

School Archives and their Potentials in Teaching: Aspects of Greek Reality

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Abstract : *In Greece, school archives are no more considered only as the fundamental documents of a school which are absolutely necessary in administration but they are appreciated also as valuable tools for the teachers in their efforts both to highlight the history of a particular school or the function of certain educational institutions and to construct the educational memory. Thus, the nature of our school archives, the evaluation of their documents and their use in teaching, especially in the secondary schools where the organization of the archives is more systematic within the scope of research projects, are some the points this paper is focused on.*

Keywords: *School archives, educational research, school culture, educational memory, teaching.*

I. SCHOOL RECORDS, SCHOOL ARCHIVES

It is well known that records are society's tools for establishing facts and provide a concrete way to validate human memory, because they serve as evidence or proof of decisions and actions taken by individuals, organizations and governments.¹³ It is also well known that they are used as witnesses to (an organization or individual) activities, but, if they survive when they fulfill their original purpose, they can be used for research. Thus, their "evidential" purpose becomes "cultural".¹⁴

These facts concern schools also. School records initially fulfill administrative and academic needs. They are able to assist pupils to know their progress and plan

for their future, teachers in ensuring effective teaching, school heads or counselors in taking appropriate decisions on administrative and academic matters and parents in informing themselves about performance and behavior of their children (Alabi, 2008).

Later on, the school records become school archives (McKemmish, 2005). As school archives concern researchers, because they are the ones who focus their interest in. In our country, the importance of school archives in the new paths of research in education has made Greek researchers face them as historical documents which have established a specific outline in the universe of sources of information. Handwritten or typed, the school archives give the researchers valuable information not only for the history of a particular school (although the history of a school may reflect the history of the community), but also highlight parts of education and general history, local and state history, community study, sociology of education and so on.

Thus, according to the bibliography¹⁵, school archives have, fully or partially, served Greek historians of education to:

a. understand the relevance and importance of various factors in determining educational outcomes in terms of improving school environments (e.g. S. Gedaki, The 2nd Male Secondary School of Athens, 2005 / I. Kandila, Agricultural School of Averof in Larissa 2004 / M. Papadopoulou, Zosimea School of Ioannina, 2003),

¹³. "We can think of records as the vital 'glue' that holds society together. Without recordkeeping, civil societies, as we know them, would not exist" (Pederson, 2004)

¹⁴ The meanings behind the use of the terms *records* and *archives* vary (McKemmish, 2005). Primarily, records were defined as documents created in order to fulfill current needs whereas archives were what was left at the end of the records' life-cycle and were used for research needs. According current views, the process of record keeping is a holistic one, which incorporates no sudden cut off point at which records suddenly become archives (Liverpool university centre for archive studies, "Archival awareness, Understanding the archival domain", 2003, pp 2-3). So, the impact of these two roles, the *evidential* and the *cultural*, is felt across the archival domain as a whole.

¹⁵ For the analysis of the relationship between school archives' documents of diverse character and possible investigations that these permit, see Mogarro, 2006, pp 76-77: «... *Teachers' dossiers, teachers' records* : Characterization and evolution of the teaching staff of the scholastic institution: geographical origin, academic and professional training, professional itinerary and evaluation, years connected with the institution, *Pupils' dossiers and enrolments, Pupils' records* : Profiles of pupils who attended the school throughout the years: geographical origin, interaction with the community and the region, age on entering and leaving the institution, quantitative relationship of genders, study of the training of the local, social and economic elite...».

b. study the ways gender, nationality, socioeconomic status and cultural differences are relevant with themes of equality of educational opportunities and support attempts (e.g. P. Papadimitriou, Education in Hellenic communities in Egypt. Hellenic schools of Mansoura, 2001),

c. rectify inequalities (e.g. A. Rossiou, Th. Christoforides, Gender and ecclesiastic education. Female Schools, 2007),

d. improve the schooling systems (e.g. E. Sofianou, Teachers' education. Teachers' Training College in Rhodes, 2002 / Ch. Antoniou, Greek Teachers education, 2002),

e. analyze school discipline records for students (e.g. P. Galanis, Education in Mantinia province during Ottoman period, 2008 / A. Skorda-Papagiannopoulou, Education in primary school in Volos province, 2001) or

f. determine the significance and strength of the relationship between academic skills and scores and behavior variables (e.g. T. Doukas, Primary and secondary education during dictatorship, 2008).

II. THE GREEK REALITY: SCHOOLARCHIVES AND THE ORGANIZATION OF DOCUMENTS

In the specific case of our country situation, in most Greek schools their archives -required by the law (e.g. Time Table, Attendance Register, Punishment Book, Pupil's Report Card/ Sheet, Health Record Book, Staff Records, School Cash Register, Record of School Equipment/Material, Book for Meetings, Marks Book and so on) or not (e.g. letters, issues of the school newspaper, student handbooks, yearbooks, photographs, course catalogs, rare text books, student term papers, artifacts, special awards received by the school, records of special school programs, special research files developed by teachers, flyers promoting student elections, audiotaped or videotaped oral histories, videotapes of school performances and athletic events)- are dispersed throughout different locations of the school building, without any conditions necessary for storing books or documents.

It is obvious that in Greece the preoccupation with the preservation and evaluation of this historical patrimony is not consensual, as the responsible do not usually act accordingly and do not make the needed urgent decisions. The state of conservation of books/ documents in the archives of the three oldest secondary schools of Athens (Geladaki, 2004) could, on the whole, be considered as a significant example, which shows the incapacity of most schools to conserve their archives.

A sample examination of the archive of the first secondary school (established in 1830), which was dispersed in an attic, made clear that :

a. it had been significantly compromised during the continuous transportations of the school to different buildings,

b. at least once in the past, an effort was made to classify and casual trim it, without being completed,

c. regardless any deterioration though, it was a very rich archive, whose oldest book was a Pupil's Report Book (1830-1834) and

d. its books and documents presented an internal coherence and logic. For example, the Registration books, the Pupil's Report Books and the Staff Records could easily provide an image clear enough about the different phases of the school operation and their influences to the staff and the students, although three other Registration books (1834-1856), a Pupil's Report Book (1852-1864), three mail Protocols (1834-1842, 1842-1852, 1852-1858), a School Cash Register (1848-1852) and the Record of School Equipment and Material (1848) described vividly the organizing process, which could form a model for the rest of Athenian secondary schools.

The archive of the second secondary school (established in 1852) was consisted of books (of varied origins and uses) mixed with documents, which were piled up in disorganized heaps of papers. The whole material was stored in a disused place, which raised certain difficulties about its safeguard and preservation, and it was presented with a great chronically void. For example, some Registration books (1852-1886), Pupil's Report Books (1852-1873), Book for Meetings (1852-1912) and Pupil's Report Sheets (1842-1882) have not been rescued. However, with the help of the finally rescued documents the historical course -not only of the main school but also of its annexes- is depicted in many details.

The archive of the third school (established in 1916), which represents the first feminine presence in education in Athens was well stored in the basements of its building and it had already been casually recorded once and it was found in exceptionally good condition. It was cohesive and reliable but it was also the smallest of all, not only because that as a female school it has operated fewer years than the rest, but also because the official documents and books of its annexes had been either lost or destroyed.

In the above example it is more than obvious that the archives of the three Athenian secondary schools have sources of information which are traditionally important in the realm of history. If their contents are put into perspective, in liaison with archives of a more general character (either educational or national), not only their central role in the understanding of the organization and functioning of the three institutions will be produced, but also a lot of scientific researches and pedagogic activities will be successively accomplished.

III. THE GREEK REALITY: SCHOOLARCHIVES AND THEIR POTENTIALS IN TEACHING

School archives can serve teachers, especially those of the higher levels. For them, school archives constitute an element of a program for teaching research-related

skills to students, who can benefit in several ways from researching their school's history because "this is near at hand and has a direct connection to their lives" (L. J. Hackman, New York State Archivist 1985, in National archives, "Establishing..."). In other words, students can work on projects in a variety of capacities (e.g. collecting materials, arranging and describing records or doing activities related to local history) (Roe et al, 1983 / Chatziagianni et al, 1995 / Tilley, 2008) in order to learn to use document handling techniques, to be instructed in citing archival materials in their bibliographies and to be encouraged to use sources as instructional material (Greene, 1988).

The school archives mentioned above were used in this way and a lot of recent students of these particular schools had the opportunity to work in many projects. For example, from the Registration Books the students collected valuable information about the demographic assembling of the centre of Athens (19th-20th centuries) and the social status of the parents who used to choose specific schools for their children's education. Likewise, the Pupil's Report Books made them understand the evolution of pupil's performance in connection with the official curriculum of each period. Furthermore, the Records of School Equipment and Material were also useful. The differentiation or not of the state's provisions in their school was a proof about specific activities that took place in their own school. Regarding the Books for Meetings and the Punishment Books, they were also helpful for the detection of important data. The first were used to evaluate the records regarding the everyday life in school, the tutorial opinions and the trends of teachers (especially those who affected public opinion on tutorial policy). The second enlightened the reward-penalty system and the relation with social challenge at each time. In other words, even documents which are not required by the law, such as issues of the schools newspaper, artifacts or awards received by the schools, with the appropriate approach gave evidence about the development of extracurricular activities and their results.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Using the school archives as the main historical source and other sources (e.g. General State Archives, daily papers and magazines, oral testimonies etc.) as complementary, the specific case of a secondary school aim its recent students to develop consciousness towards the local social organization and the collectives attitudes (Voros, 1990, Leontsinis, 1996) as well as their school's culture in the past, which is a principal of present-day heritage.

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