«Εχεις μοι είπείν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἢ διδακτὸν ἢ ἀρετή; ἢ οὔ διδακτὸν ἀλλ’ ἀσκητὸν; ἢ οὔτε ἀσκητὸν οὔτε μαθητὸν, ἀλλὰ φύσει παραγίγγεται τοῖς ἄνθρώποις ἢ ἄλλω τινὶ τρόπῳ
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EDUCATION FOR EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN GREECE.
THE “NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ANAVRYTA” FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Andreas Andreou
Professor
University of Western Macedonia
aandreou@uowm.gr

Sofia Iliadou
Associate Professor
University of Western Macedonia
siliadou@uowm.gr

Ioannis Mpetsas
Assistant Professor
University of Western Macedonia
impetsas@uowm.gr

ABSTRACT

Looking into the subject of education for excellence and leadership in the history of Greek education, the “National School of Anavryta” seems to be a specific case of educational institution, which has hardly been studied in the relevant literature. Founded ad hoc to educate the Crown Prince Constantine, the school of Anavryta applied the educational ideas and school practices instituted by Kurt Hahn in Salem, Germany and Gordonstoun in Scotland, addressing descendants of rich and powerful families of Greek society and, to a limited extent, gifted students from lower social strata. Character building, community service, experiential learning, activities with elements of adventure and danger, public speaking, theatrical performances, physical education and outdoor experiences, all formed a series of extracurricular opportunities that went beyond the realm of the normal curriculum. Those educational innovations, in tune to the educational ideal of Kurt Hahn, placed the Anavryta School in the Round Square group. Though, the “National School of Anavryta” was eventually an expensive educational borrowing based on a foreign innovative educational experiment. A public school that allegedly occurred, to respond to the educational needs of the royal family and the upper socio-economic class in impoverished Greece. A public elitist school heavily criticized for its incongruity with the needs and priorities of Greek people.

Keywords: Education for excellence, Education for leadership, experiential learning, history of Greek education

1. THE FOUNDATION OF THE “NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ANAVRYTA”

The foundation of the “National School of Anavryta” took place in 1949 and was directly related to the desire of the Greek royal family to create a safe educational
and socializing environment for Crown Prince Constantine. From the beginning, the founders, surpassing even at a communicative level the practice of isolating the “blue-blooded” during the educational process, gave the school a strongly elitist profile, which was considered an essential for students embarking on a journey towards excellence.

The institutional framework of the “National School of Anavryta” was dictated by its founding law 1956/1950, which in its first article defined the model status of the school, which targeted boys from the upper classes, of primary or secondary school age, i.e. from about nine to eighteen years old, the age at which they prepared to enter University (Ethnos, 6/12/1950). The school would include two fields of study, of a practical and theoretical nature, while its diplomas would be equivalent to those issued by the public schools (The Royal National Foundation, 1961: 15-16).

The educational aims and objectives of the school were outlined in its first Internal Regulation as follows: “a) the integral development of a virtuous character, b) an overall healthy physique, c) the development of the students’ intellectual and other abilities in the framework of the Greek-Christian tradition, for the good of society and the country” (Anavryta, 1969: 7). By incorporating the constitutional demand for education in the ideological framework of the Greek-Christian culture, the school of Anavryta was proclaiming its intention to provide young people with challenges related to their character, and to religious and physical education.

In any case, a school in which the Crown Prince Constantine would receive his education should not be a common school. The glare of publicity would be focused upon it. Besides, the school was expected to cultivate the Crown Prince’s intellect, his sentiments and his will, and mould his thoughts and actions according to the principles determined by the ideal of kalos kagathos (the ideal of an integrated personality, harmonious in mind and body), as in ancient times. A third important point was dictated by the necessity for the school to provide a Greek-inspired model of education, which would have to combine the enhancement of the glorious past with the perspective of the present. These were all essential preconditions which, according to the founders of the school, could altogether be satisfied by applying the educational ideas and school practices instituted by Kurt Hahn in Salem, Germany and Gordonstoun in Scotland. There were several arguments in favor of adopting such a model of education. The schools in question had been in operation for at least thirty years and presented good results. Addressing the social elite, these schools had already included members of European royal families among their students. Additionally, from a pedagogical perspective, their operation was influenced by Plato’s idealism, which prevailed in Greek educational theory.

It was the King’s National Foundation, which launched the initiative of the “National School of Anavryta” (Empros, 25/5/1949). It is obvious that the Greek royal family were largely affected by Hahn’s educational ideals. Several of its members

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1 Kurt Hahn’s significant influence on the fields of outdoor and experiential learning and adventure education made him a key figure in the development of progressive education (McLachan 1970).
had been sent to Salem in the past to continue their studies, and in 1948, Prince George of Hanover, Frederica’s brother, had become the headmaster of the Salem School. This may therefore explain the idea of founding Anavryta School and also why the royal family supported the educational system of Kurt Hahn. Various sources claim that Frederica was the driving force behind the establishment of the school\(^2\). Whatever the case may be, the members of the school’s educational and administrative staffs have indicated the active role played by Frederica as regards the school’s operation (Georgountzos, 1969: 12, Tsoukalas, 1969: 8, Winthrop-Young, 1970: 116). Within that sense, yet another special group of children were to become “Frederica’s children”\(^3\).

The first headmaster of the “National School of Anavryta” was Goffrey Winthrop-Young\(^4\) from Britain, a man who enjoyed the trust of the Palace, and a graduate of Gordonstoun himself. Winthrop-Young was closely related to Kurt Hahn and he undertook to organize the school on the basis of Hahn’s pedagogical principles. The school, in correlation with the Salem and Gordonstoun schools, wanted to become the third European institution that would faithfully apply the pedagogical vision of the German educationalist (Empros, 21/1/1950). The first teachers of Anavryta School were sent to Gordonstoun, in order to acquire a proper understanding of the educational system they were going to apply.

The school’s building complex was located in the grounds of the Syngros estate, on the pine-covered slopes of Anavryta forest (The Royal National Foundation, 1961: 17). It was a boarding school for boys. The vast majority of boarders were obliged to pay tuition fees, while a quarter of the pupils were said to be granted scholarships by the Royal National Foundation (The Royal National Foundation, 1956: 24-25). Winthrop-Young claimed in an interview in 1950 that “we didn’t choose geniuses, nor perfect characters; if we had done that, the school would now have no purpose” (Empros, 21/1/1950). However, the school mainly addressed descendants of rich and powerful families in Greek society. It was an elite school, which merely included children from other social classes, in order to meet the educational concept that “the sons of the powerful were to be emancipated from the prison of privilege” (Wilson, 1981: 11). This framework of academic coexistence of students from

\(^2\) “The initiative belongs to the Queen who has appointed Mr Young as general headmaster” (Empros, 21/1/1950).

\(^3\) “Frederica’s Children” have been the tens of thousands of the Greek children, who either were caught up in the maelstrom of the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) or became subjects of political expediency and experiments in political socialization within the Cold War. During the last few years a multitude of published studies contribute to a better understanding of the issue from the historical and sociological point of view. Exploiting the perspective of the History of Education, Andreou, Iliadou and Mpetsas investigate the involvement of the Greek royal institutions in the education and socialization of those children and highlight the royal initiatives in dialectical counterpoint to the “Communist peril” within the context of the Cold War. The remarkable and innovative educational projects presented in their survey seem to be an organic part of the anti-Communist agenda and of the overall reconstruction programmes originated, funded and implemented by the American factor (Andreou et al. 2012).

\(^4\) Goffrey Winthrop-Young, a former pupil of Kurt Hahn at Salem and Gordonstoun, served as headmaster of Anavryta School from 1949 to 1958. He later became the second Headmaster of Salem in Germany and the founder of the Round Square Conference, a global association of boarding schools, organized according to Hahn’s legacy (Bagnall, 2008: 39).
different social strata had been dictated by Kurt Hahn himself, who advocated that: “any school cannot build a tradition of self-discipline and creative and enjoyable effort, unless at least 30% of the children come from a home where life is hard” (Warren, 2005: 91).

2. PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

2.1. The daily routine of the school

During the first school year of its operation (1949-1950), the Anavryta school had 3 classes and 29 boarders (10 students per class) (Ethnos, 24/5/1949, Empros, 21/1/1950). Gradually, more classrooms were added to the school and by the end of 1957, 180 students were attending classes there. The students came from various regions of Greece and from Greek communities’ overseas (Winthrop-Young, 1970: 116). They included the Crown Prince Constantine and other members of the royal family who were educated as boarders at the school. Scholarship students of the Royal National Foundation were selected from the poorest provinces of Greece, after being recommended by their schoolmasters and examined by committees set up by the Foundation. The scholarship project began in the school year 1952-1953. It was aimed at top students from Greek rural areas, who were singled out because of their intellect, unblemished morals, good health and excellent physique (Eleftheria, 8/5/1952) -which contradicts the claims of Winthrop-Young, in his interview to the newspaper Empros in 1950.

The school curriculum was set by the Greek Ministry of Education. However, the charter of incorporation of the “National School of Anavryta” allowed for certain modifications, compared with the regular public schools of the same level (Royal National Foundation, 1968: 53). The students’ timetable, on a typical school day, was as follows (Anavryta, 1969: 7):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06.30</td>
<td>Wake-up call, cold shower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06.40</td>
<td>Morning call, wash and tidy up, make bed, get dressed, polish shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.10</td>
<td>Inspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.20-07.40</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.50</td>
<td>Prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.55-08.35</td>
<td>Lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.40-09.20</td>
<td>Lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.30-10.10</td>
<td>Sports for 1st &amp; 2nd grade of high school, lessons for the rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10-10.25</td>
<td>Mid-morning break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.25-11.05</td>
<td>Sports for 5th &amp; 6th grade of high school, lessons for the rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15-11.55</td>
<td>Sports for 3rd &amp; 4th grade of high school, lessons for the rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.05-12.45</td>
<td>Sports for primary school students, lessons for the rest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12.55-13.35 Lessons
13.40 Inspection
13.50-14.15 School Lunch
14.15-15.00 Leisure time - Mentoring / Tutorials for weak students
15.10-16.00 Various activities
16.05 Washing with hot water
16.20 Tea break
16.35-19.45 Study period (with 10-minute breaks at 17.40-17.50 and 18.50-19.00)
19.50 Inspection
20.00-20.25 Supper
20.25-21.15 Studying, recreational activities, English or French night, as well as lectures and various hobbies
20.35 Bedtime (primary school students)
21.30 Bedtime (high school students)

Military order and discipline seem to have pervaded the daily routine of students at Anavryta. Discipline, as a crystallized precept of Hahn’s educational program, even from the Salem period (Ewald, 1970: 37), was considered a prerequisite in order to implement the objectives of the curriculum. In general, the principles of the school were not merely based on knowledge. Character building, experiential learning, activities with elements of adventure and danger, public speaking, physical education and outdoor experiences, all held an important position in the school’s curriculum.

2.2. Extra-curricular activities towards experience-based learning

The extra-curricular activities were considered a surrogate which would help students take charge of their lives. Kurt Hahn’s famous quotation “I regard it as the foremost task of education to insure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self denial, and above all, compassion” (McLachan, 1970; 8), was implemented through a multidisciplinary curriculum, which assigned substantial responsibilities to students, and gave them the opportunity to meet realistic situations from an early age.

The extracurricular activities of Anavryta combined cultural and sports interests. At every opportunity, the royal presence in those activities ensured the involvement of specialized persons and specific professional groups, such as the army, drama schools, sports clubs etc. Athletics was a predominant type of extra-curricular activity. Anavryta school was one of the first Greek schools to attach due importance to the education of youth in sports and athletics and considered them a priority. Hockey, which was the most important team game according to Hahn (Ewald, 1970: 29), and a sport totally unknown in Greece, was one of the centerpieces of the sports program. Swimming, running, basketball, climbing, alpine and cross-country skiing were some of the many sports activities promoted by the
school (Winthrop-Young, 1970: 119).

Among the cultural extracurricular activities, the most prominent were the theatrical performances given by the students. The students rehearsed frequently, putting on dramatic performances in their original language, with plays by Shakespeare (A Midsummer Night’s Dream), Molière (Le Médecin malgré lui), Sophocles (Antigone), Bernard Shaw (Androcles and the Lion) etc. presented at the end of the school year. An open-air theatre was built in the forest of Anavryta to house the students’ extracurricular drama activities (Winthrop-Young, 1970: 119).

Claiming that personal responsibility was one of the major objectives of the school, Winthrop-Young organized a community life for the boarders, and a monitoring system of cadets, ranks and assistants was used to organize the daily routine of the students. The elements of civics were also taught at Anavryta School, through active citizenship within a self-governed community, with the boys themselves electing the new members of the Student Council. Students were responsible for several aspects of the school’s daily operation. In addition, the principles of self-respect, a sense of responsibility and doing service for the community were demonstrated at every opportunity (Winthrop-Young, 1970: 121).

As far as experience-based learning is concerned, which was regarded as a character-building exercise, based on adventure and testing experiences (Andresen, 1995: 227), this was mainly pursued at Anavryta through excursions organized each weekend, which offered students the opportunity to follow orders, test the limits of their endurance and succeed in extreme situations (Winthrop-Young, 1970: 119).

Another aspect of the experience-based learning method, was related to community service, which was “a part of the school ethos” at Gordonstoun (Arnold-Brown, 1962: 40). In addition, for Hahn himself “service meant primarily Samaritan service, directly linked to immediate and dramatic life saving in order to provide for a moral equivalent to war” (Richter, 1970: 210). Such service could appeal to the juvenile soul, by softening and directing aggressive instincts towards more peaceful channels (Röhrs, 1970: 135). Within the framework of community service, students at Anavryta undertook initiatives to provide their services at hospitals, asylums, helped families in need, and even participated in rescue missions involving natural disasters or complex emergencies. A well-known example of this community service was the intervention made by the Anavryta students, in cooperation with students from Salem and Gordonstoun, shortly after the earthquake that destroyed the islands of Cephalonia and Zante in the early summer of 1954 (Frederica, 1971: 214). Prince George of Hanover, Frederica’s brother, led a team of young students to Cephalonia, in order to offer their services to the desperate locals and rebuild the islands from the ruins. About one hundred students from France, Germany, Switzerland, U.S.A., India, Great Britain and Sweden, together with 45 boys from Anavryta School, volunteered to do relief work for a full month. Among the projects undertaken was the reconstruction of the entire coast of Argostoli, which was essential for supplies to reach the island, as well as the rebuilding of elderly people’s homes in the city of Argostoli (The Royal National Foundation, 1961: 41-42).
The students’ intellectual growth was another pivotal objective of the Anavryta curriculum, in accordance with the Greek educational tradition. Along with providing intensive and effective training, the school also offered students extra support teaching in order to help them deal with highly challenging tasks and to improve their chances of achieving excellence. The teaching of foreign languages was also intensive, in order for graduates to have a degree of proficiency in English, which would enable them to study at a University abroad; music was also high on the list of priorities.

3. THE TEACHING STAFF

Extremely impressive is the list of teachers who taught at the National Educational Institution of Anavryta. In general, they were professional educators with a high level of formal and substantial qualifications. Several of them later became University chairpersons, or reached the top of the administrative and educational hierarchy of the Greek educational system. More specifically, the list of supervisory and teaching staff, during the first twenty years of the school’s operation, found in the pages of Anavryta magazine (Anavryta, 1969: 16-21), includes, inter alia, the late Archbishop of Athens, the Heads of the Advisory Boards of the Ministry of Education, during that period and later on, as well as professors who chaired the Departments of Pedagogy, Ancient History, Byzantine History, Greek Literature and Theology at various Greek universities. Furthermore, a search on the Internet shows that most of the teachers at Anavryta presented significant scientific or artistic work, in their own field of specialization.

The vast majority of teachers were employed through the Greek public education system, via the procedure known as “placement for the needs of the department”. At the same time, however, foreign, internationally-renowned teachers were also employed at Anavryta School, mainly to teach foreign languages and music. To claim that some of the most significant and capable teachers from the Greek public education system of that period were gathered at Anavryta school, would not be an exaggeration. The personal testimony of Linos Benakis, a member of the teaching staff, supports this view. Benakis describes the process through which he was appointed at Anavryta, from a school in Epirus where he was teaching. He was approached for this purpose by Linos Politis, a university professor. Benakis also points out that Alexandros Delmouzos, a well-known Greek pedagogue, had asked for Politis’ mediation, “as a request from the Palace”, in order to find a suitable teacher from public secondary education to teach at Anavryta (Benakis, 2000: 26).

In the school year 1949–1950, twelve teachers (Theology-1, Greek Language-1, Mathematics-1, Physics-1, Physical Education-1, Technical Courses-1, Primary Education-2, English Language-3, Music-1) were teaching the 29 students attending

---

5 The relationship between Delmouzos and Anavryta School is yet unclear. Xerotyris claims that, in the mid 50s, Frederica had asked Delmouzos to inspect the School of Anavryta to identify shortcomings and make suggestions about its operation (Xerotyris, 2000: 256).
the school’s three classes. With respect to the number of students attending the school, the student-teacher ratio was 2.4. In the school year 1957-1958, there were 31 teachers for 180 students and the ratio changed to 5.8 (Anavryta, 1969: 16-21). This was obviously an extremely favorable figure in order to improve the quality of the education provided, which was in direct contrast with the mainstream Greek educational system in the 50s. As regards the latter, there is no statistical data and no case studies referring to the number of students and teachers for the school year 1949-1950. There is however a lot of documented evidence, which speaks of an educational system that was inadequate in meeting the needs of its students because of the lack of teachers and the destroyed school buildings after a decade of war (Unesco, 1949: 150, 1950: 105). As regards the school year 1957-1958, data derived from the Statistical Service of Greece refers to a student-teacher ratio of 46 to 1 in primary education (National Statistic Service of Greece, 1960a: 7). In secondary education, there were 37 students per teacher in public schools and 11 students per teacher in private schools (National Statistical Service of Greece, 1960b: vii).

4. CRONYISM AND LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

At the same time, the amount of money spent on the students studying at Anavryta was completely disproportionate when compared with the poverty experienced by students in the public school system. The regular budget and the special budget (Public Investments Account) of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs for the school year 1961-1962 were less than 1.5 billion drachmas for primary and secondary education. As there were 920,309 pupils attending public schools, the total amount for each pupil was about 1,629 drachmas (Unesco, 1965: 105). The situation at Anavryta was totally different however. The institute’s balance sheet for the year 1960 clearly shows that a total amount of 4,001,562 drachmas had been allocated for the school’s operation (obviously, the salaries of teachers who were civil servants and were paid for by the state were excluded) (Minutes of Administrative Board Meeting of the Royal National Foundation, 25th Meeting, 18/9/1963). The total amount for each of the 180 students at Anavryta reached 22,225 drachmas, over thirteen times more than the amount allocated to each pupil in public education.

From the above, it is clear that the critical fields of education, administration and organization favored the effectiveness and quality education of Anavryta School. Its well-defined and tested pedagogical approach, the high-level specialists asked to apply it, its gifted and studious pupils capable of remarkable achievements and competition, the working conditions which resembled a laboratory, the enviable facilities and abundant funding, were all elements which potentially guaranteed the school’s success.

It is mentioned that when Kurt Hahn visited Greece in 1954, he gave a very positive view of the school’s operation, and stated that: “he was happy because he could characterize Anavryta as the best school of the Round Square group”
(Potamianos, 2000: 18). The same view seems to be shared by a large proportion of the school’s alumni -240 students had graduated by 1969 (Tsoukalas 1969: 8), and formed an active alumni association. It is also important to point out that at the turn of the turbulent years, before the imposition of the dictatorship in Greece, the then King and graduate of Anavryta made concerted efforts to apply the Anavryta model in other parts of the country (Kozani, Thessaloniki) (Macedonia, 11/8/1966 and 26/1/1967, Minutes of Administrative Board Meeting of the Royal National Foundation, 44th Meeting, 5/10/1966, & 46th, 10/2/1967), an initiative which did not materialize however, due to the political changes that occurred.

From the mid 50s onwards, the school was criticized by the opposition press and members of Parliament, who raised specific questions about the cost of the school, its sources of funding, its status, and the purported scholarships (Eleftheria, 13/9/1956). Accusations were made of squandering the money of the Greek people, as the Royal National Foundation was subsidized by the state budget and had access to a specific section of the state’s revenue (Ethnos, 25/9/1958). Furthermore, accusations of favoritism and of catering to the personal needs of Crown Prince Constantine were launched, which were fully justified.

Unlike Salem or Gordonstoun, which were fully private schools, the school at Anavryta had been funded to a large extent by the Greek people, and therefore the status of the school was not clear. In fact, at a time when extreme poverty was widespread throughout the country, the establishment of such an extravagant school could be considered an excessive luxury. There had never been any kind of public accountability regarding its financial management, and furthermore, the names of students who had been granted the Foundation’s scholarships had never been published. In actual fact, the establishment of this specific school seems to be associated with the priority given to the fact that the Crown Prince Constantine had to be educated in accordance with a tried and tested educational system, which was quite popular among the royal circles of Europe at that time. Furthermore, several references made to Anavryta School, even by its former teachers or students, characterize Anavryta as the school of the aristocrats or the illuminati.

5. EPILOGUE

From 1949 to 1969, the “National School of Anavryta” had been an educational and pedagogical project of special interest in the history of Modern Greek education. Not only as a model school but also because it applied pedagogical ideals which connected knowledge with nature, with one’s practical needs and inclinations, and with a sense of adventure, since it was a Greek school included in the group of “experiential learning” institutes (Röhrs, 1966). The school had intended to function as a cluster of excellence and to overcome the rigidities of the state educational system regarding the education for excellence and leadership. However, its

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6 On the contrary, in a letter sent to the domestic press, Potamianos claimed that the Royal National Foundation had set up a model school in Anavryta “to provide education for gifted poor students, preferably war victims” (Ethnos, 25/9/1958).
educational approach did not follow a “Greek pattern” and couldn’t even be characterized as a “conservative experiment” (Royal National Foundation, 1956: 24-25). It was an educational borrowing based on a foreign innovative educational experiment, which allegedly occurred, because it was considered appropriate for training a successor to the throne and the upper socio-economic class in impoverished Greece. In any case, the “National School of Anavryta” had been among a limited class of schools pointing toward the reproduction of the social and political elites of the Greek society via their education for leadership.

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BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES

Andreas Andreou has studied Classical Archaeology, Ancient History and Byzantine Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz and he obtained his Ph.D. in Classical Archaeology at the University of Mainz. He is currently Professor at the University of Western Macedonia, where he teaches History and Culture. He has published several papers in scientific journals and books about History and History teaching.

Sofia Iliadou is an Associate Professor in History of Modern Greek Education at the University of Western Macedonia. Her scientific interests focus on History of
Education and Education Policy. She has published several papers in scientific journals and books about History of Modern Greek Education and Education Policy.

Ioannis Mpetsas is an Assistant Professor in “History of Education” at the Department of Early Childhood Education of the University of Western Macedonia. His research interests focus on History of Education and Education Policy. He has published three books, scientific essays and papers in Greek and international conference proceedings.