

Greek Education in Great Britain

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RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur de cet article présente l'histoire du développement des communautés chypriote et grecque de Grande Bretagne et plus particulièrement celles de Londres en traitant les différentes vagues d'immigration, la structure communautaire et son influence sur l'éducation hellénophone. Il conclut avec un examen de la situation actuelle de cette éducation tout en recommandant l'adoption du matériel didactique du programme *Paideia Omogenon*.

ABSTRACT

The author paints a historical fresco of the Cypriot and Greek community's beginnings and development in the United Kingdom, especially in London. The article treats the various waves of immigration, basic community organizational structure, religious and educational influences on Greek-speaking immigrants and their children in Great Britain. The author concludes by recapitulating with details of the current situation of Greek-language learning in the UK and a strong recommendation to adopt the *Paideia Omogenon* material as soon and as broadly as possible.

1. The first Greek immigrants and Greek communities in Britain

The Fall of Constantinople in 1453 forced a number of scholars, nobles, soldiers and others to flee their home and seek new destinies in Italy, France and other European countries, including England. A group of those first immigrants came to London, but for a century and a half remained an isolated group of humble manual workers.¹

In later years a group of about a hundred immigrant families, probably from the Peloponnese, were in the end invited to settle in London and offered some land in the Soho area to build their church. In 1677, the Greeks in London were able to acquire their first privately owned Greek church. The leader of those first immigrants was Daniel Voulgaris, but their efforts in the new land

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were greatly assisted by the ex- Archbishop of Samos, Joseph Georgirinis, who happened to reside in London. Greeks lived in the Soho area for about 300 years,² as revealed by the name of a main street in the area, Greek Street.

Although it took many centuries before a substantial ethnic minority of Greeks appeared in Britain, there was a regular presence of individual travellers, mainly in London, for trade or studies.

It was in the beginning of the nineteenth century that the first few immigrants were joined by another wave, consisting mainly of dynamic and educated cosmopolitans from Chios, Samos and Smyrna who came to London. They breathed new life into the lingering members of the Greek community. From then on, the Greek community in London prospered, and by the last decades of the nineteenth century, it had gained prominence among the Greek communities in Western Europe.³

The first major step in the history of Hellenism in Britain occurred in the 1670s, when Greeks made an effort to organize a community as well as acquire the legal and collective existence which would not only represent them in the eyes of the authorities, but also provide them with continuity and a shelter in difficult times.⁴

Up to the end of the seventeenth century the only noteworthy activity regarding Greek education in Britain was the establishment of a college for Greeks by Dr Woodroff (principal of Gloucester Hall, Oxford).

As Britain remained a distant and inhospitable land for Greeks, it was only after the outbreak of the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire in 1821 that large-scale and coordinated emigration and settlement of Greeks in Britain took place, particularly in big cities such as London, Manchester and Liverpool. Here Greeks hoped to find opportunities to prosper in trading and shipping.⁵

After the Soho Greek church was destroyed by fire, the Greek community in London used the chapel of the Russian embassy for religious duties. In 1836 however, thanks to the efforts of Charilaos Trikoupi, who was the Greek Ambassador in London, the Church of the Saviour Jesus in London was established and the first fully organised Greek community in London.⁶

By the 1840s, the number of Greeks in London had increased so much that

the church became too small and humble for the prospering community. In 1849, a bigger and better church was built, again dedicated to the Saviour Jesus. That church served the community until 1879 when the Cathedral Church of the Divine Wisdom we know today in Bayswater was opened.

2. Second and third waves of immigration to Britain

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a financial crisis struck the thriving Greek communities in Britain, perhaps due to the Franco-Prussian war and changes in trade. Many businesses went bankrupt and others had to close and transfer their assets back to Greece. At the beginning of the twentieth century, prospects for the Greek communities in Britain were not bright.

The ethnic catastrophes of 1896 and 1922, together with the World War I, created new waves of immigrants to Britain. By the end of the Great War, new names and new fortunes were emerging in the maritime trade.⁷

Three Greek Orthodox churches in London, and one in Manchester,⁸ gave the communities a focus to become stronger and continue their efforts to maintain their language, identity and culture.

What undoubtedly saved the Greek community in Britain was the massive immigration of young Cypriots from the 1930s onwards. Unlike emigrants from Greece, who preferred America as their destination, they chose Britain, particularly London as their new home.⁹

There have been two main peaks in Cypriot immigration to the UK, after 1955 (anti-colonial war) and 1974 (Turkish invasion). The census shows that by 1981, there were 212,000 immigrants of Greek origin in the UK. Some 200,000 were Greek-Cypriots while there were 12,000 from Greece.¹⁰ Today the Cyprus High Commission estimates that there are about 290,000 Cypriots in the UK, of whom 77,436 were born in Cyprus.

The slow rate at which Greek community schools were established in London reflects the poverty of the initial waves of immigrants from Cyprus. Many of the immigrants arrived with very little money and no job or accommodation; however, three decades later the same people had prospered

in business and were able to take education into their own hands. From humble manual workers, they had become prosperous businessmen fully integrated into social and political life.¹¹

In summary, the Greek community in Britain consists of two groups. The majority are immigrants from Cyprus, concentrated mainly in north London, and there is a smaller group originating in mainland Greece and the islands, based mainly in central London, who continue the tradition of the nineteenth-century Greek community.¹²

3. The development of Greek communities in Britain

Apart from the 1677 establishment of the church of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Soho, which had been built with contributions from (among others) the Duke of York, later King James II, other attempts were soon made to set up communities and places of worship in the areas of central, north and south London. The next was a chapel in a Greek commercial office in London's Finsbury Circus, with a priest sent from Greece to serve there. By 1849, this church had become too small and a replacement was built at London Wall.

In the meantime, a chapel had also been opened in Manchester, which was soon to be replaced by the cathedral of the Annunciation, which is still in use today.

An important page in the history of Greek communities in Britain was turned when an Englishman, Stephen Georgeson Hatherly, was ordained priest in Constantinople in about 1870, being given the name Timothy. On returning to Britain he inaugurated in 1873 a Greek Seamen's Mission in Cardiff,¹³ where a permanent church dedicated to Saint Nicolas of Myra, was built in the Byzantine style in 1905.

By 1865, Liverpool had also acquired its own church, also in the Byzantine style and also dedicated to St Nicolas.

In London, wealthy Greeks had moved to the healthier and more fashionable area of Hyde Park, and a new Byzantine-style church was opened in 1879 in Bayswater. This cathedral, which is dedicated to the Divine

Wisdom (*Agia Sofia*), has subsequently been beautifully adorned with icons and mosaics, and adopted as the archdiocese's cathedral in 1922. This activity continued with the opening in 1948 of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of All Saints in Camden Town, an area where many Cypriot immigrants had settled since the 1930s.

The activity of buying properties and organizing Greek communities continued with the opening of the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St Andrew in Kentish Town in 1957, while in 1962 another Greek Orthodox Cathedral, dedicated to the Nativity of the Mother of God was established in Camberwell, South London, and in 1965 the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Golders Green, North London.

During the 1970s the number of communities reached a new high. As the immigrants' financial status improved, they were able to buy more buildings and become more involved in setting up committees and to take the running of community affairs into their own hands. They ran their local church and Greek school and also organized other community groups to provide charitable services to the poor, sick and elderly.

Today, 114 Greek Orthodox communities in various parts of Britain are listed in the records of the Archdiocese,¹⁴ but in London only 21 have more than two hundred members and their own Greek school, while in the rest of the country only sixteen are of a reasonable size.

4. Community organizations and Greek education

The history of Greek community organisations in Britain, including those involved in education, stretches back more than three centuries to the foundation of the first Greek church in London in 1677. Also in 1677, the idea of a Greek College in Oxford was conceived; this became a reality in 1698, but functioned only until 1705.

Apart from the communities mentioned earlier, various localised unions were established, such as the union of Peloponnesians, the union of Macedonians and the union of Paphians.

The establishment of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain in

1922 became a landmark in the development and organization of the Greek community in Britain. The first archbishop was Germanos Strinopoulos, previously metropolitan of Seleucia, who had earlier been principal of the Theological School of Halki. This was an inspired choice, and his pastorate lasted for almost thirty years (1922-1951), during which time he became widely-known as a leading representative of Orthodoxy in this country and contributed greatly towards organizing the Greek immigrants in Britain into healthy and active communities.

His activities included various attempts to establish places of worship and education in Britain. During Archbishop Germanos' pastorate¹⁵, communities were established in Birmingham (1939), Glasgow (1944), Camden Town in London (1948) and Bristol (1951).

By the time of the death of Archbishop Athenagoras I, the second archbishop of Thyateira in 1962, the diocese had grown to an almost unmanageable size. During his pastorate, he had been assisted by a total of five assistant bishops.

Immigration from Cyprus both in the 1950s and following the Turkish invasion of 1974 raised the population of the Greek communities to a new high, and many Greek Orthodox churches in Britain were founded during this period.¹⁶ Around this time the *Orthodox Herald*, the official journal of the archdiocese, was established, along with a number of charity and educational organizations such as the Greek Orthodox Charity Organisation and the Central Educational Council.

The archdiocese now embraces 125 churches in the United Kingdom and Ireland, the majority of which possess their own places of worship. Due to the magnanimity of the Church of England, the communities have been able to acquire suitable premises, not only for places of worship, but also for schools and community centres, and this has invariably also involved great sacrifices and generosity on the part of the community members.

During its eighty-year history, the archdiocese has placed a special emphasis on education. It was involved in the establishment of the Hellenic College of London in Knightsbridge, which has an enviable academic record. In 2000 the archdiocese inaugurated St Cyprians, the first Orthodox primary day school in England, at Thornton Heath in south London.

Further to this, the archdiocese operates Greek afternoon and Saturday schools in almost all of its well-established communities. Finally, the archdiocese runs a flourishing school of Byzantine music based in Wood Green, north London.

Another important organisation is the Greek Cypriot Brotherhood, which was founded in 1934 by a cleric who was later to become Greek Orthodox Archbishop of America, Michael Constantinides.

The original name of this organisation was “The Christian Greek Cypriot Brotherhood of St. Barnabas”. Its aim was to help the first Cypriot immigrants in London to overcome the difficulties they faced in the economic depression of the 1920s and 30s, which were compounded by their limited knowledge or total ignorance of the English language.

Through the efforts of its founder, contributions by the Greek community in Britain, and the co-operation of local government, a measure of welfare and tolerable conditions were achieved.¹⁷ The constitution of the Brotherhood required its members to be “good and law abiding citizens” and dedicated to Christian teachings. It set up English classes for the community, and later, the first Greek schools to assist the younger generation in learning their mother tongue and heritage.

Following the Second World War, immigration from Cyprus increased substantially, but their circumstances this time were much improved. The Brotherhood therefore widened its aims to include cultural, sporting and social activities. Every year art exhibitions, conferences, youth events and lectures on various issues organised by the University of Cyprus, are frequently held in the premises of the Brotherhood, which serves as a cultural and spiritual centre bringing together members of the Greek community in Britain.

Another area of the Brotherhood’s interests is the ongoing campaigns for the peaceful solution of the Cyprus problem and the unification of the island. Evolving with the times, the needs of the community and of Cyprus, it currently dedicates a great part of its resources to activities aimed at a fair solution of the island’s problems created by the Turkish invasion of 1974.

Finally, a comment on the name of this organisation. The name *Brotherhood* is a noble word that, like many others, has lost its original

meaning and today may convey the wrong signals. It is not a secret society. At one point they considered a change of title, but as one member comments, a member of the British Parliament once asked about the matter of the name, said “we receive dozens of invitations from associations, federations, leagues, it is so confusing. When we get one from the Brotherhood, we know who you are.”

As the immigrant community continued to expand, the Greek Cypriot Immigrants Federation was set up in 1970 by the Cyprus High Commission.¹⁸ An early aim of the federation was to assist Cyprus following the Turkish invasion in 1974, by targeting British public opinion concerning the injustice suffered by Cyprus and Greek and Turkish Cypriots. This has involved frequent rallies and peaceful protests outside the Turkish Embassy and in other parts of London. Moving with the times, the federation’s circle of activities has expanded to address problems faced by immigrants repatriating and issues of interest by the continually-increasing Greek community in Britain.

The League of Greek Orthodox Communities of Great Britain was founded in 1978. This organisation is run mainly by the archdiocese of Thyateira and representatives from the various orthodox communities. Its main aim is to assist the orthodox communities all over Britain in their religious and educational activities. The president of the coordinating committee is the archbishop himself. Their work has included building new churches, establishing new schools as well as helping existing schools and churches.

More recently, a very significant development towards the better organisation of the Greek community in Britain, especially in the area of education, was the creation of the United Forum for Hellenic Education (UFHE) which was founded in 1988, after a long struggle and disagreements.¹⁹

Between the 1960s and 1980s, although more than a hundred Greek afternoon and Saturday schools were operating, with large numbers of children learning their language, history and traditions, the situation in the schools themselves, and between the parents’ committees was not good. In the mid 1970s a fierce row broke out between the various groups in relation to education matters. Questions about the character of the community schools, and whether they should teach Greek history and culture or Cypriot

history and traditions, started to be openly discussed.

The disagreements and division lasted a long time, and had a devastating effect on the quality of the education itself. Instead of putting their efforts into improving the effectiveness of the schools, people were preoccupied with unnecessary concerns.

The problem was not helped by the existence of two educational missions – from Greece (established in 1980) and from Cyprus (started in 1977). Some schools refused to accept teachers from Greece with the excuse that children speaking the Cypriot dialect would not be able to understand them. Pressure was exerted on the Ministry of Education in Cyprus to increase the number of teachers seconded from Cyprus.

In the middle of this disunity, the Ministries of Education of Greece and of Cyprus together made efforts to bring the members of the Greek community together and reach an agreement to form a united forum for Greek education in this country. The United Forum for Hellenic Education became a reality in 1988 with only two individual schools refusing to join and which still operate outside it.

The Archbishop is the president of the forum, and in running the schools he is assisted by the Counsellors of the two Educational Missions (KEA and EEA) and the presidents of the three educational associations in Britain. These are the Central Education Council (KES), the Parents Association (OESEKA) and the Independent schools. KES runs all the church schools and OESEKA runs the schools organised by parents' committees, and the independent schools are run by trusts. With the establishment of the UFHE, educational matters in Britain started to improve, because of agreement on the principles, rules and issues regarding the provision of Greek education in this country.

5. Greek full-time schools in Britain

Initially, the only way for immigrants to offer Greek education to their children was through private home tuition. In the nineteenth century, however, Greeks in London and Manchester attempted to establish full-time Greek schools. The first such school became a reality in 1870 in London,

under the management of the distinguished teacher and scholar, Ioannis Valettas.²⁰

The initiative was ambitious but did not last very long. In 1884, the school closed for the usual reasons, lack of funding and the reluctance of some parents to send their children to a school which might isolate them from British society.

It was about a hundred years later, in 1980, that with the financial help of some wealthy Greeks the community in London was able to open the prestigious Hellenic College in Knightsbridge. This school has remained open and offers nursery, primary and secondary education up to the age of 17.

For about a year after its opening, the Hellenic College was recognized by the Ministry of Education in Greece as a Greek state school and provided with teachers. This recognition was withdrawn on March 1, 1983, and the teachers were withdrawn. However, wealthy London-based Greeks decided to keep the school open, as it was important to them to provide Greek education for their children. It is now a private English rather than Greek school, which is bilingual to an extent because it teaches Greek and Greek Orthodox religious studies. The school today has about 150 students.

The Greek government then made plans to buy a new building and establish a new full-time Greek primary school, which would be recognized as a Greek state school because it would follow the curriculum of primary schools in Greece and also teach English as a second language.

This school became a reality in 1987, in west London. It now has about 100 pupils and is funded by the Greek government. The teaching staff are seconded from Greece, and its pupils are drawn from immigrant families and Greek families living temporarily in London.

In 1990, a building in north London was rented to house the Greek Secondary School of London, which operates under the same principles as the primary school. This school has about 60 pupils. In 2000, an English-Greek Orthodox denominational primary school was founded in south London. Funded by the British government, it is a recognized British state school. The school offers 20% of its teaching in Greek, including Religious Studies and Greek language, and has about 200 pupils, not all of Greek-Cypriot ethnic origin.

6. The first Greek Community Afternoon Schools in Britain

Community schools are open for a few hours in the evening or on weekends, and operate outside the normal education system.

The Greek community in Britain established its first community afternoon school as early as 1869 in Manchester, and a second school was established the following year in London.²¹ However, it would not be until after the 1950s that an abundance of such schools flourished, not only in London but also in other major towns and cities such as Cardiff,²² Liverpool and Birmingham.

In the early 1920s, Archimandrite Ilarion Vasdekas founded an afternoon and Saturday school at Agia Sophia cathedral in Bayswater, London. In 1924, an organisation named Hellenic Friends of Education in England was established in London, with the aim of supporting this school. The then Metropolitan of Thyateira, Germanos Strinopoulos, believed that this school could be strengthened and become an English-Greek full time college. This effort had to be abandoned due to lack of interest on the part of the Greek community in London. Greek education for children of Greeks in London was left to the Agia Sophia community school operating for two afternoons a week.

One of the first initiatives of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain was to establish an afternoon or Saturday school on the premises of each Greek Orthodox Church in Britain. As the number of churches increased so did the number of schools. The Archdiocese, therefore, to organise and coordinate more effectively all these Greek Schools went a step further and established the Central Educational Council (KES) in 1964 with the aims of coordinating activities and planning for Greek community schools. In this task the Archdiocese found willing assistance and support from the Ministry of Education of Greece and the Ministry of Education of Cyprus.

The community school at Agia Sophia was followed in the late 1950s by a similar school established by the Greek Cypriot Brotherhood, and a third one by the Agioi Pantes Orthodox Church in Camden Town. About the same time another school was established in north London, this time not by the church but by the Greek Parents Association, which preferred to organise

their own community schools. This second group of schools was the work of the pioneer Cypriot poet Tefkros Anthias who was living in London at that time.²³

In the schools of both groups, youngsters are taught reading, writing, Greek and Cypriot history, music and dancing. These subjects are intended to allow young people of Greek origin to maintain their language, identity and culture.

Today, there are more than a hundred Greek community schools in Britain, in which the Greek language and culture are taught to more than 6,000 pupils of Greek origin.²⁴

7. UK educational policy for minority groups

The educational rights of cultural minorities first began to be recognized in the 1944 Education Act. The act acknowledged the existence of different religions in Britain and recognised the rights to cultural autonomy of minority groups. However, it was restricted to the area of religious education; language and other cultural aspects were ignored. Before the 1950s, therefore, it was accurate to describe British schools as monolingual and monocultural institutions.

From the mid-1950s onwards this practice was challenged by the substantial number of immigrants beginning to arrive in Britain. However it took a long period of assimilation and “dispersal” policies before the government realised that a different approach was needed to successfully address the problem of language education for immigrants.

In the 1960s discussion and criticism²⁵ of the existing provision for ethnic minority children in schools reached a point where it became clear that urgent measures were needed to find a constructive and appropriate language policy that would accommodate the needs of immigrant children. This led to one of the most significant developments in the history of language support in Britain — Section 11 of the Local Government Act of 1966. According to this, British schools with significant numbers of minority pupils had to facilitate the provision of these pupils’ mother tongues during school hours, as well as offer them extra help to improve

their knowledge of English.

Since then, however, the conditions for support of minority languages in the educational system have declined.²⁶ From one generation to the next, the English language has naturally become dominant. In third generation immigrant families, there is nobody to speak Greek as a mother tongue to the next generation. The Greek community no longer qualifies as a minority group in state schools needing Section 11 support, and nobody would dispute the necessity and realism of this policy.

The possibility that pupils will lose all contact with the language and culture of their origins is created by a short-sighted policy in the foreign languages offered to them.²⁷ Schools commonly consider French, German and Spanish (all major languages) as possible options, and ignore the fact that in a multicultural, multilingual society, the most useful and important second or foreign language that ought to be offered to pupils is the language of their origin.

Greek pupils in particular, although second or third generation immigrants, generally still have family ties with Greece or Cyprus, so a knowledge of Greek language and culture is important for social purposes. In addition, there are wider employment opportunities²⁸ within businesses of the Greek community for school leavers who are able to speak both Greek and English.

Under these circumstances, the establishment of community afternoon schools offering Greek language teaching came to fill the gap created by the decline of Section 11. This, together with the priority given to EU languages by the British National Curriculum,²⁹ are seen by the Greek community as crucial to the future of the language.

8. Greek Community Afternoon Schools today

Since the first Greek community school was established in Manchester in 1869, the number of schools has increased and there are now about 70 in London and 40 in other parts of Britain. Many of these do not own buildings, but instead pay rent to use British schools (some local authorities offer use of the buildings free of charge). In this case, there is no opportunity

to display objects on the walls, use storage space, or take advantage of other facilities such as computers or videos.

About 5,300 pupils attend community schools in London, and about 1,300 attend schools in other parts of Britain.³⁰ It is estimated that there are between 22,000 and 30,000 children of Greek origin aged 6 to 15 living in Britain. Therefore, the biggest problem of Greek education in Britain is the small number of Greek origin children receiving it, as the majority do not attend community schools.

In the 1970s, those running community schools realized that they should offer further incentives to pupils to attend, and began to teach GCSE and A-level courses leading to the examinations of the University of London Assessment Council³¹ (now called Edexcel). However, in 1992 the council announced that on financial grounds, it would reconsider offering Modern Greek; due to the low number of candidates, the costs of running the examinations were not covered by the fees. To lift this threat, the education ministries of Greece and Cyprus offered to meet some of the costs of providing the examinations. A number of community schools became examination centres and provided staff to conduct the examinations.

8.1 The objectives of Greek community schools

A recent law of the Greek Government³² states the main objectives of the education offered to children of Greek origin abroad:

1. To cultivate and teach the Greek language.
 - To promote the Greek cultural identity.
 - To form the personality of Greek-origin children in a way which will promote their self-knowledge and self-confidence.
 - To promote the particular cultural elements, traditions and history of Greek communities abroad, and to exploit these both in the host countries and in Greece through the educational system.
 - To exploit the knowledge and experience of the Greek diaspora for the development of science, culture and education in Greece.

- To promote mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence and cooperation of individuals and groups of different origins and cultural traditions living in contemporary multicultural societies.
- 2. The education provided to children of Greek origin abroad aims to reinforce programs and types of Greek education which will correspond to the particular circumstances prevailing in each country, while being closely connected with the educational, psychological and cultural needs of the pupils of Greek origin and of the Greek diaspora in general.

This list is similar to the aims declared in the memoranda of the parents' associations in Britain which founded the community schools; these include:

- The maintenance of national identity.
- The transfer of Greek culture to future generations of children of Greek origin in Britain.
- To prevent the loss of Greek origins by assimilation into British culture.
- To prepare children to adjust to the Greek or Cypriot educational system if they return to live there.
- To strengthen the bonds with Greece and Cyprus.
- To function as a cultural centre for the community as a whole.

The results of research described later show that from the point of view of the teachers and pupils, there are two main aims:

- develop and maintain ethnic and cultural identity.
- learn the Modern Greek language to GCSE standard.

This multidimensional synthesis of aims (language, history, culture and religion) adds an increased level of difficulty in language teaching, because from the very early stages language is seen as the vehicle which must carry the load of all the other aims. Clearly, the need to accord with this synthesis of aims influences and constrains the design of materials is paramount in order to achieve progress in Greek language learning.

8.2 Organisation and administration of community schools

Community schools may be divided into three categories:

- Church schools — founded and administered by the Greek Orthodox church.
- Committee schools — found and administered by parents and linked together under a central parents association committee.
- Independent schools — belonging to independent trusts set up by parents and other individuals to promote Greek language and culture.

8.3 Teaching staff at community schools

By the end of the 1960s, the governments of Greece and Cyprus decided, after pressure from Archbishop Athenagoras Kokkinakis and representatives of the Parents Association to provide qualified teachers for Greek community schools in Britain.

A few years later the first groups of teachers were seconded from Greece and Cyprus to teach in the Community Schools in Britain.

By the early 1970s antagonism between the different types of community schools and division of opinion between their leaders created the rather strange situation where teachers from Greece were placed only in church schools and those from Cyprus only in committee schools. Instead of working together in unifying smaller schools to create bigger and hence more viable and effective units, those claiming concern for educating the younger generation of Greeks put their efforts in the direction of division and disagreement.

Although the Greek and Cypriot governments send qualified teachers to work in community schools, the numbers provided do not satisfy the need. A large number of individuals who have attended a training course but are otherwise unqualified are also employed as teachers.³³

The two educational missions both from Greece and Cyprus still exist today. In 2005, the Greek Ministry of Education seconded 82 teachers to work in all types of Greek Schools in Britain. A number of them are priests and their duties, apart from teaching, include running the various Orthodox

churches in this country.³⁴ The Cypriot government in 2005 seconded 36 teachers from Cyprus, and in addition, the Cyprus Educational Mission employed 90 local people to fill in remaining vacancies in various Community schools. A problem with the local staff is that a number of them do not have a teaching background, but instead come from a variety of professions. In order to help the situation, UFHE established the Training Institute of London and offers seminars and training for those who wish to teach in the community schools.

Apart from the teachers mentioned above, the schools themselves employ some more local people to fill in the remaining teaching posts, whom they pay themselves. The school committees are responsible for these payments and the finances in general of the school, so the parents are charged fees for their children to attend. Most schools charge about £200 per child per year.

8.4 Structure and Operation of Community Schools

Most community schools have a sufficient number of pupils to set up the classes by age groups, as follows:

- Nursery: 3 - 4 years old
- Reception class: 4 - 5 years old
- A class (two years): 5 - 6 and 6 - 7 years old
- B class: 7 - 8 years old
- Γ class: 8 - 9 years old
- Δ class: 9 - 10 years old
- E class : 10 - 11 years old
- ΣΤ class : 11 - 12 years old
- GCSE 1 : 12 - 13 years old
- GCSE 2 : 13 - 14 years old
- A-level 1 : 14 - 15 years old
- A-level 2 : 15 - 16 years old
- A-level 3 : 16 - 17 years old

With this organization the pupils take GCSE and A-level examinations in Greek a year earlier than their other GCSE and A-level subjects. This is to avoid overloading them with too many examinations in one year.

The schools function throughout the school year and pupils usually attend twice a week for a total of four or five hours, either during weekday evenings or on Saturdays.

9. Programs of Study, Textbooks and Methodological Issues

Period of mother tongue teaching

In the first three decades after significant numbers of community schools were established in the 1950s, the programmes of study and materials were supplied by the Ministry of Education in Greece, and were identical to those used in Greece to teach language, history, geography and religion. At that time, these programmes of study and materials were suitable for pupils in the community schools, because the majority of pupils were first generation immigrants for whom Greek was naturally the first language.

Situation in the mid-1980s

During the 1980s community schools started to contain significant numbers of children from the second generation of immigrants. The results achieved gradually declined, an increasing number of pupils dropped out or moved from school to school, and there were problems of discipline. This triggered a debate about the suitability of programmes and materials, and in 1986 the Ministry of Education in Cyprus produced the first course and materials specifically designed for teaching Greek in the UK.

This course was still biased towards first generation immigrants, as the authors had not realised the extent to which Greek in the UK had moved along the language continuum away from being mother tongue (MT), and hence it was not successful. The course was modified in 1993 and a series of new coursebooks were sent from Cyprus to be used in schools. However, the modifications were not radical enough to reflect the movement in the language and the real needs of the learners.³⁵

A second modification to the curriculum took place in 1997, which was followed by a change in policy towards materials. The new policy recognised that the language had moved away from being MT, and, apart from two small books on history and culture, abandoned the existing series of coursebooks. These were replaced by teaching material created by the

Pedagogical Institute of Greece to be used for foreign and second language teaching in community schools in the USA.

These spasmodic reactions were not sufficient to address the ongoing problem faced by the schools — the shift of the language from mother tongue to second and foreign language. This was accompanied by the corresponding change in pupils' needs. For example, one of the main reasons for pupils attending community schools is to pass the GCSE examination, yet neither the program nor the material met the requirements of the GCSE syllabus of the UK National Curriculum.

An examination of the 1986, 1993 and 1997 programs of study revealed the following characteristics:

- The content seemed irrelevant to pupils' needs and interests as only a few topics referred to the life and activities of the Greek community in Britain. The sociocultural aspects of the country of origin and country of residence did not appear as a united and interrelated whole.
- The programs of study were long in relation to the timetables and circumstances. The number of topics was too great to be covered in the 35 weeks that the schools operate. In fact, it was impossible to cover even the core of the language as presented in these programs.
- The structure and presentation of the various subjects seemed very complicated and overlapping. For example, the distinction between the technique of writing and writing itself, or the technique of reading and reading comprehension, are unnecessary divisions and raise questions about the degree of coherence between the parts.

Designing suitable materials for teaching Greek in community schools in Britain should take into account the syllabus for the Edexcel GCSE examination in Modern Greek, especially the revised one for the examinations from 2003 onwards.³⁶

This syllabus revolves around five broad areas of experience:

1. House, home and daily routine,
2. At home and abroad,

3. Social activities, fitness and health,
4. Education, training and employment,
5. Media, entertainment and youth culture.

Each of these areas includes a number of sub-topics. The syllabus sets targets for each of the four skills — listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing. It also offers lists with the Core Vocabulary, the Grammar and the Rubrics for the questions.

In general, this program of study has a simple and easy-to-use structure. The topics and content seem to interest the pupils as the units are within their range of experiences and interests, are attractive, and provide many opportunities to learn how to use the language in communicative situations.

The problems, however, described above with the 1986, 1993 and 1997 programs of study, and the fact that they were not designed according to the principles of second-language teaching and learning had a direct impact on their effectiveness in community schools in Britain. Year after year, one noticed a drift in pupils language abilities, while English becomes widely used even during class hours at the Greek school.

A new hope for education matters in the diaspora, however, appeared in 1997 when a large-scale EU funded program began operating under the aegis of the University of Crete with supervision by the Ministry of Education of Greece. The program was called *Paideia Omogenon* (Education for Greeks Abroad) and lasted for 8 years.³⁷ Its aim was to study the state of Greek language teaching in the diaspora and create appropriate teaching materials based on contemporary programs, both for Greek as a second language and Greek as a foreign language.

10. The *Paideia Omogenon* Program

The first attempt to investigate educational matters in community schools in Britain was made in 1968. At that time, the Central Education Council of the Diocese of Thyateira and Great Britain appointed a special committee to investigate the situation in the schools. The investigation was prompted the lower than expected number of pupils attending the schools. In a population of 250,000 immigrants, according to the 1958 census,³⁸ one

would expect at least 10,000 pupils to attend community schools; whereas, the number actually attending was around 5,000.

The second time that a team of academics and educationalists studied the situation in community schools in the Greek diaspora was within the framework of the *Paideia Omogenon* program, funded by the EU and the Ministry of Education of Greece and carried out by the University of Crete.

Up to that time, little information had been available, and what was available was outdated. The shift from first to second and third generation had meant that today's learner had little in common with the learner of previous decades.

In 1998, it was decided to conduct extensive research to obtain current and valid information about community schools, mainly because of the idiomorphic and complex situation which characterises the provision of Greek language teaching in the Britain.³⁹

The research was carried out using questionnaires for pupils attending community and British schools. Closed and open questions were used to determine the pupils' relationship to the language, their opinions about materials and lessons, the difficulties they find with the language, and their attitude toward both the school and the language.

Supporting information about materials, methods and difficulties with the language was collected using questionnaires for teachers and parents. Interviews with teachers in community schools and in British schools where Greek is offered as a foreign language supplemented the questionnaires.

The working team also carried out language tests to determine the pupils' language abilities and form an idea about the actual effectiveness of the materials under investigation. The contents and level of the language tests were formulated in accordance with what the pupils were supposed to have learned by the end of the course.

Some important findings of that research are summarized below.

The research showed a fairly even distribution between the sexes (Boys 42.7% and Girls 57,3 %)

Regarding age distribution the following table shows how pupils tend to drop out after a few years at school. This makes it a priority to discover why the children leave the school.

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Classes</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
5 - 7	A	40.7
8 - 10	B - Γ	22.1
11 - 12	E - ΣΤ	20.6
13 - 15	GCSE	14.3
16 -	A-level	2.3

This table also shows that the number of pupils decreases from class A to class E. The ΣΤ class is the preparation year for GCSE and a number of children join or rejoin at this stage in order to take the examination.

The research showed that 97% of the children had been born in the UK, with only 2% in Cyprus and 1% in Greece. About half of the parents had been born in the UK, and most of the rest in Cyprus:

UK	53.2%
Cyprus	40.8%
Greece	4.8%
Other	1.2%

In most cases, the partners in the marriage did not have the same place of birth.

These findings show that the majority of pupils are second or third generation. More than half of the pupils' parents were born in the UK, so their first language will be English.

The following table shows the parents' educational level:

<u>Education</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Primary	7.8
Secondary	27.7
6th-form or equivalent	38.9
Higher education	25.6

The research into parents' occupation revealed that most pupils come from comfortable, secure homes. Their family backgrounds give no reason for slow progress in school.

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Unskilled worker	5.3
Skilled worker	10.4
Clerical worker	28.2
Business	47.3
Professional	8.8

The results showed the priority given by pupils to passing examinations for college or university. This is one of the reasons for attending Greek school. The second main reason given is to learn to read and write. The connection they feel with their country is shown by their wish to learn more about Greece and Cyprus and to meet other Greeks or Cypriots. Although most pupils are second or third generation, they still feel Greek and wish to know about their origins. They are also interested in learning and maintaining the Greek culture and language and socialising with other Greek people.

Analyzing the responses to the open question in which the pupils were asked to write down three things they like about Greek school and three things they do not like, the most frequent answers revealed their dislike of the material and the work they do in class. It is surprising the degree of negative impact that materials and practices have on these pupils. These results offered us a strong indication of the cause of the problems faced by these schools.

The research showed that most pupils are fluent speakers of English, whereas little more than a third are fluent speakers of Greek. One should expect increased difficulty in their effort to learn Greek, and inevitably a lot of transfers between English and Greek. One should be open-minded about using English in the first stages to give explanations and instructions, and to introduce the pupils to the context of the Greek language. Efforts should be made to ensure the pupils are aware of the differences between the two languages using strategies of contrastive analysis.⁴⁰

The pupils were given a list of difficulties and asked to rank them in order. This table is based on the first choices of the pupils:

<u>Difficulty</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Writing essays	43
Understanding the texts	29
Spelling	17
Reading	5
Speaking	4
Understanding when spoken to	2

The three first difficulties are all related to inadequate teaching of vocabulary and grammar.

Attitude toward the Greek school

The pupils were asked whether or not they would recommend attending the Greek school to their friends and in each case to give the reason why.

<u>Positive reason for recommending to attend</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Learning things	30.2
Meeting friends	9.3
It is pleasant	8.1
I like the school	7.0
I like the activities	1.2
Break time and food	1.2
The language is useful	1.9

This table indicates the pupils' positive attitude to the school as a learning environment and as a place to socialise with other children.

The negative reasons given for recommending friends not to attend were

<u>Negative reason for recommending not to attend</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
It is not pleasant	11.1
I dislike the school	6.7
The timetable	3.0
I dislike the school equipment	0.5
I dislike the teacher	0.2

The percentages do not add up to 100% as some pupils did not give a recommendation. More pupils thought the school was unpleasant than pleasant.

Learning Greek in British schools

Two thirds of the pupils stated that they would like to learn Greek at their British school. The main reasons given for this were:

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
It is easier	17.0
The teaching is better	11.4
I am Greek so I must learn my language	10.6
I like the Greek language	10.3

The first two reasons indicate that the pupils prefer the approach to language teaching adopted at British schools, which treats the language as a foreign language and offers more assistance to the pupil.

11. Textbooks

Textbooks used in the 1990s for teaching Greek in Britain

In the 1998 research, the teaching materials were also investigated. This investigation showed that in Britain the most widely-used materials at the time were:

- 1 *Matheno Ellinika* series, Paidagogical Institute of Greece, OEDB, Athens 1989 (books 1 to 5).

This is the official Ministry of Education series, designed to teach pupils of Greek origin living in the USA. When the research was carried out it was widely used in nursery and primary school classes.

- 2 *Communicate in Greek*, K & F Arvanitakis, Athens 1990 (books 1 to 3).
- 3 *Greek Now*, D. Dimitra & M. Papachimona, Nostos Publications, Athens 1992 (books 1 to 3).

The last two series are by independent authors who created the material for teaching foreign students in Greece. Some of their units correspond to GCSE topics and so they were used to teach pupils taking the GCSE Exams.

Detailed examination of these materials revealed the following common

characteristics:

- 1 Although they state that their aim of teaching Greek as a second or foreign language they fail to substantiate this claim by following an appropriate design, one which in a principled way sequences and grades its items so as to correspond to the learners' needs in order to facilitate language learning. As mentioned earlier, the content largely failed to match the aims and objectives of the language programmes in Britain.
- 2 These materials did not cover the four language skills in a systematic way. There was a partiality in their approach towards practising the language across the four skills. They are not accompanied by audiovisual aids, and tend to orientate their activities and exercises exclusively towards practising reading comprehension (neglecting other reading subskills) and oral practice, while writing is limited and listening omitted altogether.

Speaking and reading comprehension are only a small part of the pupils' needs in order to learn the language. As our research revealed writing is a skill highly valued by learners — 40% state that the reason they attend school is to learn to read and write Greek. In addition, skills integration through the material results in a more interesting and natural learning process than material characterised by the monotony of practising dialogues and filling in blanks.

- 3 The methodology implied by the materials seems to be based entirely on whole-class teaching with very little group or pair work. In most cases, the materials are based on drilling and rote learning, despite some authors' claims to have adopted a communicative approach.⁴¹

The methodology used was an awkward combination of communicative characteristics and structural characteristics. There was no gradual and coherent process which would lead to fluency and accuracy. Methods and materials attempted to serve communication through boring topics and confusing presentation of grammar and syntax.

- 4 There is a predominance given to teaching the morphological aspect of the language, while syntax and phonology, intonation and punctuation are neglected. The materials emphasise accuracy through grammar at the expense of fluency through practice of language functions and an

awareness of appropriateness and style.

- 5 In order to use a language fluently, not only does one need to know the grammatico-syntactical system and have a sense of appropriateness according to the communicative situation, but one also needs a knowledge of the lexis of the language. Systematic teaching of vocabulary is therefore a necessary part of any language learning process. None of this material seems to teach the vocabulary in a systematic and efficient way.
- 6 The poor quality of layout and visuals makes the material unattractive for the pupils. There is very little use of pictures, diagrams, tables or authentic material. The main characteristics are extensive texts followed by exercises on reading comprehension and filling in the blanks (where very little space is provided for the learner to write). The coursebooks are not accompanied by peripheral material such as workbooks, picture books, glossaries, etc.
- 7 Most of the topics are uninteresting and far from the learners' everyday experiences and activities. The reading passages are unnatural and inauthentic.⁴²
- 8 The coursebooks do not include assessment or self-assessment material. The only thing that we noticed in this direction was few pages of *Revision Exercises* every 5-7 units.

Materials and methods are closely interrelated.⁴³ Poor quality material need not inhibit a skilful teacher, but cannot help an average teacher — by definition, the majority of teachers found in community schools.

Textbooks used since 2000 for teaching Greek in Britain

Because of the popularity of the *Matheno Ellinika* series and because of the lack of any other proper series in the early 1990s, the Paidagogical Institute of Cyprus decided to spend money to adjust this material to the circumstances of community schools in Britain, and in agreement with the Paidagogical Institute of Greece they started modifications to this series. The full modified series is now printed in Cyprus every year and sent to be used in community schools in Britain.

This was unfortunate, because when in 2000 the new textbooks which had been created by the *Paideia Omogenon* program of the Ministry of Education of Greece started arriving from Crete, they did not attract the interest of the teachers in the community schools, who were generally happy and comfortable with the “new” old textbooks arriving from Cyprus.

This situation has still not changed. While the new materials from Greece are used as extra material, the main textbook is still the modified ‘Matheno Ellinika’ of 1989. This situation is not only a huge waste of resources and money, but also a lost opportunity for the pupils to benefit from this new high quality series, the result of eight years of hard work by the University of Crete and the various working teams all over the world (USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, Britain, Holland, South Africa, Argentina).

To understand and explain this unacceptable waste regarding the provision and use of the textbooks in Greek schools in Britain, one has to bear in mind that the existence of two separate educational missions, from Greece and from Cyprus, separately governed by their respective educational counsellors, often creates an atmosphere of doubt and even antagonism. Because of this, people seem to have failed to understand that the new series of textbooks produced by *Paideia Omogenon* is the official Greek Ministry of Education series for Greek schools abroad rather than just another set of books produced by the University of Crete. Additionally, the existence of another official series by the Ministry of Education of Cyprus further complicates the situation. The teachers of both missions should be offered more opportunities to learn about the new series and gain some insight into their aims and principles. Seminars and training for the new materials are essential, especially now that the series is complete.

12. Greek as a foreign language in mainstream British schools

An important development for the teaching of Greek language in Britain was the arrival of the National Curriculum (NC) in the autumn of 1992. In the NC’s section for foreign languages provision in British schools, Greek, as an official EU languages, could be offered among the optional languages taught in schools, given sufficient demand.

Section 3(2)(b) of the Education Reform Act 1988 provides that a modern

foreign language specified in an Order made by the Secretary of State shall be one of the foundation subjects which comprise the NC. Such a language is to be studied by pupils in the third and fourth key stages (ages eleven to sixteen).

In November 1991 the Education (National Curriculum) (Modern Foreign Languages) Order specified those modern foreign languages which are eligible to be the National Curriculum's foundation subject (HMSO 1991). Schools are required to offer one or more of the official languages of the European Union (which were then Danish, Dutch, French, German, Modern Greek, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish), and in addition may offer one or more non-EU languages from a specified list [31].

However, in spite of the opportunity offered by the NC and the fact that in some boroughs such as Enfield and Barnet in London there are many pupils from Greek backgrounds (most of whom do not attend community schools), only one British school offers Greek as an option at the moment.

When Greek became an optional language within the NC, the Greek Embassy in London decided to make an effort to support its introduction at schools in boroughs with large Greek communities by offering to provide native Greek teachers free of charge. Unfortunately this effort was not successful mainly because pupils and parents lacked interest. Perhaps this is due to the fact that MFL teaching in Britain seems to be in decline. Every year fewer pupils choose a foreign language among their GCSEs options. They are happy with just the one compulsory language (French), and as for the language of their origin, they seem happy with what the community schools can offer, if they happen to attend.

However, as the research shows, many pupils of Greek origin are interested in studying Greek and taking the GCSE at the community schools, since this can count towards the minimum five GCSEs they are expected to achieve before they finish their secondary education.

In the last few years, however, the number of pupils attending community schools seems to be steadily declining, especially as the pupils progress through the classes. With few pupils reaching GCSE level, Edexcel considered withdrawing the examination on financial grounds.

These problems generated a debate about why pupils drop out, and

questions were raised about the appropriateness of materials and methods and about the need for further teacher training. It was then generally recognized that the main reason for this situation was a lack of awareness of the methodological principles necessary to approach the teaching of a second and foreign language. The second reason was the poor quality of the available material.

At the moment, the threat to the GCSE examination has been deferred, but the examination's long-term future will remain in doubt unless the number of pupils reaching GCSE level increases. This increase can only be achieved if changes are made to the methodology and material used in community schools, so as to sustain student motivation.

This change, however, does not seem to be easy. Greek is a minor language and, as such, rarely offered as a second or foreign language, so there has been little experience in this field. For languages such as Greek, I believe that a useful starting point for attacking these problems would be to combine insights drawn from studies and research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) with the extensive experience and research⁴⁴ built up over the years from the teaching of English as a second and foreign language. Although the two languages have little in common, I believe that the theory and findings of ESL and SLA can help teachers of Greek build their own explicit theory.

If the decline in the position of Greek language teaching continues, young people of Greek origin will effectively be deprived of their right to learn their language and discover their cultural background.

13. Conclusion

As described above, supplementary language education suffers from a variety of problems (timetable, building facilities, equipment). It seems however that the greatest problem is a lack of understanding about the kind of language education that community schools should offer to their pupils⁴⁵.

Textbooks based on old-fashioned approaches, such as on drills or texts that revolve around topics which do not interest the young generation,⁴⁶ and which have little to do with the principles of second and foreign language acquisition, should be replaced as soon as possible!⁴⁷

Studying the new series of textbooks produced by *Paideia Omogenon*, one soon realizes the special qualities that this series has to offer. It includes material drawn from the experiences of Greek children living abroad. This alone makes the material interesting for the pupils. It is of paramount importance therefore that the modern series of textbooks produced by *Paideia Omogenon* should be adopted as soon as possible.

One of the biggest problems faced by community schools in Britain today is the steady decline in the number of children attending. Half of the pupils who register in the first class drop out after two or three years and only about a third of the original number reach GCSE. There is also a tendency for pupils to attend higher classes than the classes they attend in British schools. The large majority of the classes are mixed-ability and mixed-age classes. Again, it is obvious that important reasons for pupils dropping out are the methods and materials, which do not include aspects of differentiation and are of poor quality and unlike the materials the pupils are familiar with at British schools. One solution to this decline would be the introduction of Greek as a foreign language in more British schools with a significant number of pupils of Greek origin.

As for the community schools themselves, there are a number of factors which the pupils do not like; namely, the schools hours, the pressure of uninteresting hard work.

The vast majority of pupils were born in Britain, as were half of their parents. This confirms the fact that the schools have mainly third generation immigrants, with limited knowledge of the Greek language. Greek should therefore be seen as between a second and a foreign language. It is not a second language because it is not extensively used at home and in the environment; it is not a foreign language because the pupils have a sense of it and a significant amount of subconscious knowledge of and social contact with it.

Most of the families enjoy a good financial and social status, and the parents seem to be well-educated, although the majority are not fluent speakers of Greek and a significant proportion have only a very limited knowledge. The consequence of this is that the language is not heard at home and the pupils can have little help with their homework.

To address this problem of the different target groups in Greek schools

abroad, the *Paideia Omogenon* program created two different series of textbooks, one for the teaching of Greek as a second language for pupils who come to school with some knowledge of Greek and another series created on the principles of foreign language teaching, specifically for pupils with no or very little knowledge of Greek. In addition, to address the needs of pupils preparing for the GCSE examinations in Britain, the programme also created separate material aimed at secondary education groups sitting the exams.

What drives pupils to attend Greek community schools is mainly the wish to gain another GCSE certificate, to keep in contact with the language and culture, to learn how to speak and write, and to socialise. Their difficulties with the language are mainly with learning vocabulary and with writing activities.

As we have seen, the pupils start off with a positive attitude to school and come willing to learn. However, as they progress through the classes their positive attitude becomes more negative, and this is because of the materials and methods which they experience.

The pupils have difficulties in learning vocabulary, and the knowledge of grammar and syntax they display is significantly limited. Their achievement at the end of the course is very much below the level which would be expected from the syllabus.

The use of old-fashioned approaches seems to be widespread, with few teachers attempting new strategies, group work, project work and interactive processes in the classroom.⁴⁸ The teaching of grammar in a linear, structural way seems to take the majority of the time spent on language teaching.

The way ahead, therefore, calls for a radical change to the teaching programs, materials and methods used in community schools in Britain. Abandoning the old textbook series and adopting the new programs of study and textbooks created by *Paideia Omogenon* seem to be urgent steps, since these textbooks are the only ones available which succeed in putting the pupils and their lives, interests and needs at the centre of the learning experience in Greek community schools in Britain.

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