

Research into the public administration and policy procedures in the domain of culture in Cyprus with a special focus on the translation of literature

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Abstract

The writer, as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctorate project in 2005, entitled: 'An Evaluation of the Administrative Processes and an Enhancement Strategy for Policy Formation at the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus', undertook extensive research into the administration procedures at the Cultural Services and their responsibility to formulate cultural policy with particular focus on the literature domain. As the intention was to study a specific governmental department's activity, the most suitable research approach was the case study. The recommendations yielded out of this piece of research are highlighted in this paper and the current situation is focused on in comparison to procedures followed in the past. The importance of translation of works of literature as a bridge between civilizations and its effect in bringing different cultures together is also studied in this paper, which is additionally examining the contribution of the state in Cyprus to the translation of works of literature by Cypriot writers .

Key words: Culture, administration, policy, translation, literature, mobility

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In Cyprus, the main government body for the handling of cultural affairs is the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture, established in 1968. It deals with all the contemporary forms of art as well as with the spectrum of the cultural heritage area apart from the antiquities. The writer, followed a Professional Doctorate Program of Studies at the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University, UK. As partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctorate project in 2005, entitled: 'An Evaluation of the Administrative Processes and an Enhancement Strategy for Policy Formation at the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus', the writer undertook an extensive research into the administration procedures at the Cultural Services and their responsibility to formulate cultural policy. As the intention was to study a specific governmental department's activity, the most suitable research approach that should be used was the case study.

An inquiry about the Cultural Services without excluding any of the available research methods was focused on. A survey¹, in-depth interviews with key individuals and with artists and writers, structured and unstructured observation and literature reading were methods which enabled the insider-researcher to gather as much data as possible and as related as possible to the objectives that had to be met. Thus both the quantitative and qualitative information acquired and cross-checked, i.e. triangulated through the different methods of data collection, helped to produce valid, objective and interesting findings, elaborate and evaluate them and eventually recommend ways of improving existing malfunctioning at the Cultural Services due to administrative inefficiency and inconsistency in policy matters.

The research revealed interesting findings that regarded mostly problems in the administrative processes and the formulation of Cultural policy at the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Delays in handling applications by writers or artists or the public for governmental support either moral or financial, lack of communication among cultural officers, assignment of tasks inappropriate to the role of cultural officers, confusion in the assignment of responsibilities, mistrust in the role of experts who were members of advisory committees came to surface. Also, problematic criteria or inexistent criteria that determined who and what to support, problems in governmental assistance regarding issues dealt with at the literature section e.g. poor promotion of book-reading and translation, low attendance at literary events, problematic advertisement of the department and its services which lacked uniformity among its sections, limited and scattered collaboration with the media which resulted in very low media coverage, unspent money from government budgets, the minimal role of the Arts Council, in some cases low attendance at the “Kypria” International Festival, problematic state support to religious groups and ethnic communities, lack of clear policy for the decentralisation of culture etc came to surface.

All the above areas of the cultural sphere in which malfunctioning was detected of a severe or mild degree were analyzed and the outcomes of this research were evaluated. This led to the suggesting of recommendations by the researcher which can be adopted by the department in order to improve its efficiency and the manner in which it shapes policy for such a sensitive aspect of the society in Cyprus, the creation, preservation dissemination, and mobility of art. The recommendations are listed below:

- a) Senior Cultural Officers should keep an eye on the performance of their employees and call for assistance when needed.
- b) Open dialogues with seniors and collaboration with others would solve the problem of confusion in the assignment of responsibilities to Cultural Officers.
- c) Delays in dealing with applications by citizens should be controlled by the Director of the Cultural Services in collaboration with the Directors of other departments at the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- d) Alternative schemes of state support should be examined by Cultural Officers when applications do not comply with the criteria of a specific scheme.

¹ The Survey used as one of the research methods was entitled “ A survey in cultural life in Cyprus and on the public’s view on cultural activities offered by the state”. The identity of the Survey was the following: Population: all the inhabitants of the government-controlled area of Cyprus (age 16 and over), Method: random stratified sampling, Data Collection Tools: telephone conversation with close-ended and open-ended questions, Number of Successful Telephone Calls:331, Non Response Rate:22 (6.6%), Sample Size:n = 309 persons, Dates:10-12 December, 2003

- e) The organization of cultural events should be assigned to professionals from the private sector.
- f) Decisions by experts should not be questioned but respected and professionals should terminate their services as members of advisory groups if they apply for governmental support themselves.
- g) Research on cultural life in Cyprus and the public's views about the Cultural Services' schemes of support should be conducted more frequently.
- h) Criteria have to be implemented for all available schemes of services and strictly followed. Problematic criteria should be reshaped.
- i) Cooperation between the public and the private sector needs to be encouraged.
- j) A specific budget for translation projects should be included in the state budget for culture and writers should be urged to apply for the financing of the translation of their works.
- k) Literary events should be made more interesting for the public.
- l) More money should be spent on the advertising campaigns of the Cultural Services and on the campaigns of organizations sponsored by the Cultural Services and a Public Relations section should operate within the Cultural Services department, ensuring amongst other things, an even and uniform media coverage of cultural events.
- m) The 'Kypria' festival should be better advertised and it should include more events in Limassol, Larnaca, Famagusta and Paphos.
- n) Decentralization of culture should be improved and further developed.
- o) Expenditure accountability on the part of Cultural Officers should be a must.
- p) Measures of financial and moral support to the Turkish community and the religious groups of the Armenians, the Maronites and the Latins should be taken and cultural diversity should be promoted.
- q) The Arts Council should not only be an advisory body but take action and see that its recommendations are taken into account by the Cultural Services department and implemented.

Lastly, a long term recommendation was that "There is a direct need for a 'Directorate of Culture' that could encompass cultural activity in its totality". The fragmentation of responsibility for culture and its diffusion in different ministries prevents the shaping of a common vision for culture. Integrated administrative arrangements and a cohesive cultural policy are needed to give culture the place it deserves in Cypriot society. This 'Directorate' can run with its own Permanent Secretary parallel to a 'Directorate of Education' under the same Ministry, i.e. the Ministry of Education and Culture. Cyprus may now start a process towards this long-term aim with proposals to the House of Parliament to expand the Cultural Services department and eventually turn it into a Directorate.

The above recommendations were presented in the sense that they were feasible, i.e. they could be put into practice in reality and in a reasonably short time period.

Assessing the courses of action taken by the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture from the completion of the above piece of research until 2012, we note that several practices have indeed been promoted, like for example the assigning to professionals from the private sector of the organisation of cultural events and this is done to a considerable extent, in other words cooperation between the public and the private sector has been encouraged. Cultural diversity has also been promoted but there is still a lot to be done. In the report of the European Panel of Examiners presented by Christopher Gordon in 2004 for the European Programme of Cultural Policy Reviews, on the issue of cultural diversity, it was highlighted that one of the most

crucial issues in the enormously complicated situation of Cyprus was the fact that culture appears in general to have a low profile in relation to integration and social inclusion agendas².

As there are coexisting multiple cultural identities throughout Europe, the reconciliation of difference and the acceptance of diversity is a must for the establishment of a peaceful and coherent society.

However, what is indeed very important regarding the literature field, is that additionally a specific budget for translation projects has been included in the state budget for culture. I would like to focus for a while on the background behind the whole issue of the translation of works, what is the policy in the EU on the matter and the contribution of the state in Cyprus to the promotion and mobility of Cypriot writers and their works.

Writers of literature are “artists”, as they have to master the use of the language from an artistic perspective in order to convey meanings that provoke feelings not just of ephemeral nature. Feelings can be always experienced through reading, as literature refers to the past, the present and the future and in the majority of cases literature is a lonely artistic procedure as it does not require a number of individuals to be produced. This artistic procedure has to be arrested, examined and elaborated in order to contribute to knowledge and if it is arrested, examined and elaborated by a group of people living in a country who happen to read literature, surely this is not enough as it does not contribute to universal knowledge but only to local knowledge. This further enhances the need for funding the works of translation of literature and dissemination of works.

If the improvement of literature and the further ‘unlocking’ of creativity is considered an aim to states in Europe and elsewhere, then ‘material’ and ‘moral’ support to writers is a must .

1. Writers’ opinions on the promotion of literature by the state in Cyprus

Writers’ opinions on the level of promotion of culture by the state in Cyprus and on the support they receive, in ethical or financial terms, depends on the issue of how often they apply to the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the State’s service responsible for the support of cultural affairs, for financial support. This in its turn depends on two facts: a) the quality of information they get from the state about available schemes of support by official announcements and b) the clarity of guidelines that artists and writers receive from Cultural Officers on how and when to apply for available assistance.

2. The ‘Culture 2000’ Program

The degree to which writers have been informed about the ‘Culture 2000’ program, now extended to “EU Culture program 2007- 2013” offered by the European Union and especially about each ‘Call for Proposals’ since its establishment in February 2000, also contributes to the writers’ support. The writers’ interest in participating in this program is also important, together with their eagerness to foster an intercultural dialogue and a mutual exchange of cultural products between European countries.

2.1 “Conditions for Creative artists in Europe” Seminar

More than a decade ago, during an important and lucrative seminar held by the Swedish Ministry of Culture in Visby in 2001, entitled: “Conditions for Creative artists in Europe”, the Greek writer Demetris Nollas emphasized the importance of everybody having access to the European Literature of languages ‘not widely-

² The issue of culture appearing in general to have a low profile in relation to integration and social inclusion agendas ‘touches directly on democratic participation, human rights, the changing roles of women, the questioning of religious orthodoxy and an increasing materialistic society’ as stated in the report of the European Panel of Examiners

used'. He remembered the words of nobel prize winner poet George Seferis, who referred to the same subject in the early 1960's (in 1963). 'Translation into another language never repeats the original, but starting from this an equal poem to the original is created. Such are the difficulties of poetical exchanges. These exchanges are necessary for the benefit of communication and solidarity between people, whatever their language may be.' Nollas preferred the term 'not widely used' rather than the definition 'small languages'. As Nollas says, 'language is not only a tool of communication, but it is a vehicle of culture. Its code, apart from what it illustrates, is something more'. The author's creation searches for a reader and if the reader doesn't speak the same language as the author translation is needed, otherwise the text is useless. Most often we focus on books or texts written in "big languages" ignoring the wealth of languages "not widely used" or "small languages", such as the Greek language for example. The potential to meet with the culture of a country means the potential to comprehend the way of thinking of its people, to come across issues deeply inherent in that country, particularities in social settings and cultural values or to discover common values among different countries. Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990), view translation as a process involving the negotiation of meaning between producers and receivers of texts and consider translating as a communicative process that takes place within a social context. Today, this social context may very well be the internet.

And let me at this point stress the importance of the use of the internet. The book and literary texts on the internet, as cultural products promoting free thought, the dialogue, knowledge and exchange of ideas may surpass conditions of language isolation and separation rendering our acquaintance with other worlds possible.

Helena Vaz Da Silva, president of 'Centro National de Culture', Portugal, in her speech under the title 'Society Needs its Artists, Artists Need Society' during the aforementioned seminar in Visby, shared a critical approach on the effectiveness of the European Commission's "Culture 2000 program". She stated that the EU had to 'raise the budget and convert the program into a simple one, which it wasn't'. Artists who wished to enter the program were 'monsters', she believed, since they played the game of the market as 'half artists, half businessmen'. She went on to argue that cultural actors took more frustration than satisfaction out of the 'Culture 2000' program in form at the time and that many chose to ignore it.

Da Silva proposed an ideal 'Culture 2000' program. According to her, it should cover:

- 1) Mobility
- 2) European Events
- 3) Details about what subjects, what and how many partners, how many countries, what methodology would be left to the cultural actors
- 4) The Jury should be asked to judge exclusively on the quality of the projects
- 5) There should be more transparency and better results.

Members of the workshop from many countries including candidate countries testified to the unsatisfactory situation of self-employed writers outside social security benefits and pensions. An extremely large number of writers are really poor.

2.2 EU Funding on Books, Reading and Translation

According to the Commission's policy for the funding of translation projects in the first years of the establishment of the "Culture 2000" program it was planned to be given to approximately fifty projects for the translation of fiction (literary works) written after 1950 by European authors and priority was given to works written in the less widely-used European languages or translated into these languages (including regional languages and candidate countries' languages).

2.3 EU Funding on the translation of Cypriot literature until 2004

Literary translation plays an important role in enhancing intercultural understanding. One of the objectives of the 'Culture 2000' program of the European Commission is the transnational dissemination of culture and the movement of artists and their work. Apart from the main sector of cultural activity highlighted each year, funding is offered for translation projects with priority given to works written in the less widely-used European languages or translated into these languages. EU funding for translations regards annual cooperation projects and multi-annual cooperation agreement projects. Cyprus entered the 'Culture 2000' program in 2002. Before that, Cyprus was invited to participate in the program but as it had not been able to activate the governmental mechanisms to work towards the achievement of its participation and pay the fee, it lost the opportunity to participate.

3. 2nd Symposium of Translation of Cypriot Literature organized by the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus

During the 2nd Symposium of Translation of Cypriot Literature organized by the Cultural Services which took place in November 2001, it was stressed by the majority of speakers that there was a need for more works to be translated in other languages so that Cypriot literature would travel to other countries and be made known internationally. 'In many countries publishers do not dare to take risks in publishing translations of Greek or Cypriot poetry but would rather publish translations in English, Italian, French and German poetry as demand for literature from those countries is higher', as José Antonio Moreno Jurado said during his speech at the symposium, agreeing with the idea that "big languages" are usually preferred instead of "small languages". Thus the state's responsibility to make the literature of Cyprus known abroad is huge and surely the formulation of policy to promote translations internationally must be urgently promoted.

4. Research

Andis Panayiotou (2001) conducted a very useful piece of research entitled 'The English Translations of Cypriot Poetry, Historical Account-Statistics'

According to his findings, while there were 188 translations of works of Cypriot poets who wrote in the Greek language, only 13 folk poets or poets who wrote in the Cypriot dialect saw their works translated. This is perhaps due to the difficulty in translating dialects. Also, there are poets the works of whom have never been translated, 177 who wrote in the Greek language and 222 who wrote in the Cypriot dialect. As a result, he concludes, 'the public and private sector have to think seriously and act accordingly so that the whole wealth of Cypriot poetry (and literature in general) will be presented internationally'.

In another research undertaken by the speaker in 2004, entitled: "An evaluation of the administrative processes and an enhancement strategy for policy formation at the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus", most of the writers (total number of writers asked: 27), when asked regarding the level of state support, the question: 'Do you consider the support offered by the state through its department of culture adequate?' 55.5% admitted that it was low. To the question 'What else could be done by the state to assist writers?' a substantial proportion of them (nearly 50%) proposed the state's support in the translation of their works. Additionally, 94.8% of the writers in Cyprus when asked about the state's assistance to them said that they needed higher sponsorships and 50% proposed the financing of events to present their work to the public.

The proposal of writers themselves for their works to be translated into other languages coincided with A. Panayiotou's findings that 399 (177 in the standard modern Greek language attitude and 222 in the Cypriot idiom) poets' works had never been translated and with the fact that there was no specific government budget to be spent on assisting translation projects. Also, the state's encouragement of writers to participate in EU translation projects should be a primary goal.

5. Translation of Cypriot Literature today

Today the landscape has changed significantly. The Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture in Cyprus have introduced a budget that is allocated specifically for translation projects. This budget has contributed enormously to the mobility of writers and their works and thus to the promotion and dissemination of the literature of Cyprus abroad, furthering the development of intellectual works as an aim.

The EU Culture program 2007-2013 has also been extended, following the "Culture 2000" program offering funding opportunities for the translation of European fiction. The minimum available grant is €2.000 and the maximum available grant is €60.000, for the translation of up to 10 books. The purpose is to stimulate the widest circulation of European literature among European citizens, by supporting the translation of high-quality European literature into the different languages of the countries participating in the Culture program. Eligible applicants are not individuals but publishers who wish to translate works written in a European language to another European language provided that those works have circulated in books. The EU Culture program 2007-2013 Contact Point is now under the responsibility of the TALWS Development Organization a Private Law Legal Entity founded in 2000. The Foundation is fully harmonized with European Union directives. Within this framework, it provides a solution towards decentralization as well as the potential to unburden the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture, acting in parallel within a civil society. Interested parties can apply for EU budgets through the TALWS Development Organization which helps applicants significantly making application procedures appear more simple. What I have been informed by the Director of TALWS Foundation is that for the past years there have been no applications for support to the EU Culture 2007-2013 program by Cypriot publishers for the translation of Literature and this is something that has to taken seriously as available EU budgets remain unused resulting in less works travelling to other countries, less of our literature being known to other Europeans, more of our literature staying within the closed boundaries of the island of Cyprus.

6. Conclusion

Summing up, the '*ripple*' of literature is indeed profound and extended, we all have experienced the effects on us of a good literature text; this interaction with the writer by reading his/her book, his/her experiences, emotions, all of which cannot be separated from the influence of culture can help adding to who we are, what we feel, what we do; let us take advantage of the wonderful tool of translation and add to this *ripple*.

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