



Democracy and leadership in the educational system of Cyprus

Petros Pashiardis

Department of Education, University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

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Abstract *Life is lived in an era characterised by complexity and instability. Pedagogical ideals or educational goals are usually determined based on the socio-political and cultural period in which people find themselves at a specific point in its history. Then, in what ways do people train their principals to be models of and act in line with those democratic values and ideals that aim at fostering good citizens? Furthermore, how do these goal statements fare in relation to the moral purpose of schools and especially focus on the social goals of schools? These and similar issues are dealt with in this paper. More specifically, there is a description of the major restructuring initiatives towards school empowerment and democracy introduced in the Cyprus education system. Further, an attempt is made in order to show how these changes have affected (or not) the education system with respect to personnel management, the power of the centre, democracy and the curriculum, and democracy and inspection.*

Introduction

We live in an era characterised by complexity and instability. Continuous change is the only factor that remains stable in our era. During the last few decades, we have witnessed numerous developments in every area of the human enterprise, with the economic and scientific-technological achievements receiving the lion's share. We have also witnessed vast demographic changes, state interdependence and globalisation, knowledge expansion and universal problems (Pashiardis, 1997a).

Educational organisations, being open, social systems interacting with, and depending on their environment, are the direct recipients of any innovations (sometimes they are also the initiators of these innovations). Changes in the social environment, inevitably have a tremendous impact on education such as increased demands for effectiveness and quality in education which are the result of three main trends:

- (1) recent developments in the educational and psychological sciences;
- (2) an increase in monetary expenses and bigger investment in education; and
- (3) increased accountability demands by parents and society at large for the provision of quality education (Pashiardis, 1996).

As a result, educational organisations need to adapt to contemporary trends and demands.

Pedagogical ideals or educational goals are usually determined based on the socio-political and cultural period at which a people find itself at a specific point of its history. These pedagogical ideals are usually transformed during the various historical eras. Therefore, every society forms a number of goals that contain at least the following three basic elements which are as follows:

- (1) an interpretation of the socio-political milieu that exists in the particular society;



- (2) an idea about the position of the youth and their role in this particular moment of history; and
- (3) a projection as to how the socio-political system and society at large will be further transformed in the future.

At the same time, these educational goals need to give an idea about the youth's role in the formation of this future stage of society. Therefore, nowadays, educational goals or ideals need to offer the following three elements to the new generation:

- (1) a general direction of orientation and cultural identity to the young people and at the same time convert them into critical thinking persons;
- (2) experiences of democratic processes early on in their education, thus creating members of society with autonomous and democratic thinking;
- (3) people with free and critical thinking who are educated in the scientific method of inquiry and who are able to act in a wise and creative way in society.

Moreover, there are mission statements in different laws and other policy documents that describe the purpose of schools. Most of those statements contain two goals:

- (1) passing on knowledge from one generation to the next, and
- (2) the upbringing of good and harmonious citizens who shall be able to take over and continue to develop our democratic societies.

Based on the above, in ancient Greece there used to be the "heroic" ideal during periods of war, the "agricultural" ideal during periods of peace, the "democratic" ideal during the era of democracy, the "theocratic" (or metaphysical or religious) ideal during the Byzantine era (the ideal was to reach god), etc. During the more recent European history, we have Rousseau and his individualistic ideal and we also have Durkheim and his social ideal and then, the Humboltian Humanistic ideal (Humanismus). This is the main ideal that the education system of Cyprus pursues today, at least in theory. This ideal is a combination of the ancient Greek spirit as well as teachings of Christianity. Based on these two pillars, the humanistic ideal has been developed for the education system of Cyprus, which states that:

The general aim of the Greek Cypriot Education System is to create free, democratic, and autonomous citizens who have a well-rounded personality, they are healthy, honest, creative and contribute through their work to the social, scientific, economic and cultural advancement of their country and to the promotion of cooperation, understanding and love among peoples with the aim to have freedom, justice and peace, and definitely pursue the freedom of their country, having in mind the Greek identity and the Christian Orthodox tradition.

Then, in what ways do we train our principals to be models of and act in line with those democratic values that aim at fostering good citizens? Furthermore, how do these goal statements fair in relation to the moral purpose of schools and especially focus on the social goals of schools? These and similar other issues will be dealt with in this paper. In essence, we will try to examine how the main (theoretical) educational goal of the Cyprus Educational System, as presented above, is transformed into practice (if at all), through the way in which the schools are managed and governed, and through the way in which school principals are trained and prepared for their new posts.

However, initially, the context of Cyprus and its educational system should be placed in the forefront so that the reader can gain an understanding of the educational context in Cyprus.

A brief description of the social, political and economic circumstances of Cyprus

Cyprus is an island in the northeastern part of the Mediterranean with a total area of 9,251 km². As of 2003 the estimated population was 800,000 with an ethnic composition of 80 per cent Greek Cypriots, 17 per cent Turkish Cypriots, 3 per cent foreign residents, and a few Maronites, Armenians, and Latins. These figures do not include Turkish settlers and military personnel, estimated at 85,000 and 40,000, respectively, who have moved into the Turkish-occupied areas since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. At that time one-third of the Greek population (about 200,000 persons) were expelled from their homes in the northern part of the island and were forced to resettle in the southern areas.

The economy of the island depends on agriculture and tourism, which may be regarded as the major economic factors of Cyprus. Indeed tourism (and in general the service sector) account for about 70 per cent of the island's economic activity.

A description of the educational system

In 1960, Cyprus became an independent state. The provisions of the independence agreements placed education under two parallel Communal Chambers, one for the Greek Community and one for the Turkish Community. In 1965, all administrative functions of the Greek Communal Chamber were transferred to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry was (and still is) responsible for all Greek schools, and for the schools of all the other ethnic groups, which aligned themselves with the Greek Cypriot Community. Our discussion throughout this paper pertains only to the schools supervised by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cyprus. The Ministry of Education is the policy-making and administrative body of the Government for education. It prescribes syllabi, curricula and textbooks. It regulates and supervises all institutions under its jurisdiction. Appointments, secondments, transfers, promotions and discipline of all teaching personnel and the Inspectorate of the Public Education System are the responsibility of the Educational Service Commission, a five-member independent body, appointed by the President of the Republic for a period of six years.

The public education system in Cyprus is highly centralised, with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) responsible for the implementation of educational laws, the preparation of new legislation, the financing of schools. Private schools raise their funds primarily from tuition and fees along with some government assistance. They are administered by voluntary bodies or private individuals but are supervised by the Ministry. Education is provided in pre-primary, primary[1], general secondary, technical and vocational secondary schools and in special schools. Children begin free, compulsory, primary education during their sixth year. About 95 per cent of elementary school children attend public schools and about 5 per cent attend private ones, with 67 per cent of the students enrolled in urban schools and 33 per cent in rural schools. Public primary education has been free and compulsory since 1962.

Secondary education is pursued in public and private schools. Public secondary education extends over six years and is divided into two cycles: the lower, which is

called the *Gymnasium*, with pupils between 12 to 15 years old, and the upper, *Eniaio Lykeio*, with pupils between 15 to 18 years old. The lower cycle is free and compulsory, while the upper one is free but not compulsory. The lyceum comprises Grades 10 to 12. Enrolments in public schools account for about 88 per cent and in private schools for about 12 per cent. Some 65 per cent of secondary school leavers attend tertiary institutions either in Cyprus or abroad, mainly Greece, the UK and the USA.

A description of the major restructuring initiatives towards school empowerment and democracy introduced in the Cyprus educational system

Currently, the main philosophies that underpin the education system in Cyprus are that:

- (1) of centralisation of powers; and
- (2) of seniority within the system.

Power emanates mainly from the Ministry of Education through the Inspectorate and the schools and their principals are obliged to obey without really questioning the system and its authority. The second main philosophy is the one that tells everybody that they need to be patient and eventually (usually sometime before retirement) they will reach higher administrative positions within the educational bureaucracy. However, the education system in Cyprus was not always so centralized. Indeed, under the British rule of the island (1878-1959) it went through various eras of centralization and decentralization. Initially, the system was very decentralized and the local communities had almost total control as to which they employed as teachers, how much they paid them and for how long they employed them. There were School Councils, Community Councils and District Councils as well as the Education Council for the whole island. In any case, the Education system of the island was separate for the two communities (Greek and Turkish) and quite autonomous till October 1931 (Spyridakis, 1952). In October 1931, when the Greek-Cypriots rebelled against the British rule and burnt down the British Governor's house in Nicosia, the British Administration imposed a new law in 1933 (Education Law No. 18 of 27 May 1933) taking complete control of the island's education system. That law reiterated that the British Governor of Cyprus had total command and authority for the provision of elementary education in Cyprus. As mentioned before, the Ministry of Education was created in 1965 and all the centralized structures that were created by the British Administration were kept in place. Indeed, as the UNESCO (1997) auditors argued in their report on the Cyprus Educational system, three themes can be underlined that probably formulate the philosophy and values on which this system operates.

Money

The system is very centralised and everything needs to go through the Director of Primary or Secondary Education, respectively, within the Ministry of Education. For everything there has to be a written authorisation. School principals cannot handle money; not a single cent. As school principals often mention, the country trusts them with the education of its children but it does not trust them with handling even small sums of money. Therefore, democracy is at a minimum when this aspect of school management is examined, as principals have many responsibilities but are not given the money or the authority to exercise these responsibilities.

Personnel management

Furthermore, one of the biggest obstacles in being an effective school and creating a distinct school culture and ethos is that the principals have no say for the appointment of personnel to their school. Teachers are sent to them by the Education Service Commission and the Ministry of Education and school principals have to work with them. Thus, another aspect of democracy and leadership in schools is minimized as school leaders in Cyprus have no say with regards to the personnel of their school. On the contrary, these teachers are rotated at will every two-three years from one school to the next based on bureaucratic regulations that have little to do with the proper functioning of a school. This is what can be called “playing the musical chairs game” in the Cyprus educational system.

The power of the centre

The third theme, running strongly through the others, is the power of the Ministry of Education and the lack of power of the principal at the school level. Many principals nowadays argue both that the principal should have greater authority and that the school should be more autonomous in order to achieve more democratization and participation in the everyday running of the school. As it is indicated through findings from effective schools research (even in Cyprus), leadership has an essential role in the life of a school. “A school’s leadership is its heart and soul” (Pashiardis, 1993, p. 27). However, teachers in public schools continue to be appointed, transferred, and promoted by the Educational Service Commission. School Inspectors from the Ministry of Education visit schools at all levels and offer consultations, advice and supervision. School evaluation is also their responsibility. In-service education for primary school teachers is not mandatory after their university years. For secondary school teachers the only mandatory training is a one-year programme (taken at the Pedagogical Institute in co-operation with the University of Cyprus) prior to appointment to their first teaching post. The Pedagogical Institute and the Ministry of Education offer a variety of professional development programmes for teachers. These usually consist of ongoing guidance from inspectors and principals and are taken on a voluntary basis during afternoons and after the school day. No organized, compulsory and systematic in-service training takes place after appointment to the education service.

Another distinct feature of the centralized system of Cyprus is the system through which teaching personnel are promoted to higher ranks. Teachers can be promoted to a Deputy Principal (or Assistant Principal, the two terms are used with the same meaning in Cyprus), and Principal. There is no specific pre-service training programme designed for becoming qualified for the post of Deputy Principal or Principal. The procedure of promotions is based on the following:

- (1) on seniority;
- (2) an assessment by the Inspectorate;
- (3) additional academic qualifications; and
- (4) an interview with the Education Service Commission.

The Inspectors’ evaluation on one hand and seniority on the other carries a considerable weight. Teacher evaluations improve with seniority and age and, therefore, the result is that older teachers are mostly the ones promoted. Based on the above, appointment to a Deputy Principal post occurs when primary and secondary

school teachers are (usually) between 45 and 50 years of age, respectively. A recently completed UNESCO (1997) national review of education revealed that in the appointment and promotion of teachers to assistant/deputy principals and principals “the principal criterion is age and seniority...competence in performing the work is scarcely taken into account...” (UNESCO, 1997, pp. 56-8).

For secondary general education, there are two different job descriptions for Deputy Principals. There are Deputy Principals who are responsible for administrative matters and there are others who act as co-ordinators of the subject areas taught who are also called coordinators of specialization (something like a Head of Department). The selection of coordinators is made among the Deputy Principals and is not permanent. Then, a Deputy Principal can become a Principal. Again, the main criterion for the promotion is age and seniority with slight adjustments for additional qualifications. Appointments to the Principalship occur not long before retirement age (which is 60 years currently). Then, Principals and Deputy Principals can be promoted to Inspectors. Promotion to inspector at the secondary level requires at least a Masters Degree in a particular subject or in education (Pashiardis and Ribbins, 2003).

School leaders' authority in Cyprus (Principals, Deputy Principals)

As mentioned previously, school principals have no responsibility with regard to the appointment of their staff, the selection of textbooks, the setting of examinations and the development of their own curricula because of the centralised system of education in Cyprus. It can be inferred that democracy is at its minimum when one regards the way schools are staffed and managed. In fact, Cypriot Principals' main functions revolve around routine administrative matters (OELMEK, 1999) or *administrivia* (Pashiardis, 2001). They direct and supervise Deputy Principals and coordinators and delegate roles and responsibilities to them. When it comes to money, again, principals have no authority to handle any amount of it. Written authorisation must be obtained by the director of primary or secondary education within the Ministry for most of the functions and activities organised at the school level. The principals are in a continuous co-operation with the Ministry, the church, the School Committees, the parents' association, the pupils' union, the Counselling and Careers Guidance service and other welfare agencies both within and outside the Ministry of Education. They are responsible for developing a collaborative climate in the school. They supervise teaching staff, technicians, and ancillary staff. They also encourage staff towards staff development activities. They attend and observe teachers' lessons and try to evaluate them, albeit not in any organised fashion or with any particular instrument.

Deputy Principals are “middle managers” in the administrative structure of the school organisation. Deputy Principals play supporting roles for the Principal by handling school discipline matters and routine administration tasks such as, timetable changes, pupils' standards of work, attendance record keeping, implementation of school examinations and arrangement of educational visits and overseas journeys (OELMEK, 1999). Coordinators are responsible for implementing and delivering the curriculum and for developing departmental policy on issues such as the direction of homework and the assessment of pupils (Papayianni, 1993). However, all of the above functions are discharged in a strictly regulated environment with little room to deviate from what is required by the Ministry of Education.

Based on the above description of government policies and the duties of principals, deputy principals, etc., it becomes obvious that, the notions of self-management at the

school level, decentralisation and democracy are non-existent in Cyprus or exist at a very low level. As mentioned previously, the system is highly centralised and regulated and schools have to operate within the close control of the Ministry of Education and the District Education Offices that are staffed by School Inspectors. Therefore, no other specific mention can be made with regards to the issue of school autonomy and school democracy.

Democracy and the curriculum

Each department at the Ministry of Education (i.e. primary, secondary, technical) has its own curriculum development unit even though recently there was an effort to create only one unit, which would be responsible for all levels of public education. In fact, this unit became a single operating entity as of 2002. The same curriculum is applied to all schools in Cyprus in both primary and secondary (national curriculum). At school level, there is no flexibility for curriculum changes except when teachers take their own initiative to create papers and handouts for the enrichment of the education process. All modifications to the curriculum, if necessary, come as a direct result of policy decisions emanating from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Democracy and inspection

Each education department in the Ministry has its own team of Inspectors (about 40 inspectors in primary and about 45 inspectors in secondary), which inspects teachers, Deputy Principals and Principals during a wider inspection for the whole school the so-called general inspection. In essence, these whole school inspections will give the principal a grade based on which the principal may be promoted to inspector.

Inspections for newly appointed teachers are supposed to be done twice a year until they become permanent civil servants. Then, inspection becomes erratic, and not so important until the 12th year of service for a particular teacher when (by law) the teacher must be inspected in order to earn a grade for promotion, which usually happens around the 18th-20th year of service in the education system. Recently, teachers at the elementary level have been promoted even as early as during their 15th year of service, but this is due to periodic cycles because of retirements and not to any structural changes in the system.

Furthermore, Inspectors take part in curriculum development activities, the production of textbooks, the identification of other curricular resources, the setting up of examinations for the school-leaving certificate and for the University entrance examinations. In a sense, Inspectors act as a link between the Ministry and the individual school units. They are the policy implementation unit for the Ministry of Education. Although their role is over-encompassing and very important for the functioning of the educational system, they generally lack the necessary training and other qualifications to successfully exercise their duties.

The lasting effect: has democracy in Cyprus schools been implemented?

Unfortunately, there are numerous examples of policy changes and policy implementation at the national level, where those who need to implement them do not know or have not been informed about the content of the changes. The usual approach in Cyprus is for all educational innovations to be introduced in the top-down approach without the knowledge of those who will need to implement them. The most

recent example is the decision for the development and introduction of national standards in the education system of Cyprus. Initially, when the whole effort began, not even the Ministry inspectors knew about this development. Only a handful of persons who developed the ideas and the (then) Minister of Education himself were cognizant about this new development. In short, the policy-making role of school administrators in Cyprus is non-existent, as they do not help formulate policy, but are merely called upon to implement it once it has been decided. Therefore, one could argue that there is no democratic process in place through which innovations are introduced and/or implemented.

As indicated through research worldwide, the most important catalyst for the introduction of innovations and empowerment at the school level, is the school unit's leadership, i.e. the principal, assistant principals, etc. Unfortunately, even at this level, the Cyprus education system has not done much in order to empower principals and provide them with the tools necessary to lead and introduce change at the school level in a democratic way. Even the way in which school principals are selected indicates that other motives are behind this process and certainly motives that have nothing to do with democracy or meritocracy.

Selection and appointment to the principalship: waiting in line

It is interesting to note that very few attempts have been made to examine systematically the views of principals on the island about how they are promoted to the post as well as the extent to which they feel empowered to do their job. Such attempts were undertaken by Pashiardis (1995; 1997b) who used a questionnaire to investigate primary and secondary school principals, and Pashiardis and Orphanou (1999), drawing on a gap-analysis technique. In a more recent research project, Pashiardis and Ribbins (2000; 2003) found very interesting notions among the principals themselves about the way first appointments and promotions to the principalship are currently made in Cyprus. Limitations of space preclude a full treatment of the "long climb". What is evident is that most principals share the concerns of the UNESCO authors and few were reluctant to criticize the system, which has created and sustains this situation. For instance, in the Pashiardis and Ribbins (2000; 2003) project, one of the principals told us, "I have never had a career plan". In this she was a representative. None of the participating principals regarded themselves as working to a career plan designed to lead to a principalship at the earliest opportunity.

Indeed, selection methods for educational leaders in the Cyprus system are either obsolete or non-existent. "Impressionistic measurements such as simple interviews and application forms lack the power and accuracy to assess the desired characteristics of prospective leaders" (Hoy and Miskel, 1996, p. 398). What is really needed is the introduction of improved selection methods and the readjustment of job description qualifications, in order to comply with the current needs of our educational system. In essence, we need radical reforms. The selection of potential educational leaders could be done through assessment centres, which, according to Hoy and Miskel (1996), enable the identification of individuals displaying the personality traits and the motivation to lead. It cannot be argued that assessment centres are a panacea. However, "they do promise to create personnel selection practices that are based on more sound scientific evidence" (Pashiardis, 1993, p. 34). Based on the above, one can note that there is a vast potential for restructuring and democratization in the way of personnel selection and promotion in the education system of the island in order to empower schools at the

school level. For instance, the whole process could be decentralized with the abolition of the Education Service Commission and the development of several different commissions on an *ad hoc* basis through which promotions could be made. The available posts could be advertised and the new principals could be hired through a combination of the assessment centre process as well as other ways.

Preparing for the principalship in Cyprus: waiting your turn

A practically non-existing system of leaders' selection and preparation can be seen as the black hole of the Cyprus education system. Even though research findings emphasise the advantages of pre-appointment training (McHugh and McMullan, 1995), at present, few, if any, potential leaders receive training, which adequately prepares them for leadership responsibilities. Some of them acquire graduate degrees in educational administration in either the UK or the US or Cyprus, as of 1997. The majority of school principals are prepared to assume their position through an apprenticeship model. Interestingly, according to recent research (Pashiardis, 1998; Pashiardis and Orphanou, 1999), conducted among primary school principals in Cyprus, most of them believe in the trait theory of leadership, and that, at the same time, there is a felt need to improve in areas such as professional growth and development, and personnel management. These findings reflect the inadequacy in the preparation (or lack thereof) procedures of educational leaders in Cyprus. For most principals in Cyprus when first appointed it is essentially a matter of sink or swim. They have no formal training for their first principalship. The Ministry of Education offers a few induction seminars through the Pedagogical Institute but even those short courses and seminars that are available are not found to be helpful. For some principals a beneficial source of training is the good fortune of having worked with good and supportive principals and the chance that this gives to learn from them. Perhaps the most interesting view is that, in Cypriot education, there is really no such thing as preparing for a post. You wait for your turn. You are interviewed by the Educational Service Commission. You are appointed or not as the case may be. Then, the principal is usually not informed of the school into which he or she will be placed until shortly before the time to take up the new post. This makes preparation, particularly for a beginning principal, unnecessarily difficult. Another concern is that usually in order to be promoted you have to belong to the correct political party. As one principal concluded in reflecting on the system as a whole: "It must change". This is a view that the UNESCO auditors evidently share:

Personnel management is a major weakness ... perhaps the greatest weakness [of the educational system in Cyprus]. Neither the method of appointing teachers for the secondary sector nor the promotion system ... focused on the needs of the education system... (UNESCO, 1997, p. 58).

Just recently, in 1997, the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus has initiated a graduate programme in the disciplines of educational administration and curriculum development, apart from the aforementioned *post hoc* training programmes and short courses for principals. Such efforts are highly promising, however they must be intensified, expanded and enriched. Simultaneously, research programmes investigating the influence of our culture in educational leadership must be designed. Actors such as the Department of Education of the University of Cyprus and the Pedagogical Institute could do it through close collaboration. According to

Pashiardis (1996), research between the two institutions can contribute to the successful resolution of challenges for the educational system of Cyprus. Research concerning educational leadership within our cultural context is definitely necessary in order to prepare our leaders in the best possible way. This kind of research should be intensive, diagnostic, and developmental, in order to predict the needs, and develop new approaches to educational leadership. It should also be critical and evaluative in order to place existing theories under scrutiny and absorb functional ideas and practices.

Another effort which was introduced very recently, is that the Secondary Education Directorship in the Ministry of Education began thinking of ways to offer at least some training for the management staff (principals and assistant principals) in the areas of school autonomy and school improvement, planning, participative decision making, and culture-building at the school level. This is just a beginning albeit in the right direction. Through the empowerment of these school officials, it is possible that the education system will move towards more decentralization, democratisation and autonomy at the school level once the school leaders are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to lead their schools towards new directions.

Moreover, increased accountability is expected as a result of the forthcoming introduction of national standards, which will, undoubtedly, change the educational setting in Cyprus. There is a pressing need for courageous political decisions and reforms to confront the challenges of our times. Thus, the new millennium signals the necessity for new moral leadership and more democratic autonomy in our schools, as evidence of the past 50 years is consistent in pointing out the importance of quality leadership and local control in order to have successful schools (Creissen and Ellison, 1998).

Following current trends in school empowerment and school autonomy

Undoubtedly current trends in the field of educational leadership and accountability favour the empowered school unit and the need for skilful educational leaders who can cope with the multifaceted character of schooling. Decentralisation, democratization and site-based management is a major trend nowadays regardless of the fact that they have not been proven more successful, with regards to student achievement as of yet (Bimber, 1994). Decentralisation entails that the authorities entrust the school site with a number of responsibilities favouring the creation of the self-managing school.

Willingness of authorities to share power is a necessary prerequisite for successful decentralisation. As Reynolds (1997) argues, "site-based management is perceived as a "bottom-up" strategy for change, but its success requires leadership and supportive change from the top" (Reynolds, 1997, p. 23). The management team of the school including the principal, teachers, parents and sometimes students and other community members should be afforded release time to improve the quality of educational programmes of their school unit, and in order to participate in meaningful ways to the everyday running of their schools.

Such an evolution in the Cyprus educational system would bring parents and society closer to the real school life. The accountability movement demands the provision of quality education and thus, makes collaboration among all stakeholders necessary. Parents and other stakeholders should be an integral part of the school management team. It cannot be argued that site-based management or other

decentralisation practices are a panacea. However, given the highly centralised character of the Cyprus education system, a careful step towards decentralisation and more democracy, might be the starting point for the creation of a healthier educational system. Indeed, given the current situation of the educational system in Cyprus, decentralisation, democratization and site-based management seem to be radical practices. However, the power of unionism, conservatism and the centralisation of the educational system make the idea of devolution of power seem utopian.

Concluding remarks

Now that education has just entered the new millennium, contemporary educational needs necessitate that the structures at the school level be redesigned and modified in a way that will reflect these new needs and guarantee further democratization and improvement in the years to come. Obviously the bureaucratic and highly centralised structure of the Cyprus educational system is ineffective and must be abandoned. Principals must be motivated towards self-improvement and school improvement. It would seem logical for such motivation to be offered to teachers also in order to create an attitude fostering self-improvement among all teachers, since the current teacher evaluation and promotion system does not seem likely to face any imminent change.

Principals are very important to the education enterprise and their preparation, evaluation and overall treatment must be dealt with accordingly. Change in educational matters becomes manageable if there are principals who can manage change. At the same time, no change in the educational scene can be successful unless, certain issues about principals' work and their preparation are modified as well, in order to become more democratic. We cannot profess that our educational goals purport to promote democracy, and then practice tyranny. As long as this is the *modus operandi* in Cyprus, then we create feelings of dissonance among the various participants of the education process.

It is imperative that selection methods, evaluation, preparation, and professional development of educational leaders draw substantial attention by those concerned with the improvement of educational provision in every country and that educational leaders become central figures to any efforts towards empowerment and further democratization. It seems that in Cyprus we urgently need to make gigantic steps forward in structural and organizational reforms so that existing drawbacks do not constrain the educational system from successfully encountering current changes in a democratic way. Principals should be flexible enough to allow teachers to take part in rational problem solving and be responsible for widely shared decision-making thus, putting into practice distributive, participatory and democratic processes. Teachers should not have to become principals to influence policy; they should have the opportunity to work with school administrators as partners and to share power in a democratic way. Principals' power derives from their staff; therefore, their competence in delegating responsibilities would reinforce their position within the organisation they lead. Furthermore, principals should always remember that only those who are qualified for the post are accepted and respected by their staff.

In lieu of a conclusion, given the accession of Cyprus in the European Union, the current educational system should be harmonised with European and global educational practices (such as inclusion, equality and democracy), albeit paying close attention to the local culture and character of Cyprus Education. In view of this development, tensions between local and European elements and other forces are

expected to emerge. However, Cyprus, as a member of the multi-cultural European Union, should have the necessary readiness to respond to the challenge of multicultural education. During the 21st century, educational institutions will have to become multicultural in their perspectives and values given that Cyprus society has been confronted with unprecedented diversity in its population during the last decade. Many groups of foreign peoples either emigrate or come to Cyprus for short-term periods to work. Consequently, students with diverse cultural profiles, colour, religion and language needs, are already enrolled in our schools. It is the school's duty to provide an educational environment that will be effective for all students, regardless of their background. However, in order for schools to be able to do that, they need to be empowered and become more democratic to the greatest extent possible within the boundaries of a national educational system. I would argue that the educational leaders who will be able to produce this kind of courageous leadership need to use their emotions, feelings and sense of egalitarianism in their management style even more so that they could probably do today. This was a recurrent quality that was evident in a piece of research I recently concluded with Cypriot school principals. Therefore, one would be tempted to say that MBFE must become our philosophy: Management By Feelings and Emotions (Pashiardis, 1998). Actually, it was interesting that what are often and wrongly described as "female" qualities (such as caring, sharing, crying, showing emotions and feelings), was evident in all 49 principals (both male and female) interviewed in that particular piece of research. In any case, the word "leadership", in Greek (ηγεσία-igesia) is a female noun and, therefore, one would be correct in arguing that leadership is a term that could be described with (mostly) what are (wrongly) regarded as "female" qualities in our society. It seems that one characteristic that these principals had in common was the exaggerated humane and emotional characteristics that they exhibited. Perhaps, more research is needed in this particular area to uncover more information about the validity of these findings. In case they are validated, then, some rethinking of our courses in educational management programs should take place as well. The preparation of principals is very important business or, as one principal put it, "the principal is the beginning and the end or the Alpha and the Omega for a school". This is the main way in which educational leaders can assist our students best. And I stress students because we need to remember that schools exist because we have students who need to learn and not because we have teachers and educational leaders who need a job.

Note

1. In this context the terms "primary" and "elementary" are used interchangeably. They refer to the schooling of pupils from age 6 to 11. Pupils in secondary and technical schools are approximately from age 12 to 18.

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