INVOLVING ROMA PARENTS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN ENGLAND AND CYPRUS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we discuss processes and experiences encountered in professional development work, undertaken to support teachers' practice in relation to Roma children and their families in two European countries: England and Cyprus, as part of the INSETRom Comenius project (2007-2009). We focus on the research and training experience as part of the INSETRom project that we draw on the involvement of one primary school in each country. In addition to a brief description of details of Roma people in our respective countries, a discussion of the nature of leadership styles, the project itself and data collection, we present short case study descriptions of the respective schools, followed by a critical comparative analysis of the school contexts, and barriers to change, foregrounding leadership issues, practices and orientations as the salient element in the transformative process for equitable, anti-racist, educational experience and outcomes.

Keywords: *Roma children, school leadership and managemet, transformative process, INSETRom project*

ΕΜΠΛΕΚΟΝΤΑΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΡΟΜΑ ΓΟΝΕΙΣ ΣΤΟ ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΟ ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟ: ΜΙΑ ΣΥΓΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ ΑΝΑΛΥΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΔΙΚΑΣΙΑΣ ΑΛΛΑΓΗΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΓΓΛΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΥΠΡΟ

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Στην εργασία αυτή συζητούμε διαδικασίες και εμπειρίες επαγγελματικής ανάπτυξης εκπαιδευτικών σε πρόγραμμα που αποσκοπούσε στην υποστήριξη των πρακτικών εκπαιδευτικών παιδιών Ρομά και των οικογενειών τους σε δύο ευρωπαϊκές χώρες (την Αγγλία και την Κύπρο), στο πλαίσιο του έργου INSETRom Comenius (2007-2009). Ειδικότερα εστιάζουμε στην έρευνα και στις αναπτυξιακές εμπειρίες όπως αυτές προκύπτουν από τη συλλογή δεδομένων από ένα δημοτικό σχολείο σε καθεμιά από τις δύο χώρες. Παρουσιάζουμε σύντομες περιγραφές μελετών περιπτώσεων των δύο σχολείων και προβαίνουμε σε κριτική συγκριτική ανάλυση των δύο σχολικών πλαισίων και των εμποδίων στη διαδικασία αλλαγής, αναδεικνύοντας ζητήματα σχολικής ηγεσίας, πρακτικών και προσανατολισμών και προοπτικών ως προεξάρχοντα στοιχεία σε μια μετασχηματιστική διαδικασία που στοχεύει σε δίκαιη, ισότιμη και αντιρατσιστική εκπαιδευτική εμπειρία και αποτελέσμα.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: *παιδιά Ρομά, σχολική ηγεσία και διαχείριση, μετασχηματιστική διαδικασία, έργο INSETRom*

INTRODUCTION

Changing classroom and school practice to address educational inequalities and encourage parental/family involvement as part of that has remained a challenging and not always successful endeavour. In this paper we discuss processes and experiences encountered in professional development work, undertaken to support teachers' practice in relation to Roma children and their families in two European countries: England and Cyprus, as part of the INSETRom Comenius project (2007-2009). In that work, the process of professional development and corresponding change of practice resulted in varying degrees of success. In previous work (Crozier, 2000; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Symeou, 2002, 2010) we have discussed and analysed teachers' attitudes and levels of receptiveness to parental involvement and working with Roma parents and children in particular (Crozier et al., 2009; Symeou et al., 2009a, 2009b, 2009c) and their teaching experience and expertise in the areas of multiculturalism, as key elements in the barriers to change. In this paper, we focus on the nature of school leadership in the change process, in relation to our in-service training project, comparing and contrasting the experiences in the two settings. We discuss these dimensions in relation to a range of attitudinal and contextual factors. Therefore, we locate the analysis within the socio-political and policy contexts of the two countries and the significance of the spatiality/locality of the school. In our original project we did not research directly the leadership and management styles of the schools. Therefore our analysis is based on the data we collected during the initial phase of the project from teachers, headteachers, parents and young people of Roma heritage, together with our general 'participant' observations noted in our field journals during and following our training sessions with the teachers and utilising ideas and concepts of different types of school leadership and management, school effectiveness and change processes, together with the theories of dysconscious racism and institutional racism.

The research and training experience as part of the INSETRom project that we draw on involved two primary schools in England and two primary and one secondary school in Cyprus. However, in this paper we focus on only one primary school in each country. In addition to a brief description of details of Roma people in our respective countries, a discussion of the nature of leadership styles, the project itself and data collection, we present short case study descriptions of the respective schools, followed by a critical comparative analysis of the school contexts, and barriers to change, foregrounding leadership issues, practices and orientations as the salient element in the transformative process for equitable, anti-racist, educational experience and outcomes.

ROMA PEOPLE IN ENGLAND AND CYPRUS

As in many other European countries, in both UK and Cyprus, the Roma people have, to a large extent, been ignored and marginalized (Demetriou & Trimikliniotis, 2007; Hancock, 2002; Trimikliniotis, 2007). Roma migration to UK is part of the migration of Eastern Europeans following accession to the European Union. They include people exerting their right and desire to seek new life experiences, economic opportunities and, in the case of the Roma in particular, to try to seek less discriminatory environments. This migration has also been caught up in the movement of asylum seekers and refugees as a result of global conflicts. The Roma when they first came to the UK as asylum seekers (before EU accession of Central and Eastern European countries in 2004), they were frequently vilified by the media who whipped up a moral panic about "welfare scroungers", positioned as dangerous and devious (see Migration Information, accessed 29/5/09) and dispersed like commodities irrespective of their own preferences. Sivanandan (2001) describes these attitudes as xenoracism. He argues that

> *The racism we are faced with today [in the UK] is not the racism we [South Asians] faced 50 years ago, when we first came here … that … racism [state, institutional and popular] continues … But there is a new racism … even more virulent and devastating … this racism is meted out to refugees and asylum seekers irrespective of their colour. This is the racism that is meted out to Roma and Sinti and poor whites from Eastern Europe …* (2002, accessed 29/5/08 www.irr.org.uk).

Whilst according to Hancock (2002) the term Roma has gained increasing currency as a term to encompass all people who speak or at some time in the past have spoken the Roma language, not all groups in the UK accept this term (p. xix). Hancock suggests that, on the other hand, all groups would describe themselves as Romani. In the UK, even though it is recognised that the term 'gypsy' is often used derogatively, the terms Gypsy, Roma and Travellers still tend to be commonly used including in official documents and by teachers in schools. The main groups who are referred to as Gypsies or Roma or Travellers in the UK are: Gypsies; Irish, Scottish, Welsh Travellers; Eastern or Central European Roma; New Travellers, Bargee or water craft people; Fairground and Show people; Circus people (Tyler, 2005). Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers comprise groups who are settled, partially nomadic or fully nomadic. The Eastern/Central European Roma tend to be settled, although some may choose to return to their country of origin at any time. The total population of Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers in 2003 was estimated at

350,000, although exact figures are not known (DfES, 2003). Moreover, there is currently no precise data on the numbers of Roma from European Union accession of countries. Similarly in Norton, in the North East of England where we carried out this work, there were no official statistics available on the Roma population. The majority, if not all, of the Roma population in Norton appeared to come from the Czech Republic. They originally came as asylum seekers prior to European accession during a period when they experienced overt discrimination in the Czech Republic. There is evidence to suggest that they were not well received in the UK or the North East of England. Since accession in 2004, new Czech Roma families and individuals came to the city and live in an area we call Hill Top. The Local Authority web site states that it is difficult to know the extent of the population of Roma, or Gypsy or Travellers in the area as "many prefer to remain unidentified, fearing prejudice and bullying". This has implications in terms of provision and requiring schools to engage with this aspect of diversity. However, many Czech Roma do self-identify in community contexts. Based on anecdotal evidence, the Roma community in Norton are mainly employed in unskilled manual jobs although there is said to be also a minority of professionals.

In Cyprus they are one of the smallest indigenous minorities living on the island. They are better known among Greek-Cypriots as *Cigani* or *Tsiggani*. In 1960, with the independence of the Republic of Cyprus, the Roma population of Cyprus –approximately 520 people– became officially part of the Turkish-Cypriot community (Administrative Commissioner, 2003). Roma were not granted the status of a 'religious group', as was the case for the Maronites, Armenians and Latins indigenous minorities, nor were they recognized as a national minority with a specific identity and culture (Theodorou & Symeou, 2013). Following the 1974 Turkish invasion in Cyprus and the forced transfer of Greek-Cypriots living in the north of the island to the south and the Turkish-Cypriots living in the south to the north, Ghurbeti (Muslim Roma) living in the south were forcibly moved to the north (Marsh & Strand, 2003). After being moved, Roma settled in houses abandoned by their original owners, creating new communal groupings on both sides of the demarcation line.

Starting from October 1999, but especially during 2001, several Roma groups from the north moved back to the south and settled in their former neighbourhoods mainly in urban socio-economically deprived areas. Since April 2003, when travel restrictions across the demarcation line were eased, the numbers of Roma to the south increased. Compared to the previous years, larger numbers of Roma resided in the Republic of Cyprus-controlled south while migration between the two sectors became more regular.

European Commission reports on social exclusion in Cyprus identify Roma as one of the local social groups that fall outside the prevailing social networks (European Commission, 2005; Council of the European Union, 2006). Despite the increase of Roma pupils attending Greek-Cypriot schools, the albeit limited research concerning the education of Roma indicates that school enrolment and attendance among Roma is low, whereas Roma pupils' dropout rates are very high, especially in the transition between primary and secondary school (Demetriou & Trimikliniotis, 2007; Symeou et al., 2009c).

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE PROCESSES: A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE LITERATURE

Although contested (Slee et al., 1998) there is a long held view that schools make a difference to educational in/equality of opportunities (Rutter et al., 1979; Mortimore et al., 1988; Smith & Tomlinson, 1989). The reasons for this are complex, and schools alone are not solely responsible for such effects, positive or negative. In the UK, although substantial research has been carried out into achievement levels of Black and Minority Ethnic children, there has been much less research on the school effect on these children (Smith & Tomlinson's 1989 study is of course the exception). In Cyprus, even though the reserach in the area is more limited, this points mainly to bilingual students' lower language performance (Alexandrou, 2006; Symeou & Demona, 2005). Research that has been carried out in both countries has focused on for example, discrimination, stereotyping, classroom and school experiences and the role of parents. With some exceptions (e.g. Bhopal, 2011; Derrington & Kendall, 2004; Zembylas & Papaevripides, 2011) there has also been considerable neglect of research into the effect of school on the life chances of Gypsy Roma and Traveller children, in particular, in the UK and Roma in Cyprus.

One of the criticisms of the school effectiveness discourse was that it didn't take into account the socio-economic dimensions of school and children. Children, particularly from low SES and Black and Minority ethnic backgrounds, were and are still seen as 'the problem' to be dealt with rather than the school processes and teacher practice. In addition to the children being constructed in this way so too were their parents. Across Europe and the 'Western world' the role of parents in education (for a variety of reasons) is seen as increasingly important (see Symeou, 2010, for a review of this). But as research has shown, there is frequently a disonance between school/teacher expectations of what this involvement might entail with the perspectives of certain parents (e.g. Crozier, 2000; Reay, 1998; Symeou, 2002). In both countries, researchers have found, there is a commonly held view amongst teachers that some Black and Minority Ethnic parents (in Britain) and more specifically Roma families (in Cyprus) tend to have negative attitudes towards formal education and see no reason to send their children to school (Crozier et al., 2009; Derrington et al., 2004; Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou & Symeou, 2003; Symeou et al., 2009; Theodorou & Symeou, 2013). However, as Crozier and Davies (2007) have also shown, this is very often as a result of the negative response by schools towards these disempowered parents that further inhibit either the visibility of their involvement or their proactive engagement with school. Also, the negative and often disturbing harassment and discrimination the children from these minority groups experience acts as a deterrent to attending school at all (e.g. Myers & Bhopal, 2009).

The focus of the INSETRom project was aimed at addressing teacher attitudes and practice in relation to Roma children and their families with the intention of improving parental involvement and home-school relationships. Whilst we subscribe to the view that effective and equitable practice is based on an interrelation of teacher practice and attitudes, and the social, policy and material conditions that impact on the children's learning dispositions and parental engagement, missing from our project and hitherto our analysis, is the significance of school leadership. In the two schools we focus on here we have a very engaged headteacher at Akron (Cyprus) and the absent presence of the headteacher at Westfield (England). But the impact of our initiative in terms of teachers' responses to our interventions, by the end of the project period, were qualitatively very similar – that is to say limited interest, engagement and sustainability (for further details on this see Crozier et al., 2009; Symeou et al., 2009).

Fundamentally, our project was intended to result in some change of practice in the respective schools through the introduction of an innovation and its implementation. As Fullan (1992a) described, an innovation is something new and comprises a change. The aspect of implementation is concerned with how the process of change unfolds. Change involves, or should involve, a change or potential change in attitudes, practice, beliefs and philosophy: in our case this involved practice with parents and pedagogy in the classroom and curriculum. As Fullan says, in an earlier work (1992b), this multidimensional aspect of change is often not understood by those involved, especially if the change initiative is introduced as either unidimensional or presented as separate dimensions. He identifies a central problem and consequence of this approach:

> *Ignorance of these dimensions explains a number of interesting phenomena in the field of educational change: for example, why some people accept an innovation they do not understand; why some aspects of change are implemented and others are not; and why strategies for change neglect certain essential components* (p. 36).

School effectiveness research, referred to earlier, has been successful in convincing the educational establishment that school leadership plays a highly significant part in ensuring school success (Gronn, 1996; Lakomski, 1999). However, what is leadership?

There are different types of leadership approaches and models representing different perspectives on change. These include: technocratic leadership, transformative leadership, headteacher leadership; constructivist and co-constructed leadership; teacher leadership; distributed leadership and transformative leadership (see for example Harris & Muijs, 2005; Ryan, 2003, for a discussion of distributed leadership in particular, and Shields, 2009, with respect to transformative leadership). In most European education systems school leadership tends to be hierarchical and based on power differentials. In Britain neo-liberal policies have also meant that such leadership is informed by performativity at classroom –both with respect to teacher and pupil– and school level. In Cyprus, there is a highly centralised and prescriptive education system ensuring a structured hierarchical system and one with limited opportunity to implement transformative change. Starratt (1996) argues that there is an enduring tradition of antagonism between teachers and school leaders, and Beatty and Brew observe (2004) that "teacher-leader relationships tend to be constrained by the intransigent hierarchical conventions of the broader school culture" (p. 331). However, as Murphy (2000) suggests, engagement with a leadership role or identity leads or could lead to empowerment, community building and transformation (p. 14).

The technicist and hierarchical approach to leadership is particularly disposed to implementing neo-liberal policies whilst distributive and transformative leadership approaches are more suited to transformational change (Sheilds, 2009). It is with regard to the latter that we are particularly interested, in that we are not only focused on the need for radical change and transformation of teachers' practice but also the orientation of the school.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR ROMA INCLUSION: THE PROJECT AND DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

Between 2007 and 2009 we participated in the European Union funded project INSETRom (IN-SErvice Training for Roma Inclusion, 134018-LLP-1-2007-1-CY-COMENIUS-CMP) which involved working with teachers in order to develop the involvement of parents from Roma backgrounds with their children's schools. This also involved enabling teachers to engage critically and reflexively with issues around racism, stereotyping and taken for granted assumptions about normative values. The INSETRom project brought together a team of scholars with expertise in intercultural and anti-racist education and/or the education of Roma from educational institutions in eight European countries: the European University Cyprus in Cyprus, the Università di Torino in Italy, the International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE) in the Netherlands, the University of Ioannina in Greece, the Universität Wien in Austria, the Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai in Romania, the Roehampton University and the University of Sunderland in United Kingdom, and the Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa V Nitre in Slovakia.

The project was based on the assumption that the development of adequate in-service teacher training, the improvement of classroom practice and the enhancement of family-school relationships foster educational inclusion and equity against the barriers and unequal access to education faced by Roma people, resulting in educational disadvantage. Therefore, empirical research was conducted in the countries of the partner institutions to gain insights into the views and experiences of teachers, parents and Roma children themselves. The research we undertook was used to develop a programme of teacher professional development through the development of a core curriculum which included nine modules for in-service teacher training. The training modules were then used for teacher in-service training that took place in the partner countries (see www.iaie.org/insetrom)

The training, adapted to teachers' own local needs, priorities and local contexts, focused on enhancing teachers' awareness of issues related to the Roma experience issues and teachers' ability to support Roma parents to become active agents in their children's education. The nine modules addressed the following issues: the problematisation of culture, enculturation, stereotypes and prejudices, Roma history, Roma cultures, cultures of the schools and the arts and cultural diversity, intercultural education, classroom management and methodology, curriculum design and development, and teacher-parent communication.

In this paper we reflect on and analyse research data we collected during the initial phase of the project from teachers, headteachers, parents and young people of Roma heritage, together with our general 'participant' observations noted in our field journals during and following our training sessions with the teachers from teachers in one primary school in England and one in Cyprus. Even though in our original project we did not research directly/specifically the leadership and management styles of the schools, our analysis in this paper is mainly based on the latter and utilising ideas and concepts of different types of school leadership and management, school effectiveness and change processes, together with the theories of dysconscious racism and institutional racism.

THE CASE OF THE ENGLISH PARTICIPATING SCHOOL: WESTFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL, NORTON

Westfield Primary School is situated on the edge of Norton, a northern city in England, in an area we call Hill Top. Norton is the centre of a former industrial region with a history of high unemployment, poverty and deprivation. Following the accession of Eastern European countries in 2004, Britain experienced an increase in migration. This followed a period of refugees and asylum seekers also coming into the country. In the early part of the last decade, many of these people were dispersed to the North and North East of England, as well as other parts of Britain.

Hill Top itself is an area of poverty and unemployment and low rates of educational achievement. There is little evidence of gentrification in spite of its once grand, Georgian and Victorian terraces. There is a bleakness that pervades the streets exacerbated by the ever present grey skies and cold Easterly wind and the absence of trees, flowers and gardens in general.

Westfield School is housed in a large Victorian building with high ceilings and large rooms. The staff have worked hard to fill the walls with children's colourful work and stimulating pictures but in the 21st century the school is in need of refurbishment and updating. There were 358 children on school roll (in 2007) aged between 4-11. Pupil attainment for the majority of the children was well below the local and national average according to the 2006 Ofsted[1] inspection report. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs was also very high, representing more than half the pupils in the school. Moreover, replicating the national

1. Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is the non-ministerial government department of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools In England.

trend, attainment of Roma children was very poor. Demographically the school had changed considerably over the past 10 years, from a predominantly white working class intake to a considerable, according to the teachers, rise in the number of British black and minority ethnic pupils. More recently, over the past four to five years, there had been increased numbers of Czech and, among them, Roma, children, as well as Latvian, Slovakian and Polish children. There are also children from some African countries who were thought to be asylum seekers or refugees. Many of these children spoke English as an Additional Language (EAL) and often were learning English for the first time on starting school. These pupils represented about a fifth of the pupil population. There was also a relatively high degree of pupil mobility. Support for children who spoke English as an Additional Language was provided by the Local Authority EMTRAS (Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service) teacher. However, she only worked two days a week at the school.

In England there are stringent school inspection regimes together with a system of extensive testing (for example Standard Assessment Tests – SATs) and monitoring of a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) including attendance, punctuality and behaviour. These results in turn impact on a school's profile, reputation and ranking in the league table stakes. Headteachers and classroom teachers are therefore under considerable pressure in relation to these policy imperatives. In addition to these requirements the school should comply with the Race Relations Amendment Act by publishing and implementing a policy on race equality.

At the time we approached the school to request their participation, they were in the process of appointing a new head teacher. Ms Thompson took up the post just as we began the training phase of our work in the school. Ms Thompson had seen our leaflet asking for participants and as a new and very keen headteacher, contacted us to say that she and the school would like to be involved. However, following this initial enthusiasm we only ever once met Ms Thompson when she attended our first session. She seemed not to show any interest in the work that we did with the teachers or indeed in the initiatives the teachers implemented as a result of our work. As a new headteacher she clearly wanted to make her mark on the school and demonstrate success. As indicated in terms of school-pupil academic performance, there was much work to do. We thought that she would draw on the free expertise from three university academics (all formerly school teachers) to help with aspects of this development but this was not the case. Likewise we offered to work alongside the teachers in their classrooms to support the implementation of the INSETRom but they rejected this suggestion.

Due to substantial and fairly rapid changes in the demographics and the almost continuous Government policy initiatives, changes and subsequent requirements, the staff at Westfield had many demands to deal with and the specific needs of certain groups were often seemingly overlooked. Given the various imperatives together with the relatively poor educational qualifications in the school, teachers felt considerable pressure to improve standards and ensure all requirements were met. There was apparently a dissonance between what they felt they needed to do in order to improve standards and getting to grips with the needs of the Roma and other minority ethnic groups. Rather, the Roma children, in particular, were seen as a potential barrier to their success in this respect. There was particular anxiety about the Roma children's perceived lack of engagement with learning which was seen as problematic, especially with regard to those children who had not attended school before (or at least were perceived as not having previously attended school). Roma pupils at Westfield Primary school in KS2 (age 7-11) for example, were seen as 'not [being] ready' for the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs). Also teachers expressed great concern about the children's poor attendance and their alleged poor behaviour.

There appeared to be limited attempts to identify the specific needs of the Roma pupils and there was no consultation with the parents about this; although that in itself was not unusual since little parental consultation took place at all in relation to pedagogy. The initiatives which they did take tended to focus on ensuring that the pupils became 'integrated' and on their social development and behaviour. Prior to our intervention, except for some Local Authority training with respect to English as An Additional Language (EAL) and the importance of the use of home languages, there had been no targeted training in relation to Roma pupils. In terms of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) some younger teachers had had a 'diversity' component in their course but this was rather tokenistic. There is an extensive amount of materials for the development of multicultural pedagogy such as guidelines, teaching aids, plans, ideas and resources provided by governmental and none governmental bodies readily available on the internet and in hard copy but teachers tended not to avail themselves of these.

By the summer term and the final phase of our project the deputy head teacher Laura King, who had been one of our core participants and originally very keen on and supportive of the project, expressed disquiet at the amount of curriculum development and the extensive changes the new head was expecting of staff. As a result of these major changes Laura King doubted to what extent they could implement the strategies we had devised with them to develop their teaching and meet the needs of the Roma children and parents. Although we saw our work as integral to the mainstream work of the teachers and thought that it could be drawn on in relation to these other requirements, there was an enduring compartmentalisation and marginalisation of the Roma INSET work: ignoring the multidimensionality of the change process as Fullan (1992b) referred to above, has argued. In fact rather than incorporate our work the headteacher in her endeavours to develop the curriculum, paid an external consultant to run staff workshops/development days, totally eschewing our own modules and initiatives.

The INSETROM project highlighted the importance of work in this area, and indeed, in related areas where teachers are required to examine their views of minority groups, and to critically scrutinize the provision that they offer. There were examples of notable shifts, particularly in the teachers' appreciation of the dangers of homogenising and essentialising minority groups, and of the importance and significance of more accurate means of identifying the needs of individual pupils and families. However, it seemed that this understanding was very tentative and embryonic and thus necessitating the need for work of this nature to be on-going. In terms of the training, the sessions were well-received and were relevant to the teachers' needs, although they continued to ask for information of the Roma children's 'culture'. The impact of the project on teachers' actual practice was difficult to measure, although the final evaluation indicated the group's commitment and interest. Subsequent anecdotal evidence as well as the brief report the participating teachers wrote for us, would also suggest that the teachers had benefited from the training and were incorporating aspects of the training within their respective schools. For example, teachers had letters translated for parents into Czech and adopted the 'Language of the month' idea and this became a whole school initiative.

The teachers evaluated our training course with them as a success and they expressed their commitment to developing their practice and utilising the resources we had shared with them. However, they appeared to be torn in their priorities between what the school management required of them and what they wanted to do to develop a more inclusive and multicultural approach to their teaching and parent-school relationships. Arguably the management view of the INSETRom could be symbolised by the response to our invitation to the school to send one or two teachers to the dissemination event in Turin (all expenses paid): they felt they did not have the time to do this. Gleaning insights from these observations we can characterise the headteacher's leadership approach as technocratic. She appeared to lose interest in INSETRom and abandoned her responsibilities to the project and thereby left the teachers without authority and one might say the confidence to proceed with the change.

THE CASE OF THE CYPRIOT PARTICIPATING SCHOOL: AKRON PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Cypriot participating school, heretofore called Akron Primary, is a state primary school in the Greek-Cypriot state educational system. The educational system is characterized by centralised structures of educational administration, curriculum development, and policy making controlled centrally by the Ministry of Education and Culture [MOEC] (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2006). Issues of multiculturalism in the Greek-Cypriot state education system have only recently begun to receive attention. There is yet to be devised a comprehensive policy for aiding the educational and social integration of culturally diverse students in the system which has been criticised for being monocultural, monolingual and ethnocentric (Angelides & Stylianou, 2001; Educational Reform Committee, 2004; Philippou, 2009; Zembylas, 2010). Efforts to integrate culturally diverse students consist of support mainly at the primary school level, primarily of a remedial kind in teaching Greek as a Second Language, and of inadequate duration, even though that in August 2008, the MOEC sent a new circular to state primary schools regarding intercultural education charting out new measures to be taken in light of the educational reform that is underway, such as the provision of intensive lessons in Greek in some schools and the publication of an orientation booklet for immigrant families (see Theodorou, 2010, for an analysis of the Greek-Cypriot policy on intercultural education).

Akron Primary, the Cypriot participating school, is the primary school with the largest numbers of Roma children in the Greek-Cypriot state educational system. Akron Primary is situated on the south-west side of a city nearby, the so-called 'Turkish-Cypriot neighbourhood' of the city, a low socio-economic catchment area. A total of 116 pupils were enrolled in the school at the time of the study, of which 44 were Roma and/or Turkish-Cypriots, 9 other Turkish speaking, 57 Greek-Cypriots and the rest from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The number of Roma pupils enrolled in the school started to increase in early 2000. This resulted in reactions from the Greek-Cypriot majority parents and the school staff faced an outbreak of racist incidents not only among pupils but also between families and the local community (Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou & Symeou, 2003). In 2003 most parents members of the school's Parents' Association moved their children from the school and enrolled them in other schools, bypassing the strict regulations that children in state schools attend their local schools. The place being small, news spread very quickly around and the established perception became that the school was a 'problematic' school –previously considered 'difficult' mainly due to the socio-economic background of the pupils' families– and thus teachers were not willing to be appointed at Akron. Year by year it became more difficult for the MOEC to staff the school, therefore the Ministry had to appoint for a number of years newly hired teachers from other educational districts who would stay at the school for mostly one school-year and submit an application for transfer to another school the following year. The annual turn over of the staff reached more that 80% (Zembylas & Papaevripides, 2011).

At the same time Roma pupils either did not attend regularly the school or after being enrolled in the school did not attend the whole year (Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou & Symeou, 2003). Similarly to what is reported in many other European countries (Symeou, Luciak, & Gobbo, 2009), Roma children at Akron Primary appeared 'hard to reach'. Even more, despite a ten year compulsory education law, a number of Roma families did not enrol their children at school. Even though social services tried to convince Roma families to urge their children to attend and stay in school, and Roma parents were presented with various incentives, such as uniforms, shoes, school equipment (Agathokleous, 2005), most Roma children of the neighbourhood area end up almost illiterate (Demetriou & Trimikliniotis, 2007). Interestingly though, Roma who fail to send their children to school are not considered to violate the compulsory education law.

Fights between Greek-Cypriot and Roma pupils was in the early 2000's a daily event, whereas the local community was highly upset and a petition circulated among local Greek-Cypriot families for the move of Roma and Turkish-Cypriots from the neighbourhood. In 2003, the school started showing signs of neglect, obvious by its infrastructure problems and its aesthetic appearance. The headteacher, a female local dynamic teacher appointed in 2002 at her last two years of service just before retirement, was fighting to bring the school to the attention of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) and the public, but without the sincere support of the school teachers and deputies, the local inspectorate and the school's Parents' Association. An intervention programme initiated by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus in 2002 (see Hatzitheodoulou-Loizidou & Symeou, 2003) aiming at supporting the school to enhance its inclusion practices in order to address the multicultural reality established, documents that Roma parents of the school did not send their children to school because they understood very few in school, got into fights and felt excluded. The report of this intervention programme submitted to the MOEC suggesting intervention measures aiming to support the school in introducing inclusive measures was never utilised.

It was most possibly the killing of a 10-year-old Turkish-Cypriot pupil during a racist incident in the summer of 2003 that was the turning point to the recent history of Akron Primary. The incident brought the attention of the media and put Akron school and its local community to the spot.

As soon as the following school-year, the case of Akron school and its local neighbourhood was related to/possibly initiated the discussion for the introduction of a small deviation from the mainstream education model in the Greek-Cypriot educational system, namely the Zones of Educational Priority programme (ZEP). The new institution was implemented at a small number of schools across the country, including Akron Primary and its affiliated kindergarden and secondary school. A ZEP is comprised of a cluster of schools: a primary school and the kindergarten and the gymnasium (lower secondary school) which are linked to the primary school. The institution of ZEP was initially declared by the MOEC as a measure to combat school failure, particularly functional literacy, violence, deviance, truancy and drug use (F.7.1.10.6/2, 30/6/2005). Apart from the Akron area, it was introduced to a small number of other areas which were deemed as socially disadvantaged based on several criteria, one of which was the presence of ‘other-language’ students (a term used by the MOEC to refer to non-Greek native speakers enrolled in state schools). Over the course of time the emphasis of the program slowly shifted from school failure to intercultural education, particularly because ZEP schools hosted a large number of foreign students and also because it has come to be the main form of education for Turkish-speaking students, both Roma and Turkish-Cypriots, as in the case of Akron school.

Since 2004, Akron Primary, together with its cluster schools, belong to one of the five initially established ZEP given that all Roma children of the school were classified as ‘other-language’ pupils and were considered as facing educational difficulties. As such, Akron Primary receives extra assistance from the MOEC, for instance is allowed for having fewer students in class, for more hours of remedial teaching, for being staffed with bilingual teachers (Greek and Turkish speaking who teach the Turkish language and culture to Turkish speaking pupils) and for offering free lunch for all students (Council of Ministries, Decision Number 59.509, 18/2/2004). In addition, as ZEP aim at providing ‘other-language’ students and children with educational difficulties with etxra support, Akron school is funded to provide after school and vacation classes, to organise cultural and athletic events, and apply new technologies in order to improve school attractiveness to the students.

Among the measures taken by the Ministry to introduce change in the school was to staff the school with local and experienced teachers. From the first year of the inclusion of Akron in the ZEP, and given the retirement of the previous headteacher, a male headteacher was appointed, Mr Costas Andreou. Similarly, new deputy headteachers and new teachers moved to the school. Under the headteacher's direction, the staff was called to utilise the ZEP innovation in order to solve the school's 'problems' by activating the school staff, the local community and the families, the Parents' Association, local agents, the local educational authorities, and so on. In order to achieve this aim, the headteacher took a number of specific measures, including the teachers to become personally involved in achieving this aim; the increase of trust among the locals through school visits at homes and addressing the drop-out plenomenon; the re-establishment of relationships between the Greek-Cypriot parents and the Roma and Turkish-Cypriot parents through their participation in joint activities and seminars and the representation of the Roma and Turkish-Cypriot parents in the school's Parents' Association; the equal provision of extra support to all pupils and the equal treatment of all pupils regarding rights and responsibilities; the cultivation of respect to difference, through school visits at historical monuments of both Greek-Cypriots and Roma and Turkish-Cypriots in the neighbourhood (e.g. visits to the local church and mosque) and school editions in both Greek and Turkish (Zembylas & Papaevripides, 2011).

The school managed in the following years, under the leadership of headteacher Andreou, to achieve some of its goals and most notable the decrease of the school's drop-out rate, the increase of school attendance and the reduction of racist incidents. The school was brought to the attention of the government, the media, as well as local and international agents supporting co-existence in multicultural societies. Ministers and representatives of some of these organisations, like the United Nations, the European Union, visited from time to time the school in order to get a closer information about the school's actions and initiatives but also to express their support to the school and its staff. Akron Primary managed also to be awarded a number of awards for its good practice by local agents and received a prize as an exemplar school of intercultural practice by the Commonwealth. All these achievements shifted slowly but steadily the school culture to a more collaborative and inclusive one and amended the image of the school and the teaching staff to the local community, the teacher community in the country and the broader society.

Despite these successes, teachers after the excitement of the first few years started feeling dissapointed for the very slow progress of the introduction of change and therefore year after year more of them asked for an appointement to another school. It was at that moment that the collection of data for the current study took place. At the time, Roma children's school enrollment was still rather low and attendance was similarly poor with only approximately one third of Roma children attending the school daily. Roma school enrollement was usually interrupted during the transfer to gymnasium. Teachers frequently pointed to sporadic and unsystematic school attendance among the Roma: "*After the first rains in autumn, they disappear*", a teacher commented. Many Roma children indicated that schooling was something they could engage in and disengage from with ease, possibly because they have negative attitudes towards education and see education as an unnecessary burden (Demetriou & Trimikliniotis, 2007). "*I only went to school for a limited period of time, less than a year … when we came to live here*", said a 10-year old Roma pupil. Hence, most interviews with Roma children took place at their home; whenever the research team arrived at the school for the interviews, most Roma children were absent and claimed not feeling well that specific day and thus remained home.

Teachers also considered that Roma pupils attending Akron Primary were 'different' than the rest of the children: they were considered illiterate, did not do their homework and did not socialize with the rest of the children in the school: "*I do not believe that these pupils benefit from school*", said one teacher, whereas another one stated that "*[Roma pupils] feel like strangers at school*". In addition, the Roma children themselves reported limited learning in school and tended to identify school with play: "*We play football and play with the computers at school while the Greek-Cypriots read…*"

Roma children experienced serious difficulties with speaking, reading and writing in the Greek official school language, which impacted both their oral and written performance. Surprisingly, teachers regarded Roma children as less able to learn Greek compared to 'other-language' students at Akron Primary. Roma students received extra hours for language instruction, an arrangement settled by the ZEP institution: "*Their time is divided into thirds: one third for Turkish language support work, one third for Greek language support work, and one third in the classroom for the rest of the other subject matters*". Nonetheless, this support was perceived by teachers as being inadequate. This was confirmed by the researchers who noticed that nearly all the interviewed children had a limited understanding of Greek, despite long periods of living in the local community where Greek is the more used language.

Roma parents stressed the importance of the provision of having a Turkish speaking teacher at school as a mediator between children, teachers and parents: "*Some children do not speak Greek so well. A teacher speaking Turkish is very helpful* *for them*", suggested a Roma parent, while an 18-year old pupil who dropped out from school noted: "*If our teachers could speak to us in Turkish [...] I think I would have stayed in school*".

Language appeared also to be related to the absence of Roma culture at school, while teachers attributed the communication gap with Roma parents to language barriers. Teachers indicated their lack of knowledge of Roma as a cultural group and their perceptions of Roma culture related to Roma nomadic life and a disposition towards music, sports and fighting. Roma parents from their part confirmed teacher's ignorance by asserting that their cultural background was completely unknown to the teachers, thus making them feeling culturally 'invisible' within the school: "*They (the teachers) do not know how we live here. They never came to see us. Nobody knows us. Nobody asked us what we need*". Similarly, Roma children, when asked how their school could have been better, referred to culture: "*I would like my teachers to know more about the way we live. We celebrate different things, we eat different food...*"

Correspondingly, Roma parents' most common reason to visit the school was to report bullying incidents against their children and express their concern about their children's safety. At the time of the study, despite the decline in racist incidents at Akron, many Greek-Cypriot pupils were still negative towards their presence in the school reflecting their families' attitudes towards Roma: some accepted diversity but most of them called them *Τούρτζιοι* (Turks) or *Κκιλίντζιροι* (Gypsies). Either way, both labels referring to Roma children's cultural backgrounds: *Τούρτζιοι* or *Κκιλίντζιροι*, were used to diminish their status. In employing name-calling, Greek-Cypriot students used widespread negative societal stereotypes regarding this particular ethnic group: in calling them *Τούρτζιοι* they made reference to the established stance among Greek-Cypriots that Roma chose to live with the 'enemies', the Turkish-Cypriots, as old allies against the Greek-Cypriots who have always been suspected of being spies of the Turks (Iacovidou, 2009). *Κκιλίντζιροι* was used by Greek-Cypriot children to mock Roma peers as dirty and poor, a widespread negative stereotype for Roma both in Cyprus and elsewhere, and thus diminish their status. "*I like school, but I do not like it when children fight each other. Greeks and us fight each other*", a child explained. A Roma parent noted "*Other children hit my children. My daughter has a broken arm... My son was hit on his ear*", and another one explained:

> *He [my son] was older than his classmates. They were making fun of him [...] He went to the school nearby but got into fights with other children. They called him 'Turk' [...]; my girls went to school but did not finish because of the fights.*

Interestingly though, all Roma children admitted that they had good Greek or Turkish friends at school and in the neighbourhood.

Despite the recommendation of the Second ECRI Report on Cyprus (2001) that all teachers are properly trained to teach in a multicultural environment and to react to any manifestations of racism or discriminatory attitudes in schools, teachers at Akron Primary who participated in our training made no reference to support or specialized knowledge of teaching methods for intercultural education in multicultural educational settings, and particularly for including Roma. Despite some school-based training (e.g. on conflict resolution), comments revolved about training being insufficient "*in either depth or frequency*" and professional development, as a teacher stressed, being a result of teachers' own initiative: "*Part from what I know for these people comes from my experience and part from what I read*". Therefore, teachers described their efforts to keep these children disciplined and prevent them from leaving school as overwhelming and attributed the little progress made to their own personal efforts. Teachers' pedagogical approaches seemed to be traditional, despite reference to mixed-ability grouping and individualized instruction. Teachers stressed that "*it is up to each teacher's willingness to find ways to motivate them [Roma children] to come and stay in school*", underlying teachers' anxiety of "not doing enough", perceived to be reinforced by educational authorities.

Certain stereotypes regarding Roma pupils, their family and their culture also emerged in teachers' accounts: "*They [the Roma pupils] are happy just living as they live. They do not want anything else from school and do not expect anything else from us*"; "*They are not interested in learning, they come to school to play and socialise, they search for an excuse to leave class ... these are aspects of their culture*", "*Roma pupils lack skills to comply with rules. It is very difficult for them to integrate into the classroom*" were some stereotypical comments. Such comments appeared to reflect low expectations, especially since teachers referred to Roma school inclusion as an illusion:

> *The children do not integrate and they never will. They might acquire a number of desirable attitudes/habits such as the love to learn, the habit to hold a spoon and a fork to eat; however, they will always stand out as different.*

An attitude that '*we do whatever we can*' prevailed, while teacher goals for Roma children appeared very basic: "*I just want to help progress a little. I try to keep them busy with the material*". Their major concern however was the clarification of aims and expectations of Roma pupils: "*What do we –the formal society– want from them?*

What exactly are the needs of these people … and do we really want to fulfil their needs and how? Can someone give us an answer?" Teachers suggested the need to assess what the Roma want from school and whether the school can help them adjust current teaching material or design new curricula for Roma children and provide extra school time to work with them. Interestingly, Roma parents, from their side, were satisfied with the teachers. "*Teachers think that children are good. I do not know if teachers see our children differently*", said a parent.

Teachers' accounts who participated in the INSETRom training[2] at Akron Primary reflected a similar anxiety about their training needs as their anxiety in teaching Roma children in multicultural classrooms. The training programme, as this was implemented in Cyprus, although somewhat helpful, was not adequate in addressing their overall concerns regarding Roma educational inclusion. Even after the training sessions, most teachers claimed they lacked sufficient knowledge, skills and confidence to work optimally with Roma children and their parents, and predicted that difficulties in teaching Roma children –and keeping them in school– will continue, thus appeared pessimistic about the impact of training on their teaching. In particular, they appeared to believe that Roma children would continue to have poor school attendance, would continue to experience learning difficulties and would continue to resist cooperating with the teacher. They also indicated the need for further training in view of practical everyday classroom challenges and to be directly linked to classroom practice. Hence, teachers at Akron considered as most useful those training sessions that provided tangible, practical guidance in resolving day-to-day real class situations (e.g. strategies for teaching language and mathematics to Roma children, coping strategies for incidents of violence and racism between Roma and other children) or those that directly related to Roma issues (e.g. the module on 'Roma history and culture', detailed information about Roma everyday life, knowing more about experiences and material on Roma education from other educational systems). They also noted that they did not feel more confident in either teaching about Roma issues or addressing stereotypes and prejudices towards the Roma in their class than prior to the training.

2. In Cyprus, the teacher training was provided by a small team of trainers during February-April 2009. The following five topics were addressed, reflecting the stated needs of the teachers: 'Culture and enculturation', 'Roma history and culture', 'Intercultural education', 'Classroom management and methodology', and 'Curriculum development'. Each training session lasted three hours, and took place in one of the primary schools. Out of the 17 participants, 14 were teachers and 3 were local social agents. All participants had Roma children in the class, ranging from 15% to 75% of their class population.

The most positive element for teachers at Akron appeared to be the endorsement of the idea that they personally need to know more about Roma to be able to teach them. For instance, one teacher stated: "*Thus, I will become more able to deal with my own prejudices first and then teach Roma pupils and other pupils to face their prejudices against Roma*", while another teacher explained: "*I plan to work more on accepting Roma uniqueness. Then, I will utilise in my teaching elements on their own culture, so that they accept me and realise that since I can get from them they can get from me*".

COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION

Although there are specific differences between the two schools, the two countries' Roma populations and the responses to the INSETRoM training, there is also a significant amount of similarity in all of these respects.

Roma experience: the Roma in these two countries have different histories, languages and have migrated in different times from different parts of Europe. However, the issues facing them in the two countries and in these particular regions is very similar, for example they are faced with: marginalization; poverty; poor housing; low status jobs; racist abuse and negative stereotyping.

In both of the schools the attitudes of the schools and teachers were in many ways negative and derogatory. Teachers at both Westfield and Akron claimed that the Roma parents did not value education and this they claimed, accounted for the children's poor school attendance. They also held assumptions often for which they had no evidence, such as the Roma children had not attended school prior to coming to England/Cyprus. Teachers in the two schools also constructed Roma boys as aggressive, ill-disciplined, arrogant and confrontational.

Teachers in the two schools emphasised that they needed to know more about 'Roma culture' and how to address the Roma children's behaviour, implying that these children were somehow different from the rest of the schools' children and uncontrollable.

The teachers believed that if they knew more about 'their culture' then they would know better how to relate to the children and the parents. In spite of spending a significant amount of time in the course programme addressing the problematisation of 'culture', the teachers did not engage with this line of argument and analysis. They maintained by the end of the training course that they still had this need to know more about 'Roame culture' and the course had not sufficiently addressed the issue.

At Westfield teachers did begin to recognise that some of their previous views tended to homogenise the Roma children and parents and by the end of their course they were more self-conscious about making such sweeping statements. They also indicated that they valued some of the teaching ideas that we had shown them as well as the materials we gave them. However, there was a strong view that they were overwhelmed with 'other' work and curriculum development and were unsure to what extent they could sustain the changes we urged them to develop. It was clear that this work we had been doing with them was very marginalised and an addition rather than viewed as essential and central to their teaching in general: in some ways echoing the dominant view of the Roma people themselves.

At Akron there was a negative response to the project expressed in terms of a dissatisfaction with course programme, and teachers claimed that it did not meet their needs. Moreover, they claimed they were already implementing a multicultural approach which did not address their particular concerns about the Roma children.

Although we do not wish to suggest that the teachers were uncaring or uncommitted in their work, there appeared to be a difficulty in recognising their own negativity towards the Roma children and parents and an inability to focus on the children's and parents' needs rather than their own. They also could not contemplate that the problem with beahviour and low academic performance and parents' apparent lack of involvement might be rooted in the attitudes and practice of the school and the teachers. As referred to earlier, Joyce King (1991) terms this 'dysconcious racism'.

With respect to the leadership of the schools, this was very different at Westfield and Akron. At Westfield as described, we felt the headteacher tolerated our presence but gave no active support or encouragement to our work or the efforts that the teachers were making. At Akron by contrast, the headteacher was very supportive. He had driven a multicultural agenda in the school but the teachers having complied with initiatives in the past seemed to view our project as unnecessary and irrelevant.

So how can we account for these responses and what might we have done to ensure greater success?

i. Dysconcious racism – although we were aware of the need to address this, we could have addressed it differently and perhaps made it more central to our training programme.
ii. Our project was not set up as a multidimensional change process. It was more focused on the substantive issues than on the process. We neglected discussion about implications of the required change. As Fullan (1992b) said "change often is not conceived of as being multidimensional". Hence the ramifications

of change are not taken into account and anxiety about these could act as a barrier. In the English case this can be demonstrated by the disjointed approach to curriculum development and change.

iii. Both (i) and (ii) actually interrelate: we needed to consider the requirement for change and the way that addressing the Roma children's and parents' needs was in fact relevant to the teachers' whole teaching and learning approach (even though we also needed to foreground the Roma too).

iv. Changing attitudes and practice is a long term process and a potentially very threatening process. If we were to succeed at this we needed to engage the headteachers in a discussion about this. At Westfield we didn't do so; mainly because we did not have the opportunity and we were very concerned about the school withdrawing altogether from the project. At Akron, despite the engagement and support of the headteacher, knowing from the very beginning we approached the school that the school's teachers had complied with similar initiatives in the past and would resist to spend more time on a training, tried to make the training happen with the minimum change of the school and the teachers' schedule and activities. The training as such was therefor offered during and as an extension of their weekly staff meeting and any further involvement of the teachers in our project was planned with caution not to overwhelm them with our presence and expectations.

v. At Westfield, a community of practice did in some ways develop with the core of teachers who continued to attend and participate in the course. The main stumbling block for them in developing their work was the lack of support by the headteacher together with the headteachers' demands on them to undertake other changes. At Akron, very few innovations occured as a result of the training. Before the end of the school year, the training was left in the memory of the teachers as another initiative that came from outside, which did not manage to address their day-to-day concerns working with Roma pupils.

In the literature on change strategies as we have said, in order to bring about transformational change then a tranformative leadership approach is necessary. We argue that as part of this is also a form of distributive leadership. In terms of our own approach we did attempt to identify the teachers' needs and involve them in a constructivist approach to changing their prcatice. However, it is true to say that we held on to our own views about what form that change should take, so for example although we discussed issues around culture and also shared information about some Roma customs etc., we failed to satisfy the teachers' desire to know more. We also did not convince the teachers of the problematics of ‘culture’ and the Roma people were not a homogeneous group adopting a monolithic culture. Clearly at Westfield there was no attempt at transformative or distributive leadership from the headteacher’s perspective. Perhaps at Akron if we had approached the project differently this may have been more possible. In particular if the process has foreseen and allowed enough time for addressing the change of attitudes and practice and managed to negotiate with both teachers and the headteacher the potential threats they might have felt in entering in the processes involved in our project.

CONCLUSION

Our INSETRom project had much more modest intentions but in order to be successful as we discuss later, we ought to have considered these wider implications and the macro ramifications too. Moreover, whilst some of the contextual difficulties presented challenges to change. Following Johnson (2004), we do not think the macro conditions and policies are necessarily totally prohibitive of school leaders and teachers engaging in choice-making and creative initiatives for change.

Of course there are many barriers to change which we have already alluded to. Perhaps the most troublesome are the personal which touch the emotional self. Involved in this is the risk and stress which all change seems to incur to some degree. Change presents a challenge or potential challenge to one’s identity – what one stands for or has stood for; it implies an element of failure – hence the need for change. It therefore removes one from the comfort zone of what one knows and felt one was good at. Change in relation to ‘race’, for white people in particular, seems to present an even greater threat often leading to denial (King, 1991). King has termed this ‘dysconscious racism’ which she describes as “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things” (p. 135), that is to say the tendency of white people to accept Whiteness and White values and ways of being unquestioningly. Beatty and Brew (2004) suggest that the relationship between trust and learning and development is essential in the process of change. The lack of this, they argue, seriously threatens the development of collaborative cultures and others too have argued or acknowledged the importance of collaboration (e.g. Little, 1993; Nias et al., 1989) and communities of practice in order to develop effective and meaningful change (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The more significant the change such as in challenging the dominant hegemony, the greater the threat and need for collective engagement.

Moreover if it is so, as Wenger (1998) suggests that individuals develop their understanding of their work from the community of practice within which they carry this out, then the socio-cultural and micro-political context and environmental ethos would be very significant. Wenger also suggests that individuals derive their identity from their membership of and participation in such communities. Going against the grain therefore would hold heightened significance. Thus, the importance for colleagues working together to develop their thinking is crucial. In relation to 'race' and in our specific example of Roma children and families, this also poses further difficulties and controversial challenges because of racist attitudes or dysconscious racism.

In order to develop practice underpinned by social justice and equity principles, transformative and distributive leadership would appear to provide the most efficacious approach. Sheilds (2009) argues that transformative rather than any other leadership approach has the most potential in order to effect equitable change. Transformative leadership differs from other approaches in that it is value based – that is to say, it is based upon the principles and values of justice that it is seeking to implement and develop. "Its focus is on promoting a form of education that may achieve its transformative potential" (Sheilds, 2009, p. 57). In order to achieve this we suggest however that a distributive leadership approach, or in Ryan's terms (2003) 'inclusive leadership' approach, would also be necessary and do not think that harnessing the two approaches together would be counterproductive. Harris and Muijs (2005) argue for a form of distributive leadership as an effective approach to developing school change. School improvement, they argue, is co-constructed, rather than imposed 'top-down'. Through this collective effort meaning is formed, shared and a type of group learning takes place (Lambert, 1998); in so doing the possibility for building internal capacity for change ensues.

The process of professional development and corresponding change of practice resulted in varying degrees of success. Although we spent over a year working with the teachers, the process of change and transformation takes a long time to 'take root' and it is an on-going process especially when changing attitudes is a key part of this process. Supporting teachers in overcoming anxieties and fear as well as ensuring the centrality of the head of school needs to be at the heart of the process.

Having said that, was it better to have done what we did than nothing at all? We think so. Small changes are better than no change.

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