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Jubilee Press Occasional Papers

**Greek Educational Provision in the UK; Reform Under the
Financial Crisis**

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www.nottingham.ac.uk/education

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UK; Reform Under the Financial Crisis***

A Research Paper by Iordanis Paraskevopoulos

ISBN 978-1-906235-16-1

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First Edition published 2012

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The Nottingham Jubilee Press
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Dearing Building
Nottingham NG8 1BB

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present the existing Greek Bilingual Educational provision in the UK and discuss its reform as described in the latest Law 4027/2011 titled "Greek Education Abroad". It is based on findings of the case study undertaken in two Greek community schools in Bristol and Cardiff and on the author's teaching experience in Greek community schools in England.

The theoretical background has to do with immigration, ethnic identity, minority communities and the integration of ethnic minorities into a dominant society as well as bilingual education.

The methodology adopted is a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology. The methods for data collection are participant observation, questionnaires and document analysis.

It is argued that Greek bilingual projects contribute to the conceptual, cognitive and psychological development of pupils of Greek origin living in the United Kingdom (UK). Research findings show that Greek Community schools bring children of the Greek Community together and closer to its older members including parents and relatives as well as raise their self-awareness and self-esteem which in turn enhances their participation in the wider community. Parents strongly support the existing Greek community schools and other Greek language and culture projects running in the UK. The recent reform which aims at the rationalisation of resources (human and financial) provided by the official Greek state – in the context of the financial crisis – compels Greek community schools to become self-sufficient and self-managed in order to survive.

INTRODUCTION

The provision of Greek Education to children of Greek origin who are located worldwide and outside of Greece is a responsibility of the official Greek state. This includes mother-tongue teaching as well as elements of culture, history and religion. In Britain it is the responsibility of the Educational Departments of Greece and Cyprus, as well as of the Greek communities and the Greek Orthodox Church of Great Britain to provide such education. In this context both countries, under a common policy, provide teaching staff and teaching material to various mother-tongue schools/projects, run by local Greek Communities.

A motivating factor for this occasional paper has been the major reform announced by the Greek Ministry of Education with regards to the legislative context of Greek education provided to the Greeks living abroad (Greek Diaspora). According to the Greek Ministry of Education, these reforms are driven first by the change in circumstances of Greeks of Diaspora which has made the existing system dated, and secondly by the current financial crisis in Greece which has forced the government to rethink a series of educational provisions, including the Greek educational programmes run abroad.

This occasional paper is the outcome of the research conducted in 2002 in the context of the author's Master's Degree, titled "Greek Education in the UK" combined with the author's experience gained from eight years of service in the Greek community schools of Bristol, Weston Super Mare and Nottingham, where he currently serves as Headteacher.

The research questions of the study include:

1. What are the purposes of Greek Community Schools?
2. What is their role in the Greek Community as well as in the wider community?
3. What is the nature of their current operation in aspects such as schooling, teaching and learning and curriculum?
4. What are the likely implications of the latest reform under the Greek sovereign financial crisis?

The occasional paper is structured in four sections. In the first section the theoretical underpinnings are reviewed, whereas the second section deals with the existing types of Greek bilingual projects in the UK. In the third section the case study of the two Greek community schools of Bristol and Cardiff is presented while in the fourth section the proposed reform of Greek educational provision outside Greece - in the context of its current financial crisis - is discussed.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Immigration and Its Major Arising Issues

Immigration, ethnic identity, minority communities and their integration into a dominant society (social cohesion) and bilingual education are major issues which constitute the theoretical background of this paper.

Contextualising Mainland-Greeks and Greek-Cypriots

Due to historical and political circumstances there are Greek people who live in mainland and island Greece, in Cyprus, as well as in other parts of the old Greek world. All these people share the same religion, language and culture referred to as the Hellenic ethnic identity. In the course of history, Greek origin people from these places migrated all over the world. These diasporic Greeks have formed Greek communities in their current dispersed locations and, together with the Greeks of Greece and Cyprus, constitute modern Hellenism. Greek communities in the United Kingdom (UK) consist of Greeks regardless of the country they come from. However, the largest percentage of their members is of Greek-Cypriot origin. They share a common Hellenic/Greek identity. In this paper the term Greeks is used for all the members of the Greek communities in Britain, regardless of their place of origin. When a distinction is needed, the terms Greek-Cypriots and mainland-Greeks are used for the people of Cyprus and Greece respectively.

Ethnic Minority Communities-Indicators of Membership

In the area of 'multicultural education policies' as well as in the study of ethnicity and race, a key issue for consideration arising directly from the settlement of an ethnic group is the foundation of various ethnic minority organizations.

The fundamental notion underlying the formation of these organizations or communities is that of ethnicity. Raveau defines ethnicity as;

...the awareness - felt or recognized - of belonging to a group related to an historical or mythical past that can be projected into a possible or utopian common destiny. It is expressed in terms of seven indicators of participation or recognition: biogenetic, territorial,

linguistic, economic, religious, cultural and political (Raveau, Galap, Lirus and Lecoutre, 1977, cited in Raveau, 1987:105).

The biogenetic has mainly to do with morphological features while the territorial with the geographical reference of the country of origin and of the country of migration - in the form of concentration in specific areas of cities or towns. The linguistic refers to the use of a common language amongst the members which can be either the minority group's mother language or the new linguistic code - a mix of the two languages - characteristic of the minority group. The cultural indicator represents the customs, heritage, kinship relations, cuisine, dress, male and female roles etc, whereas the religious indicator defines the dominant religion (i.e. Greeks, in their vast majority are Greek-Orthodox Christians). The economic indicator represents the form of economic activities the minority has with its environment, and the political indicator represents the way that the community is administered and/or the political beliefs of the members of the community (Raveau, 1987:105-113).

Minority Communities as a Part of the Wider Community-Integration

There is a lot of discussion regarding the issue of multiculturalism and integration of ethnic minorities within a state. In the Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain (2000), five possible models - namely Procedural, Nationalist, Liberal, Plural and Separatist - are described through which, societies can "...reconcile cohesion, equality and diversity" (Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, 2000: 42).

Although there is a lot of debate among supporters of the above models it seems that the dominant ones in contemporary politics are the liberal and the plural. The liberal model's view is that society is a community of citizens, while the pluralist model's view society as a community of communities. In the report it is argued that although "the debate between the nationalist and the liberal models is certainly not over...it needs to be increasingly replaced by debates between the liberal and the pluralist models, with a view to creating a synthesis of their best features" so that finally Britain should develop both as a community of citizens and as a community of communities (Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, 2000:47). This means that although integration of immigrants into the multicultural society is the main target, the implemented policies have the form of integration through diversity rather than through assimilation. Cultural

diversity must be recognised and celebrated in the public sphere in order, firstly, to raise and maintain minorities' self-esteem and secondly, to encourage them to feel as equal members of the wider community. However this diversity should not "pre-dominate over the obligations to the nation...a certain amount of national loyalty, obedience to the law, civic responsibility...and political involvement are expected by the society from all residents regardless of the community to which they belong" (Taft, 1983:4). Also common values are needed to hold society together and give it a sense of cohesion (Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, 2000:53, see also May, 1999:15). The role of a minority community school, therefore, is to empower the community as a whole, first by raising its members' self-awareness and self-esteem, and second by linking and reconciling the minority and dominant cultures.

Bilingual Education

According to Klein (1997, cited in Abdelrazak, 1999:13) "there are more than 275 minority languages spoken by school age children in London alone". Blackledge (1994:43) suggests that "as many as five hundred thousand children learn to speak a language other than English at home before they encounter English at school". The number of mother-tongue schools running in various forms is far more than one thousand (Abdelrazak, 2000: ix). Houlton & Willey (1983: 5) argue that "the continued existence of these languages among children of second and third generation serves as reminder that linguistic diversity *is a permanent feature of life in today's multicultural Britain*".

Definitions of 'Bilingual' and 'Bilingual Education'

The terms bilingual and bilingual education, have come to mean various things. However, in the widest sense and one that is adopted in this paper, they can be defined as the following: "Bilingual is an individual who functions in two language environments regardless of fluency and literacy" and "Bilingual education is a system of education which maintains or develops skills in both these languages" (Saifullah, 1977:1). This means that bilinguals can be both a child who understands, even to a limited degree, his/her mother tongue but is not able to speak it as well as another child who is fluent and literate in both languages. Furthermore, as Von Maltitz (1975:1) points out, the "term bilingual, whether applied to a person or a group, usually carries with it the implication of at least some degree of biculturalism". As a

result, biculturalism is almost always implied in both literature and projects relating to bilingual education and is very often added after the term bilingual. This point of view is particularly relevant to Greek bilingual projects as it is impossible to separate the bilingual education of children of Greek origin in the UK from its cultural elements. In contrast, language and culture are equally taken into account in all the relevant projects.

The Bilingualism Debate

Until the late 1950s, early 1960s, the prevailing view of bilingualism of young children was that supporting mother-tongue teaching had a negative effect on children's intelligence and, therefore, would be at the expense of the children's acquisition of the dominant (official) language. According to Chen, Benet-Martinez, & Bond (2008:805) "some of the early work on this issue considered bilingualism and biculturalism to be psychologically handicapping and stressful, provoking anxiety and depression". As a consequence, bilingualism would be likely to hamper bilingual pupils' progress through the education system (Lambert, 1980; Houlton & Willey, 1983; Romaine, 1995; Chen, Benet-Martinez, & Bond, 2008).

However, this pessimistic view changed in the early 1960s and gave its place to an optimistic one. Three factors played a significant role in this change. First were many studies in immigration and multi-ethnic countries that demonstrated that "bilingual children, relative to monolingual controls, showed definite advantages on measures of 'cognitive flexibility', 'creativity', or 'divergent thought'". In other words the old notion, that becoming bilingual confuses and divides one person's cognitive resources and reduces his efficiency of thought, was discredited. On the basis of research evidence there has emerged a more common notion that "...there is a definite cognitive advantage enjoyed by bilingual children in the domain of cognitive flexibility" (Lambert, 1980:5-7, see also Romaine, 1995:112-115; Chen, Benet-Martinez, & Bond, 2008).

Second was the failure of educational systems to effectively educate the children of ethnic minority groups when they systematically ignored their linguistic and cultural diversity contributed to the new positive approach to Bilingualism (Von Maltitz, 1975:7; Paulston, 1992:62). And third was the increasing demand by ethnic groups to maintain their languages and their lifestyles, together with the increase in the number of community-run mother tongue schools in nearly all the linguistic minorities was another factor which contributed to the change towards

bilingualism (Saifullah, 1977:3, LMP¹, 1983:22, May, 1999:13, Abdelrazac, 2000: ix).

As a result, policies regarding bilingual education have changed world-wide since the late 1970s or early 1980s. The two main forms of bilingual education, as Blackledge (1994:3) notes, are Additive Bilingualism and Subtractive Bilingualism. The aim of the former is for the second language to be acquired parallel to the mother tongue so that both languages will be used in the future. The aim of the latter is for the second language to be acquired with the means of the mother tongue and to gradually replace the mother tongue. Due to their different purposes, the first is called Maintenance Bilingual Education and the second is called Transitional. Maintenance forms of bilingual schooling are supported by most of the research findings - for both its individual and societal benefits - as the results of the transitional programmes showed that pupils develop limited competence in the minority language (Herrera & Wedin, 2010:237).

Key Principles of Bilingual/Bicultural Education

Principle of equality of opportunity

According to Houlton & Willey (1983:12), "it is central to educational thinking in Britain that all pupils should have equal access to the service provided" by Local Education Authorities including those with a different linguistic and cultural background. The basic "social-justice problem in the education of minorities is to decide where and when a form of language learning" should be provided (Blackledge 1994:3). The ideal would be inside the mainstream school during normal school times. However, it is very difficult for high immigrant countries, such as the UK, to provide universal mother tongue schooling for their highly dispersed but often small groups who speak a variety of languages. Therefore, minority language maintenance can be initiated in communities. Greek Communities' Educational projects fall in the last case, due to the small number of Greek people compared to other minorities.

Principle of equality of cultures

The acknowledgement and acceptance of the mother-tongue culture, as equal to the dominant and other cultures, is of major importance in bilingual educational provision. As Paulston (1992:74) points out, bilingual education includes the study of the history and culture

¹ LMP = Linguistic Minorities Project.

associated with the mother tongue which is a "legitimate pride in both cultures". An important issue arising from this assumption is the teacher's background in bilingual/bicultural projects. According to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, as cited in Paulston (1992:74), "one way [in which] bilingual/bicultural education further enhances self-concept is by utilising language minority teachers to reinforce the child's background and culture".

Bilingual Education and Personal Identity

One controversial issue relating to bilingualism is the matter of identity. Lambert (1980) questions the notion of "becoming bilingual and bicultural subtracts, through division, from one's sense of personal identity". As the writer explains, the research findings relating to this issue are very encouraging. Lambert refers to research projects regarding children of mixed marriages (bilingual Canadian children, and bilingual children in the USA) who received bilingual education from a very early age. These studies suggest that "there is no basis in reality for the belief that becoming bilingual or bicultural necessarily means a loss or dissolution of identity". In contrast he argues that "ethno-linguistic minorities need strong educational and social experiences in their own languages and traditions before they can cope in an 'all-American' society or before they will want to cope in such a society" (Lambert, 1980:14, see also Knight, 1994-in British context). In a more recent research regarding the mother tongue teaching to Mayan people in Guatemala, Herrera & Wedin (2010) argue that "the introduction of bilingual education has led to consciousness-raising and greater self-esteem" of Mayan people. According to their findings "making space in school for the language and ethnicity of groups that have earlier been marginalised and perceived as having a lower status promotes students' active participation not only in their construction of knowledge but also in the creation of their own identities" (Herrera & Wedin, 2010:247).

2. GREEK BILINGUAL PROJECTS IN THE UK

There are several providers of Greek bilingual Education in the UK. They run various projects that involve almost all the types of bilingual education mentioned earlier. This section presents the most important providers of Greek education and discusses some important Greek bilingual projects running in England.

Providers of Greek Bilingual Education in the UK

According to Damanakis (1999), Law 2413/1996, and Law 4027/2011 the main providers of Greek education in the UK are the Greek Communities, official Greek state and the official Cypriot state.

The Greek Communities

The vast majority of the Greek communities operate as Christian Orthodox Church Parishes under the status of charity organisations under the British legislation. Simultaneously they operate under the supervision of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain² which is based in London. Almost all the communities run their own community schools which are housed either inside the church premises or in premises of mainstream schools. They are called supplementary schools or mother tongue schools and run evenings and Saturdays with the aim of teaching the Greek language and culture to the children of Greek origin and to everyone else who is interested.

The official Greek state through the Greek Embassy in London

The official policy of the Greek state is to promote the Greek language and culture and also to help the Greek Diaspora maintain their ethnic identity. In this context, the Greek Ministry of Education maintains an educational department in the Greek Embassy in London which consists of one supervisor/educational adviser, two or three administration officers and an Educational Mission of approximately one hundred teachers appointed in Greek schools in the UK. These teachers are permanent civil servants in Greece and are detached for three consecutive years with the possibility of renewal for another two years depending upon a supervisor's consent and the need for teaching staff. Concerning their wages they are paid their regular wages in Greece as well as an additional salary in the UK. This makes the specific deployments very attractive for Greek teachers and is as a result very competitive.

The official Cypriot state through the Cypriot high commission in the UK

The official Cypriot policy is similar to that of the Greek one discussed above. The official policy of the two Ministries of Education in Greece and Cyprus is to promote the closest possible co-operation between the

² Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain = this is the official title of the Orthodox Church of Britain.

supervisors and their educational missions as well as to adopt a common policy in all aspects of schooling.

Types of Greek Bilingual Education inside the UK education system

There are two types of schools running inside the English mainstream schooling: the pure Greek schools and the bilingual Greek-English schools.

Pure Greek schools

According to the Law 2413/1996, these follow the Greek national curriculum and the medium of instruction is Greek. Their teaching staff are detached from Greece and are paid by the Greek Ministry of Education. Such schools running inside the British mainstream school system are the Greek primary and the Greek secondary schools located in London. The former was established in 1983 by the Greek government in order to provide Greek education to the expatriate Greeks in London (<http://dim-london.europe.sch.gr>). It is based in West Acton and is fully funded by the Greek state with no school-fees at all. It accepts pupils in the age cohort of 6-12 years. The curriculum is the Greek primary education national curriculum and the language of instruction is Greek. English is taught as a language subject for two hours daily. The teaching staff is seconded from Greece, except for teachers of English and French who are British nationals. The school is recognised by the DfES³ as an independent school and is recognised by the Greek Ministry of Education as equal to all the state schools in Greece and Cyprus. The school's aims are to help children acquire knowledge about their Greek heritage and feel proud about it; to create a happy and purposeful school community which fosters mutual respect, values individual worth and ability and raises each individual's self-esteem; and to assist children in acquiring knowledge and develop skills relevant to their present and future needs (<http://dim-london.europe.sch.gr>).

The Greek Secondary school of London (Gymnasium and Lyceum) was founded in 1985 to provide Greek education for Greek expatriates based in London, students with Greek or Cypriot citizenship residing in London and friends of Greece regardless of their nationality. The majority of students are of Greek origin from at least one of their parents, however students from other ethnic background also attend the school. The language of instruction is Greek and the Greek

³ DfES= Department for Education and Skills (British).

national curriculum of secondary education - as defined by the Greek Ministry of Education - is followed. The emphasis is on the teaching of the English language by English natives. A-level courses in Modern Greek, Mathematics and French are also offered. Teachers of subjects other than English are detached from Greek secondary schools subject to their knowledge of English, teaching experience, and postgraduate studies. The school's aims are to encourage students to maintain their national identity and to prepare students to become ambassadors of the Greek spirit (<http://www.greek-secondary.haringey.sch.uk>).

Bilingual schools

St. Cyprian Greek Orthodox primary school

The British National curriculum is presented in this school and the language of instruction is English. In addition to the basic curriculum, the school teaches Greek as a foreign language which is allocated around 10 per cent of the total curriculum time. According to the school's profile cited in <http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk>:

As a school we strive continually to improve standards in both core subjects and in Greek and Religious education. The school wishes to provide a curriculum which links the teaching of Greek as a Modern Foreign language and culture alongside the teaching of the Greek Orthodox Faith. As such the links between the Greek Embassy, Cypriot Mission and the Churches is crucial to the success of the school.

The teaching staff consists of British teachers, apart from teachers of 'Modern Greek' who are members of the Greek or Cypriot Educational missions (<http://schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk/3063008/school-profile>).

Bilingual projects outside the UK mainstream education system

The vast majority of the Greek bilingual projects in the UK run outside the mainstream school system and take the form of evening and Saturday community mother tongue schools. The total number of institutions is estimated to be approximately one hundred (Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, 2008). It is worth mentioning that 80% of the detached teachers (members of the Educational missions of Greece and Cyprus) teach in such schools.

Typical examples of such schools are the community schools of Bristol and Cardiff which constitute the main sites of the research presented below.

3. THE CASE STUDY OF THE GREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS OF BRISTOL AND CARDIFF

The two Greek community schools of Bristol and Cardiff constituted the sites for the main research of this study. The information on Bristol is taken from the Bristol School's records with permission from the management committee. The descriptive data on the Cardiff site is the result of formal and informal discussions and interviews with the Headteacher of the Greek School of Cardiff.

Location and Premises of Both Schools

Both schools belong to local Greek Communities. The Greek community of Bristol is based in the area of Easton and comprises the Greek-Orthodox church (a former Anglican church), the community hall (built in 2000 after a donation by the National Lottery) and the Greek school (the old Vicarage of the church, see picture 1).



Picture 1: Greek school of Bristol.

The Greek school of Cardiff is based in the area of Butetown, very close to the port. It comprises the Greek-Orthodox church (built in 1903 in Byzantine architect design by Greek mariners) and the community hall, which is next to the church (see picture 2).



Picture 2: Greek school of Cardiff.

Aspects of the Study

The research was primarily focused on developing an understanding of the role and relevance of the Greek school in these two communities, with particular regard to the views of the community. The study focused upon the role and relevance of the following aspects: teaching and learning, the curriculum, pupils' assessment, administration/management and school-community links.

Teaching and learning.

Both schools present similar enrolments; that is, approximately sixty for each one of the schools. However, the number of pupils who actually attend each school is about fifty. Both schools provide midweek evening classes (17.00-19.30) and Saturday morning classes (9.00-13.00). Added to this timetable is the celebration of national and religious days that involve performances by children of poems, songs, plays and traditional Greek dances which takes place either in the community hall or inside the church after the service. These performances always take place on Sundays due to parents and pupils commitments to work and English schools respectively. The standard number of these Sundays each year is five; however the number can rise to ten when other events such as fireworks parties, disco parties, Greek dinner and dances, school trips and so on are added in.

The pupils are divided into classes according to their age and level of competence in Greek, starting from nursery class, following Year One

up to Year Six, and GCSE and A-Level as the higher classes. However, due to the limited time of the school's operation, the limited number of teachers and the small number of some classes (especially after year five) there are inevitably some classes with pupils of mixed years.

The teaching material involves course textbooks for all classes apart from the courses of A-Level. These are a product of the co-operation between the Educational Departments of Greece and Cyprus and are delivered free of charge by both the Educational Missions to all the Community Greek Schools of the UK. The teaching methodology is based on the method of teaching Greek as a second language, given that all children attend mainstream English schools and the vast majority of them use English as their first language.

Curriculum

The curriculum of the Greek Community Schools includes Modern Greek language, Greek History and Culture, Religious Matters and Greek traditional songs and dances.

The School of the Greek Community of Bristol is a recognised examination centre for conducting examinations through 'EDEXCEL'. This role of the school is very important since it offers the opportunity to take an examination in 'Modern Greek' and particularly given the difficulties of doing this in their English school (lack of teachers-examiners and limited number of candidates).

The language of instruction is a major issue in all bilingual education projects. Due to the fact that the majority of pupils learn Greek as a second or foreign language, the use of English by the teachers as a means of instruction is necessary, especially for early years teaching. Children's existing language skills, in this case English, must be used in order for a second language, such as Greek, to be taught effectively (Cummins, 1987; Damanakis, 1999).

Concerning the Greek language used by the teachers in school, this is the Standard Modern Greek which is the official language in both Greece and Cyprus. However, the Cypriot dialect is the spoken language by Greek-Cypriots. Even though there are no problems in communication between Mainland-Greeks and Greek-Cypriots this was a point of disagreement by a proportion of the Greek Communities' members in various communities within the UK who favoured their children being taught through the Cypriot dialect. However, the official policy of both the Greek and Cypriot Educational Missions is to use Standard Modern Greek as happens in Greece and Cyprus.

Assessment

Currently there is no official policy in community schools regarding pupil assessment. The implementation of any kind of assessment scheme is a matter for individual teachers, head teachers and school management committees. At present the 'unofficial' pupils' assessment scheme in both schools includes 'End of term' and/or 'End of Academic Year' tests together with the provision of a 'Certificate of Attendance' marked from A to C provided at the end of each year.

Management-Administration

The administrative system, which is discussed below, applies to both schools. The school committee which is a sub-committee of the Community committee is responsible for the management of the school. It usually consists of eleven members elected by community members every two years and the Headteacher of the school. Issues of responsibility are the maintenance of school premises and equipment, provision of teaching material and stationary (except text-books), financial control (this involves the income from school fees and fund-raising events and the expenses related to the necessary payments, apart from salaries of teachers of Greek and Cypriot Educational Missions who are paid from their governments), recruitment and payment of extra teachers for dance or nursery classes, organisation of school performances, for example, hall decoration, food preparation, live music, and communication with parents - this involves posted letters to all the families, informing for various school activities.

The School Committees of both schools have no actual responsibilities for educational issues. Rather this rests with the head teacher and teaching staff, under the supervision of the Educational offices. The head teacher is also responsible for all the administration work and contact with examining boards and the conduct of the exams in Bristol's school. In addition, with letters sent to parents by school committee, the head teacher of Bristol's school informs parents and pupils of various events and activities through school's newsletter, which is attached to Community's newsletter (edited every three months).

School community links.

In Bristol and Cardiff, the Greek Community Schools, have two missions. One relates to inside the Greek community and the other refers to the wider community.

Inside the Greek Community, the school is the link between children who learn about their common background, parents who meet each other in school's activities, parents and children - by introducing parents' cultural background to children - and between children, their parents and the community.

Outside the school the knowledge acquired by children in terms of language skills and cultural background is intended to raise their self-esteem and confidence and help them to integrate in the wider society more effectively. The above mentioned aspects of the study are the basis of the questionnaire's structure and therefore are discussed in more detail further on in the discussion of the questionnaire findings.

4. THE RESEARCH METHODS

Selection of Research Method

The research approach selected was the 'case study' to enable the researcher to understand the complexities of two Greek Community schools that operate under similar circumstances. Despite the general perception that the case study approach should include a single case, the researcher - in line with Burton 2000 - adopted the point of view that the number of cases is not such an important issue (see Burton, 2000).

The case study as the primary research approach was selected for three reasons. The first was related with the researcher's main objective, which was to enhance his knowledge and understanding of issues relating to the organisation where he worked at that time, and its context (which is the Greek community), in order to contribute more significantly to the development of students, staff and project in general. According to Cohen & Manion (1994), the researcher in a case study observes the features of an individual unit such as a class, a school or a community in order to explore and analyse its operation. In addition Yin (1984) suggests that a case study explores a current phenomenon in its real life context.

The second was the very little existing research in the area of 'Community mother-tongue schools', together with the complete lack of research in the area of Greek Community mother-tongue schools. Burton (2000) argues that case studies can be exploratory when the existing research focusses on limited specific topics.

Finally, was the difficulty of accessing other schools due to long distances, as there are Greek schools only in large cities and in London..

Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods employed for the study were participant observation, documentation and a questionnaire. This combination was selected for two reasons: to include in the research both qualitative and quantitative data, and to formulate the general picture of the study as well as the research questions by using the data from observation and documentation – due to the very limited existing research in the specific topic area.

Participant observation

According to Yin (1984) in participant observation the researcher is not just a passive observer but he/she may take various roles within the case study explored and even participate in the investigated phenomena. These roles include serving as a staff member in an organisational setting and being a key decision maker in an organisational setting.

The researcher's position as a Headteacher in the Greek school of Bristol provided him with easy access to both the actual (school) and the contextual (community) settings of the study. During the study notes were used in order to record the information gathered in various circumstances such as during schooling time from interactions with students, parents, members of school's teaching staff and other community members; during participation in School Committee meetings and Community Committee meetings; other unofficial gatherings with members of the community in the church or the Community Hall and during formal and informal discussions and interviews with the Headteacher of the Greek School of Cardiff.

However, even though participant observation provides great opportunities for collecting data, it has its limitations as well. One of its major problems has to do with the biases produced and the subjectivity with which the researcher can see the observed setting (Yin, 1984; Cohen & Manion, 1994). Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the data gathered from observation was mainly used for setting the context of the study (due to the lack of existing research relating to Greek Educational Projects) and no attempt for its analysis was made. This data helped the researcher formulate the study in general and identify the topics for the construction of the questionnaire and the discussion of its findings.

Documentation

This type of information can take many forms such as letters, memoranda, agendas, announcements, minutes of meetings, administrating documents, newsletters and so on (Yin, 1984, Wellington, 2000). Such information was used-from Bristol's school records in order to study some aspects of the Greek Community schools of Bristol and Cardiff. Permission was sought and was granted from Bristol's School Committee.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used as the main method of data collection from parents of both schools. It was preferred compared to interview as it 'reduces biasing errors that might result from the personal characteristics of interviewers' (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996:225). Particularly as the researcher's role both as a Headteacher of the school of Bristol and member of the Greek Educational mission could influence respondents' answers. It also offers greater anonymity (again very important due to researcher's position) and gives respondents the freedom to answer the questions as they really feel and believe. Moreover, a questionnaire gives more time to respondents to think about their answers and/or consult other sources and provides easier access to organisations and participants. Additionally, questionnaires are less time consuming especially for someone with professional commitments. Finally, and importantly, questionnaires have been used in similar research projects such as the Linguistic Minorities in England Project and in community surveys conducted in schools' districts in order to gather information about people's perceptions of local schools (Wiersma, 1991).

However, questionnaires have limitations such as the need for questions and instructions to be simple in order to be easily comprehended by respondents and the lack of opportunity for probing; the answers have to be accepted as final as the researcher will not be able to seek any clarifications (discussed in Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996:225)

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire aimed to gather information about parents' perceptions on certain issues relating to the study such as the purposes of Greek Community schools; its role in the Greek Community as well as in the wider community and certain aspects of its current operation (schooling, teaching and learning, curriculum and so on).

In order to be easier and less time consuming in responding the majority of the items in the questionnaire were the close type.

However, the questionnaire provided the opportunity for the respondents to add their comments or to justify their own personal option. There was also an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire that aimed to allow parents to express freely their opinion about the two schools.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-four questions divided into seven sections. Section A included demographic information as well as information about parents receiving community education. Section B sought to explore the purposes of sending children to Greek school, while sections C, D, E, F, and G aimed to gather information on issues related to teaching and schooling, the curriculum, students' assessment, administration and school - community links respectively.

Piloting

A 'pilot run' of the questionnaire was done in its initial draft with five members of the community of Bristol who used to bring their children to the school. Two of them were doctorate degree holders, in science rather other than education, but nevertheless experienced in research. In the piloting two teachers of the Greek school of Cardiff were also used. The purpose of questionnaire's pilot run was to check for ambiguity, confusion, and poorly prepared items (Wiersma 1991). This pilot work revealed a number of weaknesses in terms of the wording of questions, the addition or reduction of ticking options, clarification in instructions, correction of 'jargon' to more simple terms and so on. Attempts were also made to minimise any biases in the questions in order to increase the validity of the research. The comments enabled the researcher to adjust the questionnaire a couple of times before its final edition so that ambiguities and points of confusion could be eliminated, as much as possible, before its administration.

Sampling

Concerning the sampling, it was decided that the questionnaire would be self-administrated by all those families who send children to the Greek Schools of Bristol and Cardiff. The actual number of students in each one of the schools totals 50 from thirty families. Therefore, thirty questionnaires were administrated in each one of the schools – a total of sixty questionnaires.

Data collection and analysis

A self-administered questionnaire was chosen in order that a higher response rate might be achieved. The researcher's wish was to give a 'personal touch' at the time of administration, together with any clarifications that respondents should need (even if an explanatory letter was attached). It seems that the high questionnaire response rate (68%) confirmed this specific choice. Moreover, in order to ensure the anonymity at the time of the collection, it was agreed with parents that they would place the returned questionnaires (after their completion privately) in a paper-box (something like a big money-box) located in the entrance room of the school. A cover letter was included to explain the purpose of the study and to confirm anonymity and confidentiality. Respondents were asked to complete and return the questionnaire in two weeks. Twenty three out of thirty were received from Bristol and eighteen out of thirty were received from Cardiff. That means a response rate 76 percent and 60 percent respectively, while combined they totalled 68 percent which is a forty-one questionnaires. This represents an adequate rate of return based upon the whole of the population. According to Wiersma (1991:181), although writers differ on suggested minimum response rates, a typical response rate of parents in an educational research project would be 60%. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (1996) suggests that despite many efforts at maximising the response rate, "...many mail surveys achieve a response rate no larger than 50 percent" (1996:232).

With respect to the analysis - a simple frequency reporting was adopted. The results are discussed in relation to the aims of each question. The data was then developed into statistical representations utilising 'Microsoft Excel' personal computer programme for Windows.

Validity-Reliability

The notions of validity and reliability are central to the research process and various issues are related to them. Wiersma (1991) notes that validity involves two concepts: internal, which is "the extent to which the results can be accurately interpreted" (1991:4), and external which is "the extent to which the results can be generalised to populations and conditions" (1991:5). Reliability refers to the consistency of the research and to the extent to which two or more "independent researchers can replicate studies in the same or similar settings coming up with the same findings" (1991:6). He concludes that both of them "establish the credibility of research" (Wiersma, 1991:7).

Concerning the internal validity of this study, particular attention was paid to two closely interrelated areas of the research process; firstly in the case study due to the researcher's role as participant observer and secondly, in the questionnaire as the primary means of data collection. In the case of the participant observation, as has already been discussed, it could be argued that data collected with this method is biased as the researcher sees the observed setting subjectively. Given that data collected from observation was used only for setting the context of the study, researcher's bias could enter in questions during the questionnaire's construction. Bearing that in mind, the researcher tried to be as objective as he could. Questions were formulated carefully trying to eliminate bias as much as possible. Pilot work also offered the opportunity for minimising bias in questions by identifying and altering any limitations before its administration.

Continuing the issue of internal validity, it could also be argued that respondents' answers in the Bristol school could be influenced by the researcher's post as Headteacher of the school. In order to account for issues in this regard, the second case of Cardiff's school was added in the study so that data collected from both schools could be compared for general consistency. Moreover the selection of the questionnaire as the primary medium of data collection aimed to reduce biasing error, due to its anonymity, as compared to interviews.

According to Yin (1984), a common concern of case studies is the limited basis for generalisation which constitutes the external validity of the study. Although this study does not seek to generalise its findings to other Greek Community Schools in the UK, it could be argued that as the majority of them operate under a common policy and a common supervision (EFEPE) in effect they present similar environments and similar conditions. From the researcher's point of view the findings apply to the majority of Greek community school in the UK.

Reliability has to do with the replication of the study. The researcher's post should be regarded as a factor that may well reduce the reliability of the research. However, the addition of the second case in the study serves as an attempt to mediate this and to act as a form of comparison and triangulation.

5. ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Demographic Data and Use of Greek at Home

Of the forty-one questionnaires received, 47.7 percent were completed by families with both parents and at least one of the two parents were of Greek-Cypriot background, while 39 percent were completed by families with Mainland-Greek background.

In 55.1 percent of the overall respondents from both schools, one of the two parents was born in the UK, while in 29.1 percent of families both parents were born in the UK. In the remaining 15.8 percent, both parents were born in Greece or Cyprus. In the vast majority of families (84.2%) one or both parents were born and raised in Britain. It is worth mentioning that in Bristol's school, Greek was the family language for the 26.1% of families who said that both parents were born in Greece or Cyprus. The responses to this question reflected what appeared to happen in the Bristol's Greek school where, for example, there were ten bilingual children (25% of all pupils) with high levels of competence in Greek and two or three other with some competence, while the remaining children have had limited or no knowledge of Greek. This situation explains why, for the majority of pupils, the teaching approach is 'teaching Greek as Second or Foreign language'.

Outcomes of Parents Gained by their Attendance of Greek School and Purposes of Sending their Children in the Greek school

The two related questions were "Have you ever attended during your school age, any kind of Greek school in the UK?" and "If Yes, please number in order of preference the most important outcomes you gained". According to the findings the majority of second or third generation parents (60.7% of the 84%) have attended Greek Community schools in the past. The outcomes that parents gained from their attendance in the Greek school were almost identical to the purposes of sending their own children in the Greek school. In other words, having some prior experience of Greek schools seems to be an important precondition for sending their own children to such a school. The first ranking in both questions was 'to develop language skills'. The second ranking was 'to learn about culture and heritage', and in the third was 'to develop Greek identity'. The fourth outcome for parents was that they 'met friends' with the same background and fifth that they 'learnt more about religion'. In the sixth rank was the

possibility of gaining a GCSE or A LEVEL qualification in Modern Greek and in the last rank was the view that skills in Greek can help in broader education and life in general.

Teaching and learning

Children attend Greek school once a week, for two to two and a half hours. More than half of the respondents said that the amount of schooling time is 'right'. It is worth mentioning here the different points of view that parents of the two schools presented in this issue. In Bristol's school 52.2% supported that schooling time is 'too little', while in Cardiff's school the percentage of parents who shared this view was only 33.4%.

Concerning the timetable arrangement, 62.5 percent of parents who answered that the time allocated is too little would prefer a schooling time consisting of two times a week, in a range of two to five hours per time, while 25 percent suggested once a week, as it currently is but with an extension in the time from two hours, to four or five. Another 8.4 percent supported the idea of children coming to school three times a week for two hours per time.

Bilingual Education inside the Mainstream School, or Outside of it

One major issue in Bilingual Education literature is the nature of provision. Should bilingual projects be a part of the mainstream schooling or should it be independent ones? Parents' responses to this issue showed that the majority are in favour of their children learning Greek only in the Community school (52.2% in Bristol and 66.7% in Cardiff, which is an average of 59.5%). Another 37.8% would prefer the teaching of Greek language in both institutions (Community school and Mainstream school), while only 2.8% would prefer the teaching of Greek language inside the normal school solely.

This was a surprising result, as someone would expect parents to be in favour of their children's mainstream school as an additional likely provider of 'Modern Greek' teaching, together with the Community school. Here we can see the strong position the Greek school maintains in parents' perceptions as an important institution, perhaps due to its influence in their own childhood, either in the UK, or in Greece and Cyprus. It can be concluded that what shapes the views of these parents is that the issue is as much one of language and culture, and not just language.

Celebration of National and Religious days

Questions relating to special celebrations sought to explore parents' perceptions, about the necessity of celebrating Greek national and religious days which takes place on Sundays or whether these Sundays are exceeding their expectations and possibilities for participation. The purpose of these questions was to explore the reasons for the constant absence from Sundays' school performances of a number of children and parents. However, the majority of the respondents believed that these festive days are essential for the school (42.3% in both schools 'Strongly agree' and 45.2% 'Agree', in total 87.5%. Another 9.8% are 'Neutral' and only 2.7% disagree). Concerning the amount of Sundays that both parents and children are engaged with Greek school activities, 80.2 percent of respondents-with similar results in both schools- said that this is 'about right', another 7.2 percent said that it is 'too little', while only 4.9 percent said that it is too much. From these results it is concluded that the absences from those Sundays are due to reasons other than disagreement with the purposes of the particular celebrations and festivities.

Curriculum

Questions related to the curriculum explored parents' perceptions about school subjects. It was found that these are similar to both the Greek and Cypriot Educational missions' ideas and objectives according to which, due to the limited schooling time, there is a need to concentrate more on language skills and historical/cultural issues. Concerning religious matters and music, these should be linked primarily with the occasional celebration days rather than with the weekly programme. According to the findings, the parents of both schools consider 'Modern Greek' to be the most important subject (98.9%), history and culture as the second most important (71.1%), religious matters third (51.2%) and Greek music and songs rank fourth in their preference (35.5%). Here again the results of the two schools are almost identical. This shows the general agreement in this issue. The majority of the respondents (75%) seem to be satisfied with the existing curriculum whereas (25%) think that we should add a few subjects. All of them suggest 'Greek Dances' as their first preference, while some other suggestions are Geography of Greece and Cyprus, Greek cooking and social club. It could be argued that adding 'Greek Dance' classes should be considered by both schools' management committees, as both schools offered 'Dance classes' for children and/or adults occasionally over the past year. These ran outside of the normal

school time which proved too limited for integrating dance teaching in it.

Teaching material

The majority of parents in both schools were positive about the teaching material; this might well reflect the increased attention which has been paid by both Educational Departments in Greece and Cyprus in recent years regarding the text books and other teaching material for schools outside Greece and Cyprus.

Greek dialect of instruction and teachers' background

As earlier discussed, while English is the prime medium of instruction for non Greek-speaking children, Standard Modern Greek⁴ (SMG) is the main medium of instruction for the Greek speaking children. The research question aimed to explore whether the issue of the Greek dialect which is used by teachers in school activities, as well as in their communication with pupils, is a 'big issue' or not. The impetus for this investigation was an MEd research conducted by Kappa (1995). The researcher concluded that '...in the case of the second and third generation Greek-Cypriot children born in Britain', the use of SMG by the Greek teachers '...quite often hinders the communication between the Greek teacher and the children' (Kappa: 1995: 54). Finally the researcher recommended 'the appointment of Cypriot teachers in Communities where all members originate from Cyprus, in order to avoid any linguistic problems' (Kappa, 1995:72). However in my research 87 percent of respondents in Bristol's school supported the point of view that 'Standard Modern Greek must be used in school activities'. In Cardiff's school, 72.3 percent agreed with the use of SMG while 27.7 percent were neutral.

In terms of the background of the teachers, the results showed that 85% percent of respondents of both schools said that they would prefer 'mixed staff' (teachers from Greece, Cyprus or UK) and/or they 'don't mind' about teachers' background. Another 15 percent said that they would prefer teachers from Greece. One of those justified his/her option as follows:

I believe that the teachers should be from Greece only so that the children can hear and learn how to speak the

⁴ Standard Modern Greek: The official language of both Greece and Cyprus, which is used in Education in general, and in text books specifically, in all level schools, both in Greece and Cyprus.

language 'correctly' i.e. as it is spoken in Greece,
(Questionnaire No: 5, Bristol, option (a).

Assessment

More than half of the parents in both schools seem to be satisfied with the assessment of pupils (13.6% 'very satisfied' and 47.4% 'satisfied'). However, 14.3% percent o stated that they are 'Not very satisfied', combined with the high percentage of those who said they 'Do not know', suggests that this is an issue which needs further consideration from both Educational Missions in order that a common policy for all community schools can be constructed. A more organised mode of assessment has to be implemented, so that pupils and parents will be more often informed about pupils' progress. It seems that parents are not aware of how the assessment is organised and therefore they cannot form a judgement. It could be argued that this might be because homework does not guide them sufficiently of where the children are, what there needs are and generally what their progress is.

Administration

The issue of communication between parents and school is a very important one as it is likely to affect school performances. With similar results for both schools parents stated there is 'adequate communication' with a percentage of 61% while 31.3 percent reported that they are not fully satisfied. If we see these results in association with the constant absence of a number of pupils and parents in some of school activities we may conclude that some parents don't receive on time, or do not receive at all, the letters by the school committee or the newsletters by teachers and children. According to one respondent:

The notification about the various events throughout the school year should go out earlier than it has so far. (Questionnaire, No 20, Bristol)

As earlier mentioned the secondment of Mainland-Greek teachers is for three consecutive years, with the possibility of renewal for another two years while the secondment of Greek-Cypriot teachers is for three years only. According to the parents more than the half of the respondents in both schools (56.5% in Bristol and 55.5% in Cardiff) believe that teachers should stay at least five years and maybe more while the 30.1 percent (43.5% in Bristol and 16.7% in Cardiff) believe that teachers should stay for three years. Some of those who supported the view of five years and more justified their opinion as follows:

The more the better to ensure continuity from both child and teacher perspective (Questionnaire No3, Cardiff)

As long as they are enthusiastic (Questionnaire No11, Cardiff).

From a parent's point of view I do not feel a need for any limit at all. May a good teacher stay forever (Questionnaire No8, Bristol).

In the last two of the above responses the element of 'teachers' evaluation' is implied as parents would like 'good' teachers to stay longer. However there is no official appraisal scheme at the moment for the teachers of both educational missions.

School-Community Links

Parents' perceptions in terms of school-community links, as well as the role of the Greek school in the wider community, were very positive. With similar results in both schools, the vast majority of them (95%) supported that 'knowing your history and cultural background raises your self-awareness and self-esteem'; 93.5% supported the idea that 'Greek school brings children of Greek Community together' and 83% the view that 'Greek school brings children closer to community'. Furthermore statements such as the 'Greek school helps children to come closer to homeland culture and relatives who live there' were maintained by 79.6% of the respondents. Although the majority of parents agree (70.3%) with the statement that 'Greek school introduces parents' culture to children and therefore brings parents and children closer', there is a percentage of 29.8% who are neutral.

Summary and conclusions

In conclusion, the research findings indicate that parents' perceptions regarding their community schools are positive. The findings can be summarised as follows.

Aims and Objectives of Greek Community Schools of Bristol and Cardiff

Parents' perceptions regarding the most important purposes of sending their children to the Greek School are harmonised with the aims of the schools as they are established by both the Greek Communities and both the Educational Departments of Greece and Cyprus. They include to develop Greek language skills; to learn more about Greek culture and heritage; to develop Greek identity (in harmony with their British

one); to learn more about religion and to meet other people of the community.

Teaching and Learning

According to the research findings, Greek is the second language for 75 percent of the families. This, combined with parent's willingness (as it is reflected from their responses) for both themselves and their children to 'develop Greek language skills', showed that parents supported the argument that second language acquisition has positive effects for both individuals and society.

The amount of time given to teaching is controversial. Almost half of the respondents believes that the teaching time is too little while the remaining half believe that it is right.

Concerning the issue of where children should get their Greek education, it seems that for parents it is not so questionable, as the majority prefers the community school as currently happens.

Curriculum

The curriculum seems to be adequate for the needs of pupils, their parents and the communities whereas the text-books are reported by the majority of respondents as being good.

Furthermore, as it appears there is no 'issue' of preferable 'dialect' as parents believe that Standard Modern Greek should be used at school given that it is the official language in both Greece and Cyprus. Concerning the teachers' background and length of stay they believe that as long as they are competent and enthusiastic it does not matter where they are from and how long the stay.

Assessment

Questionnaire responses showed that the majority of parents are satisfied with both schools' methods of assessment which, as discussed, are rather informal. It seems that parents believe that children should not be assessed in the formal way as in the rest of schooling. They would prefer that the Greek Community School maintains its social and casual character – rather than build a formal one so that they are more attractive to children.

Management and Administration

The method of school – parents' communication needs improvement, as a third of the parents said that they are not adequately informed about various school activities. Additionally, other modes of communication (i.e. emails, text messages) could be developed.

School-Community Links

Concerning the schools-communities links, parents support the belief that Greek Community schools, bring children of Greek Community together, raise their self- awareness and self-esteem as well as bring them closer to the Greek communities of both the UK and homeland. These findings support the argument that multi-ethnic societies, like Britain, should be developed both as a community of citizens and as a community of communities as ethnic minority members prefer to participate in society both as citizens-members of the nation state where they live and as members of their own community.

6. REFORM PROPOSALS UNDER THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

In May 2010, the Greek government and the EU governments - under the threat of national bankruptcy - agreed to a "rescue mechanism" involving both the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a result Greece was obliged to take the necessary measures to gradually correct its economic indicators by reducing public spending, reducing the number of civil servants (including teachers) and reforming the public sector part of which is the education system. These measures are described in detail in the much discussed agreement-document titled the "Memorandum" (Paraskevopoulos & Morgan, 2011).

In response to the above developments the restructuring of the education system and the rationalisation of its human resources have been considered of major importance by the political leadership of the Greek Ministry of Education. As a result, since the last school year a course of measures which involve merges and closures of schools across Greece as well as suspension of teachers' detachments, study leaves and in-service programmes have been implemented.

Under these conditions the provision of Greek education projects outside Greece has been deemed an area under reconsideration. Firstly, because it absorbs a large part of the Ministry of Education's annual budget and secondly, because it requires a large number of teachers who - under the new conditions - are needed in Greece.

In this context Prime Minister Mr Papandreou appointed Mrs Gennimata as a designated deputy Minister to deal with the specific issue. The first step towards this direction was an open consultation process which started on the 26th of January 2011 and completed on the 11th of March 2011 (Open Consultation, 2011: <http://www.opengov.gr/yppepth/?p=648>). At the same time both the

Minister and the deputy Minister visited countries with major Greek communities such as Germany, USA, Australia and the UK where they had the chance to meet and discuss (formally and informally) with members of the Greek community, parents and students.

According to the open consultation results (as published at <http://www.opengov.gr/ypepth>) and the Ministers' discussions there has been a general agreement regarding the need for changes in the way that Greek education is provided to the Greeks of Diaspora. Furthermore, in order to comfort the Greek communities' members' concerns about cuts (in both funding and teaching staff) they assured these members that the forthcoming reform is not solely the consequence of the financial crisis but a part of the general education reform in Greece. As deputy Minister Mrs. Gennimata stated in a letter addressed to the Greek communities worldwide:

...I would like to assure you that the Greek government and I personally are prepared to put an end to the pathogen the Greek educational system carries abroad. ... I can assure you that it is not our intention to close schools, but to upgrade them... ... I would like to emphasize that reducing the costs is not our sole objective. Despite the fact that the financial crisis generates new conditions, our aim is to offer useful and quality educational services (Gennimata 2011)

On the 26th of July 2011 Mrs Gennimata introduced the proposal for the new Law named 'The Greek educational provision abroad'. In the foreword of the proposal the deputy Minister suggested that despite the large sums of money spent in Greek education abroad (for both teachers wages and schools' funding) the results - especially in the last decade - have not been the anticipated ones. As she argued the 79% of Greek schools abroad run outside the mainstream schooling of the hosting countries without providing any kind of official certification. She also argued that the pure Greek schools (i.e. the Greek schools of London) do not really support the Greek students as they do not effectively help them to be intergraded into the society in which they live. Concerning the teachers detached in those schools, she stressed firstly that they are not appropriately trained (in methods of teaching Greek as a second language), secondly that their number is disproportionally large compared to the numbers of students and third that they are not evaluated. Therefore she concluded for the following reasons that a new legislation is essential:

1. The new needs of the third, fourth and fifth generation of expatriate Greeks,
2. The decline of students of Greek origin.
3. The evidence that multilingual school units produce better results.
4. The failure of identifying the educational needs and the outcomes.
5. The waste of human resources with unclear and bad managed procedures.

As a result the new Law 4027/2011 titled 'The Greek educational provision abroad' was introduced in November 2011. According to this:

1. The pure Greek schools (the ones that follow the Greek national curriculum and their language of instruction is Greek) will be transformed into bilingual ones. At the same time they will be intergraded into the mainstream schooling of the hosting country following its national curriculum and providing degrees recognisable in the hosting country. The schools that fail to transform in this manner will close. Also, in cases where integration is not possible due to political or other particularities, the specific school will stop registering students from the academic year 2012-2013.
2. The supplementary Greek schools (i.e. Greek schools Nottingham, Bristol and Cardiff) will be partially funded for their operation only if they are recognised by the Authorities of the hosting country and only if they fulfil certain criteria, specifically in terms of student numbers, hours of work, the quality of education and the degrees provided. It is unclear whether teachers from Greece will still be detached to these schools. It seems however that the Ministry of Education devolves the responsibility of employing teachers to the managing committees of the schools. Presumably these teachers will be permanent residents of the hosting country rather than teachers from Greece. Nevertheless it is almost certain that very few of the existing Greek community schools will meet the criteria set by the Ministry both in terms of the number of students stipulated (25 per class) and the working hours (at least 30 per week).
3. Particular attention will be given to the programmes of Greek language run in Universities. These will continue to be funded and staffed with specifically trained teachers.
4. Finally, the Ministry's priority will be the boost of the existing 'Logos' (means talk in Greek) centres as well as the foundation of new ones. These are independent organisations that aim to the

promote the Greek language and culture not only to the children and adults of Greek origin but also to everyone else who would like to study the ancient and/or Modern Greek language, history and culture. An additional task of Logos centres will be the training of local teachers who will be interested in teaching in the Greek projects abroad.

5. In the meantime, until the implementation of the new Law which is expected to become active in the next academic year (2012-2013), the Ministry of Education in Greece (MoE) has over the last two years proceeded to freeze f all teachers' detachments. In addition, it terminated the detachments of more than half of those teachers already detached making use of the specific provision of Law 2413/1996, which allows for the continuation of the detachment after the third year subject to Ministry's discretion.
6. In this context the Greek schools abroad - among which the ones in the UK - are forced to search for alternative ways of funding in order to continue the provision of Greek educational services to their communities. It seems however that Greece, despite the rhetoric about upgrading the existing educational provision abroad is gradually withdrawing from the specific projects under the pressure of the on-going financial crisis. It seems further that an era where expatriate Greeks were supported financially by their home country comes to an end.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to investigate the role of the Greek community schools in the UK and discuss the implications of the new legislation introduced by the Greek government under the financial crisis regarding their operation. It is argued that the teaching of the mother language contributes to the conceptual, cognitive and psychological development of pupils. Furthermore, the current research showed that the aims of Greek Community Schools as described by parents are harmonised with the aims of the schools as per their established by both the Greek Communities and the Educational Departments of Greece and Cyprus. Curriculum seems to be adequate for the needs of pupils, whereas the text-books are reported - by the majority of respondents - as being good. Concerning the schools-communities links, parents believe that Greek Community schools bring children of the Greek Community together as well as closer to the Greek communities of both the UK and homeland. Finally, it is suggested that the teaching of linguistic and cultural backgrounds

raises pupils' self-awareness and self-esteem and by so doing improving their opportunities as members of the wider community.

However, the latest reform made up under the pressure of the sovereign debt crisis in Greece has generated a lot of concern and uncertainty in the Greek community schools in the UK and elsewhere. Possible closures or dysfunction of Greek schools will affect the overall operation of the Greek communities as well as the education of pupils of Greek origin living in the UK. Linking with the theory, the former could mean the loss of the role of the school as a link between parents, pupils and the Greek community, whereas the latter might negatively influence pupils' integration in the wider community.

Given that for almost four decades the Greek community schools have been relying on the support of the official Greek state it is almost certain that they will struggle to find alternate ways to continue to serve their communities. To achieve this they have to become viable, which under the new conditions means they need to become self-funded/sufficient. More specifically they have to change their organisational operation and become more professional, they have to upgrade their services in order to attract more students and also to re-examine their fee-policies which at the moment are very low reflecting the fact that they have been partially funded by the Greek government. The Greek communities will have to re-take the responsibility of running the organisations they founded⁵. They will have to take the responsibility of hiring and paying permanent teaching staff responsible for running the school as they have been doing since the foundation of the schools for the temporary hourly paid teaching staff. Given that the Greek communities have the financial ability to achieve the above the MoE anticipates that the Greek schools' managing committees will respond to these challenges. It is also anticipated that although the withdrawal of the Greek state in the short term will affect the operation of the schools in the long term and after a period of adaptation that they will raise their standards. This falls in line with the general educational reform policy of the MoE which aims to decentralise the Greek education system through the devolution of responsibility to local communities and their schools. This also falls in line with the international educational developments where schools and other

⁵ The Greek community schools unlike the pure Greek schools have been established by the communities themselves and not by the Greek state

learning organisations are encouraged to develop their own teaching and management policies in order to improve their educational outcome. Furthermore local teaching staff as being more familiar with the communities and more aware of their needs can prove equally effective with those detached from Greece or Cyprus.

Concerning the pure Greek schools and their transformation into bilingual schools which will follow the curriculum of the host country, it seems to be in the right direction given that minority monolingual schools marginalise rather than contribute towards the smooth integration of minority pupils in the wider community.

Overall I think the partial withdrawal of the official Greek state from supporting the small Greek community schools wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing as the current socio-economic conditions internationally support the decentralisation and devolution of authority as a raising standards factor. Concerning the financial element the majority of the Greek community schools (at least in the UK) have the potential of becoming self sufficient.

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