Later, I was also the first Head of the Department of Educational Sciences of the Faculty.

One of the most exciting positions that I filled in the Faculty of Education was that of being coordinator and lecturer in Co-Existence Workshops—courses in which Arab and Jewish students met for at least a semester as part of their preparation for teaching. We planned this as a means for advancing intercultural understanding and we were naive enough to hope, peace. With a wonderful staff (among them, Dr. Nimer Ismair and Edna Toledano-Zaretsky), we developed different ways of conducting the workshops: focusing on proverbs and sayings that Arabs and Jews in each group had grown up with; discussing current events and airing contrasting opinions—getting it out of the system, so to speak; doing simulations that made it possible to 'take the part of the other'. In the early 1990s, we received a three year grant from the Ford Foundation for workshops where Arab and Jewish students in 'mixed' pairs, prepared teaching materials together, and then, as part of their coursework, each pair actually taught the materials in two schools: one where Arabic was the language of instruction, and one where Hebrew was the language of instruction. Thus, not only did the students get to work together on something that was of professional and personal interest to both, but they also each had the experience of being part of the dominant majority in a school and, most important for the Jewish students, being part of the minority that is strange in another school.

Throughout the years, I have found a great deal of satisfaction in fulfilling the academic demand for publications. I have seen articles and books as a means of self-actualization (Maslow, 1965) as well as a way of adding some ideas to the marketplace of sociological theorizations, on the one hand, and to the marketplace of findings that may, hopefully, be of use not only to colleagues, but also to the shaping of Israeli society (see Kalekin-Fishman, Selected Publications, below).

I am hopeful that my involvement with education in schools and in the university has contributed something to civil society. When looking at myself strictly as citizen, I have been active in two types of organizations: 'Partnership' in which I chaired the Board of Directors for several years, was an organization to promote neighbourhood collaboration among Arabs and Jews in Haifa, which is, as you know, a city with a population of both Arabs and Jews, but with very little mixing. This neighbourhood initiative is now part of a municipal project. I have also been active in an organization that tried to advance a secular agenda, i.e., finding ways to annul religious laws and practices that are part and parcel of the legal apparatus of Israel (personal law, family law are primarily adapted to religious law).

Although I grew up in one country and immigrated to another, I have found myself constantly reflecting on what it means to 'belong' to a state, to a nation. Where I live affects the language, the 'vibes' and the content of discourse in the everyday, it affects relationships, and the ordinary behaviours that I partake in. But it can't any more mean shutting myself away from discourses, relationships and ordinariness in other parts of the world. Blind loyalty to a single state no longer seems to make sense in an ineluctably globalizing world. The total commitment to a Jewish state and being part of it, which was part of my education in the week-end youth movement and inspired my migration to Israel, has undergone radical

change. I have learned, *pace* Gertrude Stein of the 1920s, that a state is a state is a state—and certainly not a rose. The Jewish state operating with a bureaucracy and an army is no different from states throughout the world, struggling to preserve sovereignty and using nationhood as a frame for solidarity, a basis for impressing identities. And yet, things are never so simple, are they? The definitive genocide in the twentieth century, a century of genocides, was the Nazi Holocaust. In all conscience, I cannot desert the notion that as a state Israel has a sacred obligation to make sure that people called Jews will, if persecuted, have somewhere to go. It is commonplace today to argue that Israel is a last ditch European colonialist project, and from the macro point of view that is a fair description (Lubin, 2008; Penslar, 2007; Rodinson, 1973; Shohat, 1992). But from the micro standpoint, people involved in establishing the state and in its development were moved by enthusiasm for creating what they understood to be a new kind of society; determined to rehabilitate those Jews who survived the Holocaust, and thoroughly imbued with faith that they were making the world better! The contradictions between the deliberate manipulations in the macro and the naïve commitment elicited from individuals who felt they were binding themselves to a sacred mission are the stuff of which Israel as a state is made.

Q. What are some of the key educational 'problematics' that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

Academics involved in education confront a perennial puzzle. Even though there is constant progress in educating personnel for work in education as well as in conceptualizing effective pedagogies, schooling does not solve social problems. To my mind, it is coping with the dynamics of school life tends to lead to an over-emphasis on classroom management and an evasion of the difficulties of coming to terms with how the political institution, or if you will, politicians, make sophisticated use of schooling to protect the status quo, the regime in power. Interventions in the form of curricula and textbooks are obvious, but more insidious are the interventions installed as 'natural organization.' Among them is the unalterable hierarchy that governs schools, the arbitrary but unalterable conception of how to conceive of classes, the allocation of children to different groups, the kinds of tests devised for classifying students at different stages of the school career, the credentials enthroned, and many more. The most subtle way of preserving the status quo is the pretence that teachers are *neutral* purveyors of knowledge and that knowledge, too, is by nature *neutral*. Teachers with preparation in which political questions are ignored, become willing tools for ensuring the perpetuation of 'natural' conventions. Clearly, educating teachers to carry out curricula that are pre-cooked with the aid of textbooks that have been approved by government-appointed bodies is a deeply political project. In this context, the rules of 'good pedagogy' are only relevant in connection with the dimension of human relations.

The frequently quoted idea that 'knowledge is power' has to be rephrased for education (Foucault, 1995): power is implemented and perpetuated through definitions of school knowledge. Given this basic understanding, teacher education should be organized around the task of eliciting evidence of power in every aspect of the curriculum, and of schooling in general. To date, the Faculties of Education that I am familiar with allow themselves to ignore the politics of schooling. While teaching and learning are reduced to psychological issues, analyses of political aspects of education are ghettoized in a course or two—often electives. Yet, confronting politics in education would prepare student teachers for resisting demands for neutrality, demands which misrepresent the true processes of education. In point of fact, teachers should be responsible for communicating the inevitability of multiplicity. Think of Riemannian geometry, arithmetic to the bases of 2 or 12, Einstein's laws along with Newton's, not to mention Shakespeare and Zadie Smith, Messiaen and Dave Brubeck. Almost every topic treated in school has diverse definitions and diverse interpretations. Facts as well as ideas and styles have to be placed on the market, for comparison, for weighing and for determining a fair exchange. Technology is advancing at mind-boggling speed because people dare to think in different ways. Yet children are held hostage to 'the one correct' way to learn and do in school situations.

What is implied in all of the above is a still under-valued pedagogical principle that has implications for all learning. Doing is always a part of learning – cognition is always coupled with some action. This key theme is undermined because the taste for 'neutral information' ignores the importance of action. Yet this is the insight must guide teacher education. Students learning to be teachers should be *doing* teaching all along *and doing* their subject matter through contact with students. Education for teachers has to emphasize this simple principle across the board. Schooling has to impart ways to action that are part of every solution. In many cases, this can be prescribed in subjects connected with citizenship. After all, learning to be part of society and contributing to solutions entails *doing* citizenship. Thanks to transparent media, such doing can be based on flows of information about problems and about what can be done. I would like to think that everything done in regard to schooling, every suggestion that is set in motion is a political act, which changes the air of schooling, even if imperceptibly at first. Virginia Woolf's (1960) ideas about the 'common reader' have a future in the world of sharing research and doing education. Woolf shows that by reading books, people not only acquire ideas but also liberate ideas 'into the world' and that these ideas are important to the development of literature. I think that by participating in the knowledge market, picking and choosing among theoretical orientations, and doing what one wants to learn, educators do have a chance to contribute to solving social problems of the most diverse kinds.

I am happy to explicate my approach to education for the good of the children *and* for society in lectures, in op-ed pieces. But for the most part, I implement my ideas, advising graduate students on research projects that involve doing, writing research proposals for active interventions in schools with doing as a core. Since most of the

graduate students in the Faculty of Education are people who are themselves working as teachers at different levels of schooling, these projects do have outcomes in practice, as in principle.

Q. What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in your country/region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in your country/region?

The major forces shaping educational practice in my country derive from the religious presuppositions and the political situation. Unfortunately examples are legion.

Religious presuppositions: One basis for the divisions in the educational system is the claim that the major groups in the population of Israel, have different histories and different religious traditions not to mention different mother tongues, even though all the relevant groups (Jews, Muslims, Christians) trace their presumed history and derive their traditions from similar Biblical sources. According to law, there is freedom to practice / belong to any religion, but the divisions are rigorous. Not only do the religious Establishments each insist on their uniqueness, but state law fixes personal status only according to religion, mobilizing legal strictures against escaping the religious community into which one was born. State support for religion is a boon to the respective religious Establishments and ensures the perpetuation of each stream, no matter how small. In regard to the majority religion, Judaism, government support rules out diversity. Among the four streams in Judaism, only the practices of the orthodox and ultra-orthodox (Haredi), streams enjoy legitimacy. Their influence on education is felt in the sheer amount of time spent on religious matters in all schools. Between the second grade and the 12th— primary school to the end of secondary school—children in schools where Hebrew is the language of instruction 'learn' the Bible, the Old Testament and the Prophets from start to finish, twice. Moreover, the (ultra-)orthodox religious establishments run schools in which 'secular studies' are expressly forbidden. Boys in these schools spend all their time studying religious writings, mostly the Talmud. And many of them continue in these schools as adults, relying on government support to provide a meagre livelihood for their families. The Orthodox Jewish Establishment justifies the general rejection of secular studies by asserting that the sacred books are in fact the pillars of Israeli society, a more effective means than the army for maintaining Israel's security. If these young men decide to enter the labour market, they have to reorganize their lives entirely, leave their studies for some vocational framework to gain marketable skills. In the organization of the calendar in the public sphere, Israel has very few civil holidays. All the official holidays of the bureaucracy, including the schools, are Jewish religious holidays which shape the year for all. Islamic and Christian holidays are, of course, celebrated by their respective communities; but their impact on the state as a whole is limited. The wide differences among the sectors prevent the development of a repertoire of common concepts.

The religious commitment of the state is also the basis for justifying the state's politics. Settlements in the occupied territories are justified by reference to God's will as expressed repeatedly in the Bible—to the three patriarchs, but also to Moses in his time, as well as to his successor, Joshua. Religious studies in the curriculum actually justify political moves that are condemned by many states and by regional organizations—the EU, the UN.

Concepts of legality are distorted by racist bills designed to limit the number of non-Jews in the country. Thus, the law opposes family unification if an Arab citizen of Israel marries a Palestinian from the occupied territories. These distortions are taught as examples of practices that are legal and just.

What are the underlying interests? Complex. There are the interests of the religious establishments (most vociferously the Jewish religious establishment) in keeping their control over those affiliated with them. The populations of the settlements have an interest in touting religious justifications for remaining in the occupied territories, and individuals who reside in the settlements have significant economic interests: reduced costs for land, generous loans for developing the area, mortgages at low interest rates, access to cheap labour (Palestinian villager neighbours).

These are related to educational practice in two ways: in referencing the contemporary era as a replay of ancient history, and through the interpretation of current political processes as the re-realization of the early Zionist pioneering projects. In the public sphere, as noted above, the new historians, historical sociologists, and human geographers (Seguev, 2007; Yiftachel, 2006) openly discuss ideas that identify Israel as the creation of European, most specifically British, colonialism. But the people mobilized by the Zionist movement, with all its sub-divisions (religious, secular, socialist, liberal, right-wing) were moved by the ideal of redeeming a battered people, of finding a place where it would be possible to be free of the stress of anti-Semitism. Immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century saw themselves as creating a new world for Jews who had been oppressed because of their birth, and rejected, among others, as Weber suggested, because of their unbending observance of dietary laws which prevented commensality. Mythologized as courageous pioneers, early immigrants are presented as secure in the 'knowledge' that they were also redeeming a 'land-without-a-people', and that the 'few' people who were there were simply selling their land and receiving appropriate compensation. Today, historians who reinterpret that period, decry the politics of the Zionist movement and the wrongs that were done. But for the settlers in the occupied territories it is convenient to adopt the foundational myths and to describe their actions as a further realization of the pioneering glories of Zionism. The mixture of myths is embedded in school programs. Moreover, when objections are raised, it is denied that these are anything but the neutralized 'correct' history of the birth of the state.

Throughout this section I have avoided the temptation to use the word 'narrative' in describing historical perspectives as in describing my own. Although references to narratives of different groups sound very up-to-date, I feel uncomfortable with the

idea that grappling with ideas that are crucial to the makeup of a nation-state and crucial to the self-conception of a people should be summed up as a 'narrative'—a story that has been constructed for a particular purpose and can be/must be? re-constructed when purposes change.

Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why?

The easiest part of the question to answer is, of course, what I feel most critical of. With every change of government, there are changes in the Ministry of Education. The Minister is appointed by the leading party in the coalition and s/he in turn appoints the Head Administrator of the Ministry as well as the chairperson of the Secretariat for Pedagogy. These appointments are key in a country where the state system is still dominant. After the last elections, the choice was a young Minister, who, on the basis of his past performance in the Knesset seemed to be a moderate and rational legislator. As Minister of Education, he reinstated an Administrator who had already served in two earlier ministers, and he appointed a man whose former position was as head of an Institute for Research on Jewish Communities as chair of the Secretariat for Pedagogy, the council that determines educational policy. Since then, a textbook in civics was withdrawn from schools and from bookstores because, to the mind of the new Chair, too much attention is paid to the problems of the Arab citizens of Israel; similarly a history textbook was invalidated because the war of 1948 is presented in it both according to the 'narrative' of the Jewish state and according to the 'narrative' of the Arab minority. Both the materials on citizenship and the history textbook had been compiled by committees appointed by former Ministers. The trend of underlining the Zionist 'narrative' as uncontested has reached heights of hysteria with a relatively new student organization ('Im Tirtzu' – 'If you will it') which has taken its slogan from one of Theodor Herzl's well-known sayings in order to state that university syllabuses have to be examined for anti-Zionist bias. Only 'good Zionists', who choose the 'right' (in both senses) resources in their courses, deserve to be professors at the universities. One outcome of their vicious campaign is that the Minister now proposes to set up a committee to compose a 'Code of Ethics' for lecturers at universities and colleges. Thus, a creeping dictatorship is proposed to replace the freedom of recognized academics to compile courses that to their minds meet standards of integrity. The good news in relation to this proposal is that as one, all the heads of universities in the country, refused to comply with a 'code of ethics' dictated by the ministry.

Perhaps some explanation is called for. While arguing with university professors is the life-blood of the academe, and more important, the only way to 'do' knowledge in depth; the activities of 'Im Tirtzu' and the proposal to impose a 'code of ethics' is no less than a way of throttling scientific judgment and critical thinking. Criticism, as an examination of the validity of conventions, is blackballed and the justification of social science as critique is rejected. A regime that curbs criticism in both senses is

suppressing both democracy and the very possibility of acquiring and disseminating knowledge.

The uproar that these steps have caused is a basis for being encouraged. Democracy is of course evident in that the University Presidents feel free to object to limitations on the freedom of academics to choose sources and resources on the basis of their informed judgment. There are also other indications that primary and secondary education is run democratically. Minority students have the right to study in their mother tongue, but if parents prefer, they also have the right to enrol their children in schools run in the mother tongue of the majority. Of course, this is practicable only in towns or villages where there is a mixed population—and these are few (Tel Aviv-Yaffo, Haifa, Nazareth and Nazareth Ilit, Acre, Ma'a lot, maybe one or two more). Democracy is evident in that there are no quotas on minority students in institutions for higher education.

There are, however, problems of equity in education on the basis of nationality as well as on the basis of class, and often the two go together. A growing number of private schools on the primary and secondary levels accentuate gaps between the privileged and the lower classes. Licensed by the Ministry, private schools have access to government support at the expense of the state school system. Thus, they enjoy smaller classes (the standard in state schools is 40 students per class in state secondary schools), longer school days, closer monitoring of the achievements of individual students, cultural enrichment, and often teachers who have proven records of success. Well-to-do Arab families, Muslim as well as Christian, have throughout this time been sending their children to private church schools which maintain high standards matching international requirements. In state schools in Arab communities, however, the number of classrooms is inadequate to the school population and schools make use of rooms rented in residential buildings, or of 'temporary' structures. Although successive ministerial committees have examined the needs of Arab students enrolled in the state educational system and have drawn up plans for building needed classrooms and for improving facilities; most of the programmes have been filed away, and the problems remain almost sixty years after the 1953 legislation that established free compulsory state education and marked the beginning of universal education for Arab children in the country (Kalekin-Fishman, 2004; Agbaria, personal communication, 2010). The situation in the state schools where Arabic is the language of instruction is actively contested today, however, by the many Arab academics active in advancing the interests of the community, especially the interests in education.

Another problem is language. Hebrew is the language of instruction and communication in Israeli universities. Thus, minority students who have spent their time in schools in which Arabic is the language of instruction have to meet new kinds of demands, among others having to adjust to the exclusive use of Hebrew in their classes. Apart from the studies, minority students who have been accepted to an institution that is far from their homes, have problems finding a place to live. This is often a humiliating experience. Recently, for example, a branch of one of the state

universities was established in Safed, a city known as a centre of kabbalistic study, but also with a secular Jewish population. Many Arab students from the villages in the north of Israel enrolled in the university, and a fairly large number decided to rent rooms in order not to waste precious time in long commutes. The Head Rabbi of the city called a meeting in which eighteen rabbis signed a petition calling on the residents of the city not to rent apartments to Arabs. This attack on allowing Arab students to rent accommodation is especially frightening in that although it was publicized in detail in the newspapers, it was been acted upon by the police only weeks after the story broke.

There have been so many unhappy events recently that it would seem foolhardy to be optimistic, and yet, optimism refuses to disappear. Strangely enough, with all its limitations, Israel is more democratic (in the sense of transparency and opportunity for protest) than it was when it was established. UN Resolution 147 (November 29, 1947), called for two new independent states (for Jews and for Arabs), as soon as the British mandate in Palestine came to an end on the 15th May, 1948. While the Arabs did not agree to the division of the territory between two states, the Jews of course were ecstatic at the decision that marked a realization of the Zionist dream. The Party of Workers in the Land of Israel (MAPAI) set up the first government and remained in power until 1977, imposing a social-democratic orthodoxy. The government bureaucracy was populated by 'our people', and government aid went to 'our people' wherever they undertook economic or political initiatives. After the elections of 1977, the right wing parties took over, and since then, except for short flurries in the mid-1980s and the early 1990s (from 1992 until Rabin's assassination on November 4, 1994), Israeli governments have consistently been dominated by right-wing parties. They have undone much of the welfare system that was put in place between 1949 and 1977, and have energetically advanced neo-liberalism in education as in economics and in politics. Still, there was a lesson for democracy in the very fact that the collective mind could change so as to replace one type of government with another. This lesson sustains opposition among Arab Members of the Knesset, and among Left-wingers.

Q. What comments would you care to make about the impact of globalisation and/or regionalisation (e.g. Europeanisation) on educational development in your country/region?

There is no doubt that processes of globalisation in the sense of living in one world rather than within narrowly defined boundaries, have penetrated educational institutions in Israel. Most schools are equipped with computers and school children find their way to Facebook even before the age of ten. Most are undoubtedly cognizant of all that can be done by searching the internet from the early years of grade school. Globalisation has penetrated higher education in the form of greater mobility. Far more students now seek opportunities for graduate studies in Europe as well as in the US, and there are, of course, influences of the EU's conventions on how to evaluate studies although this is not acknowledged formally. And further on,

Israeli researchers are usually partners to EU funded research, as was I. Israel was recently admitted to the OECD, and although it was understood that this does not bring any practical benefit, it was touted as a significant measure of the country's prestige. In addition, there has definitely been a growing awareness of the need to connect to other regions of the world. Connections are being developed on the academic level. Members of the Faculty of Education at Haifa have recently been invited to Chile, China, and India, for example, and a group of Chinese educationists visited Haifa.

One sign of the growth of awareness of the importance of other parts of the world is the publication of statistics. The direct advantage to the Teachers Unions of Israel's joining the OECD was the publication of statistics showing that Israeli teachers are among the most poorly paid. The publication of worldwide statistics on pupils' achievements has shown the Ministry of Education that there are elements in the educational systems of Singapore, for example, and of Finland, that should be studied with benefit.

Reflecting on the things we see happening, I find it exciting that Israel is now, at long last, in a situation that will bring her/us into the population of nations and into the appropriate geographical region. Having lived for so long in a situation of conflict with all its immediate neighbours, Israel has paradoxically been sustained by the comfort of 'knowing' that we are a unique country with a unique society, and for many this has meant that Israel has all the resources necessary for realizing the intellectual and the cultural potential. It is becoming increasingly clear that the intellectual potential of humankind is far richer and far more diverse than the potential of a single unit however defined. Of course, it has for long been evident that Israel cannot rely on itself for all its physical needs, but the realization that intellectual collaboration is advantageous is opening Israelis to a new way of seeing ourselves and others. Globalisation is, in a word, a healing process, a chance to overcome the dangerous provincialism of a small, closed-in country, which seeks 'security' by occupying territory and 'necessarily' instituting oppressive measures in order to discipline the Palestinian residents of those territories.

What, to my mind is most interesting is the gap between the slow, even regressive approach of the Israeli government to politics—excessive 'caution' in regard to signing peace agreements—with what is happening in the real world. During a newscast on the government supported television channel, we were shown that Israelis and Palestinians are collaborating in a 'hi-tech' venture. The Palestinian who heads the team in Ramallah mentioned that the Israelis were surprised to find that there are highly qualified Palestinian computer engineers; the Israeli partner was enthusiastic about the important discoveries that his company is making thanks to the collaboration. Even more astonishing is the news in *Haaretz* of November 12, 2010, in a short article by Assaf Schtull-Trauring on the bottom of page 13 (below a report on a rapper who has become a religious Jew and above a report about the firing of the Google employee who publicized the bonus that employees are getting this year). The headline says: 'New Funds Advance the Project of an Electronic Particle

Accelerator of the Middle East.' And the story begins with 'In a hotel that faces the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea, scientists from Israel, Iran, Turkey, The Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Pakistan, Jordan, Bahrein and Cyprus, as well as representatives from Europe and the USA, sat at one table last Tuesday to discuss unprecedented future scientific collaboration among these states, for the next fifteen years: the establishment of a research centre with a particle accelerator in Jordan, at a distance of only thirty kilometers from the Allenby Bridge' [the bridge on which travelers pass between Israel and Jordan] [my translation]. Obviously the Israeli reporter was astounded, for he went on to describe 'this incredible meeting' of a group of senior physicists, SESAME, who agreed to carry out the project and cites the 'virtual certainty' that all of them will commit to funding the initiative. Whatever happens among the governments is in a sense irrelevant to the perceived need to advance scientific projects in the region, and in effect, through this, to regionalize the Middle East.

In the realm of the social sciences, there has, of course, for long been an interest in globalization. But what seems most interesting is seeing how the *fact* of globalization is having an impact on what we as social scientists are doing. For one thing, there is the development of a fascinating body of work that emphasizes intersectionality, the intersection of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, as a basis for discovering moments of oppression. An approach that was initiated in feminist research in the wake of the dissatisfaction with theorization that presented all women as cut of the same cloth, the insights achieved by dealing with intersectionality are most important in shedding light on the subtleties of diversity in different cultures and, more pointedly, to my mind, in different political regimes.

Further: given that one of the implications of globalization is transnationalism, i.e., people's capacity to feel that they are part of more than one nation-state, we see this, too, echoed in intellectual life. The trend of 'transdisciplinarity' has gathered impetus in recent decades. The perception that most real life problems require integrative treatment in the light of theories from several disciplines, rather than the orthodox insistence on arguing for the superiority of one social science over another, or of the natural sciences over the social sciences, has been gaining ground. This holistic approach is 'not concerned with the simple transfer of a model from one branch of knowledge to another, but rather with the study of isomorphisms between the different domains of knowledge … [It] takes into account the consequences of a flow of information circulating between the various branches of knowledge, permitting the emergence of unity amidst the diversity and diversity through the unity' (Nicolescu, 1987). Echoes of physical mobility! It may well be that scientific cosmopolitanism is foretelling the full material realization of one world.

Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country/region? How do you use these authors/texts in your own work? Feel free to cite an extended passage, and to comment on it in ways that add further insights into your own thinking.

I think there is no better way to understand educational dynamics in my country, and I would venture to say to understand educational dynamics in the region, than by examining religious texts. The messages of the texts are internalized from childhood on; they are part of the taken for granted, the 'mentalities' of the different sectors of the population, and have to be reckoned with in order to see why educational institutions are taking the shape they have, and produce discourses antagonistic to one another. In addition, however, it is necessary to consider the advances in science and technology that are constantly brought to the attention of people throughout the world. In the educational system of Israel, careful distinctions are made between the sources of values, i.e., traditions derived from the religions, and the capacity to adopt advanced inventions and to build on them. This is the inner message of the neutrality that is demanded of teachers. One might say that there is a collective shudder at the implication that scientific and technological advances imply changes in traditional modes of behaviour and in the possible interpretation of traditional texts. Among the advances whose implications have to be kept in abeyance (zeroed into neutral) are the processes that unfold in contemporary history. No new political developments can be allowed to undermine the historiography of the Bible, just as no new technology can be allowed to cause a reinterpretation of holy words.

In order to understand the impact of lay mentalities, however, and to demonstrate the unity of the world and of humankind, I find it necessary to recommend to students critical readings of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, along with passages from Simmel. I have worked a great deal with the theories of Mead, and think that they shed light on aspects of human living that the 'fathers' simply didn't get to. There is also more recent work that seems to me to be particularly important. I would like to explain.

Since I joined the academic staff of a university faculty, and participated in the education of people destined to take up different roles in the educational system, I have, perhaps naively, sought ways to enable education to lead to changes for the better in society just as have many of my colleagues. In thinking what 'better' can indeed mean in relation to education, I have come to the conclusion that 'better' would mean equality in human relationships and in opportunities, equity in inputs. I would like to think that these can be achieved by fostering sensitivity to detail, and a readiness to act.

In teaching this means to me including a research component in every course and choosing readings that lead toward doing studies in the field. In recent years I find that the work done by people in Actor-Network-Theory comes very close to the kind of perception I have. First of all, A-N-T recognizes that in every social situation both people and objects contribute to the situated experience and to its outcomes. Second of all, the approach recognizes that to grasp reality in the whole, it is important to find ways to describe slices of the world in exhaustive detail. Third, in order to find ways to map the world in detail, researchers have to be ready to confront the messiness of living, and even to work through messes (Latour, 2005; Law, 2006). Through this approach to understanding reality and developing appropriate methods, there is hope of finding atoms of intersectionality and meeting points of transdisciplinarity.

But of course there is more, and that is something I have not solved to my satisfaction. From the point of view of teaching method, I attempt to put all the students into positions of responsibility. From the point of view of praxis, I am attempting to apply principles of deliberative democracy in sites where they are not expected (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). My fear is that higher education is far too late for effectively conveying deliberative democracy and I am working on research that will hopefully enable me to make some suggestions for inculcating deliberative democracy and civil activism from stages that are much earlier.

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MOHAMED MILIANI

University of Oran—Algeria

milianimoh@gmail.com

BETWEEN ENDURING HARDSHIPS
AND FLEETING IDEALS

Q. What have been some of the most formative moments in your own education? Here you can also tell readers about the individuals, movements, organisations, etc that were most influential in shaping your development as an educator/scholar/citizen

Strangely enough, it is a life full of antagonisms and ambiguities (the environment's, the people's, even my own), of lacks and shortages (in the Algerian society, and in my family), of difficulties and tensions (in my own educational and professional trajectory as a young man in the making, as a citizen and as a university teacher) that gave meaning to my personal development. Having experienced injustice in its most extreme form, namely that of colonialism, it would also be unjust on my part not to acknowledge certain feelings and emotions that are supposedly incompatible with the plight of the 'colonised', so-well depicted by Franz Fanon, a psychiatrist born in the West Indies, Martinique, who defended the cause for an independent Algeria, and who wrote *The Wretched of the Earth*, and *Black Skin, White Mask*s. In a world of violence, there was also tolerance (advocated by the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) in which I bathed because of the neighbours around us. The French, the Spaniards and the Algerian Jews were part of my world, a world of an open Sunni Islam that did not build borders but bridges towards the Others who were not that alien. In a world of paradoxes, it seemed to me that I learnt more with my parents, as much as with the neighbours (Chamika, the Perez family, El Ghalmia, the Guttierez) than with the primary schoolteachers I had at *l'École Bastrana* then *l'École Paul Doumer*. But it was my mother who stated to me the very equation that allowed me to understand the stakes for a free, young, timid Algerian: '*Learn at school and you'll be successful in life*'. Was she not rueing the fact that she did not go to school? Or, did she realise that school was the key to total independence?

Language-wise, multilingualism was a reality my parents, as many other 'indigenous' people, handled with some expertise. My mother is illiterate, while my late father had some years of schooling that allowed him to write in French. Both mastered three languages: Arabic, French and Spanish. In comparison, today's generations suffer from a deep semilinguism: neither good in Arabic nor in French. It is through my parents that I developed a liking for languages. But, it was school that helped me increase my French

and introduced me to the English language from the age of 11. At three, I went to a religious school led by *les Sœurs Blanches* where I started learning French. As a way to balance my education, my parents sent me to the Koranic School of our district: *Sidi Lahouari*, named after the saint of the city. Belonging to that district helped me get on the map of my country with some pride. I had an identity, rather complex, as it was an addition of cultural elements which later in my life enlarged my identity: I am a Mediterranean, well beyond the limits of political borders, or religious entities, rich with different educations (informal, formal and even non-formal). It is true that, part of my social upbringing was my membership to the scouting movement where I learnt while playing: another way of enriching my personality and my ideas on how education could help individuals free themselves from a stronger enemy: illiteracy. But it was the military service that gave me the sense of belongingness and responsibility.

When I furthered my studies in Britain, thanks to the financial backing of the State and the moral support of my wife, I experienced other feelings which I hoped to make mine in the future: the sense of punctuality (something, we, Mediterraneans, seem not to be friends with!) and the sense of conciseness (something my Arab and French cultures did not give me). Going abroad has been a blessing built on a linguistic and cultural bedrock I owe to so many people, and at the forefront an illiterate old lady, still full of energy, who taught me self-reliance, and a very kind man (may God bless his soul) who transmitted to me his open-mindedness and his tolerance.

Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life and your most noteworthy achievements as an educator/scholar/citizen. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.

Well, the first part of your query is quite a thorny question. In my early twenties, I would have elaborated on who I was, and that would have shown how self-centred I was, while at the same time feeling part of that 'Woodstock Generation' that granted me a universal membership well beyond the political borders, and a feeling of freedom (crystallised in the motto: *make love not war*) in a country that was known for its highly-centralised policies where the individual was considered secondary to the community. Quite a dilemma! In my late twenties, my feelings changed because of the ideals that sprung up in me, which I developed while entering the realm of education. Becoming a teacher was to achieve what my mother advocated, while at the same time positioning myself on the social ladder. That of course gave me a big head. However, when I took charge of the English department in the mid-1980s, I put everything into perspective and understood how relative things are. Being responsible introduced me to the idea of accountability, which had been generated when I got married and became father (two daughters and a son). My nominations as director of the institute of foreign languages, then vice-rector for pedagogy, increased my sense of isolation from my colleagues and students. That feeling was the price to pay because of some misunderstandings developed despite my personal unwavering commitment, but also people's sheer personal interests.

My area of intervention widened when in 2000 I became head of the department of research and postgraduate studies at the University Academy of Western Algeria (there were 3 academies representing the Ministry of higher education and scientific research on a regional scale). This position came while I was presiding over different pedagogical and scientific committees or commissions: among them that of the literature and language degrees equivalencies, and those of research in 'student assessment', 'curricula evaluation', 'error analysis', etc. In the midst of all the meetings, colloquia and seminars I attended, there stood my wife (Mrs. Courage), the Lady who understood without my insistence how important these were for my personal advancement and 'notoriety'(sic!), and who sacrificed so many things for my own visibility.

The highest achievement in my career took place when I was appointed by the Minister, member of the committee for the reform of Higher Education in 2002, then President of the domain of Foreign Languages in the LMD (Licence-Maîtrise-Doctorat) Reform. That gave my career a national scope. Oddly enough, that reminded me of Alan Sillitoe's title of his collection of short stories: *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*: Treading on forward, becoming more and more isolated in our crusade towards quality education. That took place in a spate of criticisms from politicians, teachers, as well as students. Many people may have doubted my genuine commitment. In a world of challenges, I thought that university teachers had to be part of the changes they are supposed to bring about. It was also my way of paying my dues to my country's important financial contribution to pursue my studies, but also to voice from within the system my stand as an intellectual and mostly as a citizen. And that was unquestionably important during the 1990s 'Black Decade' Algeria went through.

Maybe the most rewarding position has been and still is my career as teacher at graduate and postgraduate levels. Teaching American literature, didactics, educational psychology, research methodology has helped me establish durable links with my students—many of whom are colleagues now—which is quite different from the cold universe decision-makers enter, and where there is always a missing piece in the puzzle of reforms, the one between the hands of the politicians. That is why I chose to adopt Sartre's words: *'contester le système de l'intérieur'* and not flee the country for serene skies. This attitude has been my late father's. Allow me to thank him for doing so much for me and not knowing how much I owe him.

Q. What are some of the key educational 'problematics' that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

Before any attempt at answering the first question, one would have to mention some 'problematics' that are the concern of the political and educational authorities. Of course, their approach is more selective, not to say out of touch, and their priorities not what lay people, in particular, parents believe they are. The different ministries (National Education and Higher Education and Research) are mostly intent on

managing numbers (8.5 million pupils between Primary, Middle and Secondary schools, and 1,300,000 students). If this seems worth finding an answer to, I believe that additional and more crucial problematics at both levels are legion. Amongst them: the sensitive question of the curricula seems not clear enough to the teachers. Content in the primary and secondary cycles is geared towards competence-getting, while matters in the Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) Reform are still hazy, but should be a logical follow-up of the previous cycle. The other neglected issue is time management. At school level, sciences have always the favour of the authorities who downgrade systematically social sciences and languages. Mornings are given to the 'hard' sciences while afternoons are left for the 'remaining'. Because of such discrimination, quality education will remain just a trendy term. However, 'quality' is simply word of mouth among the decision-makers, and not reality on the field in the classrooms.

As I see it, it is the problematics that are at the heart of democracy that are worth investigating, but they are the ones the political sphere does not want to hear about: the systematic teaching of Berber; the teaching and development of multilinguism with the tangible inclusion of foreign languages, in particular French; the participation of civil society into educational matters; the reduction of the dropout level (around half a million kids leave school each year, at primary, middle and secondary schools). But surely the most worrying element is the low level in all the education system. If it is the talk of the town, very few people seem intent on improving things. But this has to be linked to the lack of concern of parents that approximates the abandonment of their own progeny to the hazards of the bleak future of the country still clinging to its unique source of wealth: oil. School that was once the key to social success is differently viewed today. I believe this goes also hand in hand with the disappearance of values that were once our parents'. Quick money and '*piston*' (contacts and clientalism) have plagued the whole society and driven the population to look for expedients. It is also true that the welfare-state has progressively given in whole sections of the aid towards the needy.

On a social plane, I believe I have done very little. My only outside activity has been directed towards the blind to help some of them to find jobs. That is why, as a citizen, what I think is that an organised civil society would do more and better. But society has become increasingly selfish. At university level, I have created since 1989 a library for blind students through my contacts. But this again could not be developed because of counter-productive choices of some decision-makers. Inside the university, one has met total lethargy when tackling the problematics of quality education mentioned here and there, but not dealt with energetically. I believe the university has come to a point where professionalism will be sheer utopia. My idea is that what we are suffering from is a dual economic system made up with remnants of the socialist era and on the other hand, a free-market economy imposed on us. This boils down to saying that everything is economic and at the end, it is the badly-paid teachers who are footing the bill, torn between their ideals and the crude reality of their day-to-day survival. Despite that, there are still individual initiatives that square down the ins and outs of the problematics they believe to be central to the plight of

the educational system. Teacher-training has been a personal challenge I have been facing for decades now. Of course, this has been possible with the help of a handful of believers despite the ingratitude of the administration.

Q. What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in your country/region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in your country/region?

Well, there is nothing new under the sun. In the absence of a strong, courageous, productive intelligentsia (Harbi, 1980), politics is still the name of the game in educational matters. Ever since independence in 1962, in the political sphere, a real Hydra, the parties, old (FLN) and new (RND, the centre, MSP, the Islamists, PT the leftists), the old Mujahedeen (who have a Ministry of their own), the army, the state-led trade union (UGTA: *Union Générale des Travailleurs Algériens*) have had their way in educational matters, leaving aside the intellectuals. Voices of dissent have rarely been invited to utter their criticism or their disagreement with the state of affairs. Indeed, Addi (1995) speaks of a schism among the élite. The self-centred members of that sphere have even named themselves: '*la Famille Révolutionnaire*', a recurrent leitmotiv in the State's sloganeering, more than 48 years after Independence! But a real highjacking of the people's revolution. This is why free voices are systematically ostracised or are left with a despairing alternative, stay and keep away from politics and become bureaucrats or leave the country. On the other hand, if politics has been, up till now, the master of the game, religion since the early 1990s has invited itself to all debates (Rouadjia, 1991), and in particular those of education. The trendy overbid of religiosity (Addi, 1990) in schools has been a constant feature in the recent school reforms. Secularism has been fought back by enlightened self-proclaimed educationists at all levels. The way has thus been cleared up for these counter-productive endeavours by the decision-takers' lack of discernment, to the point that all parties concerned are competing to exhibit their extreme religiousness.

Under such counter-productive conditions, the challenges to build a real educational project, one that is more in line with the world around us, are totally ignored. However, all political actors throw at each other slogans that are borrowed from up-to-date rhetorics, but which do not make up a coherent whole. They are more like alibis to explain the current reforms in education. Indeed, the various narratives/reports where insignificant details rub shoulders with non-essential matters (Benbouzid, 2009—education minister for over 16 years), seem like verging on the undisclosed *mea culpa*. It is true that quick makeshift reforms are being launched successively, without any tangible impact on classroom practices: the results, about half a million dropouts each school year.

But more than this micropolitics, it is the quasi 'cultural hara-kiri' we are witnessing that is most worrying. The political and educational authorities (are they not the same?) have conducted the country from a multilingual state to one where the new generations are showing a fall in their level in all languages ending up with an invading and

frustrating semilinguism (Miliani, 2001). School has gone from being bilingual until the mid-eighties, to a monolingual one thanks to a series of absolutely peculiar decisions. What transpires from these processes, is the uniqueness of the challenges that concern first and foremost the status of Arabic as a privileged language, as if one single language would suffice in the near or far globalised future (Taleb Ibrahimi, 1997; Miliani, 2005).

As for the underlying interests, well, it is first to preserve the social and political *status quo* by the strict supervision of the majority of teachers by the State's middle-men (directors, inspectors, head-teachers or even trade-unionists). On the other hand, the biggest challenge the country would have to take up is the over-zealous religious commitment of the state representatives. Besides, the myth of a glorious past seems to last to soothe people's disillusionment with today's plight. This myth is in essence both religious (the mythical Muslim past) and political (around the upheaval against the French yoke in 1954). School textbooks are replete with these references for the building of a nation-state that has been more difficult than predicted due to the predominance of people's individual interests over the collective welfare. Today, there is an increasingly worrying impression of individualism that is replacing the once strong sense of national community: the '*wataniyya*' or national unity (Lacheraf, 1978), but lost in the midst of the '*qawmiyya*' (Arab unity) at the heart of the no less nebulous religious concept of the '*Umma*'. Present day history is showing that the latter notion is not functioning fully, leaving the stage to the more down-to-earth *realpolitik* of the individualistic Arab and Muslim states.

Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why?

Talking about democracy in my country sounds less believable than fairy tales. In a land where cooptation is mainstream and genuine elections a utopia, one has doubts about any possible agenda of democracy or even equity. If the former dimension is definitely alien to the education system, apart from free education to all, the latter is a constant concern that has been carried on throughout the last decades despite the state of the educational sector. Equity continues to be a leitmotiv in the politicians' discourse. Having said that, teachers, as inveterate optimists, believe that democracy is unavoidable if only the people's power is re-enacted. However, you give me here an opportunity to express myself on a matter that is close to my heart, namely the university Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD) reform, which started in 2004. So much has been said by the ill-intentioned adversaries, the poorly-informed public, and the badly-trained supporters. So between the rock and the hard place, this reform cannot develop harmoniously. Indeed, the education system has become 'obsolete in a world that moves, goes fast and with the everlasting innovations and the necessary changes induced by the digital revolution' (R. Harroubia, Minister of Higher Education, 2007). My point is that beyond the eternal confrontation of ideas between intellectuals, the whole undertaking was some kind of expression of democracy at work, and this boosted

my interest in the reform. From 2002 on, it was university teachers themselves who took charge of the technical side of the reform. Nothing was done 'as usual'. Of course, we were not asked to reinvent the wheel, but we did it the Algerian way. In the domain of foreign languages, which I presided, more than sixty university professors came up with the present 'licence' degree architecture. One felt that real freedom was given to the experts and some trust invested in the teachers.

What was even more important in this recent innovation was the fact that some equity was also achieved for all students who chose this system. The old one was very selective allowing those who used the fast-track to find their ways into a system that bred corruption, developed nepotism, and generated dissatisfaction. In the present reform, more possibilities in terms of degree specialities are being offered to students while not discarding any for a supposedly low mark in the baccalaureate examination. The system is still in its infancy, and many of those concerned (students and teachers alike) are not fully informed or rather misinformed. In other words, with more information and training, all partners will feel part of a moving progressive change. My word of caution towards the LMD reform concerns the languages policy: the country must develop a real policy of 'linguistic diversification by a multilingualism synonymous with survival' (Miliani, 2004, p.24) in a globalised environment.

On the other hand, my antagonism is deep when people mention the competency-based approach (CBA) to learning (Miliani, 2005). What I dispute most is that Algeria uses here another 'fad' to turn upside down an education system that needs stability. Besides, I always question any 'imported' theory for its 'implementability' and lack of concern for its ecological validity, not its own coherence. The CBA created in another cultural area needed some epistemological caution before its implementation in a totally alien context. This new development at school level has generated uneasiness of teachers who are supposed to teach through it but know nearly nothing about it. Furthermore, the textbooks that have been designed along CBA characteristics are posing problems to the teachers who return systematically to their old ways and practices. Teachers who have not been really introduced to CBA have acknowledged the fact that pupils' level is at a record low, and without the ministry's handling of the baccalaureate examination, the results would have been catastrophic. That is why the Minister of National Education has been accused of developing '*un bac politique*' to hide the extremely worrying level to which CBA has been of no contribution.

Finally, one is torn between optimism provided by the rare attempts at improving things at a high level by allowing teachers to contribute to the development of school, and deep concern because of the abrupt fall of the learners' level in all cycles of the education system. What has made the situation all the more cataclysmic is that it is not just pupils need proper attention. Neophyte teachers as well require adequate training because of their amateurish or ill-informed approaches to teaching. I cannot finish answering your question without mentioning the quasi-immovable Minister of National Education, 16 years in office. That is surely bad news to democracy and equity-lovers. If teachers are said to be change-agents, they are given a bad example here. And dictatorship is not that far!

Q. What comments would you care to make about the impact of globalisation and/or regionalisation (e.g. Europeanisation) on educational development in your country/region?

Globalisation is a phenomenon the Algerians have learned to undergo and not live with or in. This is so because most of the time, globalisation is equated with the flood of fashionable goods and techniques/technologies Algeria is importing: internet, cars, the industries, agribusiness, satellite dishes and the like. However, if one takes youth at their word, the global world would be reduced today to two countries: France and Canada, i.e., the old and new Eldorado. This whim has overshadowed all feelings of nationalism. Strangely enough, this sentiment has emerged, as never before, during the World Cup qualifier football match against Egypt in November 2009. On the contrary, because of a number of malfunctionings, a majority of the younger generations have become very critical of their country, which has fed their feeling of estrangement from their native land. The '*Harraga*' phenomenon (illegal emigrants) has shown how dissatisfied people are with their social, political, cultural and educational statuses, hence the search for the dreamland, the lost paradise.

It is true that, one of the challenges Globalisation has put to all countries is 'the mobility of the innovative human resources' competences towards more lucrative markets' (Djeflat, 2000, pp.55-56). Two things are thus put into perspective: globalisation and innovation. This goes along with my vision of today's problematic: what do less-developed countries want to be? The Hesiodic Prometheus, i.e., innovators or creators, or the Rabelaisian Panurge, i.e., simple imitators or followers. Along this line, I personally made a contribution to *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies* in 1996, entitled 'The circulation of European educational theories and practices: the Algerian experience' (Miliani, 1996), which has considered the impact of Europeanisation of the educational agenda. My main contention in that paper was that many theories (the east-German polytechnic school and the Canadian competency-based education) have been imported, even paid for, but their results were a far cry from the expectations of the population. Despite that, one hypothesizes the prevalence of a more disconnected and unarticulated set (all cycles of education program reforms without a concern for the others and the possible impacts) that is the result of the borrowed fashionable theories. Maybe using your word 'impact', while I was talking in terms of circulation of ideas and theories, shows better the kind of relationship countries of the underprivileged periphery have with the all-knowing countries of the Centre. What I dispute most here is that Algerians have become only consumers of theories that have shown their inadaptability to our context. One is in no way allergic to the Western world's contribution, but one is keen on having more aggressive, imaginative and creative policies for developing an endogenous educational agenda to reduce the impacts of globalisation because they will be rooted deep in the Algerian culture. Imported reforms work like band-aid over a wooden leg. The latter is an unstable non-system of education that is the result of makeshift policies and blind nationalism.

Particular to the Algerian case and in the face of what globalisation is, politicians display a suspicious attitude towards Otherness. Indeed, around highly religious and

exclusive rhetoric, the political sphere has developed some kind of policy of imprisonment as a way to react to the Globalised world that is accused of being self-centred and even Islamophobic. But, what is paradoxical is the systematic call for the external expertise to the detriment of the local know-how. In addition, social sciences still have a bad name despite the rich corpus developed by researchers in those fields, contrary to the 'élite (i.e. the 'hard sciences'). The President himself made a public address belittling the work of social sciences. One must admit that this has been taken as suspicion of the politicians towards the university community. Or, once again, is it not the eternal question of the struggle for power that is at the heart of the antagonistic nature of the relations between the university community of practice and the politicians in their ivory tower? Indeed, what transpires from the micro-political relationships at university level is a constant bureaucratic power that leads at times to political posts, but does not develop strategies to face the challenges school meets every day in a global world like ours.

Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country/region? How do you use these authors/texts in your own work? Feel free to cite an extended passage, and to comment on it in ways that add further insights into your own thinking.

Today, if you took an X-ray of the educational dynamics in Algeria one would think straightaway of the word anarchy or unprofessionalism. Besides, in all educational matters there is a constant feature: the everlasting references to Islam and the Koran. One has of course to acknowledge the huge contribution religion made at a social level. However, one has doubts about the possibility of developing other domains because of the mental straightjacket put by excessively pious teachers instead of building a vision of tomorrow's world. The 'sacred' has always the upper hand in countries like Algeria. The religious paradigm has not systematically been behind all reforms. Nevertheless, today everything is scrutinized though the lenses of religion. Teachers at all levels seem to mix the scientific and the religious narratives, not always for the better. Since the 1990s in Algeria people have witnessed an exponential development of discourses that consider Islam as a compulsory parameter. But in a globalised world, is it not more sensible to make room for different referents to conduct business with the Other who is not like us?

To understand today's system of education in the whole of the Maghreb, one may single out one author who seems to stand out among all writers: Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) and his *Muqaddimah* (*Prolegomenon*) mostly known through his analyses of North African societies. In more recent times in Algeria, it was Ibn Badis Abdelhamid who founded the Association of Muslim Algerian *Ulema* (a figurehead in educational matters between the1920's to 1940). But of course reference to him alone would not explain today's dynamics let alone the often quoted President Boudiaf's term of '*école sinistrée*'(*stricken school*): a school fluctuating between pure imitation of foreign schools and illogical innovations. That could be explained by referring to the lasting Minister of National education, Boubekeur Benbouzid's book, or rather self-

congratulating report on his own achievements. Populism is here mixed with total blindness and absence of accountability. Benbouzid does not even make room for the slightest mistake he may have made. Failures, inadequacies or errors are the others'. Any other problem is due to the others' misunderstandings.

As for my personal references in education, they go back to my years of study: Freire, Bandura, Coombs, Beeby, Manzoor. But surely the most positive free-mind has been the late Mostefa Lacheraf who impacted the Algerian school system and even advocated a secular one. I was introduced to this democrat's views in the lectures of philosophy through his book: *Algérie, Nation et Société*. Lacheraf took part in the writing of the National Charter of 1976 and was the only Minister of Education who had advocated a bilingual school. He was also a strong voice against the extremists during the 1990s. Besides, other intellectuals have put forward strong ideas for the building of a modern Algeria and the need for political legitimacy (Addi, 1990), or about the expansion of political Islamism in mosques (Rouadjia, 1991), the politicization of Arabisation (Taleb Ibrahimi, 1995), the divide between francophone and arabophone élites (Cheriet, 1983), the linguistic dictatorship that is bound to lead to a growing social anomie and language schizophrenia (Miliani, 2001).

Through this question you allow me to give a fair place to a number of intellectuals who have expressed opposed views to those of the decision-takers. School has always been attacked as the product of some 'misunderstandings' (Greffou, 1989), but the necessity of a real reform is called by several university teachers: '*une nouvelle vision de l'éducation et de la culture dans notre pays est d'une brûlante actualité*' / 'a new vision of education and culture in our region is often of a burning topicality' (Chitour, 2002, p.8). On the other hand, pre-schooling has not been given enough attention despite the increasing numbers of children (Benghabrit-Remaoun *et al*., 2005). As for the university, it seems that it is in such a bad state that it should be closed down: '*en effet, le système universitaire est arrive à un stade de déchéance et de déliquessence extrême*' / 'indeed, the new system has reached a stage of decline and extreme deliquescence' (Maïri, 1994, p.11).

But the state of the art of education would be incomplete without a reference to the everlasting problem of languages (national and foreign). Indeed, some university researchers have gone quite far in the criticism of language planning and its impact on education. Thus, and more critical than Granguillaume, Sebaa states that: '*la langue et la parole en Algérie sont encore de l'ordre exclusif de l'institution, c'est-à-dire de l'ordre de l'interdit, de l'obscur et du nébuleux*' / 'language and speech in Algeria are still in the exclusive domain of the institution, that is to say, in the domain of the forbidden, the obscure and the nebulous' (Sebaa, 1996, p.62). To this Elimam responds by accusing the authorities of discarding the mother-tongues (Algerian dialect and Berber) that are tokens of our citizenship: '*l'Etat substitue au langage actuel, actif et créative, une langue extérieure, fétichisée et prétendument supérieure*' / 'the State substitutes to the present active and creative language, an external fetichised and supposedly superior' (Elimam, 2004, p.35). Finally, everything boils down to the question of democracy: '*la reconstruction de l'état est le passage oblige de la*

métamorphose de la démocratie comme expérience politique en projet collectif multidimensionnel' / 'the rebuilding of the state is the prerequisite for the metamorphosis of democracy as political experience into a collective and multidimensional project' (El Kenz, 1993, p.vi). One can but agree that in the case of Algeria, the near miss in implanting democracy in 1988 is not a curse but still an overture towards more open, more convincing enterprises in the future if only the State decided to build stability and invested in democracy, and if bureaucratic power ceased to dictate its agenda in the micropolitics of the social, educational and economic institutions.

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M'HAMMED SABOUR

University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu Campus—Finland
mhammed.sabour@uef.fi

RETROSPECTIVE AND EXPERIENTIAL PERCEPTIONS ON EDUCATION IN MOROCCO BY AN ENGAGED OBSERVER

Q. Tell us a little about who you are...

Born in the countryside my father, who was a small landowner, stems from a maraboutic family (*shorfa*). Eleven of my grandfathers and close paternal relatives have small or big shrines built on them. One of them constitutes a sanctuary where people come from all over the region of *Abda* for its veneration. This is one of the features of popular Islam. Popular and formal Islam were always intermixed in Moroccan traditional society. The status of being genealogically descendent from the prophet Mohammed's family lineage bestowed on my father important symbolic power and prestige from his surroundings (Sabour, 1993, 2011). My father enjoyed great respect although, like my mother, he was illiterate. Some believed strongly that he was a bearer of *Baraka* (spiritual power, holy blessing) and brought their sick children or relatives to be treated by him. Many were convinced that his consultation provided them with comfort and his blessing cured their diseases and alleviated their pains. I am supposed to inherit some symbolic capital from him in this matter. But as I have a sceptically and rationally quenched mind, I believe that the *Baraka*, if it does exist, can only be achieved through an individual's deeds and achievement and not through lineage or inheritance.

Q. What have been some of the most formative moments in your own education?

Although my father was illiterate he believed strongly in the virtue and importance of learning and knowledge. But as a devout, traditionalist Muslim and a nationalist Moroccan, and due to the French assimilationist educational policy, he refused to register me in the French school at the beginning of 1950s. Instead he put me in a Koranic school (*masjid*). There was my first initiation to literacy and Arabic and where I learnt to memorise and recite verses (*surat*) from the Kuran without understanding their content and meaning. The teaching was non-pedagogical, violent and frustrating. I was unhappy and frightened every day that I had to go to the *masjid*. Rare were the days when I was not physically punished for 'incorrect' behaviour, inattention or for mere indiscipline. Because I did have a good memory in reciting the Koran I was quite often asked by my father to entertain our numerous guests.

My father was immensely proud that I was reciting out of memory in front of his guests. Despite the attention and the warm praise I got from them these 'entertainment' sessions, they were a torture for me because I was afraid of making mistakes or of not meeting the expectations of adults. I was only five or six years old at that time.

With the advent of Morocco's independence, my father, who never liked the rural lifestyle, decided to give our land for rent and moved the whole family to Casablanca. That was the beginning of urban life and the first contact with the European French culture for me. In fact, at that time, Casablanca was the most European city in the country. But for me the change was not that significant because my father put me in a Koranic school instead of the new established French-like 'modern' elementary school. Thanks to a 'Europeanized' uncle, who fought as a volunteer soldier in Indochina with the French Army, and against the reticence of my father, I was enrolled in a bilingual school. This uncle convinced my father that '... the road to a better future for the children passes by the European educational system...'. At school we studied some subjects (such as calculus and biology) in French in the morning, other subjects (such as history and religion) in Arabic in the afternoon. But the whole structure and pedagogy was typically French. Compared to the *masjid*, the school was more appealing and 'humane'.

Q. Can you please locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical events that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'?

The political situation in post-independence Morocco has often been tense and even explosive. The French-run Lyceum where I was among the privileged-few to be selected for continuing my study was an institution sensitive to political matters. Our discussions were vivid but discrete because of the very repressive *système sécuritaire* that was implanted at all levels. Often my history professor, who was very active in the Socialist Party, gave me leaflets to be distributed in various corners and classes in the institution or an assignment for transmitting various information and organizing secret meetings with other active students. Convinced of the right cause, I took big risks by being involved in this activism. Indeed, I could easily be jailed and/or dismissed from school altogether. In this atmosphere, I participated actively in the students' uprising in the mid-60s in Casablanca and especially after the assassination of *Mehdi Ben Barka*, the legendary symbol of the Socialist movement.

During the period of what was called the *années de plomb* ('Years of Lead')— i.e. 1960 to 1970—a decade characterised by arrests, imprisonments, torture and assassinations against opponents to the regime, the intellectual and political life was stifling (see Daoud, 2007). Very attracted by reading and well-honed arguments, I was always interested by *res publica*. In a certain period in my life I was fascinated by a juridical vocation because I thought naively that by knowing and mastering the law I would be able to defend myself and to defend others as well. But I realised later on that knowing the law in a system, which does not respect it, couldn't change much.

Like many others around me, I was convinced by socialist ideology, and avidly followed progressive movements, both in the region and internationally. We admired Che Guevara, and celebrated the military successes of the Vietnamese over the 'imperialist' Americans. We exchanged forbidden newspapers, revues and books that had been secretly introduced into the country. Moreover, we were supporters of Pan-Arabic ideology and followed and participated in many debates on the Palestinian cause and the Middle-East conflict. We were perhaps utopians or dreamers, but we strongly believed that we could change the world for the better. In fact, in the prevalent stifling circumstances, we did not have any choice other than to act against the oppressive and authoritarian system. If we were unable to resist and change things physically or violently we did it intellectually and behaviourally.

Q. Can you tell readers about the individuals, movements, organisations, etc that were most influential in shaping your development as an educator/scholar/citizen?

Although it was against my will, I found myself embarking on a technical career. My father's philosophy was that 'technical orientation leads up to a certain profession. Any profession is good, because if it does not make you rich it could at least secure your basic means of subsistence.' But I was always attracted by and interested in philosophy and social science. I recall my French professor of philosophy saying, on reading my essays on democracy, social justice and power: 'Mr Sabour, what are you doing with us in the technical courses? … Your place is in social sciences or the humanities…'.

This was to be realised many years later. By a conjunction of unexpected circumstances and as a result of the socio-political situation mentioned earlier, I decided to expatriate myself to Finland. It was the period when left-wing radical ideas dominated, or at least were tremendously influential in most of the discourse in political, cultural and academic fields. In fact, it was the golden age of social sciences. Finland was well connected to the ambient mainstream thought. Joensuu, where I resided, was one of the 'bastions' of radical left-wing thinking. The orientation of professors and researchers in Joensuu during the 70s and 80s was such that historians of social sciences in Finland designated the city's university as the 'red university' of the country.

As a student of sociology, psychology and education, I integrated the academic world in this atmosphere, which would significantly enrich my perception and knowledge of many things. I however kept a room for manoeuvre that enabled me to have a leeway of autonomy of judgement and disagreement with the dominant ideological paradigm and perception of things.

Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country? How do you use these authors/texts in your own work? Feel free to cite an extended passage, and to comment on it in ways that add further insights into your own thinking.

Having been always interested in the role of the intelligentsia and the *forces culturelles vives* in society, I was drawn to the thought of Pierre Bourdieu as early as the 1960s. Three of his books—namely *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relations to Culture; Outline of a Theory of Practice,* and *Reproduction in Education, Society and* Culture—were a revelation for me and inspired many things later.

The initiation to his sociological thinking was to take an unexpected turn when, due to a combination of circumstances, I met one of his friends, a professor at the university of Marseille, who was lecturing at our university and who was slightly surprised to find a North-African researcher working on Arab intellectuals and living 'close' to the polar circle, geographically behind 'God's back'. I gave him two of my publications, which he showed to Bourdieu after his return to France. A few weeks later I received a letter from Bourdieu where he mentioned that if I ever were to pass by Paris, he would be pleased to discuss my research with me. He ended up supervising my Ph.D., and we were later to cooperate closely on many projects. His thought and acquaintance have profoundly influenced my intellectual endeavour and subsequently my career.

I do not agree with all of Bourdieu's sociological thinking, but it goes without saying that he has offered some efficient instruments for analysing the mechanisms of power in society and in the academic field. I have always thought that the exposure of injustice, domination and authoritarianism sociologically calls for a strong argument, a credible methodological approach, a well-honed theory, and an analysis that simultaneously conveys rigour and conviction. In my view, Pierre Bourdieu offers this possibility.

Q. What are some of the key educational 'problematics' that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

In the Maghreb countries, and especially in Morocco, an immense effort has been made during the last five decades—i.e. since independence—in spreading literacy and in universalizing access to formal education, including in rural areas. Given the high rates of illiteracy at the start of the process, as well as the disjuncture between demand and supply due to the country's limited economic means, Morocco has nevertheless been able to chalk up some respectable achievements. Unfortunately much of this progress has remained statistical and quantitative in scope. The quality, the efficiency and the equity of the education on offer leaves much to be desired.

In fact, when we look at the official policy of enrolment at the various levels of the education system, and the resources invested, the numbers cannot fail to impress. However, when we check the outcome of educational policies in terms of school success and failure, of drop-out rates, of the percentage of those who graduate after enrolment, of graduates who are gainfully employed, of the exclusion or marginalisation of female students in school in rural areas, and so on, we are confronted by a critical situation. From primary schooling right through to

university, the educational system in Morocco lives a serious structural, pedagogical and vocational malaise.

Morocco has been able to carry out aspects of the 'modern' nation-building project from scratch, has managed to establish a 'functioning' society with its own administration and infrastructure, and has succeeded in securing some basic aspects of the welfare state for its people. This suggests that the country is far from being held hostage to lethargy, and has dynamic forces that propel it forward. One of the basic elements that give the country its drive is formal education, which has been the midwife of important changes in society. However, given that education is the reflective and reflexive image of the society which gives rise to it in the first place, the educational system(s) in Morocco is/are characterised by several dysfunctions, deficiencies and lack of foresight.

Due to various conflicts related to, among other things, political legitimacy, the division and exercise of power, economic constraints, democratic representativeness, internal upheavals and colonial cultural heritage, Morocco has often been concerned by—and faced with—pressing, short-term and urgent problems. Responses and solutions have often been formulated under pressure, mostly to tranquilise social movement demands, to untangle political crises, and to deal with urgencies and emergencies. Such action was not conducive to balanced, long-term and carefully thought-through policy required by an efficient educational system worthy of its name. In these circumstances, educational policy has often been marked by improvisation, stopgap measures, plastering over major crevices, and provisional solutions—what I have elsewhere referred to as the 'enduring temporary' (Sabour, 2003). In many instances changes and plans in the field of schooling and research look more like a *simulacrum* than a real, well-intentioned and credible educational policy. The simulacrum is exemplified by the way in which the different actors (e.g. policy-makers, planners, decision-makers, politicians, educationalists, and bureaucrats) put up pretence by formally articulating flashy slogans and glittering ideals—but all this half-heartedly and without much if any conviction at all. Many of these actors speak emphatically about the glorious past of Moroccan civilisation (e.g. the University *al-Qarawiyyin*), and about the creative ability and aptitude of the Moroccan educated population. But deep down they have little respectability for and faith in the quality of formal national education in Morocco, from primary school to higher education. Their contradictory attitude is exemplified by the fact that most of the ruling and political élites do not educate their offspring in Moroccan schools or universities, but rather send them to private or foreign academic institutions either in the country or abroad.

As I noted earlier, the fate and development of education is tied to that of the society that shapes it. The development of both relies mostly upon the ruling political élite that plans, assesses, legitimizes and implements the developmental policy and ideology. But the key element for all this is how the process of decision-making that produces this policy and ideology is democratically shaped. Here, as I have stressed elsewhere (Sabour, 2007), and as is the case in many Arab countries, the process of

decision-making in Morocco suffers from many deficiencies, including lack of professionalism and efficiency, an inhibiting bureaucracy, dissent amongst those who administer the system and teachers who have to implement policies which they find incompatible and lacking in legitimacy. As a consequence, teachers have low motivation, a factor which deals a death blow to quality in education as a whole. The facts speak for themselves.

The Moroccan government is not sparing expense in investing in education, and indeed, the percentage of the national budget dedicated to this sector is one of the highest in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. The survival rate to Grade 5 in 2002 reached 75.6 percent; the repetition rate is 13.8 percent in primary education and 16.4 percent in secondary education (World Bank, 2008). As a result of this inefficiency, only 12 out 100 students who enrol in primary education reach the university. Out of these 12, no more than five receive a diploma (Achy, 2002).

Statistically, the masses of pupils and students have increased tremendously during the last three decades, but as outlined by Zouhar (2005, cited in Elmeski, p.10), in comparison with other countries in the MENA, 'Morocco has one of highest illiteracy rates in the region… [and] 43 percent of the population aged 10 and above is illiterate. 60.5 percent of this population is in rural Morocco. 54.7 percent of the illiterate population is female and 74.5 percent of them are concentrated in rural areas.'

Furthermore, according to Boudarbat (2005, p.12), there is serious discrepancy between the content of the educational system, the learners' aspirations, and the expectations of the labour market. He describes the situation in the following way: '…[H]igh illiteracy rates, an underperforming educational system, and very limited investment in research development of Morocco's largely small and medium companies have created a supply and demand situation where the educational system is not adequately prepared to supply highly skilled knowledge workers, and where the labour-intensive market has not developed enough capacity to switch to knowledge intensive production. In such an environment, it is hardly surprising that amongst the educated active population, the unemployment rate in 2002 reached 34 percent for active population with a high school diploma and 32.2 percent for university graduates. Amongst these graduates 40% are holders of bachelor's degree.'

This bleak situation is made even worse by the deplorable state of infrastructure. As Ahmed Akhchichine, the Minister for National Education, himself acknowledged, '75 percent of schools lack drinking water, 60 percent lack electricity, and 80 percent of schools lack adequate latrines' (Elmeski, 2008, p.10). Moreover, he estimates absenteeism amongst elementary and secondary school teachers to have reached 2 million days of absence, which represents a financial leak that is enough to build 100 lower secondary schools. This damning verdict is an indicator of the scope of disrepair of the Moroccan public education system.

I insist, once more, that an educational system can be changed only through the change of the political and social structures that have produced it. Without that we can only carry on playing simulacrum instead of making real and significant reforms and changes in the sector of education. So far, although few positive improvements

have taken place in some fields (such as engineering, for instance), the path that has been hitherto followed presages, in general, an educational policy full of uncertainty and haziness.

In addition to the political and ideological factors there are some social and economic facts and realities that have to be taken into account when we analyze the situation of schooling and the educational system in Morocco. After its independence over fifty years ago, Morocco finds itself without cadres, without a compatible and working educational system, and without the required economic means and infrastructure. With the majority of its population illiterate, Morocco used the 'skilled' manpower and resources at hand. In Koranic schools, *fqih* were enrolled as teachers in primary schools, even though they had no formal modern pedagogical training. French teachers, working as '*cooperants*', for a while satisfied the crying needs for education in large urban cities such as Casablanca, Fès and Rabat. Unskilled teachers made up the rest of the education workforce. The rural area has in most cases benefited less from this 'universalisation' of education.

The two decades that followed independence witnessed a massive growth in population, and a tremendous demand for education. The rural exodus and the transformation in the population's aspirations and activities have aggravated this situation. The means and the prevailing policies were far below the qualitative and quantitative demands. It goes without saying that those possessing economic means and social capital enrolled their offspring in the best schools and in private institutions. The rest had no option but to content themselves with underfunded and overcrowded public schools. The State has been always falling behind in meeting the increasing demands of a demographically burgeoning population. This shortage has only been amplified with time. By the mid-1980s, the phenomenon started becoming visible at the level of higher education as well. The massification of universities, especially in socio-economic and juridical sciences, placed an unbearable strain on already poor infrastructure and facilities. Overcrowded auditoria and mediocre teaching standards produced bookish knowledge-bearers and ill-educated graduates. As noted earlier, this bad situation has been made even worse by the mismatch between the skills provided by the education system on the one hand, and the expectations of the labour market on the other. Furthermore, the inconsistency in the policy regulating the language of instruction, together with the continuous shifting in some subjects from Arabic to French during the academic life-course of students between primary school and the university make it pedagogically and didactically very difficult for those students to assimilate knowledge, in either of the two languages. This can be exemplified in the feeble command of spoken and/or written Arabic and/or French at the university level.

What are the solutions? The reform of Morocco's educational system represents a huge challenge. And many reforms were tried during the last few decades. Despite some improvements in the domain of governance, the orientation and autonomy of the educational system, starting from the primary level right through to higher education, is still suffering from acute structural problems. One approach is to strive

to provide sound basic education for all the population. Then we have to promote a rational and realistic attitude and expectation from formal education by developing an efficient system of vocational guidance. This may help pupils and students become aware of their abilities and dispositions to various occupations and professional activities. This would also help in directing individuals towards appropriate career tracks that correspond to their aptitudes and where their activity is more effective. At the moment, this sort of guidance is non-existent and the majority of students are often mainly motivated in their educational and professional choices by personal aspirations and unrealistic ambitions. One of these unrealistic ambitions is to get a job in the State sector. In the past, because of the shortage of educated manpower and the weakness of the private sector, the State has been the main recruiter and employer of graduates. This sector is relatively saturated at the moment but it is still targeted by many, even if their skills and aptitudes can be invested more effectively elsewhere. This can be explained by the job security and the prestige bestowed on by some domains in the public sector.

The inclusion of women will certainly not only correct a long-standing deficiency in gender equality and human rights, but in the long run it will also provide the ground for a more civilized and developed society. A society with educated women is in a better position to foster an open-minded attitude, to raise children who invest in and perform well at school, and who have a tolerant attitude towards gender differences. Indeed, research in Morocco has showed that female students who perform well at school often have educated mothers.

Given the different issues and realities I have mentioned above, there is clearly no quick-fix solution for the woes that prevail in the educational sector in Morocco. However, despite the acute pressures and demands, I think we should ensure that all the population does have access to basic education. This is not only an important investment in human capital, but also a question of fundamental rights for all citizens. When it comes to higher education, a preference should be made in favour of quality based on meritocracy, rather than pursuing an open door policy that ushers in mediocrity—the outcome of which is not just economic waste but also the creation of false expectations and bitter disappointments among a large and badly prepared mass of students. The disappointments and broken dreams of these students, whose ambitions and expectations are beyond their capacity, readiness, and academic dispositions, run the danger of being converted into countercultural hate and anti-establishment radicalism. This is already visible in many campuses among some student factions.

While I place an emphasis on meritocracy, I would also like to underline the fact that we should provide the support, means and opportunity to all pupils and students to fulfil their potential and to reach the highest academic levels that they can possibly attain. In other words, we should give room and opportunity for learning and academic success not only to those from privileged background, who are born in favourable circumstances and who are in possession of a large number of economic assets, but also to those from deprived and dispossessed classes and origins.

Meritocracy should thus reward individual achievement and ability, rather than favour pupils or students whose families have social influence, fame and an illustrious name. This is a question of primordial importance, key to promoting social cohesion among students, to enhancing their belief in the credibility and fairness of the educational system, and to alleviating some of the recurrent frictions and dissensions in academia. But, can we achieve that in the academic field before reaching it in the political sphere and social domain?

Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country/region?

Paulo Freire's approach can be very useful in assessing how the spread of literacy and the increase of people's awareness can give birth to an empowerment that enhances their will for changing their social reality. The sociological thought of Pierre Bourdieu could be also helpful in understanding the mechanisms of power structures obtained through the educational system as well as the process of the reproduction of élites and the hegemony that it is involved in. Freire's thinking provides insightful means of practical modes of actions, while on his part, Bourdieu offers a sophisticated analytical tool for assessing how power is explicitly and/or implicitly used, abused and imposed through material and/or cognitive structures.

Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity?

In the course of the last ten years there is an expressed will from the top ruling élite in promoting democracy, human rights and gender equality. One of the cornerstones of this policy has been the improvement and universalisation of formal education and the improvement of its quality. Many decisions and political gestures confirmed this good will. But the difficulties related the educational system are tremendously vast and structurally and economically multidimensional. This is made worse by the crippling bureaucracy, the loose accountability and the lack of efficiency and competence. Morocco has been pointed out by many international institutions, such as the World Bank, as an underachiever in education in comparison with its neighbouring countries and inside the Arab League, in general. A new policy that emphasizes the development of human resources has been initiated and a large budget has recently been allocated to support educational reform. But in the light of previous experience, one can only be cautiously optimistic and only the future will show the extent to which these projects are successful.

Q. What comments would you care to make about the impact of globalisation and/or regionalisation (e.g. Europeanisation) on educational development in your country/region?

Globalization, in its various economic, cultural, mediatic, scientific and other dimensions, has put more pressure on developing countries like Morocco. As these

forces are mainly based on a (neo)liberal and market-driven ideology, Morocco does not enjoy a comfortable position in the new global environment. It is rather more a policy-taker than a policy-maker, experiencing globalization as a shaping pressure rather than as a field it can influence or have an impact on. Globalization calls for competitiveness, efficiency, productivity and excellence for meeting the requirements of international standards in many fields. One of these fields covers education and knowledge. In this regard, given its insertion in the global mainstream and due to its close cultural and educational ties with Europe, Morocco opted to adhere to the Bologna Process and to impose on itself the benchmarking of its higher educational system to European and international criteria. Through various projects and reforms, and in consultation with many European institutions, Morocco has embarked on internal and external evaluations for assuring the quality and accreditation of its educational system. The processes of Europeanization and globalization have been a positive incitement to take a hard look at the education system, to consider quality issues seriously, and to promote a culture of evaluation and self-evaluation.

As things stand at the moment, Morocco has reached satisfactory levels of self-sufficiency and self-reliance in some fields—such as agronomics and medical sciences—but is trailing behind in others—such as a number of engineering branches, and educational sciences. A long path lies ahead before reaching European and international quality standards. Morocco is increasingly feeling the pressure to rise to the challenge of meeting the requirements of a global knowledge society. To secure a place under the sun in this society and to be a creator-contributor member instead of being only a receiver-consumer of research and knowledge, Morocco is obliged to develop and establish an education and learning system that is compatible with international requirements. Many indicators suggest that decision-makers are aware of the urgent, pressing need for change, but it remains to be seen how determined and able they are to make this change happen.

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MALAK ZAALOUK

American University in Cairo

malakzaalouk@hotmail.com

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION, TRANSFORMING LIVES IN THE MENA REGION

Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life, and your most noteworthy achievements as an educator/scholar/citizen. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.

Nothing is as important as to be able to situate oneself when one is responsible to educate others and enter into an ongoing dialogue. Contextualizing oneself is as important as contextualizing the other in order to construct the realities that shape our world and our everyday life. We are the products of the political economies in which we exist and also the historical moment during which our consciousness was shaped. We are the product of our gender, our class and the disciplines that shaped the lenses through which we perceive the universe.

I am an Egyptian woman who grew up in the sixties of the previous century and hence belongs to that very particular generation that was shaped by the years of hope, transformation, revolution and change. I belong to the third world that was colonized and later rendered even more dependent through a myriad of intertwined interests between exogenous and endogenous actors. I have also been influenced by the more progressive components of the Mediterranean and European culture; a culture that has been rich with economic anthropologists, philosophers, Arab nationalists and materialist historians.

I also carry an international identity that focuses on the struggle for rights, justice and the abolition of discrimination and poverty. I believe in human dignity/respect and the fundamentals of goodness. I adhere to the universal declaration of human rights and the various rights based movements that are in fact all spiritually founded.

My intellectual foundations are transnational and eclectic. My background covers political economy, social anthropology and education. I come to the realm of education through a human development perspective one that views the ultimate goal of education as human liberation.

As an educator the achievements I am most proud of is the contributions made towards Community Education with a rights and empowerment framework in Egypt and the Middle East and North Africa Region. The first in-depth experience in community based education and girls' education began in the early nineties in

Egypt (Zaalouk, 2004; Sultana, 2008). Since 2005 concerted efforts were exerted to propagate rights based education in the form of Child Friendly Schools and Girls' education in the whole MENA region. Other agendas that were pursued in the region were focusing on Early Childhood Education and Development (Sultana, 2009) as well as fostering education during emergencies in several countries in the region notably the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon and Yemen as well as beyond the region proper as defined by UNICEF, namely Afghanistan. All these contributions were achieved during the time I worked for UNICEF in my capacity as Country Officer and later as Regional Adviser for the MENA region.

I believe I have influenced others and continue to do so in my current position as academic educator at the American University in Cairo Graduate School of Education. I believe in transformational education and have myself been influenced by the works of Dewey, Freire, Green, Torres, Lambert and the many community educators I have worked with. I think if I claim to belong to any of the educational movements it would be critical education and liberation education. Those blends of education that strive to sharpen people's consciousness, to enhance their capabilities and foster their life opportunities towards an empowered existence; the kind of education that recognizes the context but strives to change it; an education of the heart, soul and mind that can potentially bring about justice and allow children and adults to grow to their full potential.

Q. What have been some of the most formative moments in your own education? Here you can also tell readers about the individuals, movements, organisations, etc that were most influential in shaping your development as an educator/scholar/citizen.

My school as a child was an amazing one. Coming from a privileged background gave me access to the best school in the country. It shaped me as a researcher from a young age, as a leader and social being. We were organized in 'houses' which enhanced collective behaviour and identity as well as early citizenship. We had an amazing library with encyclopaedias and other interesting books. We also had very large and well equipped playgrounds. Friendship was hugely important.

At the American University in Cairo where I did my undergraduate studies I was greatly influenced by Black American students who had come for a year abroad in Cairo. They gave me a very different insight and perspective into American society and also introduced me to radical revolutionary black literature. My interest in social justice grew even stronger as I acquired a deeper understanding of racism and exploitation.

As a graduate I became more fascinated with issues of justice and exploitation and delved deeper into questions of class relations as my readings and understandings of political economy expanded. My graduate years in England in the University of Hull were truly formative. These years constituted the backbone of my intellectual existence and equipped me with many life skills amongst which the power of reflection. Many powerful intellectuals mentored me at the University of

Hull in the department of Social Anthropology such as Ian Cunninson, David Booth and Talal Asad. Both David Booth and Talal Asad had strong influences on my intellectual development. Asad, who was my thesis supervisor and now a dear friend, is one of the best analytical brains I have yet to meet.

Back home in Egypt I became engaged with rights organizations and feminist movements. I believe the collective regional work we developed as Arab women was a landmark in my perspective. Many great women influenced my vision and also led to a keen interest in girl's education in my later years.

Joining UNICEF was a breakthrough as a practitioner and policy analyst. It allowed me a huge dent into education and development, comparative education and most of all it allowed me to develop pedagogically. These were glorious moments of achievement and enlightenment as I mounted a whole initiative on community schools, girl's education and many other pathways to equity. What was most challenging and dynamic in my UNICEF experience was the possibility of self-learning and the great opportunity to mingle theory and praxis. It was also a great insight into educational leadership. The regional dimension showed how peer learning and cross fertilization could have huge potential in moving several agendas forward particularly on rights based education.

The Education for All (EFA) movement has quite an important global impact. It has the power of engaging policy makers and governments into a global dialogue that supports universal basic education, quality learning and equity. It raises concerns on issues of educational governance and marginalization. The movement has indeed mobilized more resources and efforts towards the six EFA goals overtime. The Global Monitoring Report, a serious EFA publication, has through its eleven volumes tracked the progress made. Although huge gaps remain it is still impressive to see how an advocacy movement has indeed made a difference. A very powerful leading component of the EFA movement since Dakar has been the Girls' Education Initiative and through many partnerships it has managed to make a difference for many girls in the region. The new format of advocacy adopted by the EFA players is one that is evidence based. It has created a good working partnership and symbioses between educational research and policy analyses and recommendations. It has allowed academia and researchers to shed light on best practices and to assess policies that work.

I have had the honour to have participated in both the EFA movement and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) at the regional and global levels. During my engagement I have come across many a devoted champion and advocate.

Q. What are some of the key educational 'problematics' that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

I am currently very preoccupied with the quality of education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Although many important improvements have

been achieved in the level of schooling and enrolment, the quality leaves much to be desired. In addition to the very large numbers who are still out of school on the regional level—some have estimated they are at 7 million—there are many more that are out of learning. They are either not learning at all or learning that which is not relevant to the needs of a country in transition striving to make a developmental break through. The most pertinent entry point selected for a reform agenda in quality education is to work on the professional development of teachers and to promote teacher education in a number of ways.

The teacher reform agenda entails working on research with regard to teacher profiles and also how teacher institutions function and support their professional development. An ongoing concern in this reform initiative is bringing the efforts of faculties of education and teacher professional institutions closer to schools. More specifically, this entails making school-based reform a reality through the establishment of teacher education programmes in schools and allowing schools to develop their own research and monitoring agenda. These activities need to be done in partnership with academia, research outfits and faculties of education. Our graduate programme at the American University in Cairo is currently joining a regional initiative that aims at fostering an action research partnership between faculties of education in a number of MENA countries and surrounding clusters of schools.

The reform agenda on teachers also involves putting in place policies and programmes that create opportunities for empowered teachers in the region that are rights holders/claimants (those who claim certain rights) as well as duty bearers of rights (those who safeguard the rights of others). These policies need to observe incentive systems as well as other social-economic services for teachers that enhance the status of the profession.

Another important dimension of teacher professional development and enhancement is the development of teacher standards, indicators and rubrics that are rights based and perfectly capable of measuring teacher performance but more importantly of guiding teacher education and preparation. Teachers in our region are mostly prepared technically. They are coached on subject matter and teaching techniques mostly of a traditional nature, very little is offered in the way of empowering teachers to develop their students to their full potential through care, confidence building, exploration, enquiry and active and hands-on learning.

The reform agenda on teachers is one that revolutionizes the methods of teacher education with an emphasis on ways in which the practicum is conducted. Schools need to be strong partners of teacher preparation and assessment. In order to foster such partnerships there needs to develop strong institutional mentorship and regulated methods of overseeing a smooth transition from teacher academic preparation to praxis jointly managed by faculties of education/professional teacher academies and schools.

Another equally important problematic is that of equity, in terms of narrowing the disparity gap and breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. This agenda entails reviewing educational policies to tilt towards resourcing the most deprived and

ensuring the hard-to-reach are not only reached but are reached through quality learning. I am currently involved in establishing quality assurance mechanisms that are mostly self-managed for community education.

Another important approach towards the equity agenda is to create opportunities for economic empowerment for community based education. This will not only alleviate and support the cost of education but will also result in a very smooth school-to-work transition. A model of cooperative education is being developed to allow economic livelihoods to mushroom around schools and become the foundation for a rich educational experience similar to the Dewey Chicago schools.

Finally it is important to study and research the extent of which education continues to be an equalizer in certain contexts. This is a research question that aims to analyze the possibility of social mobility through education. Moreover foreign and international schooling needs to be studied as a potential constraint to disparity reduction and the reproduction of class divisions.

Q. What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in your country/region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in your country/region?

Many forces are at play in the region. A very significant factor that has shaped education has been the dearth and misallocation of resources. While it is true that most allocations to education budgets in the region range from 5-6% of the share of national income in countries, it is still not enough if we really want to improve on quality. More of the same will simply not do. The cost of poor quality education is exorbitant and quality although seemingly more costly balances itself out with the returns on every investment made to improve on teaching and the learning environment. Most investments are made in the direction of quantity and infrastructure. To date investments in education have not shown clear returns in any of the development spheres. It has not enhanced citizenship nor has it spread a true culture of rights and participation. Moreover it has not resulted in economic growth nor have the investments created an expanding economy with an absorptive job market. Finally education has not brought about an equitable society.

Other forces that have shaped education in the region are the spread of emergency situations and the absence of security. This has led to a rapid erosion of past gains. Iraq, once so well reputed for a powerful educational system, is now suffering from high rates of illiteracy, school drop outs and a growing gender gap. Palestine, that had the highest quality of educated young people in the region, is now on the decline with reports of deteriorating achievement. More girls are suffering from the security conditions.

Hand in hand with the emergency landscape is the situation of violence in schools. Violence is so widespread that many children fear school and refrain from going based on stories overheard from siblings, neighbours and friends.

In addition to all the above are external influences such as the ideologies upheld by many a World Bank professional that will vastly reduce educational reform to

employment generation. This reductionist approach is not only fallacious but also adds to the general lack of vision most educational systems manifest. This lacuna in vision is largely behind the stalled reform efforts.

The political reform landscape in the region is also replete with interest groups that are struggling for immediate gains. Long-term development investments such as education will not secure the power positions they aspire to; hence it is not a priority. There is also insufficient political will or knowledge amongst these political interest groups to bring about the much needed educational reform. In line with this perspective little effort and time is spent in reflection and adequate planning whilst much time is wasted in not well thought out implementation strategies that end up costing more and resulting in wastage.

Monitoring and evaluation are not part of the norms in the development of policies. A culture of inspection presides with a great deal of finger pointing as opposed to the objective analyses of enhancing and constraining factors. Moreover innovations are not easily tolerated or encouraged.

A generalized culture of accountability is not well developed which makes schools and/or educational systems not answerable to the general public or communities. Schools are answerable to a bureaucracy all of which aggravates the situation and does not allow for the development of a change and or transformation impetus that is led by knowledgeable educational leaders.

Very few communities of praxis and/or of learners exist since cooperative learning is not the norm. Most achievements are not done in team but tend to be individual. The one value that is repeatedly heard over and over in the region is the need for making the educational systems competitive.

Finally there is very little respect and or investment in education research in general and much less respect for qualitative research that may result in educational theory and/or the development of strategies that work at the classroom or system level.

Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country/region? How do you use these authors/texts in your own work? Feel free to cite an extended passage, and to comment on it in ways that add further insights into your own thinking.

I believe Freire continues to be very relevant to the situation of education in the region if one were to understand the very large levels of disparity as a reflection of deep seated power relations. Most countries in the region have very different levels of investments in education, from a minimalist approach in Sudan to a far more lavish mode of expenditure in the Gulf area. Moreover, within national boundaries, most countries suffer very large levels of disparity; the North Eastern parts of Syria, the South in Egypt, the Beqa'a of Lebanon, Darfur and the south of Sudan are certainly far less privileged than the capitals and other large cities.

Voice accorded the underprivileged in the region is still not the norm. Pro-poor policies in education are not taking off sufficiently and as private education expands

the level of marginalization and disparity is made even more significant and takes on deeper dimensions as new élites emerge with a culture quite alien to local societies and where mother tongue is less and less respected.

Authoritarian power relations permeate the educational systems of most countries in the region. Centralization and total student subservience to teachers is common practice. The culture of teacher respect to students and or schools that foster trust and respect is hard to find. Some countries have chosen to adopt a transformation path towards respect of rights, yet as Freire cogently put it:

'Transformation is not just a question of methods and techniques ... the question is a different relationship to knowledge and to society ... liberatory education is fundamentally a situation where the teacher and the students both have to be learners, both have to be cognitive subjects in spite of being different ... both have to be critical agents in the act of knowing' (Shor & Freire, 1987, pp.33, 35).

Thus the trajectory is none too easy and one that requires a context and many structures that support transformation not just in schools but in society at large. It is not education alone that can effectuate change and development, although it can trigger much of it. This region is not offering the kind of pedagogy and or establishing the structures that will bring about a paradigm shift since much of the reform agendas are fragmented and not in tune with the needs for personal growth and enlightened development and change. Very little is done in making the system truly accountable. Meanwhile the vast majority of existing structures are totally archaic—separate examination and curriculum centres, inspectorates and Ministry of Education; centralized directorates managing heavy and hierarchical bureaucracies and traditional training centres—and do not lend themselves to a holistic approach with very little harmonization and coordination around a transformation vision.

Moreover most changes are affected from above. A number of countries in the region have indeed developed strategic plans, examples of which are Egypt, Jordan (through Educational Reform for the Knowledge Economy—ERFKE), Morocco, Iraq, and Sudan. Expanded national dialogue has not been part of the equation nor has consensus building towards overarching goals and outcomes of learning been the practice. Many countries have built their own measurable standards for quality education and teacher performance but the question is who was consulted and how wide-ranging was the consensus.

Education in the region needs to be treated as a social project. One that answers the critical questions many a philosopher posed centuries ago both in the west and east: What society are we aspiring to and hence what characteristics should its citizens be endowed with? As long as these reflections are not made we will continue to regard education as a vehicle that will enhance our *competitive* position within a global economy that is unkind to most citizens of the world rather than question its very existence. We will further more continue to reproduce the existing disparities that are visibly the result of the tenacious power relations most countries in the region are party to.

Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your region fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why?

Despite some of the bleak reflections made earlier on the MENA region, there is scope for hope as some national initiatives in the region are truly innovative and some regional initiatives as well. On the regional level I would like to highlight two initiatives that I believe leave us with a lot of hope; an initiative on teacher professional development is now at the third stage of its evolution. In the first stage a guiding framework for teachers' performance was developed to emphasize a humanitarian and rights based approach as opposed to a bureaucratic technocratic one. It introduced many of the standards and competencies rights based type of teachers in child friendly schools might want to live up to. Caring, supporting and endearing children were in the forefront of what was being sought. Empowered and autonomous teachers capable of reflection and self-assessment are what the framework strives for. A second phase of the initiative aimed at developing policies and programmes that would successfully support the approach. The framework, along with the policies and programmes, were presented to all ministers in the region in a conference in Oman in March 2010 and were endorsed by all.

A third phase of this initiative is now being conceived. Centres of excellence for teacher professional development are being reinforced and their capacity developed. Two such centres have been identified and selected for the region: the Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT) in Egypt and the Queen Rania Academy for Teacher training in Jordan. The two centres will be developing regional agendas to promote participatory approaches to reform and the development of teacher standards as well as strengthening the school and higher education institution partnerships. This will be a first in creating consultative mechanisms in countries in the region for the development of professional standards for teachers. This will widen the possibility of voice and democratic practices in the way reforms are developed. Moreover schools will become more and more the subject of research, reform and professional development as opposed to being merely the objects. This will certainly reinforce the process of decentralization and hence the movement towards more democratic practices.

A second innovative initiative in the region is one that is covering Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and is entitled TAMAM. The initiative is one that reinforces the partnership between higher education institutes and schools though reflective and action research. These various pilots can of course all be linked to the functions of the regional centre of excellence PAT in Egypt. Moreover this initiative is one that will enhance the power of teachers to become researchers and design their own teaching strategies. It will democratize knowledge and allow teachers to be part of the construction of knowledge. Teachers who are normally not regarded as the intellectual force of a nation can now be seen as a producer of theory in education through classroom observation, reflection and analyses.

Trends that are certainly not too encouraging in the education scene are the proliferation of two phenomena: increased violence in schools is a reality in the region

and is a reflection of much frustration on other fronts. It is part of the inequity of the increased powerlessness at all levels of society and that gets acted out in the classrooms.

Another very serious emerging trend is the proliferation of private education for profit that is creating disinterested élites in each of the countries in the region. Young graduates from such schools are increasingly aspiring to emigrate to a large number of countries, having neither a sense of belonging, nor any aspiration to join the various development initiatives or reforms. Contrary to the idea of choice, the proliferation of privatized for profit schooling is more an obstruction to the democratization of education, and is based on a philosophy of exclusion and the building of cultural capital among a select few to the detriment of the remaining national populations.

Q. What comments would you care to make about the impact of globalisation and/or regionalisation (e.g. Europeanisation) on educational development in your country/region?

I have a few reflections to make in response to this question. In my view, globalization is introducing too much of the technology-driven type of culture in the realm of education. Although technology is a most welcome innovation, it is increasingly becoming an end in itself and a status symbol. It has acquired the 'magic wand' status and hence it is anticipated that with the broad brush of technology all educational systems can be 'modernized' and changed to the better. Linked to this is the trend to establish open universities in the region, even if the courses they offer are not really affordable to the vast majority of the population.

Across the region we notice that business and corporate interests are increasingly becoming involved in curriculum reform, in order to cater to the needs of the labour market, with education increasingly being reduced to vocational training. This vocationalist ideology is also apparent in the way 'standards' have become part of a fashionable discourse in education, with standards being not so much a tool for improvement but as a first step towards accreditation and other forms of market-oriented quality assurance mechanisms in a competitive world. How can accreditation work within incentives that are not market generated? Most countries in the region are in state-led types of educational systems with the exception of Lebanon, which is not really market-driven but is more driven by religious factions and ethnic groups.

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MARIE ELIOU

Professeur émérite à l'Université d'Athènes—Grèce

mjes.eliou@gmail.com

UN VOYAGE MOUVEMENTÉ

Q. Qui êtes-vous? Parlez-nous de votre histoire, et des événements clés qui vous ont marqués en tant qu'éducatrice, intellectuelle, et citoyenne.

Mes réponses aux deux premières questions ne peuvent que se croiser dans une sorte de narration qui englobera nécessairement des points cruciaux de l'histoire de mon pays.

J'avais 3 ans, quand la dictature du général Métaxas a été instaurée, avec l'assentiment actif du roi Georges II. Mon père a été muté d'Athènes à une petite vile au nord de la Grèce (1936). Je venais de fêter mes 7 ans (Octobre 1940) quand l'Italie de Mussolini avait attaqué mon pays qui a victorieusement résisté et repoussé l'envahisseur à l'intérieur de l'Albanie. Mon père qui était vétérinaire militaire s'est retrouvé au front dès le premier jour de la guerre et nous autres avons quitté Véria pour Athènes. Après 6 mois de combats, l'Allemagne de Hitler est venue à la rescousse de son alliée ouvrant un deuxième front et installant rapidement une triple occupation du pays par les forces allemandes, italiennes et bulgares. Nous avons quitté Athènes pour Pyrgos, dans le Péloponnèse, où la ferme de mon grand-père maternel nous garantirait la subsistance. C'est en entrant dans ma dixième année que j'ai perdu mon père.

Et c'est chez grand-père que j'ai vécu la naissance et le développement des mouvements de Résistance, plus précisément du Front de Libération Nationale (E.A.M.) et de l'Armée Nationale Populaire de Libération (E.L.A.S.), dans lesquels s'étaient enrôlés mes oncles et tante. L'écrasante majorité de ces mouvements, tout en combattant les occupants, œuvraient pour l'édification prochaine d'un régime démocratique dans un après-guerre qu'on espérait différent du passé. Il y a eu même un projet de réforme de l'enseignement élaboré par l'E.A.M. pendant l'occupation (voir ce projet en entier dans l'*Ouvrage Collectif*, 1966, pp.37-75).

L'intervention armée de l'Angleterre (1944) soutenant les mouvements royalistes, mais aussi des bandes armées de collaborateurs des Allemands, en vue du retour inconditionnel du roi et exigeant le désarmement des partisans avant même que les forces de l'occupant évacuent complètement le pays, a conduit à la guerre civile (Tsoucalas, 1969; Svoronos, 1972) qui a duré trois années et s'est terminée par la victoire des 'forces de l'ordre'. Pendant ce temps, l'Angleterre s'était retirée de la Grèce en faveur des Etats-Unis qui avaient ainsi trouvé à disposition un terrain propice pour expérimenter in vivo des méthodes employées plus tard au Viet-Nam.

Après un referendum contestable, le roi Georges II avait déjà retrouvé son trône, l'année où mes oncles avaient été emprisonnés (1946).

A la fin de la guerre civile (1949), la Grèce était parsemée de camps, dans lesquels étaient déportés, sur une simple décision administrative, des dizaines de milliers de personnes; le parti communiste et une série d'autres organisations politiques et culturelles étaient mises lors la loi; des 'lois d'exception' suspendaient une bonne partie des articles de la Constitution; les prisons étaient archipleines; des tribunaux spéciaux travaillant d'arrache-pied prononçaient de lourdes sentences. Un nombre indéfini de personnes, parmi lesquelles des étudiant(e)s et des collégien(ne)s, ont été ainsi légalement exécutées en plein Athènes.

Les plaidoyers d'un brillant avocat dans des procès politiques avaient été largement remarqués et gêné l'ordre établi. Ilias Iliou, le père de ma meilleure amie, devenue une dizaine d'années plus tard ma belle-sœur, arrêté à son tour, était déporté dans une île. Aux élections de 1951 qui n'avaient pas été suffisamment manipulées dans les grandes villes, 3 prisonniers politiques et 7 déportés parmi lesquels Ilias Iliou avaient été élus sur les listes d'un parti nouvellement créé, la Gauche Démocratique unifiée (E.D.A.). L'élection des prisonniers avait été immédiatement invalidée; quant aux déportés élus, ils ont été emmenés de leurs camps pour porter serment à la Chambre. (Ilias Iliou qui a eu des funérailles nationales en 1985, avait passé 8 années de sa vie en déportation, ou bien en prison sans jugement ou encore dans un camp. Pendant 18 autres années que fractionnait le cours de l'histoire du pays, il avait siégé au Parlement en tant que député de l'E.D.A. dont il était devenu le porte-parole à la Chambre et plus tard le Président).

Les évènements qui ont marqué mon enfance et mon adolescence ont contribué à mon éducation autant, sinon plus que l'école: études primaires à Pyrgos, secondaires dans une école réputée d'Athènes, l'Arsakeion. En 1951, j'avais été reçue à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université d'Athènes, dont je suis sortie diplômée de la section d'études classiques—il n'y avait pas alors dans nos Universités de section de psychologie, de sociologie ou de sciences de l'éducation. Je suivais parallèlement le cycle du Cours Spécial de préparation au Professorat de français à l'Institut Français d'Athènes qui formait à l'époque les professeurs de français pour les écoles secondaires, ainsi que pour les Annexes de l'Institut, dans lesquelles j'ai enseigné pendant deux ans (1955-1957).

Des ces années d'études supérieures j'ai tiré un triple bénéfice: (a) confirmation de ma vocation précoce d'entrer dans l'enseignement et de ma conviction que le pays nécessitait dans ce domaine une réforme radicale—réforme qui, ainsi que la démocratisation de nos institutions, était recherchée activement mais vainement par les forces les plus vives du pays, depuis le 19e siècle; (b) profonde reconnaissance à l'égard de l'Institut Français et son sous-directeur Roger Milliex pour la formation reçue, ainsi que pour le fait qu'avec le directeur Octave Merlier ils avaient tissé des liens solides entre nos deux pays et marqué durablement la culture du mien; c) ouverture vers la problématique sociale, à travers notamment les organisations d'étudiants, pas toutes légales.

J'avais pu entrer à l'Université et en sortir quelques années plus tard sans problèmes politico-administratifs. Mes deux diplômes m'auraient normalement permis d'enseigner dans l'enseignement secondaire. Mais il n'en était plus question. Liée depuis mes jeunes années avec Philippe Iliou, le fils d'Ilias, j'ai vu nos vies se compliquer.

A l'époque, la possibilité d'avoir une vie sans problèmes additionnels était subordonnée à une pièce administrative d'une haute importance, délivrée par la police: le *Certificat d'opinions sociales*. Il était nécessaire pour passer les examens d'entrée dans l'Université, pour avoir un poste dans l'administration ou l'enseignement, pour obtenir un passeport, pour accéder même à un permis de conduire… Un tel Certificat était refusé à Philippe, ce qui lui avait fermé aussi bien l'accès à l'Université que la possibilité d'aller faire des études à l'étranger. Appelé au service militaire, il l'a exercé enfermé dans le camp de Makronissos de sinistre mémoire. C'est en 1957 qu'il a pu enfin avoir son passeport, à durée limitée. Nous nous sommes rapidement mariés (les deux versions de notre nom Iliou—Eliou, sont due à un désaccord entre employés subalternes des Affaires Etrangères sur son écriture 'juste' en lettres de l'alphabet latin…) et partis le jour même pour Paris et la Sorbonne. Philippe a dû s'inscrire en Propédeutique avant de suivre des études d'histoire, tandis que moi qui pouvais formellement aborder la préparation d'une thèse de doctorat, j'ai préféré compléter d'abord ma formation en pédagogie et en psychologie de l'enfant.

Vivre à Paris était une bénédiction: les conférences, les musées, l'ambiance intellectuelle…Tous les cours universitaires étaient enrichissants, mais c'étaient ceux de Jean Piaget et surtout son Séminaire d'épistémologie génétique qui m'ont marquée. En même temps nous nous sommes engagés auprès du Comité Français pour la Grèce démocratique et du Secours Populaire Français, en faveur notamment des prisonniers politiques dans les pays méditerranéens.

Jean Piaget a accepté de diriger ma thèse sur 'La formation du nombre et de l'espace chez l'enfant algérien de Paris'. C'était la période de la guerre d'Algérie qui ravivait mes représentations des luttes grecques pour la libération. Les Algériens de Paris étaient à l'époque soumis à une répression visible et leurs enfants à de multiples difficultés. C'est tout naturellement que j'ai reconnu en eux des frères et sœurs. J'offrais mes services avec d'autres étudiants bénévoles à un club pour enfants algériens fondé dans le 15e arrondissement par l'organisation protestante CIMADE et je partis en tant que monitrice à une colonie de vacances pour petits Algériens, organisée par de jeunes catholiques français et algériens musulmans dans le village de Fléac, près d'Angoulême, où nous avons passé un mois inoubliable.

Ayant besoin de travailler, j'ai eu la chance d'être acceptée en tant que chercheur sur contrat à l'Institut d'Etude du Développement Economique et Social récemment créé alors à la Sorbonne. Ciblé sur le tiers-monde, l'IEDES menait simultanément enseignement et recherche. C'est avec ardeur que je me suis lancée à travailler sur une enquête concernant la scolarité dans certains pays africains, dirigée par Jean-Claude Pauvert.

Le programme de recherches de l'Institut sur des problèmes économiques et sociaux dans des pays de l'Asie, de l'Afrique et de l'Amérique Latine étaient d'une brûlante actualité. Les échanges qui s'en suivaient entre chercheurs sous la direction entraînante de Michel Debeauvais ont créé dans l'IEDES une cellule de réflexion et d'innovation dans laquelle d'autres organismes, tels que l'Unesco ou l'OCDE, puisaient pour leurs propres projets.

C'est ainsi que je me suis trouvée consultante à l'Unesco, tout en gardant mon travail de chercheur à l'IEDES. Tout un monde s'est ouvert devant mes yeux quand j'ai pris part à une des premières missions de planification de l'éducation de l'Unesco en Afrique, dans la République du Mali. C'était mon premier contact physique avec un pays africain et une expérience privilégiée sur plusieurs plans: lourde responsabilité envers un jeune pays; contact avec une tradition vivante et créative; contradictions contenues dans l'objet même de notre mission, dans la mesure où nos efforts étaient minés par le manque de données, les objectifs éducatifs butaient sur la pénurie de moyens et nos propositions, formulées avec la participation active des responsables maliens, ne pouvaient ne pas avoir, malgré tout, la marque de personnes venant d'un ailleurs radicalement différent.

On était en 1964. Philippe venait d'obtenir son diplôme d'historien. Entre l'IEDES et l'UNESCO, j'éprouvais des satisfactions professionnelles qui rencontraient mes conceptions de pédagogue/universitaire/citoyenne. J'avais parallèlement terminé la partie recherche de ma thèse que Piaget avait approuvée. Mais la rédaction restait à faire. Cependant, nous étions, mon mari et moi, malades de nostalgie. Pendant 7 années nous n'avions pas pu mettre le pied sur le sol natal, car personne ne nous garantissait de pouvoir obtenir à nouveaux le permis de partir pour l'étranger. Nous avons donc pris la décision de rentrer en Grèce où de récentes élections avaient conduit à un gouvernement du Centre présidé par Georges Papandréou (le grand-père de l'actuel premier ministre) qui avait procédé entre autres à la mise en œuvre d'une réforme de l'enseignement.

De retour au pays, nous avons constaté que le gouvernement ne contrôlait qu'une partie de l'Etat. Les 'lois d'exception' établies pendant la guerre civile restaient toujours en vigueur. Pas question pour nous de trouver un travail autre que des contrats temporaires dans le privé. L'enseignement nous restait interdit.

A ma demande au Ministère de l'Education pour que je sois acceptée au moins sur les listes de l'enseignement privé, j'ai reçu en réponse une pièce officielle qui me notifiait : '…vous étés priée de nous soumettre la déclaration d'opinions conformes aux lois prévue par la loi d'exception 516/1948, pour que nous la communiquions au Conseil d'Opinions Conformes aux lois, ainsi que le Certificat de la Police en vue d'un examen selon la loi 516/1948. A défaut (…), votre demande sera considérée comme inacceptable'.

Cependant, le Centre de Recherches Sociales recrutant des chercheurs sur contrat, m'a confié la direction d'un groupe. Portée par l'enthousiasme, j'ai élaboré un projet qui entrait dans la perspective de la récente réforme de l'enseignement, soutenue par de jeunes chercheurs que j'ai contribué à former. A travers mille difficultés, le résultat de notre travail prenait forme début 1967.

Projetant de me libérer pour l'année prochaine en vue de la rédaction interrompue et de la soutenance de ma thèse à la Sorbonne, je suis partie à Paris avec un congé de quelques jours pour régler certaines formalités administratives à l'Université. Le coup d'état des colonels instaurant la dictature (21-4-1967) m'a trouvée loin des miens : mon beau-père arrêté et molesté, mon mari en fuite, des collègues du Centre arrêtés et torturés, moi-même recherchée, ma mère licenciée de son travail, le pays entier sous les verrous…

Coincée à Paris, j'ai été fraternellement accueillie par mes anciens collègues et retrouvé mon travail de Chargée de recherche à l'IEDES, ainsi que des contrats de temps à autre à l'Unesco. Apres quelques mois mon mari a pu me joindre, un fils nous est né, le projet de terminer ma thèse en psychologie de l'enfant a définitivement sombré.

Nous sommes de nouveau restés à Paris pendant de longues années, sans pouvoir rentrer en Grèce. Mais il y avait maintenant dans notre vie le bonheur d'un enfant. Sur le plan professionnel, c'était un épanouissement : développement de mes travaux de recherche, participation active à des colloques et autres réunions scientifiques, membre élu au Conseil d'Administration de l'IEDES et du Comité des publications Tiers-Monde (1971-1975), conférences, publications dans des revues (*Prospects, Tiers-Morde, International Review of Education*), études et missions (Congo, Zaïre, République Centrafricaine, Sénégal) pour l'Unesco (avec le grade P5), un livre (*Enseignants Africains. Enquêtes au Congo et au Mali*, IEDES, Université Paris I, 1975). Et une thèse de doctorat en sociologie sur 'La formation de la conscience nationale en République populaire du Congo et le rôle de l'enseignement', que j'ai soutenue en 1975. Notre fils, me voyant peiner les soirs sur la table de la cuisine m'avait donné des conseils judicieux : 'Attention maman ! Le plus important c'est de garder ta ligne droite'.

J'avais été quelques fois au Congo pour le compte de l'Unesco: estimation de l'impact de certaines politiques éducatives, évaluation de l'efficacité interne des Ecoles Normales, étude du projet de réforme de l'enseignement. De solides liens d'amitié et l'appréciation mutuelle créés à cette occasion avaient renforcé mes interrogations sur la construction des identités collectives dans les nouveaux Etats et conduit à la préparation de ma thèse. Le jury, présidé par Georges Balandier, avait recommandé cet ouvrage au Centre National de Recherche Scientifique français, qui a contribué à sa publication aux éditions Anthropos (Paris, 1976). J'ai pu ainsi avoir la satisfaction de le voir favorablement accueilli aussi bien dans des revues spécialisées qu'au Congo même.

Aussitôt après ma soutenance nous sommes rentrés à Athènes. Les colonels avaient déjà abdiqué en 1974. Après des élections libres on avait enfin un régime démocratique et les lois d'exception étaient abolies.

'Quinze années de ma vie, en instance de départ, en instance de retour; carnets d'adresses perdus ; amis d'enfance et de jeunesse suspendus au fil d'une correspondance problématique, inspectée. Amitiés nouées, dénouées. Longue coupure. Déchirure. Retour donc finalement au pays. Retour dans un autre pays…

Adieux et retrouvailles (…) Profils d'amis dispersés sur la planète. Paris, Brazzaville, Vienne, Jannina… C'est la mappemonde qu'il me faudrait pour reconstituer la trame de l'amitié…' (Extrait d'un texte écrit en 1998).

Il nous a fallu trouver nos marques dans le pays. Pas facile, les réseaux universitaires étant en béton. J'ai à nouveau travaillé sur contrats temporaires au Centre National de Recherches Sociales, tout en publiant articles, livres, résultats de recherches. Comme pendant mon séjour en France durant 15 ans il était hors de question d'avoir un travail rémunéré pour des recherches portant sur la Grèce et son enseignement, de même, à mon retour au pays, mon expérience et mon engagement intellectuel pour l'Afrique semblaient inutiles, voire extravagants. Un livre sur la poésie congolaise a concrétisé ma nostalgie du Congo (1981).

En 1984, mon dossier de candidature pour un poste de professeur titulaire à l'Université de Jannina a été accepté à l'unanimité. Conseiller du Ministre de l'Education sur l'éducation populaire (1982-1984), professeur visiteur à l'Université Libre de Bruxelles (1986-1987), directeur p.i. de l'Institut Pédagogique national (1989-1990), j'ai été appelée en 1990 à l'Université d'Athènes où j'ai enseigné jusqu'à ma retraite.

Cependant, j'ai tenu à garder mes liens avec mes collègues d'autres pays, en particulier à travers mes activités dans les organisations scientifiques internationales dont j'étais membre et à essayer de faire profiter mes étudiants de ces liens privilégiés: EADI (Européen Association of Development Research and Training Instituts, trois fois élue à son Comité Exécutif et coordinatrice pendant cinq ans de son Groupe de travail 'Femmes et Développement'); AISLF (Association International des Sociologues de langue française, deux fois élue à son bureau et membre du groupe coordinateur du Comité de recherche 'Modes et procés de socialisation'); CESE (Comparative Education Society in Europe, élue au Conseil exécutif en 1992); AFEC (Association Francophone d'Education Comparée, élue au Bureau en 1991); nommée à titre individuel par le Directeur de l'UNESCO au Fonds International pour la promotion de la Culture (1982-1990) et au Joint ILO/UNESCO Commitee of Experts on the Recommendations concerning the Status of Teaching Personnel (CEART, 1989- 2007).

En somme, si cet itinéraire inhabituel laisse une impression de dispersion (Grèce, France, Congo/psychologie de l'enfant, pédagogie, sociologie/enseignement et recherche/engagements multiples), il y a eu cependant un fil conducteur qui a permis de voir chaque étape, chaque lieu, chaque obstacle même, se transformer en chance et produire des fruits.

Q. Quelles sont les problématiques dans le secteur de l'éducation qui vous préoccupent le plus? Quelle est votre réaction à ces défis?

Parmi les orientations de mes travaux et activités en Grèce, on peut repérer deux questions majeures: les inégalités éducatives et sociales et la défense des droits de l'homme. Il va sans dire que ces deux questions se complètent mutuellement et traduisent concrètement mes 'broader preoccupations about society'. Dans un vieil

article (Eliou, 1978), je considérais ceux dont la récente alors 'réforme éducative' n'avait pas tenu compte: les illettrés, les marginalisés par leur lieu d'habitation, les minorités, les femmes.

La condition féminine socialement construite a eu une place importante dans mes recherches et publications (Eliou 1983,1988), comme aussi dans mes cours et mes autres activités. Membre du comité directeur de la Ligue grecque des droits de la femme de 1979 à 1991, j'en ai été le présidente pour une année (1982-1983).

Au début des années '90, l'importance des flux migratoires vers la Grèce, ainsi que l'ethnocentrisme cultivé dans nos écoles, interpellaient l'université posant avec intensité la question de la sensibilisation des élèves et des enseignants à ces problèmes. C'est alors que j'ai élaboré le projet d'un programme d'études de 3e cycle d'une durée de deux années universitaires intitulé 'Education comparée et droits de l'homme'. Ce projet, comprenant notamment une collaboration de l'Université d'Athènes avec l'Institut of Education de Londres a été accepté par les deux institutions et continue à fonctionner jusqu'à maintenant. Dans mes cours faisant partie de ce programme que j'ai dirigé jusqu'à ma retraite, j'avais tenu à sensibiliser mes étudiants (pour la plupart déjà enseignants) aux différentes formes de marginalisation et d'exclusion, ainsi qu'à la détection des violations des droits des hommes et des femmes dans nos propres sociétés.

Un autre aspect concernant l'enseignement grec est à signaler. Il s'agit de l'uniformité et du centralisme en tant que volets complémentaires rendant compte d'une bonne partie des problèmes de l'éducation grecque. L'uniformité est dirigée, appliquée et garantie par les mécanismes d'un centralisme bureaucratique tentaculaire et ces mécanismes trouvent leur justification et renforcent leur légitimité à travers l'évocation d'une 'nécessaire' uniformité.

L'uniformité caractérise donc l'enseignement grec. Mais ce qui est plus grave: elle n'est généralement pas perçue comme problème, mais plutôt comme une qualité positive, parfois comme une conquête. Ainsi, elle est recherchée et même revendiquée. Par conséquent, elle tend à être renforcée et amplifiée.

Il y a une confusion, très largement partagée, entre démocratisation et uniformité. Tout ceci culmine vers la légitimation d'un système d'enseignement contestable et contesté à travers l'utilisation idéologique des concepts de démocratisation et d'égalité des chances.

Et c'est avec tristesse qu'on relève le paradoxe que l'administration évoque l' 'égalité des chances' pour appliquer à l'enseignement un centralisme encore plus fort, une uniformité encore plus grande, des éléments de répétition (et donc de rétrogression) encore plus nombreux. Et que ceux qui revendiquent avec raison l''égalité des chances' réclament (à tort) encore plus de centralisme, d'uniformité et d'éléments répétitifs.

Et les perspectives ? Les solutions ? Elles semblent renvoyer d'abord à des examens lucides de la situation, à la prise de conscience du sens contenu dans ces problèmes et à la détection des forces qui pèsent sur le présent et compromettent l'avenir. Les plus importantes de ces forces font corps avec notre société. C'est la

partie conservatrice de celle-ci qui cultive l'inertie et l'immobilisme et annule les efforts consentis. C'est aussi l'église qui intervient dans chaque tentative de réforme de l'enseignement, avec l'assentiment voilé des principaux partis politiques, pour imprimer sa marque ou empêcher qu'elle s'estompe.

Q. Quelles innovations et réformes dans le secteur de l'éducation vous inspirent le plus d'enthousiasme, et quels sont les développements qui suscitent en vous le plus de critiques?

Les problèmes actuels de l'éducation en Grèce comportent une dimension historique non négligeable. C'est que l'enseignement a toujours constitué un enjeu important et explicite des forces sociales et politiques grecques. Ainsi, les tentatives de réforme de l'enseignement et les campagnes de contre-réforme ont scandé les péripéties d'une histoire mouvementée. Le titre du plus important ouvrage sur l'histoire de l'enseignement grec (Dimaras 1973 et 1974) est significatif : *La réforme qui n'a pas eu lieu.*

En effet, une rapide rétrospective montrerait que déjà, les revendications d'un renouvellement du système d'enseignement et les tentatives de réforme en 1897-1900, 1909-1911, 1913, 1917-1920, n'avaient pas pu aboutir. De la réforme de 1929 qui avait notamment réussi le changement de programmes scolaires en vigueur depuis 1836 et institué la structure 6+6 (primaire + secondaire), il est resté peu de choses après l'instauration de la dictature de 1936. Le projet de réforme de l'enseignement élaboré par le Front de Libération Nationale en 1944 n'avait aucune chance de voir le jour pendant la période qui a suivi la guerre civile.

Les grandes luttes politiques qui aboutirent à la victoire éclatante du Centre démocratique en 1963, reprenaient comme référence constante le problème de l'enseignement. De puissantes manifestations populaires avaient érigé l'enseignement comme la priorité du renouveau attendu. Le gouvernement du Centre a très rapidement élaboré une réforme de l'enseignement, reprenant des éléments de projets antérieurs. La réforme a pu être votée au Parlement en 1964, malgré la violence des réactions des conservateurs.

L'entreprise de déstabilisation du régime démocratique qui a suivi n'a pas épargné, dès 1965, l'enseignement. La réforme a ainsi sombré, bien avant la venue des colonels (en 1967) qui n'ont fait que démanteler le reste.

Avec le rétablissement de la démocratie (1974), la réforme de l'enseignement était à nouveau devenue prioritaire. Et c'est la formation politique qui l'avait si obstinément combattue sous sa forme de 1964, qui la proposait en 1976 au pays. L'orientation générale de cette réforme pourrait être résumée en deux objectifs implicites: (a) essayer d'insérer l'enseignement grec dans le temps présent (avec notamment la modernisation des programmes et la prolongation de la scolarité obligatoire portée à 9 ans); (b) réhabiliter et développer l'enseignement technique.

Néanmoins, cette réforme, votée avec l'assentiment quasi général, venait trop tard et était déjà dépassée par les problèmes de cette nouvelle période. Etant largement anachronique et pas vraiment intériorisée par ses promoteurs, elle n'a pas

pu atteindre ses objectifs. Les problèmes de l'enseignement continuaient à s'aggraver et à être utilisés dans les affrontements politiques.

Les deux principaux partis politiques qui se succèdent pendant plus de 35 ans au gouvernement, tentent périodiquement d'introduire des changements, parfois des innovations, dans le système d'enseignement. Toutes ces tentatives, manquant de cohésion et de conviction, se diluent rapidement dans l'indifférence et l'inertie. La gouvernement actuel se réfère à un nouveau projet de réforme de l'enseignement qui serait soumis à discussion ouverte avant d'être présenté au Parlement. A suivre !...

Q. Quelles sont vos réflexions sur l'impact de la globalisation et de l'Européanisation sur l'éducation dans votre pays?

L'explosion des savoirs d'une part et la nécessité d'adaptation des formations à l'évolution de l'organisation économique et sociale de l'autre, ont propulsé le questionnement sur l'enseignement au centre d'un débat qui, pour être partiel (car il élude la problématique d'un projet de société différent) n'en est pas moins essentiel pour qu'il y ait évaluation du présent éducatif et élaboration d'alternatives pour l'avenir.

Quelques unes des questions soulevées:
– la pertinence des savoirs transmis en vue des formations proposées et des compétences escomptées (crise des savoirs?);
– la restructuration des modes de transmission des savoirs (crise pédagogique?);
– la renégociation des critères d'évaluation dans les (et des) systèmes d'enseignement (crise de légitimité?);
– Les contradictions inhérentes dans certaines représentations sociales de l'enseignement, marquées par une sorte de syncrétisme naïf de valeurs et d'objectifs: épanouissement individuel et compétitivité, égalité des chances et égalité de traitement scolaire, démocratisation et uniformité, légitimité des aspirations individuelles et « effets pervers » et ainsi de suite (crise du sens?).

Devant la complexité de tous ces problèmes, on assiste actuellement à des entreprises de rationalisation qui conduisent à une dualité équivoque: le débat concernant les systèmes d'enseignement est nourri de questions sur la qualité,les valeurs, la diversification nécessaire de l'éducation, le multiculturalisme, pendant qu'on déplace doucement les moyens et les efforts des systèmes éducatifs vers les systèmes de formation. En fait, cela revient à accompagner un déplacement des attentes des usagers et correspond à une issue provisoire à la perplexité des décideurs.

Dans ce débat pluriel, les différents pays s'insèrent de manière singulière. S'agit-il d'une question de niveau de développement économique, de différenciation culturelle, du poids de l'histoire?

Cependant, deux tendances majeures semblent se dégager: l'uniformisation et la professionnalisation de l'enseignement.

Les différences constituant la plus grande richesse de l'humanité aussi bien sur le plan culturel que social et même biologique, l'avancement de l'uniformisation

constitue un appauvrissement désolant. Dans 'le combat titanesque entre pouvoirs homogénéisants et capacités différentielles' (Lefebvre, 1970) qui continue sans cesse à l'échelle planétaire, nous avons chacun notre place.

Quant à la professionnalisation qui menace actuellement l'enseignement supérieur en Europe, mes craintes retrouvent dans un vieux texte le cri de cœur de quelqu'un qui essayait de secouer l'inertie de ses contemporains en faveur de l'éducation permanente: 'Et derrière les apparences se construit la grande machine à décerveler que risque fort de devenir la formation professionnelle continue, si nous ne savons pas, dès maintenant, lutter pour l'éducation permanente' (Lapierre, 1974).

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FRANCO FERRAROTTI

Emeritus Professor, Università di Roma, La Sapienza—Italy

ferrarotti.franco@gmail.com

THE EDUCATED PERSON
AND THE NEW CAPITALISM

Q. Tell us a little about who you are, about some of the most significant milestones in your personal/professional life, and your most noteworthy achievements as an educator/scholar/citizen. Locate and position yourself within the socio-political and historical movements that define who and what you are, and where you 'stand'.

I had at least four different careers: translator and editorial consultant, as a young man (with Publisher Einaudi, Turin), 1944-1946; business associate (with Adriano Olivetti, 1948-1960); as an international diplomat (at the OECE, in Paris, responsible of the *Facteurs Sociaux* and Head of the Human Sciences Section; 1957-1962); as a Member of the Italian Parliament (1958-1963). But finally, my only real career—some sort of underground current unifying my whole life experience—has been the career of university professor at the University of Rome, *La Sapienza*, having, by a stroke of good luck, reinvented, as it were, a discipline that had been eliminated from any academic curriculum by Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile during fascism (the same thing happened in Germany during Nazism), that is sociology. As a Member of Parliament I was obviously independent, belonging to the *Gruppo Misto*, to the left of the Christian Democrats. My main target consisted essentially in changing the prevailing, political and intellectual attitude of the Italian élite, traditionally prone to adopt an old-fashioned rhetorical posture in dealing and trying to tackle specific issues and to dissolve ethical problems into aesthetic, if hot theatrical, gestures.

Why sociology, one might ask? To put it bluntly: because it was no longer there (psychologically speaking, a clear consequence of my Ulysses' complex). Secondly, and more seriously, because I was in the best condition to make the rediscovery of sociology. In fact, after the five years of elementary schools, (6 to 11 years of age), I was basically a self-taught student. At 15 I achieved my *licenza ginnasiale* as a *privatista*, or private scholar, and two years later my *maturità classica*; then, at the university of Turin I took my *laurea* in the department of History and Philosophy with a dissertation on the sociology of Thorstein Veblen, although no courses in social science were offered; later, in 1951 at Chicago University, where Veblen had studied and taught, half a century before. During my formative years, I was blessed by my relative solitude. Being a private student and scholar, I was neither infected by

the prevailing neo-idealistic philosophical climate nor by the spiritualistic (Catholic or neo-Thomistic) outlook. Without being fully conscious of it, I was ready for sociology, that is something less abstract than the ongoing philosophy and not so dry as political economy. In 1960, when the first full Chair in Sociology was established in the Italian academic system, I was the 'natural' winner. As regards what so far appears to have been the most fateful decision in my life, I recall when, in 1963, I decided, against the advice of many good friends, to abandon active politics. A most difficult, anguishing decision—but I could already see the growing wave of political corruption, the fact that a policy-maker must decide before having in his/her hand the reasons justifying the rationality of the decision. Moreover, the fact that in the university milieu a new social type was emerging: the 'academic gangster', turning the professor into a shady business dealer. Thus, I did not stand for re-election and devoted myself completely, without reservations, to teaching and research.

No doubt that I am a man of books, afflicted by the strange disease of 'bookishness'. My father hated books because he feared, with some good reasons, that I would become a 'man of paper', that is what the Germans would call, perhaps more appropriately a *Luft-mensch* (a man of air). I have written many books (too many?), but I have read a great deal of books also. Leaving aside the great books of the classical sociological tradition (including, together with the official founders Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, and the epigone Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, there are some books that had an impact on my early education. I would give, in this connection, a passing mention to Charles Péguy, *La Thèse*; Léon Bloy, *La Femme Pauvre*, *L'Âme de Napoléon*, *Sueur de Sang*; Max Weber, all his works, but especially his last two lectures, 'Politics as a vocation', 'Science as a vocation'; I would mention also the works of Max Scheler and especially of Julius Langbehn, *Der Geist des Ganzen.*

As far as my own books are concerned, I would emphasize the underlying interest for power, power-makers, power-holders, and power victims. This is already apparent in my early *Il Dilemma dei Sindacati Americani* (1954) and *La Protesta Operaia* (1955). The main thesis is easily summarized: no power without counter-power; no power without formal legitimation; but, at the bottom of any legitimation, there is an act of illegitimate, pure violence. Hence, from power my interest shifts to violence as a sudden interruption of the dialogue, whether interpersonal, inter-institutional and international; violence as a void of values; violence as hypnosis. Most important contributions include: *Alle Radici della Violenza* (1979); *L'Ipnosi della Violenza* (1980); *Il Potere come Relazione e come Struttura* (1980); *Rapporto sul Terrorismo* (1981). Thus, violence, although at the origin of society, denies in principle the existence of the community. Hence, a dichotomic view of society, with a commanding élite and a subjected majority. This holds true not only in the domestic scene, but also as regards immigration with its inevitable consequences, that is a multicultural, multilinguistic, multi-religious, racially discriminating society. In this connection, see my *La Tentazione dell'Oblio* (1993), dealing with anti-semitism, racism and neo-nazism; but, for the

Italian domestic scene, see also *Roma da Capitale a Periferia* (1970); *Vite da Baraccati* (1974); *La Città come Fenomeno di Classe* (1975). From the analysis of racial discrimination, class division and basic social inequality, the issue of re-building a sense of community comes to the fore: the public at large feels the need of a new community. How? By finding or by recuperating the value of human relations as having a value in themselves and not in the utilitarian, or market, perspective. But then, what is free from the market logic and its intrinsic utilitarian considerations? The only answer is: the sacred. Hence, my trilogy: *Una Teologia per Atei* (1983); *Il Paradosso del Sacro* (1983); *Una Fede senza Dogmi* (1990), preceded in 1978 by *Studi sulla Formazione Sociale del Sacro*. With the book, *Il Senso del Luogo* (2010), I have recently summarized my reservations about globalization. I have especially dwelt on its basic principle, usually neglected even by its most vocal critics, that is: *a-territoriality*, the indifference to historical variability and to the specific community as a prerequisite for a socially and culturally irresponsible predatory activity all over the world.

Q. What are some of the key educational 'problematics' that currently preoccupy you? How are these linked to the broader preoccupations you may have about society? What is your response to these problematics and preoccupations, as a scholar and as a citizen?

It might sound obvious or trivial, my general answer is 'academic freedom', that is to say no immediate subordination of curricula to the practical needs of the economy, no matter how vocally claimed by governments and policy-makers. The most urgent, and serious, problem that is today confronting educational systems the world over is how to educate independently thinking human beings, not to train them for a given job, remembering that you can only train animals; in human beings you can hope to wake up and reinforce their subjective consciousness.

Business and economic needs, quite legitimate in their own sphere, tend to prevail and to condition the whole intellectual climate of any given society. The idea of the 'two cultures' (scientific and humanistic) is misleading. The only human culture possible and desirable lies in the ability to pass a reasoned, and global, assessment of any given situation. The *esprit polytechnicien* does not lead anywhere. It confuses instrumental with final values. Technology is perfection without a purpose. A society can be technically advanced and humanly barbaric.

Financial and economic potentates are heavily conditioning higher learning institutions in every country, naturally in different ways according to historical variability. In general, in Europe also, state universities are being privatized through a severe reduction of funds and the consequent necessity for professors to spend time and energy in finding financial resources for Masters and Doctorates. On a different occasion, I had the opportunity to ask myself what are the characteristics of Europe, *vis-à-vis* the United States, Japan, and China. Leaving for the time being China and India aside, given their recent emergence as world players in this field, especially as regards manufacturing and electronic industries in China and computer components

and special software in India, we see convergences as well as major differences among the three cultural milieus mentioned above. No doubt that, roughly speaking, the basic convergence is given by science and technology. The major differences, on the other hand, have to do with the underlying values. I submit that the most serious shortcoming of the present day thrust toward a worldwide economic globalization concerns the neglect or the inability to understand such distinction.

To put it succinctly, while technology seems to be basically the same in its practical implementation, irrespective of the peculiar characteristics of each specific community or locality into which it is being imported in a more or less coercive manner, cultural values, in the sense of cultural orientations and patterns of behaviour active in each historical context, are likely to be widely divergent and to require an *ad hoc* examination. Thus, we may observe the overpowering sense of the community at work in Japan, to the point that the idea of the individual as a free agent is hardly tenable, or we may realize that in the American society the utilitarian principle and the money-making ability, linked with a technical efficiency or workman ship factor, are by far the most important tenets for moral justification and for social respectability, that is to say for attaining a good standing in the community.

The European scene appears to be more complex. In the first place, history and historical consciousness here play a role much greater than anywhere else. Secondly, and consequently, the past carries a decisive weight in terms of the educational process as a way to achieve the formation of the responsible individual person or, to put it more precisely, of the *personality* of the person. Here, as we may learn from Greek culture and Christian testimony, the conscious participation of each individual requires that the entity in which we desire to participate represent a hierarchic scheme or a symbolic concentration, whereas in utilitarian societies participation is not in terms of systems of meaning representing the ultimate reality. These societies are interest-based and participation in them refers primarily to the process of making decisions concerning the various practical interests. However, in Europe, the prevailing concept of culture is still essentially individualistic in the classical sense. We, as Europeans, have not been able so far to go beyond traditional humanism.

Q. Which authors/texts would you single out as being of utmost importance if one wishes to understand educational dynamics in your country/region?

Limiting my examination to authors endowed with a specific sociological inclination, I would mention, first, Thorstein Veblen, whose *Theory of the Leisure Class* I translated after the Second World War and was published by the Turin publisher Einaudi on 3 January, 1949. Secondly, an author whom I feel on the same wave length is undoubtedly Max Weber, taking especially into account his life-long ambivalent attitude towards active politics and pure research. Among recent writers, I would mention Leo Strauss, with whom I entertained a good friendship in Chicago, in particular during the time he was writing *Thoughts on Machiavelli* and *Natural Law and History.* But during those early Fifties I was especially involved with the International Labour Project, together with Clark Kerr (chancellor of Berkeley

University), John T. Dunlop (Harvard University), Charles Myers (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Frederick Harbison (University of Princeton). For the Italian scene, these experiences had some weight in underlining the importance of field work as well as the relevance of inter-disciplinary approach. This was of a decisive impact on a culture such as the Italian and European one. Here, the educated person is still conceived in Greek terms as an individual *kalòs kai agathòs* or, to put it in Ciceronian terms, *vir bonus dicendi peritus.*

Needless to say, this concept is far from adequate for an industrial mass society. The elaboration of a European educational 'space' requires, in the first place, the transition from the concept and practice of an élite culture, whereby the educated person asserts herself against and over a mass of illiterate persons, *òi polloi*, who can be said to be human only in a zoological sense, to a new concept of culture, corresponding to any value or selective criterion. It rather points to the need of a new *paidéia* and a new selection based on a broad social basis which raises inevitably two issues: (a) the overcoming of the question of the so called 'two cultures', especially as expounded in the famous and misleading pamphlet by C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution;* and (b) what are the methods and avenues to express, from within an industrial mass society and its mass culture, adequate *criteria of excellence*?

The transition from Greek *paidéia*, founded on the idea of aristocratic *arête*, to the 'democratic', advanced education as advocated, among others, by John Dewey, in obviously a difficult one. A new image of man is required and should be conceptualized. The three images recalled and elaborated upon by Nietzsche in *Unzeithemässige Betrachtunge*, that is Rousseau, Goethe, and Schopenhauer, cannot be considered sufficient in view of the present day 'knowledge-societies'. They are important, however, in so far as they point out the necessity of rejecting, on the one hand, pure technology as a basis of the new education (being aware that technology is nothing but perfection without a purpose) and advocating, on the other hand, an articulated unity of natural and cultural sciences in which a positive cross-fertilization between them would be insured.

Q. If I could just echo back to you your important statements that 'technology is perfection without a purpose', and that 'society can be technically advanced and humanly barbaric'—how does this conviction speak to similar arguments made by Adorno, in his memorable essay 'Education after Auschwitz', where he argues that education can never be the same in the light of the Shoah?

The Shoah does not concern only the Jewish People. It involves also, in even bigger numbers, nomads, especially Roms, Armenians, political opponents, and all sorts of minority persons and groups. There are old and new genocides. The simple fact is that the persecution of the Jews should be understood as a special instance within the broader category of intolerance for minorities and the historical elimination of the 'different' generally. This phenomenon goes well beyond racism as it is usually conceived. What remains to be seriously considered is that the mass

murder of the Jews by the middle of the twentieth century has attained an exemplary, paradigmatic value as an attempted 'final solution'. The Shoah is striking and original in the technical efficiency, cold-blooded, bureaucratic organization and businesslike book-keeping of the whole operation.

This aspect of the Shoah should not be overlooked. It is historically unique and a perfect case of the crime industry. Revisionist historical comparisons equating the Shoah in importance with historical tragedies such as the Soviet Gulag, fail to hold up to examination. It is well-known that history has recorded many gruesome mass murders and wide-reaching criminal operations conducted against harmless and defenceless populations. None of these enterprises, however, was as scientifically, rationally, or routinely planned as this one.

Despite the efforts of Nolte, in his *Three Faces of Fascism* (1965), as well as of Romano, in his *An Outline of European History* (1999), and of other commentators, the Shoah raises a question that transcends a specific historical situation and certainly cannot be explained away, as quite unexpectedly Arno Mayer also attempted to do in his *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? The 'Final Solution' in History* (1988), resorting to the notion of a Hitler made angry by defeats on the Russian Front.

'Revisionists' cite the Crusaders, the Inquisition, and Stalin's purges, overlooking the fact that the Holocaust has not been one among many genocides, concerning not only the Jews but mankind as a whole. Moreover, while classical sociologists such as Hebert Spencer emphasized that industrial societies would be more rational and radically different from traditional military countries, the Holocaust has proved beyond doubt that rational planning can be used to serve a criminal purpose of massive proportions. The Holocaust has taught us that technology per se is nothing but perfection without purpose and that a contemporary society can be technically advanced and humanly barbaric.

To understand the essence of the Shoah or Holocaust, it is necessary to move beyond the mere counting of victims, important as this is to keep their memory alive, economic considerations such as the confiscation of Jewish estates, and the legal and political significance of long-term Jewish persecution, to the religious meaning of this event. Nazism was forced to view Jews as the enemy par excellence, the real *hostis* to be destroyed, because Judaism is based on absolute respect for human life and the equal dignity of every human being in front of God. Through the concept of universal, divine fatherhood, Christianity has perfected this heritage without always acknowledging its regard; such values represent the complete opposite of the Nazi doctrine as revealed in the official statements and text of Hitler's *Bewegung* and *Gauleiter*. Notions of individual responsibility and moral conscience are denied in the name of total obedience to the *Führer*. No principle of equality is admitted; the only ethical obligation involves complete service to the Aryan race as the *Herrenvolk* or 'People of the Lords'. The rest of mankind must accept a subordinate position as slaves or be exterminated. The white Aryan race is the only Nazi God; no other God is recognized or theoretically conceivable. Jewish monotheistic religion, linked to

the Jewish race, was the enemy to be destroyed and replaced by the new neo-pagan, Nazi, secular religion. Jews must be suppressed like obnoxious, parasitic insects. Contrary to the revisionist view of Hitler's persecution of the Jews as an unfortunate turn at the end of his career, in my *La Tentazione dell'Oblio* (1993, 1994) I believe I have demonstrated that he had already thought of eliminating them while writing his *Mein Kampf.*

While anti-Semitism exists throughout German history and European thought, to concentrate on the confused generalities of Nazi doctrine and minimize anti-Jewish persecution as if dealing with a *faute de mieux* occurring after military setbacks on the Russian eastern front would be a serious misunderstanding, as I have indicated extensively in my book referred to above. No doubt, Nazism and its pedagogy of 'education to death' contains a conglomerate of world visions, from Julius Langbehn, author of the *Spirit of the Whole*, who later converted to Catholicism, to Martin Heidegger, a passionate theorizer of the *Heimat,* not far from the cult of *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil).

Q. Which recent developments/innovations in the education sector in your country fill you with hope in terms of furthering the agenda of democracy, and of equity? Which recent developments do you feel most critical of, and why?

As far as higher learning is concerned, I do not see any major breakthrough in Italy. The economic crisis is having a negative impact. There is a widespread feeling that any academic endeavour should be useful and 'pay off' in practical terms. This leads to a serious weakening of the theoretical impulse. There is, at the present time, an abundance of raw data and empirical fragments that are waiting to be theoretically digested and interpreted.

I submit that the opening toward Europe, the United States, and the rest of the world, is a positive step. But a relative neglect of foreign languages and a difficult circulation of valid field research seem to prevent, for the time being, the full blooming of international cooperation which is, however, possible in the near future. Perhaps, although historically rooted and motivated, men and women of culture should learn how to be loyal inhabitants of the village and, at the same time, citizens of the world.

Q. What are your reflections about the major forces that are shaping educational practice in the Mediterranean region? What are the dynamics and interests that underpin these forces, and what kinds of challenges do they represent for the articulation of an education project in our region?

The Mediterranean is a peculiar sea. It is the 'sea among or in the middle of different lands'. Old Romans could call it *mare nostrum*. Actually, it is a sea that touches on many countries with a different language, different traditions, a great variety of cultural and behavioural patterns. Different patterns of culture imply different patterns of society. The Mediterranean touches and in a sense protects this extreme variety. As such, as some sort of custodian, it has a *maternal function*. It has

a feminine character—*la mer*—contrary to a river than comes down and ravages and destroys the environment with its unforeseeable floods. In fact, the Mediterranean is a *closed sea*. Gibraltar towards the Atlantic Ocean is a very narrow strait. On the other hand, before the Suez Canal had been opened, it was not possible to reach the Indian Ocean directly.

A concentration of diversities can be a source of strength and freedom, provided the different countries and cultures can learn how to communicate. This might have special difficulties for countries such as Italy, historically used to export manpower and, all of a sudden, finding itself a pole of attraction for immigrants from the less developed areas of the world, from central and Eastern Europe to North Africa and Asia. The old concept of 'citizenship' is bound to become obsolete. Neither the Greek concept of *polítes* nor the classical *civis romanus sum* are at the present time adequate. The very concept of nation seems to be excessively limited and exclusive. It seems necessary to elaborate a new concept of 'inclusive', if not transcultural, citizenship. The first step is intercultural communication. But communication is not only a verbal question dealing with linguistic differences. It requires *recognition*, a dialogue that does not confine itself to pure and simple information, based on a clear acceptance of specific values beyond the mere principles of individual preference. European history has already known an epoch-making attempt in this direction: Alexander's Hellenism (see my *L'Enigma di Alessandro*). At the time of Alexander, the medium for intercultural communication was the Greek *koiné*. But, behind the language, values were there—different, and yet converging. The same values are today at the basis of what could be defined as a peculiar European 'space', moved by the common awareness that *no value can be regarded as an absolute* without denying its very nature; *no dogmatism*, no matter how grounded by religion or tradition, is admissible. The classical Greek *logos* is the first root of the European 'space'. The second, the social equality of all men and women, as implicit in the Christian message. The third, more recent, the concept of the individual, the *persona singolare* of the Italian Renaissance, as handed down and philosophically justified by the Enlightenment. At a sober look, Europe does not strike one as a grand territorial entity. It is the 'land of sunset', the *Okzident*, that, both demographically and geographically, presents itself as a mere appendix of the Asiatic continental mass. Demographers can be cruel: at present, the European Union, demographically speaking, does not exceed the 6% of the world; in the years 2020-2030, in a world of about eight billion people, they calculate that Europe will come down to 4%, Asia will represent 58% and Africa will go up (AIDS permitting) to 25%.

However, Europe will remain strong. Despite the American hegemony, and the economic rise of China and India, its presence will still be important. It is perhaps true that the Atlantic Ocean is being overcome by the Pacific Ocean. However, the Mediterranean continues to be an essential 'cultural *carrefour*'. On a map, Western Europe does not look much more than an isthmus, some sort of light bridge. The great empires—Babylonian, Persian, Roman—have disappeared from the historical scene. Once colonialism was finished at the end of the Second World War, we have

the beginning of the technological colonialism through mass communication, the cultural industry, and globalization.

However, despite everything, Europe resists: a European 'space' seems impenetrable. Its limitations and shortcomings are well known. During the fourth century after Christ, when the lower strata of the population of the Roman Empire were desperately searching for a relatively independent expression, not even an innovator such as Emperor Constantine proved to be far-sighted enough to widen the scope and the horizon of the Greek-Roman culture. He accepted the Christian religion, mostly under the pressure of his mother, and to this day we do not know whether he did it out of persuasion or political opportunism. But he did not accept other languages than Latin. Europe, however, remains strong. Why? I respectfully submit, because Europe is varied, heterogeneous, diversified. Historically, this has been for Europe *not a weakness*, but a reason for strength. The European 'space' is based and defined by diversity. According to John Stuart Mill, in chapters three and four of his treatise *On Liberty*, nineteenth century China was a 'negative model' because it was self-enclosed in its ritualistic and static behavioural patterns. Europeans were not more talented than the Chinese. What made them a portion in progress of Humanity—in his own words, 'an improving, instead of a stationary, portion of mankind'—was to be attributed to their diversity, to their 'plurality of paths'. In other words, the strength of Europe lies in the *synergy of diversities* and in the *dialectics of differences*.

Hence, the essential characteristic, a really basic feature, of the European person, in the ability to move and to discern differences, the tendency to analyse complex phenomena and behavioural patterns, to use this analytical acumen in order to distinguish the various components and to grasp their final global meaning. The educated person is the European tradition is not a mere specialist, nor a specific technician. Rather, he/she is the person capable to see and to assess the global meaning—conceptual and technical—of a given situation. In a sense, the famous debate about the 'two cultures', as initiated by C. P. Snow's pamphlet and to which reference has already been made, does not hold water. It is evident, however, that this type of educated person, as a person who passes judgment taking the different angles of a problem into consideration from a global interaction point of view, runs up against the prevailing pressure stemming from the present day capitalistic system of production and distribution. Capitalism has emerged as a winner from the 'cold war', together with its fundamental principle, i.e. the *division of labour and the consequent specialization of knowledge*, through a priority given to applied science versus pure science. In this perspective, a technically advanced economy as a market economy could become so powerful and all pervading as to give rise to an 'economy-society' in which all the relations end up being market relations, essentially utilitarian, narrow-interest gauged, and therefore no longer human (at least, in the sense that human relations have a value in themselves irrespective of their economically useful outcome). For this reason, effectively working behind the official facades, the educational systems all over the world are under stress, being subordinate and sub-

serving the growing needs, defined and enforced by a rapidly changing technology that is inevitably upsetting curricula and educational standards and, at the same time, creating conditions of psychological stress, precarious jobs, uncertain career profiles and all this for a rather simple reason: because, I reiterate, technology is perfection without a purpose.

Q. The insistence on the normative in relation to technology—a leitmotif in your interview—draws us ineluctably towards a consideration of religion—another area of concern for your sociological analysis—and its intersections with education. What kinds of reflections would you like to share about this, given the relevance of this theme to our region?

Weber's specific contribution cannot be legitimately conceived as a polemical reversal of Marx's historical materialism. Rather, it is a broadening of its scope to include religious experience and commitment, together with the economic interests, as a powerful factor in shaping society. Weber does not deal with theology *per se*. He wants to know and explores the consequences—social, economic and political—of religious ethics as a living experience, that is to say as it influences the everyday behavioural patterns. In this respect, Weber goes behind and against scholastic Marxism, notably against Stalin's *Diamat*, that tends to oppose economics and ideology, giving a clear priority to the economic structure over the ideal superstructure (*Unterbau versus Überbau*). What Weber could not see is the political use of religion or, more precisely, of religious dogmatism. Especially in countries such as the United States of America, the radical right, with the so called 'reborn Christians' and the 'Pro-life groups', has been having, as of recently, an important political role *without* facing specific political issues—a role grounded instead on a meta-political, theological outlook. At the university level as well as in all the major educational institutions, an irrational wave of anti-Darwinism has been mounting in the name and for the defence of 'creationism'. Biblical fundamentalism here seems to be the inter-face of Islamic fundamentalism in its most extreme forms. In Latin American and Mediterranean countries the influence of Catholicism is, in this respect, of decisive importance and, from the point of view of an open-minded attitude, quite negative. This is true especially as regards the financing of private (Catholic) schools, against and to the detriment of public schools.

Q. Veblen has clearly been a major influence on your thought, from early on in your career, as you explained, right up to now. What is it about Veblen that informs your thinking generally, and about education specifically?

Thorstein Veblen's specific and original contribution concerns the sharp distinction between industrial entrepreneurs, supposedly producing goods for the community, and financial businessmen, who would 'try to get something for nothing', that is to make money through pure manipulation of money. Moreover, Veblen has generally researched the role of 'honorific consumption' and 'conspicuous waste' in terms of 'invidious comparison' among individual persons

and social groups. In an sense, Veblen anticipates the critique of the Frankfurt School (in particular of Herbert Marcuse and Theodor W. Adorno) as regards late capitalism, that is a system no longer simply exploiting physically the subordinate workforce but trying to achieve some sort of 'soul proletarianization' with the 'industrial culture' in which intellectual 'products' would be equated to usual market goods. A special mention should be made also of Veblen's book reflecting his unfortunate academic career but having a general merit also, especially from an educational point of view. This is *The Higher Learning in America*, that the author considers a 'memorandum on the conduct of universities by businessmen', containing an explicit and vitriolic value-judgment in that original education should be free from any constraint stemming from the needs of the business system and the market economy, lest it might produce servants of the prevailing economic groups instead of human beings capable of independent thinking. Naturally, Veblen tries to avoid any allusion to his own personal career while criticizing bitterly the academic system. He writes in the Preface: 'It is hoped that no fortuitous shadow will now cloud the issue … This allusion to incidents which have no material bearing on the inquiry may tolerantly be allowed, as going to account for a sparing use of local information and, it is hoped, to extenuate a degree of reserve and reticence touching divers intimate details of executive policy' (Veblen, 1935, p.vii). Veblen's critique is based on the specific right of the scientist to 'idle, disinterested curiosity'. Hence, most university research, being subservient to the needs of the business community, is 'not yet scientific'. In fact, 'inquiries carried on in this spirit in the field of human institutions belong, of course, in the category of worldly wisdom rather than of science. 'Practical' questions occupy these scientists in great part, and practical, or utilitarian, considerations guide the course of inquiry and shape the system of generalizations in these sciences … in such a way that the ideals of scholarship are yielding ground, in an uncertain and varying degree, before the pressure of business like agencies' (*op. cit.*, pp.189-190).

Veblen distinguishes very sharply between the preparation and general attitude of a technician, that is of a pure expert offering his service to the best Bidder in the open market, and the scholarship of the 'educated person' in the proper sense. He allows, obviously, a degree of good use for the community by the specialized technicians, but at the same time he criticizes the unproductive predatory role of businessmen while lamenting the shortage of truly educated disinterested persons.

'The professional knowledge and skill of physicians, surgeons, dentists, pharmacists, agriculturists, engineers of all kinds, perhaps even of journalists, is of some use to the community at large, at the same time that it may be profitable to the bearers of it. The community has a substantial interest in the adequate training of these men although it is not that intellectual interest that attaches to science and scholarship. But such is not the case with the training designed to give proficiency in business. No gain comes to the community at large from increasing the business proficiency of any number of its young men. There are already much too many of these businessmen, much too astute and proficient in their calling, for the common

good. A higher average business efficiency simply raises activity and avidity in business to a higher average pitch of skill and fervour, with very little other material result than a redistribution of ownership; since business is occupied with the competitive acquisition of wealth, not with its production. It is only by a euphemistic metaphor that we are accustomed to speak of the businessmen as producers of goods. Gains due to such efficiency are differential gains only. They are a differential as against other businessmen on the one hand, and as against the rest of the community on the other hand. The work of the College of Commerce, accordingly, is a peculiarly futile line of endeavour for any public institution, in that it serves neither the intellectual advancement nor the material welfare of the community' (*op. cit.*, pp.208-209).

Given such situation, it is evident that the preparation of the 'educated person' in the affluent business society encounters special difficulties. Everybody seems to be obsessed with the need to prepare young students and scholars for job opportunities eventually offered in the market. Veblen bitterly remarks that:

'Pushed by this popular prejudice, and themselves also drifting under compulsion of the same prevalent bias, even the seasoned scholars and scientists—Matthew Arnold's 'Remnant'—have taken to heart this question of the use of the higher learning in the pursuit of gain. Of course it has no such use, and the many shrewdly devised solutions of the conundrum have necessarily run out in a string of sophistic dialectics. The place of disinterested knowledge in modern civilization is neither that of a means to private gain, nor that of an intermediate step in 'the roundabout process of the production of goods'.

As a motto for the scholars' craft, *Scientia pecuniae ancillans* is nowise more seemly than the Schoolmen's *Philosophia theologiae ancillans*. Yet such inroads have pecuniary habits of valuation made even within the precincts of the corporation of learning, that university men—and even the scholarly ones among them—are no more than half-ashamed of such a parcel of fatuity. And relatively few among university executives have not, within the past few years, taken occasion to plead the merits of academic training as a business proposition. The man of the world—that is to say, of the business world—puts the question: What is the use of this learning? and the men who speak for learning, and even the scholars occupied with the 'humanities', are at pains to find some colourable answer that shall satisfy the worldly-wise that this learning for which they speak is in some way useful for pecuniary gain' (*op. cit.*, pp.199-200).

The bitterness of Veblen's strictures is revealing. It points to the gap between the sad state of higher educational institutions and his idea of an 'educated person'. This idea is never, to my knowledge, fully expounded by Veblen. It has to be extracted, as it were, from his polemical observations. It seems to me that for Veblen man is a project for man. In other words, man must be conceived as a goal, and therefore as a value in himself, never as an instrument for no matter what kind of goal. To put it succinctly, the function of a citizen or subject may vary from society to society, and the system of training, or adaptation, or instruction may vary with it. But the function

of a man as man is the same in every age and in every society, since it results from his nature as a man. The aim of an educational system is the same in every age and in every society where such a system can exist: it is to improve man as man.

This improvement appears to be both desirable and possible. Human nature, in fact, is conceivable neither as a dogmatic a-historical construction, according to most religious doctrines, nor can it be seen as a purely historical phenomenon, according to a purely relativistic conception. After all, if everything is relative, the truth of relativism itself is necessarily relative. I respectfully submit, by differentiating my position from natural righters and absolute relativists, the idea of 'historical horizon', as defined by the average moral consciousness acquired in a given historical phase. In this respect, man is conceived both as a historical being and at the same time as a meta-historical value, that is some kind of *Grenzbegriff*, or limit-idea, to be perfected and eventually reached through educational efforts.

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RAPHAEL VELLA
University of Malta

BOOK REVIEW

John Baldacchino, ***Makings of the Sea: Journey, Doubt and Nostalgia***, Gorgias Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-61719-940-0

To speak of the Mediterranean is to speak of migration. From the start, hence, any discussion of this geographical region is characterised by mobility, flux, and by an internal tension that defies the levelling tendencies of any generic definitions of cultural identities. Fernand Braudel's classic study of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* spoke of the sea in relation to the routes that crossed land and water: the sea's networks and connections transformed it into a transnational geographical space that made any singular perception of this sea sound unbefitting to such a perpetually evolving region. This fluidity in our understanding of the region and its multiple groupings of inhabitants, is not only perpetually incomplete—because it is always on the move—but our reasoning must also take account of the undeniable fact that the region is criss-crossed by an influx of currents from outside the peripheries of the area that challenge its political and cultural stability. Iain Chambers reminds us of this as he writes of the characteristic fluctuations in the Mediterranean that affect people all over the region despite the sharing of a common sea:

Today's immigrants from the south of the planet, however feared, despised, and victimized by racism and social and economic injustice, are the historical reminders that the Mediterranean, firmly considered the origin of Europe and the 'West', has always been part of a more extensive elsewhere. If its 'internal' constitution has...always depended on 'external' forces, its histories, cultures, and peoples...have also consistently abandoned its shores for other places. If Ulysses is the mythical figure of the traveller, the stranger, with which that history commences, it is once again with the traveller and the stranger that this history continues (Chambers, 2008, p.39).

Interestingly, or rather, inevitably, it is with the classic figure of Ulysses and that figure's mythical and metaphoric journey that John Baldacchino commences his own substantial contribution to Mediterranean studies, *Makings of the Sea: Journey, Doubt and Nostalgia*. For Baldacchino, the Greek epic story illustrates the idea that the 'journey is an excuse for further journeys. It leaves no choices, but entertains more than an excuse to move on and to keep going in the hope of surviving' (12). Odysseus's journey is, for Baldacchino, a struggle or predicament that haunts our

understanding of the Mediterranean, whether this is expressed in a filmmaker's Eastern European journey in the film *Ulysses's Gaze* (1995) by Theo Angelopoulos, or in Tennyson's depiction of the hero's restlessness on his return home to Ithaca, or again in the Greek Alexandrian poet Constantine Cavafy's musings on the significance of a journey that never ends in *Ithaka*. A fascinating and related aspect of Baldacchino's book is gradually recognised as the reader progresses through the text and realises that the book is itself an embodiment of this epic journey, carrying him or her from one land to another, connecting one discipline to several others, and leaping into the sea during different decades of the twentieth century. As he or she traverses a complex interdisciplinary series of fields, the reader will find that this journey is not an easy one, but then again, a smoother reading would probably serve only to undermine the idea of a horizon that is replete with uncertainties.

The hybridity, richness, and indeed, the doubts that permeate any serious engagement with the Mediterranean are not only palpable in the author's scholarly insights and in the complex moves that the book performs, but especially in the fact that this book is actually only the first of a trilogy of texts on Mediterranean aesthetics that Baldacchino is working on. This first volume, *Makings of the Sea*, focuses on Southern Europe and on specific instances from the literary field and, to a lesser extent, the visual arts in the twentieth century (with fascinating connections between writers and artists like Calvino, Cavafy, Mahfouz, Montale, Sciascia, Pirandello, Guttuso, Kazantzakis, Lorca and Dali). The second volume, *Composed Identities: Sound, Number and Desire*, will study the problem of a Mediterranean identity within the context of musical compositions produced in the region, while the last volume in this project, *The Carob and the Olive: Land, Art and Polity*, will focus on North Africa, the Middle East and the relationship between art, politics and colonialism. The scope of this vast project can be gauged by the author's decision not to restrict his attention to the political history of the region (an area that has been tackled by some precursors) but to weave an 'aesthetics' (or to discuss the possibility of such an 'aesthetics') into the fabric of the geopolitical realities that form the Mediterranean. The author's highlighting of the sheer wealth and depth of artistic thought in the region (hardly surprising, given his academic interests in aesthetics and cultural theory) provides the whole project with a unique approach to Mediterranean studies that is very refreshing.

In his introduction, Baldacchino immediately warns his readers that the quest for some definition of Mediterranean aesthetics is bound to be problematic and that the reader should expect 'more questions than answers' (3). Doubt—the second term in the book's sub-title after 'journey' (the sub-title is borrowed from Angelopoulos's film *Ulysses's Gaze*)—therefore permeates the book's engagement with the art and literature of the region. It also leads to the third and possibly the most significant term in the sub-title, nostalgia, a word that—as the author reminds us—is etymologically linked to the Greek *nóstos*, referring to a perpetual homecoming. Baldacchino links this notion to his own earlier work on the subject (2002), where he coined the term *avant-nostalgia*. Avant-nostalgia reverts 'nostalgia into a force that looks forward'; it

is therefore a 'nostalgia that acts as a vanguard' and 'distances the idea of a *return* away from an image of linear regression' (119-120).

This political reading of a return or remembrance brings the reader back to Baldacchino's emphasis on the journey as an essential trait of Mediterranean consciousness, with a heritage that can be traced to the work of Cavafy and others. Sometimes, the art produced in the 'South' may be perceived as a laid-back follower of its Northern counterparts, a kind of waning of artistic strength in a region that lies on the peripheries of the avant-garde movements and places associated with the development of modernism in the twentieth century. Such an assessment of the South would probably place an artist like Sicilian painter Renato Guttuso in a category of artistic misfits: a maker of anachronistic pictures that may look reactionary when compared to a progressive aesthetic that looks suspiciously at any move that transports art away from the sort of teleological drive espoused by so many modernist critics and theorists. Yet, Baldacchino challenges this reading by seeking Guttuso's political critique precisely in the painter's defiance of 'the myth of progress' (77). Rather than seek Guttuso's 'truth' within some political grand narrative, one must seek it in the small narratives of his subject-matter, its cultural specificities and 'banal' details of everyday life.

This postmodern, Lyotardean incredulity toward metanarratives is cited in Baldacchino's concluding pages, where he underscores the importance of understanding that 'our notion of the Mediterranean imaginary begins to reveal a steady resistance to the pretence of certainty' (149). Despite these constant reminders of the author's mistrust of certainties and a preference for an 'aesthetics of suggestion' (148), *Makings of the Sea* is an extremely rich and rewarding account of the ideas and works of several central artistic figures from Southern Europe and Northern Africa, and the book augurs well for the two sequels that will complete this important trilogy.

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MARGARET FITZPATRICK AND JAMES GEARY

University of Illinois—Urbana-Champaign

BOOK REVIEW

Cameron McCarthy & Cathryn Teasley (eds) ***Transnational Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education: Redirecting Cultural Studies in Neoliberal Times***, New York, Peter Lang Publishers, 2008, 361 pages, ISBN 978-0-8204-9731-0

Transnational Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education is a productive collection of essays seeking to broaden the perspectives of cultural studies. Writing from 'the intersections between popular culture, race, public policy, and the neoliberal times in which we live,' these authors broadly engage a neo-Gramscian awareness of hegemony and Foucauldian assumptions about governmentality to insist upon the specificity of diverse lived experiences of increasingly skewed global power relations. Bidding adieu to post-Fordist sentimentality, they extol the necessity for global citizenship and universal justice and they call for creative new responses to the corporate 're-feudalization of the public sphere' that is currently thwarting these ideals.

The essays in this volume argue that the apparatuses of education are implicated in the continually shifting cultural formations of a place, as well as being embroiled in the state's processes of control. Further, this volume discusses the global ramifications of an ongoing struggle to reform education at a local level, as human subjects are increasingly involved in creating and recreating identity in relation to cross-border understandings of cultural meanings, shifting languages, and uncertain bodies of knowledge. Schools construct subjects and often do so with the same profound unevenness that the world manufactures groups of people, depending on aspects such as class, gender, sexuality, race, and nationality; the results in school are expectedly similar to what we witness elsewhere around the world. We find openly oppressive situations, deeply unfair structures, and ultimately an inhuman existence for some, as opposed to a position of great power and possibility for a fortunate few. Schooling shapes us as individuals living in communities set in particular places at certain times, and it becomes painfully apparent that we need to challenge the basic assumptions inherent in systems of education, so that we might begin again to approach learning for purposes other than those demanded by a dominant market ideology.

Racial affiliations are shifting, unstable, uncertain, and not fixed, and the same can be said of other social affiliations. The multiplicity of our identities appear to often cut against one another at right angles, as Cameron McCarthy asserts, and this shifting ground demands that we assemble new structures to examine our identities, our schools, and our communities. This historical moment requires a radical reconfiguration of theoretical and methodological systems, to better understand and challenge the relations of power between the centers and the peripheries. The essays in this collection help us to re-examine the constantly transforming systems of government that regulate our conduct through various modes of media, claimed discourses of truth, and the constant appeal to self-government, self-discipline, and self-punishment. Obviously, the logic of these various institutions operates at the economic and political level, but we need to question how it regulates citizens through *cultural means*. The writers in this book help us theorize in terms of hybrid cultures, negotiating newly developing (never static) social disjunctures, and look for new narratives that might assist in understanding our places in the world; the classroom and the workplace are two sites where this tension plays out, but we cannot assume that these places are vacuums in space, nor are they temporally disconnected.

The collection of essays in this volume examines the three factors of class, gender, and ethnicity, suggesting methods that will enable these new students to move from oppression to equality. New forms of racism seem to be emerging in Spain, and the reader is urged to examine the question of difference in the 'Other', in a transnational context. Education can play a role in helping students to understand the fear and distrust that seems inherent in an encounter with difference, with newness; racism works as a perpetually nuanced ideology under constant reconstruction and redeployment in schools and in other social structures. As challenges of migration and the issue of xenophobia has increased in Spain with the arrival of more immigrants on the streets and in the schools, multiple unfixed identities require an anthropological undertaking, to develop a respect for difference, dialogue, and communication through multilingual approaches. The world is *not* a 'patchwork' of cultures, but seems more like a field of 'interrelations and mutations,' and anthropology can help us to till this constantly shifting field, this uneven ground moving beneath our feet.

What alternatives might we use to approach educational policy, to posit learning within a framework of cultural politics, to usher forth a local commitment on the part of education, coupled with a call for social justice in the schools? The theoretical intervention here focuses on systems of power through cultural means, and pursues social change as the goal of education, situated in a local context, with an acute awareness of transnational flows and disjunctures. It is necessary to assess the role of *informational capitalism* in a broad context, looking at how technologies generate and transmit

information over vast areas, reaching large numbers of people in a short time; how can we process this information, make sense of it, deconstruct it, and challenge it? The meaning of knowledge becomes a central question. Technological ideals seem to be propelling us forward with the promise of continued improvement across humanity, but we need to examine these modes of technology to understand how oppression is perpetuated around the world in different contexts. If we review the classroom culture, connecting it to other cultures, so that oppressed groups can understand the systems of oppression, to 'generate dreams,' we can collectively work to transform reality.

This collection of essays seeks to unearth hope and create coalitions through the development of 'knowledge, empathy, and understanding,' challenging the neoliberal discourses that have been re-articulated across the social spectrum to stifle voices of the oppressed, along lines of race, class, and gender. The notion of 'success' cannot be isolated around the individual alone as proffered (for the sake of profit) by the neoliberal discourse, as the ideology of individual success reproduces inequality and disintegrates social coalitions. To remake civic coexistence, we require cultural integration, both preserving our identity while incorporating diversity; global patterns of migration and settlement demand this integration process. 'Togetherness' assumes two forms: Being *with* and Being *for* others. To move from certainty to openness is no easy task, but is necessary to build solidarity and promote inclusion amidst the increasing complexity of culture. Power exerts itself in two ways, through force and through hegemony, and to counter this power, we need to learn how to combine and mediate our differences to create civic coexistence. Cultural representations are cultural politics, requiring cosmopolitanism, communication, and a commitment to inclusion.

These essays accentuate the necessity of understanding popular culture in terms of the power structures at work in society, as various modes of media reveal themselves as both symptoms and examples of dominant forms of representation. Popular culture is situated as a contradictory space, 'a site for strategic contestation,' and to create a critical consciousness, we need to understand the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, and class (as well as other aspects of being). The discipline of cultural studies needs to look inward, as well as casting its gaze outward, turning the camera on itself, framing the discourse and assumptions of its own practices. An examination of the 'public' discourse of media controlled by the elite unveils the domination inherent in an *elite discourse* that maintains racism and social inequality. Educational institutions need to challenge the social practice of racism, as well as assisting students in a deconstruction of the discourse that undergirds race. Freedom comes to be seen as a creative act on the part of a community, changing the human condition from one of oppression to one of equality. *Transnational*

Perspectives on Culture, Policy, and Education is a collection that offers a critically optimistic approach to negotiating cultural studies with an eye on traditional schooling, as well as other sites of identity formation. Identity is fluid, variegated, and in flux; always, however, coexistence is possible and needs to be our goal. The essays in the book help to shake up the narratives that dominate our lives transnationally, and ask important questions that speak to lives at a local level in particular contexts.

MARILYN CLARK
University of Malta

BOOK REVIEW

T-Kit No. 11 – Mosaic: The training kit for Euro-Mediterranean Youth Work (2010) is a thematic publication authored by experienced youth trainers and experts and constitutes an excellent resource for non formal educational activities. The tool kit is a laudable achievement in the youth field because it researches and proposes non formal educational methodologies reflecting the realities of young people in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe and the 10 MEDA countries. The task set for the authors was however challenging since the Euro-Mediterranean area is a diverse one. While the risk of falling into generalisation and stereotyping is always present in such an enormous task, this is skilfully avoided in the text. Written by a multidisciplinary team, the T-Kit is an excellent intercultural production which and explores issues that are relevant to the different social and cultural contexts in this region.

This T-Kit provides those involved in youth work and training projects with tools to enable the young people they work with to participate most effectively within the projects they are engaged in. However the text is more than a collection of activities. It also provides theoretical discussion and critical engagement with several important themes and poses some poignant questions for reflection. It aims to enhance the exchange of experience and good practice in the youth field and, to this end, contributes towards the actualisation of the Council of Europe and European Commission Youth Partnership agreement 'to promote active European citizenship and civil society by giving impetus to the training of youth leaders and youth workers working within a European dimension'. The training focus of the kit is on intercultural learning, citizenship and human rights education and provides youth workers, trainers and project leaders with both theoretical and practical tools to address the common issues faced by young people participating in Euro Mediterranean youth projects.

The text is effectively structured into three sections; an introduction, the themes and the activities. The introductory section addresses the conceptual framework embraced by the tool kit and explains to the reader how the kit is

structured. Importantly it documents the pedagogical approach the kit adopts which is based on experiential, intercultural and participative learning, is action orientated and applies non formal education principles. Non-formal learning is purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily the sole or main activity. The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects (Chisholm, 2005). The text proposes that the main objective of youth work should be to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures. The introductory section also provides a useful note on terminology over which there is often confusion in the youth field.

The second section has several chapters exploring the thematic areas reflecting the specific fields of cooperation being developed in youth projects. The structure of these thematic chapters is excellent in that they start off by defining the key concepts employed in the text and locating these within the specific challenges faced by European and Mediterranean societies. The chapters then explore how these issues are related to the life world of young people and on a more practical note, how they may be addressed in youth projects. The thematic chapters provide the opportunity for youth workers to think and reflect and not just 'do, thus emphasising their role as reflective practitioners. The thematic chapters combine theoretical approaches with practical tips on how to integrate the particular issues in youth work activities.

The last section provides a series of activities fitting several themes simultaneously that can be used in Euro Mediterranean youth projects, youth work being a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. The activities are tried and tested initiatives submitted by experienced practitioners and are such that they may be adapted to suit the requirements any group of young people in any Euro Mediterranean project. Thirty activities are presented in this section. Each activity highlights the relevant themes and the issues addressed in the task. It also documents very clear objectives. All practicalities are sufficiently addressed, such as materials needed, instructions for youth workers, and tips for facilitators, possible variations and suggestions for follow up. The activities stress the importance of processing the activities. The text also includes handouts to be used during the sessions.

On the whole, the text is well researched and written and structured in a user friendly manner. It is very instructive and contributes towards youth work provision. To this end it a very political text in that it provides the opportunity for real participation, liberation and empowerment of young people. It also attempts to deconstruct what is generally understood by the terms 'European' and 'Mediterranean'. The activities are creatively designed to address through experiential learning different aspects of young people's

life worlds, ranging from family conflict to perceptions of beauty, tolerance of different religious beliefs, attitudes to migration etc. The activities are participant centred, that is, the focus is what the young people may learn from these experiences. They start and end with the participants realities. The activities also link the personal with the political. For example, an activity which does this particularly well is the one titled 'My History' where participants share and discuss their personal histories and how they connect with history in general. There are also several activities surrounding the important area of youth identities.

This training kit does however lack engagement with the current discussions taking place in the sociology of youth and perhaps most notably critical engagement with the concepts of 'youth', 'transition' and 'risk'. Comparative studies increasingly show changes in the sequence and pattern of transition to an extent that the rationale for its use is being rapidly eroded (Mizen, 2004). The concept of youth transitions in a risk society is not sufficiently engaged in within the text.

This tool kit nonetheless provides an excellent resource for the youth worker/trainer working within the Euro Mediterranean region and is a significant contribution to youth work practice methodology.

Chisholm, L. (2005) *At the end is the beginning: training the trainers in the youth field*. Council of Europe Publications, Strasbourg (also available in French)

Mizen, P. (2004) *The Changing State of Youth* Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

AIMS OF THE JOURNAL

The **MJES** is a biannual refereed international journal with a regional focus and established in 1996. It features educational research carried out in Mediterranean countries, as well as educational studies related to the diaspora of Mediterranean people world-wide. The journal offers a forum for theoretical debate, historical and comparative studies, research and project reports, thus facilitating dialogue in a region which has strong and varied educational traditions. There is a strong international dimension to this dialogue, given the profile of the Mediterranean in the configuration of the new world order, and the presence of Mediterranean peoples in Europe, North America and elsewhere. The **MJES** is of interest to scholars, researchers and practitioners in the following fields: comparative education, foundation disciplines in education, education policy analysis, Mediterranean studies, cultural and post-colonial studies, Southern European and area studies, intercultural education, peace education, and migrant studies.

Notes for Contributors

The *MJES* publishes original contributions in the field of education that focus on Mediterranean countries and the diaspora of Mediterranean people worldwide. To ensure the highest standards all submitted articles are scrutinised by at least two independent referees before being accepted for publication. Prospective authors are strongly advised to contact the editor before submitting their manuscript as several special thematic issues may be in preparation at any one time. Published papers become the copyright of the journal.

The *MJES* features articles in English, though occasionally it will also publish papers submitted in French. Authors who are not fluent in English should have their manuscripts checked by language specialists in their Universities or Institutes. The Editorial Board is also willing to promote English versions of high quality articles that have already been published in any of the Mediterranean languages that do not have wide regional or international currency. In such cases, however, responsibility for copyright clearance rests with the author/s, who carry all responsibilities for any infringement.

All contributors should be aware they are addressing an international audience. They should also use non-sexist, non-racist language, and a guide sheet is available in this regard.

Manuscripts, preferably between 6,000 and 8,000 words in length, should be sent to the Editor *MJES*, Professor Ronald G. Sultana, Director, Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research, University of Malta, Msida MSD 2080, Malta, accompanied by an abstract of between 100-150 words. Research Notes, Project Reports, and Comments (1,500 to 3,000 words in length) are also welcome.

The manuscript can be submitted as an e-mail attachment, to be sent to: ronald.sultana@um.edu.mt.

It is essential that the full postal address, telephone, fax and e-mail coordinates be given of the author who will receive editorial correspondence and proofs. Authors should include a brief autobiographic note. To enable the refereeing procedure to be anonymous, the name(s) and institution(s) of the author(s) should not be included at the head of the article, but should be typed on a separate sheet. The surname of the author/s should be underlined.

Figures and tables should have their positions clearly marked and be provided on separate sheets that can be detached from the main text.

References should be indicated in the text by giving the author's name followed by the year of publication in parentheses, e.g., '... research in Mahmoudi & Patros (1992) indicated ...', alternatively this could be shown as '... research (Mahmoudi & Patros, 1992) showed ...'. The full references should be listed in alphabetical order at the end of the paper using the following formula:

Book: Surname, Name initials (date of publication) *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher.

Article in Journal: Surname, Name initials (date of publication) Title of article, *Title of Journal*, Volume(issue), pages.

Chapter in Book: Surname initial/s, Name initials (date of publication) Title of chapter. In Name initials and Surname of (editor/s) *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher.

Particular care in the presentation of references would be greatly appreciated, and ensures earlier placement in the publication queue.

Proofs will be sent to the author/s if there is sufficient time to do so, and should be corrected and returned immediately to the Editor.

The Editorial Board welcomes suggestions for special thematic issues of the *MJES*.

CONTENTS   Volume 15 Number 2 2010

EDUCATORS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN – I