

Language education in a multilingual city: The case of Limassol

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This paper aims to provide an overview of the current situation of multilingualism and language education in the city of Limassol, Cyprus. The multicultural character of Limassol is reflected in every aspect of city life, and is notably reflected in the sector of education. Therefore, there is a need to delve into the situation of language education, as this is manifested in affordances and policies, and in daily encounters, within the educational context. Drawing both from primary and secondary data, the study examines issues such as good practices in language learning for immigrants and the role of linguistic support.

Keywords: multilingualism; language education; visible languages

Introduction

There has been a massive increase in immigration throughout Europe over the last decades. European enlargements in 2004 and 2007, contemporary globalization, as well as various world events, have accelerated migration movements both in terms of speed and magnitude. Global mobility has led to the development of new social contexts as more and more people of diverse origins are relocating, changing thus the demographic character of formerly homogeneous societies. Increased transmigration and, consequently, the development of culturally diverse societies has been a turning point in educational systems, which have been called upon to respond to the rapid changes in the cultural make-up of school bodies and to develop mechanisms to cater for the heterogeneous student populations. Language education has always been at the core of multicultural education and, since the early migration movements, various language policies and education systems have evolved.

Cyprus has experienced increased inward migration over the decades with Limassol, its second largest city, developing into a migration locus inhabited by people hailing from various cultural backgrounds. The multicultural character of Limassol is reflected in every aspect of city life, most notably in the sector of education. Current policies and practices employed in the field of education face a number of major challenges, which relate in particular to some ultimate changes taking place in the global society of the twenty-first century – for instance, the rapidly developing information and communications technologies, the high levels of mobility, and the dramatic change of workforce skills and demands. Within this dynamic environment, one key dilemma is to understand the challenges that both instructors and learners are confronted with, and to take action for the future of educational systems (Nicolaou *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, there is a need to delve into the sector of education in order to evaluate the situation of language education and multilingualism, because these are manifested in affordances and policies, as well as in day-to-day encounters and experiences, within the educational context. This paper examines issues pertaining to multilingualism and plurilingualism within the educational system

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of Limassol, including good practices in language learning for immigrants, the role of linguistic support at schools and in the wider community, and the promotion of intercultural dialogue and communication. The research also addresses more specific questions, such as educators' perceptions of multilingualism, language barriers in the educational context, and current efforts that help develop the educational system within an intercultural perspective.

Language education in multilingual contexts

In the past few decades, educational systems across Europe have been called upon to respond to the changes in the cultural composition of school bodies and to develop mechanisms to cater for culturally diverse student populations. Language education has always been at the core of multicultural education, and since the early migration movements, various language policies, education systems, and research paradigms have evolved. Busch (2011: 543) refers to the shifting paradigms in research on multilingual education, explaining how the first shift centred on the teaching and learning practices in relation to the specific social context, particularly emphasizing the teaching of minority languages. This shift led to an increased interest in teaching languages as a *second* language, rather than as a foreign language. From the 1990s onwards, a second shift in research on languages in education is noted, during which there was an increased emphasis on the right for all learners to have access to multilingual education from a wider perspective. According to Lo Bianco (2011, as cited in Busch, 2011: 544), multilingual education is understood to embrace a broad spectrum of dimensions, such as intellectual, cultural, economic, social, and civic dimensions. García and Sylvan (2011: 393) also emphasize the multidimensional character of plurilingual education, which encompasses seven principles that promote dynamic plurilingual practices in instruction. These are: heterogeneity; collaboration; learner-centredness; language and content integration; language use from students; experiential learning; and local autonomy and responsibility.

Limassol as a multilingual city

Cyprus has historically had a multilingual and multicultural character since ancient times. This, however, is now more evident than ever before. According to the last census (CYSTAT, 2011), the population make-up of Cyprus today is largely heterogeneous as the country is inhabited by people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Increased inward migration is, relatively, a new phenomenon on the island. In the past, migration in Cyprus used to be associated with large-scale emigration of Cypriots abroad in the early twentieth century in search of jobs and better standards of living; and later, between 1960 and 1975, especially following the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974, to countries such as the UK, the United States, and Australia (Gregoriou *et al.*, 2010: 65). More recently, however, Cyprus has experienced a large wave of inward migration owing to various world events and situations that have sent numerous groups of people in Cyprus searching for relocation opportunities.

Many factors have affected the demographic make-up of the island. The gradual liberalization of the labour markets in the 1990s, the partial lifting of the restrictions of movement across the Green Line in 2003, followed by the accession of Cyprus to the European Union in 2004, are some of the factors that have brought about significant changes in the demographic composition of the island's population. Other factors that have influenced migration trends towards Cyprus are economic ones, including income gaps and labour conditions, as well as its political stability, weather conditions, language spoken, and common colonial background (Gregoriou *et al.*, 2010: 84).

For historical reasons, the most commonly spoken languages in Cyprus in general are Greek, spoken by Greek-Cypriots since ancient times, and Turkish, by Turkish-Cypriots since the Ottoman Era (1571–1878). Under Article 3 of the Constitution, Greek and Turkish are both official languages, but de facto, they are only used as such in the Republic of Cyprus and the occupied area, respectively. The Greek community in Cyprus uses both Standard Modern Greek (SMG) – the official language in Greece – and the Greek-Cypriot dialect, which belongs to the south-eastern Greek sub-group and is considered to have remained closer to ancient Greek because of its isolation. Greek has no legal status in the occupied area. The Turkish currently spoken in Cyprus is the Turkish-Cypriot dialect and mainland Turkish, mainly imported by settlers and troops. Turkish is considered a minority language in the Republic of Cyprus. Many other languages and cultures have also left their mark on Cyprus, such as English, because of the island's colonial history. French was used during medieval times (1192–1489), and Italian during the Venetian Rule (1489–1571). Assyrians, Persians, Arabs, and others also spent some time in Cyprus during different periods, for various reasons, and left their linguistic and cultural marks on the island. All these languages and cultures have enriched the linguistic and cultural mosaic of Cyprus through the centuries.

Limassol is the second largest city in Cyprus, with a population of 235,056 (CYSTAT, 2011), the biggest city on the island in geographical size, and also the largest port in the Mediterranean transit trade. Limassol is a city of inward migration, attracting both EU and third-country nationals. Non-nationals make up 20.6 per cent (48,520) of Limassol's total population (*ibid.*). Foreign populations residing in Limassol are of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Greece and the UK are among the top countries sending immigrants to Cyprus in general, and to Limassol in particular. Other foreign populations hail from countries such as Russia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, Ukraine, Belarus, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, and China (Intercultural Cities, 2011). Therefore, one could claim that Limassol qualifies as an emerging global city – not in the sense of world megacities, such as London and Tokyo, as described by Block (2008) – but as a modern city that accommodates people of diverse origins and cultures, and as a location where a variety of international financial services exist, which dominate the trade and economy of the extended southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions. In Limassol, formal interactions usually take place in SMG rather than in the Greek-Cypriot variety, and this 'distinctive diglossia has led to the characterisation of the city as de-facto bilingual' (King and Carson, 2015). English has a particular significance as an international language of trade, but also because of the island's former British colonial power. Russian is rapidly gaining presence in Limassol owing to the substantial Russian community residing in the city. At the same time, other languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Indian, and Vietnamese are also gaining distinctive statuses in the city of Limassol for various reasons.

The LUCIDE network

This paper presents the findings of a study that was undertaken within the framework of the research project LUCIDE (Languages in Urban Communities – Integration and Diversity for Europe). LUCIDE is a network composed of university and civic partners from 13 European countries along with research teams in other parts of the world. The network aims to depict how communication occurs in multilingual cities, as well as developing ideas about how to manage multilingual citizen communities. The authors of this paper are involved in the project as researchers representing the city of Limassol (Papadima-Sophocleous *et al.*, 2015), which is included in the LUCIDE network of multilingual cities and is classified as one of the 'cities which are officially or overtly bilingual, or which occupy border regions including more than

one language group' (King and Carson, 2015: 23). In defining what the network understands to be 'multilingualism', the distinction drawn by the work of the Council of Europe was adopted. The network therefore employs the terms 'multilingualism' and 'plurilingualism' to distinguish between societal and individual multilingualism. Multilingualism refers to *societal* multilingualism: the co-existence of many languages within a city. Plurilingualism refers to an *individual's* repertoire of languages, or the 'capacity of individuals to use more than one language in social communication whatever their command of those languages' (Beacco, 2007: 19).

The LUCIDE network is interested in multilingualism in the context of the real-life complexities faced by individuals in various aspects of city life. The five overarching topics set out to be explored are:

1. Good practice in the provision of language learning opportunities for immigrants.
How do immigrants learn the language of the host city and how are they helped to maintain their own languages? What happens in schools and also in adult education?
2. Social inclusion.
How does each city support social inclusion through linguistic support in social services, health, etc., and what kind of training is desirable in these areas? What happens about translation and interpreting?
3. Neighbouring languages.
How does each network city provide for communication and cultural exchange with 'neighbouring languages'? What do we mean by neighbouring languages in a city context?
4. Intercultural dialogue.
How does each city promote intercultural dialogue and understanding by celebrating community cultures in common spaces? What is the culture of each multilingual city?
5. New patterns of migration.
Do particular challenges confront each city? How does it respond to this changed perspective and what is the impact on civil society?

In order to ensure a comprehensive and systematic exploration of how languages are encountered, used, and learned, the project focused on five spheres of city life: the public sphere, education, economic life, the private lives of citizens, and urban spaces or the 'cityscape' (King and Carson, 2015: 6).

The network's activities occurred in two phases: a phase of secondary data collection, followed by primary data collection. In the first phase the researchers conducted meta-surveys of recent secondary data on multilingualism and plurilingualism in the network's cities. The aim of this phase of the research was to help create a multiplicity of up-to-date narratives on the multilingual and plurilingual realities of the city, referring to data related to multilingual practices, processes, and products in a specific context, and to develop original research questions for the next phase of primary research. As well as the more traditional academic or policy documents on multilingualism, the researchers were also interested in examples of multilingualism, such as artefacts that illustrated the multilingual reality of the city like websites, advertising campaigns, and public or private documents. The secondary research phase yielded a considerable amount of data that allowed the researchers to generate hypotheses regarding language visibility and audibility, affordances, and challenges (King and Carson, 2015: 7).

The present study

This paper aims to present the findings that emerged from the research undertaken within the LUCIDE project (Papadima-Sophocleous *et al.*, 2015), although it is limited to the results that

have come forth solely in the education sphere in the context of Limassol. The overarching research questions are set in line with the broader network's main research questions, but with a narrower scope confined to the Limassol educational context. Specifically, the study explores issues of linguistic support to non-nationals residing in Limassol, current practices and provisions geared towards immigrant students, educators' attitudes towards multilingual education, and efforts made to cater for Limassol's culturally diverse population within the education sphere.

Findings from secondary data

Various aspects of the educational sphere in the Limassol context were explored, such as the state school system, vocational education, lifelong learning, non-governmental organizations involved in formal or informal education, independent/private and cultural organizations, and societies or associations. Types of data collected during the secondary data collection phase included data on students' native tongues or home languages, students' place of birth/nationality/ethnicity, and languages of education in the 'official' and private school sectors (e.g. international schools). Reporting templates were deployed in order to simplify data recording. These templates captured concise information from data on/about multilingualism and plurilingualism. Templates collected information on: (1) bibliographic information, content overview, methodology, and key outcomes of empirical studies and research reports; and (2) on the authors/creators of examples and artefacts, a description of the example, and its place of creation/observation. In the following section, the major themes that emerged from the secondary data are presented.

The multicultural character of Limassol is, obviously, reflected in the sector of education. Classrooms at all levels of education are now made up of students from several different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, although the student body has become more diverse, the teaching force, called to cater for the needs of culturally diverse students, steadily represents the dominant Greek-Cypriot culture that follows a school curriculum that is largely ethnocentric (Nicolaou *et al.*, 2007: 342).

While intercultural education is an official aim of the Ministry of Education in Cyprus, measures to implement it are unfavourable, with limited possibilities to adapt curricula in practice. Provisions that are made for migrant children include their legal right to access compulsory education and general support; however, undocumented migrant children may have difficulties to do so. Migrant children benefit from some targeted, but limited, measures that include standardized language support that is also provided to migrant pupils' parents. Yet, little is done to encourage migrant children's contribution to society as other countries do; for example, by teaching migrant languages, integrating intercultural elements into the curricula, or reaching out to parents. These are practices that are applied in many other European countries; however, they are met with resistance in the Cypriot educational system (Mipex, 2010: 53).

Limassol's education policy achievement rate is quite low according to the results of the Intercultural Cities Index (2011: 5). According to the Index, very few schools do involve parents from migrant/minority backgrounds in daily school life. One case that could be characterized as good practice is that of St Nicholas Secondary School, where the parents' association hosted in 2009 an intercultural day involving parents from migrant backgrounds as well as migrant associations. Similar events are limited and very infrequent within schools in Limassol. Local and national authorities endeavour to provide educational support with regard to language learning provision. Local authorities run an educational programme (Open School) that is primarily focused on the lifelong education of the citizens residing in the Limassol area. The programme offers, among other things, language lessons (English, Russian, and Greek for foreigners).

In the same vein, various actions have been put forward by the Ministry of Education and Culture, some of which have been supported by national or European funds (e.g. UNHCR, 2010). Actions realized by the Primary Education Directorate include training seminars for primary school educators regarding intercultural education. Actions realized by the Secondary Education Directorate (adult education centres and state institutes of further education) include Greek language courses offered free of charge to children of repatriated Cypriots, to political refugees, and to Turkish-Cypriots. Moreover, Turkish language courses are offered free of charge to Greek-Cypriots. Other actions that function under the auspices of the Secondary Education Directorate include the collection of statistical data with regard to the migrant children in Cypriot schools (country of origin, native language, parents' competence in the Greek language, family socioeconomic status, etc.) In addition, other completed actions focus on the provision of Greek language lessons to third-country nationals (students and adults) and asylum seekers, as well as on the development of valid diagnostic tests to verify Greek language competence.

Furthermore, the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture has devised a guide translated into nine languages – Greek, English, Turkish, Russian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Georgian, Ukrainian, and Arabic – with information on the Cypriot educational system (system regulations, students' rights and responsibilities, etc.) The guide is available online and, as stated in the introduction, it aims to achieve a 'smooth integration of students with different cultures and languages into the educational system and the broader society of Cyprus' (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009). Finally, the Ministry has conducted a research project exploring the attitudes and perceptions of primary school teachers towards third-country nationals and how the latter can be integrated smoothly into Cypriot society. All these actions undertaken by national authorities indicate that intercultural education is a priority area for officials and various stakeholders. However, the Mipex Integration Policy Index (2010: 53) ranks Cyprus very low in the sector of education, compared to other European countries, and underlines that, for the time being, migrant children may benefit from a programme that commits to the smooth integration of non-Greek speaking students with additional language support. This is, of course, a good first step – but more needs to be done, especially in a country where the diversity of languages has been appreciated both officially and unofficially for a long time now. The *Language Education Policy Profile: Cyprus 2003–2005* clearly states that 'all language education must be analysed holistically, to include mother tongue/first language, minority languages (both well-established and recent) and foreign languages; the aims of education should include the promotion of the plurilingualism of the individual; language education policy should promote the inclusion of all linguistic and cultural groups in a society' (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.: 5). Similarly, the *Country Report* prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2004) makes reference to the enrichment of foreign language teaching and learning, and to the importance of language education of bilingual children who are attending state primary schools. According to the report, a more orchestrated approach may be required that would encompass the children's mother tongue and the teaching of the Greek language. In secondary education, the languages that are currently included in the curriculum are: Greek, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Turkish. Some are compulsory and some are elective.

The data gathered from this phase of the research was employed to generate the overarching research questions for the primary data collection phase. The following research hypotheses emerged from this phase: (1) we hypothesize that the provisions made for non-nationals in the education sphere are not adequate; and (2) we hypothesize that there is sometimes a mismatch between policy and practice or daily reality.

Findings from primary data

In the second phase of the research, we sought to question city respondents about the reality of multilingualism and plurilingualism in the city of Limassol and about language policy/practice, visibility, affordances, and challenges. This phase involved the targeted questioning of selected individuals in the sector of education. A qualitative research design was deemed the most appropriate model, given the diversity of research sites and the importance of gathering input from key stakeholders. A semi-structured interview protocol was employed for all interviews, and issues of validity and reliability were taken into consideration when designing them. The interview protocol included 14 questions that were followed in the same order for all interviewees, thus addressing the criterion of reliability (Silverman, 2015).

The interviewer attempted to avoid expressing any bias, or guiding the answers, of each interviewee and instead allowed for the interviewee to express his/her view in depth. An attempt was made to meet Johnson's (2002: 109) ideal goal for the 'informant [interviewee] to become a collaborative partner with the researcher in the intellectual adventure at hand'. A pilot was run for the interview to confirm that the questions were clearly stated and set in a logical order. Aspects of trustworthiness were also taken into consideration, such as credibility and dependability. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), credibility is pertinent to the focus of the research and whether the data and processes of analysis address the intended focus. In this study, selection of participants was made with an eye to include various experiences and thus strengthen the possibility of shedding light on the research question from a variety of aspects. Another aspect connected to trustworthiness is dependability, which relates to 'the degree to which data change over time and alterations made in the researcher's decisions during the analysis process' (ibid.: 110). To this end, the same questions in the same order were posed to all participants. Interviews were administered in a variety of modes: face-to-face, over the telephone/Skype, and via email. In the case of face-to-face and telephone interviews, these were recorded and transcribed. In the case of email administration, follow-up questions were sent to participants, wherever deemed necessary. Interviews were conducted in English in the cases whereby respondents' competence in English was at high level, and in Greek in the cases whereby respondents' competence in English was at medium to low level.

Respondents included two types of individuals: (1) policymaker/influencer and (2) policy-implementer/user-client-recipient. Core interview questions were relevant to key areas identified through content analysis: visibility, affordances, and challenges, as well as context and background questions. As this was a semi-structured interview, additional questions were addressed when new topics came up during conversation. A total of 15 interviews were conducted by the researchers. Respondents were all individuals selected within the researchers' professional network and who were employed in the sector of education, such as primary and secondary school teachers, academics at state and private universities, university administrative officers, and university students. Interviews were tape-recorded, translated (in the case of interviews conducted in Greek), and transcribed verbatim by the researchers. Data collection did not extend over time, thus the risk for inconsistency during data collection was eliminated. A preliminary draft of the findings was described to four interviewees, selected based on their depth of responses, who had agreed to provide feedback on the accuracy and plausibility of the findings drawn from the data. All interviewees confirmed the plausibility of the findings and supported the conclusions of the study.

In order to familiarize ourselves with the data, we first read through all the data set thoroughly. This enabled us to acquire a holistic view of the primary and secondary data during the analysis and to take the context into account. The analysis of the secondary data was performed with the use of the qualitative research software NVivo. When exploring the data we adopted a

somewhat broad, rather than a narrow, approach, capturing and reporting themes yielding from the data. When we had a collection of themes that described the data, we sorted and grouped the codes and used them to formulate patterns that describe the data set. In the following section, the major themes that emerged from the primary data are presented.

The issue of multilingualism is perceived as a sensitive matter by all interviewed participants. The ubiquity of multilingualism was highlighted in many aspects of life, including the educational sector, owing to the presence of many bilingual and multilingual private schools, colleges, and universities. Participants referred to the policy followed with regard to language learning for immigrant students. The policy was criticized, especially because immigrant students mainly attend Greek language lessons and are not provided with opportunities to maintain their native language as well:

In schools, more emphasis should be given on fostering language development of all students. Unfortunately the Ministry of Education has not taken into consideration the importance of native language development. Immigrant students mainly attend Greek language lessons and not lessons in their native language.

(Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology at a private university)

Participants referred to some ways of promoting multilingualism within the educational spectrum through the use of multiculturally oriented textbooks. This was brought up as a good practice by participants. One of the respondents, a private primary school teacher, mentioned that 'in the textbooks various heroes exist with different names and different ethnical backgrounds. The concept of multilingualism is passed from primary school unconsciously.'

Among other practices that have been mentioned as good practices in the educational sphere are: (1) inclusion of the wider community by having children's parents at the school in order to get to know a different culture; (2) organization of games from different countries; (3) collaboration with other countries through EU projects; (4) interdisciplinarity – art and music contests related to interculturalism and equality among all people (e.g. a contest held in public primary schools entitled 'Black or white, all equal'); and (5) including foreign poets and/or painters in the curriculum who bring together the culture of other countries.

Participants mentioned, however, that more action needs to be taken by the local government in order to support the children of repatriated Cypriots in learning the Greek language. One participant who referred to repatriated Cypriots explained that:

Their needs are distinctively different of those of the kids whose parents are of foreign origin and they require some attention to specific areas, e.g. grammar, pronunciation, writing skills. On the contrary, the majority of the children of different origins has already spent a few years in Greek schools and face some learning issues, which do not necessarily have to do with the fact that they are bilingual. My personal experience is that provision to Cypriot children of repatriated families in terms of language skills is very much neglected in comparison to the support offered to other bilingual children in Cyprus.

(State primary school teacher)

Language barriers in the educational context are handled mainly through translation (printed or online) and, in rare cases, human interpreters are also provided. Participants criticized this policy. Specifically, one of the participants, a language instructor at a private university, mentioned that 'students should be exposed to more communication in the language, firstly in speaking and listening. That is, students should be provided with opportunities to "think" in the language and not translate from their language into another.' In handling language barriers in the communication with families, teachers are in favour of human interpretation, which is perceived as a good policy for schools; however, this is not always achievable or feasible. One suggestion put forward by a state primary school teacher was articulated as follows: 'If foreign embassies could provide

translators in schools then communication with some of the parents in the school where I work would have been more efficient.'

Participants also revealed difficulties experienced because of lack of knowledge of Greek. The main difficulty experienced relates to foreign students (or their families) who do not speak Greek and are forced in a short period of time to learn the language in order to attend the classes or communicate with the school (parents need to complete forms in relation to their children's school processes). In case they cannot cope with the language, they fail or even drop out from the educational system:

Last year we had a Russian student who came to our school from a private school in Limassol. She did not know Greek at all; she came to the school because her parents could not afford paying the fees in the private school. She had potentials but the school could not support her, so she left after a month. She could not attend to any class or a group of other foreign students since she had many difficulties. She might have returned to her previous school or she might have dropped the school.

(State secondary school teacher)

The findings from both primary and secondary data indicate that there is some effort on behalf of local authorities to transform the educational system into a more intercultural one; yet, much more still needs to be done in order to achieve this more successfully.

Discussion

Limassol is a city of increasing inward migration, receiving over the past few years many immigrants of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This unprecedented change in the demographic character of the city has happened in a short span of time and has left the people and authorities unprepared to deal with it. Some of the efforts that are made to respond to this new perspective emerge from national initiatives and focus on nationwide rather than citywide migration. However, certain measures have also been taken at a local level, and good practices have been adopted in order to confront the new particular challenges. Immigrant children are provided with the opportunity to learn the Greek language at school through a government programme, which has been adopted for the integration of immigrant non-Greek speaking students into state schools. The Ministry of Education acknowledges that this is a first step; but, although efforts were made to integrate intercultural elements into the curricula, these are being met with resistance (Mipex, 2010: 53). In addition, a number of lifelong learning opportunities are provided to adult citizens through Greek language programmes offered for free to third-country nationals and asylum seekers. Limassol municipalities make efforts to provide linguistic support to their citizens through the Open School Programme offering Greek language training for foreigners (Intercultural Cities, 2011: 12). However, the efforts made do not seem to be adequate or efficient enough to cater for the varied needs of diverse groups of people residing in the Limassol context: that is, immigrant children, adult non-nationals, repatriated citizens, asylum seekers, refugees, and other groups. The programmes offered are solely oriented towards the learning of the local national language and fail to reflect the attributes of bilingual education or plurilingual instruction, as illustrated by García and Sylvan (2011: 385), which support students' plurilingual learning through dynamic plurilingual practices such as collaboration, experiential learning, autonomy, and responsibility.

Findings from both secondary and primary data also demonstrate that there is often a mismatch between policy as it is 'promised', and practice. A noteworthy example is the ambitious goal set by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus to promote the plurilingualism of the individual; however, financial restrictions inhibit the realization of this policy. Along with financial

reasons that may be a serious inhibiting factor, especially in difficult times of economic recession, other challenges are confronted as well. The fact that Limassol used to be a largely homogeneous city with a strong Hellenic ethnic background has made it difficult for authorities and people to respond to the changed perspective quickly and effectively. The adoption of new policies, such as the inclusion of intercultural elements into the curricula, is sometimes encountered with resistance or hesitation, as these policies may be unfavourable to the local dominant, and many times larger, ethnocentric population. Linguistic diversity is not always welcome, even though multilingualism is considered by our participants to be a very sensitive issue in the city of Limassol.

Conclusion

This study provides an overview of the current situation of multilingualism and plurilingualism in the education sector of Limassol. Through an examination of the city's history of language diversity, as well as through an analysis of the city from a contemporary point of view, the study demonstrates current practices in language learning for immigrants, the role of linguistic support in social inclusion, and the changing face of migration in the context of education in Limassol. Through the analysis of the research findings, various suggestions have emerged as well as visions of the city in the future. In general, Limassol needs to create a more pluralistic idea of the city. Success in multilingual education is determined, of course, by a myriad of factors (Vez, 2009: 11). To achieve this, the city needs to reassess its existing policies and practices at both public and private levels. Provisions for linguistic support offered to migrants should be re-examined along with affordances at the level of governance and policy.

In the education sector in particular, city officials might consider recruiting migrant teachers and non-teaching staff in schools. This way, the ethnic background of teachers and school administrators will mirror the ethnic background of students. Schools might also decide to involve migrant students' parents to a greater extent by inviting them more often to school activities and meetings. Providing interpreting services for them would be a great help for parents of non-nationals. Similarly, the translation of important school documents in the students' native languages would facilitate communication and understanding.

Limassol is progressing towards becoming a multilingual city that makes an effort to accommodate its diverse citizens. The actions and initiatives taken serve as a stepping stone to enhancing plurilingualism; however, more needs to be done to overcome the challenges that emerge, especially in a country where the diversity of languages has been appreciated both officially and unofficially for a long time now. Viewing linguistic diversity as a problem rather than as an asset will only lead to the reinforcement of social exclusion (Taylor-Leech and Liddicoat, 2014: 353). Finally, multilingual education should be perceived with a more holistic view, encompassing twenty-first century skills – such as learner autonomy, responsibility, accountability, and learner-centredness – instead of being confined to the teaching of the local language and/or culture. Limassol, together with many other multilingual societies, is challenged to make the necessary provisions in order to support social inclusion and social coherence.

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This paper was published in a special feature on multilingualism in education in cosmopolitan cities, edited by Dina Mehmedbegovic. The other articles in the feature are as follows (links unavailable at time of publication):

- Caporal-Ebersold, E., and Young, A. (2016) 'Negotiating and appropriating the "one person, one language" policy within the complex reality of a multilingual crèche in Strasbourg'. *London Review of Education*, 14 (2), 122–33.
- Ellyson, C., Andrew, C., and Clément, R. (2016) 'Language planning and education of adult immigrants in Canada: Contrasting the provinces of Quebec and British Columbia, and the cities of Montreal and Vancouver'. *London Review of Education*, 14 (2), 134–56.
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- Menghini, M. (2016) 'Multilingualism and language learning: The Rome city report'. *London Review of Education*, 14 (2), 157–73.

Elsewhere in the journal

- Camicia, S.P., and Franklin, B.M. (2010) 'Curriculum reform in a globalised world: The discourses of cosmopolitanism and community'. *London Review of Education*, 8 (2), 93–104.
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