

# Interwar Greek «school communities»: Recruitment, implementations, and effects

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**ABSTRACT:** During the early 1900s, educational institutions in the United States and Europe underwent a significant transformation. They evolved into environments that fostered democracy, critical thinking, and community life. The establishment of school communities is being pursued, although there exists a discrepancy among educators regarding the definition of this institution. Greece is proactively advancing school communities by facilitating the translation of works by foreign educators, providing teacher training programs at foreign institutions – primarily in Germany –, and conducting teacher training at Normal Schools. This paper focuses on the efforts made by schools during the interwar period to introduce the institution. Specifically, it highlights the significant contributions of “invisible” teachers in Greek Primary and Secondary Education who played a pivotal role in spreading the institution’s influence. Their efforts were instrumental in shaping the educational landscape during this period.

**EET/TEE KEYWORDS:** School community; Interwar period; Greece; Democratisation of education; XX Century.

## *Introduction*

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the new school appeared internationally in various forms and manifestations in the context of the New Education movement<sup>1</sup>. It is the school of the future – in Kerschensteiner terms – which, among other things, puts the students at the center of the educational process and aims to provide rights and cultivate social and civic skills. The new school is democratic. Therefore, in such a school, at

<sup>1</sup> A. Dimaras, *Close the Schools*, Athens, Gnosi, 1985, Vol. 1, pp. 1st'-xz' (in Greek); V.A. Foukas, *The journey of pedagogical ideas: Routes and stations in the history of pedagogy and education (17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, Thessaloniki, Kyriakidis Editions, 2020, pp. 207-256 (in Greek).

least two pivotal principles should prevail: the principle of *creating democratic structures and procedures* (e.g., access to all levels of education, participation of teachers, students, and parents in the educational and decision-making process, school life, self-government of school units, ecc.) and the principle of *creating a democratic curriculum* (e.g., cooperation, participation, decision-making, acceptance of the other, critical thinking, abstraction, ecc.). In this light, both principles are covered by the institution of school communities.

In this paper, we examine the dynamics of school communities in Greece during the interwar period, from recruitment to implementation, and their consequences.

### 1. *Theoretical framework and recruitment in Greek education: An overview*

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Europe saw a deliberate effort to create educational institution-based communities. However, educators were divided on what exactly constitutes a «school community»<sup>2</sup>. For this paper, I will not delve into the historical origins of these communities, which are well-documented in Greek literature<sup>3</sup>. Instead, I would like to highlight a few key points:

(a) John Dewey, a prominent figure in the US Progressive Education movement, believed that schools should be experimental communities where students are encouraged to think critically and creatively, rather than being forced to obey authority. Dewey expressed this view in one of his essays:

to make each one of our schools an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society, and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history, and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious<sup>4</sup>.

Georg Kerschensteiner (1854-1932), a distinguished German pedagogue, drew significant inspiration from the works of Dewey, which he studied meticulously and gained valuable insights from<sup>5</sup>. Dewey's books were made

<sup>2</sup> See G. Kontomitros, *German reformist pedagogy and its effects on Greek education in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, Volos, Volos University Press, 2006, pp. 530-531 (in Greek).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the relevant chapter in M. Papamavros, *The School Community*, Athens, Dimitrakos Publishing House, 1927, pp. 117-123 (in Greek).

<sup>4</sup> J. Dewey, *School and Society*, translated by Moscow Michalopoulou, Athens, Glaros Publications, 1982, pp. 29-30 (in Greek).

<sup>5</sup> The German pedagogue G. Kerschensteiner in his book entitled *The Concept of Citizenship*, which was translated by Evangelos Kakouras, Athens, Rallis, 1926, pp. 7-8 (in Greek) points out: «I confess with great joy and gratitude how many reflections have arisen and greatly benefited me from the deep study of John Dewey's writings (School and Society, Morale Principles, The

accessible to Greek readers through translations in 1924, 1926, and 1930<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, George Sakellariou received his education from esteemed American universities<sup>7</sup>.

(b) Translated by Dimitrios Georgakakis in 1916, Georg Kerschensteiner's *The Concept of the Laboratory School or the School of the Future* received a Greek version that highlighted the significance of student community and self-government in the nation's schools. The book had already undergone three editions in Germany before its translation. Georgakakis's 27-page introduction proposes crucial changes to Greek schools, based on the Laboratory School's tenets, to invigorate them<sup>8</sup>. He notes:

The purpose of the Laboratory School is to make the student, through the widest exercise of his self-activity, independent in all things and to prepare him as a useful member of the society in which he will live and act and of the whole of humanity [...]. For this reason, the Laboratory School attaches great importance to the self-governance of students and the institution of cooperative communities, as excellent means of educating students and preparing them for a harmonious and fruitful life in real society<sup>9</sup>.

The author distinguishes between two types of reforms: internal and external. Internal reforms rely on the cooperation of teachers and do not require significant expenses or legal decrees<sup>10</sup>. The recommended internal reform involves implementing a system of self-governance for students, with close supervision from school directors and teachers<sup>11</sup>. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this institution, Georgakakis suggests reading Paul Conrad's *Elements of*

Educational Situation, The Child and the Curriculum) that I knew in recent years. I am convinced that I am on the right path and I will continue».

<sup>6</sup> In 1924 *The Laboratory Schools* was translated by Michail G. Michaelides, in 1926 *The School and the Child* was translated by Kostas Sotiriou, and in 1930 *How We Think* was translated by Georgios Katsamas.

<sup>7</sup> G. Sakellariou, who was a director of the Marasleio Normal School of Athens and a professor of Psychology at the University of Thessaloniki, studied for one semester at Princeton University Philosophy, Ethics, Psychology of Education, General Psychology, and Experimental Psychology and practised in the Psychological Laboratory of that University. In New York, for three years he studied at the Faculty of Philosophy of Columbia University and the Higher School of Education of the same University Sociology, Moral Philosophy, Philosophy of Education, Comparative Education, Pedagogy, Psychology, Child and Adolescent Psychology, and many other courses for the organization and administration of schools. At the Medical School of the same University, he studied neurology with practical exercises in his laboratory. So, in 1922 he was named Master of Arts of Columbia and in 1923 he received a diploma in psychology from the same University. See. V. Foukas, *The Faculty of Philosophy of University of Thessaloniki (1926-1940): Persons and programs, development and innovation*, Thessaloniki, Kyriakidis Edition, 2016, pp. 263-266 (in Greek).

<sup>8</sup> G. Kerschensteiner, *The Concept of Laboratory School or the school of the future*, translated by D.M. Georgakakis, Athens, Publisher I. Kollaros, 1916, p. 25 (in Greek).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

*Pedagogy and its Auxiliary Sciences*. For further reading, Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster's *Schule und Charakter*<sup>12</sup> is an appropriate reference book in German and French translations. These works are endorsed by Alexandros Delmouzos, a renowned pedagogue and representative of educational demoticism, as essential resources for students studying at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Thessaloniki. Both books are included in the syllabus of his courses<sup>13</sup>.

(c) Spyridon Kalliafas (1885-1964)<sup>14</sup> the successor of Nikolaos Exarchopoulos at the University of Athens, translated Swiss teacher C. Burkhardt's work into Greek in 1922. Kalliafas had the opportunity to study in Zurich from 1916 to 1919, where he first came across Burkhardt's work. In 1926, Kalliafas published a condensed version of the translation<sup>15</sup>. Throughout the interwar period, Kalliafas' translation laid the foundation for establishing student communities in Greek schools. The impact of Kalliafas' translation during this time is evident in various instances.

(i) The philologist Andreas Papatheodorou notes:

In 1924, an attempt was made to establish student communities in Veria [=a city in Central Macedonia, west-southwest of Thessaloniki]. At that time, I was young, enthusiastic about new ideas, inexperienced, and only equipped with Burkhardt. With an ukaz [=an order or regulation of a final or arbitrary nature], I transformed my class into a community overnight. However, I did not give the community complete freedom, which made it possible for me to easily revert to the previous regime when the children asked for the strict curator I had appointed. Although my attempt failed, it was certainly beneficial because it taught me to moderate my approach. I continued to talk about community but turned water in my wine<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> This book was translated into the Greek language by N. Karachristos in 1926.

<sup>13</sup> Foukas, *The Faculty of Philosophy*, cit., pp. 295-298.

<sup>14</sup> See P. Nikolopoulou, *The theoretical foundation of Pedagogy as an independent science in the discourse of the Pedagogues of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Athens (1947-1967)*, in S. Bouzakis (ed.), *Panorama of the history of education: Aspects and views*, 2 voll., Athens, Gutenberg, 2011, Vol. 2, pp. 575-579 (in Greek).

<sup>15</sup> «The forthcoming second edition of the translation of the Life of a Student Community is shorter than the first; the costs of printing have increased in recent years to such an extent that, in order not to make the book inaccessible to teachers, I have reasonably accepted the publisher's recommendation to omit what can be omitted without prejudice to the value of the book. But another reason persuaded us to accept this request of the publisher without hesitation: Our translation is undoubtedly one of the best practical guides of self-government, but it also shows a great deal of study and exaggeration of, for example, the number of laws and the number of rulers, ecc. For this reason, benefit rather than detriment may result from the omission of parts in which such excesses appear. There is no harm in saying that ordinary events of the order referred to many times before are repeated» (C. Burkhardt, *The life of the student community*, translated by Sp. Kalliafas, Athens, D. and P. Dimitrakou Publishing House, 1926<sup>2</sup>, p. 5 (in Greek)).

<sup>16</sup> Andr. Papatheodorou, *From theory to practice (The student community in its implementation)*, Tripoli, The Papyrus, 1931, p. 22 (in Greek).

(ii) The philologist Antonios Antonakos in Aigio [= a city in Achaia near Patras] writes: «I had in mind all the pedagogical books dealing (in Greek) with this issue, but especially those of Wyneken, Delmouzos and Burkhardt»<sup>17</sup>.

(iii) The philologist Stamatia Patrikiou-Valagianni in Thessaloniki emphasizes that: «the institution became known to all of us in 1922 when the director of Marasleio Normal School Sp. Kalliafas translated from German the book entitled, *The Life of the Student Community*»<sup>18</sup>.

(iv) The pedagogue Michalis Papamavros, in a way mocking the teachers, points out:

The schools' community is not transferred, not transplanted, but it is rooted and grows and bears fruit according to its conditions [...] In the last two or three years, many teachers and professors have fallen into this mistake, driven by their enthusiasm and love for every young person in their work, as soon as they learned how Marasleio Normal School in Athens transformed into a school community and as soon as they read the translation of Burkhardt's study on the communal life of the classroom, decided to make a community<sup>19</sup>.

Within a mere four years, Kalliafas provided a compelling rationale for a second edition of Burkhardt's book. He observes that the swift depletion of the first edition gives a misleading impression of the level of interest among education ministers in crucial educational subjects that have recently gained prominence in the Greek education landscape. The idea of a school community has become very popular in education<sup>20</sup>.

(d) Works on the pedagogical work of the German pedagogue Hermann Lietz (1868-1919) first published by Alexandros Delmouzos and then by Michalis Papamavros in the *Bulletin of the Educational Association* (1920 and 1922)<sup>21</sup>, in which they present their experiences from school life at the School Village of Haubinda and the school community that operates there. It is important to acknowledge that Papamavros's 1927 paper entitled *The School Community* extensively incorporates the ideas of a German pedagogue. This citation reveals how foreign educational philosophies shaped academic principles. This influence is evident throughout his work:

<sup>17</sup> Ant. Antonakos, *School of Life and Student Society*, Athens, I. D. Kollaros, 1931, p. 235 (in Greek).

<sup>18</sup> Archive of the 1<sup>st</sup> Gymnasium for Girls in Thessaloniki, Act IX, 21-11-1927, p. 20 (in Greek).

<sup>19</sup> Papamavros, *The School Community*, cit., p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Burkhardt, *The Life of the Student Community*, cit., p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> See M. Papamavros, *Dr. Lietz and his work*, «Bulletin of the Educational Association», vol. 8, n. 1-4, 1920, pp. 103-115 (in Greek); M. Papamavros, *The life of the student community. Three examples from Dr. Lietz's Village Schools*, «Bulletin of the Educational Association», vol. 10, n. 1-4, 1922, pp. 227-233 (in Greek).

What I write is exported and studied, but above all, it is my exported experience. I also had experience in German schools, especially in H. Lietz's School Village in Haubinda, Thuringia, where I spent time as a teacher, but above all experience, acquired at Marasleio Normal School, where I have been its deputy director ever since, which became a model and organized into a community<sup>22</sup>.

In the same year (1927), Papamavros translated the work of the German pedagogue and collaborator of H. Lietz, Gustav Wyneken (1875-1964) entitled, *School and Youth*. This book presents the twenty-year course of operation of the Wickersdorf's free school community (1906-1926).

(e) In the second augmented edition of the *Introduction to Pedagogy*, in 1927, the Professor of Pedagogy of the University of Athens, Nikolaos Exarchopoulos, includes, as he mentions on the cover, «a distinct section on the Laboratory School» of approximately 60 pages (out of a total of 340 pages). In this section, he focuses on how students manage responsibilities and interact with peers. The information provided here is based on pages 329-335 and has been gleaned from two noteworthy works – *What spirit should guide our education* by Sp. Kalliafas and *School and Character* by Nikolaos Karachristos. Although educators may already be acquainted with Exarchopoulos' 1913 publication, it's worth noting that the segment doesn't touch upon the valuable contributions of Delmouzos and Papamavros<sup>23</sup>. Exarchopoulos emphasizes the importance of communities and self-government but also acknowledges the limitations and restrictions of the institution<sup>24</sup>. The text lacks specific instances of practical application and does not refer to any international examples<sup>25</sup>.

Under these influences, during the interwar period, specific efforts were made to introduce the institution of the school community and student self-government. The most systematic ones come from the pioneers of *Educational Demoticism*<sup>26</sup>, they are the result of experience, and in their entirety, they are known – therefore, I will not refer in detail to their application – while others

<sup>22</sup> Papamavros, *The School Community*, cit., p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> St. Patrikiou-Valagianni notes: «Bibliography on the institution of the Communities is given to us by Mr Exarchopoulos in his Introduction to Pedagogy, p. 80 [...] Mr Exarchopoulos writes a little about the Communities in his aforementioned book in 1913» (Archive of the 1<sup>st</sup> Gymnasium for Girls in Thessaloniki. Act IX, 21-11-1927, p. 20).

<sup>24</sup> «One of the most important means by which the objectives of the Laboratory School are pursued is [...] the coalescence of students into cooperating communities and their self-governance. In this way, work and life as a whole are regulated proportionately and prepared for life in society, and the disciples have a very wide stage towards free spiritual energy. Through the system of self-government, pupils take over the administration of the school community in their hands, as the sovereign group, enacting the laws to be observed and supervising their implementation» (N. Exarchopoulos, *Introduction to Pedagogy*, Athens, Dimitrakos House, 1927<sup>2</sup>, p. 329 (in Greek)).

<sup>25</sup> It is content with the general statement that in America, France, England, Switzerland, and Germany the institution is applied.

<sup>26</sup> *Educational Demoticism* [Εκπαιδευτικός Δημοτικισμός in Greek] emphatically supported the need for reform to support education in the modern Greek cultural reality and to serve the needs of the present with basic requests for the teaching of the modern Greek language

– less known but equally important for the diffusion of the institution – come from the “invisible” teachers of practice.

## 2. *The first systematic implementations in Greece*

The most famous and, perhaps, the most systematic implementation of the institution in Greece during the interwar period was attempted at the Marasleio Normal School in Athens (1923-1926) by Alexandros Delmouzos and Michalis Papamavros, who jointly applied the principles of the Laboratory School and organize a «School Community», emphasizing the importance of the community system for school life, which shapes social virtues. The establishment and operation of the school community in Marasleio Normal School are presented extensively in the work of Delmouzos entitled, *The First Attempts at Marasleio 1923-1926* (pp. 133-304).

According to Papamavros, the institution introduced at Marasleio Normal School and the implementation of Unified Centralised Teaching were the most notable reforms of the era. These changes significantly improved the overall operation of the School Community<sup>27</sup>. Papamavros considers this community an adaptation, not a copy or imitation, of the Greek conditions in the School Community of Haubinda. Regarding the course of implementation of the institution, Delmouzos notes:

I approached the task with a methodical strategy. While it has been noted that I tend to display excessive hesitancy, I recognize the importance of balancing impatience and eagerness when shaping something that is still undefined. However, attaining mastery of mental discipline to give it structure requires time and cannot be hastened<sup>28</sup>.

A school community was established by Miltos Kountouras at the Girls' Normal School in Thessaloniki (1927-1930), as described in Dimaras' two-volume book *Close Schools*. As Dimaras outlines, there are three main aspects of Kountouras' vision for the school community. First, he believes that morning prayers are an effective method of teaching children the value of collaboration and working toward a common goal<sup>29</sup>. Second, the school community should attend the weekly Thursday meetings to share their values and aspirations under his direction. According to Kountouras, his ultimate goal is to build a community that upholds ethical principles and continuously strives to improve,

<sup>27</sup> M. Papamavros, *Teaching Principles of the Laboratory School: Twenty letters to a Greek teacher*, Lamia, K. I. Mavroidi Press, 1930 (in Greek).

<sup>28</sup> A. Delmouzos, *The first attempts at Marasleio Normal School 1923-1926*, Athens, Dimitrakos Publishing House, 1929, p. 256 (in Greek).

<sup>29</sup> Dimaras, *Close the Schools*, cit., p. 148.

even if it takes time<sup>30</sup>. Finally, Kountouras emphasizes the importance of a school environment that encourages teamwork through group discussions, research, and active participation<sup>31</sup>.

Delmouzos evaluates Kountouras' performance at the Girls' Normal School in Thessaloniki. According to Delmouzos, this esteemed institution allowed every student to showcase their unique abilities and collaborate towards personal growth and benefiting society. The school promoted a lively and open dialogue environment, complemented by individual and group-based initiatives. The community united in celebration, emphasizing mental resilience as the foundation of a robust education. Every student had the opportunity to display their strengths while working towards self-improvement and making a positive impact on others. The school encouraged lively discussions and group projects, celebrating together as a community with a focus on mental fortitude<sup>32</sup>.

For Michalis Papamavros (1890-1962), deputy director of the Marasleio Normal School (1923-1926) and director of the Lamia Normal School (1928-1933), the school should cease to serve social inequalities and aim at educating and group teaching – not individual and competitive teaching. To create a type of person, critical, active subject, and creator of his history. The author of the book entitled *The School Community* (1927), who translated Wyneken's works<sup>33</sup> and was a professor in Haubinda, organized community life at the Lamia Normal School. According to Papamavros, essential virtues such as solidarity, social empathy, a sense of responsibility and duty towards our fellow humans, and a sense of justice should be fostered by schools, even more so than families, as they are the highest educational influence. Undoubtedly, the most efficacious approach to achieving virtues like helpfulness, fairness, and safety is through individualized experience. Papamavros has proposed a compelling solution to this predicament by introducing the concept of School Communities. These communities operate like miniature societies and adhere to general pedagogical principles. These principles involve nurturing children's

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>32</sup> A. Delmouzos, *Studies and less important works*, 2 voll., Athens, 1958, Vol. 1, p. 100 (in Greek).

<sup>33</sup> Papamavros translated into the Greek language in 1927 G. Wyneken's *School and Youth*. G. Wyneken together with P. Geheeb is the instructor of the *Free School Community*, in which pupils and teachers engage in creative activities in an attempt to establish a new culture. For more details, Ch. Charitos, I. Kandila, G. Kontomitros, *The Normal Schools of Lamia and Karpenisi: Contribution to Local Educational History*, Athens, Gutenberg, 2002 (in Greek). Papamavros in the preface to the translation notes: «I know that with this translation, which I give to our educational world, I will upset some spirits. I know that the author with his radical ideas, both in education and in the whole organization and work of the school, will shock and shock many. But it seems to me, how it will help to create pedagogical life in our country as well» (G. Wyneken, *School and Youth*, translated by M. Papamavros, Athens, "Athena" Publishing House, 1927, p. 5 (in Greek)).

well-rounded development<sup>34</sup>, granting them freedom within reasonable limits<sup>35</sup>, emphasizing individuality and collaboration<sup>36</sup>, and inspiring self-improvement<sup>37</sup>.

Theodoros Kastanos (1888-1932) applies the principles of the Laboratory School to the Normal Schools of Kastoria (1926), Karpenisi (1927), and Florina (1929), which he directs. He publishes his pedagogical theory and its implementations in the book entitled *The Laboratory School in theory and practice* (Thessaloniki 1929), in which he discusses new ways of structuring and operating school spaces, to favour the child's unfettered expression. The book went through two editions within two years. Regarding the institution of the community, Kastanos notes:

The process of a child growing and becoming independent does not negate the importance of education. A child is not an isolated entity and cannot exist alone. They are a part of a larger society, including their family, school community, and homeland. They must learn how to function as a contributing member of society for the betterment of all. Education is a service to society<sup>38</sup>.

According to Kastanos, the child at Laboratory School learns «the sense of responsibility and conscience in duty»<sup>39</sup> and the single and best way to achieve this is to create «cooperating communities»<sup>40</sup>. The creation of such communities «in the beginning should be small, with few members, and which can become denser little by little, as children become accustomed to common work, until in the end a working community is formed by all the children of the class»<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> «Children must live their own lives freely [...] If we take a closer look today, we will see that we have no children. We have only small old people, small people, homunculus. Our child does not live like a child. He does not live his own life, a childhood life, with his special psyche and his special interests, but he feels himself as a small person and tries in his life to imitate adults. And the factors of education until today considered it as such, that is, as a small man, and as such and educated it. The childhood was despised and fought and still fought wherever they can» (See Papamavros, *The School Community*, cit., p. 16).

<sup>35</sup> «Children are not angels, as Rousseau believed. Therefore, the second principle that the school community must follow, namely freedom for children, must accept certain restrictions [...] But the school is another organization. There, it is not only the teacher who should have the initiative but every child. There the child should not be feckless, a slave to the will of the teacher, but on the contrary, his action should be accompanied by his will. By the education of violence, we can never educate true characters, since it denies any development of the individual will» (*ibid.*, pp. 20-21).

<sup>36</sup> «The Community shall be an association of like-minded individuals with the same aim» (*ibid.*, p. 29).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-42.

<sup>38</sup> Th. Kastanos, *The Laboratory School in Theory and Practice*, Thessaloniki, M. Triantafyllou & Co Press, 1929, p. 62 (in Greek).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

Organization of a «student community» is also attempted at the Experimental School of the University of Athens (1929-1933) inspired by the supervisor of the Professor of Pedagogy Nikolaos Exarchopoulos, its director George Palaiologos, and Professor Dimitrios Tsiribas<sup>42</sup>. Exarchopoulos in 1930 urged the teachers of the Experimental School of Athens University:

It is crucial for every class to embody a sense of self-regulation and to be a part of a larger school community that includes students from all classes. While individual classes may focus on topics that align with their respective interests, the school as a whole must address broader concerns that affect the entire institution. To establish a strong community, it is crucial to implement measures that align with Pedagogical Science and ensure that students are fully equipped to assume responsibility for adhering to and enforcing these measures. The formation of the school community should not be rushed or conducted carelessly<sup>43</sup>.

Palaiologos expresses reservations regarding emerging trends and advocates for strict limitations and regulations to be placed upon them. He posits that a society with a high proportion of young individuals may struggle to attain full maturity and develop into an adult society. Furthermore, he asserts that education alone cannot provide a complete understanding of the world without being shaped by wider societal influences: «The school follows and monitors the overall cultural creation, being an intrinsic force and not a primary and groundbreaking one»<sup>44</sup>. Thus, he favours the “examples” of American schools, whose student communities do not express a subversive spirit, but aim to addict students to the classroom, self-government, and inspire a sense of responsibility<sup>45</sup>.

More groundbreaking is the effort undertaken by Delmouzos at the Experimental School of the University of Thessaloniki (1934-1937). One of the most important innovations applied to it is the establishment of pedagogical sessions<sup>46</sup>, in which issues related to the purpose of education, the purposes of

<sup>42</sup> «The second of the general principles, set at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> year by the Supervisor of the School, Professor N. Exarchopoulos, was through the institution of communities and self-government the aim and social education of the pupils of the Experimental School so that they could fulfill their duties and obligations during their social life, as a result». See D. Tsiribas, *Implementation of the institution of self-government in the Experimental School*, in *The operation of the Experimental School during the years 1929-30 and 1930-31*, Athens, Dimitrakos Publishing House, 1933, p. 173 (in Greek).

<sup>43</sup> *The operation of the Experimental School during the years 1929-30 and 1930-31*, cit., pp. 189-190.

<sup>44</sup> See G. Palaiologos, *The new primary education in Germany and the problems of modern pedagogy*, Athens, 1926, p. 144 (in Greek).

<sup>45</sup> «The institution of student communities and student councils in many countries, especially the Anglo-American ones, is not intertwined with the pursuit of profound social upheavals, but rather aims at addicting students to order, self-administration and inspiring a sense of responsibility». (*ibid.*, p. 145).

<sup>46</sup> Part of these pedagogical sessions is utilized in the article by N. Varmazis, A. Delmouzos and the *Experimental School of the University of Thessaloniki*, «New Paideia», vol. 14, 1980, pp.

establishment and operation of Experimental Schools developed, the general pedagogical principles that should govern them, the method of teaching, the role of the teacher and the importance of school life.

According to Delmouzos, learning without agency cannot be understood and completed. For this reason, the principle of agency concerns both the student and the teacher:

The primary goal of education is to encourage self-motivation and initiative in children, and this same objective should be a prominent feature of school life. By stimulating children's self-activity, they become more engaged with their studies. Encouraging a child-driven school environment involves empowering students to take control of their interests and school life organization. Motivating them to establish individual and collective objectives and collaborate to accomplish them is crucial. Teachers should act as mentors and facilitators, guiding students in identifying needs and challenges, promoting analytical thinking, and ensuring their well-being<sup>47</sup>.

The concept of self-government is directly linked to self-motivation in students, which is also associated with the freedom of children:

Self-government means freedom. In other words, children should be free to govern themselves. However, self-government is an end and even an extracurricular one since the purpose of education in general is to prepare children for their self-existence and self-government<sup>48</sup>.

Delmouzos asserts that achieving success in education hinges on prioritizing the student and acknowledging the pivotal role school life plays in this pursuit. Mere acquisition of knowledge or ideas does not suffice; students must also master the art of application and taking action. The establishment of regulations, boundaries, and constraints within the school environment enables the socialization of students and the development of extracurricular opportunities<sup>49</sup>. This framework allows for both individual and group action, empowering students to take ownership of their experiences<sup>50</sup>. Consequently,

25-33 (in Greek) while the minutes of the meetings are published and transcribed in the journal «Chronica of the Experimental School of the University of Thessaloniki», vol. 1, n. 2, March 1992 and in N. Terzis, *The pedagogy of Alexandros Delmouzos: Systematic examination of his work and action*, Thessaloniki, Kyriakidis Brothers Publishing House, 2006<sup>2</sup>, pp. 256-328 (in Greek). Also, N. Varmazis, *The Experimental School of the University of Thessaloniki: Its establishment and operation in the context of the educational policy of Eleftherios Venizelos*, in *Educational policy in the years of Eleftherios Venizelos*, Athens, Ellinika Grammata, 2007, pp. 255-261 (in Greek) and Foukas, *The Faculty of Philosophy*, cit., pp. 325-336.

<sup>47</sup> See Varmazis, A. *Delmouzos and the Experimental School of the University of Thessaloniki*, cit., 10<sup>th</sup> Minutes of Meetings, 14-12-1934.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> «We will not be able to say that we have succeeded in our work if next to the good and methodical work of the lesson we do not build a worthy school life [...] Our school life should be spontaneous, flowing naturally and effortlessly from children, their world should manifest and their own needs should be satisfied» (*ibid.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Minutes of Meetings, 9-11-1934).

<sup>50</sup> «The lessons do not satisfy all the interests and needs of the child, only a part. A richly

the role of the teacher is shifting from one of authority and omniscience to that of a supportive observer and guide<sup>51</sup>.

Finally, Delmouzos understands differently the role and value of punishment or discipline of students. The discipline of students stems, he believes, from the inner need of the student and from the degree of satisfaction of this need by the teacher and the educational system in general. In this light, punishments to students are kept to a minimum, and the educational process proceeds seamlessly and creatively for everyone:

To prevent the need for punishment, it is essential to address the root causes of the disorder. These may include factors such as the school's program, methods, and overall environment failing to meet the mental and physical needs of students, excessively limiting their freedom, or improperly handling relationships between students and teachers. It is important to approach punishment as a means of correcting behavior, rather than publicly shaming the student, and to accurately assess the situation before taking action. By promoting self-governance, we can work towards a future where punishment is no longer necessary<sup>52</sup>.

### 3. *Implementations by Greek teachers of Primary and Secondary Education: A few examples*

Primary and secondary education teachers have implemented various techniques in their classrooms. Here are some examples of these implementations that have proven to be effective. I aim to provide primary and secondary education teachers with six effective ways to establish and assess school communities.

The teacher and later inspector Tzanos Tsangias<sup>53</sup> was the first who translate Celestine Freinet's book entitled *No more Primers* [=books for teaching children to read]-*The Printing House at the Elementary School* (1933) with a preface by Freinet himself, with whom he has correspondence<sup>54</sup>. The schools that acquired

organized school life that will provide numerous opportunities for group and individual action will complement the work of the lessons. This integration is essential for the education of children» (*ibid.*).

<sup>51</sup> «The role of the teacher, as long as the work is going well, will increasingly be to withdraw, and while what is done in the classroom will be his creation, it will be as if he is not there» (*ibid.*).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 15<sup>th</sup> Minutes of Meetings, 22-1-1935.

<sup>53</sup> I warmly thank my colleagues Professor Despina Karakatsani and Dr. Pavlina Nikolopoulou for the information and material they gave me, as relevant work is being prepared.

<sup>54</sup> Freinet's letter is published at the beginning of the book dated 23-1-1929. Freinet writes: «I clarify my proposal. You saw how our children write in La Gerbe magazine. It is enough to ask yours to tell you, their lives. how they eat, how their parents live, their surrounding nature, animals and plants, local customs, ecc. And I am sure that everything they write will be interesting, as long as it is their true expression, the very life of the children». See Célestin Freinet, *No more Primers-The printing house at the Primary School*, translation-adaptation by J. Tsagkias, Athens, Kontomari Publishing House, p. 8 (in Greek).

a printing house are those of Kalogreza and Eleftheroupoli in Nea Ionia, a refugee area in Athens. Tsangias also edited the fortnightly magazine entitled *Our Life* (1930-1933), consistent with Freinet's ideas. He, also, was vice-president of the Greek Teachers' Federation in 1928. I focused on implementing self-government in Atsipopoulo's two-class full primary school in Rethymno Creta from 1923 to 1924. The starting point was his reflection on the rigor of the school and the role of the teacher:

I have always seen these [=students] docile and disciplinary when I was present, but I also doubt whether they were such in my absence, I often wonder whether it would not be preferable to relative freedom which would bring better results without any coercion, would bring closer the soul of the disciple to that of the teacher, would put an end so that the school would not nevertheless be regarded as torture of souls and bodies as torture of souls and bodies as true redemption<sup>55</sup>.

Tsangias after the implementation of the institution from October 1923 to May 1924, concludes that:

Self-government can only be applied to the upper classes of primary schools from the 4<sup>th</sup> and generally to middle education, but only after the following classes have been accustomed and prepared in simple subjugation and not terrorism [...]. So that self-government, properly implemented, will become how future citizens will become aware of their duties and rights, above all the first through which conscientious loyalty to the public will take root in tender souls, as the Swiss Burkhard says, which prepares for patriotism [...] But for its successful implementation, a radical change is needed in the existing spirit of Despotism prevailing not only in our schools but also in their families [...]. So, when the pupils love their little community, their class, and their school, there is no doubt that when they leave it, they will also love the greater community, the state because they will have acquired the will to act according to the laws, the social spirit they will actively participate in public life to which they will devote themselves with all their strength and soul. Above all, they will not become victims of any political transaction because they will have become "truly moral characters"<sup>56</sup>.

Between 1927 and 1937, Efstathios Athanasiadis (1888-1978)<sup>57</sup> worked as a teacher at the village Kastania Primary School in Veria. His teaching

<sup>55</sup> [J. Tsagkias], *Implementation of the principle of self-government to the full Primary School of Atsipopoulos*, «Prometheus the fiery», vol. 2, n. 29, March 1, 1926, p. II (in Greek).

<sup>56</sup> [J. Tsagkias], *Implementation of the principle of self-government to the full Primary School of Atsipopoulos*, «Prometheus the fiery», vol. 2, n. 36, 15 June 1926, p. II; [J. Tsagkias], *Implementation of the principle of self-government to the full Primary School of Atsipopoulos*, «Prometheus the fiery», vol. 2, n. 37, July 1, 1926, p. II (in Greek).

<sup>57</sup> Athanasiadis is motivated, as he notes, to implement the institution by the inspector of the primary schools of Veria, Patistas, who at the end of the pedagogical conference of 1927 on the subject of the student community and the school of work, advises him: «Gerostathis, I think you should apply to your school 'the working school' or the 'student community'». He reads, in addition, Kerschensteiner's book, *The School of the Future*, and Delmouzos' book, *Demoticism and Education*, 1926. See Eust. Athanasiadis, *The Self-government in my school* (1952), in N.

style was unique in that he combined Freinet's approach to correspondence with the involvement of the student community. This approach promoted self-management, direct democracy, and cooperation among the children, creating a pedagogy focused on these values. Athanasiadis strongly believed in self-governance principles based on equality<sup>58</sup>, freedom<sup>59</sup>, and fair justice administration, all of which formed the foundation of his school's philosophical framework<sup>60</sup>.

In 1927-1928, Athanasios Relias, a teacher and later inspector of primary schools, introduced the concept of student communities at the second mixed (= school for boys and girls) primary school in Alexandroupolis (=the largest city in Greek Thrace). He published a small booklet in 1930 dedicated to Konstantinos Lagoumitzakis, the inspector of primary schools<sup>61</sup>. He believes that educational settings promote communal bonds, help children acclimate to societal norms, and emphasize collaboration. All members must collaborate willingly and appropriately to attain optimal outcomes for the collective<sup>62</sup>. Social feelings are cultivated: «They would develop sympathetic feelings that would educate them morally. They would develop in them a sense of responsibility and understand the importance of work both for them and the community»<sup>63</sup>. Contribute to the

Balis (ed.), *The ideology of education and the learning of freedom*, Athens, Kastaniotis, 1979, pp. 347-348 (in Greek).

<sup>58</sup> «Self-government means democracy and democracy without equality cannot be understood. All of us, even today, still have the idea that woman is inferior to man. So, my first concern was to eliminate this idea and inspire others. There is no difference between man and woman» (*ibid.*, p. 348).

<sup>59</sup> «My students had a great deal of freedom, which perhaps exceeded the limits of real freedom. If one entered the tradition before the lesson began, one would see many children painting on the boards, others doing handicrafts and plastics, others reading or writing, others warming up in the heater, others playing dominoes, and others playing in the yard [...] I was interested in how each child was busy with the job they chose and I didn't care about the kind of job they did [...] Freedom is a good that will be gradually acquired by the community. We betide us if we start giving freedoms from the first days. Children will become our tyrants» (*ibid.*, p. 351).

<sup>60</sup> «The punishment by the teacher is considered arbitrary and unjust, but the same does not happen with the punishment by the children themselves. In my school, the punishment was not imposed by certain children (children's court), but by the general assembly» (*ibid.*, p. 356).

<sup>61</sup> Lagoumitzakis became an inspector during the Venizelist period, after 1917. Until 1920 he was a temporary inspector in Thrace. In 1920 he was appointed permanent inspector in Kilkis and until February 1931, when he appeared as inspector of Thessaloniki, he served in the regions of Alexandroupolis and Kavala. In 1935 he was dismissed by a Constitutional Act by the Minister of Education. See in detail Ch. Tzikas, *The educational role of education inspectors and the educational conferences of Thessaloniki in 1932*, in S. Ziogou, V. Foukas (edd.), *Schools and Teachers of Thessaloniki (19<sup>th</sup> century-Interwar period): Portraits of benefactors and teachers*, Thessaloniki, Despina Kyriakidis, 2013, pp. 221-245 (in Greek). «Our work will be more flexible and practical, without omitting anything from the current school curriculum. Lagoumitzakis not only willingly allowed us to do this, but also enthusiastically assisted us with our work». See Ath. Relias, *The applied Laboratory School (taken out of the life of Greek children)*, Athens, Dimitrakos Publishing House, 1930, p. 7 (in Greek).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

development of society: «If they all worked willingly and selflessly, they would be able to do many good things for the whole school and make it such a good school that it would attract people's attention and be proud of their parents»<sup>64</sup>. The self-motivation, freedom, and critical thinking of students are cultivated:

The featured work produces notably more impressive outcomes in contrast to the current educational system. Allowing children, the liberty to engage in self-directed endeavors frequently results in unexpected achievements, provided that the teacher is adept at directing their work, comprehending their emotional states, and answering any questions they may pose. The current education system restricts children's cognitive abilities to the teacher's knowledge and reprimands them for abstract reasoning, as Ferrierre posits. On the other hand, fostering agency opens up a vast realm of knowledge for the teacher, which they must not only acknowledge but also explore alongside their pupils<sup>65</sup>.

Relias, however, does not hesitate to point out negative points from his implementation:

A few days had passed since the election when I found the children gathered in the hall during a free period. Curious, I asked them what was happening. One child replied, 'Sir, we brought down the President and we'll do it again.' I felt the need to respond and expressed my disappointment that they had misunderstood my previous teachings and believed that their only role was to elect and depose Presidents. I told them that their attitude was not conducive to building a strong community<sup>66</sup>.

Andreas Papatheodorou, a philologist who was a student of Dimitris Glinos, a philosopher, educator, and politician, at the Pedagogical Academy in 1926<sup>67</sup>, has highlighted important concerns regarding the execution of school or student communities as an institution:

The notion of self-governance is widely acknowledged and indisputable. Nevertheless, it is crucial that we shift our attention towards the successful implementation of this principle, and how it can aid us in our pedagogical responsibilities, along with the overarching goals of education<sup>68</sup>,

Papatheodorou refers to his first failed attempt to implement the institution, considering that this early effort helped him subsequently to improve and perform more in the subsequent applications he pursued:

In 1924, there was an attempt to establish student communities in Veria. While the community was eager to embrace new ideas, their inexperience left them with only Burkhardt

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>67</sup> «Although I lived in the student community for a short time as a simple member and not as a guide at the Pedagogical Academy in 1926, this of course greatly enhanced my experience» (Papatheodorou, *From Theory to Practice*, cit., p. 28).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

as their guide. I endeavored to create a communal atmosphere in my classroom but soon discovered that granting too much independence was not a wise decision. The students themselves requested the return of the strict supervisor whom I had previously dismissed. This mistake taught me the importance of making compromises and I subsequently reverted to our former routine. [...] When I arrived in Dimitsana (= a medieval village, located in Arcadia on the Peloponnese in southern Greece) in 1925, I aimed to continue experimenting with my work. Despite my limited experience and past hardships, I proceeded with caution and made thorough preparations. Eventually, the children were so interested in what I was doing that they asked to form a community. With the approval of the entire community, I took the next steps<sup>69</sup>.

Assessing his effort and making his self-criticism, he boldly notes:

It is important to recognize that achieving perfection in self-management without external aid is an unattainable goal. It is an ideal that remains out of reach. I have yet to reach the desired level of confidence in my work, nor have I welcomed every positive opportunity. Similarly, not all children in the community have benefited positively, and there are those whose negative attitudes we are grateful have not influenced others. Without the support of the community, where might these children end up? It is certainly something worth pondering<sup>70</sup>.

However, he acknowledges several positive elements of his institution:

The children have acquired enough courage to defend their opinions with decency, they have cast off the servile that one usually has in front of one's superior socially or spiritually, but they have learned to accept correct foreign opinions regardless of where they come from. The discussions they had during the meetings and classes, their manner, their courage, their struggles in the elections to the Board, their obedience to the laws they put in place, and their efforts to secure their freedom when they were in danger, give me the right to believe that they entered into the spirit of political and social life enough. Their parliamentarians, if the name is appropriate, their struggles, judgments, and criticisms in group and individual work, have greatly helped to develop their judgment to a degree that would not have been easy with daily lessons. They learned to make proper use of their vote, which would have been fortunate for the nation if all its citizens had known. The teamwork they did taught them that the cooperation of the various members of a society is imperative. Individual work has shown them that to assert oneself one must work, toil, fight, and thus achieve the esteem of others. [...] It is very characteristic that they keep a pleasant memory of their community life with interest, they ask about the progress of the community that succeeded theirs, and they often write to me about their student life asking for advice and moral support<sup>71</sup>.

In 1927, the Association of Teachers of the Girls' High School of Thessaloniki decided to draft a Regulation for the operation of the School Community. The individual responsible for delivering the presentation is Professor Stamatia Patrikiou-Valagianni. Valagianni is the one who will be delivering the

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 108.

presentation<sup>72</sup>. As I have been informed by the school's minutes of meetings since 1924, the school community has been applied to the Girls' High School of Thessaloniki with good results<sup>73</sup>. In her presentation, Valagianni refers to the relevant literature and starts with Binet's view that school is preparation for social life. She points out that «the pupil must become accustomed to the recognition of duties and rights towards his peers», and to this end, the best way is self-government: «so that the maintenance of order depends on the pupils themselves, who establish the laws to be observed, see to it that they are applied and that offenders punished. To fulfil the purpose of self-government, children must be given freedom and opportunity to act»<sup>74</sup>. In Valagianni's submitted and teacher-approved regulation, there is no mention of female students receiving penalties or courts. She believed it could be harmful to both the school's order and students' relationships, which should be as friendly as possible. That's why she chose not to include penalties and courts in the Statute Law<sup>75</sup>. The Head of the High School, Professor Antonios Toussas, and the teaching staff, which include professors Stamatia Patrikiou-Valagianni and Stavroula Marketou, have all signed the statutes.

The philologist Antonios Antonakos, who studied at the Pedagogical Academy during the period 1924-1926<sup>76</sup>, admired Educational Demoticism and the principles of the Laboratory School since he characterizes<sup>77</sup> the introduction of the new school in the Greek educational reality as a «school revolution», adopts the institution of school communities and attempts to implement it. It should, of course, be noted that he differs in the terminology he uses, referring not to «student communities» but to «student society»:

The student society is not a subordinate entity and should be considered an integral part of the school. It is the foundation upon which the school is built. Matters such as the course schedule, curriculum, and teaching methods are all under the purview of the student society. It should not be referred to as merely a community, but rather a student society, as that accurately reflects its significance and role<sup>78</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> Stamatia Patrikiou-Valagianni from Kefalonia is a graduate of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Athens. In 1924 she came to Thessaloniki with her husband, Em. Valagianni, philologist. In 1929 Stamatia Patrikiou-Valagianni left public education and took over the management of the private school called Hellenic Schools for Girls Stamatia Patrikiou-Valagianni.

<sup>73</sup> «We introduced this institution to our school three years ago, and now our communities are successfully implementing it» (Archive of the 1<sup>st</sup> Gymnasium for Girls in Thessaloniki. Act IX, 21-11-1927, p. 22).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>76</sup> See Ant. Antonakos, *Two and a half years teacher in Maroussi*, Athens, "Athena" Publishing House A.I. Ralli, 1929, p. 3 (in Greek). Maroussi is a suburb in the northeastern part of Athens.

<sup>77</sup> «A school revolution has taken place in recent years. The old school, the school of knowledge, collapsed, and the new school, the so-called working school, replaced it. And this revolution reached our country» (Antonakos, *School of Life and Student Society*, cit., p. 5).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

It positively values the institution not only for students and teachers but more broadly for society, homeland, and humanity. Characteristically, he points out:

There are neither few nor small benefits that come out of the institution of student communities, benefits to children, to teachers, to society, to the country, to humanity [...]. Children with a community spirit are humanized. They shed their defects and acquired social virtues [...]. The teacher with the social life he creates in his students, with this moral education, which he provides them, seeing them from day-to-day worth more than he believed and becoming worthy of respect and respect, with all these and more, finds more correctly the meaning of his mission and sweetens and beautifies his life from all the sweetness and beauty of school life and all the sweetness and beauty of the child's soul. With the spirit of community, the boasting and arrogance of the school of knowledge are gone, hypocrisy and falsehood and mutual espionage and mistrust are gone, relations between pupils and teachers are simplified with honesty, and school life becomes more natural, richer, freer, and more humane. However, this moral progress of pupils has a direct benevolent effect on society, especially tomorrow's, which will be the youth of today's schools. And the moral welfare of society will be followed by the prosperity of the country, the state, the nation, and at last humanity not at all, with one word the happiness of man on earth will follow<sup>79</sup>.

### *Conclusions*

The institution of the school community – with all that it entails – frees students from the shackles of the traditional school, leads them to experience and learn, to seek knowledge, and opens their wings beyond the authority of the textbook and the teacher. In my paper, I provided a few “illustrations” as evidence, even if they do not represent the entirety. The primary obstacle was the inadequate research and instructional techniques utilized by the teachers involved. It is gradually beginning to realize that the one who decides on classroom issues is no longer only the teacher. He co-decides with the students. Children assume roles and responsibilities related to the smooth functioning of school life and manage situations without the constant supervision of the teacher. So, to the question of whether the establishment of a school community is pedagogically correct, I resort to the answer of an interwar educator, Kostas Sotiriou, who answers, of course, in the affirmative, justifying that with the institution of school communities:

Social sentiment developed, solidarity exercised, student friendship and devotion to each other developed, a sense of responsibility cultivated and students live, move, and act as living and active members of their small society, self-motivation cultivated, dogmatism, verbalism and the authority of the teacher crushed, which destroy curiosity and spontaneous manifestation, outdoor teaching and contact with nature are promoted, and the school

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278.

space changes, as the school is no longer limited to the suffocating atmosphere of the four walls. A genuine childhood experience was established<sup>80</sup>.

The school communities of the interwar period became “places” of democracy and the development of critical thinking. They start with the child (his interests, inclinations, psychology) and end up in his own life and the democratization of education. The school communities in Greek primary and secondary schools during the interwar era offered students a chance to break away from the restrictions of traditional education. The school community aimed to foster independent learning, encouraging students to explore beyond the curriculum and expand their horizons. The school community needed not to be merely symbolic or mimetic.

The examples to which I have referred, indicative but not exhaustive, prove that the institution found ground for implementation, despite the imperfections and difficulties encountered mainly due to the practical inabilities of teachers to implement it and due to lack of training and appropriate bibliographic references and examples. Delmouzos emphasizes:

The student community cannot grow overnight like a mushroom [...] A student community needs time, years, steady steps, intensive effort, and above all teachers with universal excellence and a strong hand<sup>81</sup>.

However, it is clear from what preceded it that during the 1920s and 1930s<sup>82</sup>, there was a laborious effort towards the creation of school communities. Although not flawless, these initiatives present a distinctive viewpoint on the establishment of schools and the duties of educators and learners in the process of education.

To conclude, I would like to share a quotation from the Primer entitled *The High Mountains*<sup>83</sup>:

In the past, there was a cherished educator who had established a reputation in the rural community. When the weather was pleasant, he would gather the youngsters and teach them beneath the shade of different trees, such as pine and plane trees. They delved into books and discovered the world around them, including various animals like cows, sheep, goats, and chickens. The educator ensured the children learned about the environment, sky,

<sup>80</sup> K. Sotiriou, *The High Mountains. Reply to the Commission*, Athens, “Athena” Publication House, 1923, pp. 47-61 (in Greek).

<sup>81</sup> A. Delmouzos, *Demoticism and Education*, Athens, M. Saliverou, 1926, pp. 128-129 (in Greek).

<sup>82</sup> Athanasiadis states that the institution was applied until 1937: «So we spent a decade until the order came (of the Gendarmerie Commander!!) to abolish the Community, and we abolished it» (Athanasiadis, *The Self-government in my school*, cit., p. 357).

<sup>83</sup> A children’s novel by Zacharias Papantoniou, published in December 1918 as a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade reading book in the context of the Venezelian Language Education Reform of 1917 which introduced the demotic language to the Primary school.

and everything in the world. They became knowledgeable about trees, birds, and insects, and even had the opportunity to stargaze on clear evenings. The educator also encouraged them to reflect on their observations and emotions about the world in their hearts and minds. It was a captivating and informative experience for everyone involved<sup>84</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Z. Papantoniou, *The High Mountains*, Athens, National Printing, 1919, pp. 169-170 (in Greek).