

## **A Qualitative Study of the Teaching of Modern Greek in Western Australia under the 'Seconded Teachers from Greece Scheme': Implications for Other Similar Schemes**

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*Abstract: The aim of the study reported in this paper was to develop an understanding of how the key stakeholders in Western Australia (WA) 'dealt with' the teaching of Modern Greek (Greek) as a second language under the 'Seconded Teachers from Greece Scheme' (STGS). It addressed a deficit in research in the field not only in relation to WA, but Australia-wide. We report that the stakeholders moved through three stages, namely, the stage of idealism, the stage of conflict, and the stage of cooperation. The study has implications for the development of policy, practice, and future research for the STGS and other similar schemes.*

### **Introduction**

After World War II, Greece entered into an agreement with countries where Greek migration existed, to enable Greek education to be promoted through the supply of human and material resources (Baltatzis, 2003, p. 147). To this end, Educational Advisory Offices (EAOs) were established in Europe from 1950 onwards through agreements with Holland (1953), Great Britain (1953), West Germany (1956), Portugal (1980), Denmark (1988), and Italy (1993). Developments were slower in Australia, where Greeks have been living almost since the beginning of European settlement (Tsounis, 1975; Yiannakis, 1996, p. vii).

The desire of the members of the Greek population in Australia to maintain their language and culture had become evident by the early 1900s. For example, in Western Australia (WA) an after-hours Greek School was established in 1915. It was not until the early 1970s, however, that the Greek government established that there was a need to supply specialist teachers who could come to Australia from Greece to assist local teachers with both their personal literacy skills in Greek, as well as with the delivery of Greek lessons. Following this, the Seconded Teachers from Greece Scheme (STGS) commenced formally in Australia in 1977 with the arrival of the first Greek government-appointed coordinators in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra (Baltatzis, 2003). Between then and 1980, more than sixty primary and secondary school teachers were seconded from Greece (Arvanitis, 2004, p. 40). The first seconded teacher from Greece to be appointed to WA was in 1983. Since that time, a further twelve teachers have arrived. However, no substantial research project has been undertaken to date on various aspects of the STGS which might allow us to understand it better and lead to suggestions for improving it and similar programmes.

This paper reports on a study conducted which was designed in response to the deficit identified. It is a qualitative study whose aim was to develop an understanding of how key stakeholders 'dealt with' the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA. The paper is in four parts. The first part constitutes the background to the study. While it is not possible to provide a conventional literature review since this is a

largely un-researched field, some existing literature is drawn upon to provide a broad overview of the context. The methodology of the research is then detailed. This is followed by an outline of the results of the research. Finally, a conclusion along with implications arising from the study is presented.

## **The Background**

Around the world, and in Australia, schemes similar to the STGS are run by Alliance Francaise, the Goethe Society, the Japan Foundation, the Italian Institute of Culture, and the Balai Bahasa Indonesia Organisation, to provide Language Assistants for the support and promotion of the target language. Alliance Francaise was founded in Paris in 1883 with the purpose of providing a blend of learning and cultural immersion. With over 1,116 centres in 138 countries, it is the largest French language teaching association in the world. The language courses on offer are modelled on the Common European Framework of References for Languages (Department of Education, 2011).

Regarding Japanese, language advisors are sent to host countries through the Japan Foundation. In Australia, this happens with the assistance of Commonwealth funding under the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Programme (NALSSP). The Language Advisor's role is to support the teaching and learning of Japanese by providing professional learning opportunities for teachers and workshops for students, on-going professional advice, school visits, demonstration lessons, support for the Japanese Exchange Programme for teachers, support for the Language Assistants, provision of information for locally-trained teachers of Japanese, coordinating and judging competitions relating to Japan, and liaising with the Japanese government.

The Italian Association of Assistance was established in Australia in 1968 for the promotion of the Italian language and culture, specifically in New South Wales, and to assist the growing number of migrants arriving from Italy. Since then, it has continued to cater to the needs of education and community services (Italian Association of Assistance, 2011). The Italian Institute of Culture operates along similar lines. It is the official body of the Italian State in Australia, aiming to promote the Italian language and culture through the organisation of cultural events and language courses. Language Assistants for Italian are assigned to schools with an existing qualified Italian teacher, aiding that teacher in the preparation and presentation of a school's language programme.

The Balai Bahasa Indonesia Organisation is a cultural, non-profit organisation that promotes the teaching of Indonesian and fosters cultural links between the host country and Indonesia. One of its many roles is to increase activity between the host country and Indonesia through business, communities and institutions. In this way, relationships are strengthened and perpetuated.

The STGS operates like those organisations considered so far. It exists not only in Australia, but also in England, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA, along with many other countries where Greeks have settled. Teachers in Greece are invited to apply for secondment to a country, or countries, of their choice. Those selected attend a mandatory week-long professional development course in Athens prior to their acceptance of the offer of secondment and to their departure.

Those teachers who are selected for the STGS have, invariably, been prepared as teachers in Greece. From 1933 to 1984, the training of primary school teachers in Greece was carried out in pedagogical academies. These public institutions offered a two-year, non-university theoretical and practical education (OECD, 2004, p. 63). According to Porpodas (1985), teachers seriously questioned the structure and content of their curriculum. The basic

philosophy was that a 'good teacher' is one who knows the 'what' of teaching. If added to this there is some knowledge of the 'how' of teaching, then it was assumed that the teacher would be able to 'transfer' the knowledge to the pupil who would memorise and reproduce it (Porpodas, 1985, p. 150).

In 1984, the primary-teacher programmes were attached to the four-years-of-study undergraduate university sector and, four years later, they were totally absorbed within the universities (OECD, 2004, p. 63). Problems, however, continued. Efstathiadis (1993), for example, concluded that teacher education in Greece was too theoretically inclined and divorced from much useful, practical classroom work. This explained for him why young teachers often suffered the 'shock of practice'. The 2004 OECD Activity Report for Greece also revealed problems with teacher-induction programmes and those relevant to the continuing professional development of established teachers, including lack of coordination and evaluation. Those teachers who have come to Australia under the STGS, and who formed a significant proportion of those who participated in the study about to be reported, were prepared within such a milieu.

## Methodology

The study reported in this paper was located within the interpretivist paradigm, with the theoretical position being that of symbolic interactionism, the methodology being grounded theory, and the research methods being document study and semi-structured interviewing. Interpretivists set out to examine the meanings that phenomena have for people in their everyday settings (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 17). Symbolic interactionism, the most prominent theoretical position within this paradigm is underpinned by three main premises (Blumer, 1969). The first of these is that human beings act towards phenomena on the basis of the meanings or perspectives they have for them. The second premise is that the meaning or perspective constructed by the individual arises out of interaction with other people. The third premise is that meanings are dealt with and modified through a process of interpretation.

There is a distinct relationship between symbolic interactionism and the central guiding question of the study, namely, how did the key stakeholders 'deal with' the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA? Perspectives are an integral part of the notion of 'deal with'. They can be defined as "frameworks by which people make sense of the world" (Woods, 1983, p. 7; Charon, 1989, p. 3). Accordingly, to use the term 'deal with' in the central aim of the study was a 'shorthand' way of asking: What are the patterns that can be detected over a particular period of time from an investigation of:

- The perspectives which the participants had on a phenomenon at the outset;
- How the participants acted in the light of their perspectives; and
- The changes, if any, which took place in the participants' perspectives as a result of their actions? (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 33)

'Perspectives', in turn, can be defined as having four major components, namely, the aims or intentions of the participants, their strategies, what they see as being significant for them, and what they see as the expected outcomes of their activity (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 39). Furthermore, participants can give reasons for their position on each of these components. A series of 'sub-guiding questions' were developed to pose for the key stakeholders in relation to each of these areas.

The 'key stakeholders' in this particular study were all those people, or groups, both in Greece and in WA, who had a vested interest in the teaching of Greek as a second

language under the STGS. They included 13 prospective Australia-bound seconded teachers from Greece, former and currently-serving seconded teachers and staff of the host schools in WA, and members of the Greek and wider community. The latter included the Greek government appointed Consul of Education for seconded teachers in South Australia (SA), WA, and the Northern Territory (NT); the Consul of Greece in WA; the president and members of the executive of the Hellenic Community Committee of WA, the School Board of the main host school, the president of the other major community organisation in Perth, namely, the Greek Orthodox Community of Evangelismos, and parents of the host schools. Therefore, the total of participants interviewed for this study was sixty. Finally, the 'phenomenon', where this particular study was concerned, was the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language in WA under the STGS and how the key stakeholders 'dealt with' this.

Data were collected from relevant policy documents and through semi-structured interviews. Questioning was guided by a desire to become enlightened on each of the four aspects of the perspectives of the participants outlined above, namely, their aims or intentions regarding the STGS, their strategies for realising these aims or intentions, what was significant for them in the STGS, and the outcomes they expected from participation. Furthermore, their reasons for their position on each of these components were sought. Staff of the host schools were also asked to write a fictitious letter to a hypothetical relative in Greece, outlining what he/she needed to know about Perth, and what he/she needed to do before coming out to Perth to teach Greek as a second language under the STGS. They were also asked to provide the reasons for their advice.

Grounded theory methods of data analysis, as outlined in the work of Strauss and Corbin (1990), were utilised. The process was one of asking constant questions of the data. This led to "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). Through this process concepts were generated. Categories and sub-categories were then developed.

## **The Results**

The central proposition generated from the data was that the key stakeholders on the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA held conflicting expectations at the outset and that, in doing so, they moved through three stages; the stage of idealism, the stage of conflict, and the stage of cooperation. While these three stages were quite distinct, there was also a certain amount of overlap. For example, while idealism was mostly evident in the first stage, it also existed in the second and third stages, acting as the driving force and motivation behind every-day activity. Similarly, conflict, while mostly evident in the second stage, was also occasionally present in the third stage. Also, while cooperation was mostly evident in the third stage, it was occasionally present in the previous stage, the stage of conflict.

### **The stage of idealism**

The three key stakeholder groups in the study, namely, prospective seconded teachers from Greece, former and currently-serving seconded teachers and staff of the host schools in WA, and members of the Greek and wider community, held a set of idealistic expectations at the outset in terms of the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA.

Three main categories of expectations were identified amongst the prospective seconded teachers. First, they expected to be teaching only children of Greek background. This influenced the view they had of the teaching objectives they would pursue, namely, to bring students closer to their country of origin, to unlock the students' Greek identity, and to bring contemporary Greece to the classroom. One participant expressed this view as follows when he said he would develop students who would be:

... able to communicate and to further understand the land of their forefathers. They will understand what it means to be a true Greek. They will understand the sea, the mountains, the land, everything.

Also, the expectation of having only students of Greek background in language classes in Australia led the prospective seconded teachers to a view that they should teach using first language teaching approaches, a grammar-based approach, and a culture-based approach. On the latter, one participant stated: "I would start with a story, with songs. I would motivate them with books with stories. The main content, I think, would be history, starting from mythology because we truly have a wonderful mythology".

All of the prospective seconded teachers had a positive outlook with regard to going to Australia and all expected to benefit from the experience on a professional level. The majority had heard that Australia used innovative and progressive approaches to education and were looking forward to experiencing these and to trialling some of them in their classrooms. In this regard, Australia represented adventure in the teaching and learning environment, with an expectation that there would be easy access to computers, the Internet, and Information Technology in general.

The STGS authorities were also idealistic in their orientation. Each year they organise a week-long professional development course for prospective seconded teachers in Athens through the Institute for the Education of Greeks Abroad and Intercultural Education (IPODE), Greece's Ministry of Education, Life-long Learning and Religious Affairs, and The Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies within The University of Crete. Key presenters include Greek government-appointed coordinators of seconded teachers in selected countries and administrative authorities from within Greece.

Three categories were identified in terms of the idealistic expectations of the authorities. First, they expected that the week-long professional development course in Athens would be sufficient preparation for prospective seconded teachers, equipping them with all the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they would require before embarking on, and during their teaching experience. Secondly, they expected that the seconded teachers would cooperate fully with authorities in the host community and host schools. Thirdly, they expected that seconded teachers would work closely with their Greek government appointed coordinator and with IPODE while abroad.

Finally, idealistic expectations on the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA were also held by the staff of the main host school and members of the Greek and wider community. Again, three categories of expectations were identified. First, they expected that the seconded teachers would undergo a speedy process of adaptation to the Australian way of life, including adjusting to the social and professional milieu. Secondly, they expected the seconded teachers to understand, adopt and conform to the various aspects of the education system in WA, including the curriculum, teaching, and classroom management strategies, as well as on-going professional development approaches. One participant put it as follows:

...as far as (the School) is concerned, we have a curriculum and it is sent by the Greek government through The University of Crete, that is, (it is) for the whole world. Now this,...with the Western Australian curriculum for languages, I think is a good base to

start to teach Greek...everything is done in (a) formal (way) and (is) programmed (for) and with a three/four year time plan; we can have some better results.

Thirdly, they expected the seconded teachers to adjust quickly to the various demands of their host-school environment, including the fulfilment of extra-curricular activities and 'duty of care' requirements, the maintenance of a professional profile, and being a part of the whole staff.

### **The Stage of Conflict**

The idealistic expectations held by the seconded teachers and the host-school staff became the source of conflict, during which the other stakeholders took somewhat of a back seat. It was sparked by the expectation held by the staff of the host school that seconded teachers should teach Greek as a second language. As a result of this expectation not being met, it was deemed by the host-school staff that the seconded teachers introduced the written word too soon to students, that they held unrealistically high expectations of students, and that they conducted text book and worksheet-driven lessons. One host school teacher stated:

They certainly have different expectations with children... I know that some of the teachers here have commented to me, "Oh, in Greece, they just take their studies more seriously". ...their expectations are higher of the students than we seem to feel they are.

Related to this was the conflict caused by another expectation of the staff of the host school; that seconded teachers should have appropriate training for Australian schools. As a result of this expectation not being met, it was deemed by the staff of the host school that the seconded teachers were lacking in second language teaching methods and in behaviour-management strategies.

It is recognised that to depict the experiences of all groups would lead to a much longer exposition than can be provided in a paper of this sort. However, it was felt that it would be valuable for the reader to get a clearer understanding of the situation by depicting some of the experiences of at least one group. To this end, it was decided to say something about the seconded teachers in one host school in WA.

A closer look, therefore, at the experiences of the seconded teachers reveals the conflicts faced by them. Members of the host-school staff found cause for complaint on a number of occasions because they perceived the seconded teachers to be lacking in second language teaching methods. They believed, instead, that they taught Greek using first language teaching approaches and methods. They also believed that seconded teachers held the same expectations of their students in WA as they did for those in Greece. This was indicative, in part, of the seconded teachers being unaware of the culturally diverse composition of the student body at the host school, portrayed as follows by a member of the Senior Management Team:

The children in this school generally speak English as their first language. There's about 40% who don't speak English as their first language. They are either Vietnamese or Chinese, so Greek is definitely for them, even a third language. So, the priority is that the teachers that are coming out here need to understand that they are not teaching it to native speakers and, as a result... that they're teaching it as a second language.

Under such circumstances, the need of the host school was for teachers who were competent in second and/or foreign language teaching methods. Also, the expectations held of students by the seconded teachers needed to be adjusted in order to reflect the reality of the non-Greek background student majority. By contrast, the consequence of having exceedingly high

expectations of the students, both Greek and non-Greek background, often led to situations of conflict in the classroom. This conflict sometimes flowed on to the next lesson, serving to corrode the working relationship between the seconded teachers and the mainstream staff.

The seconded teachers, on the other hand, had different views to those of the host-school staff on the expectations they held of students. The following comment illustrates the point of view of one seconded teacher on this:

School is the teacher; school is the parent; school is the child. The expectations of each of the three do not necessarily match. If the child's expectations match mine, then I am exceedingly happy. If the child's expectations are too low, or if they are not normal, they must go hand-in-hand with the teacher's expectations. I will try to raise the expectations of the child, or I will try to make them more realistic.

This seconded teacher held the view that, ideally, student and teacher expectations should match and that if they don't, the teacher should try to rectify the situation.

The seconded teachers, in turn, believed that parents of Greek-background students held unrealistically high expectations of them in teaching their children. However, they did little at home as parents, according to the seconded teachers, to assist progress in the language. Instead, they expected the school to be the sole source of Greek-language instruction and maintenance, a matter on which a seconded teacher commented thus:

...the exceedingly high expectations of Greek parents who want their children to learn Greek but without effort at home and, simultaneously, for their children to be part of various events for the proverbial traditional photograph, but they have never opened their mouths to speak a word of Greek...

This rather cynical view held by seconded teachers of parents of Greek-background students supported the overall view that the expectations held by the students, and/or their parents, were not in harmony with those of the seconded teachers.

Another source of conflict yet again was the expectation held by the staff of the host school that seconded teachers should demonstrate flexibility in their teaching. As a result of it not being met, it was deemed by the host-school staff that seconded teachers possessed an elitist attitude towards change and adaptation, that they took too long to adjust to the Australian way of teaching, and that they worked in isolation from the rest of the mainstream staff. In all of these cases, the seconded teachers held an opposing view-point. They believed that certain members of the host-school staff displayed an elitist attitude towards them, that some teachers were 'know all' staff members who interfered with their relationship with the students, and that they were excluded from the mainstream by host-school staff simply because they were 'different'.

### **The Stage of Cooperation**

The seconded teachers from Greece, the staff of the main host school in WA, and members of the Greek and wider community entered the stage of cooperation following the stage of conflict. The seconded teachers demonstrated cooperation through initiatives relating to the teaching strategies employed by them, the level of their expectations in regard to student performance, and their role in the host school. Likewise, some members of the host-school staff demonstrated cooperation by trying to understand the curriculum for teaching Greek as a second language under the STGS in WA, by improving the level of communication between them and the seconded teachers, and by increasing the level of cooperation between them and the seconded teachers. Finally, members of the Greek and wider community demonstrated cooperation with the seconded teachers in three areas, namely, the support offered to them, the level of trust bestowed upon them, and the level of

involvement offered to them in extra-curricular and wider-community activities. One Greek community member summed up, as follows, the appreciation which his peers had developed of the problems of the seconded teachers and their understanding of why co-operation is essential:

There needs to be a package. ...it would be best if it was in Greek. So, they actually provide them with basic information about what the place is like... that tea is a common beverage in Australia ...the nature of the schools... Not only aren't they meant to smoke in class, but they're not actually meant to smoke at school... So, there are all these little things that we've just grown up with... They need to be alerted... and they pick (the package) up from the Consular Corps so they can also meet the Consular Corps when they get here; not three or four weeks later at the first function that happens at the School. Because they are really just dropped, parachuted in... And in that, there should be things like in sociological/anthropological themes they're called nodal points, so these people know... 'Here's the Consul's Office, this is where you find two or three churches, this is the Hellenic Community Centre... there aren't many Greek restaurants in Perth... here's a couple of places which you could go to'.

### **Implications of the Research**

The study reported in this paper has implications for the development of policy, practice and future research, not only regarding the STGS, but also by way of providing insights for the development of teachers involved in similar programmes. In particular, the theory that key stakeholders who hold conflicting expectations on a phenomenon at the outset undergo three stages, namely, the stage of idealism, the stage of conflict, and the stage of cooperation, can be transferred to certain populations and settings other than those described in this study. Thus, the theory provides a new way of thinking about Languages Education under seconded teacher schemes. It offers a model to stakeholders by which they can frame their thoughts and actions regarding the transition from one stage to the next. Furthermore, by raising awareness of the existence of the three stages, all stakeholders can aim to tailor the stage of idealism to fit their host schools and communities, thus prolonging it as a driving force behind everyday activity; curtail the stage of conflict; and promote and advance the stage of cooperation. In this way, all stakeholder groups can undergo a more favourable and productive educative and social experience.

### **Implications for Policy**

At the time of conducting this study, the STGS policy of the Greek government did not stipulate that prospective seconded teachers needed to have preparation and/or experience in second and/or foreign language teaching. This resulted in many 'inappropriately-prepared' teachers, as perceived by the host schools, applying for secondment to teach Greek as a second language abroad. If a background in second and/or foreign language teaching was to become a mandatory requirement then only 'appropriately-prepared' teachers would apply for secondment.

A national and local policy on seconded teacher schemes would serve to ensure that current inconsistencies in approach would be less likely to occur. It would also address other areas of concern such as:

- Whether seconded teachers should be support teachers or advisors only in the Australian educational context;
- Whether there should be a yard-duty allocation for them in the host school;
- Whether seconded teachers should have to attend all staff meetings;
- How to provide a grievance procedure for seconded teachers in host schools;
- How to provide a clear understanding of line management and the delineation of authority for seconded teachers within host schools; and
- How to provide a clear and consistent process that seconded teachers need to follow in order to acquire an extension of tenure in Australia.

### **Implications for Practice in Greece and Other Countries**

One key deficit in the course offered in Greece was the lack of information for Australia-bound seconded teachers on cities other than Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Hobart and Adelaide. Teachers who had nominated, therefore, to come to Australia were provided with information only for these cities. The authorities responsible for the scheme could also improve practice by including information about the host schools and communities of all Australian cities so that prospective seconded teachers are provided with a complete picture of the educational context. This, in turn, could assist the teachers when choosing a preferred location for secondment.

A local host-school authority could be invited by the authorities of seconded teacher schemes abroad to participate as a presenter in the professional development courses offered in the 'home' country. In this capacity, the specific needs of the host schools could be articulated to the Australia-bound seconded teachers, assisting them thus in their decision-making process regarding the Australian city where they would like to be posted. Former seconded teachers could also be invited to discuss their experiences with prospective Australia-bound seconded teachers.

Those running the professional development courses could also improve on current practice by changing the format and time-frame. They should consider providing professional development on second and/or foreign language teaching methods for prospective seconded teachers over the period of a few weeks. This would, in turn, enhance opportunities for a 'hands-on' approach to the trialling of new resources. It could also result in more time being provided for assistance with issues to do with visas, passports and other relevant paperwork.

The authorities should also ensure that prospective seconded teachers:

- Are professionally prepared for second and/or foreign-language teaching prior to their posting;
- Have prior knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and resources to be used for second and/or foreign language teaching in Australia;
- Are exposed to the curricula used in Australia;
- Have a working knowledge of how to write teaching/learning programmes for the Australian educational context; and
- Observe recorded footage of classroom practice by languages teachers in Australia.

### **Implications for Practice in WA**

A number of strategies could also be applied to improve the situation at the WA end. These could include the immediate provision of professional development for new seconded teachers to introduce them to the local education system, host school and host community.

The professional development could be provided by the existing or departing seconded teachers who could impart the relevant information in the target language to their colleagues, by those in positions of authority in relation to the teaching of the target language and the seconded teachers at the host schools, and by mainstream staff and specialists in the field of second-language teaching or other related areas. Another strategy could be to set up a 'buddy teacher' system, linking new seconded teachers with regular teachers at the host school to observe lessons over a period of time. In particular, the WA-based 'buddy teachers' should draw attention to the importance of:

- Engaging the students by making the work relevant to their lives and context within Australia;
- Using a 'hands-on' approach to teaching;
- Using age-relevant and varied resources so as to provide a rich and interesting learning environment;
- Immersing students in the target language by using a very limited amount of English, and only where necessary;
- Referring to other cultural backgrounds in the lesson, as represented in the composition of the class, to ensure that students feel included;
- Using multi-tasking techniques, that is, setting tasks with different levels of ability in mind to cater for the different levels of language competence in the class;
- Ensuring that visual stimuli (i.e., posters, charts, banners, labels, etc., in the target language and related to the target culture) are present in and outside of the classroom to promote the learning of that language and its presence in the overall curriculum of the host school;
- Displaying the work of students as much as possible and constantly refreshing the display as new work is completed;
- Using explicit teaching strategies with a predominantly student-centred focus; and
- Making the learning of the target language and culture fun for the students.

Yet another strategy could be to arrange for the seconded teachers to visit other schools where languages are taught in order to observe, over time, other language teachers in operation in their specific school environments.

Regular professional development courses could also be conducted for the host-school staff regarding the role and purpose of seconded teacher schemes in Australia. This could involve a combination of presenters, including existing and newly arrived seconded teachers, the relevant coordinator of seconded teachers in Australia, the person responsible for languages education at the main host school, and other local, interstate or international authorities. In particular, the opportunity for seconded teachers to reciprocate professional development could assist greatly in enhancing their morale and professional status within the host school.

## **Conclusion**

The study reported in this paper was born out of a desire to assist the seconded teachers from Greece, as well as the recipients of their services. It was also intended to add to the small but growing body of literature on the STGS. The results are also likely to be informative for those involved in similar schemes across Australia and overseas. In this regard, all countries involved in this form of cultural exchange, such as teacher secondments abroad and other similar schemes need to understand the importance of induction programmes in the host country for the newly-arrived educators as well as for the recipients

of their services. This preparation can commence prior to departure, that is, in the 'home' country. There, authorities need to ensure that strategies are implemented to provide prospective seconded teachers with opportunities for intercultural understandings as well as a thorough understanding of the education system of the host country. Induction packages, even if only in written form initially, should be made available, along with every possible opportunity for professional dialogue with stakeholders in the host country. This will, in turn, provide the prospective seconded teacher with both a tangible network and moral support before embarking on secondment.

Similarly, an induction programme and on-going professional development sessions once in the host country, for the seconded teachers as well as the recipients of their services, will serve to ensure that everyone is informed about the nature and benefits of the seconded teacher schemes. Continued reflection on what comprises best practice in second/foreign language teaching, combined with the need to balance theory with practical training, will add value to the overall experience and outcomes. Such endeavours will, hopefully, also stimulate further research in the field and contribute to an emerging body of research not only on teacher secondment programmes, but also on intercultural teaching and international understanding within the field of education.

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