

A Longitudinal Qualitative Study of the Teaching of Greek as a Second Language in Western Australia under the “Seconded Teachers from Greece Scheme”

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The “Seconded Teachers from Greece Scheme” (STGS) has been operating in Australia since 1977. Its concern has been with the maintenance and promotion of the Greek language and culture through the secondment of teachers and the supply of material resources from Greece. However, there has been no substantial research to date on its progress in Western Australia (WA). The qualitative study that was undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Education from the University of Western Australia aimed to address this deficit. Specifically, the study aimed to generate theory regarding how the key stakeholders “dealt with” the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language in WA under the STGS. It is this theory that will be the main focus of this paper. Mention will also be made of the implications of the study for the development of policy and practice, as well as for future research.

Central aim and definitions

The central aim of the study was to develop theory regarding how the key stakeholders “dealt with” the curriculum for teaching Modern Greek (Greek) as a second language under the “Seconded Teachers from Greece Scheme” (STGS) in Western Australia (WA).¹ The author of this study devised the term “Seconded Teachers from Greece Scheme” to refer, in a succinct way, to the Greek government’s “Scheme” of seconding teachers abroad, and to its efforts to foster and promote Greek education in the diaspora. Baltatzis (2003) defined the STGS as being an agreement between Greece

¹ The study being referred to is the doctoral thesis by Angela Evangelinou-Yiannakis, 2009, *A Longitudinal Qualitative Study of the Teaching of Greek as a Second Language in Western Australia under the “Seconded Teachers from Greece Scheme”*. Unpublished EdD Thesis, The University of Western Australia.

and countries where Greek migration exists, for Greek education to be promoted through the supply of human and material resources.

The use of the term “dealt with” in the central aim of the study was in the sense in which it has meaning for a symbolic interactionist. It is, in this sense, a “shorthand” way of asking, what are the patterns that can be detected over a particular period of time from an investigation of:

- The perspectives which the participants have on a phenomenon at the outset;
- How the participants act in the light of their perspectives; and
- The changes, if any, which take place in the participants’ perspectives as a result of their actions. (O’Donoghue, 2007:33)

Perspectives, in turn, can be defined as having four major components, namely, the aims or intentions of the participants, their strategies, what they see as being significant for them, and what they see as the expected outcomes of their activity (O’Donoghue, 2007:39). Also, importance was attached to exploring the reasons participants gave regarding their position on each of these components.

The paradigm underpinning the study is that of interpretivism which emphasises social interaction as the basis of knowledge. The related theoretical perspective which was chosen to frame the study is symbolic interactionism and the methodology chosen was grounded theory because of its association with this perspective. Also, the research methods were document study, semi-structured interviews, and participant and non-participant observation; all of which are consistent with the paradigm, the related theoretical perspective, and the methodology.

The background

The Greek presence in Australia can be traced back almost to the beginning of European settlement (Tsounis, 1975; Yiannakis, J. N., 1996:vii).² Gilchrist (1992) has dated the Greek presence as far back as 1829. Western Australian records indicate that Greeks were living in WA during the 1840s and 1850s. However, Antoni Fossilo is the only Greek in WA whose life can be traced and documented from 1870 onward. The first process of chain migration from the island of Castellorizo, Greece, commenced in the mid-1890s.

In 1912, the Castellorizian Brotherhood was formed, followed by the Hellenic Community of WA which was formed in 1923 and which took charge of local Greek affairs. The Greek-Macedonian “Alexander the Great” Association was established in 1930 (Yiannakis, J. N., 2001:406–407; Appleyard & Yiannakis, J. N., 2002:121). The church of Sts Constantine and Helene, Perth’s first Greek Orthodox Church, was

² Yiannakis, J. N., quoted throughout this paper, is not the present writer (Evangelinou-Yiannakis, A., quoted as Yiannakis, A.). To distinguish between the two, initials have been used.

consecrated in 1937. At this time, further migration was taking place. In 1959, the Greek Orthodox Community of Evangelismos in West Perth was established and by 1971, a second Greek Orthodox Church, Evangelismos (The Annunciation of Our Lady), was consecrated.

By the 1990s a further wave of migration of Greeks took place, this time from South Africa, Cyprus and the eastern states of Australia. Perth's Greek community was now a thriving and diversified one. Within 140 years since the settlement of the first Greeks in WA, Greeks had established associations and venues for the maintenance of their language and traditions as well as their Greek Orthodox faith (Yiannakis, J. N., 2001).

One of the most important objectives for the Greeks living in Australia became the education of their children. This was followed closely by a desire to maintain their language, culture, religion, heritage and traditions. These driving forces became evident over the years in the push for the teaching of Modern Greek. In 1915, the first after-hours Greek School was established (Appleyard & Yiannakis, 2002). After 1924, the Hellenic Community of WA assumed responsibility for the Greek School, supplying teachers, some qualified and some not. Today, the Hellenic Community Greek School is attached to St. Andrew's Greek Orthodox Grammar School (St. Andrew's Grammar), and its activity is referred to as the "Greek Studies Part-time Programme". It remains the oldest running after-hours establishment in WA for the teaching of the Greek language and culture (Yiannakis, A., 2001).

As the demographics of the immigrant population changed after World War II, so did the demands and expectations of Greece and Australia-born Greeks. The existing facility of after-hours tuition in Greek was no longer the ideal situation and many Australia-born Greek youths resented having to attend after-hours classes to learn a language they no longer considered useful in their everyday lives. Also, Australia's post-war assimilation policy tended to enhance negative sentiment toward learning a language other than English (LOTE). Nevertheless, Greek parents who had been through the after-hours language programme were now demanding something better for their children (Yiannakis, A., 2001).

Changes in educational policies across Australia from the 1970s, along with the Whitlam government's embracement of multiculturalism, began to influence thoughts of a better system of education for the children of immigrants who wished to maintain their language and culture and, in turn, their identity. As a result, from 1970 onwards, Greek was introduced at Perth's Central Technical College of Advanced and Further Education (TAFE), at The University of Western Australia (UWA), and at various secondary and primary schools in the metropolitan area. In addition to the Hellenic Community's after-hours Greek School, various other after-hours Greek Schools were also established. In 1991, the first Greek Orthodox Day School in WA was realised, and in 1996, Modern Greek was accepted as a Tertiary Entrance Examination (TEE) subject. Also, in 1999, Greek language courses were introduced at The University of Notre Dame in Fremantle, a suburb south of Perth (Yiannakis, A., 2001).

During the course of developments in the history of the teaching of Greek in WA, considered thus far, the Greek government became increasingly aware of the need to supply specialist teachers who could come to Australia to assist the locally-trained teachers with both their personal literacy skills in Greek, as well as with the teaching of the language and the culture. These seconded teachers were posted to Australia for a period of three to five years to fulfil these duties. Thus, they were to play a significantly important role in the development and progress of language maintenance in Australia (Baltatzis, 2003).

According to Arvanitis (2004), in 1977, three educational advisers were appointed to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra in order to support the teaching of the Greek language and culture. In 1979, the first educational agreement between Greece and Australia was signed. During this period, more than 60 primary and secondary school teachers were seconded from Greece to various parts of Australia.

The first seconded teacher from Greece to be appointed to WA was Mr Andreas Aidonis in 1983. He was appointed in a supervisory capacity to oversee the Greek language teaching programmes of all of the educational providers where Greek was taught at the time. Also, his brief was to provide professional development for the teachers of the Greek language in WA and to address the perceived growing needs of the Greek community in terms of the educational programmes on offer in the State. Since the departure of Aidonis and the arrival of more seconded teachers from Greece, a number of educational providers in WA where Greek has been offered, have been served by the STGS. Currently, there are four seconded teachers in Perth.

The literature

An overview of the literature locates this study within three bodies of associated research:

1. Language and second language acquisition theory and related definitions;
2. A review of national policy and practice regarding second-language acquisition, followed by a review of Western Australian policy and practice; and
3. A review of international, national, and local literature relating to the STGS.

Overall, these three categories of literature demonstrate the connection between second-language acquisition and language-teaching methodologies, teacher training in Greece and its relationship to the STGS in Australia, as well as the role of professional development and assistance that can be provided to the seconded teachers in their host country.

The method

As mentioned previously, this study was located within the interpretivist paradigm, with the theoretical position being that of symbolic interactionism, the methodology being grounded theory and the research methods being document study, semi-structured interviewing, and participant and non-participant observation. A total of 61 participants were interviewed. This included thirteen prospective seconded teachers bound for Australia or New Zealand. The researcher used her skills as a social being to try to understand how others understand their world (O'Donoghue, 2007). On this, Smith and Lovatt (1991) explain that the only way that one can plausibly demonstrate that one has understood something is through a verbal or written account and that, even then, there needs to be further negotiation between the speaker and the listener, or the reader and the writer so that the way that we come to know something is through negotiation of meaning through communication. Thus, Interpretivists set out to examine the meanings that phenomena have for people in their everyday settings (O'Donoghue, 2007).

In an interpretivist study like that reported here, the individual and society are viewed as being inseparable units. Accompanying this is the view that a complete understanding of one is not possible without a complete understanding of the other. A second, and related, basic premise that exists in the interpretivist paradigm is that because all interaction between human beings is meaningful, an understanding of the meanings that create and are created by interaction between human beings is essential to an understanding of the social world (O'Donoghue, 2007). Blackledge and Hunt (1985:234) outline the foundation pillars of this premise as follows:

1. Everyday activity is the building block of society and that society can be traced back to the way that people act in everyday life. Therefore, if we want to know about education and what changes may need to take place, we need to look at everyday activity within the field;
2. Everyday activity includes some freedom and autonomy influencing the way that people act on a day to day basis, including the roles that people assume and the day to day patterns of action;
3. Everyday activity nearly always involves a person interacting with other people so that people not only give meaning to their own actions but to the actions of others; and
4. Everyday activity involves a process of negotiation of meaning and, through this we come to modify our understandings and views.

Each of these four "foundation pillars" relate directly to symbolic interactionism which is a major theoretical position within the interpretivist paradigm.

According to Blumer (1969), there are three sociological assumptions within symbolic interactionism. The first of these is that human beings act towards phenomena

on the basis of the meanings or perspectives they have for them. The interaction between abstract and concrete phenomena and humans is shaped by culture and the situation in which the interaction occurs. Particular emphasis is placed on construction of meaning or perspective (Blumer, 1969:2).

The second premise of symbolic interactionism is that the meaning or perspective constructed by the individual arises out of interaction with other people. Thus, the meaning that an individual has about the world is created by the actions of other people. An alternative viewpoint is that meaning is acquired from one's experience of the world and, because one is constantly interacting with the world, that meaning may be confirmed, modified, reinforced or changed (Blumer, 1969:2).

The third premise of symbolic interactionism is that meanings are dealt with and modified through a process of interpretation. Individuals attach their own meanings to "things" and then they act towards them on the basis of these meanings. An individual selects the things that have meaning and then checks, suspends, regroups and transforms the meaning in the light of the situation in which one is placed and the direction in which one is headed (Blumer, 1969:2).

There is a distinct relationship between symbolic interactionism and the central guiding question, namely, "How did the key stakeholders 'deal with' the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA?". Perspectives are an integral part of the notion of "deal with", the central concept in this question. The nature of the relationship is explained within the next section of this paper. Here, however, it is important to keep in mind that "perspectives" are defined as being "frameworks by which people make sense of the world" (Woods, 1983:7). Charon (1989) elaborates on this. He states that perspectives are made up of words which are used by the observer to make sense out of a situation. As he sees it, the best definition of perspectives is a conceptual framework which emphasises that perspectives are really interrelated sets of words used to order physical reality. In this light, the interpretivist approach to research, and the symbolic interactionism that lies within that approach, helps to uncover people's perspectives on a phenomenon. By adopting this approach, the researcher reveals the perspectives behind empirical observations, the actions people take in light of their perspectives and the patterns which develop through the interaction of perspectives and actions over particular periods of time (O'Donoghue, 2007).

According to Blackledge and Hunt (1985), the frameworks by which people make sense of the world, in turn, have four interrelated strands, namely, intentions, strategies, significance and outcomes. In other words, when someone has a perspective on something, the framework which makes up that perspective consists of the interrelationship between the person's intentions regarding the "thing", the strategies they say they will use to realise their intentions, the significance they attach to their intentions and stated strategies, and the outcomes they expect from pursuing these intentions and strategies. Furthermore, they can give reasons for their intentions, strategies, significance system and expected outcomes.

The explanation in the previous paragraph explains why the central guiding question of the study was broken down into four sub-questions related to participants' intentions, strategies, significance and expected outcomes, and their reasons. Also, in the case of this particular study, it should be kept in mind that the word "strategies" does not just refer to teaching strategies, but also to anything participants may do, or the approach that they say they would use with regard to teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA.

Participants

The central aim of the study, it will be recalled, was translated into the following central guiding question: How did the key stakeholders "deal with" the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA? The key stakeholders included prospective seconded teachers from Greece, former and currently-serving seconded teachers and staff of the host schools in WA, and members of the Greek and wider community. The latter included the Greek government appointed Consul of Education for seconded teachers in South Australia (SA), WA, and the Northern Territory (NT); the Consul of Greece in WA; the president and members of the executive of the Hellenic Community Committee of WA, the School Board of the main host school, the president of the other major community organisation in Perth, namely, the Greek Orthodox Community of Evangelismos, and parents of the host schools. The total of participants interviewed for this study was 61. A description of these participants now follows.

Prospective seconded teachers from Greece

In June 2003, the researcher attended the week-long professional development course in Athens for prospective seconded teachers who were to be posted to countries abroad where Greek is taught. These teachers would assume their new teaching posts by the end of 2003 or the beginning of 2004. At this course, the researcher interviewed thirteen Australia-bound (their exact destination was unknown at that point in time) prospective seconded teachers, either individually or in small groups. The participants were enthusiastic and forthcoming with regard to their involvement in the study as they deemed it to be a reciprocal learning process before their departure to Australia. Their perspectives on the sub-guiding questions stated previously were sought, recorded, translated from Greek to English, and transcribed. These perspectives, held at the outset, assisted the researcher to generate theory on how they intended to "deal with" the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA.

Former and currently-serving seconded teachers and staff in host schools

Since 1983, when the first seconded teacher from Greece arrived in WA, a number of schools have played host to the STGS. Before the establishment of Perth's Greek

Orthodox Day School, St. Andrew's Greek Orthodox Grammar School (St. Andrew's Grammar) in 1991, the Hellenic Community's after-hours Greek School was the major host, as well as that of the Greek Orthodox Community of Evangelismos. Various government and independent primary and secondary schools in the metropolitan area, where Greek was offered as a second language through Insertion Classes, were also recipients of the services of the STGS. In more recent years, the following two educational providers are the main hosts of the STGS:

1. St. Andrew's Grammar and its after-hours Greek School (known as the "Greek Studies Part-time Programme"); and
2. The Evangelismos Saturday Morning Greek School.

All of the three currently-serving seconded teachers teach at St. Andrew's Grammar in Dianella, a northern suburb of Perth. Two of these seconded teachers also teach at the Evangelismos Saturday Morning Greek School. All three seconded teachers were participants in the study reported in this paper. Also, at the end of 2002 and prior to his departure, another seconded teacher participated in the study through a semi-structured interview. His views were retrospective in terms of his five-year experience in WA and he is referred to in the study as a "former" seconded teacher. Likewise, a member of the current Greek Studies staff at the main host school was, formerly, a seconded teacher. Following her five-year tenure in this capacity, she severed her ties with Greece and remained permanently in Australia. Therefore, she is also referred to as a "former" seconded teacher.

The perspectives of all five of these seconded teachers on the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS within the context of WA were explored either through semi-structured interviews, document study, and/or through the "hypothetical approach". Their actions in light of their perspectives and the changes, if any, that took place in their perspectives as a result of their actions, were noted through participant and non-participant observation and further discussion over an extended period of time.

Members of the staff of the main host school were also included in the study. Their perspectives were canvassed through semi-structured interviews in small groups, document study, the "hypothetical approach", and participant and non-participant observation. They included the principal and staff in senior managerial positions (Senior Management Team), members of the Greek Studies Day School and Part-time Programme staff, and members of the mainstream staff from all of the three sub-schools, namely, Junior School, Middle School and Senior School.

Semi-structured interviews for the stakeholder group referred to as the "former and currently-serving seconded teachers and staff in host schools" were conducted in the following groupings:

1. An out-going (former) seconded teacher following the completion of his five-year tenure at the main host school;

2. Two of the four currently-serving seconded teachers from Greece;
3. The Principal, Heads (previously Coordinators) of the Junior, Middle, and Senior Schools, and Bursar (referred to as the Senior Management Team);
4. Members of the Greek Studies Day School and Part-time Programme staff, along with the third currently-serving seconded teacher from Greece;
5. Members of the mainstream staff of the Junior, Middle, and Senior Schools (Group 1);
6. Members of the mainstream staff of the Middle and Senior Schools (Group 2);
7. Members of the mainstream staff of the Junior, Middle, and Senior Schools (Group 3); and
8. A former seconded teacher who, after her five-year tenure, became a permanent resident of Australia and remained at the host school.

The above-mentioned groupings allowed for a variety of view-points, in particular from the Greek Studies staff members who had direct experience with teaching Greek as a second language in the Australian educational context. The groupings also allowed more contact with the seconded teachers within the host school and their colleagues, namely, the mainstream staff. Furthermore, the groupings covered the other host school of the STGS, namely, the Evangelismos Saturday Morning Greek School, where two of the three seconded teachers offered their services.

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, the majority of the above-mentioned participants took part in the “hypothetical approach” which involved writing a letter to an imaginary relative in Greece. The hypothetical situation involved the aforementioned relative wanting to come to WA to teach Greek as a second language under the STGS. The participants of the “hypothetical approach” wrote to their relative explaining what he/she needed to know and what he/she needed to do before coming to WA, and the reasons why in order to teach the curriculum for Greek as a second language under the STGS. The letter writing took place before the semi-structured interviews, generating a great deal of data for the researcher.

Prior to, during, and after the letter writing and interview process, the researcher conducted a study of documents that included the programmes and lesson plans of the seconded teachers from Greece and the locally-trained teachers of the Greek language and culture at St. Andrew’s Grammar, as well as the study of related curricula, texts and resources. Participant and non-participant observation was also conducted over an extended period of time. This allowed for clarification to be sought from the participants where actions did not seem to match previously-stated intentions. It also allowed for confirmation of the changes, if any, which took place in the participants’ perspectives as a result of their actions.

Members of the Greek and wider community

The following participants were considered to be key stakeholders in this category. They were interviewed in the following groupings:

1. The Greek government appointed Consul of Education for seconded teachers in SA, WA, and the NT;
2. The Consul of Greece in WA;
3. The President, Vice President, and Treasurer of the Hellenic Community Committee of WA;
4. The President of the Greek Orthodox Community of Evangelismos;
5. The St. Andrew's Grammar School Board;
6. Parents of St. Andrew's Grammar Day School and Greek Studies Part-time Programme; and
7. Parents of the Evangelismos Saturday Morning Greek School.

The perspectives held by these participants on the phenomenon, at the outset, were noted through the semi-structured interviews. Their actions in light of their perspectives and the changes, if any, which took place in their perspectives as a result of their actions, were noted through participant and non-participant observation over an extended period of time. Document study also assisted in this regard.

In addition to the afore-mentioned participants, the researcher interviewed the Greek government appointed coordinator for seconded teachers from Greece in the primary school sector in Stuttgart, Germany, in 2005. As Germany is the recipient of the highest number of seconded teachers in the world, the author of this study deemed it valuable to conduct this interview.

While most participants were forthcoming, the least committing group was the parents. Various approaches were pursued, the most successful of which was the offer of interviews being conducted over Morning Tea. In this way, a wide range of parents was canvassed including parents of Greek and non-Greek descent:

1. Parents of both of the host schools, that is, the Day School and Greek Studies Part-time Programme of St. Andrew's Grammar;
2. Parents of the Evangelismos Saturday Morning Greek School;
3. Parents with children enrolled for many years at the host schools;
4. New parents;
5. Parents with previous experience of the STGS in places like Johannesburg, South Africa; and
6. Parents with children across the different year levels in the Day School of St. Andrew's Grammar.

In addition, many of the other participants in the study, such as School Board members or members of the mainstream staff, were also parents of children who had been, or were currently being taught by seconded teachers. At School Board level, for example, participants who wished to present their point of view “as a parent” because what they were about to say meant more to them in this capacity, did so freely by first announcing that they were going to do so in this capacity. The flagging of this other “role” assisted the researcher to code the data, at that point, as data belonging to a different group, that is, the Parent Group, Number Six.

Sixty-one participants were interviewed for this study. In all cases, the researcher felt that the perspectives of these key stakeholders were thoroughly canvassed and that saturation point was reached. The document study that was conducted was thorough and far-reaching in terms of assisting the researcher in understanding how the key stakeholders “dealt with” the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA. The participant and non-participant observation gave further insight into how the participants acted in light of their perspectives and helped to reveal the changes, if any, which took place in the participants’ perspectives as a result of their actions.

The main site at which most of the research was conducted was Perth’s sole Greek Orthodox Day School as it has been the main recipient of the services of the STGS in WA since 1991. Prior to this period the seconded teachers from Greece taught at the Hellenic Community’s after-hours Greek School, the Evangelismos Saturday Morning Greek School, and various primary and secondary government and independent schools in Perth where Modern Greek was taught. Therefore, research was also conducted at the Greek Consulate Office in Perth, at the Hellenic Community Centre, at the Evangelismos Saturday Morning Greek School, as well as in Greece and Germany. A summary of the perspectives of the participants is provided in this paper.

The theory

The central proposition generated from the data was that the key stakeholders on the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA held conflicting expectations at the outset and that, in doing so, they moved through three stages; the stage of idealism, the stage of conflict, and the stage of cooperation. While these three stages were quite distinct, the experiences of the participants were often carried over from one to the next. For example, while idealism was mostly evident in the first stage, it also existed in the second and third stages, acting as the driving force and motivation behind every-day activity. Similarly, conflict, while mostly evident in the second stage, was also occasionally present in the third stage. Also, while cooperation was mostly evident in the third stage, it was occasionally present in the previous stage, the stage of conflict.

The stage of idealism

The three key stakeholder groups in the study, namely, prospective seconded teachers from Greece, former and currently-serving seconded teachers and staff of the host schools in WA, and members of the Greek and wider community, held a set of expectations at the outset in terms of the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA. These expectations can be said to have been idealistic. Furthermore, because they were held over a period of time, the stakeholders can be said to have been in the stage of idealism. A further group also existed in relation to this stage only, namely, the authorities of the STGS in Greece.

A number of idealistic expectations were held by the prospective seconded teachers who participated in this study. Three main categories of expectations were identified:

1. They expected to be teaching only children of Greek background and they constructed their views of what would be involved in terms of teaching objectives and teaching approaches and methods accordingly;
2. They expected to have positive teaching experiences in Australia; and
3. They expected to benefit on a personal and professional level during their time in Australia.

Three categories were identified in terms of the idealistic expectations held by the authorities of the STGS of seconded teachers prior to their going abroad, and during their time abroad:

1. The authorities expected that the week-long professional development course held in Athens each year would be sufficient preparation for prospective seconded teachers, equipping them with all the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they would require before embarking on, and during their teaching experience;
2. They expected that the seconded teachers would cooperate fully with authorities in the host community and host school; and
3. The authorities expected that seconded teachers would work closely with their Greek government appointed coordinator and with the Institute for the Education of Greeks Abroad and Intercultural Education (IPODE) while abroad.

Idealistic expectations on the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA were also held by all of the other main stakeholder groups, namely, the staff of the main host school and members of the Greek and wider community. Three categories of expectations were identified:

1. They expected that the seconded teachers would undergo a speedy process of acclimatisation to the Australian way of life, including adjusting to the social and professional milieu;

2. They expected the seconded teachers to understand, adopt and conform to the various aspects of the education system in WA, including the curriculum, teaching, classroom management strategies, and on-going professional development; and
3. They expected the seconded teachers to adjust quickly to the various demands of their host-school environment, including the fulfilment of extra-curricular activities, “Duty of Care” requirements, the maintenance of a professional profile, and being a part of the whole staff.

The stage of conflict

The idealistic expectations held by the seconded teachers and the host-school staff at the outset, became the source of conflict. A major contributor igniting the conflict was the unavoidably close working relationship of the seconded teachers and the mainstream staff of the host school. Three major sources of conflict manifested themselves:

1. The expectation held by the staff of the host school that seconded teachers should teach Greek as a second language. As a result of this expectation not being met, it was deemed by the host-school staff that the seconded teachers introduced the written word too soon to students, that they held unrealistically high expectations of students, and that they conducted text book and worksheet-driven lessons;
2. The expectation held by the staff of the host school that seconded teachers should have appropriate training for Australian schools. As a result of this expectation not being met, it was deemed by the staff of the host school that the seconded teachers were lacking in three key areas, namely, in second language teaching methods, in behaviour-management strategies, and in their overall professionalism when dealing with the school community at large; and
3. The expectation held by the staff of the host school that seconded teachers should demonstrate flexibility in their teaching. As a result of this expectation not being met, it was deemed by the host-school staff that seconded teachers possessed an elitist attitude towards change and adaptation, that they took too long to adjust to the Australian way of teaching, and that they worked in isolation from the rest of the mainstream staff.

The stage of cooperation

The seconded teachers from Greece, the staff of the main host school in WA, and members of the Greek and wider community eventually entered the stage of cooperation following the stage of conflict. The seconded teachers demonstrated cooperation through initiatives in the following three areas:

1. The teaching strategies employed by them for teaching Greek as a second language;
2. The level of their expectations in regard to student performance; and
3. Their role in the host school.

Likewise, some members of the host-school staff demonstrated cooperation by trying to understand the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA, by improving the level of communication between them and the seconded teachers, and by increasing the level of cooperation between them and the seconded teachers. Finally, members of the Greek and wider community demonstrated cooperation with the seconded teachers in three areas, namely, the support offered to them, the level of trust bestowed upon them, and the level of involvement offered to them in extra-curricular and wider-community activities.

Recommendations

At the time of the writing of this paper, the STGS policy of the Greek government did not stipulate that prospective seconded teachers needed to have training and/or experience in second and/or foreign language teaching. This resulted in many “inappropriately-trained” teachers, as perceived by the host schools, applying for secondment to teach Greek as a second language abroad. Some of these teachers then went on secondment to WA without the training or experience that was perceived to be essential by the local stakeholders. As a result, conflict was experienced in the workplace.

If a background in second and/or foreign language teaching was to become a mandatory requirement in the STGS policy of the Greek government, then only “appropriately-trained” teachers would apply for secondment. This requirement could refer to training as well as experience, or to experience only in the field. As a stated pre-requisite, it could prevent “inappropriately-trained” teachers from applying in the first place.

The lack of a national policy in Australia on the STGS resulted in a variation of approaches taken by the different host schools and communities regarding the services of the seconded teachers. This led to problems of inconsistency in relation to the seconded teachers’ experiences in schools across Australia. Because they communicated with each other on this, some challenged the way they were treated. For example, they challenged their teaching loads in comparison to those of peers in other Australian states: their yard-duty allocation, the number of meetings they were required to attend on a weekly or monthly basis, and the percentage of fees paid by them for their children to attend the main host school. This, in turn, led to conflict within the host schools between the seconded teachers and the schools’ authorities.

A consistent, overall STGS policy in Australia would serve to address such issues. This would need to be consistent with the STGS policy of the Greek government and be supportive of its intended use of the services of the seconded teachers. In this way, problems such as the ones described above might be avoided. For example, if

seconded teachers are intended to be used solely as support teachers or advisors to locally-trained teachers of Greek, then a national policy that reaffirms this would negate some of the ambiguity. Furthermore, the policy should be written in English and Greek in order to enlighten the mainstream staff of the host schools of the specific role of the STGS in Australia.

To date, there is no national policy on the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS, neither is there a local WA policy. Consequently, the host schools have had to rely on past practice and experience to guide their actions. This has led to inconsistent approaches which have not always been in the best interests of the various stakeholders. For example, some seconded teachers have been known to work well beyond the weekly-contact hours that are stipulated in the STGS policy of the Greek government. In some cases, this has resulted in conflict between the seconded teachers concerned, the principal of the host school, and the Greek government appointed coordinator responsible for the STGS in WA, SA and the NT. A local policy on the STGS would serve to ensure that such inconsistencies in approach are less likely to occur.

Most of the implications for the development of practice in Greece regarding the STGS relate to the yearly week-long professional development course which is held in Athens for prospective seconded teachers. Some, however, also relate to teacher training, preparation and selection. The study also has implications for the development of practice in WA. These are in relation to five areas, namely, curriculum, teacher training and preparation, schools, teaching, and community leaders.

Finally, a host of areas for future research suggest themselves. A number of these could be undertaken in Greece, a number of others in Australia, and a number of others yet again in WA. Examples of such research possibilities include:

1. The post-secondment phase and how it affects the day-to-day lives of teachers who have returned to live and work in Greece;
2. The acclimatisation process that seconded teachers undergo in their first year in Australia; and
3. A comparison of the STGS with other similar "Schemes" on offer in WA.

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