

**Doctor of Professional Studies (Education Consultancy)**

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**An Autoethnography of an Education Consultant in Greece**

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The views expressed in this research project are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supervisory team, Middlesex University, or the examiners of this work'.

## Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Figures</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Table of Tables</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Acknowledgements in Greek</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Navigation of my autoethnography</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction to the Context and Myself</b> .....	<b>16</b>
1.1.1 Phase 1 of my engagement with formal research .....	21
<b>1.2 Other Players in the Game</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Chapter 2 – Methodology</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>2.1 My New Approach</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>2.2 Influences on my Choice of Research Design</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>2.3 Concerns about Autoethnography</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>2.4 Becoming an Autoethnographer</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>Chapter 3 – The Journey of Odysseus and My Journey in Education</b>	
<b>Consultancy</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>3.2 The Separation and Departure of Odysseus from Ithaca – My Separation and Departure from the UK</b> .....	<b>57</b>
<b>3.3 The Role of the Gods in Odyssey and the Greek Crisis</b> .....	<b>58</b>
<b>3.4 The Goddess Athena - My Clients in the Consultancy</b> .....	<b>67</b>
<b>3.5 First Obstacle - Cyclopes and Cultural Diversity</b> .....	<b>76</b>
3.5.1 Cultural Diversity and Localisation .....	87
3.5.2 The Straits of Scylla and Charybdis: Cultural Shock.....	97
3.5.3 The Story of Calypso.....	106
<b>3.6 Second Obstacle – Passing the Sirens – a First Component of the Challenge They Represent</b> .....	<b>107</b>
3.6.1 My Practice – First Phase .....	117
3.6.2 Athena’s Role in the Odyssey – My Role as a Coach .....	126
3.6.3 My Practice – Second Phase .....	127
3.6.4 The Role of Arete in the Odyssey – My Role as a Liaison .....	132
3.6.5 My Practice – Third Phase .....	133
3.6.6 Penelope with the Suitors in the Odyssey – My Role as a Mentor.....	136
<b>3.7 How do I Avoid Poseidon?</b> .....	<b>138</b>
<b>3.8 Passing the Sirens: a Second Component of Their Challenge</b> .....	<b>140</b>
<b>3.9 Third Obstacle – Avoiding the Land of the Lotus Eaters and Moving Towards Professionalization</b> .....	<b>151</b>
<b>3.10 The Return and Reintegration of Odysseus in Ithaca</b> .....	<b>168</b>
<b>Chapter 4 – My “Ithaka”</b> .....	<b>171</b>
<b>4.1 Reflection on Action through my ‘Ithaka’ – Education Consultancy for Me</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>4.2 How I Do Not Sell a False Coin of my Own Dreams: Reflection In Action through Ithaka – the One Side of the Coin</b> .....	<b>181</b>
<b>4.3 Reflection in Action, through “Ithaka”- the Other Side of the Coin</b> .....	<b>184</b>

<b>Chapter 5 – Conclusion.....</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>5.1 Final notes.....</b>	<b>192</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Who I Am.....</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Appendix 2 – Parents Together.....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>Appendix 3 – Greek International Women Awards .....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>Appendix 4 – Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA).....</b>	<b>227</b>
<b>Appendix 5 – London Statement.....</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Appendix 6 – “Ithaka”, Constantine Cavafy, 1911.....</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>Appendix 7 – Ethics Form .....</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>Appendix 8 – Work-Based Learning Poster .....</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Appendix 9 – Curriculum Vitae Template for the Clients of <i>Athina, Education Consultants</i>.....</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>Appendix 10 – Mind Maps.....</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Appendix 11 – Children and Families in Adverse Life Situations - Article.....</b>	<b>246</b>

## Table of Figures

Figure 1: Greek Trireme, Warship (Pinterest.com)	14
Figure 2: My Compass	14
Figure 3: The Connected Curriculum Framework (Fung 2017:p. 5)	33
Figure 4: A 15th-century manuscript of The Odyssey, book i, written by the scribe Ioannes Rhosos for the Tornabuoni family, Florence, Italy (British Museum)	41
Figure 5: Peter Schrank, The Economist (18 <sup>th</sup> August, 2018)	60
Figure 6: Labour: Labour Market Statistics (Eurostat, 2014)	63
Figure 7: Household income (Eurostat, 2014)	64
Figure 8: Suicide rates in Greece (Eurostat 2014)	65
Figure 9: Pallas Athena, in Wikipedia	68
Figure 10: Inbound students and University – Industry Collaboration [National Bank of Greece Education Department (Sector Report, 2017)]	70
Figure 11: Destination of Greek students [National Bank of Greece Education Department (Sector Report, 2017)]	71
Figure 12: Polyphemus, by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, 1802 (Landesmuseum Oldenburg)	76
Figure 13: The Strait of Messina, with Scylla (underlined in red) and Charybdis on the opposite shores (Wikipedia)	97
Figure 14: The Adventures of Ulysses (tripline.net)	98
Figure 15: The Model of Cultural Shock (ukcisa.org.uk)	101
Figure 16: Culture Shock, Infographic (ukcisa.org.uk)	101
Figure 17: Detail from Calypso receiving Telemachus and Mentor in the Grotto by William Hamilton (Wikipedia)	106
Figure 18: Sirens (greekmythodogy.com)	107
Figure 19: Classroom images (pinterest)	115
Figure 20: Professional diaries (personal archive)	116
Figure 21: A model for effective Learning (Griffiths, 2006)	121
Figure 22: A model for effective learning (Griffiths, 2006)	122
Figure 23: A model for effective learning (Griffiths, 2006)	123
Figure 24: What drives the candidates	124
Figure 25: Athina, Education Consultants, Logo	126
Figure 26: Arete (shutterstock.com)	132
Figure 27: John William, Waterhouse, oil paint	137
Figure 28: Poseidon has been known as the God of the Sea. (Arte de la Palabra)	138
Figure 29: Relationships in schools (Kabouridi, 2011:p.21)	145
Figure 30: Lotus plant (template.com)	151

## Table of Tables

<i>Table 1: Compass Key</i>	15
<i>Table 2: Greek Clients' Profiles</i>	72
<i>Table 3: Learning Contract</i>	119

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to create a framework for my own practice that would also be a means to share practices with other Education Consultants locally and internationally. The aim of this particular research was to reveal the complexities, tensions and learnings which arise from the lived experience in this role. The methodology chosen was autoethnography using a metaphoric frame of Homer's *Odyssey* to navigate the complexities and Cavafy's poem *Ithaka* to show the learning opportunities which can arise when one is open to discovery of self and others. The experience that is explored here pertains to both personal and professional aspects of a range of education practices and requirements, often of an international nature, which impact on how the practice of the specific Education Consultant works. The activities examined range from research, networking and speaking at international conferences to setting up and running a consultancy in Greece. This research highlights the contradictions and obstacles faced by the Education Consultant and provides a set of actions which could be the basis for initiating standards of Education Consultancy recognized locally and globally.

## Navigation of my autoethnography

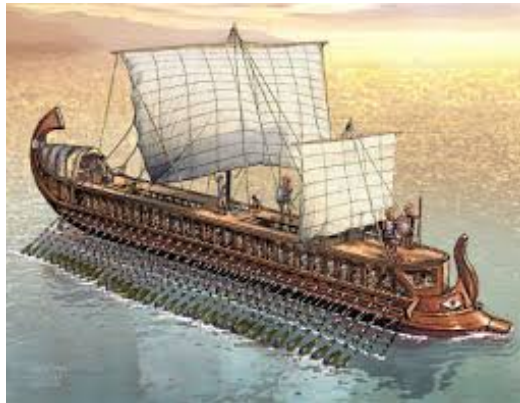


Figure 1: Greek Trireme, Warship (Pinterest.com)

Every traveller needs some kind of compass, one that guides the traveller through the regions of the world she wishes to explore and the locations of the people with whom she wishes to have conversations and then there is the compass that guides the traveller on a more internal voyage as she shapes and is shaped by her many encounters. Here is my compass which I hope helps you to navigate my world and me.



Figure 2: My Compass

<b>Research</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>No of Participants</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
<b>Autoethnography</b>	Deeply exploring myself, my own practice and sector and my own country and ethnicity	Myself and the voices and experiences of others over time including literature	Reflection and the metaphor of Homer's Odyssey and Cavafy's Ithaca	2018
<b>Artefacts of my learning with which I engaged</b>				
<b>Professional Diaries</b>	Reflection and reflexivity on my practice	Myself and my practice over 80 clients and their parents	Notes from sessions with aspiring international students and their parents (my clients)	2010-now
<b>Phase 2 Doctor of Professional Studies</b> New focus	Defining Education Consultancy in Greece	5 language teachers 2 certified agents 2 with private companies 2 staff from private schools	Professional conversations with guided questions	2018
<b>Phase 1 Doctor of Professional Studies</b> Previous focus	Internationalisation of WBL in Higher Education	4 staff in UK, Hong Kong, Cyprus and Greece	Semi structured Interviews	Each interviewed twice 2009 2012

*Table 1: Compass Key*

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction to the Context and Myself

My sector is Education Consultancy. This Introduction provides the context of and lead up to a refocusing of research I started in **two** phases and never quite completed because I kept experiencing that I did not really know what I wanted to achieve and how. Phase 1 was Work-Based Learning (hereafter WBL) but I had never worked in WBL and was researching something at a distance. To bring it closer to my interests and me, I decided to focus on cultural diversity and WBL, but it still remained at a distance. Although for me everything is a learning opportunity, I felt I could not sustain the motivation during challenging changes in personal and professional circumstances because I did not feel strongly enough about the relevance of the research to my future. When I re-engaged with the university, I began to focus on my sector of Education Consultancy (Phase 2) with a view to (i) exploring what was available in my locality and (ii) improving what I could do nationally about this area of practice, particularly the post-financial crisis era and austerity measures for my country. This involved interviewing a number of professionals who identify themselves as Education Consultants with a view to working on and sharing best practice with each other. This was a very challenging objective in such a competitive market. What I came to realise was that I had never really reflected deeply on my own practice, integrated all the disparate parts and articulated what is best practice for myself, what 'professional' means to me.

With this in mind, this critical engagement with my own practice became my focus. It energised me. For the first time I was excited, fully realising that I could not have embarked on this research of my practice without the learning from my two previous phases. I chose an autoethnographic approach to weave together what has shaped me and what I have shaped in this evolutionary process of becoming an Education Consultant. Only then will I have the coherence I need to engage other professionals in an effort to professionalise my sector. Nothing is ever really wasted if we learn from it.



This new life and new energy which autoethnography was bringing also meant I could use my learning and the voices of participants from the earlier research phases as voices which helped me to learn.

I begin first with the ever-shifting context in which myself and Education Consultancy sits.

I present myself as an Education Consultant. This is my destination, my personal 'Ithaka', which I analyse in the following sections. In Greek culture, there are two well-known references to Ithaca. One is the island of Ithaca, the Kingdom of Odysseus, hero of Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus left Ithaca in order to participate in the Trojan War and Homer's *Odyssey* tells the story of the hero's journey back home at the end of the war. Homer's Ithaca is spelled with 'c'. The other 'Ithaka', with a 'k', refers to the celebrated poem 'Ithaka', written by Constantine Cavafy in 1911. This, second, 'Ithaka' stands for the destination that someone is trying to reach in life. Both poems encompass journeys, albeit of very different types. Both will be explored in detail in the ensuing sections. I have been through both journeys myself, but my Ithaca had to take precedence before I could fully experience my Ithaka.

My professional context: the description of the pursuit of skills.

I consider myself as a person who has gone through various forms of international education, both academically and professionally. I am a Greek native speaker, born and raised in Greece. I moved to London to carry out my undergraduate and postgraduate studies. I remember only too clearly how, throughout my studies, I sometimes struggled to cope with the new learning methods with which I was confronted, a term that best describes my initial experience of it.

I have worked in various colleges and have been involved in English teaching as a foreign language. My posts included key roles in the management of colleges from the academic perspective, as well as 11 years of language testing and assessment as a 'Skills for Life' Examiner for Trinity College

London. I was mainly involved with people from different national and cultural backgrounds who came to the UK either to study or work.

Working in such an international environment in the UK, I agree with Douglass (2005) that 'all globalisation is local' as it is subject to local, sub-national and national influences and countervailing forces, including governmental regulation and academic cultures. So, in order to develop "reflective cultural, national and global identifications" (Banks, 2004), students need the appropriate, if not necessary, knowledge, attitudes and skills to function successfully within diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, language and religious groups. Cultural variations can cause problems when people from different cultures interact in business, social and other environments. Without an awareness of other cultures, people from one culture can misunderstand the behaviour, attitude and actions of people from other cultures (Welikala, 2011).

My first managerial post was as Head of the English Department in a private English as a Foreign Language (EFL) College in London. At the time, I was familiar with organising a course which I was also teaching. I was, however, not familiar with producing syllabi, nor was I familiar with recruiting students for the whole college. I had to work hard and gain knowledge to achieve the requirements of my role. This job helped me become more practical and realistic in my thinking about how to achieve departmental objectives. I felt that there were matters beyond my area of expertise that I needed to develop. I realised that there was a need to have skills in financial and staff management that I did not have. Those skills were the foundations for the career change that I made afterwards.

In addition, I realised that, in order to be a good manager in an educational environment, it is important to have experience as a manager in a different environment. In my reflections, I recognised that I had become too confident in my area of expertise and that, at times, it was hard to listen to the suggestions of others. This must have been hard for them, but I did not appreciate at the time how hard it must have been, as I was not fully aware of the impact I was having on others while sustaining my managerial role. As a

result, I decided to accept a position as an EU Project Manager in a software company, Symbian Ltd, where I developed my skills and gained experience in areas which were, hitherto, uncharted territory for me.

Knowledge and information were extremely important in this new environment. As compared to the academic world, which I had previously experienced, processes in this setting were moving considerably faster and expanding more rapidly than in the academic world. I was mainly involved in managing EU projects: these combined both academic and business environments. Within one year, I became a liaison officer between Universities and the industry. This strengthened my previous skills and helped me develop new abilities. In particular, I developed specific skills such as project management and managing contractors.

In addition, my main challenge was negotiating the wide variety of partners, each of whom had different priorities, resource constraints and targets to meet. I developed the skill to act as a facilitator and translator of EU policy and academia into business practice. Gaining respect and engagement was critical. I became responsive to requests; colleagues asked me to lead specific work and this enabled me to positively engage them in developing and implementing tasks for various projects. I was always involved in all projects that the company had with Greece and not just because I was a Greek native speaker. In EU projects whose coordinators were Greek companies or in projects that were in partnership with Greek Universities (even for other Greek employees in the company), I became a liaison person between them and the company. What was always mentioned in my annual performance evaluation was (i) my contribution in those projects as an expert on Greek culture and (ii) that I had the right skills to understand diverse ways of thinking. It is not surprising that my performance was thus evaluated: it was clear to the assessors that I had realised the importance of cultural differences in the workplace and was implementing this realisation in my everyday working practices.

I felt that confidence and trust had always been placed in me from day one, even if I was in a new environment and I lacked the knowledge. During my

first 6 months with this company, I had a mentor: a Director within the organisation who supported my development through critical appraisal of my work. It was a challenge for me, especially the first 3 months. I realised that the skills acquired in my previous post were the minimum I needed in order to be functional and efficient in the new environment. I read books about management skills and I attended seminars relating to the mobile industry, including learning coding languages. Working in this role, I gained insights into the way in which large organisations operate, including organisational culture and ethos. I became increasingly aware of the many ways in which behaviour can affect communication, motivation and learning. I learnt that emergent projects were possible and that not everything needed to be planned in detail from the beginning.

My first understanding of WBL came about while working in an environment where opportunities for new knowledge arose every single day and I had to go back to study literature in order to gain an understanding of the new working environment. Boud and Solomon (2003) have described WBL as:

*“One of the very few innovations related to the teaching and learning aspects of post-secondary education that is attempting to engage seriously with the economic, social and educational demands of our era.” (p.6)*

Part of my liaison with different Universities in the UK and Europe was to arrange learning contracts with PhD candidates from a variety of Universities. These learning contracts related to solutions of a variety of real-world problems that our company was facing. We, as a company, became stakeholders of the research projects that we funded. The management of such projects was completely new knowledge to me.

I started getting familiar with the values of learning agreements. Learning agreements had been used in the UK Higher Education (hereafter HE) since the 1970s for both independent study and work experience modules. Malcolm Knowles (1986) was the person who originally introduced learning

agreements in this sphere of activity. He, in fact, developed the five-step model which we still use today. This model includes (i) diagnosing learning needs, (ii) formulating learning needs, (iii) identifying human material resources for learning, (iv) implementing appropriate learning strategies and (v) evaluating learning outcomes. For Knowles, a learning agreement is “*an alternative way of structuring a learning experience: it replaces a content plan with a process plan*” (1986:p.37). A new world was opening up to me in which I was not only a learner, but I also held a position with a lot of responsibilities.

The difference between the traditional lecture-based learning (with which I was familiar up to that point) and the learning agreement is best explained in Stephenson and Laycock’s (1993) work “... *from the complete control of the teacher we went to the cooperation, autonomy and experiential learning*” (p.102) of the individual. The individual, with the support of the University, has “*the wisdom of their own minds and setting them free on their own learning*” (p.103). However, the key is for the individual to share and use the knowledge in order to attain organisational objectives (Garnett, 2009). For that, it is important that a learning agreement is seen as an agreement / contract of the best way of sharing information in order to make the workplace a better environment.

### *1.1.1 Phase 1 of my engagement with formal research*

Although I already held two postgraduate degrees, I decided to apply for a Doctor of Professional Studies (hereafter DProf) in this field, as I believed that the study undertaken for this degree would impact my performance and deepen my understanding of the concepts of Work Based Learning (WBL) and learning agreements in my workplace. I identified myself as an educator of some kind, whether in business or in academia. Above all, I wanted to further and deepen my understanding of how WBL learners enrich their knowledge and develop their careers. Furthermore, I came to realise that the corporate industry was just a diversion in my career, in much the same way as the obstacles in the *Odyssey* were for the hero’s journey home. As a direct result of this realisation, I wanted to continue on my journey to Ithaca which, at this stage, was the route back to education – but, this time, as a member of

academic staff working in a new field: that of learning processes such as WBL.

And so, I decided to start a DProf in 'Cultural Awareness Strategy in a WBL Concept' in 2007. The best place to do my research was Middlesex University, not only because I was familiar with this institution from previous studies, but also because Middlesex University was a pioneer in the WBL concept in an international environment. My working experience of that time allowed me an invaluable familiarisation with the internationalisation and harmonisation of HE. In point of fact, this was something that I could evidence from my day-to-day interactions with UK universities and EU project leaders. Understanding the most important stimuli for academic internationalisation was crucial, as those are the motives that lead one to comprehend why (i) HE is in serious need of globalisation and (ii) I had to be part of this movement in order for the company I worked for to undertake successful innovative projects that would keep it at the top of the international mobile industry.

This research project (i.e. the aforementioned DProf) was conducted between **2007** and **2013**. This project was not related to my working environment, though my working environment was, in actual fact, the motive that impelled me to do a WBL research project. Unfortunately, this DProf was never submitted due to a series of personal and academic circumstances. However, if truth be told, I learnt a great deal from the work I undertook, including a significant degree of adeptness in handling issues such as communication between international institutions, localisation of the curriculum and matters relating to language barriers. The research project was based on the International Centers of Middlesex University in Greece, Cyprus and Hong-Kong which have, sadly, since been closed by the University.

Moving forward, I quickly turned my attention to Education Consultancy: I could see that progressing my research was too challenging under the circumstances. Even so, I believe that the knowledge and experiences I had acquired, not least as a researcher, had equipped me with all the

indispensable elements that would ensure my success in this new role. At last, everything was beginning to fit.

I returned to Greece in 2010 and put the DProf on the backburner. I was actively engaged with setting up the initial stages of my own consultancy company, *Athina, Education Consultants* (hereafter AEC), in Athens. Currently, the company does not have direct employees but collaborates with various external experts in the field of education. Since 2010, AEC has developed an important network of partnerships. It was at this point that I decided that this would be the best model of working for me, as the company that I was working for in the UK (Symbian Ltd) was based on an ecosystem partnership model. Furthermore, the variety of services that AEC accommodates requires engagement with various other areas of expertise. AEC focuses on four directions, each one representing a different field of expertise.

The first area of expertise focuses on assisting prospective students with HE planning and admissions. AEC takes students on their final year of secondary education and assists them with academic planning and admissions procedures at undergraduate level degrees in Greece and abroad. It also assists University students who want to continue their studies in Greece or abroad. Currently, AEC provides services to people who want to study in Greece and other European countries. In other words, I provide assistance to those wishing to pursue studies leading to English and non-English degrees. To-date, AEC has carried out approximately 150 consultations providing the above services.

The second area of expertise provides services of time-management coaching to students at primary and secondary schools, as well as to university level students. The services are customised to the needs and abilities of each student. The main time-management theories used include the 'Pomodoro Technique' (Cirillos, 2018) and certain approaches of 'Getting Things Done (GTD)', (Allen, 2015). Again, to-date, approximately 240 individual cases have had time-management consultations.

The third area of expertise concentrates on offering career counseling to students and adults. This includes issues relating to career exploration, career change and personal career development, both in Greece and abroad. The tools that are used in career counseling include not only the development of efficient Curriculum Vitae (CV) and cover letters but also the preparation for a job interview. When the goal is to find a job abroad, a seminar is organised in order to provide the prospective professional with key information concerning the professional culture of the hosting country. Approximately 100 individual cases have had consultations to date via this service.

The fourth area of expertise is to assist education establishments, non-profit organisations, schools and HE institutions with educational programme planning. This includes services that improve existing programmes, that actively encourage the collaboration between staff and parents and that create strategies able to promote their ethos and aims. One of the recent activities within this field of expertise was my participation in the advisory group of a Greek Public University in Athens in order to create a postgraduate degree with partners from EU countries and Turkey, based on Erasmus and EU frameworks. In this area, I use substantial knowledge from my experience as an EU manager at the company that I was working in prior to my arrival in Greece.

When I evaluate the structure and business model of AEC, I can identify my professional experiences, my knowledge and myself in it. As identities go, the company is a 'one woman show'. Even on my website, I do write on the 'Who I Am' Section my own personal experience and journey into learning and personal development (Appendix 1). However, I do try to provide for my clients at least two sessions with other people and every piece of work that a client produces is evaluated by other people, as I have a partnership with experts in the field.



The services that AEC provides were born as a direct result of my own experiences and my needs as a learner or a professional. Over the years, I have extensively researched these needs and have, as a consequence, created models of working and, subsequently, the services that I provide. For example, during my research for the aforementioned DProf that was eventually abandoned (2007 - 2013), I had to find ways to spend time on the project on a daily basis. I found that this was difficult, even at an early stage when I did not have family commitments and was able to work long office hours. It was then that I came across the 'Pomodoro Technique' (Cirillo, 2018) which helped me find ways to write part of this research work in a short period of time. Using this technique, I was able to stop at appropriate times and integrate various activities in my daily life. For example, once I stopped work at the designated times, I was able to write an email, eat something, talk on the phone, clean my house. This technique not only solved the concentration issue that I had, but also convinced me of its success – and so, I adopted it in my consultancy practice. As a result of implementing this technique, I am currently collecting data from my practice in order to submit them and become a 'Certified Pomodoro Master' in the future.

During my years in the UK, I wanted to get as much working experience as I could. I recall many instances when I wrote CVs and covering letters that did not make it to the next step, the interview. I still have my notebook with references to the job descriptions of the jobs I had applied for. So, before setting up AEC, I made an appointment with a UK expert on writing CVs. I explained to him that my consultation with him would appertain to what was wrong with all those efforts of mine. He gave me excellent feedback which I then further analysed, evaluated and used as a service in AEC.

Moreover, my consultation with this expert made me realise that we, as individuals, do not know everything. I have grown up, as mentioned earlier in this section, in an environment where relying on one's self was the only way to learn and succeed. I am happy to learn from others and feel no shame in asking for advice. I am, now, a 'real life learner' as I deal with 'real world

issues' in collaboration with others, constantly exchanging knowledge with them.

Collaboration is an approach that I tested in my previous experiences and I have found it to actually work wonders. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the modeling of partnerships in AEC came from that professional move too. However, I recently realised that nourishing this spirit of collaboration has an added bonus: struggling with so many roles in my life (woman, mother, wife, daughter, self-employed professional, founder, friend, volunteer) makes it imperative to ask for help from others. I believe that this sort of assistance and support makes things easier. For that reason, this became my new way of thinking and being in the world.

I put this way of thinking into practice in a very recent project that I am running called 'Parents Together' (Appendix 2). The idea of this project is based on a personal need. I have become a mother, something that I consider as the most important achievement in my life. As my daughters are growing, I feel that I face issues that other mothers might face too but actually do not talk about. So, I have developed a programme consisting of a variety of seminars in which we, mothers with kids of all age groups, meet (as I am a firm believer in the validity of exchange of peers' experiences) once a week. Gardner (2011) and "the frame of mind" was the inspiration behind the setting up of those seminars, all of which are based on 'frames of mind'. Every month we analyse one frame and we invite experts in the particular field we explore to give us practical examples of how to deal with the specific situations we face. In this way, we can use the examples in real life with our kids. Our own practices and experiences are reflected through discussion and analysis during our meeting. We learn from the expert(s) and each other, we express ourselves, we improve our practices and we socialise – all at the same time. The brochure of this project states clearly that 'All Together, We Discover More'. Based on that motto, I realised that I do not want to have the AEC as a 'one woman show', so I put together an Advisory Committee, composed of nine people from different areas of expertise in education (kindergarten, primary and secondary education, language teachers, psychologists,

administration specialists, education consultants, ministry of education employees) who support, guide and evaluate the structure of the 'Parents Together' project. All nine associates are known to me through my previous academic and professional experiences. I have currently come to believe that it is important to regularly talk to this community of associates that I fashioned in the form of a scientific committee about my concerns and, also, to ask for their advice and/or critical feedback.

This, again, is part of me as a researcher doing a DProf. I have my supervisors who are there for me as 'critical friends'. For the last 10 years, I have been influenced by my encounters with research and what it is to be research-minded: always discussing, presenting and exchanging ideas and knowledge with people in the field and wider. As a result, I put these skills into practice in my daily working routine.

I have a good reputation in the Greek market and I am respected by Higher Education Institutes who have experience of my referrals. My revenue has grown, but I have felt that these accomplishments are not enough for my personal and professional development and the development of my sector. Most Education Consultants are solo operators using different practices, techniques and networks. I have been acting professionally as an introvert. This, I believe, cannot lead to a successful career as an Education Consultant who makes an impact not only on my own practice and clients but on my sector, too. I need to identify what my community of practice is, what I have to say and how others react to this. I became an Education Consultant in Greece, essentially without interacting with others, something I used to do when I was in the UK. I have, over the years, built a business based on my previous academic and professional experiences, all the while collecting evidence that what I do has a tangible benefit.

## **1.2 Other Players in the Game**

Education Consultancy has grown rapidly in the last 15 years as HE Institutes compete for international students. Confusion arises over (i) what an

Education Consultant is and (i) issues relating to false hopes and betrayal of trust. As will be seen in later sections, Education Consultants can either be brokers who are paid a commission to recruit students for higher education experiences and awards outside their home countries or professionals who are committed to preparing local students to enter these institutions with an increased level of success potential.

Education Consultants come from a wide range of backgrounds and experience. They are invariably equipped with a comprehensive range of skills and knowledge (Society of Education Consultants, 2019). The primary association in the UK is The Society of Education Consultants (SEC) and, in the US, the Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA). There is no similar association in Greece that I could belong to.

According to the above Associations, the main duties of an Education Consultant are to analyse problems, find solutions and help develop an education organisation further. Education consultants also focus on assisting students with their learning, planning and admissions to different levels of education (ranging from primary school to HE level), in or outside the country of origin. They can work individually or as employees in an educational organisation. Most UK institutions use Education Consultants as part of their international marketing strategies. They usually call them 'agents'. The rationale behind this is that Education Consultants can assist HE institutions in increasing outreach, helping the HE institutions to market the services they provide to a wide range of students.

I do provide all the above services, except the 'agent' in HE. I do not have partnerships with particular Universities. I think that my approach broadens the options I provide to my clients as agents need to match entries to agreements. However, I do have an agent partnership with a summer school in the UK to guarantee the English language level of the students who attend through my services. That being said, in terms of HE, I can see the benefits (mostly financial) in the agent relationship and that this boundaried and

binding approach is less hassle with respect to having to know all the entry requirements of different HE institutions.

In a way, an agent guarantees that the students aspiring to study in a foreign country have the appropriate level of foreign language knowledge. While I can, with some confidence, guarantee the levels of my clients' English when a two-weeks' summer language course is involved, I can certainly not guarantee this for a three-year academic course in a variety of disciplines. In addition, in my partnership with the summer school, I do have a say on what my clients want and, for children under 18 going abroad for the first time, this is important. For young people over 18, going abroad, there is no need for this requirement but there is another one:: these clients need to become multinational, as we live in a globalised world and this can be achieved, in my experience, only through a personal development process.

There is no formal qualification for an Education Consultant. Education Consultants come from a variety of educational backgrounds. All the associations stress that consultants should plan on being committed to continued professional development, such as attending conferences and regular school visits (SEC, 2019). All associations hold annual conferences and offer training for those who are new to the field of educational consulting. Additionally, there are several universities and colleges that offer programs where consultants can further their education and knowledge. The British Council, through the Education UK programme (Education UK, 2019) for Education Consultants, aims to train professionals in education who will, in turn, promote UK education to students who are considering international study.

I decided to contact The British Council in Greece and asked to be trained through this programme. The programme was focused on providing information about education in the UK and gave us, future Education Consultants, the tools with which we can provide “advice, information and services to potential students who are looking to gain academic qualifications, vocational and or English language skills in a new country” (Education UK,

2019, Education Agents Section). While following this course, I experienced what Garnett et al (2004) highlight when referring to the Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (hereafter APEL) candidates; they have “valuable, university level knowledge somewhere else in their educational and vocational life which is not necessary to be repeated” (p.10). Instead, it “can be demonstrated through various sources of evidence and then give credits to the completion of a course” (Harvey and Slaughter, 2007, p.28). It is worth mentioning that the course assessment was based on exams. I took the exams with only two days-worth of studying and I got a ‘distinction’. This gave me the recognition and the certificate of a ‘Certified Education Consultant’ but not the actual knowledge that I could implement directly into my practice. I understood through this experience (and after reflection on several works of literature on the subject) that the right definition for an educational consultant or agent might go as follows:

*“an individual, or a company, or other organisation providing services on a commercial basis to help students and their parents gain places on study programmes overseas.”* (Krasocki 2002, in Hulme et al. 2014, p.684)

Many consultants from the course were highly qualified, either academically or technically. We were all recognised by The British Council. However, none of us could gain recognition from SEC or the HECA. We all came from various backgrounds. Some were educators, some psychologists, HR managers, teachers, lawyers, engineers, economists and life-coaches.

There are, in fact, no mandatory qualifications to specify the profile of an Education Consultant. There is also huge variation in the quality and quantity of work in the field. Even though we all come from such different professional backgrounds, we, nevertheless, all provide services that have the same aim and intended outcome. We provide services to potential HE students that enable them to start or continue their studies outside the country.

I have, over the years, been exploring the field of education consultancy from the position of an independent consultant. I have gained experience from 'in country' International Education (IE), and 'outside the country' IE, from 'cultural diversity in education' to notions of global culture and global citizenship. From 1998 (when I was an undergraduate student in the UK) to 2010 (when I set up AEC), I had the feeling of 'I have done it and I have the T-shirt to prove it'. However, I needed more. I had to find a way to come out of the safety and comfort of my own shell.

The first opportunity to do exactly that came in 2017, at the 'Greek International Women Award' competition. I decided to apply for the 'Social Science' category. The purpose of the competition was to publish the distinctive achievements that Greek women have accomplished in an international context.

I was nominated as one of the five finalists of my category (Appendix 3). This was a great success for me. I was also told that the judges were surprised that I have been voted for from, literally, all over the world. I take this to indicate that, in effect, I am 'international'. In addition, reflecting on my application recently, I have noticed that I wrote it under the influence of my DProf work. 'Internationalisation' is part of myself. The experience of participating in this competition gave me the confidence to come out of my shell into a more academic environment. I had been working on this concept for two decades. This gave me

*'the ability to understand the social dimensions and political functions of experience and meaning making and the ability to apply this understanding in working in social contexts.'* (Fook & Askeland, 2006; Fook, 2010:p.46)

I had to talk about it, get feedback on my actions and move onto my next step. An academic member of staff from the Hult International Business School invited me to make a joint presentation at the Higher Education Academy (hereafter HEA) Conference, in July 2018. In the past year, the HEA has worked in support of teaching in HE in over 40 countries. They have noticed

that everyone – governments, employers, funders, philanthropists, students, potential students and parents – is looking critically at the value and quality of HE. Primarily, for them, the value and quality of HE are synonymous to excellence in teaching (HEA, 2018). How teaching excellence is defined can vary considerably depending on the professional context one finds oneself in when evaluating HE. My evaluation comes not only from the perspective of an employer (as an Education Consultant) but also that of a student (as a DProf candidate), as well as the perspective of a potential student and parent (from my clients' perspective). For these reasons, my academic associate at the Hult International Business School and I decided to make a presentation on the subject of 'Teaching excellence as a tool to better assimilate international students: lessons learned from Greek students' (Appendix 4).

Professor Dilly Fung (2017) examined the meaning behind the phrase 'teaching excellence' and asked whether changing the language to 'good education' might help us to think about what this should mean:

*"Only when we look at all elements of the educational ecosystem that affect students' learning opportunities can we logically start to think about what education looks like if it's 'good'. And we surely need to take a scholarly stand on what we mean by 'good' before we can begin to define 'excellent'. Good is a judgment that implies an ethical position; it's more than 'effective' or 'efficient', it's that which is morally right."* (p.4)

Based on her thoughts on teaching excellence, I felt confident that I had a valuable contribution to make with this presentation. Working with students who want to study or continue their studies in an international education environment, and working with employees who want to work and operate in different countries has given me valuable experience on how culture and socioeconomic factors affect educational issues in a global environment. My professional experience has shown me that if the students are well-prepared for the environment that they will be joining (I present my practice), then,



teaching excellence can be used as a tool to better assimilate international students in their new academic environment.

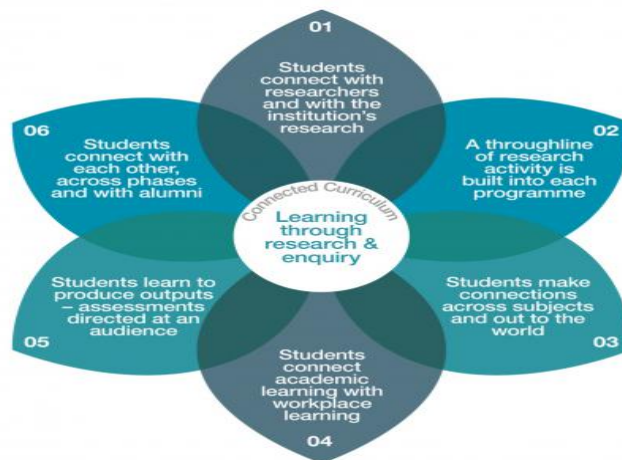


Figure 3: The Connected Curriculum Framework (Fung 2017:p. 5)

Taking into consideration Fung's (2017) Teaching Excellence Framework, our conclusion to our presentation was that the academic environment should include teaching and learning that is: (i) engaging – involves active learning, (ii) reflective, (iii) relevant – adopts a dynamic approach to teaching, (iv) encompassing a global mix of national identities – get students to become acquainted and adopt UK and/or global values, (v) collaborative – allows students to become global citizens and/or gives them opportunities for team collaboration and work. International students are assimilated, integrated and located at the core of the UK Higher Education ecosystem, as long as they are appropriately prepared for this.

This Conference provided me with a great opportunity to present my work for the first time, get feedback on it and go through the process of re-evaluation. I was puzzled when someone asked me if my framework is just based on my empirical work or whether it is evaluated through a formal process. This person mentioned the importance of professionalisation of this framework. Another person wondered if what I do in Greece is something that other consultants do too. I realised that peer review and the collaboration with others were missing completely from this research project and from my professional life. I realised that what I have extensively discussed so far in this

piece of work are only my personal points of view. At this conference, I had the opportunity to meet other people in the field, exchange ideas with them and get familiar with their practices and experiences. It was, then, time for me to meet those people who are my 'colleagues' or 'competitors' in Greece: the 'other' Education Consultants. I needed to find out about their practices.

As a professional, I inquired what 'teaching excellence' is. My inquiry became an inquiry of what actually 'professionalism' is and, more specifically, what 'professionalism' in an education consultancy context is.

Professionalism is the social process by which professionals cultivate, purify, explode and dedicate themselves to their profession (Thieme, 2017). The British Council reports in its *Guide to Good Practice for Education Agents*, (2019):

*"This standard of conduct refers both to ethical behaviour (doing the right thing) and to standards of professionalism (doing it well)." (p.1)*

'Best practice' means that:

*"... an agent's business activities should not be of a kind that might bring discredit on their (UK) client(s) or UK education generally." (p.1)*

To achieve these standards in one's practice requires academic knowledge of the specific field. However, it also requires a Code of Ethics and principles which can guide agents through the difficult territory of professionalism.

An international forum has developed a Code of Ethics that is applicable to education agents and consultants who recruit international students for universities, colleges and schools around the world since 2010. The 'London Statement', as it is known, is the roundtable on the Integrity of International Education and consists of Senior Education Officials from Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the United States. The British Council supports it. This document sets out an ethical framework consisting of: (i)

seven items relating to ethical behaviour and (ii) a set of seven principles. Integrity, objectivity, transparency, declaring conflicts of interest to all clients and confidentiality are part of the Code of Ethics (Appendix 5).

Professional competence and due care, professional behaviour and professionalism and purpose are defined by the London Statement (2012: p.1) as follows:

- *Professional competence and due care – Maintaining professional knowledge and professional service and acting diligently.*
- *Professional behaviour – Acting in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and dealing with clients competently, diligently and fairly.*
- *Professionalism and purpose – Acting in a manner that will serve the interests of clients and the wider society even at the expense of self-interest.*

The Society of Education Consultants has set up a Code of Practice to which common principles and a Code of Ethics (SEC, 2019) applies. In summary, following the SEC website, all members of the society shall:

- *Give balanced advice to the client about the assignment that is purposeful and relevant to achieving its objectives;*
- *Maintain high standards of personal conduct and integrity;*
- *Exercise independence of thought and action and in particular put the interests of learners at the forefront of any assignment;*
- *Seek to advance the professional standards of education consultancy;*
- *Take steps to enhance the quality of their work by holding themselves accountable in a community of peers and undertaking regular personal professional development.*

At this stage, I decided that any research now for a doctorate would have to focus on my practice and sector and produce something that could be used towards the professionalisation of Education Consultants in Greece one day as we have much to offer to the international scene. I decided to explore how people who define themselves as Education Consultants view what such a

practice should entail so that I can acquire an understanding of the skills, competences, training and attributes of a good Education Consultant – in Greece and, generally, the world. This was Phase 2.

To this end, I used the list of Education Consultants that the British Council promotes as Certified Agents. I found 37 Education Consultants in Greece. I contacted The British Council to find where they might be, as I could see from the list that people who were certified prior to 2016 were not in the list. I was told that this certification is valid for only two years. As a consequence, consultants need to undertake further education and training based on their working experience. However, this programme is not active at the moment in Greece. This means that old consultants (including myself) who are registered and certified by The British Council prior to 2016 are not in public view.

As a result of this complication, it was difficult to find certified consultants with more than 3 years' experience. I used my personal contact list and managed to find some consultants whom I had worked with in the past. Investigating who are the Education Consultants in Greece, I found that there are Education Consultants who work (i) through private companies (like mine), (ii) in private schools (only in those schools which have IB programmes – 12, all in all, in Greece) and (iii) are language teachers who provide this service as an extra to their teaching and, as a consequence, only consult people who are (or have been) their students. Furthermore, I managed to find an association consisting of alumni students of a particular public university in Greece which provides consultancy services to future students. I found this association through my brother who used to study at this particular university and, consequently, had attended some of the seminars they provided. His impression of the work carried out by this association was favourable.

As a result of these actions, my Education Consultant list totaled 55 consultants in Greece. Having contacted them all, only 11 returned my communication and agreed to take part in the interviews I was carrying out for the second phase of my research efforts (as explained earlier).

Most of the Education Consultants who refused to take part in the proposed interviews said that they did not feel confident enough to speak to a 'competitor'. Some said that they did not support any kind of research that would be related to their practice as, for them, what they do is a kind of 'patent'. This explained why I had been such an introvert, getting into the ownership of my own practice for so many years. I suffered from lack of the right conditions, i.e. sharing my own practice with others, which would encourage me to become an extrovert. I had to find a way to recruit participants for the second phase of my research.

In order to avoid wasting time, I started my series of interviews with two of the consultants who were happy to participate in my research. At the end of the session, I asked them to refer me to any contacts they might have in the field. This they did and, through their assistance, I managed to find more participants. Interestingly, two of the Educational Consultants who had initially refused to participate in this research, agreed to take part after they were contacted through the referral. When, at the end of those interviews, I asked them about their original response, one of them said to me:

*“Greece is a competitive market – we can’t share the [main] ingredient of our ‘delicious soup’. We can only share it with friends and, as you have been recommended by X [name of the referee], I am ok [with taking part at this interview].”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1F)

In my sample, out of the 11 interviewees:

- 5 were language teachers
- 2 were certified agents
- 2 had private companies
- 2 were working in a private school in Greece

The purpose of the interviews was to find how Education Consultants in Greece view their practice. The interview was based on the questions below:

1. What training have you received in order to become an Education Consultant?
2. What is your professional and academic background?
3. What practices do you use in order to support the undergraduate or postgraduate student who wants to start or continue their studies abroad?
4. What are the main factors influencing your way of working?

Even though these questions were the pivots around which the interviews were conducted, strict adherence to the aforementioned questions was not enforced. The interviews became slightly less structured and ended up as professional conversations between colleagues. I found that this method was more successful, as it was difficult to extract information with the structured questions. Some interviews took place at the premises of the interviewees, but most of them took place in local coffee shops, as the participants preferred not to meet at either their premises or mine.

Even at this early stage, I could see that the attitude between colleagues was anything but collaborative. In fact, in some interviews I had to speak more about my practice in order to elicit their responses and, consequently, gauge their point of view. In most cases, there existed some 'distance' between us. I am not sure if this is 'professionalism' (as it is analysed below) or not. Based on the 'London Statement' and the SEC Principles, 'professionalism' is to "*advance the professional standards of education consultancy*" which a research project does. My purpose was to "*enhance the quality of their [other consultants] work by holding themselves accountable in a community of peers*" and also by "*acting in a manner that will serve the interests of clients and the wider society even at the expense of self-interest*" (London Statement, p.2).

The decision to reject participation in a research project was acceptable and within their rights. However, when we talk about 'communities of practice' in a business environment (and in education in particular), I think we should be open to the option, if not the opportunity, to exchange ideas and practices, especially when this is for the purposes of research. We all work within a

discipline for which there is no formal qualification. There is a need to formulate a qualification based on our experiences. We should, I believe, be able to see the challenges as opportunities to develop a new field of expertise in an international environment. The issue which emerged out of all of this was whether I knew my own practice well enough to be able to communicate this to both my clients and my fellow consultants and indeed to myself.

## Chapter 2 – Methodology

### 2.1 My New Approach

I explored a number of options as to how I could best improve my own practice and contribute something useful to the recognised standards of practice in my sector, especially in Greece.

The paths leading to the role of an Education Consultant are varied. Education Consultancy is not a subject one studies at University. The skills necessary for practicing in this field come from a fusion of learning, experience on the job and an attitude which not only appreciates and values diversity but also seeks to help people move in and out of environments that often are quite different from their own. I had, by that time, tested a variety of research methods which had produced larger pieces of the puzzle, but I still could not formulate a comprehensive and coherent picture of the whole.

Eventually, I was introduced to autoethnographic research. Its role was pivotal: it allowed me to disentangle some of these notions for myself and my practice and to gain insight into both my collusion with and resistance to certain attitudes which are driven by what Graeber (2016) calls in his book *Towards an anthropological theory of value* 'the false coin of our own dreams' which also is his subtitle. This made me wonder whether it was me or others who were selling the false coin of our own dreams. In exploring my participation in shaping my profession through my outputs and through being shaped myself by my context, I hoped to gain valuable insights into how an Education Consultant can be usefully defined and professionally supported

with agreed standards in order to increase trust and purpose in the role. I also hoped to deepen my understanding of how a range of variables, from cultural to income and to historical conditions, contribute to both the confusion and the dynamics of this role.

## **2.2 Influences on my Choice of Research Design**

There are several factors which have influenced my choice of research design, including the context outlined in the previous section and my own positionality. I would dare say that the most important aspect of my positionality was (and still is) my ontology, shaped by the influences which surrounded me while growing up. My positionality involves a belief in a socially constructed reality, the power of individual agency and the constant need for reflexivity, as one does not exist alone but has an impact on and is impacted by the context. The shifting context and those who inhabit my work world and societies around me have contributed numerous additional influences throughout the years. I continue to be shaped by discovering more about myself and others and by the engagement I have with my work and family. Events in Greece over the last fifteen years have added themselves to those that belong to an older heritage, an often-dark historical heritage of occupation and internal crises which marked the 20th century.

I think I know my sector well, having been a practitioner for over twenty years. I have lived and studied abroad and participated in numerous training courses, both as a recipient and a deliverer. I might say that I have experienced a kind of training fatigue. It has been important to me not to make of a doctorate a repeat of more training, but something that would really enlighten me, that would inform my practice and would enable me, through my own critical reflection, to contribute something useful to my own business, to my sector at large and to this small area of practice knowledge in particular.

At the same time, I am the inheritor, as all Greeks are, of an archetype of learning epitomised by the feats and exploits of Ancient Greeks. I am also the inheritor of the notion that we can never quite match up to our ancient



ancestors. The gap between them and us is, in fact, so large that it can explain why people began to believe that the Ancient Greeks were more of a mythical race than a real one. The writings of our great philosophers are testament to their grandeur and we, Modern Greeks, live everyday like children who never quite live up to the expectations of their parents. Our philosophers were masters of reflection and observation as they grappled with the human being's relationship to the world (often embodied in gods and goddesses) and the world's relationship to the mere mortals.

Since a very young age, I have been fascinated by Homer's *Odyssey* and its hero, Odysseus, known to the later Romans as Ulysses. It is well-known that *The Odyssey* is the oldest example of Ancient Greek literature after *The Iliad*.



Figure 4: A 15th-century manuscript of The Odyssey, book i, written by the scribe Ioannes Rhosos for the Tornabuoni family, Florence, Italy (British Museum)

The story of Odysseus, King of Ithaca, and his journey back home after the 10 year-long Trojan War is considered by many scholars to have been the most influential historical work that has shaped (and is still shaping) European mindsets (Wilson, 2018; Fitzgerald, 2007).

Among the most noteworthy elements of the text are its non-linear plot and the influence of events on choices made by women and slaves (Fitzgerald, 2007; Campbell, 1968), but also on the actions of fighting men and the way those choices further affected events in their turn. It has endured for hundreds of years and has been translated into over 60 languages. It is studied in

schools and universities all over the world for its skill in storytelling in a historical context that speaks to the commonalities of the human condition.

My professional career has taken me all over the world, just like Odysseus sailed all over the world. The activities that I have been involved in include research, networking, speaking at international conferences, working in an international environment and setting up a consultancy in Greece. Those activities remind me of the obstacles Odysseus faced in his journey back to Ithaca. The question that was raised while I was thinking about how to research my professional sector was how I could contribute to thinking and practice in my sector if I am not fully aware of how my experiences of studying and working in different countries have influenced me. I had to critically reflect on my learning. I had to find a way to present what Chang (2016) referred to as “personal history without lapsing to pure autobiography” (p.3). This endeavour concerns the presentation of a research that “utilises the [researcher’s] autobiographical data to analyse and interpret [her] cultural assumptions” (Chang, 2016:p.5).

Additionally, I needed to choose a research approach that would be appropriate to my ontology. On my way to Ithaca, I found myself visiting several ‘islands’ or methods. When I first enrolled on a doctoral programme, I came across Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) which was trending at the time. It was the island to go to and promised great results. It seemed worth a visit, as I was looking at researching the internationalisation of HE through investigating internationalised HE practices, particularly those of the Institute for Work-Based Learning (IWBL) at Middlesex University and their WBL programmes offered in Hong Kong, Greece and Cyprus. WBL was, also, the latest in bridging professional and academic knowledge. SSM was about “producing different stakeholder’s perspectives of the problem situation by developing models of human activity systems in order to debate the intervention needed to improve current situations” (Durant-Law, 2005:p.2; Checkland & Winter, 2006:p.1438). It is a research approach that starts with an examination of the problem situation. However, SSM continues by

identifying and defining relevant human activity systems and structures as an imaginary 'ideal' system. It then compares the ideal model with the actual model. I decided to drop this methodology as it is a more business-oriented approach and less humanised.

Eventually, I had to return to Greece, where I set up my own consultancy, AEC, and decided to change the focus of my research, concentrating on the sector of Consultancy. For a number of years now, I have been exploring consultancy from the position of an independent consultant. I have gained experiences from 'in-country' International Education (IE), 'outside-the-country' IE, 'cultural diversity in education' and 'global culture'. Each of these categories brought into the research an individual case. All those cases could build up and contribute to the overall project as case studies. However, this approach seems to consider each phenomenon in isolation, focusing on individual perspectives towards one's work, without taking into account how one is when starting their work and who they become in the process. I consider that, through my professional experiences, I can inform clients about aspects of cultural life that other consultants may be unaware of. I am a professional who has directly benefited from internationalisation, education, consultancy and cultural diversity and I feel I can talk about these issues in a different way from others who may have limited experience in these areas. 'Insider knowledge' does not suggest that I can articulate more truthful or more accurate knowledge as compared to 'outsiders' but, rather, that I can tell my stories in novel ways that may resonate well with a number of different recipients (Matthew et al, 2017).

Another piece of literary work came to my mind. In 1911, the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933) wrote the poem 'Ithaka' (Appendix 6), inspired by the Odyssey. The poem's theme revolves around the pleasure of the journey of life and the increasing maturity of the soul as that journey continues. Evidently, it is not the island of Ithaca itself, but the symbolic 'Ithaka' (written with a 'k') that resonates with me. I see life, both professional and personal, as an odyssey: everyone faces difficulties and it is how one

responds to those difficulties and challenges which defines the resilience and leadership of the self before one can lead others.

Odysseus had led men using his trickery, wisdom and passion for Greece. He was brought down many times to face his own weaknesses. It is arguable whether he learned enough – even anything at all – from his journey. After all, he lost many good friends and cheated his way out of disaster repeatedly. Having arrived home, he showed little understanding of the situation of his son and wife. In the end, he still killed all the suitors. He had not really been transformed by the journey.

For me, when I reach Ithaca (i.e. my professional destination), or a place of respite on the way, I hope the value of my experiences along the journey will far outweigh my final success or failure. I hope that the value of these experiences will enable me to accept that the destination or final goal achieved may not be what I wanted but was, instead, what I needed. In that sense, I hope to have learned from Odysseus' failure to learn from his experiences.

Unlike the *Odyssey*, Cavafy's poem 'Ithaca' is written in the second person, directly addressing the reader as a traveler. I see myself as a traveler on the way to my symbolic Ithaca which, besides the destination of life, symbolises the great goal that one seeks. I have personal goals I wish to achieve, like ensuring I do my utmost to safeguard the health and happiness of my children or like increasing my usefulness in the world. However, my professional Ithaca is the professionalisation of Education Consultancy, a kind of unification of disparate states or, more prosaically, getting a house to comply with codes and ethics that make it, as a profession, trustworthy to those who use it.

In my search for the appropriate methodology, I have become fascinated by the way that Holman Jones et al. (2016) explore their life experiences, as presented in the *Handbook of Autoethnography*. This led me to think that, in my research, there is also an 'importance of personal experience' that

corresponds to Cavafy's (1911) final verses: "Wise as you will have become, so full of experience / you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean". I knew that I had to find a way of drawing parallels between my personal stories and this type of scholarly research. Some scholars, such as Ellis and Bochner (2000, 2016) or Anderson (2006) and Nash (2004), have taught me the way to utilise personal stories for scholarly purposes using an autoethnographic methodology. I arrived at auto-ethno-graphy, as it embodies the drawing of a complex picture ('graphy') of my critical self ('auto') in relationship to my 'cultures' ('ethno'). In other words, autoethnography is best equipped to express my personal work and national cultures and the outcomes of this dynamic dance that contributes to enhancing practice values (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones, 2005).

Autoethnography aims to depict "*people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles*" (Bochner & Ellis, 2006:p.431). This is, consequently, how I will present my journey: through the journey of Odysseus to Ithaca, using Ithaca to demonstrate the learning which he, perhaps, missed. I believe that my practice of education consultancy is informed by my efforts and the knowledge I acquired during my attempts to surpass the difficulties I have faced. I will, therefore, focus on personal experience, as autoethnographers do. They "*speak against, or provide alternatives to, dominant, taken-for-granted, and harmful cultural scripts, stories and stereotypes*" (Boylorn, 2014:p.351).

This process involves attempts at filling gaps in existing research through personal experiences as a student, educator, employee in an international environment such as the UK, and Education Consultant in Greece. I discovered how these various roles have provided valuable experience in proving "how the desire for, and practice of, generalisation in research can mask important nuances of cultural issues" (Bochner & Ellis, 2006:p.432) such as the internationalisation of HE, but also issues of cultural diversity and education consultancy in international contexts as well as in Greece. I realised to what a great extent I am part of this cultural life; I am not an 'other' to this reality. And this realisation has made me feel the need to contribute to the

professionalisation of our education consultancy practices in Greece.

This has become my purpose in my professional life and my experiences have become my tools. Experiences are here broadly understood as involving my professional conversations, observations and reflection in an attempt to reach conclusions that might well have been unavailable to an ‘outsider’ researcher. I find particularly appealing the fact that, given the focus on personal experience, autoethnographers describe moments of everyday experience that cannot be captured through more traditional research methods. Doing autoethnographic fieldwork allows what we see, hear, think, and feel to become part of the ‘field’ (Matthew et al, 2017), the area of practice. Furthermore, this type of work can become accessible to larger audiences, possibly audiences outside academic settings or active in the field of consultancy. Therefore, I hope that people who are not Education Consultant specialists in Greece but may have concerns similar to those I relate in my stories, might get an indication of what they can do in their own professional ‘voyages to Ithaca’ and have their unique Ithaka insights.

In short, autoethnography is a method that focuses on life as ‘lived through’ in its complexities, showing that readers, authors and/or others involved in the experiences presented matter – we *all* matter. In actual fact, this is the joy of consultancy: the interaction with one’s clients, one’s colleagues and also the people who face similar complexities in diverse fields. The overall aim is to “*open doors to readers’ hearts and minds throughout my life*”, as Chang puts it (Chang, 2016:p.12).

### **2.3 Concerns about Autoethnography**

My story of becoming a consultant and presenting my practices and what I have gained from conversations with others in the field have raised some issues in terms of ethics, reliability, validity and subjectivity. Trying to find in the autoethnographic methodological literature how to tackle these issues, I came across Sylvia Smiths’ story (Ellis, 1999). Sylvia was a PhD candidate who asked Carolyn Ellis to be on her dissertation committee. In her

discussions with Ellis, Sylvia brought up the subject of bias in the research. She thought that her personal experience of the research field (she had breast cancer and this illness was the subject of her dissertation) and the possible ensuing bias might be avoided if she did not mention this issue at all and followed another methodological approach instead.

This is not unlike my case: I originally thought that I could avoid discussing my experience as a Greek learner studying in the UK. I could simply not mention this at all and pretend that the discussion was essentially objective. In truth, however, “I could write a book about that experience”, just as Sylvia said to Ellis. For some reason, we both wanted to leave our respective personal experiences out of the presentation of our research work. But why should we? I consider myself a particularly observant person. The skills I have and my ability to make sense of my experiences have helped me develop and expand my skills in education consultancy. Why should I keep silent about it and leave it out of my research? Autoethnographers are criticised for doing too little fieldwork, for observing only few members of any particular culture, for not spending enough time with ‘(different) others’, for hypothesising, analysing and theorising (Buzard, 2003; Fine, 2003; Delamont, 2009). In reality, however, general knowledge and theory can be produced and even be written in a function format. According to Holman Jones (2016), theory is a story of how things are and helps us discover the possibilities of how things might be:

*“Theory asks about and explains the nuances of an experience and the happenings of a culture; story is the mechanism for illustrating and embodying these nuances and happenings. Because theory and story exist in a mutually influential relationship, theory is not an add-on to story. We cannot write our stories and then begin the search for a theory to ‘fit’ them, outside of cultures and politics and contexts.”*  
(p.229)

This allows us to conclude that critical autoethnography involves both a material and an ethical praxis that engages us. Citations, as a means for articulating ideas, feelings, understandings and calls to action are used in the

processes of discovering new knowledge (Holman Jones, 2016). Cavafy wishes for his traveller: “may you visit many Egyptian cities to learn and go on learning from their scholars” (lines 23-24). In this sentence, ‘Egypt’ represents knowledge as inferred through a tacit allusion to Alexandria, where the Great Library was located – the greatest library in Greek history and one of the greatest in the known ancient world. In this journey, seeking answers to my questions, I have used international scholarly articles and investigated what others have proposed in the field. This research of the literature can add reliability to a piece of work conceived and completed under the so-called ‘literary license’ (Bochner, 2002). However, the most important issue for autoethnographers is *who* reads our work, *how* they are affected by it and how it keeps a conversation going (Ellis et al, 2010).

As a clear example of the validity issue, consider Ellis (1999, 2004) on Sylvia’s story:

*“To me, validity means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible. You might also judge validity by whether it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves or offers a way to improve the lives of participants and readers or even your own.”*  
(p.674)

The way in which my story can enable readers to enter my subjective world and see the world from my point of view (Plummer, 2001) is, therefore, of paramount importance to me. What I am aiming at is for readers to find my story useful and relevant to their understanding of their own experiences (Bochner, 2002). The purpose of this piece of work is to produce an analytical, accessible text that changes me and the world that I live in for the better (Holman Jones, 2005).

This piece of work has followed all the appropriate procedures that the University provides. Ethics forms have been submitted (Appendix 7), consent forms and description of the project have been given to participants of the



interviews (Appendix 7). I have asked questions and talked to others about the research processes and have constantly reflected critically on ethical practices at every step. I have tried through these processes to keep my subjectivity on key issues of the research and have also tried to provide a clear understanding of education consultancy in Greece and what needs to be accomplished for it to become genuinely professionalised.

The story of Sylvia finishes with her discovering another aspect of herself. The person she has become, after her cancer ordeal and after her autoethnographical approach to her research, has made her reflect on her experience. It has, in fact, allowed her to find her new self. What fascinates me most in this methodological approach is that through this process I can even see myself in the future. I have met new challenges and I have realised that this stop is just like the stop at the “Phoenician trading stations to buy fine things, mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony, sensual perfume of every kind” in Cavafy’s words. And I will continue my journey to Ithaca, with Ithaca as my goddess, my guide to the wisdom of learning, not to the wisdom of trickery – ultimately, a way of being in the world.

## **2.4 Becoming an Autoethnographer**

Ever since I can remember myself, I have kept a diary. At first, this diary was aimed at capturing the happy moments of my childhood. As a teenager, I was using it to express my feelings, concerns and anxieties relating to friendships, values in life, the future and various philosophical issues that were raised through my new experiences. While studying in the UK, I used my diary to record my reflections on the learning processes I was undergoing: ways that kept me focused on the process of learning, new methods I used, evaluation of my performance.

As an educator, I have always kept a learning log on my teaching experiences and this record finally became a professional diary documenting my consultancy role. Recording my stories has always played an important role in my personal and professional life. For me, this is a way of getting my priorities

straight, evaluating my experiences and finding the paths that I want to follow in order to achieve my goals. In a sense, this was my 'therapeutic writing' (Kiesinger, 2002; Poulos, 2008).

While setting up my consultancy business, I found that the best way for me to communicate with my potential clients, while at the same time reflecting on who I am, was to write an autobiographical essay illustrating my previous experiences on my website, under the Section 'Who I Am' (Appendix 1). In this autobiographical essay, I mention all the relevant information as to where I have studied and worked while in the UK. I have also presented some of my strengths in order to convey to the readers of this section why I consider myself capable of having clients for my services. I have given some examples which were not only therapeutic for me but also probably valuable for my readers.

Since then, these reflections have been used as a tool in my practice during the first session of my consultancy. I encourage my clients to read this prior to our first meeting so that they are aware of who I am and why I adopt particular points of view in my practice. I have found that this process helps me build authentic relationships with my clients. They know my experiences and, following their retrospective feedback to me, come to ask for and engage my services because 'we have something in common'. Apparently, this commonality is different for each person. The story is the same, but the interpretations vary from one individual to the next, so it is through different routes and from different parts of my story that people connect with me.

This autoethnography then is not an autobiography of a life not really examined. It is a critical engagement of a learning odyssey based on cultural texts, experiences, beliefs and practices, all of which relate to clarifying what Education Consultancy currently is in our context before attempting to professionalise it. My first story is based on the area (object) of Education Consultancy in Greece: who I am, what I do and what I encounter – and some

of these are similar for many others in this role. Then, I move to our practices through stories of what I do in my practice and what other consultants do. This will lead me to a discussion of the Greek and British educational systems and will, undoubtedly, raise the question of cultural diversity between Greece and the UK. The stories I provide in some of the later sections will continue with the exploration of the topic of professionalisation of education consultancy internationally. The last story I will be discussing actually relates to the internationalisation of Higher Education (HE) and its impact on the professionalisation of education consultancy in Greece.

I hope these stories give to others some guidance of learning ports, diversions, opportunities and Ithaca moments in their own career paths.

This new research approach presented in this thesis seeks to demonstrate how I have moved from description to a different kind of engagement, guided by something from my own culture and an approach which helps me to examine and derive learning from two different approaches to 'journeys' of learning. I want to change this description of what I have done and turn it into something of deeper value to me and my sector. I wish to share with you my learning journey from Ithaca to Ithaka.

## Chapter 3 – The Journey of Odysseus and My Journey in Education Consultancy

### 3.1 Introduction

This section illustrates the first of two different journeys of learning, both arising from the same encounters in the voyage along the way. I will first discuss the journey of Odysseus to Ithaca, narrated in Homer's *The Odyssey*. Discuss how this journey was also mine, a personal and professional journey to Education Consultancy. Odysseus's journey starts with his departure from Ithaca and his separation from family and friends. Odysseus was away from Ithaca for, altogether, 20 years. Similarly, I have been 'rowing' between the UK and Greece for 20 years, adopting different roles in education and changing through them, both personally and professionally. This section of the work narrates my journey to my 'Ithaca', i.e. the profession of Education Consultancy.

In the *Odyssey*, the Gods (and, specifically, Athena) have played a significant role in the fate of the hero. In this, there is an analogy between Odysseus' experience and my own. Specifically, I returned to live in Greece during the period of the Greek financial crisis (a period which can be viewed as analogous to the angry mood displayed by the Gods in the *Odyssey*). However, amongst the angry Gods in the epic tale, there is Athena who supports Odysseus. In a very similar way, my clients became my 'guardian angels' and supported me tenaciously at the beginning of my career as an Education Consultant in Greece during a very turbulent period.

Odysseus arrived in Ithaca after facing various obstacles. In the analysis of Homer's epic, there is always an analogy between mythical creatures and actual facts in nature, animals and history, though agreement on these is challenging. For example, Cyclopes are said to be mammoths in reality, others say they were one-eyed, while Scylla and Charybdis are hazards in the Peloponnese, a dangerous strait in South Greece. Their greatest value and appeal across cultures and through time is their symbolic meaning.

The Cyclopes best represent the first obstacle for me. Odysseus went to their land without knowing that they even existed. When he realised that they did exist and they owned that land, he was already trapped. He had to accept that the Cyclopes were there and he had to find a way to escape from them, as they were creatures unknown to him and appeared to him as dangerous giants who were not very bright. I am not sure if his decision to blind Polyphemus was, in fact, a good (or, even, right) one but we were taught during our school years that Odysseus' name is synonymous with ingenuity and his trick on Polyphemus is used as an example of demonstrating his resourcefulness. Looking at it through more mature eyes, it appears also cruel and has something to say about ignorance or that which is out of awareness.

Polyphemus is the head of the Cyclopes. Son of Poseidon, the God of the Seas, his name shows his fame (Poly-phemus = Πολύφημος (Greek) = with great fame). Yet Odysseus did not know of him. Odysseus was encountering cultural diversity. Cultural diversity today is a topic in academic literature that enjoys great prominence. In my role as Education Consultant, I work with all levels of cultural diversity. In fact, I see my role as preparing young people of one culture to enter another culture. My job is to prepare these young people appropriately so that deception and inappropriate responses will not contribute to tensions and misunderstandings once they find themselves living within a different culture. Odysseus claimed ignorance of the Cyclopes. He felt threatened not only by their size but also by their ignorance of him and his kind. With trickery, he managed to escape their imprisonment. In real life, we, as Education Consultants, need to understand the many dimensions of cultural diversity, accept the fact that it might cause problems to our clients and work hard to find ways that allow not only them but also their families to see cultural diversity as a positive aspect of the internationalisation of HE (rather than as an obstacle) which can be anticipated and, therefore, prepared for.

On the other hand, we must ask ourselves: "Is it only cultural diversity that plays a role in the internationalisation of HE?" My personal experience and

professional observations hitherto have made me conclude that the answer to this question is in tune with what is often described by the saying 'caught between the devil and the deep blue sea' or between 'a rock and a hard place'. In the Odyssey, this very concept is represented by the challenge faced by Odysseus when his boat needs to pass between Scylla and Charybdis. This challenge is similar to what an Education Consultant faces in order to establish, promote and maintain the well-being of international students in HE. My role in helping clients with issues of cultural diversity and personal learning styles is similar to that of Calypso in the Odyssey. The advice and support I give to my clients on their journey to their own Ithaca is similar to the advice and support that Calypso gave to Odysseus during his stay at her island which I explore in more detail later.

The second obstacle that I found to be of particular interest in Homer's epic is the experience that Odysseus had when it came to sailing into the area of the Sirens. The Sirens were demonic figures and the dangers they represent are analogous to the ones that my practice as an Education Consultant faces continually. Odysseus had decided to hear the Siren's song after ensuring that he did this (i) without putting himself in danger of being tempted and cajoled to their lure and enticement and (ii) after protecting his shipmates from all temptation. Odysseus achieved these two aims by asking his shipmates to tie him to the mast. Prior to this, he gave them wax to plug their ears. In a similar way to Odysseus, while I was forming my practice in Greece, I did not have any contact with other consultants in Greece: I was listening to my clients' communications as if those communications were the songs and/or demands of the Sirens and I was working hard to steer forward, to stay on the path and form my practice without being led astray by the 'songs'. There is another analogy which I deal latter on.

My role in my Consultancy practice was to mentor my clients. In this regard, there is an important analogy relating to my first client, whose name was Telemachus, as was Odysseus's son. Even though I started my Consultancy with a focus on mentoring, I quickly realised that my practice had to encompass and address three phases. In the first phase of my practice, my

role as a Coach reminds me of Athena's role in the Odyssey, guiding Odysseus so that he can find his homeland, Ithaca. In the second phase of my practice, I deal with the application process. When my clients first come to me, they have just faced the beast – much like Odysseus, when he faced the Laestrygonians. My role as a Consultant at this stage is to liaise between the Greek and British educational systems. This second phase reminds me of the role of Arete, Queen of the Phaiakians, a wise and powerful woman in the Odyssey. My role in the third phase of my consultancy is to advise my clients with the wisdom obtained from my life experience of living in the UK. This role might be considered to be close to that of the goddess Athena in the Odyssey. However, for me, this role is closer to that of Penelope and her inimitable way of dealing with the suitors. The Sirens, also very importantly, represent seduction: seduction of the fees, seduction of making a living and short-changing or, indeed, paying little attention to the care that needs to be given to clients. Many professionals are drawn to the song of money at the expense of value and duty. They develop a form of amnesia or an epistemology of ignorance (Malewski & Jaramillo 2014) that suits their more personal purpose. More analysis on my roles in relation to the Odyssey's characters is provided in later sections.

When I started feeling confident about my practice in Education Consultancy, I also started becoming aware of the professional isolation that I was experiencing. Because of these realisations, I decided to find out who my 'shipmates' actually were. This was something that Odysseus never realised he should have done during the epic. I have learned from Odysseus that ignorance, especially of Poseidon, the God of the Seas, is best avoided. This ignorance should certainly be prevented and not be given a free rein to as in the case of Odysseus who hurt the Cyclops son of Poseidon so gravely. This was especially important, as Odysseus would have to reach Ithaca by sea and Poseidon ruled the sea. Consequently, I took action to find the other practicing Education Consultants and to explore with them the professionalisation of Education Consultancy in Greece. In other words, on the one hand is our Education Consultancy practice, which brings in an analogy with the bag of Aeolus given to Odysseus (which was filled with the

winds and their directions), while, on the other hand, is our attitude towards professionalisation of Education Consultancy in Greece. Just as Aeolus advised Odysseus to keep the bag closed and, hence, safe, only to be used in case of emergency, so do we, Education Consultants, keep our practice safe and sometimes are afraid to share it with others. Yet, in actual fact, it seems to me that sharing our practices is important if we are to improve the services we provide to our clients.

The concerns that I have in relation to the professionalisation of Education Consultancy in Greece remind me of the Lotus-Eaters' story in the *Odyssey*. This story, outlined in a later section, roused my fears of turning Education Consultancy into an area of expertise that focuses only on our own practice and that forgets, as the Lotus-Eaters did, that we belong to and are part of a community and have responsibilities to others. As Odysseus' shipmates ate the lotus fruit and forgot their purpose of returning to Ithaca, I get the impression that the satisfaction we sometimes get from our work with our clients and the pleasure and pride we feel when our services reach a point of excellence, 'the magical taste' of the lotus, might make us forget that our individual practice is part of our profession, that, in our role, we have considerable responsibility to prepare young people well and that we do not know all the secrets in our one bag to ensure that all are safe not just a few.

The final aspect of analogies between the journey of Odysseus and myself is the one pertaining to the return to and reintegration of Odysseus into the society of Ithaca and my conclusions of my journey towards professionalisation of Education Consultancy in Greece.



### 3.2 The Separation and Departure of Odysseus from Ithaca – My Separation and Departure from the UK

The journey of Odysseus begins with a call to adventure. This is not in the *Odyssey* but in the other great work of Homer, the *Iliad*. This call is followed by Odysseus' refusal to leave his safe place, his refusal to go away from home. We do not know the rationale behind his decision to finally go to the War, but as Campbell (1968) mentions (Spiegel 1998:p.3):

*“We must assume that he believes he will be successful, returning home with many spoils of war. His decision to leave Ithaca cannot be merely an external one: he is a young king, and while he rules his land with great strength, he is inexperienced (he does not wish to go off to battle (Book 24, ll. 126-128)). In part, his reasons for initiating his journey must include the experience and maturity he will gain fighting the Trojans.”*

Odysseus' journey is described in a period of 20 years (10 years in Troy and 10 years at 'sea'). My journey is also described in a period of 20 years, starting from the time when I was a young student in the UK, studying for a Higher Education degree. I had a lot of concerns about going back to Greece in 2010, especially in view of the Greek crisis which I discuss in more detail further on.

Odysseus has traditionally been viewed as a contrast to Achilles in the *Iliad* (Miller, 2014). Even though both Greek warriors played a significant role in the Trojan War, they were, nevertheless, opposed to each other in terms of practices. On the one hand, Achilles' anger exposed and fueled his self-destructive nature. On the other hand, Odysseus is frequently viewed as ingenious and his idea for the creation and use of the Trojan Horse allowed his army to finally win the war. In addition, Odysseus was a good public speaker, able to convince the soldiers to fight hard (*Iliad*, Book 9). He is a winner: he won not only his fame but also valuable experiences (that I personally consider as 'treasures') from his involvement in the War in Troy.

Along similar lines to Odysseus, I also gathered many 'treasures' during my time in the UK, which was, for all intents and purposes, my Troy. My treasures (recognised qualification, working experience, cultural collisions) were equally noticeable. They shaped me, both as a person and a professional: they gave me the strength to unveil for myself a different educational approach and to conduct my studies using this approach. They also gave me the confidence to implement this approach during my time as an ESOL teacher and examiner. Finally, they allowed me to move forward, out of my comfort zone, as an EU and academic liaison officer in an IT company in the UK. Those 'treasures' were brought back to my home, in Greece, when I decided to get out of my comfort zone again and set up my consultancy company.

### **3.3 The Role of the Gods in Odyssey and the Greek Crisis**

*During the Trojan War, which lasted for 10 whole years and ended with the complete destruction of Troy, many lives were lost, among them, those of very important heroes. The Achaeans conquered Troy due to the Trojan horse, a product of Odysseus's ingenuity. Of course they owed their victory to the gods, mainly to Athena, who stood by their side. When the Achaeans invaded the city of Troy, they did not respect the Trojans as they should have, on the contrary they violated sanctuaries and temples, thus provoking their resentment and outrage. Punishment had befallen upon them with torments and hardships on their return home. After 10 years on the battlefields, the soldiers were weary and impatient to return to their loved ones. Their leaders though, disagreed on when and how they would return. Even Menelaus and Agamemnon had seemed to argue on this matter, causing them to journey back to Greece separately. Odysseus set off with the fleet of Menelaus, which had departed earlier, but on the way, he regretted it and then joined Agamemnon. The ships began their voyage, leaving behind them ashes and ruins. When they were out to sea, a great*

*storm separated Odysseus's ships from the rest of the fleet."*

(Deligiannis, 2014:p.9)

The Gods play a critical role in the Odyssey. They are key figures throughout the epic. The gods are responsible for the difficulty Odysseus faces on his return from Troy.

I believe that the Greek Crisis stands for 'the Gods': they are powerful and able to admonish the Greeks for not behaving responsibly. The economic crisis in Greece came to a head in 2010 with the progressive collapse of the Greek economy. This is when I set up my consultancy. People thought I was superficial. However, just like Odysseus (with his passionate belief that the Trojan Horse would be the only way to win the war), I knew that my motive to raise my children in a Greek environment was, for me, a major target if not an ultimate aim: I wanted to set up my life and achieve motherhood in a single-culture influence first, then becoming multinational.

Throughout my journey, I can identify myself in many ways with Odysseus and I consider his crew to be like my compatriots, the Greek population, during the crisis. While Odysseus and the Greek soldiers were starting their journey back to Ithaca, they were exhausted. They had been neglectful of their own country in their effort to find glory and gains in another. Greed and belligerence were still with them. To them, the war with Troy was justified, even if it took place while their own country collapsed. In other words, they were pursuing what they wanted rather than what was needed. As Campbell notes (1968):

*Upon sacking the town of Cicone, Odysseus and his men loot the village, sharing the spoils of war (women, money, and livestock) equally among themselves. They then make a grievous error: their greed compels them to remain in the town, collecting every last bit they can, instead of taking a fair share of their spoils and leaving. This time is well used by the Cicones; they regroup, gather reinforcements, and attack Odysseus' unprepared warriors. Defeated and driven from*

*shore, Odysseus learns an important lesson: do not be greedy in victory.” (Campbell 1968, in Spiegel 1998;p.3)*

But this is not a profound lesson of life, it is a tactic for war. The Gods became angry at this attitude and they decided to show their power. This is the story of the Greek crisis. Greeks had been neglectful of the health and welfare of their country and citizens. They wanted to stay in the past and do what they had always done while the world was moving ahead; it was as if the rest of Europe had moved into Higher Education while the Greeks were still adolescents in school. Yet, as in the Odyssey, the gods too were fallible. Severe austerity was experienced more as a punishment than a route to economic and social redemption. The gods had already driven the best of Greek talent out of the country. Recently, ‘The Economist’ published an article entitled: “*Greece’s eight-year odyssey shows the flaws of the EU; the island where the euro crisis started has yet to recover from Europe’s help*” (18<sup>th</sup> August 2018).

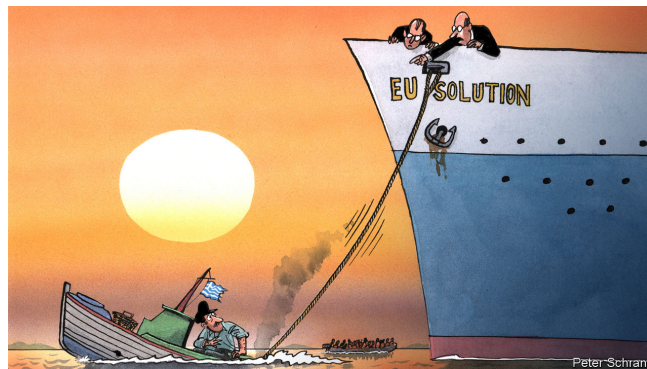


Figure 5: Peter Schrank, The Economist (18<sup>th</sup> August, 2018)

The Modern Greek state has a history of less than two centuries. It managed to move from the backwaters of Europe to a prosperous, liberal democracy – until the economic crisis, that is, of 2008. Greece won the war of Independence in 1832 from the Ottoman Empire. It can claim the legacy of being one of the longest parliamentary democratic countries in Europe (Hatzis, 2019). The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of slow modernisation of the country in terms of infrastructure and institutions. Greek politicians were incompetent and corrupt, but gradually managed to achieve convergence with other western European countries. After World War II and Civil War, Greece

had one of the strongest growths on a global level. From 1929 to 1980, Greece had an average annual rate of growth of income per capita of 5.2% (during the same period, Japan had an average of 4.9% and Germany 3.0%), (Hatzis, 2019). This led to its accession to the European Community in 1981 and to the Eurozone in 2001. However, this development was based on extractive institutions (such as EU convergence funds and cheap international borrowing) and fudged statistics. In a way, this is the greed, displayed by Odysseus and his soldiers in the land of the Cicones.

In 2010, the public deficit of the Greek Budget for 2009 was reported to have exceeded 12% of the GDP. The cost of borrowing started to increase dramatically and soon thereafter financial markets closed for Greece (Bank of Greece, 2011). A rescue mechanism was decided by the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), these three forming the so-called 'Troika'. According to this rescue mechanism, a €110 billion loan was provided to Greece in combination with an austerity and a reform programme (Greek Ministry of Finance, 2010, 2011; Konhler, 2012; Monastiriotis et.al, 2013). The austerity measures were supposed to eliminate the public deficit in a period of 2–3 years, mainly through wage and pension cuts and tax increases. In addition, a long list of structural reforms, including deregulation of markets, reorganisation of the state and privatisation were included in a Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by the Greek government and the 'Troika' (Petraikos, Psycharis, 2016). The austerity programme was implemented in a climate of severe political conflict and social protest.

A second programme, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2012–2016, followed under the same conditions as the initial one (Greek Ministry of Finance, 2012). After a popular referendum which rejected the further austerity measures required for a third bailout and after closure of banks across the country in 2015, Greece became the first developed country to fail to make an IMF loan repayment on time (Traynor, Rankin, 2015). At that time,

debt levels had reached €323bn (€299,7bn in 2009). Between 2009 and 2017 the Greek government debt rose from €300 bn to €318 bn.

However, the Greek crisis is not only economic. It is socio/political and has caused great turbulence in the political system of the country. It has, amongst other things, led to the collapse of the two-party political system whereby the Centre-right and the Centre-left parties (New Democracy and PASOK) were alternating with each other in power, and led to a political polarity which brought the left party, SYRIZA, to power in January 2015. In August the same year, the new coalition of the SYRIZA-ANEL government signed the third Memorandum of Understanding to get an additional €86 billion loan.

The impact of the Greek crisis and the ensuing austerity programmes was severe and beyond any projection (Petraikos & Psycharis, 2016). Greece experienced a deep recession and, in a period of 5 years, lost 25% of its GDP and about one million employment positions. Unemployment jumped in 2013 to 27% and youth unemployment reached 50% (Eurostat, 2014). The policy mix included the reduction of the Public Investment Programme by more than 36% in the 2009–2013 period. At that same time, private investment declined by more than 42%, despite the serious reductions in labour costs, because of the uncertainty surrounding the future of the economy and the dramatic increase in taxation (Bank of Greece, 2014). The table below illustrates this.

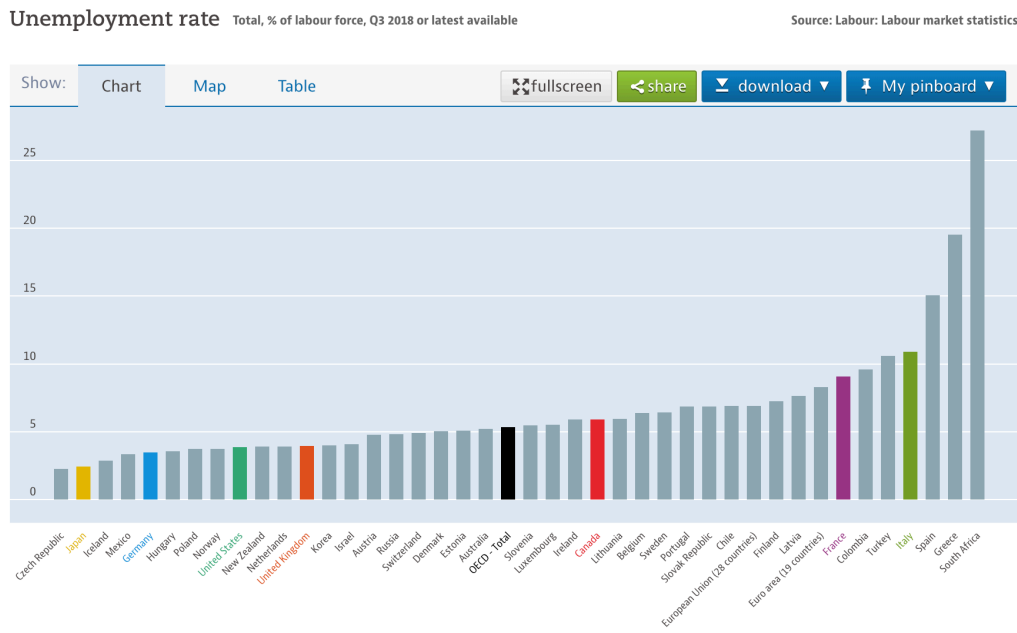


Figure 6: Labour: Labour Market Statistics (Eurostat, 2014)

In addition, since 2008, nearly half a million Greeks have left the country in search of better opportunities abroad, with young, educated professionals among those leading the exodus (Bank of Greece, 2014). The exodus started gradually in 2008, exceeded 100,000 in 2013 and grew even further in 2014 and 2015 (Karakasidis, 2016). Sadly, this is not the first time that Greeks have abandoned their country en masse. Over the past century, Greece has seen two other major exoduses, one between 1903 and 1917 (most people traveled to the USA, Australia, Canada, Brazil and Southeastern Africa), and the other one between 1960 and 1972 (most people traveled to Germany and Belgium). The difference between the first two exoduses and the current one is that in the 20th century, it was mostly unskilled workers and farmers that left, while now it is the educated professionals and young graduates who are leading the exodus towards Germany, the UK and the United Arab Emirates (Karakasidis, 2016). As a result, Greece now ranks fourth among the 28 European Union member-states in terms of mass emigration in proportion to its work force after Cyprus, Ireland and Lithuania. Even worse, it now ranks third, after Cyprus and Spain, in terms of the proportion of young people leaving the country (Bank of Greece, 2014).

Finally, due to the crisis, over a third of the country's population (34.8 % or 3.7 million people) are considered to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion (ELSTAT, 2017). More specifically, 20.1% of Greeks live in conditions of poverty and social exclusion, with a further 14.6 % of the population being in danger of poverty. This means that 34.7% of the Greek population live in undesirable conditions. The respective European average is 20.3 %. Ten years ago, the same figure for Greece was 28.1%, a little higher than the European average, which, at that time, was 23.7 % (ELSTAT, 2017). Another measure that shows the state of the economy is the disposable household income: in 2014, disposable household income in Greece sunk to below 2003 levels (viz. Fig. 5)

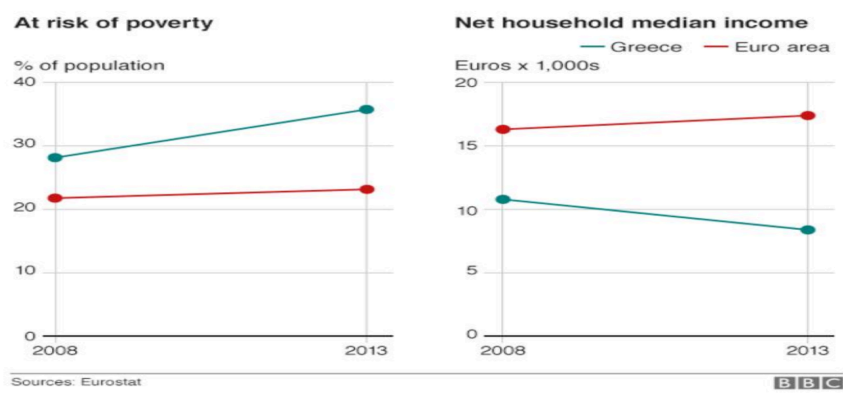


Figure 7: Household income (Eurostat, 2014)

The health and mental health implications of the economic crisis in Greece have attracted increasing attention (Madianos et al, 2014; Kentikelenis et al, 2012), with a strong emphasis on a potential rise in suicides (Kentikelenis et al, 2011; Economou et al, 2011; Economou et al, 2013). Greece had very low suicide rates recorded prior to the financial crisis (Zacharakis et al, 1998; Madianos et al, 1994).



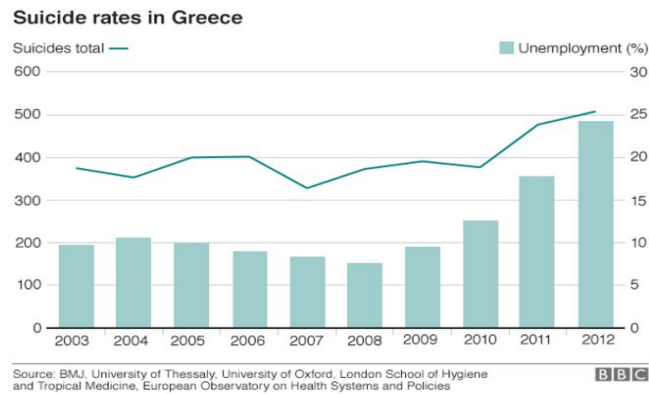


Figure 8: Suicide rates in Greece (Eurostat 2014)

Being a consultant in Greece since 2010, I have noticed that clients display varying amounts of concern over their financial situation. Some students have worried a lot about money, whilst others have felt that they had enough money to live on. However, all the clients were generally very aware of the sacrifice that their families were making in order for them to be able to study in the UK. This is no different to any other parent worldwide. What it is noticeable and, in my opinion, different in Greece, is that parents make the effort to send their children abroad and welcome the fact that their children will not stay in the country for the purposes of studying at the level of Higher Education. Parents see and admit that, by sending their children abroad, they ensure that their offspring will benefit from more opportunities in life than if they were to stay in their country. This state of affairs was also clear to the other consultants whom I spoke to:

*“Parents, especially Greek parents, will do anything and will find a way to help their kids study abroad.”*

*“Parents may live in poverty, but their kid will have great support while studying abroad.”*

*“Greek crisis? This is for banks and not for Greek parents. You start saving money for studies from the very moment they are born.”*

During my sessions with the parents of my clients, I notice that they start feeling more comfortable when talking about their financial situation. Most of them have confessed that they had already put aside the money needed for

their children's studies abroad. As Higher Education in Greece is free in terms of tuition fees, and learning materials are also provided by the State, free of charge, the worry of saving money for further studies is very real. Most parents had saved a fixed amount towards this purpose because they could see that due to the economic crisis it would be difficult to save even more money. In some cases, I have been able to provide solutions to issues that surfaced, foremost amongst which were the limitations and financial restrictions imposed because of capital controls on those occasions when parents were required to make payments in order to cover accommodation and student tuition fees.

Greek parents often feel uncomfortable about their children taking loans for higher education which is now a common practice in the UK. This attitude is rather unique to Greek parents. Specifically, the attitude towards children's education and debts is different to, say, the attitude displayed by the average English parent. Greek parents believe that they are responsible for the entire education of their kids. In fact, Greek parents are what would be considered as 'bankers for life', even when their offspring become adults. They support their children financially, irrespective of how many years it takes the latter to graduate. So long as they are students, Greek parents support them fully. In addition, interestingly, none of my clients is entertaining the thought of possibly working while studying, even if on a part-time basis. Parents are responsible for their kids' finances but, due to the Greek crisis, they feel insecure, so they might apply for a student loan as a 'security net'. The parents cover all financial responsibilities. Some of my clients do not even want to open a bank account in the UK. What is also surprising is that even those students who apply for a student loan are not concerned about the outcome of their application. The loan companies sometimes ask for further documentation and these clients do not even reply to them. Students worry about their financial responsibilities towards the University only when the University blocks their account, by the end of March. This year, however, one particular University demanded the payment of a deposit in advance of the student loan payment. This request made students aware of the financial responsibilities regarding their education.

During discussions with other consultants in my professional network, I realised that they all agree that, judging from their experience with clients, the financial crisis has had an impact on the move of these clients to the UK and not to the USA or Australia (which often act as alternative, English-speaking, countries) for studying purposes. This is also in relation to cost and opportunities for career development. There is a belief amongst Greek clients that UK degrees are more specific to the current market needs and closer to the business development in Europe, as compared to those obtained from the USA and/or Australia.

My personal experience (based on the clients who come to my office) suggests that there is a clear belief amongst the prospective HE students that going to the UK to study (and/or gaining working experience there) is preferable, as the UK lies within European boundaries, making it is easier to come back to Greece, during the length of their studies and once the studies and/or the work or job experience is over. People who, in the past, left for work or studies in the USA or Australia have never come back. Invariably, every Greek family has an uncle who left for the USA and never came back to permanently live in Greece again.

### **3.4 The Goddess Athena - My Clients in the Consultancy**

Although the gods in the Odyssey are responsible for the difficulty Odysseus faces on his return from Troy, they are equally responsible for motivating and assisting Odysseus. In the Odyssey, the gods play a critical role in the lives of humans. Odysseus, being a man, knows this and seeks protection and assistance from the gods because he knows that it is necessary. By making wise choices and being hospitable, Odysseus and his family will be graced with kindness and protection. This is perhaps more about Odysseus' reputation for manipulation rather than belief, humility or gratefulness. His protector was Athena whom he was not above manipulating.



Figure 9: Pallas Athena, in Wikipedia

Athena is the Goddess of wisdom and war. In the *Odyssey*, she has a most active role to play. She is the protector of Odysseus and, as a mentor, has assisted his son Telemachus in his effort to find his father many times. She asks Hermes to help her release Odysseus from Kalypso and then she helps him throughout his journey to Ithaca. She continues to help him in his fights against the suitors, in Ithaca. She is seen as the 'guardian angel' for the whole of Odysseus' family: himself, Telemachus and Penelope.

As an Education Consultant, I can relate to the virtues of Athena as the goddess of wisdom and her attribution as goddess of warfare. I do not see her in the latter role as being a bloodthirsty goddess, but one that is highly pragmatic and interested in what can be learned through confrontation, conflict, trial and tribulation. She represents the knowledge acquired through the choices that humans make when faced with an honourable death or a life without honour. She also represents the choice between knowledge that has been acquired through certain risks or a life with no risks, but which lacks the knowledge (the latter being similar to the life of the Lotus-Eaters).

*(Odysseus:) 'My men went on and presently met the Lotus-Eaters, nor did these Lotus-Eaters have any thoughts of destroying our companions, but they only gave them lotus to taste of. But any of them who ate the honey-sweet fruit of lotus was unwilling to take any message back, or to go away, but they wanted to stay there with the*

*lotus-eating people, feeding on lotus, and forget the way home.'* (9:91-97)

In this interpretation, those two, apparently opposing, attributes (wisdom and war) are reconciled and related. In this light, I see myself as an Education Consultant who has been graced with some of these Athenian attributes. I love knowledge. I have overcome many challenges in search of it. I am pragmatic and believe we learn from the challenges we encounter. The land of Lotus-Eaters is alien to me. I wanted to go home to the Ithaca of Homer, my homeland of Greece, regardless of the turmoil. I needed to be there for personal reasons and in order to find there my new professional role.

I can also compare the grace of Athena with the preference of clients for my services. I am greatly indebted to all of them for the learning they imparted on me. Athena's roles in the Odyssey are similar to the role of my clients in the Education Consultancy. They have been the facilitators of my learning and I have been the facilitator of theirs. On the one hand, I had to suffer the anger of the Gods (in my case, this was the Greek Crisis) but, on the other, I had my clients who have been instrumental in my success in the consultancy. My clients have opened up for me the market in Greece and have guided me in my practice in a way that is similar to the way that Athena used in order to guide Odysseus to Ithaca. When I felt I had made mistakes or stumbled, they gave me confidence and reassurance. As I learn from my mistakes, I made sure that each mistake would not be repeated. My clients always kept hope present for me and I, in turn, through my experience gathered in Troy, could translate for them the complications of the international education systems, particularly those of the UK and help them to successfully negotiate them.

According to the Education Department of the National Bank of Greece (Sector Report, 2017), the global environment is favourable for the rest of the world, as there has been an impressive increase in students' global mobility over the past four decades – with the number of young people traveling to another country in pursuit of higher education quintupling to 4.5 million students in 2014 (from about 1.8 million in 1995 and 0.8 million in 1975).

Weak competitiveness is reflected in Greece's low share in the global market (0.7%) – with the majority of foreign students enrolling either through bilateral agreements (e.g. with Cyprus) or are children of immigrants (mainly from Albania), (figure 8).

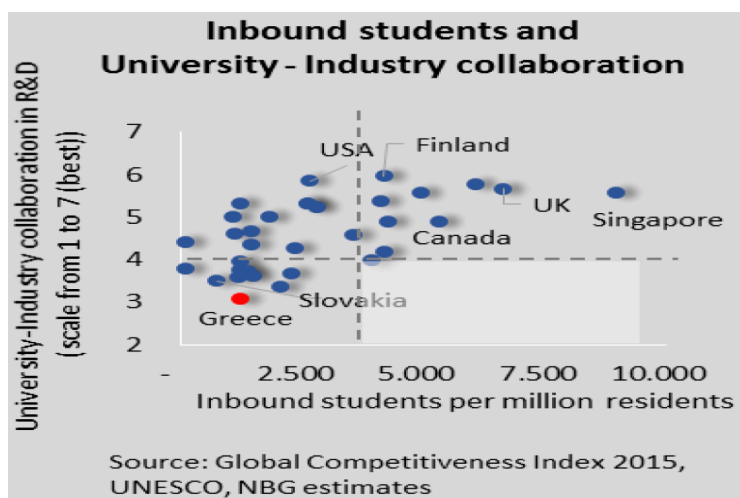


Figure 10: Inbound students and University – Industry Collaboration [National Bank of Greece Education Department (Sector Report, 2017)]

On the other hand, Greek students are travelling abroad for academic purposes. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students enroll to universities abroad in order to start or continue their studies in an international environment. According to UKCISA, in 2015-2016, 9,790 students enrolled in a HE in the UK. This makes Greece the 5<sup>th</sup> European country sending students to the UK, after Germany, France, Italy and the Republic of Ireland. Despite the fact that Greece is a small country - covering 0.15 per cent of world population - it contributes significantly to the international student mobility: 0.8 per cent of the global market in 2015. The extroversion of Greek students is reflected in a high ratio of outbound to national students -10% in 2015, versus a European average of 3.5%.

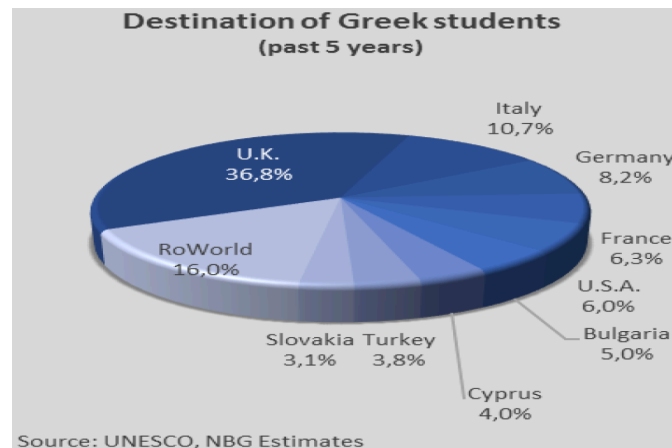


Figure 11: Destination of Greek students [National Bank of Greece Education Department (Sector Report, 2017)]

This reminds me of the time that I was still an active ESOL examiner, in 2012. I was attending our Annual Conference at Trinity College London. During our professional discussion about cultural differences, in terms of both learning and assessment, I presented my point of view and experience from working with Greek students. Specifically, I explained how Greek students feel most comfortable in structured learning situations in which there are clear objectives, detailed assignments and strict timetables. Greek students expect teachers to be experts in their fields and have all the answers (Ioakimidis & Miloni, 2010). Other factors found to affect the approach to studying of Greek undergraduate students include gender, gender combined with handedness and gender combined with age and handedness (Andreou et al, 2006). Prospective Greek students, who want to study in the UK need to be both aware of, and prepared to live, work and collaborate in, a rather different education environment. Cultural cliques, language, cultural differences in socialising and institutional and degree course barriers (Anderson et al. 2008) may affect their academic progress and experience of living in the UK (Anderson et al., 2008; Hyland, 2011), where they will encounter a multicultural and international environment.

I had to reflect on my experience as to what their background was and, additionally, what profiling and requirements the Universities in the UK were setting. As a result, I looked at the top 140 UK Universities/167 HE providers (through the data available at UCAS and, also, through the ranking published

by The Times). I, then, put together the following table of the profile of Greek students ensuring that I matched the University entry requirements for undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

**Greek Clients:**

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Undergraduate Studies</b>	<b>Postgraduate Studies</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-20 years old	22-28 years old
<b>Qualifications</b>	“Apolytirion” or IB	“Ptychion” (Degree from an Institution of Tertiary Education)
<b>Level of English</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First Certificate (C1) or</li> <li>- Cambridge Proficiency in English (C2)</li> <li>- but mostly Michigan Proficiency in English (which is not acceptable for HE in the UK)</li> <li>- none have IELTS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First Certificate (C1) or</li> <li>- Cambridge Proficiency in English (C2)</li> <li>- but mostly Michigan Proficiency in English (which is not acceptable for HE in the UK)</li> <li>- few have IELTS</li> </ul>
<b>Working Experience</b>	None or some volunteering work, if they have graduated from IB	Men – may have completed their military service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Placement work as part of their degree, especially if graduated from TEI or</li> <li>- some working experience in a different field of studies (only 30% have worked in their chosen field of studies)</li> </ul>

*Table 2: Greek Clients’ Profiles*

Although in the second phase of my researched I mentioned the discussions with participants as ‘interviews’, in this autoethnography study I come to see them as learning conversations, given that both them and myself have been learning from each other. Based on the interviews / learning conversations I had with the other Education Consultants who accepted to speak to me, I



summarise below the reasons that Greek people give for choosing the UK for studying purposes:

- The USA is more expensive and further away from Greece, so for financial reasons they choose the UK.
- In the UK, students have the option of doing joint degrees, while in Greece there is no such option.
- The standard of learning in the UK is higher than that in Greece. When I put to my clients that it is not the standard of learning that is higher in the UK but the methodology and, then, go on to explain how this is the case and how a higher standard of methodology can make a difference, they all agree that I am right and proceed to re-write their statements so that these reflect their understanding that it is the methodology that is at a higher level in the UK.
- In the UK, one learns how to learn, rather than just learn. This is very similar to the idea of 'What to Think' vs 'How to Think' (Graham, 2005).
- There are not many postgraduate courses in Greece. There is greater scope for specialisation in the UK.
- UK degrees relate to the industry, while Greek degrees are very academic. UK degrees enable one to find a job that is relevant to one's career outside of Greece, later on in life.

Going back to the story of the Odyssey, Athena chooses Odysseus as her champion and focuses on helping him, perhaps hoping he will learn as he clearly possesses courage, tenacity and focus. Athena and Odysseus are both pragmatic and manipulative when they wish to achieve goals. Athena says to Odysseus:

*“Both of us are skilled in shrewdness, since you are by far the best of mortals in plans and stories, and I among all the Gods am famed for planning and shrewdness.”* (Odyssey, 13:296-299)

I believe I am pragmatic and able to manipulate my strong points not only for the benefit of others but also for myself. I have been in my clients' shoes and know the UK education system very well. I am also familiar with the nitty-gritty

of the UK education system and know how to work it to the advantage of my clients. I am, like Odysseus, a good counsellor (although I hope I never lose the number of people he lost) but I have come to realise that I am actually helping young people leave their country knowing full well that they may never come back in the near future. This is an important dilemma for me, but my hope is that they will learn from their experiences and, directly or indirectly, will help support their country, will help rebuild it and will not get trapped in the land of the Lotus-Eaters. Many of my clients will come back. However, if they do not, perhaps their children will return to Greece, looking for their roots, just as the grandchildren of many exiles from World War II have returned to those places from which their grandparents were exiled. It was a privilege to bring the practical knowledge I acquired from my experience of studying and working in the UK to my country which was 'in crisis'. I was able to share this privilege in my Greek International Women Award application (full application in Appendix 3).

*"I have been exploring the international environment from different academic and professional positions. I have assessed verbally 8,000 people and have graded the written work of 12,000 people from all over the world. I have taught minority groups, refugees and people from different cultures. I have experienced international education; I have lived and worked in multicultural environments.*

*After 15 years of living abroad and after having developed new skills and experiences, I decided to return to Greece and set up my company. 'Athina, Education Consultants' ([www.athinaedu.com](http://www.athinaedu.com)) introduced the concept of Education Consultancy in all fields of education and professional development. I advise people not only on how to become global citizens but also on how to work and study in a multicultural environment in the 21st century".*

I continued my application by elaborating on how I viewed my decision which was representative of a minority group that was on a journey back to Greece when the great majority of people were trying to find a way out of the country.

*“The biggest challenge in my career was when, after 15 successful years in London, I decided to return to Greece and set up my own company, ‘Athina Education Consultants’. Not only did that coincide with the beginning of the economic crisis, but I also had to introduce a new concept, the multidimensional role of an Education Consultant.*

*I managed to overcome this challenge and thrive in a turbulent period, heavily relying on my multidimensional and multicultural professional experiences and on the innovative approach in consulting that I have developed.*

*I believe that in a fast moving world one cannot wait for a perfectly tailored position to open up. Instead, one must seize the opportunities that may present themselves and develop the necessary initiatives. This is exactly what I have done.”*

I uncovered a business opportunity in Greece which was beneficial for everyone in the context of the financial crisis and tried to develop in people the motive and wisdom to do what I did. I attempted to encourage people to find their own ‘Ithaka’, just as I did. Like Athena, I set about doing this not only through the challenging tasks of writing applications but through storytelling and future visioning. Athena was unlike Odysseus in this very important respect. She used her skills to help others to learn from challenges and obstacles. This is one of the concepts of hermeneutics – how we come to understand anything. From Thoth to Hermes, to Mercury, to Loki and the Eastern Monkey the translator gods often used metaphors (Maguire 2015) to facilitate understanding. I used my knowledge of both the Greek situation (personally and professionally) and international education to translate between them for the benefit of others. But there are things we see, things we do not see and things we perceive with lenses that often need checking – if not, there are consequences that can go on for generations. One of these is our perception of ‘the other’.

### 3.5 First Obstacle - Cyclopes and Cultural Diversity



Figure 12: Polyphemus, by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, 1802  
(Landesmuseum Oldenburg)

*“Cyclopes were huge creatures with a single eye in the center of their forehead and were known to be fierce and brutal. They lead a lovely life as shepherds. The fleet moored further away and Odysseus ordered the men to stay on board, as he picked a group of the bravest men and made their way to scout the area and gather supplies for the journey. As they stepped foot on land, they decided to walk inland, only to find a huge cave up on a hill. This was the home of the Cyclops Polyphemus, son of Poseidon.” (Deligiannis 2014:p.16)*

Odysseus encountered Polyphemus, the chief representative of Cyclopes, on his journey back to Ithaca. Campbell (1968) maintains that Polyphemus represents one of Odysseus’ most difficult trials. The difficulty occurred in the power Polyphemus had, compared to the power of a human being such as Odysseus. Odysseus had to escape Polyphemus’ cave. However, he could not move the great rock that sealed the entrance. Only a Cyclops could do that. At the same time, he could not kill Polyphemus in his sleep, as no one else could remove the huge rock. He had to find a trick to escape death. Odysseus realised that he needed to use his brains to solve this problem.

*“[... Odysseus] put his mind to work and came up with an idea to comfort the giant. Without wasting valuable time, he put his plan into action. He took a piece of hard wood that he found inside the cave and sharpened one of the ends, so much that it could go through the toughest of skins. He concealed it under a rock and ordered four of his*

*men to be alert. At nightfall, when Polyphemus returned, Odysseus approached him and offered him some strong wine that Maron had given him; Polyphemus was so excited that he started gulping down the whole wine [sic]. That's when he asked Odysseus what his name was. The brilliant hero, having his plan in mind, answered that his name was 'Nobody'. The Cyclops was so drunk that he fell asleep. Then Odysseus and his four men seized the opportunity, lifted the heavy sharp stick, and drove it so deep into his eye that they blinded him.” (Deligiannis 2014:p.22)*

In my consultancy practice, a certain level of analogy exists between Polyphemus and cultural diversity in an international environment such as that of Higher Education. When I was in the UK, I was a foreigner. I came from a different education background. I found different ways to survive there, whether a student or an ESOL teacher. The terms of globalisation, internationalisation and harmonisation in HE puzzled me. The extent of cultural diversity in the UK was greater than what I had experienced in Greece. The question for me was how to see obstacles as a way of learning and not as a way to escape traps as Odysseus did. Odysseus used his wit but at a high price for Polyphemus. Additionally, when one encounters difference, one often loses something in order to gain something. Odysseus lost some of his shipmates in the battle with the Cyclopes and the same can happen with encountering another culture and trying to live in it. People are changed by the experience and, specifically, part of their cultural and national identity may be lost. However, a new form of identity, namely the global identity, is not so much taking the place of as complementing the national one. This is what I try to help my clients (and their parents) to understand.

Globalisation has to do with all forms of knowledge, economy and business in general that can be transferred between nations. This is the world in which we now live. Internationalisation refers to the international perspective in HE globally. Harmonisation is a term used mainly in Europe and specifically after the Bologna Process (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009), that provides foreign policy, national security and identity as well as economic reasons and

workplace needs that lead to the internationalisation of HE (Kozma, 2014). As HE is growing globally, especially in relation to knowledge, the mission of the European Council to make Europe the 'dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' (European Council, 2015) is to treat education more globally. By studying the changing global landscape of HE, we can draw out the implications of the policies of governments and national identity for the developmental strategies of universities and for international consultancy agencies (Molina-Ray, 2010).

Individual needs of living all over the globe (and not only in one country) - such as the 2.8 million students currently moving around the globe freely - is a good reason and great opportunity for HE to be internationalised. The development of new technologies (access to the internet, online learning, etc) in all parts of society creates intercultural awareness (Pike & Sillem, 2018). Finally, academic factors play a role in the development of the transfer of knowledge and the creation of a knowledge economy (Neef, 2011). Universities are also businesses and, thus, financial benefits are always a motive towards a strategic move (Pike & Sillem, 2018).

Internationalisation in education has not influenced only the EU countries. Many institutions, all over the globe, have the opportunity to engage internationally. Universities, as a whole, have always been affected by international trends and, to a certain degree, operated within a broader international community of academic institutions, scholars and research (Williams, 2005). The rise of English as the main language of scientific communication, information and communications technologies has created a universal means of instantaneous contact and simplified scientific communication (Altbach et al., 2011). At the same time, these changes have led to the gathering of ownership of publishers, databases and other key resources in the hands of the more powerful universities and some multinational companies which are located, almost exclusively, in the developed world, providing, in this way, an international landscape for HE. However, the changing landscape of internationalisation is not developing in similar ways in HE throughout Europe and the rest of the world (Wit, 2010).

The internationalisation of HE has brought in the scene of Polyphemus, the Cyclops in Odyssey, as the cultural diversity in HE context. People from all over the world are traveling around the world for their studies. They bring with them their own culture and education norms. To understand the impact of diversity in the educational setting, it is necessary to define culture and cultural diversity. Culture can be defined as a dynamic system of values, beliefs and behaviours that influence how people experience and respond to the world around them (Guo & Jamal, 2007). For many, cultural diversity can be referred to as “*distinctions in the lived experiences, and the related perception of and reactions to those experiences that serve to differentiate collective populations from one another*” (Marshall, 2002:p.7).

Cultural diversity has several dimensions and includes numerous challenges when international students begin their higher educational experience in a new culture and environment. These challenges can have an impact both on the students’ overall experience and their academic performance. Fears and anxieties are further compounded by the fact that international students are facing unknown societal values, structures and systems, both within the host country and also in the microcosm of the host university (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010). Cultural diversity has puzzled me ever since I was an international student in the UK.

I remember that during my first year of studies, I struggled to adapt to the new learning environment. I was coming from an environment that was heavily focused on teachers and the transmission of knowledge. The classroom experience was regimented since we, as students, were not expected to engage in dialogue with the teacher, unless invited to do so. As a student, I viewed the intellectual authority of the teacher as challenging (Eaves, 2009). In my learning experience, there was a strong emphasis on memory, imitation and repetitive practice (Turner, 2006). Learning by heart huge parts and passages of several books and sitting the Pan-Hellenic Exams was a traumatic experience, so much so that I still have nightmares in relation to it. There was great pressure to pass a large set of assessments, which were indicators of academic progress and success. I did not know how to critically

analyse and assess new knowledge. By coming to the UK, I not only had to adjust to a new culture, but also to new expectations and challenges associated with my academic work (Kingston & Forland, 2008).

Graham (2005) mentions that the primary role of universities has been to develop the skills of 'how to think', rather than 'what to think'. This was very different to the way I had built and consolidated my learning habits while a student myself. I observed that other Greek students were just like me. The Greek community and the Greek Students' Association played an important role in my undergraduate and postgraduate education. I remember meeting to discuss our courses very often. We were trying to understand the way the University expected us to think. There was always some Greek person, usually older than us, in the University who had that learning experience or a Greek academic member of staff who could explain what we were supposed to do in order to think academically.

For the UK HE institutions, we were home students in terms of fee status but we were actually international students, as English was not our first language and we were not familiar with the UK educational system. Internationalisation at Home (IaH), (Teeken, 2013) is a concept that acknowledges that the majority of students in the UK are international students and, thus, their opportunities for developing cultural capability cannot be gained if we do not accept that there is a cultural diversity in the HE of the UK, and these students come from a different educational background.

National culture can vary in terms of a number of factors such as the degree to which individualism is favoured over collectivism and how much people appreciate the presence of clear rules of behaviour over uncertain rules (Hofstede, 1986). Such cultural variables can help determine what students expect in the educational situation, including their preferences for how teachers should interact with students. As a Greek student of HE, I have felt most comfortable in very structured learning environments. For me, the teacher was viewed as an authority figure, an expert and someone who remains at a considerable psychological distance from the students



(Ioakimidis & Miloni, 2010). I remember that on one occasion, when I was presenting a poster in a conference (Appendix 8) about my DProf, I could not bring myself to talk to other people I saw at the conference because I recognised them to be authorities in my research field. I booked a pre-conference BBQ and, as soon as I entered the room, I realised that amongst the people present were the current and past Heads of our Department. I turned round and left in panic. I could not even imagine being in that room, talking to them about something I was still investigating, something in which I was not yet an expert.

The main value of the UK Universities is the notion of 'an educated person' who can engage with ideas, be a critical thinker and able to participate in the excitement of learning and discovery. This means that, in the UK HE, there is no national identity (Butorac, 1998; Hassanien, 2007; Rajaram, 2013; Hyams – Seekasi et al., 2014). As an Education Consultant, I summarised the differences in the Greek and UK educational systems in order to provide services that are beneficial for my clients.

In summary:

Greek degrees at State Universities are:

- Longer duration degrees
  - 4 years for the standard Bachelor Degree – Some programmes (such as Medicine and Engineering) are 5-year long, with approximately 60 modules being taught.
- Very Theoretical
  - Assessment: by means of exams (100%), attendance is not compulsory, coursework is mostly optional
- Focus on theoretical knowledge
  - Only few Departments have close ties / links with businesses
- All students must be graduates of a Greek secondary school level (Lyceum) with Apolytirion qualification
- Courses are almost exclusively delivered in Greek (except for the Departments of Modern Foreign Languages)

From my perspective, UK degrees are:

- 3-year long Bachelor Degrees – according to Bologna Process (1999)
- Varied Assessment: assessment includes coursework, attendance is mostly compulsory, various resources of knowledge are used throughout the course
- ‘What to think’ vs ‘How to think’ (Graham, 2005)
- Learning through reflection in UK HE
- Multicultural environment – we are talking about “Internationalisation in House” (Teeken, 2013)

Language is a barrier for some students who actually need to progress from the ESOL level to the HE or the workplace levels. In my teaching career, I often observed that people from specific countries were making similar language mistakes. This was a cultural issue that interfered with learning the foreign language.

Specifically, Greek learners find English pronunciation difficult, as Greek and English phonology are very different. There are many areas where the phonological systems of the two languages are distinctively dissimilar. I have noticed that Greek speakers have problems with pronunciation of /r/ produced after /p, t, k/. They also produce the aspiration sound /h/ as a velar fricative. In addition, English intonation may cause serious difficulties to the Greek native speaker, as do weak forms of grammatical words which are often mispronounced as they are spelt. As a result, the Greek speaker may find the deciphering of words and phrases difficult, particularly when speech is produced at natural speed.

Generally, the writing skills of Greek learners are better than their speaking skills. Both my students’ written work and my experience as a Language Examiner have led me to classify frequent mistakes into four distinct categories. In the first place, vocabulary. Greek speakers may confuse ‘listen’ with ‘hear’, ‘next’ with ‘other’, etc. In the second place, spelling (e.g.

magnificent, efficient, and conclusion). Thirdly, word order (contrary to English, Greek does not have a strict word order, as syntactic functions are indicated mainly by case and other grammatical features characterising content words, rather than their position in the sentence). In the fourth and final place, grammar mistakes: common Greek mistakes include the use and formation of the various tenses (e.g. the simple present and present perfect tenses), as well as the use of prepositions, phrasal verbs and articles, to name but a few.

However, the actual problem with the language is not the grammatical errors or phonological slips. It is the culture (in which the language is embedded) that is problematic for the Greek speaker. I have observed that the Greek speaker who mixes with people from other countries often resorts to having nodding acquaintances which do not develop into friendships. This language barrier stops the Greek speaker from interacting in English. Greek students who have come to study in the UK often mention the support of the 'Greek communities' and the Orthodox Church in the area they live. Most Greek and Cypriot people in London live in North London, an area with strong religious ties to Greece and Cyprus. Throughout the Byzantine era, the 400-year Turkish rule and the modern period of independence, the church has played a major role in education (Koustourakis, 2007). Even nowadays, religious education occupies an important place in the school curriculum. In Cyprus, Greek-centered education is evident in the cultivation of a love for (i) Greek traditions and civilisation, (ii) the Greek national identity and (iii) a sense of belonging to the Greek nation (Persianis, 1998). According to Orfanos et al. (1987:p.80) "*it is only fair that our education is based on the Greek education system, since separating ourselves from Greece would be betrayal of our ethnicity*". This might seem an old reference but, after talking to many of my Cypriot friends, this stance reflects the current way of thinking. In the UK, national ethnicity is not a strong element of education. The UK educational system is very open to the internationalisation of knowledge. The system accepts cross-cultural diversity and the separation between religion and education is unquestionable (Patiniotis & Stavoulakis, 1997). As a result (and in order to avoid feeling homesick), most Greek students aim to stay

connected to people who share the same customs and traditions while in the UK.

An example in point concerning the cultural and language differences of Greek and English relates to the level of politeness in English. In Greek, a conversation is perceived as polite when the appropriate intonation accompanies the conversation and words such as 'please' and 'thank you' are limited, if not scarce. On the other hand, apart from intonation, English extensively uses words such as 'please' and 'thank you' in order to convey the same meaning.

Moreover, there was a strict dress code of wearing black or white clothes or only long sleeves in some of the colleges in which I have worked. This was because people from specific cultures would get offended if a woman wore 'coloured' clothes or short sleeves. Furthermore, in some cultures, men would not accept corrections (especially those marked with red pen) from a woman. Finally, during my employment as an examiner, I noticed that women would often come to take an ESOL exam accompanied by their husbands. The latter would enter the room in order to check the setting. They would introduce themselves and only if they found things to be to their liking would they allow their wives to enter the examination room. At the end of the session, they would also ask if their wives had performed well at the exams.

In previous research, I explored the issue of cultural awareness in the international context of HE and, in particular, the Doctorate of Professional Studies. I had the opportunity to explore these issues with people from the International Centers of Middlesex University. I was interested in what language barrier actually means in practice. For non-English speakers, there is a language barrier, as English is not only the dominant language, but also the language of commerce and exchange. In a global world, it would be hard to find international work if one does not speak English and at a national level, the more a country interacts globally, the more it needs people who speak and write the international language. This can come at great cost to cultural identity, as the role of language in preserving a nation's cultural identity is key.

In terms of HE, one of the major stumbling blocks which emerged and prevented students from completing degrees was written English which has been confusing students about its so-called 'academic English'.

*“ ‘Global identity’ has to do with knowledge and not with language. One cannot insist that an international higher education establishment must always be using English.”* (Interviewee, phase 1, AD)

However, international DProf candidates must be proficient in English in addition to their field of study. This requirement is all the more challenging for a doctorate in practice as this does not have a prescribed convention but a variety of discourse registers and conventions.

*“The language, the English language, for the DProf, is the most important ingredient of the DProf, apart from [the] ability to analyze, [the] ability to synthesise [and the] ability to cognitively develop new theories. The language, the language medium is because the DProf candidate has got to be really, really very good with the English language. I think also [that] the ability of our center to explain concepts to people in [local] language also helps, they may not be learning x language in DProf, they may never use x language before, but ... we will try to explain difficult concepts in x language, which hopefully will help them – and we are certainly more sympathetic.”* (Interviewee, phase 1, AA)

From my personal experience as (i) a DProf candidate and (ii) a non-native speaker of English, I have never felt that my ability to perform in English was an issue. I did realise that I would never achieve proficiency in English in the same way as a native speaker would. As a result, I always try to perform as best I can in English and may often need to try harder to express myself professionally. However, reflecting on my academic writing in Greek (as I produce written, publishable, work for Greek magazines on a monthly basis), I do admit that I also find some difficulty regarding the meaning of words in

Greek. I, accordingly, believe that this difficulty is a result of having to use an academic register in the language (whichever language this may be) and not a difficulty in the actual use of the language itself.

Furthermore, the language barrier is not an issue for the clients of the Education Consultants I interviewed. I have discussed this with education consultants at a later stage of my phase 2 research. They all agreed that the Greek educational system is more formal compared to the UK one.

*“[The Greek educational system] does not provide flexibility in learning.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1A)

*“Greeks see education in HE as their final destination and not as a starting point.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1F)

They also find that Greek students usually meet the required level of English. However, the students’ use of language is problematic. In other words, “language skills’ are problematic. I recall many examples that validate this claim from the discussions but the example below is very characteristic:

*“A few years ago, I received a phone call at 12.30am [10.30pm UK time]. On the other end of the line was one of my clients who said: ‘Teacher, how we say [sic] in English sanitary pads?’ This student had IELTS 7, she was at the supermarket and she could not find the said item. She also asked for ‘Everyday’ [the Greek name of the sanitary pads brand she wanted], and she phoned me because the shop assistants could not understand her.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1E)

Cultural diversity and the need for localising the curriculum were two issues that had puzzled me for a decade. The conundrum they created in my mind was further strengthened by my experiences as a learner and educator in an international environment and through studying the literature of Hill et al. (2014) and Keller et al. (2006).

### 3.5.1 Cultural Diversity and Localisation

In phase 1 of my research, I engaged with several Heads of International Centers of Middlesex University, looking closely at cultural diversity and, specifically, the localisation of the curriculum. Expressing that concern (i.e. whether there is a need for localising the curriculum within an international concept of HE) to the Heads of the International Centers of Middlesex University, there was debate about the localisation of the curriculum through the years.

In the non-Western cultures, learners are found to be less self-directed and more dependent on instructors than in the Anglo-Saxon cultures. The teaching and learning process in non-Western cultures is teacher-centered and different to the learner-centered process which characterises the Western cultures. In Hong Kong, the educational system is described as formal, disciplined, teacher-centered and didactic (Turner, 2006). This attitude was also found in the data analysis by the different dimension of seeing the Anglo-Saxon education system of the WBL as generic and very UK-centric.

*“The core module of the WBL is very generic, so the information on these handbooks relate to students of all kinds. It’s not written for a particular audience.”* (Interviewee, phase 1, AC)

*“It is very UK-centric, but it would seem to me that in a UK university (where a UK programme is obviously very UK-centric) you might say no, it’s an international curriculum, so it should be internationalised and I would agree with that, but I think that it’s for the local center to be aware of the local needs.”* (Interviewee, phase 1, AA)

What is noteworthy here is the fact that international centers thought that a curriculum adaptation should be made by local centers and not by the Head Offices.

*“So, yeah, adaptation – it seems to be the job of the local center rather*

*than the UK center”... “[adaptation must take into account the] local culture, local practices and local preferences.” (Interviewee, phase 1, AD)*

The purpose of the DProf is not only to create a product that gives value to the organisation through the practitioner but also one that harnesses the potential for academic and professional knowledge collaboration.

*“And they will locate their study, from their own organisational cultural point of view, and we do take into account these kinds of differences if you like, or idiosyncrasies, they are not UK-centric but this should be [OK]. It takes courage, because it enhances the quality of the programme and the outcome of the programme. They will come out with studies and it has to [provide] international dimensions and international knowledge.” (Interviewee, phase 1, AD)*

*“The [DProf] students [of each Centre] must be able to use whatever means they feel is right to access the data; to get part on the data means that the data must be searched for from localities that relate to the candidate and the locality which is relevant to their study. So, there are cultural differences in the way these data are researched.” (Interviewee, phase 1, AC)*

Since 1999, efforts have been made to achieve harmonisation with the European Union. Even though education is nowadays more Europeanised, the British colonial influence remains strong. In Hong Kong, there is a move towards the modernisation of pedagogical policies and the country’s economic modernisation policies (Hu, 2008). Greece was also in the process of modernising education, the first step being the change of the ‘Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs’ to ‘Greek Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Technology’ in 2010. The Bologna Agreement (1999) has been the motive towards big changes in the education system which moved towards a Europeanised and harmonised education. At the second phase of



the interviews with the Heads of the international centers, the need for localisation was no longer an issue.

*"An economist is an economist, they just address different issues, and the difference is the market. For example, an economist or an engineer or a graphic artist, [who has] graduated in the UK may well work in big worldwide organisations in any department, [and] they can stay there for the next twenty years. In X (country), it's different, the organisations usually are [sic] smaller and you get to do everything in your organisation. The smaller business imperatively need to know a little bit of everything in X (country) as opposed in the UK." (Interviewee, phase 1, AB)*

*"DProf candidates must have the ability to create rather than adopt or follow, but what happens when an education system does not teach people to do this, they do not develop this learning style." (Interviewee, phase 1, AA).*

Global identity is important in the world today and a type of programme like DProf supports knowledge transfer or exchange and co creating knowledge which fits into the inter-connectedness and dependency of the world.

*"There is no need for a localised project when it has no implication globally." (Interviewee, phase 1, AD)*

*"Localisation means that candidates must take into account the local customs and practices and they must collect data which are relevant to the subject study [and] not simply just look at the literature of other countries, but to really engage with the local situation... And, maybe, find a difference or, maybe, implement the good practices." (Interviewee, phase 1, AC)*

Having interpreted the two points of view in the two sets of interviews with the Heads of the International Centers and having looked at the literature, there is

a direct link between a student's ability to succeed in their studies and the non-academic support they receive for their 'out-of-class experiences' (Nelson et al., 2009; Mehdinezhad, 2011). The main factors that define success when studying in a UK environment include: (i) the students' need of the Head Office, (ii) where they live, work and study in the UK, (iii) the students' need of the International Center that is located closest to them and (iv) where they live and work in their home country. DProf projects have a global identity. They start with a local example that is used in order to identify a situation which, upon investigation, is shown to apply globally:

*"Knowledge is always specific to the context. What we try to do with our DProf candidates is to say [that] your project is based on your knowledge of X (country name) on a particular issue but somewhere else, where there are similar issues [in] another country they find some answers [based on your findings]. So, like you said before, act locally and think globally."* (Interviewee, phase 1, AA)

An important parameter of this change of attitude regarding localisation might be the fact that most Middlesex University DProf candidates, at that time, held degrees from UK or US Universities or professional qualifications from these English-speaking cultures. They were, therefore, familiar with the philosophy of UK degrees and their prerequisites. As a result, they did not feel that there was any need to localise the curriculum. All interviewees confirmed that candidates had high professional standards and were, as a result, able to impact their industry, organisation and profession. In most international centers, DProf candidates did not even come from the same discipline, so no comparisons between candidates could be drawn. This element might have caused a certain degree of bias in this research.

Another parameter to localisation became clear to me when I had to have my UK degrees recognised by the Greek authorities. I started the process of recognition of my UK degrees well before setting up my consultancy company, when I was still in the UK. In some cultures, for instance in Greece, recognition of degrees has an important role, as the whole educational system

is based on formal learning, just like in Hong Kong. In Greece, the question of degree recognition arises, even if there is an EU agreement for member states to recognise each other's professional qualifications. In Greece, distance-learning courses are not recognised at all. In a similar way, degrees are only recognised if taught formally. International Centers had issues with degree recognition processes and it was, therefore, crucial that Heads of the International Centers were involved in the process of accreditation. Specifically, it was important that stakeholders were actively involved with local authorities, so that they knew about the appropriate (and effective) procedures.

*"I actually got information from the university about the status of the qualifications and the problems especially for the recognition ... in 2000 we had the programmes recognised by the Education Service Commission and also by the City Commission."* (Interviewee, phase 1, AD)

In all three countries (Greece, Cyprus and Hong-Kong) the issue was the status of the qualification and whether there were mandatory lectures or not. In the case of a particular International Center, the structure of the DProf did not favour the accreditation requirements for the exact same reasons:

*"... the law says that you cannot deliver the programme if you cannot have lectures ... The Work-Based Learning mode switches the candidates because they do not have to attend lectures. They have meetings and those meetings, they can have them anywhere, they can have them at work, they can have them at the beach, they can have them in the hotel, they can have them here, but the law does not accept this as a formal qualification."* (Interviewee, phase 1, AA)

This statement also questions the localisation of the curriculum. In some cultures, this acts as a way to get a degree recognised, even though there might not be any pedagogical need for this. As a result, programme flexibility poses an accreditation issue.

*"It was very difficult to tell people, to explain to people what it is. What? You are doing a programme and there is no content? What is the content of your programme? What do you want your students to learn? What would they do? And you say, well, it depends on what they want, where they are at, what they want to achieve and, we will facilitate, but it belongs to the student. We cannot predate what kind of programmes the student [will choose], which direction they will go. It all depends on the needs of the student, it is very student-centered. And this kind of pedagogy is new to them, they always expect the university to write up the programme and tell the people 'if you come to join this programme you got into a, b, c, d, e, f, g and then you have to complete it all and pass and you get a graduation.'" (Interviewee, phase 1, AA)*

The education system in HE is different in Greece and Cyprus compared to the UK. Publications of the research work, are key at Doctoral level.

*"They may ask for publications because the competition is high in a level it is high but supposedly they do give the same value and the same level." (Interviewee, phase 1, AB)*

The recognition of the DProf through the local authorities is an issue that I will need to tackle in due course. This issue of recognition of qualifications at every level has been central to my practice: as an Education Consultant, my role is to make sure that the Universities and degrees that I recommend to my clients are accepted by the Greek authorities. As a result, I had to start following the changes to the (Greek) Law regarding those issues.

Reflecting on my working and personal learning experience, I have come to the conclusion that the internationalisation of HE is a multi-dimensional process. It begins with internationalising the student body and the curriculum (Simpson & Grimes, 2017) and goes on with the internationalisation of the programme and the faculty in question (Marshall, 2017). I investigated the academic and administrative approaches that were used in

internationalisation. I identified the major role played by cultural diversity and this was also mentioned by people from the International Centers. In fact, it seems that people took several steps in order to minimise this issue. One of these steps was localisation. They believed that the transfer of knowledge is more important and this is clear on their second phase of the interviews.

According to the interviewees, the most effective way to tackle cultural diversity in an educational context was by means of a liaison officer, i.e. someone who can facilitate the understanding and connection between different cultures. The role of these people must be centering on the international transfer of knowledge and not just the local national needs.

The subject of accreditation procedures also came up in the interviews, but I did not give much weight to it. It was only when I attempted to have my previous degrees recognised, that this brought about a flash back. There are communication and language issues which, in reality, can only be dealt with successfully if an understanding of the different cultures exists between the interested parties. Language and communication issues should not be accepted as facts. As an autoethnographer, I have realised that the need for localisation has influenced my practice: localising helped me to become more aware of the complexities of this issue. Localisation is what happened *outside* and not *inside* the classroom. As a result of my experience, localisation is part of the education consultancy paperwork; it is not viewed as an approach in my practice.

At this point, allow me to go back to the story of the Cyclopes. The case of the Cyclopes and the analogy I draw between them and cultural diversity is very clear to me. However, while I was reviewing this epic and talking to my research friends who, crucially, are not Greek, I realised that the point of view presented above (i.e. this analogy between the Cyclopes and cultural diversity), was not applicable to them: my research friends had a different point of view. They could not perceive that this is story of supreme arrogance and disregard for the property of others; it is a tale about the superiority of two

eyes; it is a narrative about handsomeness; above all, it is a chronicle of the adventures of heroes who had fought in wars.

Technically, in blinding Polyphemus, Odysseus and his men were denying him so much for protecting his own land and people. However, Homer did not want to show this aspect to the audience. Odysseus is initially presented as immature and curious/eager to meet the Cyclopes. Later, Homer unfolds the true virtues of Odysseus (Book 9). Foremost amongst these are: (i) intelligence and cunning thought, as shown in the conception of the plan to blind Polyphemus and escape the Cyclopes' land (9:351, 404-410); (ii) respect (9:294-298); (iii) courage (9: 282-284); (iv) self-control (9:331-338); (v) deep love for democracy (9: 368); and, (vi) providence (9: 336-338, 406-410).

Homer presents the Cyclopes as barbarian. They appear to be living in a quasi-primitive world (1:80-82). This representation creates a great contrast to the civilised world which is, aptly, represented by Odysseus himself (Syrogiannis, 2018). Polyphemus is huge, he possesses supernatural body power, shows no signs of a civilisation worth speaking of, is practically unable to communicate with others and is mostly presented as a wild beast (9:318-323, 416-418, 427 - 444). At the same time, Polyphemus is presented as an arrogant being, given that he does not respect the Gods, not even Poseidon, his father (9:307). It goes without saying, then, that punishment will ensue. It is clear, also, that his mind blur (- άτη) and his hubris (-ύβρης) will lead to nemesis (νέμεση) and punishment (-τίση). He is a fool because he is trying to nag out information from Odysseus (9: 278-281). Homer narrates scenes that shock the audience and make them feel horrible about the primitivism and barbarity of Polyphemus. These passages make the audience experience wild joy for the ensuing punishment of Polyphemus (Spyrogiannis, 2018). The description of the awfulness of another gives legitimacy to the punishing or hurting of the other. First a state dehumanises its enemies, then no-one is sorry to see them killed (as they were not human).

We, as Education Consultants, need to consider cultural diversity and the story of the Cyclopes from multiple perspectives: even though Odysseus was

admittedly resourceful, he should have, nevertheless, not underestimated the fact that Polyphemus was the son of Poseidon. He (and we, Education Consultants) would do better by avoiding the hubris towards the Gods. Within this framework of analogies, it is interesting to note that Polyphemus is represented as an immature giant, i.e. very much like my clients consider cultural diversity to be. An important amount of thinking and respect are necessary in order to minimise the danger posed by cultural identity to the clients who will be leaving their country in order to pursue HE studies abroad.

Being an HE student in the UK, I have observed during the last 20 years that (i) all students are not from the same educational background and (ii) all education is not founded and built upon the same values of pedagogy. Hill et al. (2014) explains that students are the consumers of HE and, as a result, student satisfaction is important. In that sense, in those cases where there is cultural diversity between the 'consumer' (i.e. the student) and the actual 'product' (i.e. the pedagogy), the issue arises of how the product will be understood in the market. At the heart of marketing lies the belief that consumer needs should be met effectively (Kreber, 2009). Therefore, when a University sets out the pedagogy and curriculum for a programme, the said University needs to create an educational experience that can be understood by its clients and that can satisfy their needs. So, what students actually want from their education is dependent on their needs, on where and how they will use this knowledge and what method is used in order to pass this knowledge to them. In other words, what I have realised during my student years is that pedagogy and curriculum should be tailored to the learners.

Having said that, Ng and Forbes (2009) found that students bring in the classroom their intellect, language and communication skills. These skills could help them develop the kind of support they actually need in their learning process. They could also help them develop the particular method that is beneficial to them. Bok (2015) suggests that the University system needs to use innovative methods to enhance the students' learning process. That can only be achieved if the curriculum is open to adaptation within the learning environment where each programme is located. However,

*“students often do not know how much they value the learning until they actually begin to learn, a process that can be facilitated by teaching methods that allow time for reflection and analysis of what is being taught.” (Cowan 1998:p.347)*

This rings true for me: I have been struggling to adapt to the UK educational pedagogy while, at the same time, I could see how this system suited me and make me achieve professional development in the UK (as well as in Greece, later on, in my professional life). Hence, the coin is double-sided. It is important to keep the UK pedagogy but, at the same time, to accept the cross-cultural differences of learners.

Cultural diversity in education is not a discrete and stable symbol system consisting of members who all share exactly the same views (Stearns, 2009). There are many other factors, such as gender (Ainscow, 2007; Andreou & Muijs, 2006) and learning styles (Altbach, 2003; Andreou & Muijs, 2006). The effectiveness of the learning process is dependent on the learning abilities, learning styles and learning preferences of learners (Biggs, 1987; Angelides, 2002; Altback & Knight, 2007; Streitwieser & Light, 2018).

Moreover, cultural diversity is a cultural value and mode of thinking that is difficult to separate from the learning process (Nisbett & Masuda, 2003). As Parrish & Linder-VanBerschot (2010:p.15) point out, *“... when we teach, we are passing along not only what we know, but how we come to know it as well as the basis for accepting it as useful knowledge, and the values these represent”*. As a result, not only is the students’ ability to perform in education, but also the teaching process is influenced by culture. The growing need for educational access leads students rightly to demand culturally adaptive learning experiences that allow full development of the individual (Wright, 2009). Therefore, for teaching and learning, especially in ESOL, there is a need to consider adapting to cultural differences. Rogers et al. (2007) point out the need for educators *”to understand more fully the cultural contexts of learners and to build better bridges into and out of cultures of learning.”* (p.45)



### 3.5.2 The Straits of Scylla and Charybdis: Cultural Shock



Figure 13: The Strait of Messina, with Scylla (underlined in red) and Charybdis on the opposite shores (Wikipedia)

*“[...] in the mid-ocean, they came to a dilemma, they had to decide which passage of the two that lay ahead, to follow. The first was the Symplegades, and the second, which they finally chose, was the Straights of Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla, the monster, lived in a cave in the middle of a huge rock. She had twelve legs and six, long necks, which held her gruesome heads up. With three rows of sharp teeth in each mouth, she tore away at her victims. Charybdis was a horrific creature, who lived inside a smaller rock across from Scylla. Three times a day, Charybdis would suck up the whole sea and then shoot it out, the fury of the waves sinking all the ships.” (Deligiannis, 2014: p.46)*

*“Odysseus was aware of the dangers but said nothing to his men so that he would not frighten them. He ordered them to stay on route, close to the cave of Scylla, while in full armour; he climbed up to the bow in order to confront her. As they were passing in front of her, from the opposite rock, Charybdis sucked up the sea and then spit it out with force; Scylla suddenly appeared, snatched and devoured six brave men. Pulling on the oars frantically, the rest were lucky to make a narrow escape.” (Deligiannis, 2014:p.46)*

My personal and professional integrity as an Education Consultant is reflected in my efforts to protect my clients and give them some tools that will assist them in finding their survivor mode. This, I believe, is extremely important because it will allow them to eventually feel comfortable while they are abroad and, at the same time, it will encourage them to gain as much experience as possible from their internationalisation. Admittedly, this international experience can (and, most often, does) cause a lot of upheaval and uncertainty in the lives of my clients. Therefore, for me to be a successful Education Consultant, I need to find the right way to help my clients discover a mode of living that will ensure their well-being whilst they live out their international experience.



Figure 14: The Adventures of Ulysses (tripline.net)

Another important dimension of cultural diversity refers to the way it influences the life of learners. The 'cultural shock' (UKCISA, 2018) experienced by students who find themselves in a foreign country affects not only the learning process but also their life in the new culture.

Greece is one of the European countries which signed the Bologna Declaration of harmonisation of HE. However, the laws of the country [and, especially, Article 16 (Article 16, Section 2 of 4415/16)] do not allow international students to enter the national HE institutions, except for some Erasmus programmes. In addition, Greek Law does not allow any form of distance learning (the only exception is 'The Greek Open University' which is only for Greek citizens). Recently, Greek Education authorities have discontinued the three international programmes (delivered in English) of the Demokriton University of Thrace, the University of the Aegean and the

University of Crete (Article 73, Section 2 of 4316/2014). Greek Universities are still below the top 200 Universities of the World (on international rankings) as a result of their difficulty to promote international research, publications in international forums, international collaborations, numbers of PhD research, etc (Avrantinis, 2016). There are various private colleges which run international programmes as branches of international universities, but, again, this does not provide working benefits (e.g. work in the Greek public sector) to graduates.

Greek learners are not familiar with multinational environments. They mainly live and operate within a Greek educational environment and, when they decide to go abroad, they face a multinational environment to which they have to adapt. UKCISA (2018) define cultural shock as “the impact of moving from a familiar culture to the unfamiliar”. Some of the elements that contribute to culture shock are: (i) the climate (British weather is difficult for people such as the Greeks, who come from warmer climates; dressing codes respond to the climate and, hence, are different too), (ii) the food (the flavours of British food are very different to the ones that Greek people are accustomed to), (iii) the language (constantly listening and speaking a foreign language is experienced as being tiring by most foreigners, Greeks included).

Living in a multinational environment, such as the UK, affects some of the social roles. This might cause confusion, surprise and offense to some Greeks as well as other people from environments that are culturally more homogeneous than the UK. This further causes concerns in terms of behaviour etiquette. Students are used to specific ways of behaviour and views of the world (values). Every culture is built on deeply embedded sets of values, norms, assumptions and beliefs. It takes time to understand others, especially if one comes from a homogeneous cultural environment. Interviews with international students in my career indicate that they suffer from homesickness, even though they may regularly communicate with family and friends via email, text messages and phone conversations (Croese, 2011). This feeling of homesickness is further exacerbated by the tendency of host students not to interact voluntarily with international students, nor to engage

international students in their activities (Meletiadis, 2014). Ten years on from these commentators, although the speed of technology and the reduction in the cost of travel has lessened the separation anxiety, in some cases it has increased the emotional desire to be 'home'. The upside too is that although international students are not a homogenous group, there tends to be many of them to mix with. In addition, UK students have become more travel-conscious themselves, taking gap years and placements abroad. As a result, their attitudes have changed considerably in the last ten years and are genuinely interested in other cultures and in creating a social and global network for the future. The downside is that nowadays that same ease of communication that can promote the contact with international students can also inhibit their mixing with other British ethnic groups in the UK such as British Muslims, or black British communities, due to adverse press and a focus on stereotypes. Greece has not been exposed to as much multiethnicity as the UK and our Greek students need to be open to learning from the richness of diversity and not the fear of disseminated prejudices.

The process of culture shock can be illustrated in the graph below and it is known as the 'W' curve. The first stage of the process is the so-called 'honeymoon stage' and refers to the period of first being in the new environment. I can observe this in my clients. Upon arrival to the UK, most of them are excited, stimulated and curious about the new culture. A little later, usually after a month or so, they start feeling confused and isolated as the cultural differences become more prominent. They start comparing the two cultures and, in some cases, reject the host culture. I have reflected that, at this stage, my role as an Education Consultant is important. Following re-integration, they accept the differences and find similarities. This gives them the motive to find autonomy and be independent.

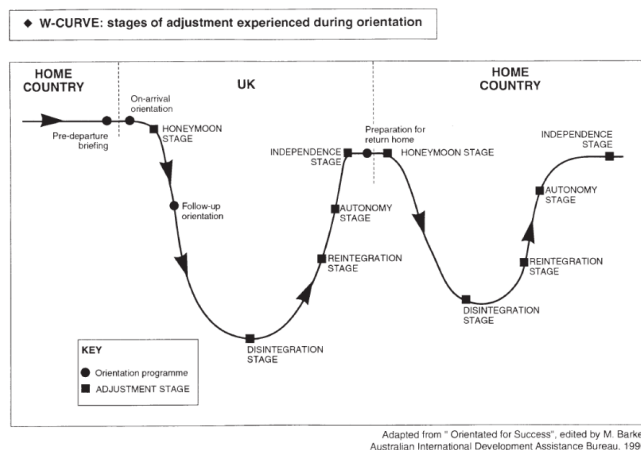


Figure 15: The Model of Cultural Shock (ukcisa.org.uk)

I have observed this “W” curve at the beginning of my return to Greece and, as a result, I have recently taken the decision that this aspect of my clients’ educational experience must be catered for in my services. In real terms, this means that my consultancy services end at the end of my clients’ first semester, when I meet them in my office during their Christmas break. I usually try to meet them in their new environment between October and November, as I have identified that this is the period when they start feeling homesick. My approach is based on the UKCISA approach illustrated below:

### CULTURE SHOCK

Definition: the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone when they are suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.

**5**

TOP TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- FAMILIAR THINGS**  
Keep familiar things around you like photographs or ornaments.
- FOOD**  
Find a supplier of familiar food if possible, your student adviser or a student society should be able to help.
- EXERCISE**  
Not only a way to keep fit but a great way to meet people. Why not join a local running club?
- MAKE FRIENDS**  
With international students, whether from your own culture or another. They'll understand how you're feeling. But also look to chat to home students so you can learn about each other's cultures.
- TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HELP OFFERED**  
Your college or university will have a range of support on offer, including orientation programmes. Attend these if you can, not only will you meet people in the same situation as you, but you'll get to learn about your new home town.

Remember, culture shock is entirely normal. It can also be a positive learning experience, making you more aware of aspects of your own culture as well as the new culture you have entered.

**UKCISA** UK Council for International Student Affairs  
For further help and advice please visit [UKCISA.ORG.UK](http://UKCISA.ORG.UK)

Figure 16: Culture Shock, Infographic (ukcisa.org.uk)

During my recorded discussions with other Education Consultants in Greece, I have noticed, to my great surprise, that they do not provide similar support to their clients. They all admit that people who want to study abroad need extra consultation on the multinational environment, but that is not a service that they provide.

*“They pay us in order to explain the differences between the two systems. We are there for the clients (to help them get into the new system) and for the Universities, to prepare the student for the degree they have been accepted.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1B)

*“It is easy to make an application and get an offer letter. The difficulty is to get an invitation for the graduation!”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1I)

The Education Consultants who do not provide services focused on explaining the UK education system base their argument on language competence: they maintain that language entry requirements are not too high for the standard of English achieved by Greek learners.

*“They [Greek learners] have a level of English which is above the entry requirements. They know well academic English, which is passive use of the language. So they do not find difficulties in terms of adopting the different learning style. It is a matter of practicing and not of multinational environment.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1G)

I strongly disagree with the attitude of leaving clients in their cultural shock. I worked in various colleges and I was involved in English teaching as a foreign language in the UK. All my involvement was with people from different national and cultural backgrounds who came to the UK either to study or to work. Working in such an international environment in the UK, I have come to the conclusion that students need the knowledge, attitudes and skills to function within diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, language and religious groups. As I know the norms of these groups, I can help my clients see the similarities

and accept the differences in order to maximise the experience of living in a multiethnic environment.

Using a practice that others do not agree with reminds me of Odysseus, when he was alone at the straits between Scylla and Charybdis:

*“The lifeless bodies of his dead companions, along with debris from the sunken ship were floating on the surface. Odysseus, after his great adventures in the Trojan War and on the journey home, was now alone, without a fleet or army. His crucible of adversity was endless and the grief for his lost men, unbearable. When he had lost all hope, the westerly winds subsided and were now blowing from the south, its force leading him to the straits of Scylla and Charybdis, once more. He had a horrific night and at dawn, he found himself under the rock of Charybdis, at that minute she was sucking in the sea. The whirl swallowed the keel and the mast. Odysseus managed to grab hold of the branch of a wild fig tree, before ending up in the monster’s mouth. He just hung there for quite some time, with his feet in air, before Charybdis spat his salvation plank out, from her stomach. As the plank landed in the water, Odysseus let go of the branch and swam to sit on it. He started paddling frantically, with his hands and feet, so as to escape, before Scylla sprang out, to snatch him. He was struggling with the waves for nine days, before he reached Ogygia, the island of Calypso.” (Deligiannis, 2014:p.53)*

During my teaching years, there is evidence that people who were aiming to meet only Greek people while abroad were disappointed and frustrated, as they had not met people with whom they might have more in common. These students eventually went back to Greece as soon as they finished their studies. I can name many friends that I made during my studies who were only socialising with Greeks and left immediately after completing their studies. I met most of them when I came back to Greece. Their years in the UK had not played an important role in their way of thinking and this has not changed even today. They teach in a very teacher-oriented mode. On the

other hand, people who mixed with other cultures, myself included, and stayed for a long time in the UK, gained new experiences and never felt homesick.

As health is a very important aspect of life abroad, throughout my teaching years I helped many students register with their local GP. I also helped them see a doctor in case of an emergency. International students do not have confidence in the British healthcare system. This is not necessarily because of bad or unpleasant experiences. It is more a case of students fearing that language problems will interfere with communication when faced with the doctor. There is also a sense that international students feel vulnerable being away from the support networks of friends and family.

Nevertheless, apart from the language difficulties that may or may not exist, it is apparent that there is a lack of faith in the health system at a number of levels. Firstly, there exists a cultural difference concerning medications in Greece and England. Secondly, there is lack of confidence in the general UK approach to medicine: Greeks, take antibiotics easily; English GPs are very strict on what antibiotics they prescribe. As this is a very well-known situation, most Greek students who come to the UK bring with them their own antibiotics from Greece. When they feel they need to use their antibiotics, they do so, without going to the GP. This predicament they find themselves in is compounded by the lack of understanding of (i) the role of the GP and (ii) how to access GP services. This whole situation becomes even worse by several rumors that circulate and which relate to the difficulties Greek students face when they need to access healthcare services in the UK. Most of these rumors are spread by people who come to the UK for studies or who already work here.

From my teaching experience, when I was teaching in a summer school in Greece, I have learnt that a teacher should also be a counselor. This is my first consideration when it comes to defining Education Consultancy. In my teaching logbook (which I keep for every year I work in education), I detail an event that, I think, shows my first steps in the consultancy:



*“I had a student with whom there was lack of co-operation. This student refused to follow the class, did not do any homework and also bluntly refused to do certain activities. I did not mention anything in the class but, at the end of the second day, I spoke to her in private. In our conversation, I tried to be friendly and I asked what she felt about the class, why she was here, how she wanted to change the class. Her real problem was with her mother. She behaved in that manner in order to show her mother that she did not enjoy English lessons during the summer holiday.”*

In that case, my role was that of a counselor. I learnt that it is not enough to share one's knowledge with learners, but that one also has to share one's experience of life and help them to not only learn, but also improve their personality. This was an opportunity no-one had offered me. This also establishes a more personal approach on my behalf. From that experience, I have realised that the role of an educator is to transfer not only knowledge, but also experiences. In this way, the educator can help people achieve their maximum potential with minimum obstacles.

My background and professional experience have placed me in a position where I can act as a liaison-person between the two worlds. The one world is that where my clients come from and the other one is the one they are going to. I have gained experience and knowledge that I could share. In the discussion with other consultants of how they view their role as an Education Consultant, the answers varied according to their background. People who had an educational background or were working in an education environment, see themselves as 'mentors, teachers and coaches'. People who work in a corporate environment mention that they see themselves as 'managers, mediators and experts'. In both situations, we have the tools we must use with 'professional competence and due care' (the London Statement, 2012).

### 3.5.3 The Story of Calypso



Figure 17: Detail from Calypso receiving Telemachus and Mentor in the Grotto by William Hamilton (Wikipedia)

This brings me to the story of Calypso from *The Odyssey*. Calypso, daughter of Atlas and Pleionis, lived on an island with rich vegetation, tall trees and running waters. She welcomed Odysseus and kept him there. She surrounded him with love for 7 years. But the Gods, motivated by Athena, decided that Odysseus should go back to Ithaca. *"O Majesty, O Father of us all, if it now please the blissful gods that wise Odysseus reach his home again..."* (9:106-112). Zeus sent Hermes to Calypso, ordering her to release Odysseus. She helped him load his boat with supplies and she gave him valuable advice for his journey to Ithaca. My advice and the support I give to my clients on their journey to their own Ithaca is similar to Calypso's. I try to give them all the goods and advice they might need in order to start their journey to their own Ithaca.

Reflecting more on my role in the story of Calypso, I am inclined to think that Calypso might be an analogy to Greece. Greek lifestyle is magnificent. The sun, the sea, the strong family relations, the attitude of 'working in order to live' rather than 'live in order to work' might be a reason why some people remain in the Greek 'comfort zone'. However, Greek parents very often play the role of the Gods, just like in the story of Calypso: the Gods encouraged Calypso to let Odysseus leave. This is what the Greek parents do, they ask for me to help their children leave the country and they provide all the support possible so that their children have a better education and better life experiences abroad.

### 3.6 Second Obstacle – Passing the Sirens – a First Component of the Challenge They Represent



Figure 18: Sirens (greekmythology.com)

*“In the morning of the next day, the ship set sail and after a safe trip, arrived at the island of the Sirens. The Sirens were demonic figures, with the head of a woman and a mermaid’s body. They posed a great threat to sailors because their melodic singing posed magical qualities. Whoever happened to hear their song was bewitched and never left the island. In order to protect his men, Odysseus gave them wax to plug their ears with, so that they couldn’t hear the singing. Odysseus though, was curious and wanted to hear what their song sounded like, without putting his life at risk, so he ordered his men to tie him to the mast of the ship. The Sirens started singing and calling his name. As the ship passed before them, Odysseus forgot everything and his only desire was to stay with them. He desperately tried to untie himself, pleading his companions, but they just tightened the bonds of his salvation. Finally, after they had left the dangerous island behind, the men removed the wax and released their captain.” (Deligiannis 2014:p.45)*

In this story, there is an element that links to me in my role as an Education Consultant. Specifically, Odysseus is tied to the mast. He uses his intelligence to both hear the singing of the Sirens and protect himself from staying in their island forever. In a similar way, I used my understanding of the role of the

consultancy to maintain my values and working ethos and, at the same time, build my practice.

I remember the first time I engaged in providing educational consultancy, without even knowing that this was what I was doing: my phone rang and it was a friend of a friend. He was seeking advice, as he wanted to apply for a postgraduate degree in the UK. Up to that time, I was only providing consultancy to school students relating to time-management skills. For the purpose of the story, I will call the person that rung Telemachus, just like the son of Odysseus is called in the Odyssey.

Following Athena's instructions, Homer's Telemachus, tried to find out what happened to his father, Odysseus, when the latter left for Troy. During Odysseus' absence, Telemachus' house, i.e. Odysseus palace, was occupied by hordes of suitors seeking the hand of his mother, Penelope, in marriage. Telemachus set out to find out what had happened to his father, first visiting Nestor, an old friend of Odysseus. Telemachus was well received by the old man who regaled him with stories of his father's glory. Telemachus then departed with Nestor's son, Peisistratus, who accompanied him to the palace of Menelaus and his wife Helen. Whilst there, Telemachus was treated as an honoured guest, while Menelaus and Helen recounted complementary, yet contradictory, stories of his father's exploits at Troy.

The story of my client, Telemachus, has been very similar.

He was studying in Greece and contacted me a few months before his graduation expressing an interest in going abroad to continue his studies. He had searched on the Internet to find useful information about universities abroad. He came across some rather unclear information about how this could be done. Some of his friends informed him that, for financial reasons, it would be better for him to not go abroad but, rather, stay in the country and do a postgraduate degree in Greece. As a result, he, like Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, became confused and felt that his dream was collapsing because of the suitors in his life (i.e. the different opinions and/or cross-information). He started asking for help from the Graduate Office at his University (this role

was analogous to Nestor's). They gave him a ranking list of Universities and provided some advice on the application process (just like Peisistratus). My client, Telemachus, became more confused and so tried to find people who had studied abroad themselves in order to get some help to reach his goal (a role played by Menelaus and Helen in the *Odyssey*). He contacted a common friend who introduced him to me. Telemachus was eventually helped by Athena (a role played in real life by my practice, *AEC*), who managed to make his dream come true. My client, Telemachus, eventually studied in the UK and was awarded a postgraduate degree in Business and Finance.

At the time that Telemachus, my first client, contacted me, I did not have a practice. As a consequence, I could not provide the necessary services that could bring about the outcome that Telemachus needed. My only guide in this process was my personal experience of applying for a place at a UK University. Limited though this experience might have been, it still was greater than his. I was, therefore, able to support his academic aims and vision. As a matter of fact, we built a relationship whereby I, being experienced in the process for applying for a place at a UK University, was sharing my knowledge with him, helping him achieve his goal. Kram (1985) calls this process 'mentoring'. Kram is the first mentoring theorist in the scientific literature and considers mentoring as a relationship between two people, where the more experienced one of the two is committed to providing developmental support to the less experienced one.

My experience of (i) being a student in the UK, (ii) going through the processes of applying to a University and (iii) completing degrees in an international environment provided me with valuable insights in the field. I knew the obstacles, the difficulties and advantages of being an international student coming from a different educational background and having significant national heritage as 'baggage'. I knew, from my own personal experience, that this heritage could not enhance intercultural competence, as defined by Jackson (2015). Furthermore, I knew that when I would return to Greece I would be more ethnocentric (Lou & Bosley, 2012; Sutton & Rubin, 2010; Berg, 2009; Vande Berg & Paige, 2009), just like some of my classmates were: the

ethnocentricity of these friends surfaced when, upon finishing their studies, they returned back to Greece. This 'call' of the homeland, egging on the Greeks who live abroad to return to Greece for good, is beautifully represented by the song of the Sirens in the *Odyssey*.

Going back to the discussion about my client, Telemachus, it is important to draw attention to the fact that I became a mentor for him in order to enable him to interact with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. I helped him survive and even enjoy the multinational environment he would encounter in the UK, where he was going to study. I tried to prepare him to be able to find benefits in this experience and I used my personal and professional experience in order to achieve this.

The modern word 'mentor' is encountered in *The adventures of Telemachus, the son of Ulysses* (Fenelon et al., 2017), where the character 'Mentor' is based on the original character of Μέντωρ ('mentor', in Ancient Greek), appearing in Homer's *Odyssey*. In the *Odyssey*, Mentor seems to possess divine knowledge and superior wisdom (Pennanen et al., 2016) and was Odysseus' mentor. He stayed behind in Ithaca. For myself, I had the knowledge of intercultural competence, which came from a long time ago. Current socio-constructivist and sociocultural views of learning have emphasised the importance of social interaction, social learning environments and participation in communities of practice (Tynjälä & Gijbels, 2012). New technologies and the access to the Internet have brought access to knowledge in an easier and faster way than in previous years (including mine). Telemachus, my client, was already accessing new knowledge through alumni students of UK Universities, forums, University websites and other similar means. My role as a mentor was not to just 'transmit the knowledge' of the new environment (Richter et al. 2013), but to also 'provide opportunities for growth and development' (Pennanen et al., 2016) so that Telemachus would be able to achieve his professional goals and visions.

Telemachus, the client, had a background in Finance. I could, clearly, not mentor him in his field of expertise. I did not have the knowledge to help him decide what course he should apply for and which University was suitable for him. This reminds me of my experience when, during my DProf studies, I was a Work-Based Student. During my studies, I had two forms of supervision: (i) academic (the person delivering this supervision was an academic, i.e. a University lecturer working within academia) and (ii) professional (the person delivering this supervision was an expert in my field of research). Working in an IT Company, I had the opportunity to be the expert in the field and provide professional supervision to University students on their research project which they undertook in relation to the needs of the company I was working for.

However, as an Education Consultant, my role is closer to facilitated understanding between differences of academic and professional cultures and ethnic culture. I have to ensure that the processes of applying to a University are performed according to the appropriate procedures. I also identify my role as that of a person who ensures that the student has made the right university choice(s), even though I am not an expert in their particular field of study. With respect to my first client, I came to the conclusion that my role as an Education Consultant was to coach Telemachus so that he might discover his learning aims which would lead him to achieving his professional goals.

At that time, in 2011, I accidentally read an article about the difference between coaching and mentoring by Chakravarthy (2011), an executive coach of the Infosys Leadership Institute. He explained that both coaching and mentoring aim to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of clients in order to increase their performance on the task they struggle with. The difference between mentoring and coaching is on the importance of the task. The coach has to help the client learn the way in which a task is performed successfully. This accomplishes the purpose of consultancy. In other words, a coach works with a clear focus on what needs to be accomplished within specific timelines. On the other hand, the mentor focuses more on attitudes and behaviors than on specific skills. This means that, in my role as a consultant, I had to help Telemachus reach his fullest potential.

Within academia, coaches work with learners on several levels, foremost amongst which are (i) evaluating performance through reviews of objective assessments, (ii) assisting the learner to identify needs and create a plan to achieve these and (iii) helping the learner to be accountable (Deiorio et al., 2016). The purpose of this work is to assist their clients in improving their own self-monitoring, thus making them better in their career or life. To my understanding, this is a case of developing learning skills in a student-centered approach. All my clients are adults, so adult learning theories and lifelong-learning theory are applicable. As a student of education myself, I had gained experience in adult education and was, thus, very familiar with the terms and practices of the learning process.

Reflecting on my performance as a consultant in my first case, I stop and take a long and penetrating look at another aspect of my interviews with the stakeholders of the International Centers of Middlesex University (phase 1 research): the role of the person who is called to liaise between the client (i.e. the potential student) and the programme they are going to follow. The need (or not!) to localise the curriculum puzzled me in those set of interviews, especially when I realised that Telemachus was not familiar with the procedure of applying and studying abroad. In interpreting the data again, I realise that the role of the international stakeholders was similar to my role as an Education Consultant: a liaison person as the following interview indicates:

*"It was very difficult to tell people, to explain to people what it is. What? You are doing a programme and there is no content? What is the content of your programme? What do you want your students to learn? What would they do? And you say, "Well, it depends on what they want, where they are at, what they want to achieve" and "we will facilitate, but it depends on the student." (Interviewee, phase 1, AC)*

My additional role as an Education Consultant was to be an interpreter of the course content that my clients were going to apply for. For International Centers, it was important to have the physical presence of a representative of



the Head Office, a “link person” via whom the potential students could access the International Centers.

*"This is really important and very useful for candidates because they are writing their reports, and doing the research, and analyzing, and synthesizing and etc., etc. They must know whether they are going or not, and no matter what they are doing [they must know if] it's acceptable or not."* (Interviewee, phase 1, AD)

Telemachus, my client, felt the need to come to my office very often and discuss the progress of his application process. He brought his friends with him and I was getting busier. I observed that spending so much time with my clients on mentoring them, as well as coaching them in order to help them find their learning aims was important. At the same time, I realised that this practice was not making my business profitable. The time I was spending guiding my clients through their application process was not equivalent to the income that I was getting. I engaged in some market research in order to find out how other Greek Education Consultants priced the same services. I realised that the amounts I was charging were above average. So, the option of raising my fees was actually not feasible. I had to review the way I run my practice in order to see what was going wrong. I understood that consultancy services are a Business-to-Client service (B2C) and not an academic research process whereby the Education Consultant gives data to clients and analyses situations. In other words, the business has a product that the client needs and, as a result, the client pays the business in order to acquire this product. When I processing this issue, I made a trip to London for an event that ex-colleagues had arranged in order for us to meet. At that event, I expressed my concerns about this issue and the outcome of a long discussion that ensued was beneficial for me. I realised that I was actually not giving the product to clients directly. I was achieving this in the end, but my role was not to mentor them on UK education but to help them get a place in their chosen university. In other words, my mistake was that I was focusing on the process and the learning outcome rather than the actual product. As a result, that process could be endless. That was already happening: some sessions were

very long and were taking place very frequently, while others were more structured and shorter.

Furthermore, I had some clients who were coming to the consultancy meetings with a very informal, friendly attitude. This was contrary to the professional image of my consultancy. I wanted to build a relationship with my clients, but certainly not a friendship. When I was with them, I would go through my experiences in detail in order to explain to them the skills they needed to develop. They misinterpreted the spirit with which I shared this information. They interpreted the informal conversation we had as an opportunity to escape from their stress and not actually develop the skills with which they could become reflective of their experiences. As a result of this experience, I decided to build my practice on a certain degree of formality. I researched the current scholarly coaching theories, learning theories, lifelong learning theories and set, accordingly, several stages of specific aims and objectives. I was clear as to which tasks I had to follow in order to achieve my aims and objectives and I started introducing contracts in my dealings with my clients. They, in turn, had to sign these contracts which detailed my responsibilities as a provider of services and the expectations of what they could get at the end of this process. This form of activity may remind other professionals of strict and formal business contracts but, for me, these were clearly learning contracts.

Learning contracts are signed between universities and the student. However, Anderson et al., (2006) do not allocate a leading role to the individual but to the relationship of the parties. The parties in my practice are the client (individual), the liaison person who acts as coach and mentor (*AEC*) and the potential University (the organization). Each party brings its culture into the bargain and the relationship that ensues is in the shape of a linking ring. The clients bring their own background and their aims and objectives. In the concept of WBL, the agreement is about a real-world problem that the clients need to solve. I, as *AEC*, bring my expertise in the field. This expertise comes from my personal and professional experiences (University Advisor). I clarify

the requirements of the University (organization) and see the value into the industry as in WBL research project.

For the University, the learning contract is “a research and development proposal, often based around the learner’s professional activity” (Costley and Stephenson, 2008). It allows the consultant “a deep understanding of the context in which the organisation operates in order to be able to resolve problems identified by the organisation” (Ellwood 2014 p.139). These issues became part of my everyday working routine. I had to find connections between the clients and the particular University that would represent for them the best choice, given their requirements. I also had to ensure that they met the requirements set by their chosen University, so that the clients could fulfill their learning and career development needs.

However, the liaising role was not enough for me, as a person. Being a liaison officer did not make me feel I was a good Education Consultant. My view of life is that, in order to achieve something, one needs to follow the steps that will lead one to achievement. Fig. 17 below illustrates my philosophy of life more than anything else. In a more poetic way, it is the journey to Ithaka that gives a person valuable skills so that they may achieve their personal goal.



Figure 19: Classroom images (pinterest)

Since that first appointment, with my first client, I have kept a professional diary. This is something that I did in all my teaching posts in the past. The picture below illustrates the diaries that I have been collecting since 2010.



Figure 20: *Professional diaries (personal archive)*

It was only when exploring autoethnography that I found another name for them: 'fieldnotes'. I realized that if anthropology was an attitude to the world, full of curiosity, reflection, note-taking, learning, enjoying and participating in difference and focusing on how many of us understand the practices and artefacts of our little cultures, then, I had always been, in a sense, an anthropologist. This is why it seemed so natural to me as an approach to explore my practice (my ethno) that is situated in a huge neighbourhood of other ethnos all influencing each other.

These professional diaries do not only include my reflections, but also encompass all data relating to professional conversations with my clients. The purpose of these diaries is to keep a record of the conversations held with each individual. Conversation Analysis (CA) is one of the main research approaches in the social sciences over the past three decades (Drew & Heritage, 2006) and an important one in linguistics. The strengths of CA lie in the analysis of interaction at the micro-level of detail. Such analysis has brought about fruitful research outcomes, enhancing our understanding of various types of workplace practice, such as medical communication

(Fairclough, 2013), business communication (Asmuß, 2008), news interviews (Clayman & Heritage, 2002), job interviews (Button, 1992), psychiatry sessions (Peräkylä et al., 2011) and classroom discourse (Markee, 2015; Seedhouse, 2004).

### *3.6.1 My Practice – First Phase*

At the beginning of each consultancy session, I provide the clients with a consent form (GDPR agreement, after 25/05/2018) in order to be able to use the conversations I have with them for research purposes. I found that this method best allows me to achieve the optimal results for my consultancy. My consultancy with each individual usually stretches over 1-12 months. It would be impossible for me to remember what we discussed in each session. I normally prepare for each session some days prior to our session, so it is impossible to keep everything in my head. I, therefore, keep a record of useful materials that I provide to clients, their reaction to the task they complete, their thoughts and needs. In addition, by analysing each consultancy session, I can monitor their progress. Most of the time, I make predictions which are recorded so that, going back, I can evaluate the level of my understanding of particular cases. Overall, I have found that this method of working is very beneficial to me and to my clients, as I often reflect on their thinking when they have “blue days” and are concerned about their professional development. My dream is to write a book with all these experiences prior to my retirement!

As I needed to make my practice more formal in terms of structure, I have used my professional diary for reflection purposes. I try to identify the specific needs that my clients have and for which they contacted me, the number of sessions that we had, their concerns and the services I provided in order to fulfill their requirements. I sometimes contact the Universities directly (and during their sessions with me), in order to identify if the guidance I provide is in the right direction or not.

Going through my professional diary as a piece of data, I formed my learning or business contract with my clients as shown:

## **Aims**

- Decision on what and where to study
- Successful acceptance to undergraduate or postgraduate studies

Those aims are divided into specific objectives and tasks.

## **Objectives**

- Phase 1
  - Identify the learning needs
  - Identify the right course for the individual in question
  - Identify the right University
- Phase 2:
  - Application to Universities
  - Application for accommodation
  - Application for student loan (if applicable)
- Phase 3:
  - Preparation for the trip (session with the parents, either on their own or with the prospective student)
  - Guidance during the first 3 months of studies (visit at the University or meeting during the Christmas break in Greece)

## Tasks

Objectives	Tasks
<b>Phase 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion on future goals and preferences</li> <li>- Search for appropriate Universities</li> <li>- Analysis of the options available to the individual, according to their specific and personal criteria</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of CV</li> <li>- Discussion of the information included in the personal statement</li> <li>- Correction of personal statement and CV</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collection of necessary supporting documents</li> <li>- Completion and submission of applications to UCAS; completion and submission of individual applications to Universities (not via UCAS)</li> <li>- - Communication with Universities</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Application to Accommodation Services</li> <li>- Loan application (if applicable)</li> <li>- Preparation of all necessary documentation</li> <li>- 3-hour seminar concerning life in the host country</li> <li>- Tips for the first few days</li> <li>- Preparing for the trip (session with parents)</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Telephone communication relating to the progress of studies</li> <li>- Probability of meeting at the chosen University during the first month abroad or during the year</li> </ul>

*Table 3: Learning Contract*

The first stage of the first phase is to (i) identify specific student needs and build a profile according to the University entry requirements and (ii) make a choice of the Universities that the student will apply to. During this phase, I have up to five sessions with the student, depending on the relationship of trust that we develop. There are people who are ready to talk and others who come just to listen to my views, expecting my recommendations as an expert.

I am not sure if this has to do either with the Greek background or with how the students have been educated. This is very clear, as they do not use my name to call me, but they call me “Teacher”, just like they would do if they were in school. I always need to explain that my role is to coach them and not to teach or tell them what to do. My role is to help them learn and reflect on their background in order to plan their future. I keep notes of these sessions in order to create a profile for them and I also help them project this profile accurately in their application process (at a later stage).

*“Coaching has been described as a ‘forum for learning’ (Creane, 2002, p. iv), a ‘personal education pathway’ (Duff, 2002, p. 7), ‘a vehicle and a platform for learning’ (Zeus & Skiffington, 2002, p. 20) and ‘a model for effective learning’ (Griffiths, 2005, p. 55). Thus, as Skiffington and Zeus (2003) suggested, it appears that ‘learning is at the heart of coaching’ (p. 30), and it seems to be implicitly understood that in order to achieve coaching outcomes, learning must occur.” (Griffiths & Campbell, 2009:p.21)*

In my sessions, I implement the principles of adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 1998; Rogers, 1986) by operating a goal-centered framework (Lewin 1951; Kolb, 1984). Students need to identify what is important for them in order to achieve their professional goals (Hurd, 2002; Skiffington & Zeus, 2003). At this stage, I aim to achieve an understanding of the value of prior experiences and what they have learnt thanks to these experiences. I focus on the “domains of learning” (Habermas, 1978) and self-directed learning (Skiffington & Zeus, 2003). The aim of this process is to develop self-awareness, self-understanding and transformation in terms of shifts in perspective (Habermas, 1978; Rogers, 1986; International Coach Federation, 2016). To achieve those aims, I use ‘a model for effective learning’ introduced and developed by Griffiths (2006) and Griffiths & Campbell (2009, 2016).



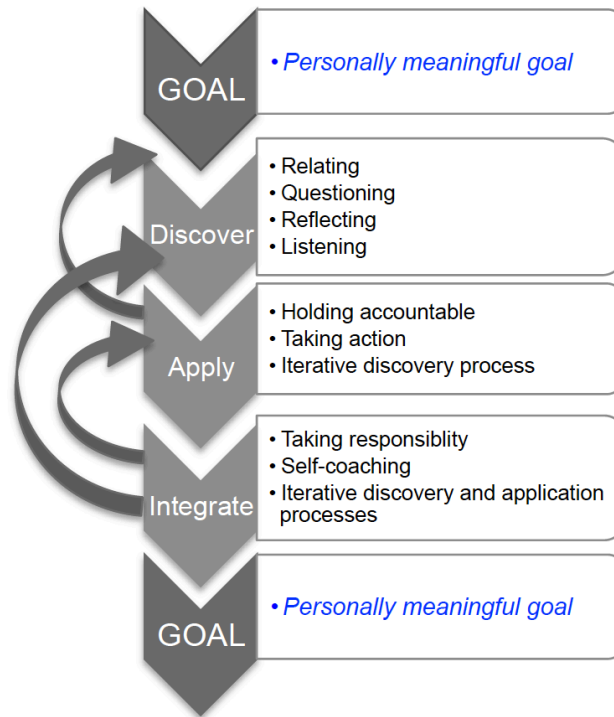


Figure 21: A model for effective Learning (Griffiths, 2006)

My clients come to AEC with a goal: a place in a UK University. However, this goal cannot be achieved if the three major stages of learning involved in coaching are not present. These three are discovery, application and integration. Students need to discover what they actually want, why they want it, reflect on the effect that this goal might have, and listen to themselves in order to confirm that this is what they want. This process of discovery leads to further discoveries, while the processes of accountability and action leads to the application of the discoveries. Those discoveries highlight the relevance with adult learning (Cox, 2015; Merriam, 2018), experiential learning (Smith, 2016) transformative learning (Clifford-Rapp, 2005; Taylor, 2017) lifelong learning (Guest, 2006; Horrigan, 2016), as well as mentoring theory (Brockbank & McGill, 2006; Garvey et al., 2017) and self-directed learning (Wilkins, 2004; Brockett & Hiemstra, 2018).

This process is not an easy one to follow and experiential learning needs time. The process of discovering new knowledge in coaching is like an iterative cycle, which combined various processes. First of all, coaching

requires my clients to trust me so that we can build an honest relationship. Secondly, as a consultant, I have to guide the clients through questions so as to discover new knowledge and trigger the process of reflection on their part. This is important as, at the same time, they may discover new knowledge about themselves and start reflecting. I need to listen to clients' reflections and guide them again so that they discover the maximum of their abilities. This iterative cycle of discovering new knowledge is illustrated in Figure 20 below:

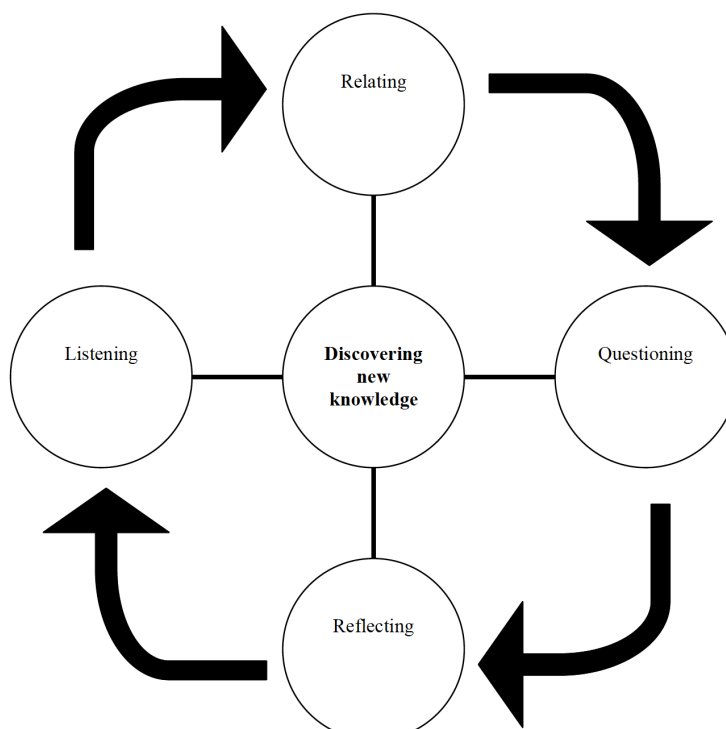
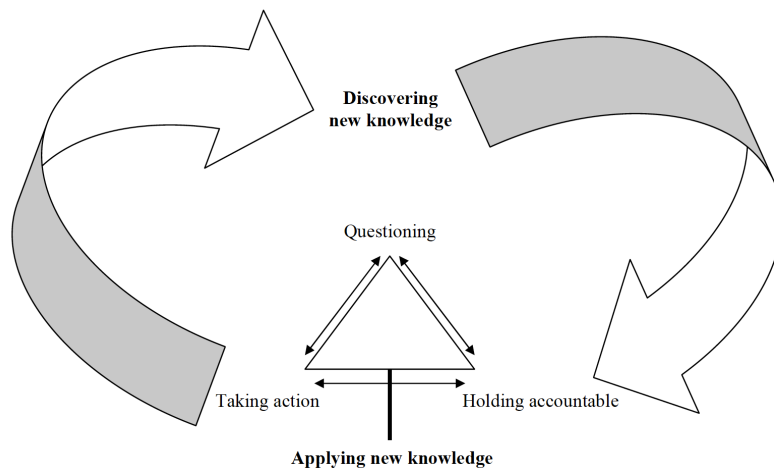


Figure 22: A model for effective learning (Griffiths, 2006)

Clients need to take action after they understand what they have learnt in order to make progress towards their desires. They need to question if what they consider to be their desire is what they really want and, (i) if yes, move forward to accomplish it, (ii) if no, go again through the process of discovering new knowledge. Identifying what someone wants or does not want in life is part of the learning process. I found this technique very beneficial for the development of my students' personalities and, in the process, I came to appreciate how some students find it easier to identify the unwanted rather

than the wanted goal.



*The process of applying new knowledge  
and its relationship to discovering new knowledge in coaching*

Figure 23: A model for effective learning (Griffiths, 2006)

Kolb's (1984) work in experiential learning clearly depicts the personal development that comes with experiential learning. In both experiential learning and coaching, personal development is important. Comparing the coaching framework (Griffiths, 2005; Griffiths & Campbell, 2009) to Kolb's basic adaptive processes, it seems that coaching provides integration (Griffiths, 2015). Clients move from current reality to the chance to see their future in a tangible way. They can, then, decide what is beneficial for them to do in the future and they know what they have already achieved. These realisations are the ground on which new experiences can be founded. I usually use the metaphor of them having chosen their way. They set their own Ithaca as their target and they follow a path that will lead them there.

As recorded in my professional diary, my observations are a different form of motivation that clients have when setting their goals. Biggs (1987) reports that intrinsic motivation (motivation to learn academic content through interest in the content itself and a desire to gain academic benefit from study) is very important if one is to achieve 'deep' learning. Extrinsic motivation however, (being motivated by external factors, such as economic advancement) is

considered to lead to more superficial learning. Biggs and Watkins (1996) consider that Greek students may well activate 'deep' learning strategies via a variety of external motivations, such as ambition, family face, peer support and material reward. My reflections on my professional diaries have shown that approximately 60% of my clients were motivated by external factors, while roughly 40 % are interested in the academic content itself.

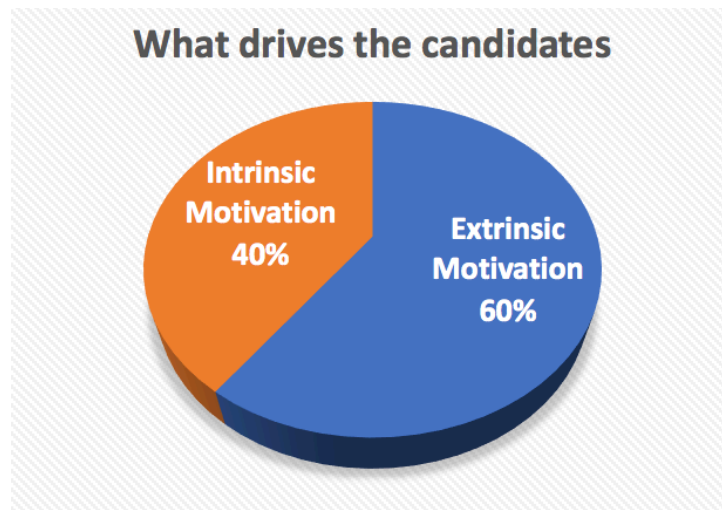


Figure 24: What drives the candidates

My clients so far have chosen the UK as the next step of their studies because of the:

- ▣ International aspect that UK universities provide through their curriculum and through their multinational environment
- ▣ Specialisation expertise in a particular field – teaching excellence is important
- ▣ Prospects of Employability – some of my clients are aiming to build a professional career in the UK
- ▣ Other people do it – this is a Greek cultural issue and is the equivalent of 'keeping up with the Joneses' Language, as they already know English well

Employability is a very important factor when choosing Universities.

International students want to find a University that has good connections with the industry. Universities dedicate entire webpages to giving numbers of

employability after their students have completed studies in their Departments. Even though Greek people do not want to work while studying, most of them want to stay in the UK for work experience in their chosen field of studies. I have noticed that all of them (i) take the opportunity to go to career fairs in the UK and (ii) apply for jobs as soon as they finish their studies. Greek parents usually give their children financial support for 6 months to 1 year after completion of studies, so that they may find a job in the UK.

University ranking plays an important role when choosing Universities. The Times Higher Education Supplement publishes the World University Rankings. Since 2015-2016, it examined 1,126 Universities in 88 countries in order to have a ranking for 800 Universities (Lim, 2018). It has never before included core institutional and reputational information for such an extended list from all over the world. This report mentions that the top 200 Universities can be considered as 'average'.

All my clients come to the first session of the first phase, ranking list in hand. They never look at what the course is offering. They come with the latest ranking list and they all want to go to the top 15 Universities. For them, a 'good' University is one placed at the top of the ranking list. There is no reference to the learning style, or preferences, of prospective students. However, ranking is not always relevant to a student's particular need. For example, a key aspect in rankings is the research engagement of the University. This aspect is important for a postgraduate degree but makes little difference at an undergraduate level. In my sessions, I insist on the importance of choosing a University that meets the client's learning objectives, irrespective of whether it appears in the Top 15 Ranking List. When I ask my clients to bring a list of 15 postgraduate degrees from Universities whose modules and websites they like, they mostly come with a list that is significantly different to the ranking list. I strongly advise them to call the universities and have a conversation with Head of Departments and Admissions Officers in order to have a first-hand experience of each University. After this task, they admit that ranking lists do not always meet

their needs and preferences. When I meet them during their first semester, they all feel very happy about their choices. As they have been familiar with their chosen university prior to their course, they may already have a 'link person' who is always there to help them. However, as an Education Consultant, I keep a record of the University rankings. When clients make final decisions, they need to know the reputation of the University.

Based on my experience, alumni communities are strong and, usually, play an important role when my clients decide which university to apply to. I encourage clients to find people they know that have studied at the university they are thinking of going to. They can give them reliable feedback of their learning experience. Alumni communities work as a 'marketer' for a University, as they promote it by 'word of mouth'. This is a marketing tool that has worked equally well and in favour of the reputation of AEC. The interaction with alumni communities has helped me understand some of the University processes with which I was unfamiliar. Collaboration work is always beneficial for all parts involved.

### *3.6.2 Athena's Role in the Odyssey – My Role as a Coach*

My role as a coach reminds me of Athena's role in the Odyssey. She is the daughter of Zeus. She had sprung from his head, fully-grown and in armor. She was Zeus' favourite child and he gave her the aegis, buckle and thunderbolt. Her tree is the olive tree and her bird is the owl. AEC is a combination of Athena, the goddess, and my first name Athina.



Figure 25: Athina, Education Consultants, Logo

Athena (the goddess of wisdom) constantly helps Odysseus, his son Telemachus and his wife Penelope, as I do with my clients. Athena petitions Zeus to allow Odysseus to come home after he has traveled for many years trying to get back to Ithaca after the Trojan War. My role at the first phase of my consultancy practice is that of a coach. I coach my clients so as to enable them to identify their prior knowledge; I question them and help them uncover new knowledge so that they set goals and see their future in a specific University abroad. This process enables them to be critical, to listen to their needs and not feel like 'lions in a cage' or 'fish out of water' (as they usually describe themselves prior to the consultancy sessions). My brief is to help clients reach their full potential. I evaluate their performance when they attempt to (i) identify their needs and (ii) create a plan in order to accomplish their desires. I also help my clients become accountable. I aim to improve their own self-monitoring, as this will benefit them throughout their career. Just like Athena transfers her wisdom to Odysseus so that he may arrive to Ithaca, I transfer my wisdom to my clients, so that they may reach their Ithaca, whatever this might be.

### *3.6.3 My Practice – Second Phase*

The second phase of my practice consists of the application processes. The first stage of this phase is for my clients to create their professional Curriculum Vitae (CV). In other words, the first milestone for them is to write a CV by listing and providing further information about their hard skills. I give them a template to complete (Appendix 9). This has become a great tool, as it helps them identify who they are and what they have already achieved in their academic and professional lives. Moreover, this template allows them to understand the Universities' entry requirements and how they might meet them. This process rests on some reflective principles, which are important for the second phase of the process.

Furthermore, I suggest they do some reading, such as works by Rath (2017), Kleon (2014), a children's book called *The Emotion's Survival Guide* (2015), Stellatos (2014), Winfrey (2015) and Dobson (2016). I found that it is sometimes difficult to express one's self under certain circumstances. So,

even when clients know what they want to write in their CV, they often use wrong wording. This reminds me of interviewees from the International Centers (phase 1) discussed language competence. In some cases, people do not have a good command of the language, not even of their own, native, language. They need to practice the development of a language and they also need to expand their knowledge with respect to context. Another point that I have observed is that my clients have some difficulties talking about themselves in a positive way. I, therefore, give them some reading to do in order to find their writing style. Part of the learning process is to look at the literature and discover what others have done in similar situations. I believe they gain new knowledge that would be beneficial to them in the near future, while they also learn how to search for information in scholarly work. Time and again, clients come up with even further reading suggestions, something that is very beneficial to my practice, as their suggestions continue improving it.

At this stage, the writing of the personal statement is very important (and the most difficult part of the process). I consider this task mandatory, not only for the application procedure, but also for the clients as learners in an international environment. Writing a personal statement is a very difficult task for Greek learners, as they are solely familiar with formal education and have no experience in presenting themselves via a narrative, the way personal statements require them to do. They experience great difficulty when asked to present what they have done outside their formal education. In fact, they find it impossible to link formal, non-formal and informal learning to their future career paths. The first draft of their personal statement is just a summary of their CV.

Reflection and reflective practice is the foundation of work-based learning and research into practice. Theories related to learning through reflection, such as Kolb (1984) and Schon (2014), have been implemented throughout my own doctoral experience. As a Work-Based learner, reflection has made me a 'map maker' rather than a 'map reader' (Lester, 1999). This has added great value to my personality and has saved me from disappointment: I learnt to



recognize and uncover the reasons behind my strategic moves. This is a skill that my clients benefit from while they study in an international environment. It is, in many ways, the value of past learning gained in relation to future goals (Baile & Aaron, 2005).

Based on my reflective observations of my clients and the guidelines provided by universities regarding the personal statements, I ask my clients to write a 500-word essay. I give them key questions which they need to answer by means of examples and justification for their thoughts.

1. What have you done academically that makes you suitable for this course?
2. What have you done outside your school or University that makes you suitable for this course?
3. Why have you chosen this particular course and how will this help your future career goals?

Every so often, my clients achieve the appropriate level. My involvement, then, is to correct the language. I do not interfere with the essay they have produced, unless they do not reach their target. In this case, I give them more detailed guidelines. The final piece of work is totally theirs and reflects their level of understanding.

The final stage of this phase is to complete the University application. This stage integrates all that they have learnt throughout the consultancy process. I hold a session in which I guide them on how to fill in an application form for academic and non-academic purposes. I find that this session is also useful for life, in Greece as in the UK. This session also includes the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) equivalent of their degrees. I base the information I provide on my investigation of UK universities which use (i) three types of online application software and (ii) the standardised UCAS form or UKPASS. At this stage, I avoid having more than an advisory role. Prospective students need to create accounts, fill in the applications and

upload the relevant documents. I run a final session, which is, in reality, a final check that everything is as supposed to be.

At this point, I provide guidelines to my clients relating to their reference letter. I ask them to forward these guidelines to their referee so that the reference letter follows the guidelines published by the University or Universities in question.

At this stage of the consultancy, I am greatly excited to see my clients being full of confidence and proud of their new knowledge. When they first come to me, they have just faced the beast, like Odysseus when he faced the Laestrygonians.

*“After many hardships, they arrived at another strange island, inhabited by the Laestrygonians. The Laestrygonians were giant man-eaters, like Cyclopes and would show no mercy to unfortunate seamen brought to them by fate. Antiphates was the king, known for his brutality and ruthlessness. There, they were to encounter many unpleasant surprises. After such a long time at sea and not suspecting what awaited them, the ships entered the port and moored at the dock. When the giants heard of their arrival, they ran towards the ships, throwing huge rocks at them. What was to follow was indescribable. The rage of the Laestrygonians was so great, that they destroyed and sank all the ships, while the crews were brutally killed. Those who jumped into the sea to save themselves had no better luck, as they were caught and devoured by the giants. Only Odysseys and 45 of his men survived. In all the madness, they had cut the ropes of their ship and sailed away.” (Deligiannis, 2014:p.31)*

The application process represents the king of the beasts, Antiphates. My clients find the applications difficult to be filled, as they seldom are accompanied by clear instructions of what is needed in the various fields. In addition, some information needs to be transposed from a Greek to an international context. Foremost amongst these confusing instances are the

following: (i) grading (e.g. the difference between 2.1 and 2.2) and (ii) the naming of degrees (e.g. 'Ptychion' or Bachelor's Degree). Greece and the UK differ substantially in terms of grading. In Greece, grade '10' is equivalent to UK 'First Class', while Greek grade 5 is 'Third Class' in the UK. The distinction between '2.1' and '2.2' is not clear. So, there are a lot of inquiries regarding degree grading. In addition, some degrees in Greece are from Polytechnic Schools and some from Universities. In Greece, there is a distinction between them (in terms of subjects taught and not in terms of the level of teaching), but in the UK this is not the case. Furthermore, in some universities, a Bachelor's Degree is 5-years long, while in others, it is only 4-years long. This causes some confusion as to whether a candidate should apply for a Master's or a PhD degree. Besides, Greek graduates of Polytechnic Schools have to complete a 6-month work placement before they can graduate. Many students are confused as to whether they should report this as work experience or as part of their degree.

The technology and the online forms also represent the beasts. Technology is one of the great inventions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, it causes fear when someone is not familiar with it. My clients' fear when they realise that they have not saved their application and would need to do it all over again is beyond what words can describe. They, nevertheless, manage to survive this too and, in the process, gain experience that will, most certainly, help them in their future goals.

Personally, I find it useful to make my clients face the beasts. In those instances when there is an enquiry of how to translate something in their form, I ask them to contact the University directly. I have observed that, without a shred of doubt, this their biggest fear. They are not confident enough to express their inquiry. In addition, they need to realise that they cannot assume that the person at the other end knows about Greek Education and is familiar with Greek procedures. For example, a client rings a UK educational institution saying: *"Hi, my name is x and I am Greek. I have finished the [name of the Greek University]."* The person at the other end does not necessarily

know that Greece is in the EU and almost certainly does not know the “Aristotelion Panepistimion of Thessaloniki”.

Moreover, many of my clients use several Greek expressions which, translated into English, do not make sense. I usually arrange for these phone calls to take place from my office so that I can hear the communication between the two parties. I consider this to be a language competence problem and not one related to their level of English language knowledge, as mentioned in the previous section.

#### *3.6.4 The Role of Arete in the Odyssey – My Role as a Liaison*



Figure 26: Arete (shutterstock.com)

My role as a consultant at this stage is to liaise between the Greek and British education systems. I have the knowledge to ‘translate’ what the UK University requires and what the Greek learners have. This reminds me of the role of Arete, Queen of the Phaiakians, wife to Alkinoös and mother to Nausikaa (Figure 24). Arete appears in the *Odyssey* as a noble and active superintendent of the household of her husband (7: 54 – 66).

When Odysseus arrives in the palace of the Phaiakians, he first appeals to Arete, asking her to accept him as a guest and to protect him. She treats him hospitably. Her opinion is, clearly, important to both the king and the kingdom. Her views are taken seriously. In fact, there is a reference in the *Odyssey* that her opinion played a part in determining the King’s decisions and both

Nausikaa and Athena had forewarned Odysseus about it (Book 6). My role as a consultant is to protect my clients from errors that they may make in their application but, at the same time, put them at ease and encourage them to write their applications on their own. My clients need to learn from this experience. Additionally, my suggestions are based on my knowledge of the Universities' requirements. Clients trust me and my suggestions are taken as seriously, as Arete's opinion was taken by Alkinoös in the *Odyssey*.

### 3.6.5 My Practice – Third Phase

The third and last phase of my consultancy process focuses on the preparation of my clients' departure. At this stage, they need to apply for accommodation and, in some cases, a student loan. It gives me great pleasure to see them filling in these applications and taking decisions on their own. I feel that I have achieved my consultancy aim: I have managed to guide them so that they are now able to find new knowledge that they can apply in their life.

At this stage, I give them again some more reading to do. I find it important to familiarise them with the British history and customs. *Passing the life in the UK test* (Gibbins & Taylor, 2009) is a useful book: it is the handbook used for those who wish to apply for British citizenship or settlement in the UK. I also provide them with some *ESOL (2005) Citizenship materials* that I used to draw on when I taught *Citizenship to ESOL learners*. Moreover, the delightful book *How to be British*, written by Ford & Legon (2003, 2009, 2014) takes a humorous approach to the issue of familiarisation of the new-comer to the UK. If any of my clients love literature, I suggest *The days and Nights of London Now* by Craig Taylor (2012) and *Watching the English* by Kate Fox (2014). I strongly recommend they take a tour of the city they are going to live in, as I find it important that they have some basic knowledge of the area in which they are going to live. Over the years, I have created a small library for my clients: they can all borrow books from there on the provision that they return them within 15 days.

My clients are not only the prospective candidates. Their parents are also my clients, though not so much on the first or second phase. However, parents always have a say. I often discuss with them the progress we are making with their children and the decisions we are taking. In some cases, it is the parents who do all the administrative work (ask for references, translate the documentation, etc).

At the third phase of my consultancy, parents have a very active role, so sessions with them are necessary. They are the decision makers when it comes to (i) the preparation of the trip and (ii) the settlement in the new environment. This is something that I fully understand: my parents did the exact same thing when I was preparing to come to the UK to study. However, there is a big difference: I was 17,5 years old and not an adult, as some of my clients are. Even today, when I discuss with my mum some of the more outrageous things that parents ask me, she finds them 'normal'. In fact, she always says that it is difficult for a parent to understand that the 'kids want to fly the nest'. This is in contrast to the viewpoint that is dominant in some European and American family environments, where children are expected to fly the nest as part of their growing up process (and where they have a habit of coming back just when parents thought their duty was over). My Greek mother insists that my role is to help the kids become 'birds flying outside the cage'. At this stage, I often listen to her wise words. Her recommendations make me realise that, when I was myself a prospective student, she played an important role in the competence I showed in living in an international environment.

Parents are keen to see that there exist many 'Greek communities' in the area where their child's chosen university is. I often give parents a list of churches in the area in order to make them feel less concerned that their children might be left without a Greek influence. In addition, it is very common for parents to recommend universities to which friends or classmates of their children are going. Parents expect their kids to stay together, either at the same flat or in student halls. On the other hand, I find that people who are open to new friendships are often able to meet more people and socialise more with

classmates and flatmates during the first semester of their studies. Those students who do not try to meet new people explain that their behavior is due to the language barrier and the cultural differences between the Greeks and the English. However, I think that the most important factor in this behavior is the influence of the parents. My conclusion is that students who interact with others, irrespective of whether 'the others' are British or not, have taken significant steps towards improving their language skills and pronunciation, as well as their cultural awareness. In fact, they become quite proficient in the use of slang and idiomatic expressions such as 'init', or 'Oh! Sweetie', which can, under certain circumstances, be considered to be informal and funny!

Seeing my clients in their new environment is, for me, an important point, signaling the conclusion of my consultation with them. As I travel a lot to the UK for personal reasons, I have decided to provide a service whereby I visit my clients in their environment. In this way, I believe that I am able to support them in (i) achieving cultural competence and (ii) avoiding a big cultural shock. I normally spend half a day with them. I meet them at the University and I ask them to guide me through the building. While we are walking around the University, I monitor how well they know the place. I can identify if someone is not going there very often or if someone feels unprotected and, hence, has avoided the exploration the campus. This 'guided tour' allows me to gauge their satisfaction with (i) their chosen University and (ii) the lifetime experience they are going through.

After the tour of the campus, I ask them to take me round where they live or round the places they visit in their free time. Usually we go for a coffee, lunch (on me, as I am older than them!) or for a drink. During my consultancy in Greece, I never take them out. This is the first time. This is an informal consultation. I guide the conversation towards their daily routine, practicalities and their academic progress, giving them further tips about increasing the effectiveness of their studying. It is at this session that I ask them for feedback on my consultancy.

Feedback is a term that comes from the field of Physics, but is also used in the various learning processes. One of the most valuable contributions

anyone can make to another person's learning is to provide them with constructive comments, well-meant criticism and honest feedback. As students provide their feedback to me, I gather useful information in order to learn from and eventually develop more effectively, both as a person and as a professional. In my profession, I am contracted to impart knowledge of a certain kind and, to meet this requirement, I carry out a series of sessions aiming to provide this knowledge. More often than not, my actions have been fruitful. I, therefore, want to get my client's opinion about the quality of this process, my services and my contribution to the end result. Getting positive or negative feedback for my consultancy is vitally important for me. Every comment I got through the years has helped me improve my performance as an Education Consultant. Learning what I do well increased my confidence. I try harder to improve the areas that need improvement. I realise that getting client feedback makes me learn new ways to perform. As a result, I have, over time, seen an increase in sales, as I am more motivated to gain new knowledge and achieve excellence in my practice. I have also realised that, after asking them to give me feedback, they feel they have achieved closure in our co-operation and all come to see me with a box of tea or chocolates, as a way to thank me during their Christmas break.

#### *3.6.6 Penelope with the Suitors in the Odyssey – My Role as a Mentor*

At this third phase of my consultancy, I see my role as being closer to mentoring than to coaching. As a mentor, I advise my clients with the wisdom derived from my life experience of living in the UK. This role might be considered to be close to that of the goddess Athena in the Odyssey. However, for me, this role is closer to that of Penelope with the suitors.





Modern muse: Penelope and her Suitors (1912) by John William Waterhouse. CREDIT: ABERDEEN ART GALLERY & MUSEUMS COLLECTIONS

Figure 27: John William, Waterhouse, oil paint

With Odysseus gone to Troy, Penelope is left alone with their son, Telemachus. Ten years have passed since the end of the Trojan War and Odysseus remained unaccounted for. Most of his old friends and acquaintances assume he is dead. As a result, suitors started to arrive at Odysseus's palace, hoping to marry Penelope. When she refused to consider their advances, they lay siege, installing themselves in the palace, consuming the family stores, and harassing the household. As a woman alone, Penelope concentrates her efforts to putting off remarriage. As a result, she is often seen as a symbol of connubial fidelity and patience. This attitude is similar to my strong belief that my clients will achieve their goal. I am patient and wait for them to acquire the required knowledge so that they may be successful learners in an international environment. However, the most notable aspect of Penelope's appeal is her intelligence. This intelligence is famously demonstrated by a trick she plays on the badgering suitors.

The suitors represent the obstacles that prospective students face prior to their arrival at the international environment. In the *Odyssey*, there are many suitors, but only four are identified by name. Antinous is the most famous one. The name appears in the *Odyssey* as Antinoos (Αντίνοος, from αντί- *vous* and αντί-*νόηση* 'anti-intellect') and speaks for itself. Antinous is the suitor that distorts reality. When this happens, we do not think clearly and have no control over situations. The second suitor that Odysseus kills is Eurydamachus. He is a man who uses legitimate and unfair means to achieve his ends. He is smooth and deceitful, but also a superhuman and ruthless fighter. The third in line that Odysseus kills is Amphinomus. He is the one who distorts the law,

changing the order in things. The fourth suitor killed, according to Homer, is Agelaus (Agelaos). He is the one who, with his words, can make people follow him like sheep and set them on dangerous paths. With the help of Antinous, Agelaus can turn the people into a directed herd.

Penelope tells them that she will choose a new husband once she finishes weaving a shroud for her father-in-law. Every day she works on it, and every night she secretly unravels what she had done during the day, knowing that the men would have no idea as to how long it takes to weave a shroud, nor would they be able to judge how much progress was being made on a daily basis. The tricks that I use to gain time in order to prepare my clients for their new experiences are very similar to Penelope's.

Penelope's intelligence holds its own when wily Odysseus returns. After he reveals himself to her, she remains cautious, wary she is being deceived and sets him a test that only the true Odysseus could pass. This, for me, is the time when I ask feedback from my clients. It is a fascinating moment: Homer has spent the whole poem honouring his hero's wives, but it is his heroine who plays the final trick, as are my clients who build my reputation in the field.

### 3.7 How do I Avoid Poseidon?

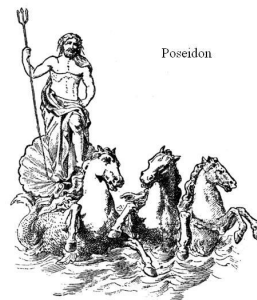


Figure 28: Poseidon has been known as the God of the Sea. (Arte de la Palabra)

Poseidon is the God of the Seas. In the *Odyssey*, he holds a grudge against Odysseus who blinded his son. Poseidon dislikes Odysseus because of the hero's hubris and, more specifically, because Odysseus thought that he did not need help from the Gods in order to succeed. Odysseus had been travelling by sea for years in his effort to find his homeland, Ithaca. He

definitely needed the help of the God of the Seas (Poseidon), if he were to achieve his aim. Sadly, he did not realise this. As Odysseus was in the seas, i.e. Poseidon's territory, he should have comprehended that this God had the power, if he so wished, to test the hero's limits and make him realise that he should have made better and wiser choices that would not have angered this important God. In the end, Odysseus was left on his own. He had to find the way to survive without his companions and this was a lesson that he learnt the hard way. Odysseus made the mistake to base his travels on the 'treasures' that warriors could amass during the War. He did not base them on the collaboration with others, nor did he base them on obtaining the favour of the Gods. These mistakes cost him 10 years of travelling. Poseidon taught him not to be arrogant and to learn from his experiences in a proactive way.

I made the same mistake. In my journey to establish my consultancy, I was focusing on becoming an expert in the field. However, what I did not realise was that being an expert in a field does not make you good in business. I became conscious of the fact that spending a lot of time with my clients (e.g. giving them clarifications about the two educational systems) was important but that did not make my business profitable. The time I was spending guiding my clients through the application process was not compatible with the income that I was getting. As I mentioned earlier, my reflection of Telemachus experience (p.105) allowed me to redesign my practice. I focused more on the products I was providing. Having evaluated my practice at a later stage, I have now established a method which allows me to provide the appropriate knowledge to Greek clients in a way that allows me to call my services 'products'. Specifically, my clients get the following products: a CV, a personal statement and applications to the University of their choice. I have managed to structure the services that I provide and it is no longer time-consuming. I have collected evidence that my clients enter their preferred University and that they are capable of completing their academic experience successfully. This has given me a very good reputation in the Greek market. My revenue has grown, but I felt that I could develop further.

I have been somewhat introverted and this does not lead to a successful career as an Education Consultant. I needed to identify three things: (i) the other people who work in the Education Consultancy field, (ii) my community of practice and (iii) what I have to say to other consultants about my practice and how others react to this. I became an Education Consultant in Greece without actually interacting with other consultants. This is something I used to do when I was in the UK. I have built a business based on my academic and professional experiences and I was collecting evidence that what I did was beneficial to people. The avoidance of interacting with other Education Consultants was ‘the anger of Poseidon’.

Researching the literature, I tried to discover what others do in this field. Education Consultants come from a wide variety of backgrounds and their experience varies greatly. They bring into their practice a comprehensive range of skills and knowledge” (Society of Education Consultants, 2017). There is no association in Greece that might be similar to the SEC (in the UK) or the HECA (in the USA) that I could belong to. The existence of such an association would be hugely supportive, as it would (i) improve routines and procedures, (ii) set standards in the field and (iii) advance Education Consultancy in Greece. It would, crucially, also improve collaboration between professionals who could, thus, further expand their practices.

### **3.8 Passing the Sirens: a Second Component of Their Challenge**

We have seen earlier how the Sirens’ tale relates to Odysseus: I have discussed the meaning of the tale, the way that it relates to my practice and its symbolism. However, there is a second component to it and this concerns the Shipmates of Odysseus. Specifically, Odysseus and his shipmates collaborated in order to escape their mesmerizing call and leave the Sirens’ dangerous island behind them. The Sirens’ song in the field of Education Consultancy stands for the different practices that the Greek Education Consultants are using with clients. The shipmates of Odysseus correspond to the other consultants in Greece.

Presenting my practice at the Higher Education Academy (HEA) conference in July 2018, I had the great opportunity to get excellent feedback from several conference delegates and, thus, re-evaluate my practice. I was, at first, perplexed when someone asked me whether my framework is just based on my empirical work or whether it is evaluated through a formal process. This delegate drew my attention to the importance of professionalising this framework. Another delegate wondered if what I do in Greece is something that other consultants do. I became aware of the fact that a professionalized framework was missing completely from my practice and, as a consequence, from my professional life, too.

It is important to state, once more, that what I hereby extensively discuss and elaborate on are exclusively my points of view and not what other consultants believe, do or say. This conference gave me the opportunity to meet other people in the field, exchange ideas with them and get familiar with their practices or experiences. It was, then, time to meet the people in Greece who are 'colleagues' or 'competitors', those who also act as 'Education Consultants'. I needed to find out as much as possible about their practices.

As mentioned in Section 3.6, where I discuss how Odysseus managed to go past the Sirens, I always work by giving my clients the opportunity to reflect on their prior learning. This enables them to make sound decisions about what and where they want to study. This is one of the elements that characterises my practice and, I believe, is one of the biggest advantages of my framework. To my surprise, some of the consultants I interviewed in phase 2 of my research did not agree:

*“Parents make the decisions. If, after your sessions, you find that this person is good at history and the parents say he should study medicine, this person will never study history because the parents will force him to change... Why? Money... “no money, no honey” and [if you do not comply with the parents’ wishes], you will never get any [further] recommendations.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1F)

*“I don’t worry about this too much. In Greece, we all study one thing but work on something else. So, even if they [the clients] take the wrong decision now, they will find what they don’t like and they will do what they like in the future. It is the education process that matters: this person will get out of the country and see another way of living. This is the education – not the subject they will be studying.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1D)

*“Profession is what you practice and not what you study.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1A)

In the discussion interviews with the other Greek Education Consultants that accepted to meet me, I was keen to explore how they viewed their role as Education Consultants. The answers I got varied according to their professional background. People who had an educational background (or were working in an education environment at the time, saw themselves as mentors, teachers, or coaches. People who worked in a corporate environment referred to themselves as managers, mediator, or experts.

On one hand, language teachers and teachers who work in private schools in Greece and act as Education Consultants use similar practices in terms of running their business. On the other hand, people who work in private companies and those who are certified agents for specific UK Universities show many similarities in the way they function. Specifically, when it comes to teachers, their practice is based on language and language skills. Their role seems to be defined more by being an *‘expert in the language’* rather than an expert in assisting their clients to make the ultimate decision about which degree or University to apply for. They act as mediators, assisting in the application process by refining statements in terms of language. The agents, on the other hand, are more focused on the outcome of the application process, outlining their ultimate goal so as to enable clients *“to get entry in their desired University”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1K). They carry through most of the application process for their clients (e.g. fill in the forms, write reference

letters etc). My practice is closer to that of Education Consultants that have an educational background. This is because even though I have a business, my background is in Education.

*“My role as an Education Consultant is to make sure that the application is done and represents my student... [...]I know them since they were 8 years old. I know who they are, so I help them present themselves in the best way.”* (Interviewee, phase 2,1C)

*“My role as an Education Consultant is to provide the University with an application which meets their standards... it is for this reason that clients come to me, they just do not know how to do it themselves.”*  
(Interviewee, phase 2,1F)

Furthermore, some of the Greek consultants I interviewed mentioned that, for them, it is vitally important to identify what their clients want. They shared with me their ways of practicing and I discovered that ranking was one of the major tools of their business. As mentioned earlier (Section 3.6.1), I am not a big fan of ranking, but I have to admit that one of the Education Consultants I spoke to gave me a viewpoint that I had never thought of up to that moment:

*‘Ranking shows the suitability of learners to [specific] Universities. There are Universities that rank high [and, hence,] take only high achievers; there are universities for medium [ranking students] and others for lower achievers. So, I use ranking to show to clients where they belong, if we take their achievements into consideration.’*  
(Interviewee, phase 2, 1B)

All in all, talking to the Greek consultants was useful as our conversations revealed some tips that I subsequently went on to implement in my practice. This is professionalism in its true meaning for me: the practice of exchanging ideas, routines and procedures that will, in the end, enable us all to become better. Our field will be, thus, developed, given that this is the usual accomplishment brought about by the transfer of knowledge.

*“I ask them to write what they don’t want to do first. Then, I ask them to make a list what will happen if they do what they don’t like. Then, I ask them to imagine the good scenario and compare the two. Sometimes you can see that what you are afraid of can occur [even] to [the scenario that] you think you like.” (Interviewee, phase 2, 1B)*

*“I ask them to prioritise their needs: “‘Have-to-do’ in their studies”, “‘Dream-to-do’ in their studies” but they can’t do it because of constraints. I help them make their dream come true. I have the tools, they have the will.” (Interviewee, phase 2, 1J)*

All of the Education Consultants who participated in the interview are working with clients, though ‘clients’ is not a term everyone uses. In fact, some Education Consultants call their clients ‘students’ or, even, ‘friends’. For instance:

*“We became friends through the process of consultancy, exchanging personal beliefs and experiences and even now we go out for a drink.” (Interviewee, phase 2, 1E)*

Personally, I disagree with this outlook in general and the friendship aspect in particular. In coaching relationships, a trusted bond is formed that proceeds longitudinally. The coaching relationship should be built on respect rather than friendship and should include navigating both negative and positive reactions (Deiorio et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is a relationship that has an end.

One point all Education Consultants I interviewed agreed on was the fact that clients go to Education Consultants in order to get help so that they may decide what the best option for them is.

*“We know what is out there, we provide what they need.” (Interviewee, phase 2, 1G)*



*“Parents say something, they [clients] want something else and they both come to an Education Consultant to solve the problem. You say something and then the parents call you and ask to change your recommendation and then [the client] asks you to support their choice, too. You are in the middle. Whatever you decide affects someone’s life because you are the expert.” (Interviewee, phase 2, 1H)*

I think that professionalism is both built – and then rests on – objectivity. The importance of making professional judgments centers on lack of (i) bias and (ii) conflict of interests. This means that in the experience reported above (Interviewee 1H), there is a conflict of opinions between parents and children. When I consult parents about their role in the educational process of their kids, I show them the picture of Fig. 27 which has three triangles. All three triangles represent the relationship between school, parents and children (γονείς = parents, σχολείο = school, παιδί = child). I carefully explain how the right attitude vis-à-vis their child’s education is expressed in the second triangle. Parents, school (or Education Consultant, in our case) and children (clients) have an equal right to opinions on education, but this opinion must be based on (and take consideration of) the child’s needs. The role of the Education Consultant is to make professional judgments based on their client’s needs and, in this case, the client is the child. The parent is not the client, their role is advisory or confined to clarifying constrains such as financial issues. Under no circumstances is the role of the parent to decide what their child should study.

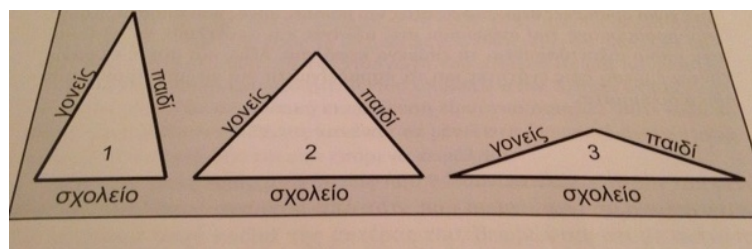


Figure 29: Relationships in schools (Kabouridi, 2011:p.21)

Greek parents are members of what Greek Education Consultants call 'clients'. Every Education Consultant pays a lot of attention to the role of parents. It is very clear, from all the interviews I conducted, that parents influence their children's decision, as they pay the fees and cover their living costs. As a result, parents have an active role in nearly every session that takes place at the consultancy. Many of the Education Consultants I interviewed supported this view, saying:

*"Parents live through their kid's life, it is [for them] a game [whereby they enjoy a] second [opportunity in] life."* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1D)

*"Sometimes they do our job [consultancy]. They phone the university on behalf of their children, they even pretend they are 18 years old."* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1A)

*"Parents are protecting their kids, even if they are 28 years old."* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1J)

*"It is a cultural thing. No matter who you are, your mother will always be behind you reminding you to take your cardigan with you – even in August, [even if the outside temperature is] 40 degrees [Celsius]."* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1E)

This last statement reminds me of an article published in a Greek student newspaper in 2015 ([mycampus.gr](http://mycampus.gr)), detailing the differences between how "living abroad" is interpreted by a young person and what this means for their mother. A rough translation of those parts of the article that are relevant to this discussion follows:

*First, let's look at the subject "Living Abroad" with the eyes of a young person who wants to experience life in another country.*

*For a young person, "Living Abroad" is:*

- *An opportunity to experience the culture and everyday life of different people. It is an attempt at expanding one's horizons, seeing how other people live, what problems they experience and how they deal with them.*
- *A way to speak a foreign language (that they may already know) for real communication. This means that the need for communication will make them start talking more about different issues and become better, something they certainly did not do while living in Greece.*
- *In many cases, life abroad means "I'm looking for a job" and it's about opportunities to find a job that is relevant to what you've been studying. Perhaps it is an idealized oasis of all the difficulties and an attempt for something better, another life.*

*For your Mum, "living abroad" means:*

- *A cold, rainy place, without the Greek sun!*
- *A jungle full of thieves and dangers, a place full of unknown people.*
- *"They do not cook well there!"*
- *They do not speak Greek!!*
- *She will question everything and, at the same time, you will have to find answers for issues you had not even thought about.*
- *How will she talk to you? [Before you leave the country], you need to teach her how to Skype, how to use Viber etc.*

*In other words, these are two completely different worlds. The Greek Mum will try to convince you that "there's no place like Greece", while a voice in you will encourage you to chase your dream. Follow the voice or listen to your mum. But when you make your decision, make sure it's the one you really want.*

*Good luck!!*

I find that meeting the parents and discussing with them the decisions that my clients have taken with my help gives them the assurance that they have an important role to play during the last phase of my consultancy. This role is critical as, at this stage, practicalities come into play. Assigning a real role to

parents is something that makes me feel professional about the services I provide. I accept and acknowledge that they care, I recognize that they can be over-protective but I, crucially, also appreciate that they do what they do in order to optimise the development of their children's career. Parents are responsible for some issues, while children need to take responsibility for their own issues. So, my role in this matter is to behave professionally in terms of competencies, diligently, with fairness and confidentiality, especially as their children are adults themselves. These aspects of professionalism appear in the Code of Ethics (London Statement, 2012) and, most certainly, apply to the parents of my clients.

Let me now turn, again, to the Odyssey and, more specifically, to Poseidon's anger which increased when Odysseus blinded his son Polyphemus, one of the Cyclopes.

*“Poseidon had heard the summoning of his son, Polyphemus, who had cursed them and so they struggled with the huge waves, once more. Their voyage was difficult and adventurous. The sea just would not let up, until they wearily arrived at the strange island of Aeolia.”*

(Deligiannis 2014:p.24)

Poseidon's anger is strong and might affect the sector of Education Consultancy in Greece as a whole. Many consultants, such as those who followed The British Council course (UK Education) for Education Consultants, are academically or technically highly qualified. Most of us are certified by The British Council, but none of us is recognized by The Society of Education Consultants or The Higher Education Consultants Association. We all come from different backgrounds, without a mandatory certification; it is noteworthy that we all provide services that have the same outcome. There is a need to follow a Code of Ethics in our practices in order to keep professionalisation in Education Consultancy in very much the same way as holds for other sectors.

*“The weary travelers were fortunate to dock at the hospitable land of Aeolia. They found shelter on Aeolia, where they rested and regained their strength. Time passed pleasantly with entertainment and good food. King Aeolus was interested to hear about their adventures in Troy. Understanding Odysseus’ desire [to get back to Ithaca, Aeolus] gave him a gift, a large bag, which contained all the winds, except for Zephyrus [this wind blows towards Ithaca], the westerly wind, so as to lead them to Ithaca under favourable weather conditions.” (Deligiannis 2014:p.27)*

The bag with the winds is our practice. Each of us, the consultants, creates a practice in order to achieve our professional goals. Just as Aeolus “tied the bag to the mast of the ship with shiny, silver rope”, so do we, the consultants, keep our practice in a safe place and use it only if there is a need.

In fact, it seems that there is a need to share our practices in order to improve the services we provide. There is a need (in every field of professionalisation), to cooperate in order to move our research, our practice and our knowledge to a higher level. After my interviews with the other consultants, I became concerned about the lack of willingness on the part of the other Greek Education Consultants to share knowledge amongst us. This is a thought that I have never had prior to the interviews with the other Greek consultants. What made me start to think was, firstly, the difficulty I experienced when trying to find Education Consultants to interview and, in particular, the specific way in which I finally found them (i.e. making use of personal contacts). I am convinced that these difficulties indicate a great fear on the part of some Education Consultants who see the sharing of knowledge as something risky.

*“Greece is a competitive market – we can’t share the [main] ingredient of our “delicious soup”. We can only share it with friends and, as you have been recommended by X [name of the referee], I am ok [with taking part at this interview].” (Interviewee, phase 2, 1J)*

It was a long journey for me trying to find the 'soup ingredient' or, to put it correctly and more precisely, my 'self-understanding' (Kelchtermans, 2009). Self-understanding relates to both my role as a consultant and the creation of a successful product that works for my clients. As far as I am concerned, 'self-understanding' is the job motivation that spurs me to choose to become an Education Consultant. I find it sad that, for some Education Consultants, sharing with others the practices they implement with their clients is equivalent to Aeolus' bag that, if opened, can cause a disaster (just as in the tale of Odysseus:

*"[Odysseus] was so exhausted that he fell asleep. While he was sound asleep, some of the men were curious to see what was inside the bag. A sailor, believing that there was gold, silver and other valuables inside, untied the bag from the mast and untied the silver rope so as to share its contents with his comrades. As he open it through, the winds poured out whirling the ships in the rough sea [...] Driven by the strong winds, the fleet strayed away from Ithaca [...] the wind pushed them back to the island of Aeolia. Desperately, Odysseus pleaded the king to show mercy and help them... The king welcomed them coldly and spoke to Odysseus with very harsh words, making them return to the ships in disappointment and continue their journey without his help."*  
(Deligiannis 2014:p.28)

### 3.9 Third Obstacle – Avoiding the Land of the Lotus Eaters and Moving Towards Professionalization



Figure 30: Lotus plant (template.com)

*“After days and nights of fighting with the huge waves and gale force winds, Odysseus and his men ended up in the mythical land of the Lotus Eaters, somewhere in Northern Africa. They disembarked there in order to rest and regain their lost strength so as to continue on their journey home. This mysterious land seemed to the tormented men like paradise, as it had tall plants, fruit bearing – trees and a quiet place to rest. When they met the residents of the region, they noticed that they had the strange habit of feeding on a sweet fruit, which they called lotus. The tasty lotus though, had a magical quality, as whoever tasted them would forget their homeland and their family. As Odysseus had a bad feeling, warned his men not to touch the fruit. Some men neglected these warnings and rushed to try the fruit. They picked it from the trees and ate it, thus forgetting about their homebound journey, as well as their loved ones, who had been patiently waiting for them for all these years. Odysseus took quick actions in order to save them and dragged them onto the ships, against their will and had them tied under the benches so that they couldn’t step in land again. Then*

*he quickly gave the order to lift anchors, open sails and set off on their journey once more.” (Deligiannis 2014:p.15)*

The lotus-eaters’ story stirred my fears of turning Education Consultancy into an area of expertise that focuses only on our own practice, with the Education Consultants thus forgetting, as the lotus-eaters did, to belong to a community. As Odysseus’ shipmates ate the lotus fruit and forgot their purpose of returning to Ithaca, I get the impression that the satisfaction we sometimes get from our work with our clients and the pleasure and pride we feel when our services reach the point of excellence, similarly to ‘the magical taste’ of the lotus fruit, might make us forget that our practice is part of our profession. I have a concern that is similar to Kelchtermans’ (2009), only the latter related to a teachers’ career. As Education Consultants, we develop a personal interpretative practice that operates as a lens where Education Consultants just look at their job, give meaning to it and act in it. We, as Education Consultants, find the practice that works in a particular situation and do not act on the need of professional development or interaction with other consultants in an effort to improve and become excellent in our practice.

To-date, in my professional experience as an Education Consultant, I can recall several times when I struggled to find the best practice in a field that I was not familiar with. I remember that, a few years ago, I had a client who wanted to apply for a medical degree in the UK but did not, at the time, have any A Levels or an IB certificate. We examined the course description in order to find if any of these qualifications were mandatory and if any one of the two were preferable. This was not clear through reading the entry requirements. I took my client through the whole process without, however, getting a positive result. Concerned that this had happened, I had a professional conversation with a colleague who explained to me that in order to study Medicine in the UK, students are required to have a specific High School certification (either IB or A Levels) and that the Greek ‘Apolytirion’ is not accepted. I wish I had known this prior to my involvement with the client. I also wished I had, as an alternative, had a contact in a professional body or some contact with a more experienced Education Consultant that I could refer to, as this (i) would have



helped me offer a successful product to my client and (ii) would have rendered my service more professional.

In contrast to the situation with the other Greek Education Consultants, the Heads of Middlesex University International Centers in my first phase as a researcher openly and eloquently discussed the cooperation between the Heads.

*“I’m sitting with a group of people [other Heads] who can tell me what is happening everywhere. So, there is five of us. Between the five of us, we can tell you every single little thing that is happening about the DProf around the world. And those five people have to make sure that this same understanding about protocols about what we mean by doctorate level apply to all of us.”* (Interviewee, phase 1, AA)

*“I learn from them [other Heads] and I communicate with them, I share my work with them as we are colleagues.”* (Interviewee, phase 1, AB)

The need to support the professional development of new teachers is a pressing challenge for education systems in many countries (Long 2009; Huizing 2012; Kane & Francis 2013). I find that this need is similar to the need of professional development in Education Consultancy.

*“Contemporary research suggests new conceptualisations of mentoring that make use of socio-constructivist theories of learning such as co-mentoring, mutual mentoring, collaborative mentoring, peer collaboration, critical constructivist mentoring, dialogical mentoring and reciprocal mentoring.”* (Tynjälä et al., 2012:p.24)

These new conceptualisations also suggest new practices centered on group formations, such as group mentoring, peer mentoring, mentoring circles and peer-group mentoring (Bozeman & Feeney 2007; Darwin & Palmer 2009; Huizing 2012; Kemmis & Heikkinen 2012; Fyn 2013). These mentoring practices have the potential to develop and transform the culture of

workplaces, while assisting with personal and professional development (Darwin & Palmer 2009:p.127).

Based on the previous example that I drew from my experience and also based on my discussions with the Heads of the International Centers, it is clear that we, as professionals, need to collaborate. I think that the best way to achieve this is through mentoring schemes. Mentoring could help Education Consultants to not only define their practice (Hobson et al., 2009), but also establish and build professional relationships based on dialogue and reflection (Fairbanks et al., 2000). Mentors are willing to engage in mutual learning during the mentoring process (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Orland-Barak, 2010). They are more than local guides and educational companions: they are also agents of change that foster norms of collaboration and shared inquiry (Wang & Odell, 2002).

It is clear from the above that the current image of educational mentoring expects mentors to be 'co-thinkers' as well as 'co-learners' with their novices (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

*“Co-thinking in terms of supervisory skill includes the ability of the mentor to use indirect conversation techniques such as probing, summarizing and responding to novice input and concerns” (Crasborn et.al, 2008 p.502). “Co-learners” is the usage of mentoring as a method of professional learning for the mentor as well.” (Feiman-Nemser, 2012:p.15)*

Mentors perceive their role as that of both a role model and an advisor, so they feel compelled to examine their role practices (Ginkel et al., 2016).

Living in Greece and working as an Education Consultant within a self-employment framework and model, I have repeatedly faced the question of what I do for a living. When I cite the title of my role, most people look confused. They are not familiar with this title. They know the career advisor,

the school counselor, the agent – but not the educational consultant. They have not heard of this profession before.

The term 'profession' is something that was widely discussed in the academic literature in previous decades referring to the licensing professional activities, setting standards of practice and regulations (Burrage & Torstendahl, 1990a, 1990b; Evetts, 2008; Orzack, 1998; Brint, 2006; Noordegraaf, 2007; Svensson & Evetts, 2003, 2010). Nowadays, the increased mobility of professionals in the globalised world, as well as the internationalisation of HE, have set new rules in the profession of Education Consultancy. My experience of working in an international company as an EU project manager at first and then as a liaison officer with an international University have set a clear view of what the motives of Internationalised HE are and what dimensions are given to the Education Consultancy field.

Firstly, Universities need to earn money. International partnership is a key motive to achieve this. Many universities use American, British, German or other foreign curricula; many teach in English and some are accredited in other countries, as this brings in international students who pay full fees (De Wit, 2010). There are many individuals who are not able to travel in a foreign country in order to study but, nevertheless, need to be academically trained using an international pedagogical approach. Many international HE Institutions have provided access to students in countries lacking the domestic capacity to meet the educational demand for cross-cultural curriculum (Taylor, 2004). Access can take many forms: (i) branch campuses, (ii) franchised foreign academic programs or degrees, or (iii) independent institutions, based on foreign academic models (Portwood, 2000; Knight, 2006).

Secondly, the global migration of talent (Knight, 2006) makes it possible for wealthier nations and institutions to attract and retain desperately needed human capital from abroad. A case in point is that of the Greek people during the Greek crisis (analysed in some detail in Section 3.3). Furthermore, Philip Altbach (2004) observes that 80% of the Chinese and Indian students who go

abroad do not return home immediately after obtaining their degree, while 30% of highly educated Ghanaians and Sierra Leoneans live abroad. Working in the IT company, I observed that we had many employees registering for our graduate programmes who came from all over the world. In addition, it is worth noting that the company had its headquarters in London, with other offices in Cambridge, Sweden, Silicon Valley, Japan, India, China, South Korea, and Australia.

Furthermore, some Universities (especially in the USA) use international programs in their effort to provide international and cross-cultural perspectives to their students. This practice is considered to enhance their curricula (Altbach, 2004). Campus-based internationalisation initiatives include: (i) study-abroad experiences, (ii) curriculum enrichment via international studies majors (degrees) or area studies, (iii) strengthened foreign-language instruction and (iv) sponsorship of foreign students to study on campus (Siaya & Hayward, 2003).

Traditional nonprofit universities have entered the international market in order to (i) enhance research and knowledge capacity and (ii) increase cultural understanding (Knight, 2015). It is important to clarify that their actions are not the result of direct financial considerations. During my collaboration with several Universities, I was able to observe that many universities which are located in countries where governments cut public funding were encouraged to seek international ventures for academic research (Davis, 2006). EU authorities, for example, actively pursued academic internationalisation for more than two decades, as part of the move to economic and political integration through (i) funded programs, such as the renowned ERASMUS programme and (ii) research projects such as FP 5, 6 and 7. Large numbers of EU university students were offered the opportunity to enhance their academic experience outside their home country by transferring to a different EU university (Huisman & van der Wende, 2005), thanks to the FP 5, 6 and 7 programmes. This state of affairs and move towards an internationalization of HE, was very clear when I was running EU projects in the IT company where I worked. The scope of European regional

integration expanded and the Bologna Process harmonized entire academic systems, always ensuring compatible degree structures, transferable credits and equal academic qualifications throughout the EU (Davis, 2006). This was a very useful tool for me at the time, as I needed to agree for funding purposes with the candidates, Universities and the company.

My involvement in those procedures made it clear to me that the UK HE is reasonably well-aligned with the Bologna Process in its structure (i.e. credit transfer and the three cycles degrees, qualification framework, quality assurance, student mobility, lifelong learning and non-formal education). As highlighted by many researchers, academics and scholars fully support the Bologna Process which is, after all, based on an Anglo-centric culture. As a result, the UK HE is well ahead of most other countries in terms of educational harmonization. In other words, the Bologna Process is trying to “harmonise the architecture” (Zizek, 2010:90) of other education systems within the UK and not the UK’s education system with the European one. However, the wide harmonisation of systems is impossible so long as national differences persist in social and economic structures. It is, therefore, impossible for a single model of the knowledge society (such as the Bologna Process) to exist in most countries, or that the new form of HE would mean the same thing to every country (Prokou, 2008).

On the other hand, the modern knowledge economy is demanding ever-higher rates of skill formation (Usher, 2009). HE is seen as the way to accomplish this and, as a consequence, pressures to continue to ‘universalise’ HE have continued. The pressures of European integration and the pull of globalisation will continue to intensify the pressures for the internationalisation of education. Students from all over the world find it easier to study abroad and this is true for both groups of students: those who come from inside and those who come from outside the EU. As a result, European Universities have become more attractive to students and staff from outside the EU.

In those circumstances, many UK universities have grasped the opportunity to expand outside the UK by opening campuses in European and non-European countries. The idea is to avoid bringing more students into the UK, while, at the same time, to promote their degrees in the students' home countries. In order to promote University degrees outside of the country, Universities need what Kazlauskienė & Christauskas (2007) have called 'regional engagement'. This is an institution with a regional engagement mission which has tight links with the local economy, so that it can both adapt programmes to the local labour market and transfer knowledge, skills and technology to the community more effectively. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) referred to the Internationalisation of the UK Universities as 'being globally competitive and locally engaged'. Furthermore, attracting students from abroad requires intensive marketing. For instance, students in China will have little knowledge about most UK universities, so institutions wishing to recruit prospective students from this country need to (i) heavily invest in promotion of 'brand recognition' outside the UK and (ii) in some way, localize their programmes (Usher, 2009).

International travel and the rapidly expanding Information Technology (IT) infrastructure have opened many new possibilities to HE. I am very conscious of this fact, as the company that I was working for was in the field of mobile technology. As a consequence, I was acutely aware of the fact that IT was part of our learning, too. New models of online learning make education and resources more readily available to individuals who reside in locations that are, characteristically, distant from the universities they enroll in. IT provided and still provides researchers with a broader reach for scholarly collaboration (De Wit, 2013). As a company, we collaborated with Universities from all over the world. Stakeholders in a variety of regions across the globe move toward a shared language and framework that facilitates the mobility of more and more students not only during their studies but also following their graduation (Altbach et al., 2009).

The international travel provides Universities with opportunities to extend academic participation to not only within a nation but also within academia at

large. The Internationalisation of HE is a strategic move of HE Institutions all over the globe and the harmonisation of the European HE Degrees is already agreed and applied all over Europe. This has built a 'global identity' (Dahl 1998) for academia which takes the form of either face-to-face education or distance learning.

Based on the analysis of Internationalisation of HE, as this has been described above, a new profession was born – that of the Education Consultant. Education Consultancy is a 'knowledge-based occupation' (Macheridis & Paulsson, 2017) and has two dimensions: (i) the student-oriented one, i.e. getting into the Internationalised HE and (ii) the recruiting dimension, i.e. recruiting students to the internationalized HE. The first one is focusing on individuals, such as prospective students and the second one on organisations, such as Universities. Education Consultancy is not a monopolistic market with restrictive practices and self-regulation. It is a new-knowledge, intensive occupation market that succeeds through innovation, entrepreneurship and active engagement with the market (Muzio et al, 2011).

Eight of the consultants that I interviewed have direct partnership with Universities abroad and are under an official agreement with at least one Institution. They support that the combination of their role – to clients and the institution they are contracted to - does not cause conflict of interests.

*"I am paid by students for my services [which entail] building their profile and finding what is in the market for them. I also get a commission from X [name of the University], as I have sent this student to this particular university. I am not paid by the client simply because they went to the X University." (Interviewee, phase 2, 1K)*

*"We are working together and I think we have a kind of 'independence', so there is no conflict of interests. I am not attached to them, I collaborate with them." (Interviewee, phase 2, 1E)*

*"The University is happy; the clients are happy; I am happy. There is a lot of happiness around consultancy. It is the best symbiotic relationship; I wish I had achieved this in my personal life, too!"*

(Interviewee, phase 2, 1J)

On the other hand, language teachers have a different attitude towards payment.

*"No, of course not! Students pay me for the IELTS courses. I know them for many years. This is not something I will be paid for. I just help them as I have personal experience of studying in London and my English is of a high level."* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1A)

*"I get a small fee, but that is not comparable to what you charge, as this is your main job. I calculate the hours that I spend with the student as if it was a lesson and they pay me at the same rate."* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1B)

In view of the statement above, I can understand that those who were kind enough to engage with me in professional conversations think that there is integrity in this transaction. Interestingly, they all agreed that Universities are only satisfied when they have the right numbers and that educational consultancy can exercise a huge influence on people's choice. This leads me to ask if integrity is genuine in that case. Personally, I doubt it. I can understand the transparency, as our Code of Ethics clearly details chargeable fees, but making things transparent is something deeper. This has to do more with the values of individuals than with professional principles. In other words, this realisation makes it clear that not only is there to identify what our profession focuses on but also to professionalise it.

The concept of profession represents a distinct and generic category of occupational work (Evetts, 2017). Professionalisation refers to the process of achieving the status of profession and accomplishing the process of pursuing, developing and maintaining this status, including self-interests, salary, status,



power and protection of occupational jurisdiction (Evetts, 2017; Abbott, 1988; Larson, 1977).

To my understanding, professionalisation can be achieved chiefly through standardisation of the education, training and qualification for practice (Brint, 2001; Ruiz Ben, 2009). What has puzzled me during all those years that I have worked in the field is that Education Consultants in Greece come from different backgrounds. My initial investigation of who the Greek Education Consultants are concluded with the realization that they are people who previously worked in different disciplines but all have (i) personal or professional experience of international education, (ii) a degree or certificate relating to either learning processes or the management of education and (iii) have lived abroad. Intrigued by this realization, I asked the Education Consultants if this variation of backgrounds is an issue for them. Some of the answers I got are the following:

*“It is like language teachers in Greece. You can teach with [either] a Cambridge Proficiency [Qualification] or with a PhD in Linguistics. Who is the best? For institutions, it is the Proficiency people, as they are cheaper. But, as people working in the field, we know that the qualified person is better educated and we know that they will give us more. As a student, you can choose: a cheap teacher or a more expensive one who is also better?”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1B)

*“It has nothing to do with prior education. It has to do with the practice [i.e. office] and how good your Greek and UK network is. You need to have a strong network in Greece, so you can match the required entries for the UK Universities. If you send many people, you have a voice at their Institutions.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1C)

*“Education Consultancy has to do with consultancy services. It is business not a school. It doesn’t matter if you are a teacher, it matters if you are good in management. Management of situations and people.”* (Interviewee, phase 2, 1F)

*“It is important to have studied or lived in the UK. You can help with your experience, not with your degree.” (Interviewee, phase 2, 1D)*

It is, therefore, clear from the above responses that Education Consultancy is not a homogenous occupation – at least, not in Greece, where it also fails to meet some of the characteristics that Hampton et al. (2009:p.88) cite about this profession:

- “1) A body of specific knowledge that is imparted through formal education*
- 2) A developed level of skills*
- 3) Some form of entry requirements*
- 4) A certification or licensing process and*
- 5) A set of behavioral norms”*

For some professions, such as teaching, the above characteristics serve as entrance requirements for practicing the profession. However, for Education Consultants, a formal education, skills development and certification is not mandatory. Revisiting the example of 1B above (talking about the differences in teaching quality between an English teacher who holds a Proficiency qualification and one holding a PhD in Linguistics), I can conclude that it is the market that sets the standards and not the state or nation. In a globalised world with new-knowledge occupations, the learning might not take place through formal education.

For myself, I strongly support the need for certification, which will give professional value to the whole field. This need is from the market that will assume that there are some characteristics that prevent the effective professionalisation (Muzio et al., 2011). I have observed that most clients ask about the qualifications I have, prior to our first session. As I regularly monitor the Google statistics relating to my website, I am aware that the page that gets the greatest number of clicks is the one entitled “Who I Am”(appendix 1). Many clients come to see me because I have been certified by The British Council and not because I have done undergraduate and postgraduate

studies in the field of education.

Hodkinson et al. (2008) use the metaphor 'learning as becoming' to express the need for new knowledge as 'occupations learning'. This can be achieved through WBL degrees. Over the last few decades, theories of workplace and work-based learning (WBL) have increased dramatically and now encompass both the informal and formal learning of individuals, groups and organizations (Hager, 2011). WBL has been considered as a significant element of professional development and Lifelong Learning (Stern, 1997; Dearing, 1997). WBL meets one of the fundamental criteria of Lifelong Learning: it is available when the student is ready to undertake learning (Burns & Chisholm, 2003). Boud and Solomon (2003:p.5) have described WBL as "one of the very few innovations related to the teaching and learning aspects of post-secondary education that is attempting to engage seriously with the economic, social and educational demands of our era". This form of a degree is appropriate for Education Consultants.

According to Armsby (2000), WBL is context-bound and grounded in practice which is not confined to particular specialised areas, as Education Consultants come from a variety of backgrounds. WBL provides knowledge to real-world problems that participants of WBL programmes face in their real-world occupational environment.

*"WBL is a learning process that focuses higher education-level critical thinking upon work (paid or unpaid) in order to facilitate the recognition, acquisition and application of individual and collective knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve specific outcomes of significance to the learner, their work and the higher education institution."* (Gibbs & Garnett, 2007:p.10).

This means that WBL focuses on the (professional) development of workers who have finished their initial education (Billett, 2004; Eraut, 2007; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2005) and need to formalise their learning at work. This process of formalisation should be the main aim of Education Consultancy courses.

Education Consultants need to develop skills from and for work, as the workplace is a learning environment. This learning environment *“must be understood as a complex negotiation about knowledge – use, roles and processes – essentially as a question of the learners’ participation in situated work activities”* (Bilett, 2004:pp.312-313)

Work-based projects are a central feature of WBL programmes at University level (Garnett 2005; Boud & Tennant 2006; Walsh 2006; Boud & Costley 2007; Rhodes & Shiel 2007). They are based on real workplace issues with which learners are involved (they become practitioners). These projects are either projects that learners are already undertaking or have decided to undertake (Armsby & Costley 2000; Graham & Smith 2002), or activities that are already complete but can be used as the basis for reflection and further learning (Lester 2007; Chisholm & Davis 2007). From the university’s viewpoint, this is ‘research’, but for the practitioner this may be a practice activity for the workplace (Costley, 2007). Lester (2011) demonstrates that real life projects concerned with the development and change (rather than explicitly with research) can be, given intellectual rigour and critical reflection, a powerful source of new knowledge.

Education Consultants have built a practice in order to provide services. Their prior knowledge has played a significant role in the way they view the reality of their workplace. I suggest that the process of accrediting prior experiential learning (APEL) is a way to for someone to enter into the Education Consultancy profession.

There are long discussions about the value that APEL gives to the learner and how universities actually accept the value of what Gibbons et al. (1994) term “mode 2” knowledge (Armsby et al., 2006). Universities need to still feel confident, even if they lose the ‘monopoly of knowledge’ (Costley & Armsby, 2007) and see value in what learners have learnt from prior activities – inside and outside the university. However, over the last two decades, there has been a significant evolution in the recognition of workplace learning, including learning from naturally-occurring activities and projects and towards the award

of formal qualifications (Lesley, 2007). This typically involves learners presenting a portfolio of work or collection of evidence, supported by a narrative or verbal argument (Heeks, 2003). In a way, this is what I have collected over the years through my professional diaries. It would be really beneficial for Education Consultants to share these portfolios with colleagues in academia. If this could take place, Education Consultants would (i) see that their prior knowledge is recognized, (ii) develop new skills and (iii) improve their practices through formal education in the field.

Hence, in order for Education Consultancy to be formalised, certification is needed. However, certification is only possible when learners (in this case, Education Consultants) are able to negotiate fully customised awards, based on or around their work activity. In a new-knowledge occupation, it is necessary for learners to have a say on awards, to a degree that is relevant to their practice, rather than to university notions of subject and discipline.

A few years ago, I decided to take advantage of the “Open Days for UK Universities” that are organized by UK universities and The British Council in Greece. These events give prospective students the opportunity to meet University personnel and discuss University life, courses and entry procedures with them. I prepared my clients for a mini-interview with the University personnel and they all prepared a question list to ask to the representatives of the Universities. I wanted to test whether a face-to-face communication with University representatives would help them decide on the best option for them. I assumed that a hands-on experience with the organizational culture of each University would be hugely important and beneficial to my clients. To my surprise, this was not at all what happened on the day.

To begin with, all communication with most of the UK University representatives took place in Greek, with Greek agents of each University trying to promote their own services. It is well-known that agents mediate between different parties, have organisational competence, juggle vast interests and knowledge while selling their services in an entrepreneurial spirit

to all sides (Kern & Muller-Boker, 2015). This event further strengthened the belief that there is an urgent need to establish an association for Education Consultants in Greece.

Associations are set up in order to provide standards of ethics and quality of services. They need to create transparent conditions for their clients. A reference to the interviews I conducted with the Heads of the International Centers came to my mind, again:

*"So, link people [i.e. liaison officers] take responsibility, together with the Heads of those centers in order to [ensure] the quality mechanisms" (Interviewee, phase 1, AA)*

Sometimes a liaison-officer can be faced with issues such as the ones described in the following example:

*"For example, giving gifts – so, we might go to a local International Center and people [may] give presents, where one of the rules of the University is to not accept presents from students; where[as] it is polite to accept it, and especially when it is something small: [it] is silly. "I am not accepting your very small gift, bunch of flowers or something" but there is always a grey line between what is a small, inconsequential gift and not a bribe. For example, you might arrive somewhere and someone says "Oh, let us all go out for dinner" and [then], it turns out that the dinner is being hosted and paid for by one of your students. It is really odd, but, then, they don't understand." (Interviewee, phase 1, AA)*

I see a great relevance between the role of the Liaison-Officer and the role of the Education Consultant. Based on the Code of Ethics, their role is to make sure that everything works according to knowledge, values, ethics and professionalism.

However, in Greece, apart from The British Council and the 'Education, UK' programme, there are no other associations that deal with Education Consultants. In contrast, in the UK and the US, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.2, there are two societies, respectively, i.e. SEC and HECA. They both ensure that their associates follow their Code of Ethics and Principles in their practices. The London Statement (2012) is a very clear example and model of the Code of Ethics for Education Consultants and I follow it in my practice, as I have explained on several occasions throughout this thesis. The establishment of a society denotes the clear effort to (i) legitimize the services in Education Consultancy but also to (ii) sustain the industry and allow it to enter new markets in order to secure new clients.

Another need relating to the professionalization of the Education Consultancy is that of lobbying. The new-knowledge occupation increasingly occurs in both the national and international markets. As outlined earlier in this Chapter, there is no clear legislation on the professionalization of Education Consultants in Greece. However, there is a move towards this since in 2013 and 2015 efforts were made in order to come up with some certification and a Code of Ethics and Practices, similar to the Network of Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE) which classifies Career Counselors into three categories: (i) advisors, (ii) counselors and (iii) experts. The creation of 'Occupational Profiles' (OPs, 'Επαγγελματικά Περιγράμματα' in Greek) is led by the National Qualifications Authority (EOPPEP). OPs are distinct for each occupation and involve the formation of a committee in which both employers and employees are represented, plus a working group of experts in the relevant field. I believe that this is a significant step towards the professionalization of Education Consultants. However, in the 197-page report this committee has produced, there is no reference to the role of Education Consultants as a profession providing educational and career advice to people who want to study outside of Greece. OP reports have come under criticism for their variable quality, the lack of a process for updating them and their complexity and length (Lester & Religa, 2017). As a result, they are no longer in use. However, I strongly support the idea that Education Consultants possess a considerable amount of expertise in studies abroad and that, as a

profession, we should cooperate with EOPPEP in order to implement our practices in their “Occupational Profiles”.

### **3.10 The Return and Reintegration of Odysseus in Ithaca**

When Odysseus eventually arrives in Ithaca, his greatest desire is to get back to his reality, a reality kept static in his mind as a place where time would have stood still and one which he has greatly desired, not fully realising that he should have been changed by his experiences – as should his family by theirs.

*“It is indispensable to the continuous circulation of spiritual energy into the world, and [...] the hero himself may find [it] the most difficult requirement of all. For if he has won through [his journey] ... there is danger that the bliss of this experience may annihilate all recollection of, interest in, or hope for [his hard-won knowledge]” (Campbell, 1968:p.36-37)*

Despite his urge to get back to his previous reality, he kept his anonymity and Athena, the Goddess, transformed him, during that crucial stage, into a beggar. He collected information about the changes that had taken place in his palace and prepared his revenge. He returned to his people as a powerful and fair king (22:393-399); he returned to his son a proud father (23:133-138) and he returned to his wife a truly loving husband (23: 259-261). He had become wiser from the experience of this journey – or so Homer wrote.

Looking at it through a contemporary lens, one does not see clear evidence of this. Odysseus was intent on revenge, he was intent on coming in and taking over what was his, as if nothing had changed. He was intent on making clear that what he claimed was rightfully his. His wife and son are virtuous and this is demonstrated by how they managed their tribulations. However, this possession of virtue is not so evident when it comes to Odysseus. Perhaps the missing phrase in Homer is ‘he should have returned to his people as a fair king by showing mercy...’.



The Odyssey of Odysseus has been a learning journey for me: I learnt how to overcome obstacles and how to enhance my learning from every encounter I have. The type of learning I benefited from has been professional learning, i.e. learning about how to steer my ship, how to save my crew, how to work together, how to send young people into the unknown already knowing. As will be seen in the chapter 4, it was the other Ithaka that has helped me to articulate a parallel learning process. It was the other Ithaka that has made the outcome for me qualitatively different from that experienced by Odysseus.

I have been exploring consultancy, over the years, from the position of an independent consultant. During those years (i.e. from 1998, when I was an undergraduate student in the UK, to 2010, when I set up the practice *AEC*, to 2019, when I submitted this piece of work, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of DProf), I have used my experience and context as a learner. I have constantly reflected on and articulated my previous learning and achievements as Educator and Employee. I have used my previous incomplete research projects to improve my practice, my sector and my competence as a researcher. I feel I have not wasted the valuable contributions of those earlier participants just because I did not, at the time, bring the whole project to doctoral completion. I use these reflections as a basis on which I found my doctoral endeavour on the professionalization of Education Consultancy in Greece.

These have been the essential principles of the practice-based doctorate. Investigating the role of the Education Consultant, I have concluded that the professionalism of Education Consultancy in Greece is based on our own practices and depends on our background. All practices that are active in Greece at present meet key principles, such as Code of Ethics, up-to-date knowledge, relationships with destination countries which provide ethical and cultural standards. No matter where we, Education Consultants, come from, we provide the best practices possible. We need to communicate, discuss our

practices and form an Association, so that we may align ourselves with the international consultancy.

*“...At last, the royal family was reunited. Odysseus with his wife and son went down to the beach. Staring at the sea, they had many stories to tell each other. The story of Odysseus spread throughout the world and became great inspiration for thousands of writers.” (Deligiannis 2014:p.74)*

This is the ‘*happily ever after*’ syndrome of the fairy tale when there is every indication from the Odyssey that this would not be the case for everyone. Its inspiration through the ages is as a story of a journey through life with a focus on how we encounter and overcome obstacles and how we learn from these experiences. Whether we like it or not, obstacles in life are a reality of life. It is, at best, sad to consider that if we stop learning from them or if we change our lives so as to avoid them, then, life becomes devoid of adventure and feelings of accomplishment. It is for this reason that we need to be open to viewing stories over time with new and modern perspectives.

## Chapter 4 – My “Ithaka”

I had mused on the emerging contradictions of the Odyssey in terms of learning when I began to use it as a framework through which to explore the autoethnographic research that would culminate in my knowledge narrative, my *graphy*. It was, I believe, the absence of reflection that was shown to characterise Odysseus that inhibited his learning from being truly transformational. I have written about reflection being at the center of that mode of learning known as work-based learning. However, this mode is an iteration of the teachings handed down to us by previous writers and philosophers from Aristotle to Confucius to Peirce to Dewey and their writings on the value of experiential learning as knowledge. Additionally, the twentieth and twenty-first century thinking includes the seminal work of Argyris & Schon (1978) and Schon’s “The Reflective Practitioner” (1983) containing his epistemology of practice, the contribution of Kolb (1984) and, more recently, the Practice Theory work of Davide Nicolini (2012). Reflection, reflexivity and critical reflection have become key components in all kinds of learning but principally in learning which takes place in practice environments. This is because such a process can bring about not only change in the practice of the practitioner but also in the culture of their organisations.

I have selected two types of reflection which resonate with me. The first one is *Reflection-on-Action* (Argyris & Schon 1978; Schon 1983,1987; Scott et al., 2004), which refers to the epistemology of practice related to exploring established or anticipated actions and thinking about them to solve problems, in some cases in the workplace. The second is *Reflection-in-Action* which is a deep learning, arising from experiential learning in the moment and which opens up a lens of the unexpected or of seeing in a different way. For me, this way of learning has anyway become a way of being in the world.

This research has its foundations on a combination of two learning procedures that evolve around reflection. The first one is reflection **on** action which led me to a position of a more mature reflection **in** action, as illustrated

through my use of the two Ithacas as a conceptual framework for my autoethnographic approach to exploring my own practice. During this project, I had to reflect **on** my daily working routine, in order to identify, improve and finally solve issues that puzzled me as an Education Consultant. The second one is my transformational learning which made me able firstly to understand and then do reflection **in** action. The former type of reflection has increased my techniques and responses, sharpening them (in a similar way as in the case of Odysseus), but the second type has emerged and informed the less tangible (but no less impactful) ways of seeing, experiencing and acting upon during the process of doing and changing in real time – in other words, the type of learning that has changed me.

The journey was a long one: just like Odysseus, it took me 10 years to find my own “Ithaka”, after overcoming many obstacles that I described in the previous two Chapters. However, I do not see “Ithaka” as a journey to the past, but as a journey to the future. My “Ithaka” is Cavafy’s Ithaka.

### ***Ithaka***

*C. P. Cavafy*

*Translated by Edmund Keeney*

*“As you set out for Ithaka  
hope your road is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.  
Laestrygonians, Cyclops,  
angry Poseidon—don’t be afraid of them:  
you’ll never find things like that on your way  
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
as long as a rare excitement  
stirs your spirit and your body.  
Laestrygonians, Cyclops,  
wild Poseidon—you won’t encounter them  
unless you bring them along inside your soul,  
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.*

*Hope your road is a long one.  
May there be many summer mornings when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you enter harbors you're seeing for the first time;  
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations  
to buy fine things,  
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
sensual perfume of every kind—  
as many sensual perfumes as you can;  
and may you visit many Egyptian cities  
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.*

*Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you're destined for.  
But don't hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,  
so you're old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you've gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.*

*Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.  
Without her you wouldn't have set out.  
She has nothing left to give you now.*

*And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.  
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean."*

'Ithaka' is probably one of the most recognisable of Cavafy's poems in Modern Greek poetry. 'Ithaka' alludes to the homeland of Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*. The journey of Odysseus is used as a metaphor for the journey of life. According to Marguerite Yourcenar (1979), 'Ithaka' is a

message of hope and a warning for the disappointments, which always lurk in life.

Poulis (2010) maintains that this poem expresses Cavafy's notion about the life destination and final goal that each one of us have. For the purposes of this research, I will follow Poulis' (2010) analysis of 'Ithaka'. According to this scholar, 'Ithaka' consists of six thematic areas, split over 5 stanzas.

The first thematic area opens the poem by a description of a journey:

*"As you set out for Ithaka  
hope the voyage is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery."* (Cavafy, Ithaka, lines 1-3)

'Ithaka' is a poem that emphasises the importance of desires as well as the significance of daily experiences. In his book *Toward an anthropological theory of value: the false coin of our own dreams*, Graeber (2016) mentions that desires are also a form of values. Our values, negative or positive, are desires for how things could or should be. In an article that I wrote recently in relation to the values that children inherit from their family environment, I mentioned that the transmission of values from our generation to our children's generation rests on a key element. This is the ability to combine the different values in such a way that we, as parents, do not build stereotypes that we pass on to our children but provide them, instead, with the freedom to achieve the highest level possible of a personality that is or appears desirable to them. In other words, we, as parents need to allow them to build how *they* want to become (Shape magazine, Greek edition, March 2019). 'Ithaka', the poem, also highlights the importance of appreciating each day and moment in life, without ever wasting our living days and moments, without ever failing to appreciate the enjoyment of our every moment.

In the Odyssey, we see that Odysseus expects the journey to Ithaca to be short and, as a result, every adventure is seen as an obstacle (Anton, 2000). The importance of this journey is to take a step back, reflect and learn from

the obstacles in our path. It is essential for us to see the obstacles as opportunities for learning. In the case of Homer's Odysseus, the opportunities seem to be more about highlighting the cunning abilities of the hero. As evidenced towards the end of this epic tale, the obstacles are not necessarily viewed as opportunities from which learning could have been derived.

The second thematic area of Cavafy's poem follows the description of the journey:

*“Laestrygonians and Cyclops,  
angry Poseidon—do not be afraid of them:  
you’ll never find things like that on your way  
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
as long as a rare excitement  
stirs your spirit and your body.  
Laestrygonians and Cyclops,  
wild Poseidon—you won’t encounter them  
unless you bring them along inside your soul,  
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.”*

(Cavafy, Ithaca, lines 4-13)

As we have seen in Chapter 3, the Laestrygonians were giants who destroyed Odysseus' ships and killed his men, while the Cyclopes were a savage race of one-eyed giants. I am struck by Western so-called 'civilisations' calling other societies primitive and savage and the ancient Greeks calling those who were not Greek (that is, those who did not speak Greek or follow Greek culture and practices), the "barbaroi". Interestingly, this is where we get the common usage of the word 'barbarian' to describe someone whose behavior is very uncivilized. Polyphemus was the son of Poseidon and the most famous Cyclops of them all. Odysseus blinded him and this act outraged Poseidon. As a result, the latter obstructed Odysseus' attempts to reach Ithaca. Homer describes external enemies (Laestrygones, Cyclopes and wild Poseidon), but Cavafy uses them to transport the myth to a different plane by presenting

them as internal: the real obstacles are those that that one creates in one's mind and if that is the case, those mind creations which can be transformed.

Cavafy hints at a positive interpretation of peoples' expectations from life.

He suggests that people need to overcome the obstacles they encounter on their route to the final destination (Ithaca). For Cavafy, it does not matter what the obstacles are. He is referring to those obstacles in general. The Laestrygonians and the Cyclopes are imaginary giants and it is for this reason that Cavafy is using those specific obstacles from the Odyssey. There is a correlation between the image of a giant and a gigantic problem. There is an important aspect that we should deal with: these problems can seem gigantic to the people experiencing them. What Cavafy asserts here with this metaphor is that if someone focuses on an aim and clears the mind of negative thoughts, one will not face problems of gigantic proportions (Maronitis, 2007).

The third thematic area further follows the description of the journey:

*“Hope the voyage is a long one.  
May there be many a summer morning when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you come into harbors seen for the first time;  
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations  
to buy fine things,  
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
sensual perfume of every kind—  
as many sensual perfumes as you can;  
and may you visit many Egyptian cities  
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.”*  
(Cavafy, Ithaka, lines 14-24)

The poet returns to the hope expressed in line 2 of the first stanza, i.e. that the traveler's journey is a long one. He hopes that there will be many summers when the traveler feels joy while on the journey, when he sees



places he has never seen before. These are the life experiences that we get as we live our lives. However, we must identify them as stops, as islands along our journey and we might decide to stop in order to visit them. There is a reference to Phoenicia, a coastal district of ancient Syria and an important port where trade took place in the ancient world. As a place of trade, many beautiful things may be purchased there (pearl, coral and perfume). These symbolise the treasures of the life we live.

The poet also hopes that the reader may visit many Egyptian cities and learn from the scholars who live there: Egypt (and later Greek Alexandria) were centers of learning. The Alexandrian Library was the Great Library and contained the largest known collection of manuscripts of the ancient world. As far as Cavafy is concerned, knowledge is a very important part of this journey, irrespective of whether it is acquired through scholarly studying or not. Equally so, Cavafy considers that travelling is very important for the development of our personalities.

The fourth thematic area focuses on Ithaka:

*“Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you are destined for.  
But do not hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,  
so you are old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.”*

(Cavafy, Ithaka, lines 25-31)

Cavafy says that the journey to Ithaka should be a long one, but people must constantly bear in mind that Ithaka is the final destination. The traveler will certainly arrive there if Ithaka is the final destination and target, but the journey to Ithaka is what is fundamentally beneficial for the development of a person. It is better that the journey lasts for years, so that the traveler is old by the time they reach this target and, hence, also wealthy from all the

experiences they have accumulated throughout their travels. Then, they will not expect Ithaca to make them rich: it is the experiences the traveler has gathered during the journey towards Ithaca that have made them rich.

In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus was trying to arrive at Ithaca, expecting to find what he had left behind when he set out for Troy. In reality, everything had changed: his knowledge and the experience he should have gained from the journey should have helped him to live in new circumstances, but this remains tentative at the end of the *Odyssey*. It is the hope of reaching a different kind of Ithaca, in fact an Ithaca, through the accumulated learning and through the changing of the personality that is derived through every new encounter that occurs as the wind takes the person to the next place and then, again, the next one – and so on and so forth. This is the meaning of living life to the full, being individual yet collective, being caring and aware.

The fifth (and final) thematic area concludes with the moral of the poem:

*“Ithaca gave you the marvellous journey.  
Without her you would not have set out.  
She has nothing left to give you now  
And if you find her poor, Ithaca won’t have fooled you.  
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.”*

(Cavafy, Ithaca, lines 32-37)

Cavafy characterises as “wise” the person who can conceive and see for what it is the true meaning of Ithaca, namely, the road and the experiences that lead one, through the tribulations of life, to a destination. The ‘wisdom’ of Cavafy is connected to the unique personality of every person and how they understand the knowledge gained from the journey (Malevitsis, 1983). Ithaca is a symbol. Cavafy mentions ‘Ithakas’ (plural of the word ‘Ithaca’ in Greek) in order to show that “Ithaca” can refer to any goal or number of goals that people set for themselves. Provided that these goals are S.M.A.R.T. (Doran, 1981), they can teach people new knowledge, help them gain experiences, be

reflective and, in the end, wiser than before. 'Ithakas' are many, as are our goals in life.

It is clear that Cavafy is also speaking of different kinds of metaphoric journeys, one of which is spiritual. This spiritual journey has a final destination: Ithaka. He provides advice to the readers of his poem relating to what they should be doing all along, until they reach their final destination: they should seek, find and gain not only experiences but also knowledge during the journey to the final destination. In fact, they should seek, find and gain as much knowledge as possible, wishing that this journey of theirs is as long as possible and also wishing that 'Ithaka' will be real.

This poem has compelled me to reflect on my journey through Education Consultancy, as well as on my journey through my DProf candidacy. What I have gained from these two experiences is analysed in the next Section.

#### **4.1 Reflection on Action through my 'Ithaka' – Education Consultancy for Me**

As a reflection on (i) what I have learnt from the experience of being an Education Consultant and (ii) my discoveries concerning how I solved the problems that I faced in this profession, I would like to share here an 'Ithaka' I have composed, a re-write of Cavafy's 'Ithaka' on the theme of what Education Consultancy means to me. I have never written a poem before.

As you set out for *Education Consultancy*  
hope your road is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.  
*cultural diversity, cultural differences,*  
*lack of professionalism*—don't be afraid of them:  
you'll never find things like that on your way  
as long as you keep *your professionalism,*  
as long as you *love your clients*  
as long as you let them stir your spirit and

as long as you *reflect on your prior knowledge*.  
*Cultural diversity, cultural differences,*  
*lack of professionalism —bring them along, inside your soul and*  
*let your soul set them up in front of you*  
*For you to embrace, transform and enjoy.*

Hope your road is a long one.  
May there be *many productive days* when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you enter *cultures* you're seeing for the first time;  
May you stop at *international* trading stations  
to find fine things,  
*experiences and friendships,*  
as many *experiences* as you can;  
And may you *visit many cities all over the world*  
*to learn from and reflect on* their scholars and *scholarly work*.

Keep *professionalism* always in your mind and heart.  
*Arriving there is what you're destined for.*  
*But don't hurry the journey at all.*  
*Better if it lasts for years,*  
*so you're experienced by the time you reach this destination,*  
*wealthy with all you've gained on the way,*  
*not expecting Education Consultancy to make you rich.*

*Education consultancy gave you the marvellous journey.*  
*Without this you wouldn't have set out.*  
*This profession has nothing left to give you now*  
*because it is now part of who you are.*

*And if you find it poor, Education Consultancy won't have fooled you.*  
*Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,*  
*you'll have understood by then what this profession means.*

#### **4.2 How I Do Not Sell a False Coin of my Own Dreams: Reflection In Action through Ithaka – the One Side of the Coin**

Reflecting on one's self, "the intrinsic reflective awareness in relation to identity" (Scott et al., 2009: p.147), is different for each person as well as each practitioner: each person "bring[s] their own biography, history, experience and personality into their project" (Costley et al., 2010: p.12). This heritage of my history, experience and personality is not only my autobiography but also the motive that I have identified that allows me to know what my background was and what my reasons were for becoming an Education Consultant in Greece.

In my consultancy job, I have the opportunity to reflect on previous experiences. I am, thus, able to understand what I was doing and why I have become who I am now. My experience as a learner was in the concept of Internationalisation at Home (IaH) but, even as a teacher, I was involved in IaH. IaH focuses our attention on "academic learning that blends the concepts of self, strange and otherness" (Teekens, 2006:p.17) and is congruent with the perspectives of Appadurai (2001), Haigh (2008, 2009), Sanderson (2008) and Trahar (2007, 2009a, 2009b). These scholars foreground not only the importance but also the value of personal awareness and reflexivity in education, especially in encounters with those who we may position as 'different' from ourselves and, indeed, by whom we find ourselves differently positioned.

In the UK, there is a trend that Ryan & Viete (2009) call 'third-space pedagogy'. This is a pedagogy that engages UK HE staff in questioning their own beliefs and values in order to "help us understand the impact of our positioning as teachers and learners with different linguistic, cultural, disciplinary and experiential knowledge, and the sense of ourselves in relation to others as writers, knowers, professionals" (p. 305). This is what I am doing to my clients. I feel empathy for my clients as I can reflect on the client's learning preferences which, as a rule, follow my national culture (Hayes &

Allinson, 1988; Hofstede, 2011; Yamazaki, 2005). The consultancy methods I use are based on transforming the elements of the experiences I had to learning opportunities. I am, in other words, a 'translator' of raw experiences into learning treasures. I came to the conclusion that this role would be more beneficial for my clients, as it would allow them to write themselves their own epic. I have understood that the way of being informs the way of doing. Through my consultancy experience, I have developed the skill of anticipation. I have learnt to anticipate my clients' attempts towards achieving their goals after (i) observation of their attitudes, (ii) reflection on their prior knowledge and (iii) awareness of their dreams of their own Ithaka. I trust them to get their lives to the next level and I build on their trust so that I can be the mediator who attains this goal. As the consultancy process progresses, I accept their choices, even if these are in the wrong direction. As I wrote in a recent article for Capital Newspaper in Greece (capital.gr, January 2019), people learn from their mistakes as long as they reflect on their failures. My wisdom comes from my mistakes and, I believe, I have become mature enough to guide others through the difficult path of learning from their actions.

I create a professional diary for every client. Reflecting on this method, it has been a very productive tool to record my expectations, and fears for each client I consult. I have found this tool useful in also recording my own beliefs about and understanding of every client, the set practices of each individual case. I can, thus, record experiences, ideas, confusions and anticipated problems that I identify during the sessions with the clients. According to Angelides (2002), these records are essential, given that every researcher has the obligation to review their initial thoughts in order to (i) become aware of their own underlying stories and (ii) discover lack of insight and bias in making sense of reality. This process is very beneficial, especially during periods that my clients are facing obstacles. The use of a professional diary was instrumental in providing clarity on how goals were translated into actions. Thus, problems were, on the whole, successfully tackled, which is something that constitutes an important part of the consultancy experience (Burgess, 2003; Coffey, 1999). What is also noticeable is that this approach allows me to record the progress of my collaboration with the clients, what

they initially thought would be the purpose of our cooperation and how this, even though it remained unchanged has, nevertheless been built on and, as a result, it has been able to further flourish.

As argued by Creswell & Creswell (2017), the field diary also assisted my attempt to chronicle my thinking, feelings, experiences and perceptions throughout the consultancy process, something that Ainscow et al. (2003) describes as a conversation with the self or self-study and that Lincoln & Guba (1985) see as a technique that guarantees the balance and fairness that should characterize quality research. To me, field diaries and mind maps help me to become persuasive. I use mind maps as a matter of habit. I have thousands of mind maps in personal notebooks. Brainstorming is a method that I use in all aspects of my life. In my academic life, I have been using it since I was in the first year of University (I provide a couple of samples of mind maps in Appendix 10). Whenever I have a task to complete, I make my plan in the form of a mind map. I typically spend time thinking what I need to do and what aspects of work I should cover. I know the reasons why I perform the way I do in my professional practice. I have the evidence in black and white, so to speak, and this evidence gives me the confidence I need when I aim for excellence in my workplace.

I use the Odyssey as a tool in my consultancy. I love analogies as I think they help people realize quickly the need to tackle obstacles. I now use the Odyssey and the analogy present in the poem Ithaka in a new way in my consultancy practice. I use these culturally appropriate tools in order to show the role of Education in adverse life situations and how non-governmental associations, such as International Inner Wheel, can use them in order to draw a strategy that can support people with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). This work will be presented at a conference in Greece, in April 2019 (Appendix 11).

### 4.3 Reflection in Action, through “Ithaka”- the Other Side of the Coin

My voyage to ‘Ithaka’ is also about my journey to the degree of Doctor of Professional Studies. Alas! This journey was not all that positive throughout. The fact is I did not heed to Cavafy’s warning about the Laestrygonians, the Cyclopes and wild Poseidon, his caution not to bring them along inside my soul and his advice not to set them in front of me. All the obstacles that I faced (like the Laestrygonians, the Cyclopes and wild Poseidon) I considered them as obstacles and, at least in the beginning, I did not see them as opportunities. What the Laestrygonians, the Cyclopes and wild Poseidon were for me are illustrated below.

At the beginning of my journey of the DProf, I was fearful that I would not be capable of completing this degree. I had the desire to succeed but, with the benefit of hindsight I can now see that, when I started my research, I did not really believe in myself. I was recently reflecting on the fact that it was lucky that my application to enrol for this degree had been successful. My attitude in the first part of the DProf process was, frankly, pathetic. The Cyclopes, representing my cultural background, held me back. Given the teacher-centric values imparted by my Greek culture (in which pupils or students tend to be in awe of academic figures), I would often feel that I knew nothing as compared to my supervisors and lecturers. Even though my level of knowledge was high; even though my professional experience (several years of working experience behind me) was extensive; and even though my academic experience was varied (already holding Level 7 degrees), I was held back and felt unable to express doubts or dissenting points of view when in the presence of my supervisors. I acquiesced to the Greek stereotype that supervisors know better (and certainly know more) and I sheepishly followed their guidelines. DProf supervisors are trained to be open to the suggestions of their supervisees. They are there to make sure that the academic guidelines are followed and are at hand to help candidates achieve their goal(s). This reminds me of the role of the Gods in the Odyssey. In my case, I faced the anger of Poseidon at the beginning of my research, as I did not have the support that I needed from my supervisors. This led me on a journey



in a wrong direction and I could not find my Ithaka. I was struggling, but I did not stop making an effort.

During this first year, I remember many times trying to find who I am by reading my Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) claims for the DProf degree. It helped me identify who I am and why I want to investigate my particular research area even further. I became confident that what I did prior to this project was not irrelevant and that, actually, the university accepts the value of what Gibbons et al. (1994) term 'mode 2' knowledge (Armsby et al., 2006). While assembling my APEL claim, I could clearly see that the interactions between my (i) professional curriculum, (ii) personal history and (iii) the way I operate in my workplace were deep and interlaced.

In my journey to Ithaka a form of Athena came: my new supervisor. She used her wisdom in order to make me realise who I am. She helped me to find my Ithaka. I consider that the new journey to my Ithaka, described in this piece of work, provided me several opportunities to (i) develop new skills, (ii) reflect on my learning and (iii) define my new 'Ithaka'. As Cavafy indicates, there are opportunities to benefit from when seeing places for the first time, when buying precious gifts and when learning from the experiences of educated people.

While I was reflecting on my work, my mind went to the notion of expertise from 'the inside view of things' (Costley et al., 2010). However, that is neither an automated nor a quick process. During this process, I had to reflect on (i) making space and time for thinking about complex and important issues and (ii) giving deliberate attention to 'circles of enquiry' (Durrant et al., 2009). Moreover, I had to find 'the epistemological and ethical side of this [i.e. the inside view of things]' (Costley et al., 2010). Reflection has helped me retain integrity and develop insights. It also helped increase my self-awareness and confidence (Chesney, 2001). I had to reflect on what I had learnt. I had to redefine my research work to fit into my workplace which was the field of education consultancy in Greece. It was important for me to identify my role as an Education Consultant in the internationalization of HE. As this research

collected data for a long period of time, it gave me the advantage to both use examples of projects that I was already undertaking (Armsby & Costley 2000; Graham & Smith 2002), and evaluate activities which I had already completed. In fact, I used the latter as the basis for reflection and further learning (Lester, 2007; Chisholm & Davis, 2007).

From the University's viewpoint, this was "research". For me, it was a practice activity for the workplace (Costley, 2007). What I realized after completing this piece of work was that real-life projects are not only concerned with development, intellectual rigor and critical reflection, but also are, in themselves, a great source of new knowledge which can be used in order to develop consultancies and, in my case, my own consultancy business (Lester, 2011). This experience has become what Cavafy calls 'summer mornings' and the entry to 'new harbors':

*May there be many summer mornings when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you enter harbors you're seeing for the first time;*(Cavafy, Ithaka, lines 15-17)

At the very beginning of my project, I found that it was important to explore the field I was planning to do my research in, in order to gain a thorough understanding of the domain of Internationalization of HE. This helped me position my own research clearly on the "academic map of knowledge creation" (Ridley, 2012:p.1). According to Hart (2018), "*the review (of reading) is a part of the academic development – of becoming expert in the field*"(p.47) and proof that the researcher "has studied the work in the field with insight" (Haywood & Wagg, 1982: p.75). However, Wellington et al. (2005) suggest that the literature review of the professional doctorate is likely to be more professionally oriented than the traditional PhD degree. To my understanding, this does not miss the main purpose of the literature review, which is "to allocate the research project, to form its context or background and to provide insights into previous work" (Blaxter et al., 2010:p.124).

During the literature review journey, I have considered my work to be but a small piece of a complicated jigsaw puzzle which did not exist in isolation. Thus, I realised that I was not required to invent the wheel and that my work would depend on what others had already done in the field. I recognized and accepted that I would end up contributing to an ongoing story. It was important, then, to know the whole jigsaw puzzle and to keep a good record of what I had read at every step of the way.

While working on this piece of work, I built the abilities of cooperation, critique, reflexivity, pragmatism and flexibility. I also developed my new methodologically-related capability (Armsby & Costley, 2000). Practitioner-led projects have also complexities that comprise issues relating to confidentiality, research ethics, managing tensions and value-conflicts (Moore, 2007; Workman, 2007). These issues are not different from those occurring in real-work contexts. Having the experience of the DProf journey, I can now think through what it means to research in practice (Durrant, 2009). Furthermore, I understand that I need to ensure quality not only in my leading role in the workplace but also in my research in the academic field (Armsby & Costley, 2009). In doing so, I have acquired a clear view of my next professional moves and I have developed the confidence to perform these well. These are my 'treasures' from the 'trading stations'.

Throughout the writing up period of this piece of work, I could feel that I kept "Ithaka always in my mind": I was performing differently in my everyday consultancy work. I had the opportunity to reflect on my practice and I feel confident that the service that I provide to my clients is the best of what I can provide and is also based on Level 8 critically analysed methods. I have realised that after all the original resistance to the obstacles I was faced with, I have managed to transform the latter into opportunities. I followed Homer and took up the challenges of the tangibles and in not being afraid, in committing myself to learn from them, I achieved an entry into the transformative intangibles which are those which endure.

## Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Odysseus' journey is described throughout a period of 20 years (10 years in Troy and 10 years in the 'sea'). My journey is also described within a period of 20 years, starting when I was a young student in the UK, studying for a Higher Education degree. I had a lot of concerns about going back to Greece in 2010, especially in the view of the Greek crisis. My journey through Education Consultancy (my professional Ithaka) was long and I can say that I am grateful for the knowledge and the experiences that this journey has given me.

Autoethnography has been my boat in this journey. The 'auto' in this autoethnographical boat has been me as a practitioner but, this time, not isolated. I have been influenced by several factors. I came to this journey with prior knowledge from my academic and personal journey into international education. I started this journey with those supplies. Through the journey, I have learnt from my experience with others. Those 'others' are both my clients (potential students in the international environment and their parents) and the other practitioners in Greece. I learnt, reflected and contextualized my interaction with them in order to provide services that cover the needs of my clients and I shared my practice with others. Through this written work, I had the opportunity to not only gain new knowledge (through the study of existing literature), but to also create new knowledge. I developed the skill to present my new knowledge and experiences through (i) monthly newsletters to my clients, (ii) papers for conferences, (iii) articles to lifestyles magazines and professional journals. I have become someone who knows her professional sector and I am happy to share this knowledge and experience with people in and outside the field. I became an expert in education consultancy both in Greece and in an international environment. I became confident of myself and I have completed a circle of my educational life.

'Ethno' in this autoethnographical boat has become my exploration of education consultancy. I was (and still am) a member of this field. I had the opportunity to be an insider researcher and professional who explores the

field, understands key concepts and is excellent in their practice. I have managed to provide information from my insider experience to people from outside the field. This is the value of autoethnography. As an autoethnographer, one shares one's understanding and one's findings of this process with everyone inside and outside of the field of expertise.

I have experienced cultural diversity from different perspectives, and roles and I have understood that it exists and often causes problems both in the learning process and when one is living in an international environment. Internationalised HE is trying to solve this issue by localizing the curriculum in some cases, as was observed not only in the professional interviews with the Heads of the International Centers, but also in campaigns such as the "Cultural Shock Campaign" launched by the UK government. However, in a similar way to the theme of the Cyclopes in the Odyssey, I strongly believe that this obstacle can be overcome if we use our brains. If a person wants to live the experience of the voyage to Ithaca, they need to find the 'trick', as Odysseus did and, as a result, overcome it. The desire to benefit from the experience of living in an international environment ensures that one does their utmost in order to eventually live this experience and, through it, become "wiser, after all".

As Education Consultants, we need to accept that the reason our clients come to us is to overcome the obstacles represented by the Laestrygonians, i.e. the application process. When faced with this obstacle, Odysseus lost his shipmates. As Education Consultants, we need to keep all our shipmates, i.e. our clients. We need to build a practice that identifies us as mentors, advisors and coaches who work in order to ensure that our clients succeed in entering HE abroad. For education consultants, it seems that it is not the obstacle represented by the Laestrygonians that creates the need for our existence as professionals – it is also the obstacle represented by the Cyclopes: we need to have the knowledge of how this application process can be accomplished successfully. This can only be achieved if we know the difference between the educational systems of the two countries and if we are prepared to share this knowledge with our clients in order to make them wiser.

Ultimately, success can be achieved if we help our clients prepare themselves for this journey towards the international environment. We, as education consultants, need to build our practice sharing our knowledge and experience with our clients in a way that will not only build and develop our clients' cultural awareness but will also give them the knowledge they need in order to study successfully in an international environment. Clients are, usually, worried about (or even afraid of) the process of internationalization and this is, partly, the reason why they seek the services of *AEC*. Interestingly, internationalisation, represented by the Laestrygonians, is the primary tool used in my workplace in order to help my clients reach their Ithaka, whatever this might be for each one of them.

In the Greek context, our clients are not only the prospective students but their parents as well (as shown in the *Odyssey* analogy). All Education Consultants need to cater for this fact in a way that is beneficial to both students and parents and not in a way that is advantageous only to our business. Parents, in the Greek context, are the financial and emotional supporters of the prospective students. They need to understand their children's "Ithakas" and be clear about what support they can provide towards their children's journey.

Another aspect that came out of my professional journey to Ithaka is the collaboration with other Education Consultants. This collaboration was something that was missing from my practice and my professional ontology. I understood that the isolation I was feeling was, unfortunately, well-justified. It was very difficult to find other consultants who would agree to take part in my research. This made me realise that their attitude promoted my isolation as a professional. During the professional interviews, I had the opportunity to meet other consultants who work in Greece and, in the process, have had more than an interview with most of them: having a professional conversation with people who share the same concerns as me and who also work in the same environment was delightful.

During the time I tried to find them and have them agree to be interviewed, I had the chance to travel to “Alexandria” in order to carry out research on the professionalisation of professions as well as on the identification of professionalism and the exploration of the view of other people on professionalism. My suggestion is that there is a need for Greek Education Consultants to collaborate in order to lobby the Greek State to recognise the role of education consultancy in the international context. In addition, there is a need for certification in education consultancy in the form of APEL and WBL degrees. The reason for this is that these degrees employ learning methods which validate the prior learning and knowledge of participants and include the assessment of practical projects that Education Consultants undertake and work on during their careers.

During my years of Education Consultancy in Greece, I felt the need for mentoring by more experienced Education Consultants. I needed guidance on improving my practice. I needed role models whose mentoring could improve not only my practice but theirs as well. Finally, as we are part of a globalised world, there is a need to collaborate with Education Consultants in the rest of the world via associations which already possess a Code of Ethics and implement working principles that can apply in the Greek context.

All the above, have been the suppliers, so to speak, of the ‘graphy’ in my autoethnographical boat. I had the opportunity to get out of the chaos of the Greek crisis and find aspects in my professional life that have allowed me to continue dreaming of a better professional future for education consultancy. Despite the crisis, I have found the way to light up inside me the hope that Greece can find a way out of this crisis if each of us, professionals, were achieving goals at a personal level first that bring benefits to the whole country. We are living in a globalized world and young people need to be ready for this. They need to bring cultural knowledge back to Greece and help Greece become connected to a globalized world once again. We, as Greeks, cannot stay in the past. We need to work and live in the present and build the right conditions for a flourishing future. Nobody has a ‘clean house’. During the last eight years that I have been living in Greece, I have observed that we

have a tendency to blame ourselves and others for everything. We need to change this. This can only be achieved if we see the present as an opportunity to form a better future. We need to change our Greek mindset and learn from the pain of the past: we must not keep the pain and scream without focusing on ways to heal, as Philoctetes did when visited by Odysseus on his way home. We need to do this so that our children have a future.

As Education Consultants, we need to get out of our 'gaining money' mentality and share our practices with others – not only in Greece but also internationally. Collaboration with everyone and everything can develop minds and people. We need to be pioneers of learning from our experience and provide field knowledge to others inside and outside the country. We, as Education Consultants, work with people so we have the power to change attributes and develop skills. We need to collaborate in order to shape others towards internationalisation by changing mindsets.

My professional Ithaca has taught me that knowledge and experience will never end and that this journey has not yet come to an end. I have to further develop my practice and I have to work harder in order to collaborate with other consultants to build an association that shares knowledge and practices, not only in Greece but all over the globe. In this way, we could end up establishing our occupation based on a global 'good' example of an Education Consultancy profession.

## **5.1 Final notes**

Ithaca is the home of Odysseus. It is a symbol for a highly desired object that drives behaviour and action. Even though Odysseus had tried for years to get home (in fact, throughout the epic), 'Ithaca' suggests that a person learns more from the journey than from reaching their destination. The experience I gained from this research project was invaluable and definitely unforgettable. The course I followed provided me with many new skills, tools and frameworks which I am regularly using in my personal and professional capacities. Most importantly, it changed my way of thinking. I found the



doctorate degree to be quite intensive and challenging but, above all, hugely beneficial. With work-based learning, I gained a completely new experience compared to my previous studies. Each one of these experiences served its purpose and life is a constant, ongoing, learning process which never ends.

Another important aspect of this long journey to 'Ithaka' related to the knowledge of how to conduct research. I have looked at how different scholars have conducted research at Level 8. Many of them were providing formal advice and tips on how to overcome difficulties in the journey through the research stage of the DProf. It must be said that conducting research on one's own teaches one a lot. Apart from the fact that it increases the level of mental development, it also teaches researchers how to employ different working methods and I think that this latter benefit is very valuable.

*Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.*

*Without her you would not have set out.* (Cavafy, Ithaka, lines 32-33)

This Doctorate of Professional Studies has been a marvellous lifetime experience for me. Without this submission, I would not have realised that being an Education Consultant in Greece is a long journey with many hardships, friendly and unfriendly, and I would not be the person and the mother that I am today.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Who I Am

#### Who I Am

Translated from the Website “Athina, Education Consultants”

([www.athinaedu.com](http://www.athinaedu.com))

(The following text appears on the website in Greek)

I was born and raised in Kavala. I received my primary education in state schools, but I also learned a lot through my extracurricular activities. I was a ‘good pupil’, interested in classical ballet (I followed the program of the Royal Academy of Dance and passed their exams all the way to Grade 7) and music [I had lessons on flute playing, as well as theoretical lessons on Composition and Harmony (Levels 1 & 2). I followed classes on the History of Music and I was a member of the Kavala Municipal Conservatory Choir). I was not good at languages. My greatest failures were in English and French examinations. I used to study a lot, but I could not deliver (I did not manage to get degrees in modern foreign languages). Nevertheless, in my adult life, I have been able to communicate with people from all over the world. I have been an ‘Adolescent MP’ at the Second Synod of Youth which was organized under the auspices of the Greek Parliament (1997). It was an interesting experience, as I delivered a speech on “Decentralization and Urbanisation”.

I have always liked travelling. We traveled a lot with my family. I now travel often around the world for business and pleasure. I think our bodies need care, but our minds and souls need new stimuli, too. Travelling offers just that. It broadens our minds. It helps us think a step further. I never loved going to camps. As a child, I only went to one camp, a music camp, where I had a great time and gained some life-long friendships. Enter summer schools – which were fun: I even now remember very vividly my experience in Great Britain at a Summer School, at the age of 12. Incredible as this may sound, I still maintain professional collaboration with this school. My student life ended with a failure. I did not succeed at the Panhellenic Examinations, the Greek

University Entrance Exams. I wanted to study at a University, but I could not put myself through the ordeal of resitting the exams.

So, I moved to Great Britain, where I studied English Literature and Teaching English as a Foreign Language. I did my BA (Hons) in English Studies, British Culture and Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Middlesex University. I had no intention of becoming a teacher, although I always played 'teacher' as a young girl. I just wanted to learn English 'well'. There was a certain degree of spontaneity, which came from being 18 – and this became a driving force for me. While at university, I came across some inspiring teaching and, as a result, I came to love teaching. I started working as a teacher for Muslim Women Programs (volunteer work for 2 years), in a number of British Colleges and Primary Schools (Enfield College, TLSI, Westminster Kingsway College, King's Fahad Primary School, Whichmore Hill Primary School), a Tutoring College in Greece (Stratigakis) and several Greek and Cypriot cultural schools (Teaching Greek as a Foreign Language). I was 19 when I first received my first salary. I really liked the 'transfer of knowledge'. I found it impressive that, through acquiring a foreign language, one can improve one's quality of life, especially when struggling to survive in a foreign country. Communicating with other cultures and contacting people from all over the world was decisive in the development of my personality, I think.

After receiving my first degree, I realized that exam phobia was the reason why I had previously failed the Greek Panhellenic Exams (called 'Panellinies', these exams are similar to the French Baccalaureate and the English A levels). I was determined to overcome my exam phobia and, thus, set myself the goal of getting to the level of being in a position to assess others. Since 2004, I have been an Examiner for Trinity College London. During those years, I estimate that I have examined around 8,000 people and have corrected more than 15,000 papers. Teaching is an integral part of my life. In fact, I have some teaching to do at every step of my professional life.

After my studies, I wanted to get out of the classroom. I was interested in how an educational system, a school, or even a single lesson is organized. So, I

proceeded with a Master's Degree in Management of Language Learning (Greenwich University). Managerial positions in education were my next professional step (Cambridge College of Learning first and, subsequently, Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College). My involvement with teachers' training arose from the positions I held in various colleges, including Trinity College London, where I was on the education and training panels. I have found that the journey from theory to practice is a long one and the road is full of obstacles. One cannot judge others if one does not judge themselves in the first place. One cannot make a suggestion about the professional career of others without examining all the relevant parameters and without considering the potential development of one's personality.

I believe that in such a professional position as described above, one needs to have the right amount of expert knowledge and be able to analyse research on educational issues. So, I headed for a research-training program (MRes in Research of Educational Issues) at the Institute of Education. This degree has given me the skills to research and analyse educational issues. I learned to research and implement the results of my research on real case studies. Throughout my academic and professional career, I have been concerned with the internationalisation of education. The transfer of knowledge became less of a focus for me and e-teaching took over. Communication, in general, and the way of teaching through e-learning has its own particularities. This realisation has led to my training on e-Learning, e-Teaching and e-Development (Greenwich University).

Subsequently, I became a member of the Q Group in the UK and in charge of the 'Flexi Learning' program. Writing material and implementing distance learning has provided me with the necessary skills to use new technologies for teaching and communication.

At the age of 26, I decided to take a break from the Educational Institutions for some years. I was curious to explore how companies work. This has been a life-changing experience for me. I have acquired business skills, come up with innovative ideas, start-ups and agile methods in the organisation processes. I

joined a dynamic team in the field of telecommunication and software design (Symbian Ltd). I was a member of the research team of the company and responsible for European programs and academic partnerships with universities.

Throughout my years of academic and professional career, I have aimed to improve knowledge and skills in the context of personal and social development. I believe in Lifelong Learning. My interest in this is presented and discussed in my doctoral dissertation. Through my DProf, I have been involved with the third generation of Work-Based Learning degrees and I investigate whether the educational culture of some peoples (British, Greek, Cypriot and Chinese) adopt this form of learning. The doctoral process is a life experience. It is a journey that makes one more aware of the particular issue that one examines and makes one more 'professional' in one's field. One learns a lot, not only about one's science but also about one's self. A 'Dr.' in front of one's name is not just 2 letters or just a title; it hides a whole research and personal story.

I am a mother since September 2013. This has been a delightful experience and a sweet adventure. Maternity is the completion of a woman and, at the same time, a challenge. The challenge relates to the wish of a parent to give their child the ability to develop skills that make the child a 'Citizen of the 21st Century'.

From 2010 until today, I set up my business as an Education Consultant under the name *Athina Educational Consultants*. My private office is in the area of Maroussi, Athens. It is at this location that I offer counseling on educational issues. It is also at this location that I provide guidance to parents and students (the latter studying in all grades and levels of education), university students, graduates, unemployed people and education professionals. The information I provide relates to school life and career, but also to their academic and professional careers.

## Appendix 2 – Parents Together



**«Γονείς μαζί...»**

Όλοι μαζί  
ανακαλύπτουμε  
περισσότερα

Εκπαιδευόμαστε | Εκφραζόμαστε | Βελτιωνόμαστε | Κοινωνικοποιούμαστε

 Βασ. Σοφίας 60, 151 24 Μαρούσι	 210 8010786	 info@athinaedu.com	 www.athinaedu.com
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## Appendix 3 – Greek International Women Awards

### Greek International Women Awards

#### Application Process

Prospective candidates were asked to describe their distinctive achievements and why they believed they deserve to win this award.

My reply was as follows:

*“My role is to coach people on how to live, study and work in an international environment with multicultural influences. Each person has a different personality and is at a different stage in his or her life. To cater for this, my approach is customized to the needs of the individual.*

*I have advised more than 155 people in Greece, each case approached as a unique project. These people were:*

- *parents,*
- *children without specific goals who had to learn how to set and achieve goals independently,*
- *students wanting to start and/or continue their studies in an international environment,*
- *unemployed people who learned how things that are often considered as disadvantages can be used as, and can be turned into, advantages for their future life.*

*I have developed innovative projects that promote the Greek culture and history abroad, using the City of Athens as a classroom.*

*As a volunteer, I help people to be part of modern society and achieve a good degree of quality of life, irrespective of their age.*

*Overall, I think that I deserve this award because I have developed an innovative methodology in supporting and coaching people on how to develop themselves and excel in a demanding global society. Besides, being a freelance consultant, I have no standard working hours and I do a lot of traveling. At the same time, I am a mother and a woman who wants to give the best to her family. Achieving a balance between personal and professional life is very challenging but makes me feel happy and fulfilled.”*



My response to the question of identifying the dimension of our national or international impact was as follows:

*“I have been exploring the international environment from different academic and professional positions. I have assessed verbally 8,000 people and have graded the written work of 12,000 people from all over the world. I have taught minority groups, refugees and people from different cultures. I have experienced international education; I have lived and worked in multicultural environments.*

*After 15 years of living abroad and after having developed new skills and experiences, I decided to return to Greece and set up my company. Athina, Education Consultants ([www.athinaedu.com](http://www.athinaedu.com)) introduced the concept of education consultancy in all fields of education and professional development. I advise people not only on how to become global citizens but also on how to work and study in a multicultural environment in the 21st century.*

*Through my voluntary work in the Greek division of the International Inner Wheel and the 50plus Hellas, I have the opportunity to work towards international concepts localized in the Greek society.”*

The organisational committee of the awards also asked prospective candidates to describe their aspirations for the future. This was a difficult question for me and my answer was as follows:

*“I believe in the global transfer of knowledge. I am amazed by the amount of opportunities that people can explore through the internationalisation of Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, Distance and Flexible Learning. I am inspired by the fact that we are able to teach and educate people everywhere in the world, at any age. International, multicultural experiences can improve the quality of life of individuals and also push the society a step forward.*

*My professional aspiration is to increase the number of people that participate in an international exchange of knowledge and bring back the best examples of practice to my home country.*

*As a mother, my aspiration for the future is to make my children citizens of the world and provide them with many happy childhood moments. My greatest desire is to teach them the required skills which will help them become global citizens and the means by which they will be able to excel in the 21st Century.”*

Candidates were also asked to identify one challenge that they had to face in their career and describe how they managed to overcome it. My response was as follows:

*“The biggest challenge in my career was when, after 15 successful years in London, I decided to return back to Greece and set up my own company, Athina, Education Consultants. Not only did that coincide with the beginning of the economic crisis, but I also had to introduce a new concept, the multidimensional role of an education consultant.*

*I managed to overcome this challenge and thrive in a turbulent period, heavily relying on my multidimensional and multicultural professional experiences and on the innovative approach in consulting that I have developed.*

*I believe that in a fast-moving world one cannot wait for a perfectly tailored position to open up. Instead, one must seize the opportunities that may present to themselves and develop the necessary initiatives. This is exactly what I have done.”*

### Nomination

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

FINALISTS

				
APHRODITE BLETAS Lawyer and Mediator	OLGA BORNOZI Managing Director, Capital Link	ANASTASIA ELPIDA KOKKOTA Founder & CEO, Muse Sandals	OLGA STAVROPOULOU Social Entrepreneur, Co-founder of Social Enterprise knowl for Education and Lifelong Learning, Founder & Managing partner at Miltos Consulting S.A	HELEN ZAHOS Registered Emergency Nurse/ Paramedic/ Humanitarian

ALSO NOMINATED

Natasha Athanasiadou Vicky Balomenou Diana Constantinide Eleni Hioureas	Eirini Kakoulidou Ferenike Kantartzi Maria Karra Rosanna Mortoglou	Yvette Nahmia-Messinas Eleni Tsakopoulos Kounalakis Stella Tsitsoula
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SOCIAL SCIENCE

FINALISTS

				
KATERINA GAVRIELIDOU Political Scientist	ANASTASIA MISIRLI Educator - Early Childhood Education and ICT	AIKATERINI TSEMPERLIDOU Author	NANA TSOUMAKI Education Consultant	ELENI ZAVERDA Medical - Paramedical Tattoo Artist / Sculptress

ALSO NOMINATED

Athanasia Davou Virginia Georgiou Dr Maria Ioannou	Catherine Marie Karatzas Fani Papageorgiou Alexandra Symeonidou	Irene Theodoropoulou Helen Xanthaki
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32

## Appendix 4 – Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA)

### Abstract

#### SP4.9b: Teaching excellence as a tool to better assimilate international students: Lessons learned from Greek students

**Athina Tsoumaki, Athina Education Consultants and Kosmas-Othon Kosmopoulos, HULT International Business School**

*Oral presentation, Room 227*

This session focuses on lessons learned from Greek students who pursue further studies in the UK. According to UKCISA, Greece is the 5th largest European country sending students to the UK. Real case studies are used to assess how the cultural diversity and the global identity of the students together with their experience have affected their academic progress through HE in the UK. A comparison is attempted between the student learning experience in the two countries and their learning frameworks. The session concludes with recommendations on how teaching excellence can be used as a tool to better assimilate international students.

## **Appendix 5 – London Statement**

### **Statement of Principles for the Ethical Recruitment of International Students by Education Agents and Consultants**

**(Also known as the London Statement)**

**March 2012**

#### **1. Introduction**

##### **1.1 Context**

Increasing numbers of students now move across national borders seeking education and training opportunities in order to gain internationally recognised qualifications. The OECD publication Education at a Glance 2010 sources OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics, which estimated that more than three million tertiary students were educated outside their home country in 2008. Some commentators project that global demand for international education could be expected to rise to almost eight million by 2025.

The growth in the number of international students has been accompanied by an increase in the number of education agents and consultants who provide services to them. Education agents and consultants are integral and important stakeholders in international education.

##### **1.2 Background to the Initiative**

The Roundtable on the Integrity of International Education is a forum at which the UK, Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the US meet to share knowledge and experience and identify common areas of practice and concern, as well as scope for collaboration. At the initial meeting of the Roundtable in 2010 Australia proposed developing a joint international code of ethics for international education agents which would facilitate a common approach and raise ethical standards.

The development of a 'Statement of Principles for the Ethical Recruitment of International Students by Education Agents and Consultants' is the initiative that flowed from that proposal. The UK, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand agreed to the statement of principles on 16 March.

Each of these countries is now working towards implementing the principles. This includes training and communications for Agents.

##### **1.3 Purpose**

This high-level Statement of Principles promotes best practice among the education agents and consultant professions that support international students. The Statement of Principles is a unifying set of understandings for the recruitment of, and related services provided to, students in international education which serve to promote best practice among education agents and consultants. The Statement will be reflected in each country's approach to international education.

A report on activity will be presented to the Roundtable meeting in 2013.

A number of factors which could be addressed under each principle when developing initiatives and actions are provided in the Attachment on page 3.

## 2. Ethical Framework

The Statement of Principles is based on an underlying ethical framework of:

**Integrity** - being straightforward and honest in all professional and business dealings;

**Objectivity** - not allowing professional judgment to be compromised by bias or conflict of interest;

**Professional competence and due care** - maintaining professional knowledge and professional service, and acting diligently;

**Transparency** - declaring conflicts of interest to all clients, especially when service fees are charged to both the education provider and the prospective student;

**Confidentiality** - respecting and preserving the confidentiality of personal information acquired and not releasing such information to third parties without proper authority;

**Professional behaviour** – acting in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and dealing with clients competently, diligently and fairly; and

**Professionalism and purpose** - acting in a manner that will serve the interests of clients and the wider society even at the expense of self-interest; recognising that dedication to these principles is the means by which the profession can earn the trust and confidence of stakeholder groups (individual clients, the public, business and government).

## 3. Principles

Principle 1 - Agents and consultants practice responsible business ethics.

Principle 2 - Agents and consultants provide current, accurate and honest information in an ethical manner.

Principle 3 - Agents and consultants develop transparent business relationships with students and providers through the use of written agreements.

Principle 4 - Agents and consultants protect the interests of minors.

Principle 5 - Agents and consultants provide current and up-to-date information that enables international students to make informed choices when selecting which agent or consultant to employ.

Principle 6 - Agents and consultants act professionally.

Principle 7 - Agents and consultants work with destination countries and providers to raise ethical standards and best practice.

## **Attachment to the London Statement**

**March 2012**

This Attachment to the London Statement of Principles provides suggestions on a number of factors that could be addressed under each of the principles.

### **Principle 1: Agents and consultants practise responsible business ethics**

- Avoiding conflicts of interest
- Observing appropriate levels of confidentiality and transparency
- Acting professionally, honestly and responsibly
- Refraining from being party to any attempt by students or others to engage in fraudulent visa applications
- Acting in the best interests of the student at all times
- Declaring conflicts of interest
- Being transparent in fees to be paid by students and commissions paid by providers
- Providing clear avenues for handling complaints and resolving disputes
- Complying with relevant laws and regulations.

### **Principle 2: Agents and consultants provide current, accurate and honest information in an ethical manner**

- Providing realistic and appropriate information that is tailored to the individual student's circumstances, particularly in relation to language skills, capacity to pay and level of study
- Specifying the rights and responsibilities of the student in the country of destination
- Refraining from claiming a direct government endorsement or privileged relationship with a public official or member of the government where one does not exist; including for example the misuse of national brand logos
- Providing a registration number or other identifier on advertising material
- Using institutions' officially approved material in promoting providers with whom agents have an agreement.

### **Principle 3: Agents and consultants develop transparent business relationships with students and providers through the use of written agreements**

- Signed by the student and the agent
- Signed by the provider and the agent
- Include information on the arrangements put in place by agents and consultants on behalf of the student, such as itemised payment schedules of fees and services, and refund and transfer policies
- Provide details on information provided under Principles 1 and 2, as a means of guiding agents and consultants to give appropriate information to students so that both students and agents understand what has been agreed to
- Maintain student confidentiality
- Are archived in an appropriate manner so that the agreements can be made available to the student or an appropriate authority within a reasonable timeframe.

### **Principle 4: Agents and consultants protect the interests of minors**

- Ensuring that the prospective student has adequate representation and support from a guardian and/or legal counsel during meetings with the agent or consultant and that this is recorded as informed consent before any money changes hands
- Ensuring that the client has the legal capacity to enter into any commitment
- Acting not only in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, but competently, diligently and fairly as befits dealings with minors.

**Principle 5: Agents and consultants provide current and up-to-date information that enables international students to make informed choices when selecting which agent or consultant to employ**

- Providing information to students about the accreditations the agents have met, the training they have undertaken, the memberships they hold to professional associations or processes undertaken to become registered and accredited education agents and consultants
- Providing information about themselves that support comparison of registration, qualifications and experience.

**Principle 6: Agents and consultants act professionally**

- Participating in training courses and professional development wherever possible
- Becoming members of professional associations and networks that promote and support best practice in the recruitment of international students.

**Principle 7: Agents and consultants work with destination countries and providers to raise ethical standards and best practice**

- Sharing information on best practice in the recruitment of international students by education agents and consultants.

**Appendix 6 – “Ithaka”, Constantine Cavafy, 1911**

Ιθάκη (Greek)	Ithaka (English)
<p>Σα βγεις στον πηγαιμό για την Ιθάκη, να εύχεσαι νάναι μακρύς ο δρόμος, γεμάτος περιπέτειες, γεμάτος γνώσεις. Τους Λαιστρυγόνες και τους Κύκλωπας, τον θυμωμένο Ποσειδώνα μη φοβάσαι, τέτοια στον δρόμο σου ποτέ σου δεν θα βρεις, αν μόν’ η σκέψις σου υψηλή, αν εκλεκτή συγκίνησης το πνεύμα και το σώμα σου αγγίζει. Τους Λαιστρυγόνες και τους Κύκλωπας, τον άγριο Ποσειδώνα δεν θα συναντήσεις, αν δεν τους κουβανείς μες στην ψυχή σου, αν η ψυχή σου δεν τους στήνει εμπρός σου.</p> <p>Να εύχεσαι νάναι μακρύς ο δρόμος. Πολλά τα καλοκαιρινά πρωιά να είναι που με τι ευχαρίστησι, με τι χαρά θα μπαίνεις σε λιμένας πρωτοειδωμένους· να σταματήσεις σ’ εμπορεία Φοινικικά, και τες καλές πραγμάτειες ν’ αποκτήσεις, σεντέφια και κοράλλια, κεχριμπάρια κ’ έβενους, και ηδονικά μυρωδικά κάθε λογής, όσο μπορείς πιο άφθονα ηδονικά μυρωδικά· σε πόλεις Αιγυπτιακές πολλές να πας, να μάθεις και να μάθεις απ’ τους σπουδασμένους.</p> <p>Πάντα στον νου σου νάχεις την Ιθάκη. Το φθάσιμον εκεί είν’ ο προορισμός σου. Αλλά μη βιάζεις το ταξείδι διόλου. Καλλίτερα χρόνια πολλά να διαρκέσει· και γέρος πια ν’ αράξεις στο νησί, πλούσιος με όσα κέρδισες στον</p>	<p>As you set out for Ithaka hope the voyage is a long one, full of adventure, full of discovery. Laistrygonians and Cyclops, angry Poseidon—don’t be afraid of them: you’ll never find things like that on your way as long as you keep your thoughts raised high, as long as a rare excitement stirs your spirit and your body. Laistrygonians and Cyclops, wild Poseidon—you won’t encounter them unless you bring them along inside your soul, unless your soul sets them up in front of you.</p> <p>Hope the voyage is a long one. May there be many a summer morning when, with what pleasure, what joy, you come into harbors seen for the first time; may you stop at Phoenician trading stations to buy fine things, mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony, sensual perfume of every kind— as many sensual perfumes as you can; and may you visit many Egyptian cities to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.</p> <p>Keep Ithaka always in your mind. Arriving there is what you are destined for. But do not hurry the journey at all. Better if it lasts for years, so you are old by the time you reach the island, wealthy with all you have gained on the way, not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.</p> <p>Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey. Without her you would not have set out. She has nothing left to give you now.</p>



<p>δρόμο, μη προσδοκώντας πλούτη να σε δώσει η Ιθάκη.</p> <p>Η Ιθάκη σ' έδωσε τ' ωραίο ταξίδι. Χωρίς αυτήν δεν θάβγαινες στον δρόμο. Άλλα δεν έχει να σε δώσει πια.</p> <p>Κι αν πτωχική την βρεις, η Ιθάκη δεν σε γέλασε. Έτσι σοφός που έγινες, με τόση πείρα, ήδη θα το κατάλαβες η Ιθάκες τι σημαίνουν.</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Ποιήματα 1897-1933, 1καρος 1984 edition, <b>and in of the quotation</b> <a href="http://www.kavafis.gr">http://www.kavafis.gr</a></p>	<p>And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you. Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.</p> <p>Translation in:</p> <p>Savidis, G. (1992) <i>C. P. Cavafy: collected poems</i>. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Revised Edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.</p>
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## Appendix 7 – Ethics Form

Dear (name),

I am a DProf student at the WBL centre of Middlesex University. In my research project, I would like to identify the cross-cultural challenges faced by the International Centres of Middlesex University and, at the same time, develop a cultural awareness strategy for WBL as an International Centre which will address issues of cultural sensitivity and identification.

The basis of my research will be an assessment of the internationalization of the DProf programme. To do this, I must understand how the educational culture of each WBL International Centre interfaces with the UK. I will investigate this dialectic with the intention of making the programme more attractive internationally. Specific research questions include the following:

- Given that: (i) Portwood (2000) determined that internationalization can be achieved through a range of business models and (ii) Cyprus and Hong Kong are branch offices while Greece is a franchise, what are the advantages and disadvantages of that strategy and how have Heads, Advisers and Students reacted to it? Keeping in mind that each educational culture has different characteristics, what should the advisers' approach to students be?
- Considering the specific characteristics of the UK education, what is the best way of internationalizing the DProf programme?
- How can someone work in an international environment without losing his/her British characteristics?

This research will, hopefully, allow me to understand the issues (if any) that the International Centres have with the UK Head offices regarding processes and pedagogy. My perspective is not necessarily critical, nor do I assume that large-scale change will be necessary. But some reform may ensure optimum benefits for the students and the organisation. In order to understand the issues, I would like to explore the various points of engagement with the UK office at a strategic level with the appropriate senior local Managers, Advisers, Students and local Administrators. I would also like to discuss cross-cultural issues in the UK with Administrators, Managers and Module Leaders. In this way, I hope to be able to identify how the programme can be developed to raise international standards and achieve greater participation.

The project originally had the approval of the Director of Master's/Doctorate Programmes in Professional Studies, Dr. Pauline Armsby. I would welcome your support in this project by being a formal stakeholder of the project.

I am currently at the first stage of my project, where I arrange interviews with the stakeholders and the Head or Deputy Head of the International Centres of the WBL Department. I hope you agree to attend an interview in order to discuss my research project. Please let me know if you agree. We can then discuss the details of the interview. I would prefer to run the interview face-to-face, however, if you prefer to do it over the phone, that can also be arranged. Finally, if you are planning to visit London, please let me know, as we might be able to run the interview at that time.

Thanks in advance for your time. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Athina Tsoumaki

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in my research.

For my research project, I would like to identify the cross-cultural challenges faced by the International Centres of Middlesex University and, at the same time, develop a cultural awareness strategy for WBL as an International Centre which will address issues of cultural sensitivity and identification.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It involves an interview of approximately one (1) hour, to take place in a mutually agreed location. The interview will cover five areas: (i) aims of the research, (ii) organisational history of WBL at Middlesex University, (iii) organisational structure of WBL at Middlesex University, (iv) pedagogy, as used in the centres and (v) areas in need of investigation. You are free to decline to answer certain interview questions, if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without penalties or negative consequences to you or your work by simply advising the researcher.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

All information provided will be considered as completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for the period of this research in a locked office in my house. Only people associated with this project will have access to these data.

Thank you again for your participation.

Kind Regards,

Athina Tsoumaki

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Athina Tsoumaki , DProf Candidate of IWBL, Middlesex University.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that quotations from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications that may ensue from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any without giving a reason and without prejudice.

I agree to be interviewed for this project. [please circle]:

Yes No

I agree to have my interview audio-recorded.

Yes No

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that ensues from this research.

Yes No

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participant,



Thank you for participating in my research.

For my research project 'Professionalisation of the Education Consultant in a Culturally Diverse Context', I would like to identify how education consultants in Greece view their practice. This research element is to supplement previous research carried out about international programmes within higher education. These international programmes looked at work-based practice and administration in three sites: Greece, Cyprus and Hong Kong. My research project concentrates on three differing Greek consultancy categories: (i) education consultants who act as agents for Universities, (ii) legal consultants and (iii) the education consultant who bases their work on enhancing the student's experience.

My main question will be:

How do education consultants in Greece view their practice?

The Interview Questions will be:

What training have you received in order to become an Education Consultant?

What is your professional and academic background?

What practices do you use in order to support the undergraduate or postgraduate student who wants to start or continue their studies abroad?

What are the main factors influencing your way of working?

Participation in this study is voluntary. It involves an interview of approximately 30 minutes, to take place in a mutually agreed location or via Skype. The interview will cover two areas: (i) your background as an Education Consultant and (ii) the practices you used in your consultancy. You are free to decline to answer certain interview questions, if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without penalties or negative consequences to you or your work by simply advising the researcher.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis.

All information provided will be considered as completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for the period of this research in a locked office in my house. Only people associated with this project will have access to these data.

Thank you again for your participation.

Kind Regards,

Athina Tsoumaki

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Athina Tsoumaki, DProf Candidate of Middlesex University.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that quotations from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications that may ensue from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without giving a reason and without prejudice.

I agree to be interviewed for this project. [please circle]:

Yes No

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

Yes No

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that ensues from this research.

Yes No

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please print)

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant Information Sheet**  
**Doctorate in Professional Studies**  
**Participants: Education Consultants**

**Research Project Title**  
**Professionalisation of the Education Consultant in a Culturally Diverse Context**

**Invitation**

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide to do so, it is important you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If

there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, please contact me at any time. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

**What is the project's purpose?**

This research project aims to investigate how education consultants in Greece view their practice. This research element is to supplement previous research carried out about international programmes within higher education. These international programmes looked at work-based practice and administration in three sites: Greece, Cyprus and Hong Kong. My research project concentrates on three differing Greek consultancy categories: (i) education consultants who act as agents for Universities, (ii) legal consultants and (iii) the education consultant who bases their work on enhancing the student's experience.

**Why have I been invited to take part in the study?**

You have been invited to take part in this study because you are practising education consultancy services in Greece.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be able to keep a copy of this information sheet and you should indicate your agreement on the consent form. You can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

You can request for your data to be withdrawn until 30/08/2018 without giving a reason and without prejudice. Identifiable data already collected will be retained if you allow us to. Anonymous data already collected will be used because we cannot trace the latter information back to you after the 30/08/2018. No further data would be collected or any other research procedures would be carried out on or in relation to you.

**What will my involvement require?**

If you agree to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and a copy of your signed consent form. The research will last up to December 2018, submission date of the thesis, but your involvement would only be for a 30 minutes interview via Skype or face to face if you wish. Please arrange an interview with the researcher via email at [tsoumaki@gmail.com](mailto:tsoumaki@gmail.com) or via phone (the researcher will call you). There are no other commitments or lifestyle restrictions associated with participating.

**What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?**

Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages or discomfort.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will have a beneficial impact on education consultancy practices.

**What happens when the research study stops?**

Should the research stop earlier than planned and you are affected in any way, we will inform you and explain why.

**What if there is a problem?**

Any complaint or concern about any aspect of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed. Please contact Paula Nottingham, [P.Nottingham@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:P.Nottingham@mdx.ac.uk) who acts as my supervisor.

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Personal data [name, contact details, audio/video recordings] will be handled in accordance with the {UK} Data Protection Act 1998 so that unauthorised individuals will not have access to them. Your personal data will be accessed, processed and securely destroyed by Athina Tsoumaki.

You will not be able to be identified or identifiable in any reports or publications. Your institution will also not be identified or identifiable. Any data collected about you in interview will be stored in a form protected by passwords and other relevant security processes and technologies.

Data collected may be shared in an anonymised form to allow reuse by the research team and other third parties. These anonymised data will not allow any individuals or their institutions to be identified or identifiable.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

Results of the research will be published. You will not be identified in any report or publication. Your institution will not be identified in any report or publication.

**Full contact details of researcher**

Athina Tsoumaki

Address: 6, York Road, London, N11 2TG, UK

Email: [tsoumaki@gmail.com](mailto:tsoumaki@gmail.com)

Tel: +306979983685

Skype ID: nana.tsoumaki

**Who has reviewed the project?**

*This research has been looked at by an independent group of people, called an Ethics Committee, to protect your interests.*

**Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.**



# Appendix 8 – Work-Based Learning Poster

**Cultural awareness strategy for Work Based Learning (WBL). An international study.**  
**Athina Tsoumaki, Middlesex University, UK**

<p><b>Research Background</b></p> <p>Work Based Learning (WBL) has been considered as a significant element of professional development and Lifelong Learning (Stem, 1997), (Deering, 1997). This is also underlined by the European Union's commitment to Lifelong Learning as a global strategy for all European countries (Toussaints, Antoniadou, 2008).</p> <p>The cultural diversity of the universities provides the need to create centres where academics operate beyond local and national perspectives. "Internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions - and even - individuals - to cope with the global academic environment..." (Albath &amp; Knight, 2007: 290-291). This research identifies the cross-cultural problems that the international centres of UK Universities might have, and develops a cultural awareness strategy for WBL as an international centre.</p>	<p><b>Research aims</b></p> <p>The aim of the project is to examine the international British education and how ethnocentric education is exported. In order to understand the issues for the "home site" and those of the branches the research explores the various points of engagement, at a strategic level with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UK Centre of WBL</li> <li>• Greek Centre of WBL</li> <li>• Cypriot Centre of WBL</li> <li>• Hong Kong Centre of WBL</li> </ul> <p>by interviewing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads of each centre</li> <li>• Senior local Managers</li> <li>• Advisers</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Administrators</li> </ul>	<p><b>Methodology</b></p> <p>The research will employ Soft System Methodology (SSM), it focuses on the development of an improved proposal through real world applicability rather than theoretical development. The research is aiming to create a system based on the cultural awareness of the WBL as an international centre. This research will carried out per the 7 stages of the SSM.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 20%;">Activity</th> <th>Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Stage 1</b> The problem situation unstructured</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading of the existing literature</li> <li>• Make few presumptions about the nature of the situation</li> <li>• Make a decision who are the stakeholders and to what extent they will be involved</li> <li>• Interviews with the Stakeholders</li> <li>• Collect data for the organizational history, structure, number of students, business module and pedagogy</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Stage 2</b> The problem situation expressed</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a detailed description, a "rich picture"</li> <li>• Interviews with Heads, administrators, module leaders, advisors and students</li> <li>• Identify the involvement in the programme, deans and learn, the environment in which they operate (including activities, processes) and how and where the interests agree or conflict between the people involved in the DProf programmes in UK, Greece, Cyprus and Hong Kong</li> <li>• Define the "arena of concern" (what is agreed and what is still unresolved)</li> <li>• CATWOE (Checkland, 1990) checklist: C refers to students and stakeholders who are beneficial from the system A refers to Heads, Module leaders, advisors, administrators who transform inputs and outputs T refers to the inputs into outputs. 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<b>Stage 1</b> The problem situation unstructured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading of the existing literature</li> <li>• Make few presumptions about the nature of the situation</li> <li>• Make a decision who are the stakeholders and to what extent they will be involved</li> <li>• Interviews with the Stakeholders</li> <li>• Collect data for the organizational history, structure, number of students, business module and pedagogy</li> </ul>																	
<b>Stage 2</b> The problem situation expressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a detailed description, a "rich picture"</li> <li>• Interviews with Heads, administrators, module leaders, advisors and students</li> <li>• Identify the involvement in the programme, deans and learn, the environment in which they operate (including activities, processes) and how and where the interests agree or conflict between the people involved in the DProf programmes in UK, Greece, Cyprus and Hong Kong</li> <li>• Define the "arena of concern" (what is agreed and what is still unresolved)</li> <li>• CATWOE (Checkland, 1990) checklist: C refers to students and stakeholders who are beneficial from the system A refers to Heads, Module leaders, advisors, administrators who transform inputs and outputs T refers to the inputs into outputs. The systems of each international centre what processes, movements, conversions of international centres take place? W refers to the relevant world views taken from the interviewees what is going on in the wider world that is influencing and shaping the "situation" and need for the system to adapt? O refers to Stakeholders and Head of the international centres E refers to outside the system which it takes as given which will be specific from the 1st part of the interview (e.g. trends, events and demands of the political, legal, economic, social, demographic, technological, ethical, competitive, natural environments).</li> </ul>																	
<b>Stage 3</b> Root definitions of relevant systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a draft strategy (referring to the business models, and the cross-cultural influence of the international centres in Greece, Cyprus, UK and Hong Kong)</li> </ul>																	
<b>Stage 4</b> Making and testing conceptual models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the draft strategy with Heads, Module Leaders, Advisors, and Administrators</li> <li>• Compare and contrast the model and the reality.</li> </ul>																	
<b>Stage 5</b> Comparing conceptual models with reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certain possible changes on the strategy.</li> </ul>																	
<b>Stage 6</b> Identify feasible and desirable changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put into practice the most desirable and feasible changes</li> </ul>																	
<b>Stage 7</b> Action to improve the problem situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion with all the participants the improved version of the strategy.</li> </ul>																	

**Research Questions**

**Research Impact**

This is a research project on cultural differences of DProf Learners in the UK University. The project is expected to contribute to the knowledge in the area of research, police and practice of DProf researchers. As a result of the project, recommendations will be provided to the key issues in cultural differences of DProf Learners and proposed solutions.

**Questions? Suggestions? Ideas?**

Please contact us: **Athina Tsoumaki** : [tsoumaki@gmail.com](mailto:tsoumaki@gmail.com)    Supervisor: **Paul Gibbs**: [p.gibbs@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:p.gibbs@mdx.ac.uk)    Consultant: **Heather Clay**: [h.clay@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:h.clay@mdx.ac.uk)

## Appendix 9 – Curriculum Vitae Template for the Clients of *Athina*, *Education Consultants*

**(Full Name)**

Date of Birth: Address:  
Tel.: +30 Mobile: +30 E-mail:

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Personal Statement  
*See notes*

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Maximum 100 words

How important is your working field for you?

What is the level of your academic and working experience so far?

Why do you want to continue your studies in this field?

Final statement – What do you want the person reading this statement to remember about you?

---

Academic Education  
*Add the appropriate details*

---

University:  
School:  
Degree:  
Duration:  
Thesis:  
Specialization:  
Grade:

---

Research Work

---

I have submitted my paper titled (title of paper) for approval to (name of journal)

---

Professional Experience

---

Company:  
Webpage:  
Job Title:  
Work status:  
Duration:  
Job Responsibilities:  
Proud of: *Here you can add examples such as:*  
*Helping with the human resources management of the business,*  
*Reducing the amount of wasted time using Gantt charts,*  
*I have established successful technical notes, etc.*

---

Personal Skills  
*Add a maximum of 3*

---

What are your personal skills?

What evidence can you provide that can show that you actually possess these skills?

---

IT Skills

---

Software:

Operational Systems: *Here you can provide answers such as:  
Excellent skills on both Windows and Macintosh  
environments*

---

Languages spoken

---

- Greek: mother tongue
- English: *degree, organization, grade, date*
- Other languages (if any):

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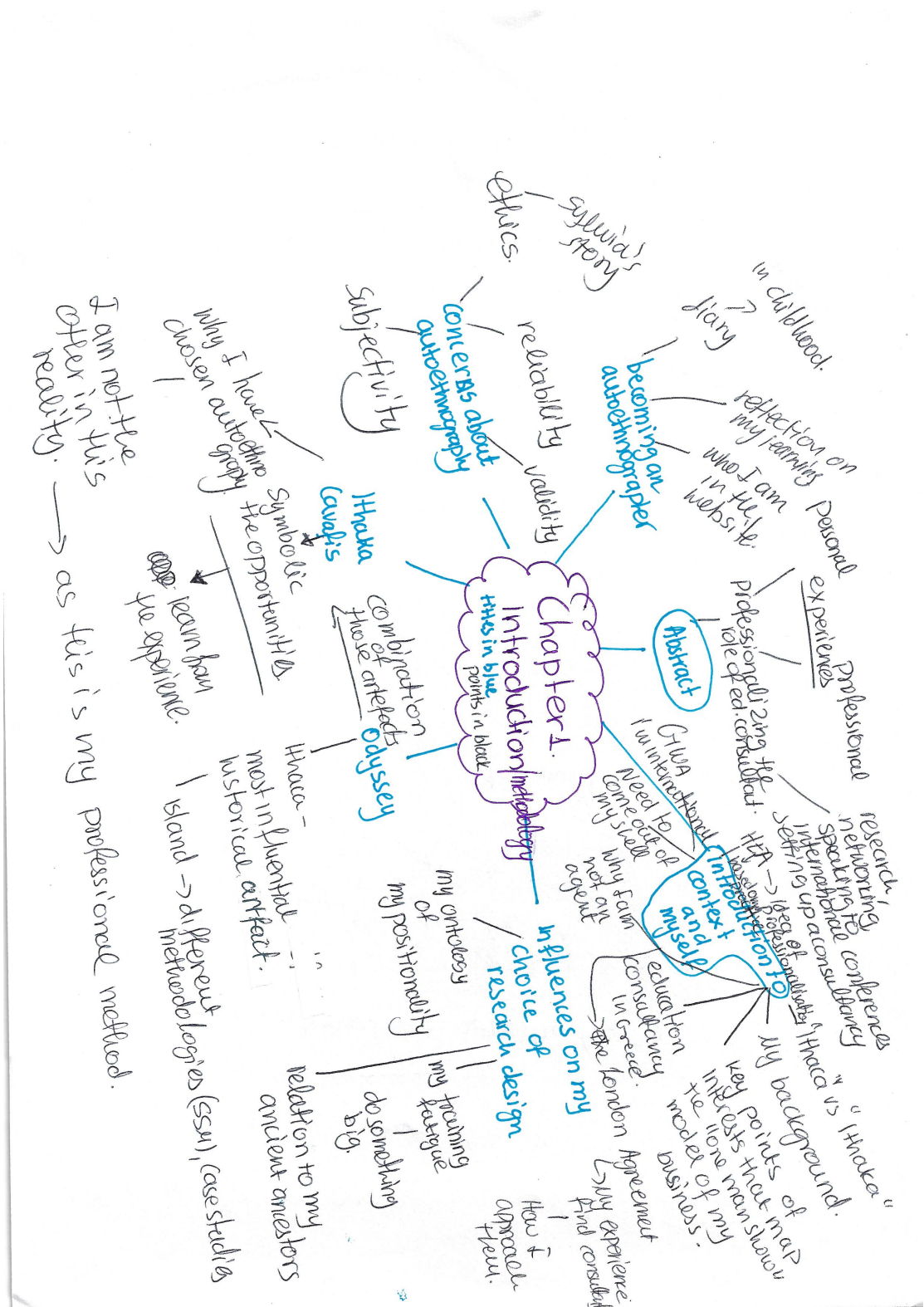
Leisure Activities

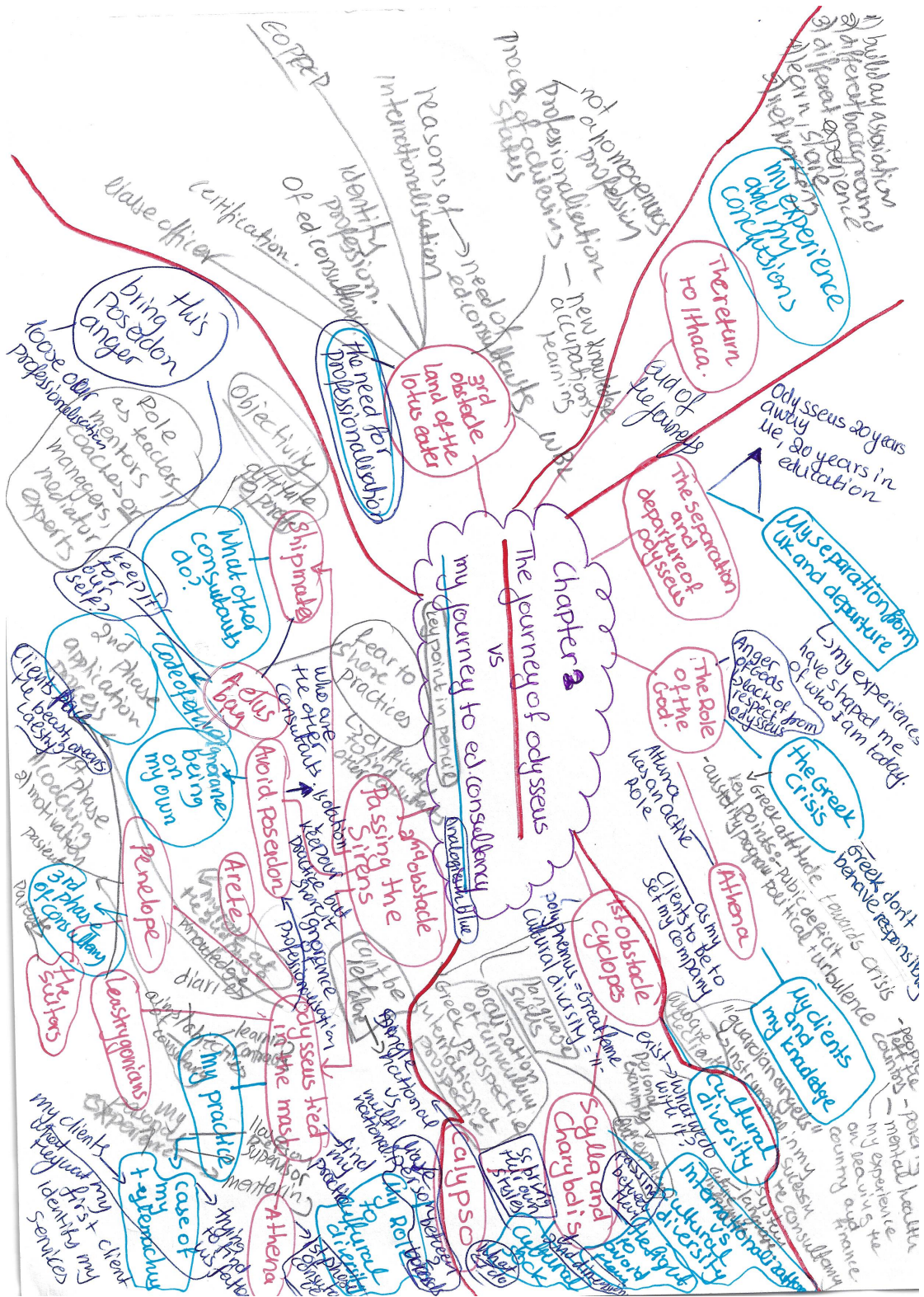
*Add a maximum of 3*

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**Appendix 10 – Mind Maps**

An example of the Mind Maps referred to in the main text are the following:





## Appendix 11 – Children and Families in Adverse Life Situations - Article

Women For Europe 9

“ The children lead Europe into the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century. Decisive dedication to their rights”

Syros, Greece: 5-6 April 2019

### WORKSHOP 1: FAMILY

#### Children and families in adverse life situations:

*What is the role of Education in adverse life situations? How Inner Wheel can draw a strategy on supporting people with adverse childhood experiences*

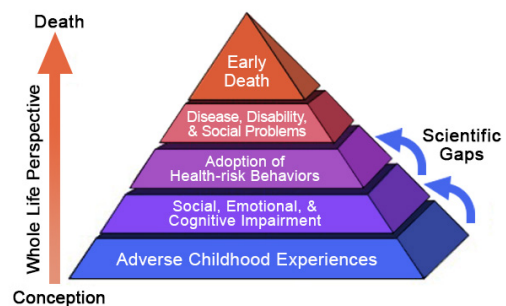
**Author:** Nana Tsoumaki, 247 District Secretary 2018-2019, Education Consultant and Director at ‘Athina Education Consultants’.

#### Abstract

This paper focuses on the children and families who face adverse life situations. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are considered as an obstacle to personal development. The paper presents the role of Non-Governmental Women’s Associations, such as Inner Wheel (IW), in instances where people live through ACEs by giving an example of the analogy with Homer’s *Odyssey with their experiences*. It ultimately suggests specific educational actions that can transform the ACEs (i.e. the “obstacles”) to “opportunities”, as the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy illustrates in his celebrated poem “Ithaka”.

#### Introduction to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The experience of events or conditions that cause inordinate stress can negatively affect development in childhood. “Adverse Childhood Experiences” (ACEs) are typically accompanied by levels of biological stress that is “toxic” (Middlebrooks & Audage, 2008). This has a negative effect on the physical and mental health development of a child. ACEs include: (a) physical abuse, (b) sexual abuse, (c) emotional abuse, (d) physical neglect, (e) emotional neglect, (f) intimate partner violence, (g) mother treated violently, (h) substance misuse within household, (i) household mental illness, (j) parental separation or divorce, (k) incarcerated household member. In recent research, chronic economic hardship (Evans & Schamberg, 2009) and social exclusion by peers (Finkelhor et al, 2013) have been added to this list. Researchers have found that “early experiences and environmental influences can leave a lasting signature on the genetic predispositions that affect emerging brain architecture and long-term health” (Shonkoff & Garner 2012 p.232). Many studies have also examined the relationship between ACEs and a variety of known risk factors for disease, disability and early mortality, as the pyramid shows.



## Non-Governmental Women's Associations towards ACEs

Non-Governmental Women's Associations, such as Inner Wheel, are intent on helping children and families with ACEs. There are various projects all over the world that International Inner Wheel has been involved in, all aiming to support children with different forms of ACEs. However, it is noticeable that most NGOs are focusing on giving support by providing these children with every day goods or facilities that render their daily lives more comfortable, without, however, helping these children develop the necessary skills that will ensure they can overcome their negative experiences. In other words, it is the “giving fish” and not the “teaching how to fish” attitude that most Non – Governmental Associations are adapting.



## “Learning to Fish”

Educating people not only through the process of facilitating learning, but also by the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits is a route towards “learning to fish”. The educational methods that can lead to this result include storytelling, discussion, reflection and training. Non - Governmental Associations, such as Inner Wheel, do not have the political power to influence the formal educational systems worldwide. However, they do have the power to collaborate with national and international organisations which help people with ACEs by organising and carrying out training sessions that can have a formative effect on the way people with ACEs think, feel and act.



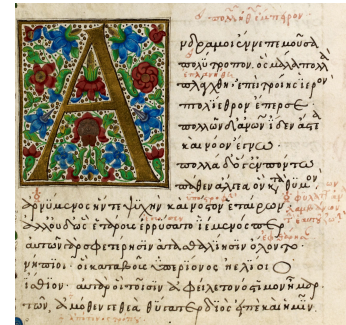
The motive to be educated mostly relates to each person's need for learning something new that can positively affect their quality of life in terms of knowledge, financial achievements or social recognition. ACEs are a threat to that motive; they are the biggest obstacles that young people can encounter. People who had or are still living with ACEs can be negatively disposed towards education, as they are unable to see the value of being educated. Their main concern and focus is to meet their daily needs. Non-Governmental Associations provide mostly services or products that meet only their daily needs ACEs people are not necessarily concerned about their personal development. Non-Governmental Associations need to show people with ACEs that their daily obstacles are, as a matter of fact, opportunities. The situations that appear to be adverse can and must be treated as a doorway to a new life, as an opportunity which can reveal the solutions to many of life's problems.

## The Teachings of Homer and Cavafy Regarding ACEs

I am the inheritor, as all Greeks are, of an archetype of learning epitomized by Greeks living with the notion that we can never quite match up to our ancient ancestors. Our philosophers were masters of reflection and observation, as they grappled with the human being's relationships to the world (often

embodied in gods and goddesses) and further dissected the world's relationship to the mere mortals that inhabit it. Since a very young age, I have been fascinated by Homer's *Odyssey*, one of the oldest examples of Ancient Greek literature, written by the great Homer, the poet to whom the other important epic, the *Iliad*, is attributed.

The story of Odysseus (known to the later Romans as Ulysses), King of Ithaca and his journey back home after the 10 year-long Trojan War is considered by many scholars to have been one of the most influential historical works that has shaped and is still shaping European mindsets (Wilson, 2018, Fitzgerald, 2007). Among the most noteworthy elements of the text are its non-linear plot and the influence of events on not only the choices made by women and slaves (Fitzgerald, 2007, Campbell, 2004), but also on the actions of fighting men and the way those choices further affected events in their turn. The epic has survived hundreds of years and has been translated into over 60 languages. It is studied in schools and universities all over the world for its skill in storytelling in a historical context that speaks about the commonalities of the human condition.



ACEs can remind one of the obstacles Odysseus faced in his journey back to Ithaca. Odysseus had led men by his bravery, wisdom and passion for Greece. He was brought down many times to face his weaknesses. It is arguable whether he learned enough – even anything at all – from his journey. After all, he lost many good friends in his voyages and repeatedly cheated his way out of disaster. Having arrived home, he showed little understanding of the situation of his son and wife. In the end, he still killed all the suitors. It is for this reason that one could argue that Odysseus had not really been transformed by his long journey. That is what most people who have lived through ACEs achieve. There is a need to make young people with ACEs realise that there is another side to the coin they have been dealt.

Another influential poetical work came to my mind. In 1911, the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933) wrote the poem "Ithaka", inspired by the *Odyssey*. The poem's theme is the pleasure of the journey of life and the increasing maturity of the soul as that journey continues. Evidently, it does not focus on the island of Ithaca itself, but on the symbolic "Ithaka" that can resonate with people with ACEs. They must see life, both professional and personal, as an *Odyssey*: everyone faces difficulties and it is how one responds to those difficulties and challenges that defines the resilience and leadership of the self before one can lead others.

Unlike the *Odyssey*, Cavafy's poem "Ithaka" is written in the second person, directly addressing the reader as a traveler. ACEs people must see themselves as a traveler on the way to their symbolic "Ithaka" which, besides the destination of life, symbolises the great goal that one seeks. They must have personal goals, like the achievement of good health and happiness and



they must also find some usefulness in the world. Inner Wheel must find a strategy that can lead to that achievement.

### Conclusion

Homer's *Odyssey* and Cavafy's "Ithaca" are world-renowned poetic works that incorporate an analogy to life achievements. I have analysed both texts in my Doctorate and I have found them to be great tools to use in my consultancy practice. I suggest that such masterpieces must be used at the Clubs of IW. Being sure that all cultures have similar literature examples, I suggest they use these as strategies which can critically assist the training necessary for people with ACEs. We, as Inner Wheel members, need to educate people with ACEs to achieve new knowledge that can have a positive effect on their lives.

As people with ACEs perceive life from a narrow perspective, they often miss or find difficult to comprehend life from a wider perspective. However, if they try to broaden their perspective, they can exploit many opportunities. This should be the role of IW: to draw an educational/consultancy strategy to not only help people to love education but, crucially, help them realise that life situations exist in order to teach us all important lessons and take us all forward in life. We, as Inner Wheel, need to teach people with ACEs to be open to life and its opportunities, to flow with life and learn to fish!

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### About the Author

Nana Tsoumaki is an Education Consultant with specialised studies in education [BA(Hons), MA, MRes, PGCE] in the UK. She is a candidate for a Doctorate in Professional Studies (DProf) through her research in the

Professionalisation of Education Consultancy in Greece. Her current work is based on an analogy between, on the one hand, Homer's *Odyssey* and Cavafi's "Ithaka" and, on the other, education consultancy in Greece. She has worked in various educational roles in London and she is the founder of "Athina, Education Consultants" in Athens. She has been shortlisted in the finals for the Greek International Women Awards in 2017. She is a member of the Athens - North Club and, specifically of the 247 District of Greece. She has served in various roles in the 247 District and in her club and is presently acting as District Secretary.